

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

Authority means the power to command and get a response of obedience. There may be two authorities in competition. God is the final authority and, if necessary, *all* other authorities may be put aside in order to obey Him (Acts 4:18-20, 5:27-29).

How do the apostles show God is the final authority in their lives? _____

This is a most important question for all religion claims to be based on truth. Where is truth to be found? How can we be sure that what we believe is the real truth? The answer of our 1689 Confession of Faith is: "The Holy Scripture is the all-sufficient, certain and infallible rule or standard of the knowledge, faith and obedience that constitute salvation" (Ch.1, Sect.1). It is because the Bible is the word of *God* that it has final authority over our lives.

THE BIBLE IS OUR AUTHORITY BECAUSE IT IS INSPIRED

When we say the Bible is INSPIRED we mean that what is written in it is fully the word of God. Thousands of times we read, "The Lord said", or similar words (starting with Genesis 1:3).

Write out the first words of 2 Timothy 3:16 about inspiration _____

"Inspired" means that the words come from God, and this is true of all Scripture.

Write out 2 Peter 1:21 _____

The prophets did not speak according to their own interpretation of the situation, but God was at work in them by the Holy Spirit, making sure that they only spoke what was from Him.

Our Lord and His apostles believed the Scriptures were the word of God.

Jesus said _____ commanded the law Moses wrote in Exodus (Matthew.15:4, see also 19:4-5).

How did David speak/write the words of Psalm 100? _____ (Mark 12:36).

Whose words were the words of the prophet Isaiah? _____ (Acts 28:25, see 1:16, 4:25).

What promise did Jesus make to His apostles that they would write the full truth from God?

Read John 14:26, 16:13 _____

How does Peter recognize that Paul's writings are the word of God? _____
_____ (2 Peter 3:15-16).

They could appeal to a word (John 10:34-36), even a singular noun (Galatians 3:16). Jesus said, "Scripture cannot be broken" because what it says is final, and everything must be judged by it.

How do we know Jesus' words are the final authority? They will be our _____ on the last day (John 12:48).

How do we know the writings of the apostles are the final authority? Paul claims that what he is writing is a _____ (1 Cor.14:37, also read 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14).

CLAIMS TO OTHER SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

(1) **Catholicism** believes that the Bible is the word of God but can only be properly interpreted by the *church*. How the church has interpreted the Bible in the past, and what the Popes say, are the authoritative teachings of Scripture and must be believed. In this way so many unScriptural doctrines and practices entered the church. The Reformation of the 16th. century was a call to return to the Bible as the final authority, with the cry, "Scripture alone!" When standing before the Emperor and other dignitaries, having been asked whether he still believed what he had written in his many books, Martin Luther replied: "I am bound by the Scriptures and my conscience has been taken captive by the word of God, and I am neither able nor willing to recant, since it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience".

(2) **Charismatics** also believe the Bible is the word of God, but insist that there is continuing *prophecy* in which the voice of God is heard. In practice such prophecies become the voice of God directing His people, so that the Scripture is no longer the final authority. If the Bible is the complete word of God, then it is sufficient to give all necessary “teaching, ...reproof, ...correction, ...and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). Our 1689 Confession states: “The sum total of God’s revelation concerning all things essential to His own glory, and to the salvation and faith and life of men, is either explicitly set down or implicitly contained in the Holy Scripture. Nothing, whether a supposed revelation of the Spirit or man’s traditions, is ever to be added to Scripture” (Ch.1, Sect.6).

(3) **Liberalism**, in all its various forms, teaches that the mind of *man* is the final authority. So where science conflicts with the Bible, as in the account of the creation and fall (Genesis 1-3), then the Bible must be wrong; it is just a ‘myth’ to teach some spiritual truth. In this way, men can take what they like, and leave what they do not like in the Bible. If you do not like the idea of an eternal and conscious suffering in hell then say it is not true because Jesus was just repeating what He heard from His teachers. If the world has a ‘Women’s Liberation’ movement then let us say that Paul refused women to teach (1 Timothy 2:12), either because he had a very low opinion of women, or because this was the culture of the day. But if God made everything He is the only One with full understanding; and if man is a sinful creature he cannot possibly understand unless it is revealed to him. And this is why the Scriptures have been given.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE IN PRACTICE

“All religious controversies are to be settled by Scripture, and by Scripture alone. All decrees of Councils, opinions of ancient writers, and doctrines of men collectively or individually, are similarly to be accepted or rejected according to the verdict of the Scripture given to us by the Holy Spirit. In that verdict faith finds its final rest” (1689 Confession, Ch.1, Sect.10).

Why does the Bible commend the Jews at Berea as “more noble than those in Thessalonica”? Find the answer in Acts 17:11 _____

Where does Isaiah say people should go for guidance instead of to the mediums and wizards? To their _____ (8:19), and to the _____ (8:20).

How did our Lord respond to the devil’s temptations? “It is _____” (Matthew 4:4,6,10).

How important it is to know the Scriptures! Write out the following two verses from Psalm 119:

Verse 9 _____

Verse 11 _____

The Bible constantly warns us against false teachers/prophets. How can we know what is truth and what is error, what we should accept and what we should reject?

Who are the “us” John says we should listen to if we “know God”? _____ (1 John 4:6). Note that this is in the context of many false prophets having gone out into the world (v.1).

Whose gospel is the only true gospel? _____ (Galatians 1:8).

Why do we forbid women to become pastors? (1 Timothy 2:12).

Why do we not practice the ceremony of Confirmation?

Why do we baptize believers only? (Acts 2:41).

Write TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements:

_____ Those who speak “This says the Lord” should not be listened to.

_____ The Bible has final authority over our eating habits.

_____ Because the church is much larger it needs bishops to rule over many pastors.

_____ The Bible must be believed rather than the sayings of expert scientists.

_____ The “altar call” should be used in evangelism because it has been so successful.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Sovereignty = “supreme and unrestricted power, as of a state” (Collins Dictionary).

In principle, the state of Kenya, by its government, has all authority to do whatever it likes in the country, with no other power from outside forcing it to do something else (not true in practice).

The teaching of our 1689 Confession of Faith: “Over all His creatures He is sovereign. He uses them as He pleases, and does for them or to them all that He wills” (Ch.2, Sect.2). “From all eternity God decreed all that should happen in time, and this He did freely and unalterably, consulting His own wise and holy will” (Ch.3, Sect.1).

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

What does God accomplish? _____ (Psalm 115:3, 135:6)

What was king Nebuchadnezzar forced to confess, after his experience of being humbled by God, that God does? _____ (Daniel 4:35)

Where does God do this? _____

What can no one do to God? _____

What things does God accomplish according to His will? _____ (Ephesians 1:11)

Write down the words that describe God’s sovereignty in 1 Timothy 6:15 _____

EXTENT OF GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY

(1) Things which no one planned. God’s prophets had said that Ahab would die (1 Kings 21:19, 22:17). In the battle a certain man drew his bow _____ (22:34) and Ahab died of his injuries. No one can plan the decision of the ‘lot’, but God does, as in life of Jonah (1:7). Whose decision alone does the ‘lot’ reveal? _____ (Proverbs 16:33).

(2) Details of our lives. What two things seem insignificant, yet they do not happen without the will of God? Read Matthew 10:29-30 _____, _____. What things did the traders forget were not under their control but under God’s control? Read James 4:13-15 _____

(3) Affairs of nations. Which way does the heart of the king turn? _____ (Proverbs 21:1). Who rules the kingdoms of men? (Daniel 4:17) _____. To which earthly ruler is any kingdom given? _____

(4) Even sinful actions of men. What was done to Jesus according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God? _____ (Acts 2:23). What did the rulers and people, who were gathered together against Jesus, really do? _____ (Acts 4:27-28).

THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

If God is not sovereign over *everything*, then who is in control of this world and our lives? Is the devil still fighting it out with God so that we cannot be sure who will get the final victory? Is there some other power above God? Many people so emphasize the freedom of man (free-will) that it appears that man is able to stop God from doing what he wants (so they teach). I remember a preacher in Nairobi from Uganda saying, “God took a chance in creating man, giving him the freedom to do what he wants”. To teach that God is not sovereign is to teach that His plans can fail (but read Isaiah 46:9-11); that the fulfilment of all His promises cannot be guaranteed; that no matter how we live we may perish in the end. If God is not sovereign then there can be no assurance about anything. Thank God He is sovereign!

PROBLEM OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND SIN

It is impossible to have full understanding of the fact that God is sovereign even in the sinful deeds of men. We believe it because the Scripture clearly teaches it. Why should we expect to understand *how* God works? What is the reply to one who argues against God finding fault with a man because He is sovereign?

_____ (Romans 9:19-20).

It is often asked why God should judge Judas when he was only fulfilling God's plan (prophecy) in betraying Jesus. But God did not force Judas to sin against his will. Judas betrayed his Master, not because he wanted to fulfil the will of God, but because he let _____ enter his heart by his wickedness (John 13:27), for he loved money and was a _____ (John 12:6). We may have many questions, because we lack knowledge of the Bible, or just because it is impossible to fully understand God's ways, but we must always confess with Abraham, "Shall not the Judge _____?" (Genesis 18:25).

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND OUR DAILY LIVES

(1) In the life of Joseph. Write down the words Joseph used to confess God's sovereignty: _____ (Genesis 45:8a). In Genesis 50:20 Joseph reminds his brothers they had meant evil against him; what were the evil things they did that got Joseph into Egypt? _____ (Genesis 37:11); _____ (37:28). Yet Joseph acknowledged that God had a good purpose. Write down that purpose: _____

_____ (Genesis 50:20b). Because Joseph knew God was in control of his being in Egypt he told his brothers they had no need to fear his revenge now their father was dead. Because you believe God is sovereign you will humbly submit to your circumstances in life, you will not seek to revenge wrongs done to you. How did Job show humble submission when he lost all his possessions? _____ (Job 1:21, see 2:10).

(2) In our daily lives. Read Romans 8:28. For what purpose is God working in our lives? For _____. In this is only the nice blessings we receive? No, in _____. Because God is sovereign, and He has called us according to His purpose, He will not let anything happen to us that will be for our spiritual destruction. You know this because the Bible teaches it. So do not be discouraged in the sufferings of this life; one day you will be glorified (Romans 8:30). God knows what He is doing, so have confidence in Him.

Two books for further study on this subject:

The Sovereignty of God, by A. W. Pink, pp.20-44

The Mystery of Providence, by John Flavel, 221 pages

Write TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements:

- _____ God has no control over the devil or the sinful actions of men
- _____ To complain about our lives is to doubt the sovereignty of God
- _____ God has purposed things in our lives that are spiritually harmful
- _____ Our earthly rulers have been appointed by the will of God
- _____ If it is possible for the will of God to fail, then we cannot have assurance

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN SALVATION

If God is sovereign over *everything*, then he is also sovereign in our salvation. Our 1689 Confession of Faith states: “By His decree, and for the manifestation of His glory, God has predestined (or foreordained) certain men and angels to eternal life through Jesus Christ, thus revealing His grace. Others, whom he has left to perish in their sins, show the terrors of His justice” (Ch.3, Sect.3). Also read Sects.4-7.

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Election = to choose, just as when Kenya has a general election MP are chosen by the voters. The idea that Christians have been chosen by God occurs about 40 times in the New Testament. The “elect” is often another name for a Christian (Matthew 24:22,24,31, Luke 18:7, Romans 8:33, Colossians 3:12, 2 Timothy 2:10, Titus 1:1, 2 John 1,13, Revelation 17:14). Read *Ephesians 1:3-4* that teaches us that being chosen by God is one of the spiritual blessings we should thank God for. When did God choose us? _____

What are the two little words that describe the relationship of our election to Christ? _____

What was the purpose for which God chose us? _____

Romans 9:6-24 is the most detailed passage about the sovereignty of God in election. Paul is answering the objection that salvation is not certain because so many of God’s people, the Jews, refused to believe in Christ. The passage teaches that it was God’s purpose to save some and not all. One of his examples is Jacob and Esau. God chose to love Jacob before either child was _____, so His choice was not because of (their) _____, but because He already had a purpose of _____ (v.11). This calling to salvation does not depend upon man’s _____ or _____, but upon God’s _____ (v.16).

The doctrine of election not only fits in with God’s sovereignty, but also with the fact that because of sin man is totally unable to do anything to save himself. Unless God saves all men will continue in their sins and go to hell. We are like a drowning man totally dependent upon another to choose to rescue us from certain death.

“Predestination” is another word that is used, and it emphasizes the purpose (or goal) for which God has chosen us (see Romans 8:29, Ephesians 1:5). “Foreknowledge” is a word used to emphasize that it is God who first enters into a close relationship with men (Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2).

A FALSE VIEW OF ELECTION

Everyone believes the Bible teaches *election* and *predestination*, but many explain it in a false way. Such believe that God chooses people to salvation because he knows they will believe in Christ. This makes salvation totally dependent upon whether a person chooses to believe or not. They teach, “If a person uses his free-will to choose Christ, then God will respond by choosing him to salvation”. This makes MAN sovereign and not God! How can this be answered?

- (1) Jacob was not loved unto salvation because of anything he had done, either _____ or _____ (Romans 9:11). But faith is something good that a man exercises towards Christ.
- (2) The Bible denies that being one of the true people of God depends on _____ (Romans 9:16), and positively teaches that God has mercy on whomever _____ (Romans 9:18).
- (3) Faith is the fruit of election. In Antioch, who were the ones who believed? As many as were _____ (Acts 13:48).
- (4) Our will is not free to choose Christ whenever we want. What did Jesus say it is impossible for the sinner to do unless the Father draws him? _____ (John 6:44,65). What two things does Paul teach are impossible for the person who is “in the flesh”? _____; _____ (Romans 8:7-8).

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

- (1) God is unjust to save only some and condemn the rest. How does the apostle Paul answer this question in Romans 9:14? _____. What did God say to Moses about His sovereignty that shows he is not unjust? _____ (Romans 9:15). Because all men are sinners, all men deserve condemnation. If some are saved it is only because God is merciful.
- (2) God says He does not want anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9). This means that he does not condemn the wicked gladly; He takes no pleasure in casting people into hell (Ezekiel 33:11). He is pleased when a sinner repents. If anyone is lost it is because he refuses to repent.
- (3) If someone is not chosen he cannot be saved even if he wants to be. Everyone who wants to be saved, and calls upon the name of Christ, will surely be saved (Romans 10:13). What assurance did Jesus give to anyone who comes to Him? _____ (John 6:37). Note the first part of John 6:37; who are the only ones that will come to Christ? _____. If a person truly wants to be saved it shows that God has already been at work in him.
- (4) Election destroys human responsibility. This is not true, as the Bible teaches both God's sovereignty in election, and man's responsibility to believe and be saved (this is not the same as free-will). Throughout the Bible God addresses men as fully responsible for their own actions, yet they are unable to do anything spiritually good by their own efforts (for example, Jeremiah 13:23). What is an evil man unable to do? _____ (Matthew 12:34).

THE PRACTICAL BENEFITS OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

The doctrine of election is very practical, and is not only for special students of the Bible.

- It brings *praise* to God. What does Paul do to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as he thinks about being chosen? _____ (Ephesians 1:3). What does Paul do to God because He chose the Thessalonians? _____ (2 Thessalonians 2:13). If I am chosen by God, it is by _____ (Romans 11:5), and not because I have done anything to deserve it (Romans 11:6). If the only reason I am saved is because of God's eternal choice then I must eternally praise Him.
- It gives *assurance* to the Christian. What three other blessings does God guarantee to the one He has predestinated? _____, _____, _____ (Romans 8:30). If I am saved because of God's gracious choice, there is nothing that can make God change His mind. This is how I can be sure that in my life God works everything for _____ (Romans 8:28).
- It makes us sinners *humble*. The key of the door of salvation is in God's hand and not in mine! It is impossible to know the Father unless the Son _____ (Matthew 11:27). I can do nothing to save myself; I deserve nothing but condemnation.

Question. How can I know if God has chosen me? How did Paul know the Thessalonians had been chosen by God? Write out the first half of 1 Thessalonians 1:5 _____. Has this happened to you?

Further reading on this subject. *The Sovereignty of God*, by A. W. Pink, pp.45-55. *Saving Grace*, by John Cheeseman, pp.52-77. Spurgeon on Election (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

Write TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements:

- _____ God chooses to save a person because He foreknows they will believe
- _____ The belief in election makes a big difference to our Christian living
- _____ Those God does not graciously choose to save he chooses to condemn for their sins
- _____ No one can be saved unless God chooses them to be saved
- _____ It is impossible to know if I have been chosen by God unto salvation

SIN - TOTAL DEPRAVITY & TOTAL INABILITY

It is so important to understand what the Bible teaches about sin. If we do not understand the disease, we cannot know how to treat it! One of the definitions of sin in the Bible is: "Sin is _____" (1 John 3:4). But sin is not only the actions, speech and thoughts that we have that are against God's law. Note what Jesus teaches as to *where* all these sinful things come from: "For _____ come evil thoughts, murder, ..." (Matthew 15:19). The "heart" is our inner self out of which all comes. There is something wrong with our heart. Jeremiah says of the heart that it "is _____", _____" (17:9). Paul writes of the Gentiles that they have no understanding and are ignorant "due to _____" (Ephesians 4:18). So sin is a condition, a character, an attitude, man's nature. Jesus likens the heart to a treasure box (Matthew 12:35). How a person lives depends on the character of his heart. Men and women not only do acts of sin, they *are* sinners by nature (see Ephesians 2:3).

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Depravity = moral corruption. When we say this depravity is "total" we do not mean that man is as sinful as he can be, but that sin has spread to every faculty of his being and has seriously affected him. As a result everything that men do by nature is sinful and not good in God's sight. Paul makes a universal conclusion about all men and all they do that "no one does _____, _____" (Romans 3:11). No thought, no emotion, no word spoken, no action, is acceptable to God. Even our very best acts are polluted by sin (Isaiah 64:6, see Philippians 3:4-8). As a drop of poison makes the whole drink poisonous, so sin makes all corrupt and repulsive to God.

TOTAL INABILITY

Not only are all actions sinful, but as a result by nature we are totally unable to do anything spiritually good which is acceptable to God. Note the following Biblical evidence:

(1) Clear statements. What things are *impossible*, according to the following passages?

John 3:3,5	_____	(unless born of water/Spirit)
John 6:44,65	_____	(unless the Father draws)
Romans 8:7	_____	(to the mind that is set on the flesh)
Romans 8:8	_____	(to those who are in the flesh)
1 Corinthians 2:14	_____	(to the unspiritual = without Spirit)
Hebrews 11:6	_____	(without faith)

(2) Word pictures. What word describes total inability in the following passages?

John 8:34, Romans 6:16-17, Titus 3:3	_____
Ephesians 2:1,5, Colossians 2:13, 1 Timothy 5:6	_____
John 9:40, 12:40, 2 Corinthians 4:4	_____

Slaves have no power to free themselves – the master, or someone more powerful, must give the freedom. Those who are dead have no power to make themselves alive – only someone who has power over death can. The blind, like Bartimaeus depend upon another to open their eyes.

Our 1689 Confession of Faith states: "The actual sins that men commit are the fruit of the corrupt nature transmitted to them by our first parents. By reason of this corruption, all men become wholly inclined to all evil; sin disables them. They are utterly indisposed to, and, indeed, rendered opposite to, all that is good" (Ch.7, Sect.4, and see Ch.9, Sect.3).

FALSE TEACHING

The Arminian view insists that sinful man still has a *free will*. This view teaches that any man has the ability, any time he chooses, to do the good that God commands, especially to repent of sin and believe in Christ. They do believe that as a result of Adam's sin the whole race also fell, and inherited a corrupt nature (= original sin); but also through the death of Christ a grace, which is called "prevenient" (because it precedes), has been given to ALL men to make everyone able to choose Christ. This is the most common view today and people will react with horror if you suggest there is no such thing as free will. They do not know that at the time of the Reformation Martin Luther wrote, what he called his most important book, *The Bondage of the Will*, which he regarded to be at the heart of the Reformation controversy.

How would you answer the Arminian teaching? What does the Bible teach about the will of men now? Is there such a thing as "prevenient grace"? It is an assumption because Arminians believe that if God commands something we must be *able* to do it. The 'will' is the faculty of choice; it does not act independently. Do you think it possible that a man would choose to drink poison if he knows it is poison and if he feels afraid that it will kill him? Impossible! How is it possible that a sinner will choose Christ if his heart is unclean, if he does not understand the things of God, if he hates the light (John 3:19-20)? Everyone chooses according to his nature.

Write down the reference of two passages that teach the will of man is not free to choose Christ _____, _____. John 1:13, 3:8, Romans 9:16 clearly teach that the _____ of man is *not* the cause of salvation.

IMPORTANCE OF HAVING THE TRUE TEACHING

(1) Our understanding of **salvation** depends upon it. Are we saved because we choose Christ, or because God first chooses us? The Bible is so clear that we are totally dependent upon God. What must God first do if anyone is to come to Christ? _____ (John 6:44). What must first take place if anyone is to produce spiritual fruit? _____ (John 3:5). Like Lazarus, stone dead in the tomb, we must *first* be made alive, before we can do anything spiritual. Salvation is of the Lord and to Him all praise is due!

(2) Our method of **evangelism** is controlled by it. Man-made methods such as special music, altar calls and testimonies of well-known people have produced many false converts. Because of total depravity and inability salvation begins with God's work of the new birth. God uses the preaching of the gospel to urge men to believe and repent. We must tell sinners the truth as clearly and forcefully as we can, trusting that God will open the heart to give heed (Acts 16:14).

(3) It will lead us into the practice of both godly *humility* because we are totally unworthy, and joyful *praise* because God has graciously done what we could never do. In our Christian lives sin becomes enemy number one that we take seriously in order to put it to death (Romans 8:13).

Further reading. *The Sovereignty of God*, by A. W. Pink, pp.92-108. *Saving Grace*, by John Cheesman, pp.33-41. Spurgeon on Inability (John 6:44). For Puritan teaching: *Human Nature In Its Fourfold State*, by Thomas Boston; and *The Plague of Plagues*, by Ralph Venning.

Write TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements:

- _____ God holds us responsible only for what we have the ability to do
- _____ A sinner is saved when he opens his heart to Christ
- _____ Apart from Christ no one has ever done any good before God
- _____ We must tell sinners that they have no ability to choose Christ
- _____ Our understanding of sin does not matter as long as we preach the gospel

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

Nothing is more important to the Christian faith than the event of the cross of Christ and its proper interpretation. How does Paul summarize the message he preaches? - “the word _____” (1 Corinthians 1:18), and “we preach _____” (1 Corinthians 1:23). What was the only message He must to preach in Corinth? - _____ (1 Corinthians 2:2). If the cross is not central it is not the true gospel message.

THE CRUCIFIXION

You must make sure you know about the following:

- (1) The prophecies that were fulfilled. Write down the Old Testament reference that is quoted in Matthew 23:46 - _____; Luke 22:37 - _____; Luke 23:46 - _____; John 19:24 - _____; John 19:28 - _____; John 19:36 - _____; John 19:37 - _____.
- (2) Crucifixion was a form of death that signified a person was _____ by God (Galatians 3:13).
- (3) The three hours of _____, at the end of which He shouted, “_____!” (John 19:30). Darkness is a sign of God’s judgment that Jesus fully endured, so He was able to shout that He was victorious, having done all the Father planned for Him to do.
- (4) The curtain of the temple was torn from the _____ = by God (Matthew 27:51) to show that through the death of Christ the way into His presence was now open.

THE MEANING OF CHRIST’S DEATH

The Bible uses the following words to explain the death of Christ:

- (1) *Sacrifice* (Hebrews 9:26, 10:12). He fulfilled the Old Testament sacrifices; for example, He is the true _____ lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7), and Hebrews 9:25-26 compares His sacrifice with the _____ (in Leviticus 16). Most of the sacrifices were because of the offerer had sinned and was asking God for forgiveness. The animal was killed instead of the sinner. So Christ was a sacrifice “in our place”, “for” us (John 10:11, 15:13, Romans 5:6,8, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15,21, Galatians 1:4, 2:20, Hebrews 10:12, 1 Peter 2:21, 3:18).
- (2) *Blood* (Romans 3:25, 5:9, 1 Corinthians 11:25, Ephesians 1:7, 2:13, Colossians 1:20, Hebrews 9:14, 10:19, 13:12,20, 1 Peter 1:2,19, 1 John 1:7, Revelation 1:5, 5:9, 12:11). The blood of animal sacrifices was poured out around the _____ (Leviticus 1:5, 3:2, 4:7) to show that it was dead. The “blood of Christ” means that Christ died as a s _____, not that there is something special about the blood in His body. His blood was just like ours.
- (3) *Obedience* (Romans 5:19, Philippians 2:8). He came from the Father to do His will, and He perfectly obeyed (Hebrews 5:8-9). As one without _____ He could die for us (Hebrews 7:26-27), just as the animals were to be without “spot or blemish” (1 Peter 1:19).
- (4) *Propitiation* (Romans 3:25, Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2, 4:10). God’s wrath is upon sinners, but Christ has suffered the punishment sinners deserve, and so God’s w _____ is removed from them. As an illustration, in traditional religion the elders would seek to turn away the supposed wrath of God in times of drought and disease by offering a certain sacrifice.
- (5) *Ransom* (Matthew 20:28, 1 Timothy 2:6, Titus 2:14, 1 Peter 1:18-19). A ransom is a price paid for release. We are released from our bondage to _____ because Christ gave His life as a sacrifice for us.
- (6) *Redemption* (1 Corinthians 6:20, Galatians 3:13, 4:5). The word ransom emphasizes the price that was paid; redemption emphasizes that the price paid brings release. When we say that Christ is our Redeemer, we mean that by His death we are set free to serve God!
- (7) *Reconciliation* (Romans 5:10-11, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Ephesians 2:16, Colossians 2:20-22). God Himself has removed all obstacles to our fellowship with Him through the death of Christ, so that we are now at p _____ with God.

Note: Propitiating God, dying for our sins, redeeming us by a ransom price, and reconciling us to God, are all things that Christ accomplished by His death. Nothing needs to be added. Do not miss the assurance in Romans 5:1-2,9-11, 8:33-34! Christ's death is powerful.

FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?

This is what our 1689 Confession of Faith states about Christ the Mediator:

“By His perfect obedience to God's law, and by a once-for-all offering up of Himself to God as a sacrifice ..., the Lord Jesus has fully satisfied all the claims of divine justice. He has brought about reconciliation, ... for all those given to Him by His Father” (Sect.5).

The Confession states that Christ died for the elect, for those given to Him by the Father (John 6:37-39, 17:24). Many people think this means that Christ's death was not able to save everyone. But the real question is, “What was God's *purpose* in giving His Son to die?”

According to the following verses, for whom did Christ die:

Isaiah 53:11, Matthew 20:28, 26:28 _____; John 11:52 _____

Ephesians 5:25 _____; Hebrews 2:14 _____;

Hebrews 2:16 _____; Hebrews 2:17 _____

If Christ died for the purpose of saving everyone, then why is not everyone saved? If His death was a ransom, then why is not everyone ransomed? If Christ died for everyone, and everyone is not saved, it means that Christ's death is not sufficient to secure the salvation of anyone. It would then depend on Christ's death *plus* something else in man, such as faith.

There are a few verses that appear to teach Christ died for _____ (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 1 Timothy 2:6). Others verses use the word _____ and supposedly teach that Christ died for everyone (John 1:29, 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:19, 1 John 2:2). Note that “all” can mean all types of men without distinction (1 Timothy 2:1), or many people (Matthew 3:5-6). “World” can mean Gentile as well as Jew (John 1:29, 4:42), sinners as opposed to God's people (John 17:9).

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

(1) Let us have full confidence in Christ and His work to save us completely. Spurgeon likens Christ's work to a bridge. One bridge is wide enough for everyone to go on it but it only goes half way across the river. The other bridge is narrower but it goes all the way across to glory!

(2) The Bible never presents the gospel as “Christ died for you.” Rather we must present Christ as a Person who, by His finished work, is fully to be trusted to save any sinner who comes to Him in faith and repentance.

Further reading. *The Sovereignty of God*, by A. W. Pink, pp.56-67. *Saving Grace*, by John Cheesman, pp.78-92. *A Price for a People*, by Tom Wells.

Write TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements:

_____ Christ's death guarantees full salvation for all for whom He died.

_____ It was not the purpose of God that Christ should die on behalf of everyone.

_____ It is possible that Christ died for people who will go to hell

_____ The ‘blood’ of Christ means Christ's death as a sacrifice for sins.

_____ God loves everyone, so there is no need for His wrath to be propitiated by sacrifice.

CONVERSION

Very few people understand the Biblical doctrine of conversion today. We have claims that half of Kisumu town was converted during the Crusade of 1988; that more than 9 million have recently been converted to Christ in Nigeria. How many of these are now baptized and active members in a local church, and the salt of the earth and the light of the world? Sadly probably very few. This is because the Biblical marks of conversion are not required. So often what is called conversion is just an emotional response to a large meeting; or an intellectual response to a gospel presentation; or (even worse) a coming to Jesus for some felt need to be dealt with, such as sickness or poverty. What makes up true conversion?

THE NEW BIRTH

Conversion is not started by the sinner, but by the Holy Spirit. This was the humbling lesson that Nicodemus had to learn after all the religious efforts he had made (John 3:1-10). In telling him he had to be born again, Jesus was saying that he had to start his spiritual life again from the beginning. So far he had done nothing. Three reasons why it is God who starts conversion:

(1) *Sovereignty of the Spirit*. To what does Jesus liken being born of the Spirit (v.8)? _____ (note that “wind” and “Spirit” are the same word in Greek). What determines the direction the wind blows? _____. How does the language of ‘birth’ also teach us that the Spirit is sovereign in this work of conversion? _____ (think: who alone is responsible for the birth of a child?).

(2) *Inability of the sinner*. What is the “flesh” (= man’s natural power without the Spirit) able to produce? Only _____ (v.6). What is necessary for anyone to produce “spirit” (= spiritual fruit such as faith and repentance)? The _____. What is it impossible for a sinner like Nicodemus to do unless born again (vv.3,5) _____.

(3) *The new birth is the source of all spiritual life*. How did believers become children of God (John 1:12-13)? _____. Again, what do those who believe Jesus is the Christ show has happened to them (1 John 5:1)? _____. What did God promise would be the result of the indwelling of the Spirit (Ezekiel 36:27)? _____.

What is the result of “the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5, and for the answer see v.7)? _____.

False teachings. Tell the sinner to ‘open your heart,’ which is impossible without the Spirit (Acts 16:14). Tell a person they will be born again if they believe, when it is the other way round (again see Lydia’s conversion). We are totally dependent on the Lord in this work of conversion, which is why we must make prayer a priority.

REPENTANCE & FAITH

There is no experience of true conversion unless there is a response of repentance and faith to the message of the gospel. Christ preached this (Mark 1:15); so did the apostle Paul (Acts 20:21). The first thing a newly born again person does is to repent and believe. There is much ignorance about what repentance and faith really are, and there are many counterfeits.

(1) REPENTANCE.

11 Biblical examples of false repentance. Judas “repented” confessing his sin (Matthew 27:3-4), but he had no faith that God could _____ him. Simon was urged to repent and he prayed not to perish (Acts 8:20-24), but there was no _____ of his sin. There is a sorrow for sin that is “worldly” but it does not lead to _____ (2 Corinthians 7:9-11), because it does not produce a change of life.

12 True repentance. Psalm 51 is David's prayer of repentance. He trusted in God's _____ and _____ (verse 1). He wanted to be _____ from his sin (verse 2). He could not forget his sin (verse 3). Although he had wronged Uriah and Bathsheba he knew it was against _____ he had sinned (verse 4a). He acknowledged he deserved whatever _____ God would bring to him (verse 4b). He did not excuse his sin but knew he was _____ in sin (verse 5). In the rest of the Psalm he promises to live a godly life (see also Luke 3:8,10-14).

13 Problems today. Very often the demand for repentance is not even made, only faith unto forgiveness, yet repentance is often tied to forgiveness (Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:22). Repentance is more than confession of sin and wanting to avoid punishment; true repentance must include admitting that judgment in hell is deserved and a purpose to turn away from all sin.

(2) FAITH.

21 Biblical examples of false faith. 'Faith' is used of many who did not have true saving faith. The demons have a sort of faith (James 2:19), but faith without _____ is dead (verse 20). Many only had a temporary faith, but because of _____ or _____ they give up (Matthew 13:20-21). Others believed only because of the _____ Jesus performed (John 2:23-25), for example, Nicodemus, but Jesus did not treat them as true believers. The Scripture records that Simon believed (Acts 8:13) but it is later shown to be false (8:21-23).

22 True faith. Faith is much more than agreeing that the doctrines of the Bible are true; the demons are forced to admit this. A faith that cannot withstand difficulties is not true, because faith is trust in _____ who is faithful to do what He has promised, and powerful to do whatever He wants (Romans 4:20-21). A faith that depends on signs will wither when he seems powerless; how many joined in the cry, "Crucify him!" when he was arrested. Faith is *trusting* Christ; one who knows he is a sinner and that Christ is the Saviour will come to Him as the leper and say, "If you are willing you are able to save me." Faith is trusting Christ with my *whole soul*: so it is to _____ on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13); to _____ to Him (John 6:37); to _____ His flesh and _____ His blood (John 6:53). Faith knows what it needs and will not give up (Mark 10:48).

23 Problems today. Saving faith is much more than raising a hand, coming to the front in a meeting and being prayed for, or agreeing in a fact such as 'Christ died for me.' Faith is a glad and unreserved submission to Christ as Saviour and Lord. It is impossible to be a disciple of Christ without _____ Him first above all others (Matthew 10:37); without being willing to _____ = to suffer for Him (10:38-39). This is why so many make a profession of faith for a while, and either give up, or produce no fruit.

JUSTIFICATION

This is one of the great blessings God gives to those who have _____ in Christ (Galatians 2:16). In justification, God declares the sinner to be righteous, only because of the _____ of Christ imputed to him (Romans 4:6, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:9). Justification is much more than forgiveness; we are counted as righteous as Christ Himself is righteous.

The following three books are recommended: Paul Helm, *The Beginnings Word & Spirit in Conversion*; Tom Wells, *Faith the Gift of God*; C. H. Spurgeon, *All of Grace*.

Write TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements:

- _____ A sinner cannot believe in Christ unless he is first born again.
- _____ Without full submission to Christ there is no true saving faith.
- _____ If I confess that Jesus died for me it is sure that I have saving faith.
- _____ Tears of sorrow for sin are genuine only if followed by a turning from sin.
- _____ God cannot justify *sinners* because He is righteous.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The subject of the Holy Spirit is a very emotional and divisive one in today's church. This is because it concerns the *experience* that people have. However, our claims must always be _____ by the teaching of the Bible (1 Thessalonians 5:21, 1 John 4:1). This does not quench the Spirit because it is what the Spirit has commanded in the Word! We have been warned to expect there will always be _____ (Matthew 7:15, 24:24, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 4:1).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION

(1) Without the powerful work of the Holy Spirit no one would become a Christian. Write down the words that describe what the Holy Spirit does: _____ the world (John 16:8); preaching comes with _____ (1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:5); _____ and _____ of the sinner (Titus 3:5, remember John 3:1-8); and _____ (= being set apart, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2).

(2) The Holy Spirit comes to permanently _____ every Christian (John 14:17, Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Timothy 1:14). Christ came to save us from our sins so that we might receive the Spirit as the central gift of the new covenant (read Ezekiel 36:26-27, John 7:39, Acts 2:33, 2 Corinthians 3:8, Galatians 3:14). If you have not received the Holy Spirit then you are not a _____. How can you know if the Spirit lives in you? Speaking in tongues is **not** the evidence, as tongues was not a gift given to *all* (see 1 Corinthians 12:30). In Romans 8:12-17 three evidences are given: every Christian _____ the deeds of the body by the Spirit (vv.12-13); is _____ by the Spirit in this way of fighting against sin (vv.14-15); and experiences the Spirit _____ with his spirit that he is a child of God (vv.16-17).

(3) This personal indwelling of the Spirit in every Christian is so important as it is the assurance God gives us of final glory in heaven. So the Spirit's indwelling is described as _____ (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13, 4:30), _____ (2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5, Ephesians 1:14), and _____ (Romans 8:23). Each of these three words emphasize the spiritual security of the one who has received the Spirit.

(4) Many wrongly think that to be "baptized" with the Spirit is an experience *after* conversion. Rather, to be baptized with the Spirit is a way of describing part of our conversion. Baptism means to be dipped into something, so it is to say that the Spirit powerfully indwells the believer. This was the experience of all the Corinthians and it united them (1 Corinthians 12:13). When Cornelius was baptized with the Spirit it was the evidence of _____ unto life (Acts 11:18).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

(1) We are also dependent upon on the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in our Christian lives. We are to _____ by the Spirit as the One who gives us power to live our lives (Galatians 5:16,25). Paul prays that Christians might be _____ through the Spirit (Ephesians 3:16). The Spirit is the Spirit of _____ (John 14:17, 15:26), who teaches us spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:13-16, Ephesians 1:17). It is the Spirit who enables us to _____ (Ephesians 2:18, 6:18, Jude 20); who gives us strength to put our sins to death (Romans 8:13); and who enables us to wait for our hope to be realized (Galatians 5:5). But above all the Spirit is the One who enables us to produce the _____ of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

(2) The Bible does not teach that we can become holy by a special experience of the Spirit, or by a special act of surrender on our part. Rather, producing fruit is **our** responsibility because the Holy Spirit of God indwells us (see Philippians 2:12-13). This sanctification, or becoming holy like Christ, is a life-long struggle against sin, which will only be complete when the Spirit gives life to our mortal bodies in the _____ from the dead (Romans 8:11).

(3) Some people claim they are ‘Spirit-filled’ because they have had some experience. But to be “filled” with the Spirit is to be controlled by Him and the sort of life that is lived by such a person is described in Ephesians 5:18-33. It has nothing to do with having certain spiritual gifts. For example, what does verse 20 say a ‘Spirit-filled’ person will do? _____. What does verse 25 say a ‘Spirit-filled’ husband will do? _____.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

(1) All true Christians have a common experience of the Spirit indwelling. This is the basis of our unity in _____ (1 Corinthians 12:13, see Ephesians 4:3). Therefore our unity as Christians is a *spiritual* unity, and is expressed in the local church.

(2) For the benefit of each member of the local church the Spirit gives gifts. The purpose of spiritual gifts is not for the individual but for the _____ good (1 Corinthians 12:7). Over and over again, in the discussion of the use of the gifts prophecy and tongues, the principle of _____ is the basis (1 Corinthians 14:3-5,12,17,26). Who gives each Christian the gift/gifts as he wishes? _____ (1 Corinthians 12:11).

(3) Lists of spiritual gifts are given in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, and Ephesians 4:11. We should not suppose that every gift must be present today. For example, there are no more apostles because they are the _____ of the church (Ephesians 2:20). No one today has the qualifications for an apostle as laid out in Acts 1:21-22, especially that of being an eye-_____ of Christ’s resurrection. And other gifts that were so closely identified with the apostles have also ceased, such as prophecy and tongues (both being revelation from God), and ability to work miracles.

(4) If you are a Christian, you have at least one _____. The Holy Spirit has given this to you to use in the _____ of your brethren (1 Corinthians 12:5). In what ways are you serving in the local church? There are two types of gift, speaking and serving gifts (1 Peter 4:10-11). Peter’s exhortation is that you do not keep it to yourself, but _____ it for one _____. Examine yourself.

The following books are recommended on the subject of the Holy Spirit: Octavius Winslow, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*; Edgar Andrews, *The Spirit Has Come*; David Budgen, *Charismatics and the Word of God*; Walter Chantry, *Signs of the Apostles*; Palmer Robertson, *The Final Word*.

Write TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements:

- _____ We can be sure our experiences are genuine without going to the Bible.
- _____ If I have not received the gift of the Spirit, I am not a Christian.
- _____ The Spirit’s indwelling is the guarantee of glory.
- _____ Spiritual gifts are not given for the benefit of the individual.
- _____ I do not need to struggle against sin if I am filled with the Holy Spirit.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

This is a very important area of Christian teaching. We must be able to answer the questions: What does God expect from me in my Christian life? How is it possible for me to live such a life?

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CONVERSION AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

A battery will only give light to a torch according to the power in it. A Christian can only live according to how God worked in conversion. Conversion is not only the action of a sinner in faith and repentance; but also the action of God. How do the following passages show God has changed the sinner? A Christian has _____ (Romans 6:2). A Christian is one who is _____ (Romans 8:9). A Christian is a _____ (2 Corinthians 5:17). A Christian has been _____ (Ephesians 2:6). When someone objects that the doctrine of free justification will lead to sin (Romans 6:1), Paul reminds the objector of what has happened to every one who has been converted: he has been united to Christ (verses 2-11), and he has been made a slave of righteousness (verses 12-23). This is why **all** Christians are described as “saints” = _____ ones (Romans 1:7), and as those who have already been s _____ = set apart for God and His service (1 Corinthians 1:30, 6:11, 1 Peter 1:2). We begin our Christian lives empowered by the Spirit, and with the power of sin over us broken. So God has given us all needed resources at conversion.

THE GOAL OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

At the end of our Christian lives what should we be like? In life we have goals for all we do. The great goal for the Christian is not wealth, long-life, high education, marriage and children. But -

(1) Like *God* in holiness (Matthew 5:48, 1 Peter 1:15-16, 1 John 2:29). God chose us with the purpose to make us _____ and _____ (Ephesians 1:4). Christ loved us and died for us for the same purpose (Ephesians 5:25-27). We must pattern our lives on how God has revealed Himself in the Bible, for example, in _____ (Ephesians 4:32-5:1).

(2) Like *Christ* (Romans 8:29, 1 John 2:6, 3:3). God’s purpose is to make us like Christ in His human nature, which will be completed on the last day (Philippians 3:20-21, 1 John 3:2). We must imitate Christ, for example, His _____ (Ephesians 5:2), His _____ (Philippians 2:5ff.), His attitude to _____ (1 Peter 2:21ff.).

NECESSITY. This likeness to God and Christ is necessary in order to enter heaven (Matthew 5:8, Hebrews 12:14). Such likeness will not be perfect in this life, but there must be a great difference from before becoming a Christian. Holiness must be the one great _____ of our Christian lives.

ASSURANCE. Is it possible to be sure of reaching this goal? Yes, because no one who is a true believer can be lost. Read John 10:28-29, 1 Corinthians 1:8-9, Philippians 1:6. But how can you know if you are a true believer? Note what the following verses say about who will be saved in the end: “he who _____” (Matthew 24:13); “if we hold our first confidence _____” (Hebrews 3:14). This is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.

HOW YOU WILL REACH THIS GOAL OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

(1) ***Use the Means of Grace.*** In order to persevere to the end you need continual supplies of the grace of God. How does God give grace to us? It is not automatic with no effort on our part. There are public and private means of grace, centred in the Word.

PUBLIC.

- Be committed in attendance at worship (Heb.10:25). It is through the reading and preaching of the Bible that you will know the promises and commandments of God.
- The ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are the same Word in the form of symbols. As you respond to the Word in faith it will be a means of grace to you.
- Constant fellowship with other Christians is a great blessing (read Hebrews 3:12-13).
- Then there is the encouragement of praying together (Acts 2:42).

PRIVATE.

- Read the Word of God consistently, let it dwell in you richly (Colossians 3:16). What benefits come from the Word in the following verses from Psalm 119? _____ (v.9); _____ (v.11); in affliction _____ (v.50); _____ (v.105).
- Pray constantly to commune with your heavenly Father (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- Meditation, a constant consideration of the Word and how it applies to your life, is very important (Psalm 1:2, 119:97).
- Make use of the sufferings God brings into your life, as His Fatherly _____ (Psalm 119:67, Hebrews 12:11).

(2) ***Give Practical Obedience to God's Commandments.*** In His commandments God has clearly shown us the road upon which we must walk. You must know the meaning of the 10 commandments, that they are positive as well as negative, that they cover our thoughts as well as our actions (study Matthew 5:21-30). Do not forget the 4th. commandment! Consider Jesus' summary of the commandments (Matthew 22:35-40). Practice the _____ commandment Jesus gave to His disciples (John 13:34-35). There are many passages that outline what our Christian lives ought to be like – Romans 12:9-21, Ephesians 4:25-5:5, Colossians 3:5-17. Such obedience is sure evidence that _____ (1 John 2:3).

(3) ***Put to Death (= Mortify) Sin*** (Romans 8:13, Colossians 3:5). You must be serious in dealing with sin, not only actions, but words and thoughts. Rather than sin, _____ your hand (Matthew 5:30). Do not let sin _____ in your mortal body (Romans 6:12).

(4) ***False Views of the Christian Life.***

- Deliverance – We sin because we have evil spirits from which we must be delivered .
- Second Blessing – We can be holy if only we are baptized with the Spirit of God.
- Keswick – Stop struggling and let Christ take over and live His life through you.

The following books are recommended on the Christian Life: Alderson, *No Holiness, No Heaven*; Ferguson, *Grow in Grace*; Ryle, *Holiness* and *Practical Religion*.

Write TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements:

- _____ The Holy Spirit was given us at conversion so that we might become holy.
- _____ It is impossible to be perfectly like God in this life.
- _____ If you profess salvation in Christ you will surely get to heaven.
- _____ The Christian life is a difficult life of constant struggle.
- _____ The 10 commandments were only for the Old Testament people of God.

THE CHURCH

The church is central in God's plans. It is the church that Christ _____; it is for the church that He gave Himself as a sacrifice; it is the church He wants to be _____ and without _____ (Ephesians 5:25-27). Many think they can invent patterns and practices for the church, but we must insist that the Bible is sufficient to teach us all we need to know because it is the word of God. Let us remember that many of the letters in the New Testament were written to churches (in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, etc.).

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

When the citizens of Ephesus assembled in the theatre the word for 'church' is used, but is translated "a _____" (Acts 19:32,39,41). Likewise that Israelites who gathered at Sinai are called a 'church,' translated "c _____" or "assembly" (Acts 7:38). A church is a group of Christians who assemble or congregate together. Note how the thought of coming together applies to the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:18, 14:23,26). The characteristics of these Christians are given at the beginning of 1 Corinthians (1:2). Write the words from your Bible next to the definition given.

- _____ the Christians belong to God.
- _____ the church is local, meeting in a particular place.
- _____ they are set apart in Christ to serve God in holiness.
- _____ God has effectually called them to be His holy people.
- _____ they have put their trust in Christ to worship Him.

Therefore, a church is *not* a building for worship, but the people who gather for worship. It is *not* a denomination (e.g. the Baptist Church) where many churches in an area are called 'the church' (note the Bible uses the plural in 1 Corinthians 7:17, 11:16, 16:1,19). The church *is* the true Christians who regularly meet together. We call this the **local** church, as opposed to the **universal** church which consists of all Christians of all time who will one day meet around the throne in glory (Hebrews 12:23, "assembly" = church). Read the following verses that refer to the universal church – Ephesians 5:23-25, Colossians 1:18. Of the church Christ is the _____ (see just listed verses), meaning that He both rules and provides for the church which is His _____. A more common picture of the church is a family, with God as _____, Christ as eldest (first-born) brother, and other Christians as _____ and _____.

WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH?

The early church knew who was, and who was not a member. They counted those who belonged - _____ before Pentecost (Acts 1:15), _____ added on Pentecost (Acts 2:41), and later _____ believing men (Acts 4:4). Members are those who profess repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ, and who commit themselves to the church as their spiritual family (Acts 2:42). Two things reveal this idea of membership.

(1) Those professing salvation, and only those, were *baptized* (study Acts 2:38-41, 8:12-13,35-38, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:14-15,30-33, 18:8, 19:4-5). The members are the baptized, which is the Biblical method of profession of faith.

(2) If such fail in their spiritual responsibilities and do not repent then corrective *discipline* was exercised to remove them from the church and treat them as if they were unbelievers (Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, Titus 3:10-11). Discipline is exercised towards those we know are in the family of God.

WHO ARE THE LEADERS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH?

In the early church there were apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). _____ and _____ are the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20) as those to whom the New Testament was revealed, and we do not have such leaders today. Evangelists were probably apostolic representatives, such as Timothy (2 Timothy 4:5). The New Testament only gives us qualifications for church elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13). These were the leaders in the Philippian church (1:1).

(1) **ELDERS** (1 Timothy 5:17,19, Titus 1:5, 1 Peter 5:1) who are also called "bishops" (Acts 20:28, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:7), or "pastors" (Ephesians 4:11). Note the evidence that elder = bishop = pastor, i.e. the same leader is described.

- When Paul spoke to the "_____ " of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:17), he also called them "overseers" (= b _____, v. 28), and exhorted them to do the work of a _____ by caring for the church like a shepherd cares for the sheep (v. 28).

- Peter similarly exhorts the “_____” (1 Peter 5:1) to do the work of a _____ by shepherding the flock of God (v. 2), and “exercising oversight” as _____ (v. 2). (‘bishop’ = ‘overseer’)

The *qualifications* for elders are found listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. They involve three areas: (a) Personal holiness, qualifications that ought to be true of every Christian, but must be true of the elder. (b) Rule in the family, assuming he is married.

(c) Teaching ability. The office of elder is only for mature men (1 Timothy 2:12).

The *work* of elders is to “rule” and to “preach and teach” (1 Timothy 5:17, see also Acts 6:4). In New Testament churches there was always many _____ (Acts 14:23, 20:17, Titus 1:5).

(2) **DEACONS** (Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:8-13) are literally servants who help the elders to minister to the church members by doing anything that would hinder the elders from fulfilling their God-given service (Acts 6:1-4), e.g. ministering to the needy.

THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Most churches are joined together in ‘denominations’ with a hierarchy of leadership. The Bible has no example of such organization, but teaches that each local church is independent with Christ as its head.

- There are no other leaders but elders and deacons of the local church.
- The local church has authority to perform everything that Christ has commanded the church to do → baptize and so admit members; teach, rule and discipline; choose its own leaders.

A local church should not act as if there are no other churches. There was obviously fellowship between churches in the New Testament, as between the church of A _____ and J _____ in Acts 15. Like-minded churches have often formed Associations for the purpose of mutual fellowship.

THE MARKS OF A TRUE CHURCH OF GOD

Not every assembly called a church is a true church of God. There are at least 3 marks.

Mark 1 – The pure _____ of the word of God (Acts 2:42, 20:20,27, Galatians 1:8-9, 1 Timothy 1:3-7,18-20, 4:16, 6:3-5,20, 2 Timothy 1:13, 2:1-2,15, 3:14-17, 4:1-5).

Mark 2 – The right administration of the _____ of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Baptism is for believers of any age, whoever shows their faith by desiring to be fully committed to the local church (Acts 2:41-42). Baptism should be performed by immersion in water because the Greek word for baptism means ‘plunge, dip, immerse’; because examples of baptism show that it was by immersion (Mark 1:5 “in”, 1:10 “out of”, John 3:23 “much water”, Acts 8:38-39 “down into” and “up out of”); and because of the symbolism of Christ’s _____, burial and _____ (Romans 6:3-4, Colossians 2:12). Baptism should be in the name of the triune God (Matthew 28:19). The *Lord’s Supper* is for the members of the local church and any visitors from other true local churches, and should be celebrated according to 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

Mark 3 – Application of church _____ to members who refuse to live according to the word. God’s church is holy and a little _____ will affect the whole church (1 Corinthians 5:6).

Summary of our distinctive doctrines.

Church members are those who have been b _____ on profession of faith in Christ.

Each local church is i _____ from every other local church.

There should be a p _____ of elders in every local church.

Baptism is only for those who evidence they are born of God in f _____ and r _____.

Those members who refuse to live according to the Bible must be d _____.

The following books on the Biblical teaching about the church are recommended: Lacey, *God’s Plan for the Local Church*; Mack & Swavely, *Life in the Father’s House*; and *Local Church Practice*.

Write TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements:

- _____ An older established church always has the authority to control a newer church.
- _____ The Bible does not tell us all we need to know about the local church.
- _____ Every local church should pray to the Head to have many bishops (overseers).
- _____ Any sin may be the occasion for church discipline if the guilty person refuses to repent.
- _____ The members of a local church are those who meet every Sunday for worship.

THE LAST THINGS

Many people are caught up in the expectation that Christ is coming very soon. They try to look at present international affairs and wrongly think that the Bible prophecies about them. They are mistaken in thinking that these years in which we live are the 'last days.'

1. WHEN ARE THE 'LAST DAYS'?

The 'last days' began when Christ came the first time, and continue until His second coming. Read Acts 2:17, 2 Timothy 3:1, Hebrews 1:1-2, 1 Peter 1:20, 2 Peter 3:3. Christ's first coming is the fulfilment of prophecy, the centre of history, at which time *all* that God promised began to be fulfilled: the promised Redeemer has come (Micah 5:2), the new _____ is established (Jeremiah 31:31-34), the _____ has come (Daniel 2:44), and the _____ is poured out (Joel 2:28). Note what this present age between the two comings is also called: _____ (Hebrews 9:26).

2. WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO DIE BEFORE CHRIST'S RETURN?

At death the souls of believers go immediately into the presence of God, and the souls of unbelievers go to punishment. It is useless and wrong to pray for those who have died.

To where did the angels carry the poor man Lazarus? (Luke 16:22) _____

Where did the rich man find himself after death? (Luke 16:23) _____

Where did Christ promise the dying thief would be that very day? (Luke 23:43) _____

Where did Paul expect to be at death? (Philippians 1:23) _____

Who will be with Jesus when He returns? (1 Thessalonians 4:14) _____

Christ Himself went to be with the Father at death (Luke 23:43,46). When the Creed says, "He descended into hell," it means that His body was laid in the grave (see Acts 2:27, lines one and two are basically the same in meaning). His preaching to "the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:19) is best understood as His preaching through Noah in Noah's day.

There is no place like 'purgatory' where the sins of Christians need to be cleansed. The blood of Christ is sufficient to cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:7). Nor do our souls lose consciousness in 'sleep' (teaching of soul-sleep). Dead believers 'sleep' in the sense that their bodies rest in the grave (cemetery = 'sleeping place').

3. CAN WE KNOW WHEN CHRIST WILL RETURN?

(a) No! Jesus very clearly says concerning that day, "no one _____" (Mark 13:32). Yet people have always tried to fix dates, the first Seventh-Day Adventists (1843/4), Jehovah's Witnesses (1914), a generation (40 years) from the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, Branhamites (1976), to more recent predications of 2000. But Jesus will return as a 'thief', unexpectedly, although not necessarily quietly. Read Luke 12:37-40, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4, 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 16:15. Other parables also emphasize that His return will be _____ (Matthew 24:44,50, 25:13), and delayed (Matt. 25:5, Luke 20:9). This is why we are commanded to be constantly _____ (Matthew 24:42-43, 25:13, Mark 13:32-37, Luke 12:37-40), as we daily do the will of our Father (Matthew 24:45-46).

(b) What about the 'signs' of His coming? The disciples asked this question (Matthew 24:3). These are things that take place *throughout* the period of the last days as signs of the struggle between the kingdom of God and the powers of evil (see the parable of the wheat and tares growing together, Matthew 13:30). Jesus would be contradicting Himself if such signs could be used to warn us of His coming. Three signs have wrongly been used:

- ♦ The founding of the state of *Israel* in 1948 is supposedly in fulfilment of the OT prophecies of the return of the Jews to the promised land. But those prophecies began to be fulfilled in 537 B.C. as recorded in Ezra. At the present time Jews have returned in unbelief when the OT prophesied it would be in repentance (Ezekiel 36:22ff.). Some expect a national conversion of the Jews in the future. But the salvation of "all Israel" (Romans 11:26) is a process that goes on

throughout these last days (as in Paul's day, 11:13-14). These refer to the _____ of Israel (11:7) because God has not totally rejected His people (11:1).

- ♦ The coming of *Antichrist* (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). There have been many such a _____s, such as Antiochus (Daniel 7:25, 11:36, see also 1 John 2:18), that are all types of a coming antichrist. Roman emperors, Hitler, the Papacy, have all been called the Antichrist. Because antichristian forces are *always* present, we shall not know when the final one has come.
- ♦ The great *Tribulation*. Christians know _____ *throughout* the last days (Matthew 24:9-10), but at the end it will be the most intense (24:21,29). Note: Matthew 24 deals with both the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.) and the end of the world, the first being a type of the second. The battle of A _____ (Revelation 16:16) is not a literal battle, but the final overthrow of all evil (19:17-21), as Sisera was overthrown (Judges 4-5, note Megiddo in 5:19).

4. HOW WILL CHRIST RETURN?

Once. There is no evidence for a two-stage return, first a secret rapture of the church, then 7 years later after the tribulation. The church will also experience the t _____ (Matthew 24:29-31, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 does not teach a secret stealing away of the Christians before the tribulation, for it will be a very noisy occasion!

Personally. Acts 1:11, 3:19-21, Philippians 3:20, Colossians 3:4.

Visibly. Titus 2:11-13, Revelation 1:7. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim that He returned invisibly in the year _____.

Gloriously. It will be the opposite of His first coming in h _____. Matthew 24:30, 2 Thessalonians 1:10, Colossians 3:4.

5. WHAT WILL CHRIST DO WHEN HE RETURNS?

(a) Judgment. All the dead will be raised (John 5:28-29, Acts 24:14-15, Revelation 20:11-15) and will appear before Christ for judgment (Matthew 25:31-32, John 5:22, Acts 17:31). It is our works that will be judged (Matthew 12:36 25:35-40, Romans 2:6, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Revelation 20:12). Our works clearly show whether or not we have saving faith (Galatians 5:6, James 2:26). Why is such a judgment necessary if our souls go to heaven or hell immediately we die? It will be a public display of the sovereignty and glory of God in determining everyone's final destiny in body and soul.

(b) Heaven. This is the new heavens and a new *earth* in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13). Its fullest description is in Revelation 21-22.

(c) Hell. This is where the wicked will spend eternity in conscious torment. There is no doctrine of annihilation (= ceasing to exist) in the Bible. Note the following passages that teach endless torment: With what is eternal life contrasted? (Matthew 25:46) _____

How is the fire of hell described? (Mark 9:43,48) _____

What do the worshippers of the beast not have in their torments? (Revelation 14:10-11) _____

The following books on the Biblical teaching about the Last Things are recommended: Grier, *The Momentous Event*; Helm, *The Last Things*; Hendriksen, *The Bible on the Life Hereafter*.

Write TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements:

_____ We are now in the time of the Last Days.

_____ The souls of believers sleep in death.

_____ We will know when the Lord is about to return.

_____ Christ will secretly come to take His church to heaven before the tribulation.

_____ We shall live on a renewed earth for eternity.