

The Keys Of The Kingdom

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If you would like to be a guest writer for TKOK you may contact me at jfmiller61@gmail.com. To announce up coming events like Gospel Meetings, Lectures, Singing events etc... Just use the email link above to contact me. Please feel free to tell others and have them sign up for their copy today. Use this link to join the mailing list. http://jfmiller.com/keys-of-the-kingdom/?page_id=1316 . May God Bless You. Jim and the Staff

Voices from the Past

"These Are Your Marching Orders Too!"

James W. Boyd

Waukesha, Wis.

January, 1957

Just before our Lord ascended into heaven to assume his position on the throne of the universe, he left a command which was both a charge and a challenge to all who would walk under his banner. That charge has become the marching orders of the church of Christ. Jesus said, *"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them unto the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."* (Mt. 28:18-20). This command was the impelling power which sent the early Christians "about preaching the word," and it must once again become an imminent impulsion with every child of God until this generation can also say that the gospel has been *"preached in all creation under heaven."*

These marching orders issued by the Great Commander-in-Chief resulted in action which would today be termed fanatical. Many men sold their houses and their land; others deserted their homes instead of their Savior and so were scattered abroad. Some changed both their religion and their occupation. Some were imprisoned, some banished from society. A goodly number made the supreme sacrifice. But before these sainted souls are stigmatized as fanciful fanatics, let the world take note of the terrific impact which they had upon a decaying civilization. These devoted disciples of the first century accepted their marching orders, and in keeping with their Master's wishes, quite literally *"turned the world upside down"* (Acts 17:6).

The marching orders have not changed. Neither has the condition of the world, for in this age it is still wrong side up. How then can we allow the Lord's charge to have a different effect upon our lives? We, too must be willing to leave our "father's house" and our "kindred" and go into the places where the lost are calling. Preachers, instead of seeking to be cushioned with the comforts of a "life-time contract" in one community, must open their ears to the Macedonian call which is so loudly echoing from countless cities destitute of spiritual truth. Every evangelist should make it his aim, at least once during his life, to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named (Rom. 15:20). The challenge of

Christ and the condition of the cosmos make this imperative. But the marching orders reach deeper than this. Brethren everywhere need to be awakened to the fertile fields which await the hay-vest sickle. Savable souls abound in areas of the globe that we have hardly thought about, and they are plentiful in sections of the country not remotely removed from our "strongholds." Christian people, with faith in their hearts and God's word in their hands, need to go into the highways and byways seeking those who have fallen by the wayside, The Lord's work must be supported by the personal efforts of every Christian. The preaching of the gospel must extend beyond the confines of our "meeting-houses" to the very boundaries of the human race. When brethren's fervor for furthering the cause of Christ reaches the stage which critics term fanatical then perhaps the world will both largely note and long remember what we have done here.

May we profit by the mistake of a defeated king of the ancient world. The army of Sparta was once invading the country of Thrace, and as they crossed the Hellespont, the king sent to the people of the different regions asking whether he should march through their country as a friend or as a foe. Most of the regions replied, "By all means as a friend." But the king of Macedonia said, "I will take time to consider it." The king of Sparta quickly answered this indecision. "Then let him consider it, but meantime we march, we march." And brethren, it is just so with the spiritual hosts of wickedness. While congregations are considering the possibility of helping in mission work, the army of Satan is marching. While gospel preachers hesitate in their decision to go into ALL the world, the army of Satan is marching. During the lingering lull of our indecision and inactivity, souls are trampled under by the trudging feet of time. Let us not linger lest we lose the precious souls for which the Lord died. Remember, these are your marching orders too.

The First Principles (Part 8)

Living Faithfully and Obediently

Jim Miller

Gray, Maine

Now that you are a Christian, what is there to do? Some say, “Well, I followed the plan laid out in Scripture, so now I am safe, and all is good, and I have nothing else to do.” This could not be farther from the truth! Now is when the work really begins: living a faithful life that is obedient, and that maintains the salvation you have received; this is a full time job in itself. You can't go back to your old ways and expect to stay saved. The people who believe in the false doctrine of once saved, always saved, have been fooled by the deceiver, Satan, just as Eve was fooled in the garden.

The word “Christian” means that you are now one who belongs to Christ. You have been added to His kingdom, and are now a servant of righteousness. There are now certain things that the Lord requires of you. Think of it like this: ask anyone who has served in the military what happened when he was in boot camp. He will tell you that one is conditioned, or broken down, and rebuilt into the type of person that the military needs, in order to fill the purpose of defending this country. One is NOT the same person that he was when he enlisted. It is much the same for the Christian. You have become a soldier in the army of God. You first need to give up the sinful things in life, such as swearing, drinking, etc. Christians are expected to be good soldiers, as Paul explained to Timothy in Second Timothy 2:3-4: *“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”*¹

Paul tells us that we are to arm ourselves with God's armor.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. [11] Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. [12] For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. [13] Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:10-13).

From these verses we get a picture of what being a Christian is all about.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22).

Next, consider some thoughts given by brother Bonds Stocks concerning the obligations of Christian citizenship:

“Now let us consider some of the duties and obligations of, Christian citizenship. In the realm of divine government and elsewhere privileges are always accompanied by an equal amount of responsibility. Jesus recognized this principle when he instructed his apostles, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8.) The duties of Christian citizenship may be summarized under one general heading - obey the king. Since we are the subjects of Christ, it behooves us to be loyal to him. He has all authority in heaven and earth, has every right to expect us to honor his authority. He is "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:8, 9.) To obey Christ is to obey the law of Christ and his apostles as given in the New Testament. "If you love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15; cf. John 15:14.) It is our duty as Christians to exercise the privileges of Christian citizenship to enjoy to the fullest all the blessings that are rightfully ours as children of God. It is our responsibility to support wholeheartedly the program of the congregation of which we are members. Some of the duties of Christian citizenship are:

1. Prayer. "Be instant in prayer," our Lord instructs. "Pray without ceasing," is the admonition of the Holy Spirit. There are some things that many members feel they cannot do, but surely all can see to it that the program of the church is supported by their prayers. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of..." (Tennyson.)
2. Attendance of the services of the church.

(Hebrews 10:25.) This is absolutely indispensable to fruitful labor, fervent service and faithful discipleship. The services of the church are ordained, not for God's benefit, but for the welfare and prosperity of our souls. It is utterly impossible for able-bodied church members to habitually absent themselves from the services of the church and maintain their loyalty to Christ. Those who think they can do so are self-deceived. They do not understand the nature and purpose of Christianity, and unless they repent of their lukewarmness, indifference and indolence they will be eternally lost.

3. Righteous living. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men teaching us that, deriving ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (Titus 2:11, 12.) The sinless Christ is our example and when we become his disciples we pledge ourselves to walk in his steps. (I Peter 2:21-25.) Christians are the light of the world, the salt of the earth, living and walking Bibles that are read of all men. (Matthew 5:13, 14; 2 Corinthians 3:2, 3.) If we live in flagrant violation of the great moral principles of the gospel we not only destroy our own influence and condemn our own souls, but we give thoughtless men an excuse to attack the religion of Christ. Let your light shine, Do not reflect on your Savior by sordid living, but live in harmony with the doctrine of Christ that you may be a reflection and radiation of the light of the cross.

4. Personal evangelism. "Go, ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature..." (Mark 16:15.) It is the duty of every Christian to preach the gospel to the very best of his ability - and every Christian has some ability to teach. If one cannot speak publicly, he can teach privately. If one cannot speak at all, he can write. If one can neither speak nor write, he can preach an eloquent and effective sermon by living the gospel. It is fine

for a congregation to have one or more full time evangelists - men supported by the congregation because they devote all their time to preaching. But remember that no one can be hired to do your work. Regardless of how many preachers a congregation may have you are not relieved of your responsibility to preach and teach. It is the obligation of every Christian to visit the sick, call on negligent members, help the weak, comfort the sorrowful, and help restore the fallen. (Galatians 6:1.) What Christian cannot distribute tracts and literature, write letters, send postal cards, make telephone calls? (Galatians 6:9, 10.)

5. Faith, consecration, devotion, sacrifice.
"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (I Corinthians 15:58.)
Let us give sacrificially of our time, talents and material resources to, the advancement of the Lord's cause. Cast your bread upon the waters and it will return with interest.

We will have no trouble in fulfilling our obligations as Christians if we will obey the admonition of our Savior in Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."²

What Brother Stocks had to say, friends, is absolutely correct. It is not an easy task to remain a faithful Christian. In fact, it is a daily struggle. The apostle Peter wrote, however, that we have been equipped with all we need:

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: [5] And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; [6] And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; [7] And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. [8] For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] But he that lacketh

² Stocks, Bonds. *Obligations of Christian Citizenship*. Dickson, TN: Academy Street church of Christ.

these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. [10] Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: [11] For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:4-11).

Friends, these *First Principles* that we have been reviewing for the last eight months need to be read and taught. It is our duty not just to stay in subjection to God, but also to teach them to all we meet. Till next we meet, may God bless.

We invite you to visit our [New Website](#) that is..

**DEDICATED TO REFUTING THE
FALSE DOCTRINES OF MAN**

If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

The Issue of Homosexuality (Part 2)

Tim Bench

Abilene, Texas

Old Testament Examination of Homosexuality

As we pick up our examination of this issue, let us begin by considering what may be found in the Old Testament, which cannot be more clear about this topic.

“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination” (Lev. 18:22).¹

“If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them” (Lev. 20:13).

“And there were also perverted persons in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel” (1 Kgs. 14:24).

Let's pause for a moment, and notice that phrase, “perverted persons,” found in First Kings 14:24 (cf. Deut. 23:17; 1 Kgs. 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kgs. 23:7). The Hebrew word translated “perverted persons” is “qadesh,” and literally means, a “cult prostitute,” or “sodomite.” Concerning some who disagree with the translation of this Hebrew word, brother Howard Denham noted the following:

“The dispute is over whether the word referred only to a homosexual male who participated in ritual sodomy associated with the pagan cults, especially Baal worship, or was more comprehensive in scope to cover any sexual penetration by a male of another male. Of course, the liberals like the former view, because it gives some cover for homosexual conduct today by implying that it was the idolatry that made the activity evil and not the activity itself. But the Hebrews in every day use employed the term in the broader sense in the Talmud and in their discussions on through the Middle Ages, which shows that their understanding of the term did not limit it to idolatrous practices. It's clear from Gen. 2:24-26 and the Lord's use of that text in Matt. 19:4-6 (not to mention Malachi 2:14-17) that God's ideal for sexual relations is one man with one woman in the state of marriage for life. It is also

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

clear from the passages, which have no immediate reference to the pagan cults, in the law of Moses calling for the execution of men who were caught practicing homosexuality that the connection to idolatry was not the sole factor as to the sinfulness of the activity under the law of Moses. It should also be noted that even in the pagan world, it was considered a shame for a man to allow himself to be used like a woman. The penetrator had no stigma attached to him under Greek, Roman, and even Canaanite ethics, but the cadamite did have a stigma attached to him under these systems. Male citizens could abuse slaves, male prostitutes, et al. and not be held in disdain, while the ones so abused were stigmatized and not allowed to have any influence or concourse in large segments of 'decent' society. The Mosaic law, however, rightly placed the onus for the evil of the act equally on both the sodomite (the penetrator) and the cadamite."²

Continuing with our examination of the Old Testament:

Genesis 19:1-26 *“And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; [2] And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. [3] And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat. [4] But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: [5] And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. [6] And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, [7] And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. [8] Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. [9] And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a*

2 Denham, Howard. Truth Bible Institute. 2014.

judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door. [10] But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. [11] And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door. [12] And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: [13] For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it. [14] And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. [15] And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. [16] And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. [17] And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. [18] And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: [19] Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: [20] Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. [21] And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. [22] Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. [23] The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. [24] Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; [25] And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. [26] But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”

Many argue, with a straight face, that the infamous saga of Sodom and Gomorrah was NOT God's wrath unleashed due to homosexuality, but rather due to a lack of hospitality. This argument is ludicrous to most readers, because the wording is clear that a marauding gang of men were attempting to homosexually gang rape the angelic beings, who were in the form of men. Commenting on the event, Flavius Josephus, the famous Jewish historian, wrote the following:

"And the angels came to the city of the Sodomites, and Lot entreated them to accept of a lodging with him; for he was a very generous and hospitable man, and one that had learned to imitate the goodness of Abraham. Now when the Sodomites saw the young men to be of beautiful countenances, and this to an extraordinary degree, and that they took up their lodgings with Lot, they resolved themselves to enjoy these beautiful boys by force and violence; and when Lot exhorted them to sobriety, and not to offer any thing immodest to the strangers, but to have regard to their lodging in his house; and promised that if their inclinations could not be governed, he would expose his daughters to their lust, instead of these strangers; neither thus were they made ashamed. But God was much displeased at their impudent behavior, so that he both smote those men with blindness, and condemned the Sodomites to universal destruction."³

Likewise, Philo of Alexandria (circa 50 A.D.) wrote the following:

"Incapable of bearing such satiety, plunging like cattle, they threw off for their necks the law of nature and applied themselves to forbidden forms of intercourse."

"Not only in their mad lust for women did they violate the marriages of their neighbors, but also men mounted males without respect for the sex nature which the active partner shares with the passive..."

"Then, as little by little they accustomed those who were by nature men to submit to play the role of women, they saddled them with the formidable curse of a female disease."

The New Testament is equally direct about homosexuality. In next month's segment of this series, we will examine the New Testament teachings concerning this issue.

³ Josephus, Flavius. The Antiquities of the Jews. The Works of Flavius Josephus. Book 1, Chapter 11, Part 3-4.

Three “Fours” of Genesis

Logan Summers

Midland, Texas

What an amazing resource God’s Word is! There is so much information about living life, responding to crisis, dealing with temptation, managing money, and living a moral life that is devoted to God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is a book that we can neither exhaust, nor wear out. We have in our possession a piece of the omniscient mind of God. Do we know what it is all about? The Bible is not simply a collection of books to use as a reference. It is a beautiful story with the Son of God as the focal point (Col. 3:17). Notice Paul’s words in Galatians 4:4a: *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son.”*¹ There is a very real emphasis on the fact that God waited until the perfect time to send Christ. How long had this plan been in the making? *“He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world”* (1 Pet. 1:20a). We will start with the beginning.

Genesis: A book full of beginnings.

In Genesis, we have the first 2000+ years of earth’s history. It is full of firsts! The first man and woman, the first family, the first sin, the first murder, the first language, and on and on we could go looking at all such “firsts.” The book, itself, is easily dividable into two sections:

1. Four Major Events;
2. Four Key People.

The Four Major Events happen in Genesis 1-11, as follows:

1. The Creation (Genesis 1-2).
2. The Fall of Humanity (Genesis 3).
3. The Global Flood (Genesis 6-9).
4. The Multiplication of Languages (Genesis 11).

The Four Key People are the focus of the rest of the book:

1. Abraham (Genesis 12-21).
2. Isaac (Genesis 22-26).
3. Jacob (Genesis 27-36).

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

4. Joseph (Genesis 37-50).

These key words can help us to easily remember what the book of Genesis is all about, and it is within this framework that we can also see four key aspects concerning the coming Savior; notice:

Genesis 3:15

“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”

The very first mention of the Gospel is seen in this verse! Adam and Eve were on their way out of the garden, separated from God due to their sin. God’s promise was that from the offspring of Eve someone would eventually come and deal with what had happened on one of the darkest days in history. A ray of hope is seen. Satan would bruise his heel, but the Seed would deal a death blow to the devil, and this victory for evil would be short lived.

Genesis 12:1-3

“Now the LORD had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. [2] I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”

Who of Eve’s offspring would be the one to repair the damage that had been done? God promised Abraham that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. Before, this Seed could have been virtually anyone of Eve’s offspring. Now, we have God focusing in on one specific family as to where the Seed would come. Galatians 3:8, 16, make it very clear that this promise is specifically referring to Christ! All the nations of the earth would be blessed in Him (Tit. 2:11).

Genesis 14:18-20

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. [19] And he blessed him and said: 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; [20] And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.' And he gave him a tithe of all.”

There is a lot that we do not know about Melchizedek. What is really beautiful is

how God used this man as a shadow of Christ. We do not know the beginning or end of Melchizedek, but we know he was a king and a priest, according to David, in Psalm 110:4, and the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 7:1-3), both of which connect Melchizedek to Christ. He is our High Priest (Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:5-10). He is our King, and the King of kings (Rev. 19:6), He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End, the First and the Last (Rev. 22:13)!

Genesis 22

“Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' [2] Then He said, 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.' [3] So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. [4] Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. [5] And Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.' [6] So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. [7] But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' Then he said, 'Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' [8] And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.' So the two of them went together. [9] Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. [10] And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. [11] But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' So he said, 'Here I am.' [12] And He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.' [13] Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. [14] And Abraham called the name of the place, The-

LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, 'In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided.' [15] Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, [16] and said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son-- [17] blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. [18] In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.' [19] So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba. [20] Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, 'Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: [21] Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, [22] Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.' [23] And Bethuel begot Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. [24] His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah."

In what can only be described as an incredible act of faith (Heb. 11:17; Jas. 2:21), Abraham offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God. Abraham had been told earlier that Isaac would continue the seed line to the promised Messiah (Gen. 21:12; cf. Rom. 9:7), and He trusted in God and His power (Heb. 11:17-19). With knife ready, and heart fully intent on obeying God, the angel of the Lord called upon Abraham to stop. A ram was provided by God for the sacrifice and the place was called "The Lord will provide." Abraham did not withhold his only son from the Lord, but God stopped him. Yet, God, His Son not sparing, sent Him to die to take away our sins. The Lord will provide.

What an amazing journey through history that God walks us through in His word to show us the Christ, His Son, who came to take away our sins! Genesis is only the beginning! There is so much more awaiting us as we continue next time with our study.

How “Social” Should the Gospel Be? * (Part 1)**

Jack Pinckert, Jr.

City, State

What is the “Social Gospel”?

Mostly led by Protestants in Canada and the United States, the “Social Gospel” came about in the late 19th and early 20th centuries during the industrial revolution. During this time, American industry boomed and the population of cities grew tremendously because people from rural areas and Europe were coming to find work. With this rise in the population of American cities there was an equal increase in the amount of squalor, filth, and poverty that shocked many.

Some, “...under the leadership of Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch...believed in social progress and the essential goodness of humanity.”¹ “The idea of the Social Gospel was to apply Christian ethics to social problems such as poverty, slums, poor nutrition and education, alcoholism, crime and war.”²

While more prevalent among the clergy of the day, the “Social Gospel” attempted to reconcile the Christian faith with evolutionary thought. The “Social Gospel” stated that theology needed to be systematic, large enough, and vital enough to match the Gospel. The idea, according to Rauschenbusch, was that “If theology stops growing or is unable to adjust itself to modern environment and to meet its present tasks, it will die.”³

The “Social Gospel,” then, rejected the idea of evangelism, sin, salvation, heaven and hell, and personal accountability. The main goal was to address social issues, changing a group mindset toward a particular issue rather than focusing on individual accountability and salvation. It “asked people to seek salvation

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** EDITOR’S NOTE: Due to space limitations, the editors have divided the original manuscript into two parts.

1 Chernow, Barbara A. and George A. Vallasi. “Social Gospel” Infoplease.Com. 30 September 2014.

<<http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/society/social-gospel.html>>.

2 Houdmann, S. Michael. “What is the Social Gospel.” Got Questions.Org. 30 September 2014 <<http://www.gotquestions.org/social-gospel.html>>.

3 Rauschenbusch, Walter. A Theology of the Social Gospel. [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com. Amazon Digital Services, Inc. 2013. p. 246.

through building ‘the Kingdom of God on this earth’.”⁴

Followers of the “Social Gospel” believed that if they eliminated all social ills, people, unconcerned about these issues, would then turn to Christ. The “Social Gospel” then focused on showing the sins of industrialism, with the intent that people would repent and build a more just social order.

The “Social Gospel,” then, believes the work of the church to be:

1. Eliminate human suffering through social reform.
2. Take a public and activist role in opposing social injustice and advocating for human rights.
3. Serve the perceived needs of the “whole man” by spending time and resources, not only on “just” the gospel and spiritual matters, but also on mental and physical health, substance addiction, lifestyles, and other similar non-spiritual matters of daily life.

Specifically –

1. Involve the church primarily, if not exclusively, in political and social programs and agendas.
2. To have churches set up copies of human institutions to accomplish this, such as foreign aid groups, political lobbyists, or institutions (i.e. gyms, pools, sports teams, daycares, counseling services, clubs and the like).
3. Engage in public demonstrations, civil disobedience, and political lobbying to achieve its constantly increasing agenda and range of social goals.⁵

The story of the “Social Gospel,” however, is much more complex. Industrialism and the problems that came with it were not the only concerns of the “Social Gospel.” Labor laws and unions did away with many of the problems, including child labor, while creating better working conditions for women, one day off each week, and the right of every worker to a living wage.

The “Social Gospel,” then, lived on in home mission societies focused on setting up churches in the western frontier and southern United States following the Civil War. These societies addressed pressing social problems, such as temperance and rights for freed slaves following the Civil War.

“During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, economics, political

4 Bateman, Bradley W. “The Social Gospel and the Progressive Era.” National Humanities Center.Org. 30 September 2014. <<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/twenty/tkeyinfo/socgospel.htm>>.

5 Walker, Steve. “The Social Gospel.” 09/20/14. <http://www.colonialchurchofchrist.org/socialgospel.pdf>. p. 1.

science, and sociology all emerged in American universities as the result of the influence of the Social Gospel. The leaders in all three disciplines were ‘social Christians’ who saw their work as central to showing the truth about American society and the need for reform.”⁶

The “Social Gospel” continued in the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century in the form of the “Social Survey Movement.” Careful surveys were done of urban neighborhoods to determine where there was a lack of, and need for, Protestant churches. The survey also used the information collected to use during revival meetings in an attempt to challenge people to work through their churches to try to make their neighborhoods better.

By the end of the Twentieth century, the “Social Gospel” had expanded to include non-Christians, and offered a vision of political transformation. The “Social Gospel,” as it was, fell out of favor with many who saw it as naïve that people might be so broadly motivated and outraged over social injustices and inequality, to do something about it. Today the influence of the “Social Gospel” continues in Protestant divinity schools and what has come to be known as “Political Correctness.”

Is the “Social Gospel” another Gospel?

The desire to address some of the social wrongs in our society, in and of themselves, is not wrong, or even inherently sinful. The problem comes when we abandon the Gospel of Christ in favor of addressing society as sinful instead of focusing on the individual. Beginning in Romans 3:22 we read:

“[E]ven the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”⁷

Paul made it clear that salvation was made available to all who complied with the terms God had set forth for salvation. Paul tells us that all people are indeed

6 Bateman, Bradley W. “The Social Gospel and the Progressive Era.” National Humanities Center.Org. 30 September 2014. <<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/tkeyinfo/socgospel.htm>>.

7 All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

sinners, and the same basis for saving one, or making salvation available to one, is on the same conditions that it is extended to all. Salvation is offered to each, and is not contingent on society as a whole accepting it, but on each individual who has sinned.

In Galatians 1:6-12 Paul addresses those in Galatia who were being led away by false teachers. He says, “*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel*” (Gal. 1:6). The word “marvel” has the meaning “to be astonished.”⁸ “So soon” – “The present tense indicates that the defection of the Galatians was well under way and still going on.... that is, they were more quickly accepting the false teaching than they had accepted the gospel at first.”⁹

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned of false teachers, “*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves*” (Mt. 7:15). This is not the only time that we are warned, either (cf. Mt. 24:11, 24). Peter reminds us again that “*there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction*” (2 Pet. 2:1).

As we continue to read Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:15-20, He makes clear that God will not bless the false teachings of men, nor will they prosper. John tells us “*do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world*” (1 Jn. 4:1). In Acts 4, Gamaliel rightly observed that some had rose up at that time, but had come to nothing (Acts 4:36-37), and so it is with the “Social Gospel.”

Throughout the Bible we are reminded that salvation is in Christ, and only through Him are we saved. Jesus rightly said, “*And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*” (Mk. 7:7). “There is one Gospel – and it is not the Social Gospel, because the Social Gospel is devised by man and not by God.”¹⁰

Since the “Social Gospel” denies personal salvation in favor of the reform of society, it is another gospel, which Paul tells us is not another (Gal. 1:8-9). Jesus tells us that we will know false teachers by their fruits, and to date, the “Social Gospel,” while doing some good works, has not come anywhere close to its goal

8 Harris, W. H., III. The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear New Testament: SBL Edition. Bellingham, WA.; Lexham Press, 2010.

9 Coffman, James Burton. “Coffman Commentaries on the Bible.” Study Light.Org. 01 October 2014. <<http://www.studylight.org/com/bcc/>>.

10 Walker, Steve. “The Social Gospel.” 09/20/14. <http://www.colonialchurchofchrist.org/socialgospel.pdf>. p. 6.

of eliminating the social wrongs of society, or creating the kingdom here on earth. It has, however, turned many away from the Gospel.

Do Christians Not Care, Then?

Of course, as Christians, we care about the social injustices that we see in the world around us. However, is the work of the church to reform society by engaging “in public demonstrations, civil disobedience, and political lobbying”¹¹?

In Matthew 28:19-20 we read that Jesus commanded us to go and to teach; He did not say to go and to protest. In James 5:13-14 we read, “*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*” The Greek word used for “suffering” is “*kakopatheo*,” and means to “undergo hardship,” or “suffer trouble.”¹² Sick has the meaning “to be made feeble” or “diseased.”¹³ When we suffer in any way we are not told to protest, but to pray.

When the apostles were thrown into prison, the people did not protest or cause civil disobedience by rioting or blocking businesses or government offices. Upon the apostles release, they did not advocate for changes in the laws, or to engage in promoting the election of sympathetic politicians. They simply continued to preach the Gospel.

In Romans 13:1-2 we see clearly our directions in relation to government, “*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.*”

Written at a time when Roman tyranny was on the Jewish nation, and Christians were viewed as a Jewish sect, even Paul was mistaken for a rebel (Acts 21:38), yet Paul instructs Christians “to a strict pattern of respect and submission to the lawful government.”¹⁴ At no time do we see command or example in the Bible for the church to work for social reforms, to take the role of an activist, set up any organizations, or cause any civil unrest. This is not the work of the church.

Can we, as individual members, work toward these ends? As individuals we can

11 Walker, Steve. “The Social Gospel.” 09/20/14. <http://www.colonialchurchofchrist.org/socialgospel.pdf>. p. 1.

12 Strong, James. The New Strong’s Complete Dictionary of Bible Words. Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996. p. 639.

13 Ibid. p. 588.

14 Coffman, James Burton. “Coffman Commentaries on the Bible.” Study Light.Org. 01 October 2014. <<http://www.studylight.org/com/bcc/>>.

most certainly participate in certain activities, as long as they do not violate the civil law, or conflict with how we are to live as Christians (Mt. 5:16; Acts 5:29). In fact, as individuals are brought to Christ, it has a change on them that begins to affect society. As Christians, we follow a higher standard: God's law. As such, this begins to reform our character, our behavior, how we think and live our lives. In turn this also affects who we vote for in politics, what organizations we participate in or support. This is how society is changed for the better, not attacking social ills that are only the symptom of a greater problem, which is individual sin.

In next month's issue of *The Keys of the Kingdom*, we will present the second, and final, part in this series, picking up with the question, "Does the Bible Teach Us to Battle Social Injustice?"

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The image is a screenshot of the Churches of Christ.com website. At the top, the logo "Churches of Christ.com" is displayed in white serif font on a dark blue background. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links: "Home", "Work of the Spring Congregation", "Recommended Links", and "Contact Us". Underneath the navigation menu is a secondary menu with links: "Sermons", "Articles", "Debates", "Spring CFTF Lectures", and "World Wide Gospel Preaching". The main content area features a red and white logo for "Contending FOR THE Faith". Below the logo, the text reads: "2014 Spring Contending For The Faith Lectures 'WHAT MUST A CHRISTIAN DO TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO CHRIST?'" followed by "February 19—February 23, 2014" and "David P. Brown, Lectureship Director". At the bottom of the banner, there is a blue underlined link that says "Click Here Watch The Lectures".

Jehovah-jireh

Scott D. Crawford

Clay, Alabama

In Genesis 22 we find the very famous, and some would say infamous, story where God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. There are some deep and abiding lessons to be learned in this episode of Abraham's life:

1. We can expect tests and trials as children of God;
2. We know that God will keep His promises;
3. We should be eager to do the will of God;
4. Worshiping God takes intent on our part;
5. The Lord will provide.

In fact, that's exactly what Genesis 22:14 says, "*And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, 'In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided'.*"¹ Some versions actually have the title of this article in that place – *Jehovah-jireh* – which according to Strong's Concordance means "*Jehovah will see (to it).*"² The bottom line is this: the name of God, used in Genesis 22:14, means that the providence of God not only means that God has foreknowledge, but also that God has an actual working part in the world of humanity.³ This is what we call providence; the Lord is an active working part of our world, within the confines of the physical laws He has established, for the good of those within this world.

Providence is directly related to the act of creation.

Understanding that the working of providence is fundamentally different from the working of miracles is of extreme importance. Miracles occur when the natural laws are suspended. In Exodus 3 we find Moses turning aside to see a wonder, a bush that burned without being consumed. In Second Kings 13 we find a dead man resurrected when he came into contact with the bones of the prophet Elisha. The first miracle performed by Jesus, as recorded in John 2, was Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding. Natural law demands that burning

1 All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

2 Strong, James. *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Dictionary of the Hebrew Bible*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), p. 47.

3 Laura vander Velden, "Karl Barth and the Doctrine of Providence," *Didaskalia* (Otterburne, Man.) 20, 41-60. ATLASReligion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed December 18, 2014).

material must be consumed; that dead men not be resurrected by coming into contact with a dead man's bones; that water not be turned into wine. The creation of the world and mankind was a miracle, but that miracle allowed providence a place to work – providence requires natural law. When, within the processes of natural law, God blesses and provides for our needs, this is called general providence. When Jesus is speaking about the general providence of the Father for all people, He said, “...for He (God) makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mt. 5:45b). In a Psalm dedicated to the providence of God, it is noted that God covers the earth with clouds, makes the rain for the earth, and makes the grass to grow on the mountains (Ps. 147:8). This goes hand in hand with the promise made to Noah after the flood: “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). Everyone that has lived, does live, and will live, benefits from the general providence of God.

God uses providence to order the events of life.

It is certainly true that Paul saw God working in his life. Paul recognized the purpose of God during the opening of several of the epistles (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1), when he said that it is by the “*will of God*” that he was an apostle. First Peter 3:17 is an excellent reference verse using the same form and meaning of the phrase “*will of God*,” in the sense that this is what God desires for us to do or be, not that we have been forced into a certain direction. When Paul and Barnabas returned from the first missionary journey, Luke tells us that “*they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith*” (Acts 14:27) among the Gentiles of that time. Might we assume that Paul did some miraculous works on that journey? Yes, but the bulk of the journey was surely the day to day activities of walking or riding about, or finding favorable conditions or protection from bad weather, or being protected from beasts and robbers, or any number of normal activities that all worked together to produce the outcome desired by God.

Look for a moment at Paul's comments to the Philippians:

“Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: 16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; 17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:15-17).

Some translations have verses 16 and 17 reversed, but that is simply a variation

dependent on the Greek manuscripts used in the translation process. Look at the phrase, “*I am appointed*” in the NKJV. In other translations, this is presented as “*I am set*” (KJV), “*I am put here*” (ESV, NIV), or “*I am set*” (ASV). The word we find here in the Greek means to be placed into a position, “*to be specifically set*” for a purpose, and is in the middle voice.⁴ Paul says that he was placed like a stone into a defensive wall, or like a road block designed for a specific purpose. The real force of God's providential placing of Paul is recognized when we see that this passage from Philippians is written while Paul was a prisoner in Rome. We know that Paul desired to go and visit the Christians in Rome and impart some spiritual gift to them (Rom. 1:11), but the method God used to get Paul to Rome was by trial, imprisonment, prisoner transport, and shipwreck while in the hands of Roman officials and military. There were miraculous workings through Paul during the journey, but the bulk of the trip was performed by the providential hand of God so that Paul arrived at the journey's end on God's timetable, not the Roman's.

God continues to work in our lives through special providence.

Along with general providence, through which God sheds His blessings on all mankind, there is also a type of special providence that works in the lives of His children.⁵ This special providence can easily be seen in what might be the following keystone verses pointing to the hand of God working in the lives of Christians:

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”
(Rom. 8:28).

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11).

The Holy Spirit tells us through Paul that God “*works all things,*” and that “*all things work together,*” not just for those that love God, but more specifically for those that have responded to the call of the Scriptures, and have obtained an inheritance. The really wonderful part to recognize is that God has put two very important blessings in our lives to help build us up and keep us strong. God fully intends to bless us in the present age, and a primary method of blessing us is through the church! The church is a safe haven for Christians, where we can find

⁴ William C. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 278.

⁵ Jackson, Wayne. *A Study of Divine Providence*. Christian Courier, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/105_study_of_divine_providence_a>.

comfort and support in time of difficulty. The strength we draw from being a part of the church allows us to fulfill a primary function of Christianity, which is to take the Gospel of Christ to all parts of the world. Another blessing that God has given us is the avenue of prayer. When Jesus spoke about the good things that God is able to give us, He reminded us that it is because we ask, seek, and knock that God responds to our voice (Lk. 11:9-13). This is a direct indication that we are to have communication with God, and our route of communication is prayer. Paul reminds us that he prayed frequently (Rom. 1:9-10; Eph. 1:16; Col. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:3), and that we should also pray to our Father in heaven (Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thes. 5:17). How wonderful that we as the Priests and children of the Most High God can come before Him boldly and with assurance through prayer.

As Moses told the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 31:6; as God spoke to Joshua in Joshua 1:5; and as the Holy Spirit reminds us in Hebrews 13:5 – God Himself has said, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*”

Providence is best seen through the eyes of faith.

Just as, without faith, we will never truly see the glory of God as revealed in the life of Jesus, we will never see the true working of God through providence without faith.⁶ When confronting Thomas after the resurrection, Jesus blessed us, because even though we do not see, we believe (Jn. 20:29). Peter also remarked that even though we have not seen Jesus, we love Him, and that our faith has filled us with an inexpressible joy and glory (1 Pet. 1:8). Our faith is the vehicle that transports us from unbelieving to believing, because we know that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). We can look back in our lives, and see the hand of God moving when someone special helped turn us from darkness to light; when we were in the right place at the right time to speak a word of encouragement to a brother or sister; when we drew strength from the truth, which taught us that we are loved and protected children of our Heavenly Father.

We certainly hold to no creed or catechism written by men that places itself above, or even alongside, the Holy Writ, but in the 16th century the Heidelberg Catechism⁷ was produced, and we are reminded therein that when we understand the doctrine of creation and providence, we receive help in three distinct ways:

⁶ Jackson, Wayne, Bobby Grow. *God Behind the Veil*. Christianity Today. Vol. 4, No. 43. p. 57.

⁷ Wikipedia contributors. *Heidelberg Catechism*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Heidelberg_Catechism&oldid=639643729>.

1. We have patience in adversity. We know that sin and temptation will come our way, and that simply because we are Christians we are NOT immune to "the wiles of the devil." This is why Paul reminds us to put on the whole armor of God so that we might be prepared to stand firm in days of trial (Eph. 6:10-20).
2. We have thankfulness in prosperity. We know that every good and perfect gift we have comes from the Father of lights (Jam. 1:17). All the earth and everything in it are the possession of God, so when we are blessed it is from the riches of God (Mal. 3:10; Luke 6:38).
3. We have true hope in the future. We are but strangers and sojourners in this life. Jesus has already promised that He is preparing a home for us (John 14:2), and Peter reinforces this truth by reminding us that we have a living hope ... an inheritance reserved for us in heaven ... kept for us by the power of the living God (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

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What is the Gift of the Holy Spirit (Part 6)

Doug Post

Vernon, Connecticut

The Promise of Joel and the Gift of the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:16-21 “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: [17] And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. [18] And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. [19] I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. [20] The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. [21] And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.”¹

As noted in a previous part of our study, Joel’s promise was identified as one of the Old Testament Scriptures referring to the miraculous associated with the nature of the Holy Spirit. It is quoted by Peter, and serves as the background for what transpires on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Bible scholars, no matter their view of what the “gift of the Holy Spirit” may be, all attest to the fact that Joel serves as the background in understanding the chapter. Regarding this matter, Franklin Camp wrote:

“Since Peter was explaining Joel’s prophecy, and the prophecy included spiritual gifts...would it not be reasonable to conclude that Peter’s promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers would be what the prophecy promised? Joel’s prophecy was the basis of Peter’s discussion of the Holy Spirit.”²

While the events that transpired on the Day of Pentecost were in fulfillment of the more general, Abrahamic Promise (Gen. 12:1-3), the specific promise under consideration is that of Joel. The apostle Peter begins explaining that which captivated the audience that day, namely the miraculous associated with the

1 All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

2 Camp, Franklin. *The Work of the Holy Spirit in Redemption*. Birmingham, Ala.: Roberts & Son, 1974. 141,147.

nature of the Holy Spirit. It is here that Peter specifically refers to the promise of Joel. Putting an end to all of the assertions and speculations, Peter stood up saying, *“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.”* Essentially, Peter said *“THIS is THAT.”* The *“this”* was what the crowd had just witnessed in hearing the sound of a *“rushing mighty wind”* (Acts 2:2, 6) and the twelve Galileans speaking languages they had never studied before. Here the term *“Galileans”* is used in a derogatory manner. The region of Galilee was seemingly a *“blue collar”* area inhabited by those considered to be unsophisticated and uneducated. The crowd was aware of this and was truly amazed. Moreover, the apostles were speaking with knowledge, wisdom, and authority, so it was only natural for them to ask, *“Whatever could this mean?”* (Acts 2:12).

On the other hand, the *“that”* was the promise of the prophet Joel, which was the promise of miraculous power and salvation, and within this setting Peter begins his sermon as recorded by the inspired Luke. In Acts 2:17-18, Luke records the words of the prophet Joel: *εκχεω απο του πνευματος*, which means *“I will pour out of My Spirit.”* The text does not say, *“I will pour out My Spirit”* but *“out from My Spirit.”* The Greek preposition, *“apo,”* when used in the Genitive case, indicates separation from the source, or *“away from,”* meaning *“I will pour out away from My Spirit.”*

According to Harrison, *“Apo has the primary sense of ‘off,’ ‘away,’ ‘from,’ having properly the notion of being apart, the being separated by an interval of distance...”*³ The preposition *“apo”* is an ablatival marker, which is easily identified as *“Genitive of Source,”* meaning that the *“ablatival genitive basically involves the notion of separation...”*⁴ Additionally, the ablative force does not exist only where the genitive is used in a prepositional phrase. Other Greek constructions maintain the ablative force without prepositions.

Some Bible scholars dismiss Luke’s usage of *“apo,”* citing the Hebrew text of Joel 2:28-29, because the Hebrew text does not use the preposition, *“apo.”* While that is certainly true of the Hebrew Text, the Septuagint (LXX) does employ it. Since the Holy Spirit used *“apo”* with reference to Joel’s promise, would it not be reasonable to conclude that the concept of *“apo”* (out from) is implied in the Hebrew text? Moreover, it is the Holy Spirit, Himself, who used the preposition *“apo”* in the Greek text while quoting Joel’s promise. Therefore, we have a Divine rendering, or interpretation, of the text, which puts an end to such

3 Harrison, Gessner. *A Treatise on the Greek Prepositions, and on the Cases of Nouns with Which These Are Used.* Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1860. 174.

4 Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996. 107, 109.

quibbles. Still, some are so embedded to the “personal indwelling” doctrine that they are unable to see the text any other way. For instance, note how one scholar stresses that the passage is referring to the Person of the Holy Spirit:

“The verb “pour out” (ἐκχεῶ, ekcheō) in reference to the Spirit is important in this speech, reappearing as a midrashic link in verse 18 and 33. The image is of a torrential downpour that is poured out on a parched earth (Larkin 1995: 53)” ... “The use of this verb with the Spirit” ... “summarizes Joel’s key promise – that the Spirit would be poured out “on all flesh.”⁵

Grammatically, Bock’s view that the text is referring to the Person of the Holy Spirit, or to a personal indwelling, is untenable, especially since “apo” is, indeed, part of the Greek text. Moreover, contextually, the passage is discussing the miraculous, which the Spirit distributes. Therefore, just what would be poured out? The same passage tells us: “*Your sons and daughter shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants, I will pour out of [out from, DP] My Spirit in those days*” (Acts 2:17-18). Regarding the ablative, which is an important factor in Acts 2, Fox writes:

“The usage of the ablative case, in Acts 2:16-21, again is significant since it is the background passage for all miraculous gifts. Such passages as Acts 8:20 and Ephesians 4:7 have the genitive-ablative ending of the noun. The endings of the genitive (possessive) and the ablative (case of the source) are the same and all arguments boil down to a contextual argument (unless there is a preposition as in Acts 2:17). This helps to support the arguments, made in other chapters of this treatise, that the Holy Spirit is not a gift. Robertson and Davis state that the prepositions “apo” and “ek” are used to express agency.”⁶

The Promise of Joel indicates that miraculous ability was promised, which consisted of prophesy, visions, and dreams. Of course, the New Testament teaches that first century Christians had miraculous abilities (1 Cor. 11-14; Eph. 4:8-15; cf. Acts 21:9-10; Gal. 3:5; Rom. 1:11; Acts 8:13-19). We learn that this miraculous power was distributed, as Acts 2:17-18 declares, to young and old, men and women, free or slave, and Jew and Gentile. Therefore, God made no distinction regarding who would receive miraculous ability. The promise of miraculous power is the foundation of Joel’s promise – power that was

5 Bock, Darrell L. Acts. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007. 113.

6 Fox, Marion R. The Work of the Holy Spirit. Volume 1. Ok, City, Ok. Five F Publishing Co.2003. 285-286.

figuratively “poured out” FROM the Holy Spirit.

Certain phrases, such as, “poured out,” “fallen upon,” or “shed forth,” are metaphors (figures of speech) describing how first century Christians received miraculous power from the Spirit. It should be noted that the phrase “poured out” is equivalent to “fell upon” (Acts 10:44-45), and “fallen upon” (Acts 8:16), which is how the reception of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the apostles hands is described in Acts 8:17. The laying on of the apostles hands was the normative way first century Christians received miraculous power (the gift of/from the Holy Spirit). The only exception would be Cornelius and his household in Acts 10, who received miraculous power directly from the Lord.

Joel promised that miraculous ability from the Spirit would be poured out on “all flesh,” which has to be limited by the context, since “all flesh” does not mean upon animals (1 Cor. 15:39). Nor, does it mean upon the entire world, or all people (i.e., for the world is comprised of sinners, unbelievers – the lost!) Certainly, “all flesh” must include “Your sons and your daughters,” “Your young men,” “Your old men,” “My menservants,” and “My maidservants.” It is interesting to note that “all flesh” means both Jew and Gentile, who are described as those who are “afar off” (Acts 2:39; Eph. 2:17). Of this matter, the late G.K. Wallace wrote:

“This is a blanket prophecy that includes all flesh—both Jew and Gentile. The apostles were all Jews and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Cornelius was a Gentile and received the gift of tongues. There were nine special gift (1 Cor. 12:8-10). These special powers, one or more, were given to both Jews and Gentiles. This passage does not suggest that all flesh will be baptized in the Holy Ghost.”⁷

To further elaborate, literally speaking, the prophet Joel did not mean “all flesh.” To understand why this position is taken, please consider the following from the apostle Paul: “*All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds*” (1 Cor. 15:39). Therefore, “all flesh” must of necessity have definite limitations and applications, and within the context of Acts, we see that “all flesh” refers to Jew and Gentile.

There are two significant points of emphasis concerning the promise of Joel quoted in Acts 2:17-21, namely the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit and salvation, both of which are addressed by Peter in his Pentecost sermon. This Pentecost sermon can be divided into three sections. The first section (2:14-21),

⁷ Wallace, G. K. The Design and End of Miracles. Printed sermon. Winter Haven, FL: Central Church of Christ, Dec. 1972.

in which Peter defends the Pentecost phenomena as the beginning of the unfolding of Joel's prophecy in the last days (cf. Joel 2:28-32). The second section (2:22-32), in which the sermon takes a decidedly Christocentric turn, as Peter begins preaching about the Christ, demonstrating how the resurrection of Jesus the Nazarene was anticipated in Psalm 16:8-11. In the third section (2:33-36), Peter argues for the exaltation of Christ as foreseen in Psalm 110:1, following His death and resurrection, and being appointed both Lord and Christ. In our next installment of this series of articles, we will seek to understand how the phrase “Pneuma Hagion” (“Spirit Holy”) is used in the New Testament.



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