

-JOHN 3:16-

GOD. Has shown His almighty authority by perfect order, from the atom to the universe. He is the answer to every problem of the scientist and philosopher.

SO LOVED. The greatest motive for sharing and giving. Selfish, sinful man can not easily comprehend very much of the love of God. His appreciation of it will grow with his being made perfect.

THE WORLD. An unlovely place in contrast with the perfections of God. Man has lost the glory of the image of God. Hatred instead of love. Rejected its Creator. The finite mind would destroy it instead of loving it as God does.

THAT HE GAVE. Here is the mightiest act outside of creation. In this word GAVE lies the heart of redemption. With a world in chaos and man fallen, there could be no just deserving of anything. All that God could do for a ruined world and fallen man would have to be in the nature of a gift.

HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON. The greatest gift of all time. God gave all, for this was His only begotten Son. How can we withhold anything from such a giver? Can we ever match such giving? He gave this Son over to cruel and wicked men who tortured and slew Him. Was there ever love like this!

THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM. Here is the price to pay for our salvation. Just TO BELIEVE. Here is the widest welcome ever given in all creation. Here is a door open to all. What have you done about it?

SHOULD NOT PERISH. The wages of sin is death. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Outside of Christ there is no life.

BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE. Here is the unspeakable gift. It is eternal life thru Jesus Christ our Lord. Man is a soul (Gen. 2:7). A soul dies when a man dies. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The CREATOR is the only source of life. It is free. It costs us nothing. But it has to be received. Have you taken to yourself this great gift? You must choose life or death.

-JOHN 1:10-12-

HE WAS IN THE WORLD. This is the incarnation, the time from the birth in Bethlehem to the ascension. This is God manifest in flesh.

THE WORLD WAS MADE BY HIM. With Him as architect the world must have been a lovely and beautiful place. Oftimes I have wished that I could have seen it before it was spoiled by the evil one.

THE WORLD KNEW HIM NOT. It is indeed a sorry thing that the creature refuses to recognize the Creator. But selfishness and sin have left their mark.

HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN. His own people, Israel, had the great honor and privilege of being visited by Him. He put them first.

HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT. The nation had its own system of religion set up. There was no room for the Messiah, either at Bethelhem or in Jerusalem. The praise of men was more to be desired than the praise of God.

BUT AS MANY AS RECEIVED HIM. The AS MANY is as wide as the WHOSOEVER in John 3:16. It goes outside of Israel and embraces every tongue and tribe and people in the world. The reception is by faith.

TO THEM GAVE HE POWER. This is a reversal of the GIVING UP and GIVING OVER of Rom. 1. Power here may be translated RIGHT. Those who at one time were NOT A PEOPLE now again have rights. This is because of the reconciliation which has taken away the enmity of sin and made the Gentiles nigh, who once were far off.

TO BECOME THE SONS OF GOD. At the time the kingdom was being proclaimed, those who believed became children of the kingdom. From the preaching of John the Baptist till the end of Acts, this was true. But the gospel of everlasting life is more inclusive.

EVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE ON HIS NAME. The conditions then are RECEIVE AND BELIEVE. And how does the NAME enter in? A careful study of names and attributes reveal that Christ is indeed God Himself. The name in the O T was Jehovah.

-DISPENSATION, MEANING OF-

This is a translation of the Gr. word OIKONOMIA. It occurs 8 times in the N T. Three times it is STEWARDSHIP, (Luke 16:2, 3, 4). Four times it is DISPENSATION, (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2; Col. 1:25). In Eph. 3:9 it is FELLOWSHIP.

OIKOS is a home, an abiding place. NOMOS is law. A steward is one who administers the laws or management of a home. So STEWARDSHIP expresses the meaning quite well in that relationship. But it can also be used of public affairs. The words ADMINISTRATION, STEWARDSHIP, and DISPENSATION may all give some idea of the meaning of the original. FELLOWSHIP in Eph. 3:9 is based on an error, the word KOINONIA appearing in later manuscripts instead of OIKONOMIA as in the older ones.

The point that must not be missed is that it is the management of a household. Too often it has been assumed that a dispensation of God has to do with all mankind instead of a household of God. This error has led to the further error of UNIVERSAL SALVATION of mankind.

In the dispensation of law, it concerned the household of Israel only. At the same time God had some other households with whom He was dealing, but on a different basis than law. He had a household among the Ishmaelites and also in Edom, according to His promises. There may have been more. Now, at the present time, there is the DISPENSATION of the mystery. Also at the same time there is a DISPENSATION of everlasting life, as proclaimed by John in his gospel. The rest of mankind is not under any dispensation, so far as I can find.

So a dispensation is not primarily a time period. Law did not in any way annul promise. Man can make beautiful charts of what he calls dispensations, but they are not Scriptural. Dispensations have to do with families, not time periods.

Each dispensation has its own peculiar gospel or glad-tidings. There must be a right division, or there will be confusion.

-WHAT HAPPENED?-

What happened at Pentecost? Is that the birthday of the Church?

During the 40 days after the resurrection, our Lord gave instructions to the 11 apostles. But we can find no evidence that He taught them anything new outside of what was written in the Scriptures. It distinctly states that He opened their understanding in the Scriptures. The Scriptures were concerning His sufferings and death, followed by resurrection and preaching of repentance and remission of sins among the nations, (Luke 24:44-48).

Repentance and remission of sins were connected with the proclamation of the kingdom, but never in any connection with the Church.

If the Church was to begin at Pentecost, we would then naturally expect that the theme of the Lord's teaching during the 40 days would be along that line. He would need to tell them all about how to set up and organize the Church. In all other instances He had always prepared them for what was to come.

But in Acts 1:3 it is stated that the theme of the teaching during the 40 days was THE THINGS PERTAINING TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. No mention there of the Church.

Of course the apostles might have understood that the kingdom meant the Church, as so many have it confused today. But after all that teaching and instruction, they came together and asked Him a question. It was nothing pertaining to the Church. If He had been giving instructions concerning the Church, they evidently did not understand. Yet it says that He had opened their understanding. The question they asked was, WILT THOU AT THIS TIME RESTORE THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL?

What was the theme of the preaching at Pentecost? Was it the Church? Or was it repentance and restoration? Read Acts 2 and 3 and judge this for yourself.

All during Acts the groups of believers were called churches, (plural). After Acts it is always in the singular, the Church. Where did the Church begin?

-PRACTICE #6-

The section, Eph. 6:14-18, concerns the armor or equipment of the soldier. There are 3 pairs of pieces. Only those of full age can go forth to war. Babes are unskilful in handling the sword.

1. **GIRDLE AND BREASTPLATE.** To be girded in olden times was to be ready for action. The soldier must be alert and ready. There must be nothing false about his equipment, for the enemy is wily and can find every weakness. Truth is embodied in a person, even the One Who said, I AM...THE TRUTH. The breastplate covers the vital organ, the heart. This piece is called righteousness. But not our own righteousness. He is our righteousness. When we put on Christ, we are covered with His righteousness. So these two pieces both speak of Christ.

2. **SHOES AND SHIELD.** Too many tread the rough pathway of life without any shoes. The going is a little hard for them. Shoes can be had for the asking. But they are not to the liking of the carnal mind, for they are likely to lead into strange paths. Conybeare and Howson translate this phrase, SHOD AS READY MESSENGERS OF THE GLAD-TIDINGS OF PEACE. He is our peace. The shield is faith. The fiery darts of the evil one cannot penetrate faith.

3. **HELMET AND SWORD.** The helmet is to protect the head. It is a defense against hostile weapons, for it is the knowledge of salvation won by Christ. It is also a blessed fact that Christ is our salvation. At the last we find the only offensive weapon of Christian warfare. It is the Sword of the Spirit. It is the Word of God. There is no more powerful weapon than this.

To sum it all up, putting on the whole armor of God is nothing more than putting on Christ. Every item is a name of Christ with the possible exception of faith.

This is a complete outfit for one who stands, but not for one who runs. There is no covering for the back. There is no turning back, once the battle is joined.

-SIN-

When we delve into the nature of sin and ask all the questions we can think of, we must arrive at one conclusion. Sin is in opposition to all law. Sin then is lawlessness. This sinful nature reveals itself very early in the life of the individual. As soon as there is rebellion against restraint or law, sin begins to manifest itself. Law is order. Sin is the parent of disorder. Law calls for perfection. Sin leads to defection.

Sin against nature leads to certain death. Nature has not provided any antidote for this death. In nature there is no way of recovery from the result of opposing its laws. Death is something very final and lasting. Death leaves no hope. There is nothing so dreadful as death. It is an enemy. It is the last enemy that will be put down. Nature is wonderful in its ability to repair injuries, but it is absolutely helpless to help in the presence of death. Nature has no way of restoring life, once it is gone. This has been true from the beginnings of life and death. Let no man deceive himself and vainly hope that he can sin and evade the consequences. The wages of sin is death. That is final.

If there is any remedy or recovery of any kind from the consequences of sin, it must be provided supernaturally. It must be from a source beyond and outside of nature. In other words, if the Creator of the universe were not to intervene, sin would eventually take all life away. Even the scientists are beginning to concede that, and now they are gloomily forecasting an earth taken over by insects which will finally prey on each other and the last life will be a grasshopper on a lichen.

The Creator of life has also the power to give another life. The fact of resurrection is the only remedy for the deadly poison of sin and death. That life is offered without price. It is a gift, but it must be received. It is simply received by faith.

-PHILIPPIANS 3:11-

IF BY ANY MEANS I MIGHT ATTAIN UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

The theme here is counting all things loss FOR THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST...THAT I MIGHT WIN CHRIST... BE FOUND IN HIM...THAT I MAY KNOW HIM...THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION ...FELLOWSHIP OF SUFFERINGS...MADE CONFORMABLE UNTO HIS DEATH...ATTAIN UNTO THE RESURRECTION.

If this is a literal resurrection, then it is going to contradict every statement as to the salvation of the members of the Body. The members are sealed until the day of their redemption, i.e. resurrection. The hope is certain. There is no question as to their security as members or their hope.

But in the context Paul speaks of things which are spiritual. They have to do with his fellowship with Christ in a spiritual sense. This verse in question belongs to the same sentence. Paul is speaking of his identification with Christ and its effect upon his life. Christ is the absolute center of Paul's affections. Christ is his goal. There is a prize to be won, and that prize can be realized here and now. Paul is desirous of being so completely in Christ and Christ in him that Paul will fade out of the picture.

All this requires a thoro knowledge of Christ (EPIGNOSIS). Christ must be won, and that by faith. Too many profess His name but do not know Him nor do they have Him. To be in Christ is to be so submerged in Him that self is gone and only His righteousness is manifest. The righteousness of Christ comes thru the faith of Christ, not our faith.

Paul did not mean a literal fellowship in the sufferings of Christ nor to literally die with Him. But while in Christ he would suffer in the very presence of sin and would be dead to the things of the world and the flesh.

The last step in identification with Christ is in His earlier out-resurrection from among the dead. This will complete the perfection of the new man, measuring up to the stature of the fulness of Christ.

-BODY IN EPHESIANS-

1. 1:23..In the putting of all things under the feet of Christ, the Father has also made Him to be HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH. This body is filled with the fulness of Christ, Who in turn is filled with the fulness of the God-head bodily.

2. 4:4. There is only one Body. This is perfect unity. Since Acts 28:28 only one church is spoken of. Before that there were various churches.

3. 4:12. Various gifts in the form of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were given for the edifying of the Church.

4. 4:16. Here is unity. The members fitly joined together, so that every part may have strength and coordination for the work that is to be done. This is the central and vital point of the seven.

5. 4:16. Each member has a part in the increase. This is fruitfulness. This increase is to be made in love, in which the whole structure is rooted and grounded.

6. 5:23. Christ is Head. This is not only a position of authority, but shows His position as the One Who directs every activity of the Body. Without the Head, the Body would be lifeless. He is also the Savior of the Body. He has bought it with His blood and He keeps it by His power.

7. 5:30. The Lord cherishes and nourishes the Body as any man would his own flesh. The members are of His flesh and of His bones. The identification is complete.

The Bible student will do well to read and reread the above references in their contexts, contrasting them with all references to any body that may be mentioned during the Acts period. The body of today is something unique. There has never been anything quite like it. No other assembly or household of believers ever had a hope that it has. No other group ever had so high a calling. No other people ever had such a manifestation of grace.

-STUDIES IN JOHN- BML #8.

- 1. How many porches did the pool of Bethesda have? 5:2.
- 2. How does this man's impotence compare with that of Israel in the wilderness? 5:5. Deut. 2:14.
- 3. What question did the Lord ask the man? Was this not a strange question?
- 4. What was the reply?
- 5. What command was then given?
- 6. Was the man able to obey?
- 7. What does this teach us about obedience today?
- 8. Upon what day of the week did this occur?
- 9. Were the Jews glad that this great miracle was performed?
- 10. How did they find fault?
- 11. Where did He say He got His authority for breaking the Sabbath?
- 12. Did he know Who it was that healed him?
- 13. What was the first place the man visited after being healed?
- 14. Why do you suppose he was there?
- 15. What warning did he get?
- 16. Did he go and tattle on the Lord to the Jews, or was he just thankful and gave his testimony?
- 17. Did the Jews hate Christ because He broke the Sabbath or because He spoke truth?
- 18. Can God stop to rest as long as there is sin?
- 19. Did sin make it necessary for the Lord to work on the Sabbath?
- 20. What additional excuse did the Jews have for killing Him? 18.
- 21. How did the Lord explain His oneness with, and at the same time His subjection to the Father? 19
- 22. How does the Father show His love for the Son? 20
- 23. What power does the Son have that makes Him equal with the Father? 21
- 24. Who is going to do all the judging?
- 25. Why is all judgment given to the Son? 23

Please number the answers, but do not copy the questions. Also write your letters on separate paper so I can keep them in my files. I like your letters.

DEAR YOUNG FOLKS; A few more have joined the BML since last month. It seems that the older young folks enjoy the questions as much as any. The new ones are: Mrs. Wm. C. Walker of Hobart, Ind., Wm. G. Poulson of Lowell Ark., Miss Mae Poulson of Lowell Ark., Mrs. Mary Johnston of Walkerville, Mich., and Miss Elaine Hazekamp of Muskegon Mich.

Try this for a brain teaser:

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      B E
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      B R D
      E S
      B C C
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It is a simple problem in long division, but I have used letters instead of numbers. Put in the correct numbers and work out the code word, 1234567890. It is something a Christian ought never to be. Let me know how you get along with this one. It is really tough.

If you would like to join the BML and get your membership pin, just answer the questions in the first column on this page, and send the answers to me as directed.

Do you have any personal problems that you would like to have advice and prayer for? Just write to me and I will try to help you.

Do you have a testimony? I mean by that, can you speak of spiritual things to others? Can you tell your friends how much Christ means to you? If not, you need to know Him better. When Christ becomes real in your everyday life, you will be able to speak of Him without shame or embarrassment. Never be satisfied with being a Christian in name only. Get into young folk's groups and use every opportunity to study and teach the Word. You may be the means of leading many others to Him. There is no greater joy than that of being fruitful for Him.

Would like some more letters. Some of you have not written yet. Give me your questions and suggestions.

--Oscar M. Baker.

-THE EDITOR'S DESK-

The editor appreciated all the nice cards received this year. You may not mind it when you know that he saved his time and money this year for the ministry of TRUTH FOR TODAY instead of sending cards.

The editor met with the Grand Rapids Bible Class (Mich.) at the Morton Hotel Dec. 9th.

The old '33 Dodge got a stubborn spell on Dec. 16th and wouldn't start. The mercury had a sinking spell which accounts for not showing up at Hobart. This meeting has been postponed to Jan. 13th if the weather man permits.

The lane drifted shut again and for a time we traveled via the field, but with chains of course.

The Duke, son of Twinkey, was sold for veal Dec. 26th.

What with the early winter, the girls (?) in the barn are going to run short of hay this year.

Heifers being fed in individual pens yet; Janell, Turvy, Vicky, and Specky. Those older and running with the cows are; Chrissy, Cookie, Stella, Rosita, and Janet.

Garret Hazekamp is beginning a publication along lines of dispensational truth. The title, THE OPENED BOOK. The address, 501 Apple Ave., Muskegon, Mich. Write to him and ask for a sample copy.

Free; Mimeographed studies in Ephesians (Blanks to fill). Key furnished with each request for 5 or more. Try these with your class.

Receipts for Nov., #368-382 with a total of \$223.59. Expenses were \$139.60. Thanks to all who have put the shoulder to the wheel.

A new typewriter was ordered Nov. 1st. It will be delivered and set up about April 1st. It is hoped that this will further improve the paper. The old one is about 25 yrs. old and pretty badly worn.

BOOKS by C.H.Welch for sale:

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Your letters are appreciated. Your editor lives 6 miles west of Warsaw on the Harrison Center Rd., or 4 miles south of Atwood. Tel. Atwood 2684. -Oscar M. Baker.

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