

AFM Doctrine

DOGMATICS

Original compiled by Dr FP Moller in 1949 translated in 1995 by Albert de Villiers.
Part 2 of 2

LECTURE 18 Soteriology (cont.)

JUSTIFICATION AND ADOPTION

1. Justification

1.1 What is meant by justification ?

Justification is about the judicial or legal aspects of our salvation. In NT Greek the Bible word for justification is *dikaiosis*. In its verb form the word means: 'to cause someone to be in a proper or right relationship with someone else.' Offenders against His Law come under His judgment (Gal. 3:10-13). In this sense, sin is also seen as a debt (II Chron. 28:13; 33:23), or as a transgression (I Sam. 25:28; Matt. 6:14; Mark 11:25). Since Adam and Eve's Fall, all humanity has sinned and everyone stands before God as a debtor or transgressor (Rom. 3:23). Before man can be saved then, God must first acquit him and declare him justified. Justification is therefore the judicial pronouncement by God whereby He declares guilty man justified. This, however, does not mean that man becomes righteous in himself. Just as a worldly criminal does not become perfect when acquitted by an earthly judge, so a person does not become filled with righteousness when God justifies him. Therefore God's kind gesture could best be described as an exculpation. Any righteousness that the person then has, is not the righteousness of his life, but righteousness which he is credited with.

1.2 How does a person get justified ?

1.2.1 It cannot be achieved through the Law

If it was possible for man to keep the Law, he could be justified in that way (Rom. 2:13). But because of hereditary sin, nobody could keep the Law, and if the legal demands of the Law would be applied to the life of man, everyone would be liable for eternal death. Via the Law then, there is no salvation for poor, fallen man (Rom. 3:19-20), for to be justified by means of the Law, one must score 100% (Rom. 3:23; Gal. 3:10). Just one misstep along the legal route, and justification via the Law is out of the question. That is why Paul stated: "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law'" (Gal. 3:10). Justification via the law is therefore a hopeless quest; The law's purpose is to convince man of his guilt, God's coming judgment and that he should take refuge in the Lord Jesus (Rom. 3:19-20; Gal. 3:24). It would therefore be a sad misconception if a person would assume that his good works could lead to justification.

1.2.2 Man is only justified by faith in Jesus Christ

Because man cannot produce the righteousness that would make him acceptable to God, he must rely on someone else's righteousness. There is absolutely no one who qualifies for this, except the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts

4:12). And to make His righteousness applicable to us, we must believe in Him as the One who took our transgressions on Him and suffered the punishment for our sins by His death on the cross (Isa. 53:5; II Cor. 5:15). So Christ and the believer changed positions. Christ took our place by taking the curse meant for us onto Himself (Gal. 3:13). He, the Innocent One, was made sin for us (II Cor. 5:21) and had to bear the punishment (Isa. 53:6; Matt. 27:46). And so through our Saviour, we become justified. So, whoever desires justification, must believe in the Lord Jesus (Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:28; 4:2-8; I Cor. 6:11). This justification is not to be earned, but is given to us as pure grace (Rom. 3:24).

This justification in Jesus Christ comprises more than just forgiveness of our sins. In Him, we are regarded as holy, perfect, and participators of His glory (Rom. 8:29; II Peter 1:4; I John 3:2).

1.3 The relationship between justification and faith and repentance

Justification is based on faith in Jesus Christ. The moment a person believes in the Lord Jesus as personal Saviour, he is justified by God. Together with faith, conversion is inseparable from justification. He who does not turn his back on the world and sin, and does not come with true contrition to Jesus, cannot claim His righteousness. That is why the tax collector's attitude is highlighted in the Bible, for he came before the Lord with: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13-14).

1.4 The consequences of justification

1.4.1 Forgiveness of sins

The debt on our account has been obliterated, because Jesus took the punishment for our sins on Himself (Isa. 53:5). But this has a corollary: The Lord demands that we will also forgive our fellow-men, i.e., those who trespass against us (Matt. 6:14; Mark 11:25).

1.4.2 Free from the judgment and curse of the law

Because Jesus met the demands of the law through His death of atonement, the judgment and curse that normally rests on transgressors of the law, has been removed from us (Rom. 8:1, 33-34). Therefore we are spared from the coming wrath (Rom. 5:9) and sentence before the Judgment throne, where our works will be scrutinized (I Cor. 3:11-15); II Cor. 5:10).

1.4.3 Peace with God

On account of his sins and transgressions man has been alienated from God. That explains the fearful mind of the unsaved, especially when confronted with death. But those who are reconciled to God, and have been justified by Him, they have peace (Rom. 5:1).

1.4.4 Heirs of God

"He washed us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit... so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5,7).

1.4.5 Glorification

“And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30).

2. Adoption

2.1 What is adoption?

In NT Greek the word mostly used for ‘adoption’ is *huiiothesia*, i.e., the process / action by means of which a child is made a son or daughter of someone. In this case it is God, our Heavenly Father who adopts believers as His children. With the rebirth we receive the divine nature by means of which we enter into a relationship with the Deity. And this adoption gives us the right to be called children of God. “...to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:12-13). See also Rom. 8:15; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Ephes. 1:5. He who turns away from the sin and temptations of the world, and goes in faith to Jesus Christ his Saviour, becomes associated with Him and receives his new status as son, i.e., he is adopted into the family of God ((Gal. 3:26-27; 4:3-7). “Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (II Cor. 6:17-18).

2.2 The proof of adoption

The Holy Spirit provides the proof of adoption. “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father’” (Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:6). While a seal proves ownership, God seals the believer with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephes. 1:13) so that we can know that we are His children.

2.3 The effects of the adoption

- 2.3.1** Through the adoption we are brought into a special personal relationship with the Deity - the tender relationship of child and Father (Gal. 4:6). Note how the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray: “Our Father in heaven...” (Matt. 6:9).
- 2.3.2** Because of the adoption the believer is free from the slavery of fear, because he receives the Spirit that cries: “Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15). Fear is now replaced by love (I John 5:1-2).
- 2.3.3** Through the adoption we become, not only children of God, but co-heirs of Christ (Rom. 8:17).
- 2.3.4** Instead of serving under the law, the believer becomes by adoption a child through grace, with the concomitant privileges (Gal. 3:25-26; 4:4-6).

LECTURE 19 The Sacrament : the Lord's Supper

1. Sacraments in general

1.1 Meaning of the word

The word 'sacrament' (Latin *sacramentum*) does not appear in the Bible. It was introduced by Latin-speaking Christians at a later stage, to describe ordinances and ceremonies that were introduced by the Lord Himself, namely the Lord's Supper and Baptism. The English word 'sacrament' now means "an outward sign combined with a prescribed form of words and regarded as conferring grace upon those who receive it." (Collin's Concise English Dictionary, p. 1015).

1.2 What is a sacrament?

As Church ordinance the sacrament has a fourfold meaning and purpose.

1.2.1 The sacrament as sign

A national monument serves as a visible sign or token of a national idea or homage to whatever. In future every spectator will be reminded of the idea portrayed. The sacrament likewise serves as a token / symbol by means of which certain spiritual truths come before man in a visible and concrete form. Certain facts of salvation contained in the Gospel - the Lord's Supper and Baptism - are brought within the reach of our senses (see, touch, taste). So the sacraments serve as aids to strengthen our faith. That which may be abstract or difficult to understand, is here simplified and concrete. And, just as a national monument promotes national unity, a sacrament like the Lord's Supper also promotes unity amongst Christian believers.

1.2.2 The sacrament as seal

Like an official stamp on a government document, so the sacrament is a seal given by God to the believer to confirm the grace promised by God. The sacrament is therefore the seal that declares that God's promises to the believer are 'Yes' and 'Amen'.

1.2.3 The sacrament as symbol

The sacrament is also a symbol or representation of a deep-lying salvation truth. So the Lord's Supper is a depiction of what Christ did for us, and baptism represents our rebirth and union with Christ.

1.2.4 The sacrament as a confession

One of the Roman applications of 'sacramentum' was the engagement entered into by newly-enlisted soldiers, the military oath of allegiance, in other words, the young soldier is saying good-bye to civilian life and pledging his allegiance to his country and his military superiors. For the Christian to take part in a sacrament, is a declaration that he is no longer in the worldly and he has transferred to the Kingdom of God.

1.3 The Sacrament and the Word

The message of salvation reaches a person via the Word (read or heard) and the sacrament. Here the Word is the more important of the two. The sacrament is based on the Word and should always follow acceptance of the Word. That which is

proclaimed by the sacrament is not new, but identical to what is in the Word. It speaks to us in another form. Although the sacrament is based on the Word, the Word is preached to believers and non-believers, while the sacrament is reserved for believers only.

1.4 The Roman Catholics and the Sacraments

We have already made the point that the sacraments are only external tokens of the deeper truths, and may not be administered independent from the Word. The Catholics, however, separate sacrament and Word and turn the former into an aid for ministering spiritual blessings to people in a mechanical way. They will for example state that a person can be regenerated by Baptism, whether the person had first received the Word, or otherwise. Further, he who misses out re baptism, will not be saved. This means that the priest, and not God, administers salvation. In the same way, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is externalized by the Catholics. Through the consecration procedure of the priest the bread becomes actually the body of Christ and the wine becomes His actual blood.

And apart from this, the Catholics have five other sacraments, namely, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Matrimony, Penance and Extreme Unction. The Confirmation and Holy Orders may only be led by a bishop, while a priest is allowed to handle the rest. Because Baptism is regarded as so vitally important, a layman may administer it in an emergency. Needless to say, there are no Biblical grounds for the extra five sacraments - they were introduced by the Roman Church itself. The many sacraments emphasizes the importance of the priest and the Church's authority and power, is also enhanced. Their members are taught to place their trust in the Church and its administering of the sacraments, instead of the eternal Word of God. Even Protestants must be on their guard against any tendencies in that direction, and one precaution is to develop a correct understanding of the sacraments.

2. The LORD'S Supper or Eucharist

2.1 The Name

The original Greek words in I Cor. 11:20, *kuriakon deipnon*, mean literally 'the Lord's supper'. Further analysis along the lines of participation in the body and the blood of Christ (I Cor. 10:6), lead to the term 'Holy Communion'. The central idea is that by eating the bread and drinking the wine, the death of our Lord Jesus is commemorated.

2.2 Institution of the Lord's Supper

This is described in Matt. 26:28, Mark. 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20 and I Cor. 11:23-30. There is a brief reference to the Eucharist in I Cor. 10:16-17. The Lord Jesus sent Peter and John to make arrangements for the Paschal meal.

"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matt. 26:26-28).

This happened on that eventful evening before his crucifixion, and it was the Saviour's desire, with the end so near, to give this sacrament to His disciples and His Church. The fact that He did this during the Paschal meal, indicates to us that, what the Pascha foreshadowed, was now going into fulfillment - His death of atonement the very next day. Hence forth there would no longer be an anticipation of the Lamb to be slaughtered (pascha), but His disciples could look back at a crucified Christ (the Eucharist theme).

2.3 *Views on the elements of the Lord's Supper*

By 'elements' we mean the bread and wine.

2.3.1 The Roman Catholic view and the idea of transubstantiation

The Catholics regard the Eucharist table as an altar, and through consecration by the priest the wine becomes blood of Christ and the bread His body. The elements of bread and wine are thus changed in substance, and that gave rise to the concept of transubstantiation. Instead of a mere remembrance of Christ's death, the Eucharist becomes a sacrificial act to the Catholic. The partaking member receives mitigation of punishment for sins and protection against certain spiritual and physical ailments. Their point of departure is the literal interpretation of the Lord's words: "This is my body" and "This is my blood". These words must be taken metaphorically, i.e., the wine and bread are symbols of the blood and body of Christ. The metaphorical style is well-known to the Bible, e.g., Ezek. 37:11, Gal. 4:24-25 and Rev. 1:20. When Jesus spoke that night, a literal meaning was out of the question, otherwise He must have had two bodies, and one of them was further divided into body and blood.

The consecration by the priest is based on I Cor. 10:16 in the older translations, e.g., "The cup of blessing which we **bless**, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" (AV). The NIV translates *eulogomen* with 'we give **thanks**', just as the same verb is translated with **praising** in I Cor. 14:16. There is further no indication in the NT that the bread and wine must be blessed by a human agent before the Lord's Supper.

2.3.2 The Lutheran viewpoint and the Consubstantiation idea

The Lutherans oppose both the idea that the bread and wine actually become the flesh and blood of Christ, and the idea that they are merely symbols of Christ's flesh and blood. This view holds that the tokens remain what they are, namely bread and wine, but the flesh and blood co-exist in these tokens. Hence their formulation: Christ's flesh and blood exist in, within and simultaneously with the tokens. There is no Scriptural support for this point of view and the theory doesn't make sense.

2.3.3 Zwingli's view

According to Zwingli the Lord's Supper is just a commemoration service and no spiritual blessings are to be expected. It is similar to remembering departed loved ones; it is another way of thinking about the Lord, without being specially aware of His presence or having any sacred feelings. This degrades the importance of the sacrament and ignores the spiritual purpose of God with the sacrament.

2.3.4 The Calvinistic standpoint

Calvin rejects the former three views and regards the Lord's Supper as a God-given aid to strengthen our communion with Christ, our faith in God and His

Covenant. This approach is generally accepted in Protestant circles and is a pure Scriptural standpoint.

2.4 Main aspects of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper includes the following:

2.4.1 A remembrance

"...do this in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11:24). Just as the Passover reminded the Jew of the wonderful liberation from Egypt, the Eucharist is a token that reminds us of the Lord Jesus' death of atonement. And by bringing His suffering and death before us, we "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Cor. 11:26).

Why must we be reminded of the Lord's suffering and death? His suffering and death is the central theme of the New Covenant, and without it man's salvation would have been impossible. In contrast with the Baptism sacrament, the Lord's Supper must be continually repeated, until His Second Coming.

2.4.2 A Symbol

As already said, the bread and wine are merely tokens. The broken bread represents His broken body (Isa. 53:5; I Cor. 11:24). The wine symbolizes the blood He shed and the life He laid down (Isa. 53:12; Matt. 26:28).

2.4.3 A Communion

A meal suggests communion between host and guests, and guests among themselves. With the Lord's Supper we proclaim our communion with Christ (I Cor. 10:16). Just as the wine and bread becomes part of our bodies, so the believer was united with Christ when he was regenerated (John 6:51-56; Rom. 6:5). By taking part in faith, this communion becomes more real for us and thus serves to build up and strengthen our spiritual life.

The Lord's Supper also suggests communion among the believers themselves. Because they partake of the same bread and wine, they profess in so doing that they are united in the same Christ (I Cor. 10:17). That is why we read that the disciples came together for the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42) and that the apostle Paul had to admonish the Corinthians to wait for each other (I Cor. 11:33).

2.4.4 A Confirmation

In terms of the New Covenant Jesus Christ set us free from our sins by shedding His blood for us, so that by merely believing in Him, we will not perish, but inherit eternal life (John 3:16; I Peter 1:18-21). The Eucharist confirms that the Covenant was instituted. That is why Jesus said during the very first Eucharist: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28).

2.5 Requirements for participation

With the Lord's Supper there is a risk of misuse, when people partake of it in an unworthy manner. This would amount to defamation of the Lord. No wonder that Paul issues a stern warning: "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord...(and)...eats and drinks judgment on himself" (I Cor. 11:27,29). Paul

hints that cases of illness and even death among the Corinthians could be attributed to intemperance (I Cor. 11:30, 33-34).

Who then could be deemed worthy? The answer seems to lie in self-examination (verse 28) and then to approach the sacrament with respect, while acknowledging your own unworthiness.

LECTURE 20 The Sacrament of Baptism

This is the other sacrament that Jesus Himself instituted and, just as with the Lord's Supper, the Church must maintain it.

1. *The Institution*

Early in the NT we read about the baptisms performed by John (Matt. 3:1-11). Like the rest of his ministry, his baptism was of an introductory nature. In John 4:1-2 we read of Jesus and His disciples performing baptisms, but it was at the end of his earthly career, just before His Ascension, that Jesus officially instituted baptism for His Church. This we find in Matt. 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." We find the same commandment in Mark 16:15-16.

This is the authority for Christian baptism and it was also a permanent instruction to the disciples re the institution and expansion of the Church.

2. *The meaning of Baptism*

Whereas the Lord's Supper is meant for a continual remembrance process for believers, Baptism is a sacrament for the new convert, at the point of entry into the Church of Christ. Baptism, therefore, comes first and is only administered once. There are four ideas expressed by baptism:

2.1 *Its a declaration of faith*

If we look up Acts 8:12, 16:15,33, 18:8, 19:5, etc., we see that all who were converted to Christ in the first century and believed in Him, testified by being baptized. That is a main purpose of baptism, namely to declare openly before God and man that you have said farewell to the world and now belong to the Kingdom of Heaven. How important this confession of faith is, is proved by the case of the Pharisees and experts in law who rejected John's baptism, as recorded in Luke 7:30 "But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John."

2.2 *A Confirmation*

Baptism is a confession of faith by the baptismal candidate, and from the Church's side (acting for God) it is a confirmation that the person has now been admitted to the Christian Church. When Peter and company noticed that the Lord had accepted Cornelius and his group by filling them with the Holy Spirit, he announced their baptism as the next step (Acts 10:47-48). So they became full members of the early Church. This procedure for new converts was also followed on the day of Pentecost: "Those who accepted his message were baptized..." (Acts 2:41). For the person who had repented and accepted Christ, baptism was then an induction ceremony.

2.3 *A unification*

Baptism depicts the unity of Christ and the believer. On account of sin, God and man were separated, but through repentance and faith a reunification between Christ and man takes place. This was made possible by Christ's death of atonement. The

metaphoric use of 'baptism' in Rom. 6:3-4, where it is called a funeral, illustrates this unification : "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" We were therefore buried with Him in death, through baptism, in order that, "...just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." We find the same unification idea in another metaphoric use of 'baptism' in Gal. 3:27 "...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Baptism could therefore be presented as a sacred act representing our funeral with Christ, or our covering by Christ.

2.4 A cleansing

In the OT we read about the ceremonial cleansing from infectious skin diseases. After the sprinkling by the priest, the patient had to bathe himself (Lev. 14:1-9). Similarly, after Christ our High Priest has cleansed our lives from sin, by the sprinkling of His blood (I Peter 1:2), we must be baptized. Baptism is therefore a portrayal of our cleansing and this reminds one of Act 22:16 - "Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name." And of course, Acts 2:38 - "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." It must be stated clearly that we do not suggest that the baptism washes away any sins - this can only be done by the blood of Christ - but the total immersion of the body in water is a representation of how we have been perfectly cleansed by the Saviour.

3. The Baptismal Candidate

3.1 According to the Great Commission

To answer the question: 'Who may be baptized?' we must refer to Matt. 28:19-20, where it says disciples from all nations. 'Disciple' in Greek - *mathetes* - means a learner, a pupil, a disciple. They start then as spiritual pupils - people who heard the Gospel message, responded, repented and now believe in Christ as their Saviour. The Great Commission therefore instructs that new believers must be baptized. This is borne out by Mark 16:15-16.

3.2 According to the practice in NT times

When we study the record of the Early Church, we find that only those who had become believers were baptized. A few examples:

3.2.1 On the day of Pentecost

Large numbers came under conviction of sin and asked Peter what to do about it. His answer: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you..." (Acts 2:38). And in verse 41 the result: "Those who accepted his message were baptized..."

3.2.2 The baptisms in Samaria

Philip went to a city in Samaria and preached the Gospel there, and then we read: "But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). So once more, these folks first believed and then they were baptized.

3.2.3 The baptism of the Ethiopian

Philip proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ to this official from the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. On their journey together the Ethiopian saw water and requested baptism. According to a later manuscript Philip first checked: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest (Acts 8:37 - AV). After giving his confession of faith, the official was baptized.

3.2.4 Baptism of the Cornelius group

While Peter was still preaching the Gospel to Cornelius, his relatives and close friends, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. Peter interpreted this as a sign that they had come to believe in Jesus and gave an order for their baptism (Acts 10:44-48).

3.2.5 The Ephesians are baptized

At Ephesus there were a number of disciples who had only received the baptism of John the Baptist. Before proceeding with full Christian baptism, he taught them about faith in Jesus (Acts 19:1-7).

These examples show that baptism must be preceded by a full explanation of the Gospel and full acceptance in faith by the candidate for baptism. Christian baptism is indeed believer's baptism. This requirement means that babies simply don't qualify for baptism.

4. *Infant baptism and circumcision*

The preceding section 3 clearly shows the baptismal practice of the Early Church. Believers sealed their repentance and faith by immersion right away. The baptism could be carried out by any worthy Christian. But various changes soon slipped into the Church, e.g., the Biblical pattern of leadership established by the apostles, changed. From the elders emerged a chief elder, which later became a bishop. While the Biblical 'elders' and 'deacons' were functional names, the new 'bishops', 'diocesan bishops' and 'archbishops' were **titles**. **Office** began to take precedence over **function**. And so in many respects, Roman Catholicism got under way. Biblical baptism was just another victim. Baptism now took on a mystical, ceremonial slant. Only a priest could perform it and the pouring on of water replaced immersion. Further corruption slipped in with the idea of baptismal regeneration and the unbiblical notion that, by sprinkling, an infant is automatically born again and made a member of the Body of Christ. This latter phase of the degeneration was strengthened by the high mortality rate for infants under one year old. Parents did not need much prompting to bring their babies as soon as possible, to prevent the infant from dying 'unsaved'.

When Christianity became the state religion early in the 4th century, after Constantine's so-called 'conversion', the polluted stream soon became a poisoned lake. To a certain extent Christianity became paganized, and when the Reformation came at last after a further 12 centuries, the Reformers could not completely shake off the by then firmly entrenched Constantine influences. People like the Anabaptists simply had to protest about this, and in most cases suffer grievously for their beliefs. The literal meaning of 'Anabaptists' is 're-baptizers'. They objected to infant baptism on Scriptural grounds and re-baptized as believers those who got saved and wanted to join them. The position was that they rightly viewed infant baptism as no real baptism at all and so, from their point of view, they weren't re-baptizing believers, but just baptizing them!

Please note, the argument isn't about **infant** baptism versus **adult** baptism, but about the baptism of **unbelievers** (whether tiny babies or grownups) versus **believers'** baptism. In the footsteps of the somewhat hesitant Reformers, the so-called Reformed churches had to develop elaborate rationalizations for retaining the Romish baptism of infants. The Calvinists, e.g., made it a matter of doctrine that baptism had replaced circumcision as 'sign of the covenant' (Netherlands Confession, Section 34). They attempt to use Col. 2:11-12 as Scriptural evidence, while those texts refer to a spiritual circumcision. In any case, why did the apostle Paul in all his many references to circumcision, never once even hint at the alleged 'sign' of the New Covenant? On the contrary, he is often very critical about this Judaistic tendency, e.g., in I Cor. 7:18-19, Gal. 2:3, 5:2-3,6, Gal. 6:12-13 and Col. 3:11. He rejects circumcision and says "...the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Gal. 5:6) or, "...what counts is a new creation" (Gal. 6:15). Important to note, water baptism doesn't feature in any of Paul's arguments about circumcision!

5. *Baptism and Regeneration*

The Catholics, and after them the Anglicans, developed the idea that besides the atonement by Christ, baptism was necessary for the re-birth, which meant that the unbaptized could not receive salvation. This idea took root in the 3rd century AD, probably through Judaistic influences and the surrounding pagan religions. When it became necessary to rationalize it as doctrine, John 3:5 was used as Scripture base: "Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.'" They took 'water' to mean 'baptism'. As mentioned in the previous section, this encouraged the baptism of infants. The association with regeneration is however erroneous, because:

- 5.1 It relegates the OT saints, the robber on the Cross, those who accept Christ on their deathbeds, in other words, all who missed baptism, to eternal damnation. This clashes with God's Word - see Luke 23:43 and Hebrews chapter 11.
- 5.2 If water was to be essential, next to the blood of Christ, for regeneration, then the power of the Blood of Christ would be belittled. And apart from that, the Bible teaches us that His blood attained a perfect atonement (Rom. 5:10; Heb. 9:14), so that we need only to accept His perfect work in faith, to receive eternal life (John 1:12; 3:16).
- 5.3 It clashes with what the Word of God teaches us very clearly. As explained in an earlier lecture, the re-birth is set in motion when the Word of God is placed in one's heart by the Holy Spirit, and that person receives it just as good, well-prepared soil receives the seed (Matt. 13:3-23; I Peter 1:23). Baptism plays no role in affecting the re-birth.
- 5.4 It misunderstands and misinterprets the sacrament. The sacrament of baptism is merely a sign and symbol of that which has already taken place. Baptism is an endorsement and image of the regeneration, and must therefore follow **after** the rebirth.

6. *The way in which Baptism is administered*

6.1 *Immersion in water*

The Greek verb *baptizo* means: ‘to employ water in a religious ceremony designed to symbolize purification and initiation on the basis of repentance; to baptize’ (Louw & Nida, par. 53.41). It also has a general meaning: ‘to wash, to cleanse, to purify.’ The following Scriptures show that the Early Church baptized by immersing the candidate in water:

- 6.1.1 With the baptism of the Lord Jesus (Mark 1:9-10) and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:38-39), the Bible states that both baptist and baptism candidate **entered** the water for the ceremony. Immersion of the candidate is therefore a logical conclusion.
- 6.1.2 With John the Baptist the Word states: “Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water...” (John 3:23). Why was an **abundance** of water important to John? Surely not to sprinkle water on the candidates! Immersion is the only explanation.
- 6.1.3 In Rom. 6:4 it says: “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death...” Here baptism is part of the funeral metaphor and that is of course unthinkable if baptism is a mere sprinkling.

It is clear that in its original form baptism meant full immersion. It is understandable that when very young and often frail infants entered the picture, immersion was out of the question. The same applied when a dying person had to be ‘saved’ by baptism. These remained exceptions until 1311 AD, when the Council of Ravenna decided that sprinkling and immersion was equally acceptable.

6.2 *In the Name of the Trinity*

In Matt. 28:19 we read: “...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...” This text formulates the basic instruction to the first disciples and the details are therefore important. When we read in the Book of Acts that new converts were baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ (2:38; 8:16; 19:5), the full instruction contained in Matt. 28:19 still applies, but the emphasis on Jesus must be interpreted in terms of I Cor. 10:2, where Israel “...were all baptized into Moses...” The Israelites identified so strongly with Moses, their God-given leader, that they were ‘baptized’ with him in the sea and the cloud. The idea in Acts 8:16 and 19:5 represents the believer’s identification with Christ. The identification process is also referred to in Rom. 4:6 and Gal. 3:27.

To summarize, in Matt. 28:19 we find the formula for how to baptize. Acts 2:38 indicates that Christian baptism manifests the candidate’s trust in Christ. Acts 8:16 and 19:5 point to the identification of the believer with Christ.

LECTURE 21 The Baptism with the Holy Spirit

1. What it is

With the Baptism with the Holy Spirit (BHS) we are referring to that special spiritual experience whereby a believer is obviously brought under full control by the Holy Spirit. For this experience the following expressions are used:

1.1 Baptism in or with

The Greek verb *baptizo* is used in Matt. 3:11 in combination with the Greek preposition *en* which can mean 'in', 'with' or 'by'. But in this case it is followed by the Dative case of both 'Holy Spirit' and 'fire', a combination which indicates the **instrumental** use of *en*. Therefore we must translate: "**with** the Holy Spirit and **with** fire."

1.2 A filling

To be under control of the Holy Spirit, means essentially that the person's urges, cravings, will, mind, feelings, etc., are controlled, i.e., he will be inwardly full of the Holy Spirit. That's why the Bible describes this condition as one of being "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4). The BHS is therefore an immersion and a filling. To illustrate: When we throw an empty open bottle into the sea, it will be immersed in the sea and very soon it will also be full of seawater. So the believer can be immersed in the sphere of the Holy Spirit, but also be filled with the Spirit.

1.3 An outpouring

In Acts 2:17 we read about the **outpouring** of the Spirit. In Acts 10:44 the Holy Spirit **came** on the people (NIV), **fell** upon them (Moffat, New Amer. Std & AV). In Acts 19:6 the Holy Spirit **came** upon them. It would seem as if 'baptize' and 'fill' describe the individual's experience and the 'come' and 'fall' refers to God, the Giver of this heavenly Gift. The majestic God pours His Spirit out or allows it to fall upon man, while man himself is baptized in the Spirit and is filled with the Spirit.

1.4 An anointment

In Acts 10:38 we can read about the anointing with the Holy Spirit and with power. It sees on Christ and His ministry. In the OT the prophets (I Kings 19:16), the priests (Exod. 40:15) and the kings (I Sam. 9:16) were anointed with oil to indicate their special calling. In the same way Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit as Prophet, Priest and King of His people. When 'anointment' is used in connection with believers (II Cor. 1:21-22), it has not so much to do with the baptism with the Holy Spirit, as with withdrawal and equipping of the believer by the Holy Spirit (compare this with Exod. 30:26-29).

1.5 Receipt of a Gift

The BHS is referred to as a Gift that one can receive (Acts 2:38; 19:2). This is in accordance with a promise made to believers - John 14:16,26; Acts 2:39. Actually it is the Holy Spirit who receives us and to whom we must submit, but because it means a real endowment for a person's life, it is customary to speak of us receiving the Holy Spirit.

When you receive someone, it means that you are going to enjoy the presence and assistance of such a person. So a person receives the Holy Spirit to stay with him and help him with his spiritual life and calling. This does not mean that one can now use the Holy Spirit according to one's own sweet will. No, the blessings that one receives through the Holy Spirit, are conditional; the Spirit can only function through that person to the extent that the person surrenders himself to the Holy Spirit.

It is not sufficient to just receive the BHS. The person must give the Spirit full control of his life, continuously. This is what Paul meant when he urged the believers to "live by the Spirit" (NIV) or "Walk in the Spirit" (AV) - Gal. 5:16. There is therefore, a difference between the baptism with the Holy Spirit as specific experience on a specific occasion, and to be continuously in the fullness of the Spirit.

2. What the Spirit Baptism is not

The Day of Pentecost had hardly got under way when Peter had to explain that what people saw was not the result of alcoholic intoxication (Acts 2:15). Apart from drunkenness there are other phenomena that must be distinguished from the baptism with the Holy Spirit:

2.1 It is not the spontaneous emotional and physical reaction to an overwhelming religious experience

It is human to display emotional and physical responses in moments of great danger, sadness, joy, etc., without willing to react that way. Could the BHS be explained as external reaction to intense grief, or fear or joy during a religious experience? No, the Spirit baptism is **not** a spontaneous reaction to some or other religious experience, because it is a conscious experience in its own right. It is true that one could experience emotional and physical reactions during the BHS, but then they will be caused by the religious experience and not by the baptism itself.

2.2 It is not a hypnotic phenomenon

It is of course possible that someone in a hypnotic trance will react to suggestions, that would evoke no reaction in his normal state. This also applies to mass-suggestion, i.e., the unconscious persuasion exercised by a group, e.g., the effect of a wildly enthusiastic crowd at a sports meeting or political rally, on an attending individual.

The question is now: could the BHS perhaps be something similar, i.e., under influence of a persuasive preacher or a participating audience, the individual is swept along? The answer is an emphatic **no**, because:

2.2.1 With hypnotic phenomena the consciousness of the patient or subject is partly or totally blocked out, as if he is in a light sleep or under influence of an anaesthetic. Therefore the subject under hypnosis, or the individual at the rowdy meeting, will afterwards be surprised at what he himself did under those influences. In contrast, the BHS is a conscious experience; the person who receives it is intensely conscious of what happens, and he can witness about his experience.

2.2.2 To become subject of a hypnotic trance or mass suggestion, a person must concentrate on the hypnotist's suggestions or the behaviour of the crowd. With the Spirit baptism a person concentrates on the Lord, otherwise the spiritual experience would most likely be destroyed.

2.2.3 The variety of conditions under which the Holy Spirit is received, rules out the possibility of hypnosis or mass-suggestion. Some believers are baptized in the Spirit

without any influence by an assembly leader or a group. Others have received the baptism in a mine, or on a street, or while lying in bed, etc. - not at all how they themselves expected it to happen.

2.3 It is not a product of fanaticism or agitation of spirit

It is possible that a person can get so carried away emotionally, that he /she will manifest certain reactions and misinterpret the latter. But this can be ruled out where the Holy Spirit is received because a prerequisite is precisely a calm surrender to God. Any excitement or constraint would normally be a stumbling block that would frustrate receipt of the blessing. A person's spirit must not be agitated but be filled with humility, leading to total submission. Some reactions to the Spirit baptism might seem to resemble the fanatical to the onlooker, but the essential experience will only take place when there is self-emptying and surrender to the will of God.

2.4 It is not a sign of mental disturbance

Because the BHS is so out of the ordinary, this question must be expected. The reasons for an emphatic **No** are the following:

Mental disturbances or psychological abnormalities are caused by brain disfunctions or insurmountable conflicts, which cause the person to manifest abnormal feelings and thought processes. We could say the person's personality is disrupted. This is far from what the Holy Spirit does in a person's life. The Spirit is meant to help the person, to promote his thought processes and insight, to bring heavenly glory into his life, and to direct his decisions and actions, to be good and God-pleasing. Furthermore, because the Spirit baptism implies that the Holy Spirit assumes full control of the person, it also means that all his urges, desires, aspirations, etc., are united in one objective, the glorification of God. This actually promotes the unity and power of personality.

The fruits of the Spirit, as listed in Gal. 5:22, are ostensibly characteristics of a perfectly happy and normal person. So, the baptism in question is actually a therapy - disease or deviation is out of the question.

2.5 It is not a sign of demonic influence or possession

The devil would like to gain full control of a person's life. He is also a past master in lies and fraud, but his influence and that of the Holy Spirit, differ like darkness and light. Satan encourages evil in man and endeavours to draw him away from God and salvation. In contrast, the Holy Spirit takes over where Jesus left off, while on earth (John 14:26). So, this will be the test.

2.6 The Baptism with the HS is not the experience of rebirth or of a special blessing

The salvation experience can be so wonderful, with immediate reactions in some people, that it gives rise to confusion with the Baptism. This also happens occasionally, when a person feels extraordinarily blessed. But the BHS is a separate and unique spiritual experience. The Bible shows us that it is a further experience - Acts 2:38; 19:2.

For this reason the BHS is something promised to believers, while the facts about rebirth, conversion and faith are presented to the unsaved. The experience of the Early Church

confirms this - Acts 8:12-17. The saints of the OT were commended for their faith (Heb. 11) but not one of them experienced the BHS.

Signs of the Baptism, e.g., tongues, do not follow on regeneration. It is also not just an instance of spiritual blessing followed by feelings of comfort, peace and joy, etc. It influences the will and the mind and it stands out as a unique spiritual experience. It is true that the Spirit of God effects the re-birth, and a regenerated person has the Holy Spirit or Spirit of Christ to a certain extent (Rom. 8:9). In contrast, the BHS involves the fullness of the Holy Spirit, whereby the Spirit becomes more real to the believer, with unique signs.

3. Is the BHS for today?

Some historical churches relegate the baptism with the Holy Spirit to the first century or apostolic period. This idea is unfounded for the following reasons:

3.1 It is a promise by God to all believers

In Acts 2:38-39 Peter declares: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

In Mark 16:17 Jesus Himself promised: “And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons: they will speak in new tongues” (a sign of the BHS). We must also point out the following:

3.1.1 If faith, conversion and baptism still apply today, then also the Spirit baptism, because these are all related truths. How dare we separate what God had grouped together, by declaring some as still applicable and others as outdated?

3.1.2 It is clearly stated that the promise of the Holy Spirit is for all, also for them who would still be called to faith and repentance by God (Acts 2:39). The Bible intimates clearly that all who came to believe and to repent in apostolic times, received the BHS - Acts 2:4; 2:17; 8:14-17; 9:31; 10:45; 19:2-6. Why would the Lord hold it back from those who come to faith and conversion today?

3.1.3 The promises of God cannot be changed by time or circumstances; even when man

becomes unfaithful, the Lord remains the same (Heb. 13:8).

3.2 God's gifts are irrevocable

In Rom. 11:29 it is stated “...for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.” The Greek for ‘gifts’ here is *charismata* which are really ‘gifts of grace’ - the same as the spiritual ‘gifts’ mentioned in I Cor. 12:4,9,31. In any case, when the Bible says these gifts are irrevocable, how dare we say or imply that the Lord has cancelled the privilege?

3.3 The prophecies about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit prove that the Spirit was not intended for the first century only

The prophecy in Joel 2:28-29 fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost and further on (Acts 2:16-20), mentions things that will happen in the last days. When we study Joel 2:30-31, we find that these last days take us up to the Second Coming of Christ. As we are still in the same dispensation as the one in which the believers of the Early Church lived, how dare we say that God's acts with His Church of today has changed?

- 3.4 The functioning of the Holy Spirit in the first Christian Church, was regarded as a natural part of the church services
When we study I Cor. 12 & 14, we find that gifts of the Holy Spirit like prophecy, tongues and interpretation of tongues , etc., operated as a natural part of the religious gatherings and Paul gave guidance about these matters - I Cor. 14:26-33. If we continue believing what the Early Church taught and continue to build on the foundation laid by Christ and the apostles, it is logical to have services that are similar to those early gatherings. That means that the baptism with the Holy Spirit should continue to be a natural phenomena in the Church today.
- 3.5 It is not God's will that believers should be without the gifts of the Holy Spirit
In I Cor. 1:7 Paul writes: "Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed." As we are still looking forward to the Second Coming, this applies to believers today who can only have part in the gifts of grace if the BHS is still operative. To believers of all times here are also the admonitions: "But eagerly desire the greater gifts" (I Cor. 12:31), and, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (Ephes. 5:18).
- 3.6 There were outpourings of the Holy Spirit on many occasions after the apostolic era
The following examples will go to show that the baptism with the Holy Spirit was not limited to the Early Church only:
- 3.6.1** Irenaeus (115-202), a Church father and martyr, Bishop of Lyons, wrote a treatise in Greek against heresies. He refers to various brothers in church who possess gifts of prophecy and who, through the Spirit, speak in various tongues.
- 3.6.2** Tertullian (160-220). One of the great fathers of the Latin Church; called the creator of Christian literature in Latin. He challenged a certain Marcion to prove that his followers also had that which was common in the Early Church. He asked him to produce prophets who do not speak from human wisdom, but through the Spirit of God; who prophesy about the future and reveal secrets of the heart. He must produce a vision, but only through the Spirit, and he must prove whether he has received any interpretation of tongues. He then gives a complete description of a sister who often spoke in tongues.
- 3.6.3** Clement of Alexandria (c.160-215), in his First letter, chapter 2, mentioned an insatiable urge to do good among members of his audience, while a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit had come upon them.
- 3.6.4** Cyprian (c.200-258), leader of the African Church, Bishop of Carthage, reported visions and also how children were filled with the Holy Spirit. These folks saw, heard and spoke about things that God wanted to communicate to them.
- 3.6.5** Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo, placed on record that they then still followed the practice of the apostles to lay hands on, e.g., the Samaritans, to pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on them. He added that their normal expectation was that converts would speak in new tongues.
- 3.6.6** The further history of so-called Pentecostalism can be looked up in any prominent encyclopaedia, e.g., the E. Britannica especially where there is reference to Christian revivals. When we come to the 20th century, it is interesting to note the remarks of the eminent church historian, Owen Chadwick, under the heading 'The Pentecostalists and charismatics' : "These were people

who felt the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. At services they may stand up and prophesy, as the apostles had at the feast of Pentecost...

They were also called 'charismatics', because the gift of tongues was an aspect of *charisma*, divine grace. These groups grew up among the Protestants of the United States during the earlier twentieth century. After the Second World War some Catholics started to feel the same power and show the same effects. In the modern age they have become numerous in Latin America... The movement had unpredicted effects among the young. On a Sunday in June 1994 ten million people over the world took part in a 'March for Jesus', with rock music cries of praise, and sincere passion. The largest marches were in the United States, London, Berlin and Brazil. In Moscow the march ran into trouble with the police and representatives of the Orthodox Church, but was allowed to go forward. No march was allowed in any Islamic country." (A history of Christianity. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995, p. 270).

- 3.6.7** Finally, it should be noted that the Spiritual Gifts cannot be standardized or stereotyped. In I Cor. 12:4-11 the different kinds of gifts are set out, as well as individual differences among the receivers. And above all, it is the Holy Spirit who "...gives them to each one, just as he determines" (I Cor. 12:11).

LECTURE 22 THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (cont.)

4. *Tongues as proof of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit*

Note the report on the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4). The immediate and obvious result of the Spirit baptism was the glossolalia, or gift of tongues. The same happened with Cornelius and his group. Here Peter and his fellow-Christians discovered that the Holy Spirit was also poured out on Gentiles who believed. And how did Peter and company know? “For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God” (Acts 10:46). Another report in Acts 19:6 - “When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”

(These folks were disciples in Ephesus).

All these cases go to show that tongues are not only the immediate consequence of the BHS, but also authentic proof of the baptism.

4.1 What about the ‘negative’ case of the Samaritans in Acts 8:17?

4.1.1 Just because tongues are not mentioned here, is no proof that tongues were absent when they received the baptism. The Bible is no verbatim report on every detail. The principles evolved are the main thing. Here the ‘symptom’ of tongues is assumed, and the account concludes with “...and they received the Holy Spirit.”

4.1.2 In a court of law a contribution can always be made by so-called circumstantial evidence. We can apply something similar here:

- (a) The BHS came suddenly but perceivably, otherwise Simon could not have noticed the sign(s) after the laying on of hands (verse 18).
- (b) The effect must have been rather dramatic, otherwise, why did Simon the Sorcerer respond so quickly with his offer to buy this ‘ability’?
- (c) What Simon saw could not have been the workings of the gift of healing or miraculous powers, because it occurred in Samaria under Philip’s ministry, at a point in time when no one there had yet received the Holy Spirit (verses 15 & 16).
- (d) What Simon saw could not have been mere experiences of joy, because, in view of verse 8, that would not have been remarkable any more.
- (e) Finally, How could the apostles themselves have diagnosed the Baptism correctly, if they did not see the signs of tongues, a sign they knew quite well by now? So, the Samaritans must have spoken in tongues.

4.1.3 Many expositors from non-Pentecostal backgrounds have admitted that the Samaritans must have spoken in tongues, e.g., Matthew Henry, Adam Clarke, Alexander Maclaren and the Lutheran Commentary. For a fairly recent example, we quote from William Barclay’s Daily Study Bible. In his commentary on Acts 8:14-25, he makes the following remarks: “To understand just what Simon was getting at we have to understand something of the atmosphere and practice of the Early Church. In the Early Church the coming of the Spirit upon a man was connected with certain quite definite and visible phenomena. In particular it was connected with the gift of speaking with tongues (cp. Acts 10:44-46). When the Holy Spirit did come upon a man he experienced an ecstasy which manifested

itself in this strange phenomenon of uttering meaningless sounds. It may sound strange but for all that it was very impressive... Simon was impressed with the visible effects of the laying on of hands and he tried to buy the ability to do what the apostles could do..." (pp 67-68).

4.2 But surely, any of the other eight gifts could serve as proof of the BHS and not only the speaking in tongues?

No, only tongues can be regarded as proof of the Baptism, because:

4.2.1 In the dispensation of the OT, while the **baptism** with the HS did not exist, we do find revelations of the gift of wisdom (I Kings 4:29-34), of the gift of knowledge (Dan. 2:17-23), of faith (James 5:17-18), of miraculous powers (Exod. 14:21-22), of healing (II Kings 5:13-14) and the gift of prophecy (II Peter 1:19-21). Tongues and the accompanying interpretation of tongues were unknown in the time of the OT.

4.2.2 The disciples performed various powerful deeds (Luke 10:17) even before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but tongues only came to the fore on the Day of Pentecost and the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It is therefore clear that speaking in tongues accompanied by interpretation, are the only supernatural signs that are essentially part of the BHS.

4.3 The apostle Paul, while touching on individual differences in the Body of Christ, makes the point that not all believers speak in tongues, although he seems to assume that all his readers are baptized with the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:30).

When we study the phenomenon of tongues in the Bible, then we see that there is a difference between:

4.3.1 Speaking in tongues as an immediate and spontaneous form of praise when the BHS takes place, and

4.3.2 The gift of tongues operating in the congregation. The context of I Cor. 12:27-31 points towards the latter gift, and so the objection falls away. The following is further proof of the difference between the two kinds of tongues:

(a) With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, the people all spoke simultaneously in tongues (verses 4 and 7) and various languages were heard at the same time. These even led to some flippant remarks by bystanders (verse 13). But these reactions to the baptism were not disorderly and could be explained by Peter (verses 14-18). The same applies in Acts 19:6-7, where a number of persons spoke simultaneously in tongues. This was in no way unruly or disorderly.

In I Cor. 14 on the contrary, the reference to tongues concerns the gift and those that have it are cautioned to take turns and wait for interpretation (verses 27-28). There are also specific warnings against disorderliness (verses 23 and 33). These instances surely refer to the gift that is controllable by the speaker.

(b) In Acts 2, 10 and 19 tongues are described as a spontaneous outflowing, and we can surely accept that there weren't pauses for interpretation. There was also no substantial evidence of disorderliness. Conversely, in I Cor. 14:27-28 we are instructed that unless interpretation is available, the speaker in tongues must be quiet and rather speak to God and himself.

- (c) According to the report in Acts 10, the Cornelius group spontaneously broke into tongues, although Peter was still preaching. Still, this did not upset Peter, in fact it was a pleasant surprise. On the other hand, if this had been the gift of tongues (I Cor. 14), Peter would've had to call them to order.
- (d) When the gift of tongues is exercised, there is a message for the assembly and interpretation is therefore essential. On the Day of Pentecost this was not the case and the believers were already speaking, when members of the crowd noticed them and came together. So, the latter was more of a spontaneous outburst, just as in the case of the Cornelius group, the disciples in Ephesus, etc.; the main thrust of it was to glorify God. When the gift of tongues is exercised, the message is often meant for unbelievers, therefore interpretation is indispensable (I Cor 14:22).
- (e) When a person is baptized with the Holy Spirit, the speaking in tongues comes as an immediate and spontaneous reaction which the speaker cannot control. Some baptized people are even unable to use their mother tongue in those moments.
With the gift of tongues, we must note what the Bible teaches us in I Cor. 14:32, namely, that "The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets." So the inspired tongues are under control of the speaker; according to what he thinks will be edifying, he can speak or remain silent.
- (f) When the Spirit baptism takes place (e.g. Acts 2, 10, or 19) the persons involved need no special preparation or effort from their side; the tongues are heard spontaneously and immediately. With the gifts of the Holy Spirit - including tongues - the Bible seems to prescribe a process: "...try your best to have the more important of these gifts" (I Cor. 12:31 - Living Bible). And this was directed to people who were already filled with the Holy Spirit.

The above points should be sufficient proof that we must clearly differentiate between tongues as immediate reaction and sign of the BHS, and the speaking in tongues as one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. So I Cor. 12:30 refers to the **gift** of tongues only.

4.4 Tongues cannot serve as proof of the BHS, for what about great men of God like Finney, Moody, Spurgeon, and others, who never spoke in tongues, but proved through their blessed ministries that they must have had the BHS?

To this we must point out the following:

- (a) It is wrong and even risky to base points of doctrine on human experience. Our touchstone is God's Word. Those preachers themselves would've rejected the idea of themselves as standard. They would've pointed to the Bible for eternal truth and would've rejected any idea of bringing the Bible down to the human level.
- (b) The biographical detail for the preachers mentioned is not sufficient to enable us to make a pronouncement on their baptism or otherwise. Their private and prayer room lives would have been revealing, but the available information is insufficient.
- (c) Even if those prominent preachers never received the BHS, the fact remains that they were blessed instruments in the hand of God. In the Bible, especially the OT, there are many examples of persons who, without the Spirit Baptism, served as

mighty channels through which God spoke to His people. The reason is that one can have much of the Holy Spirit in you, although you have not been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

4.5 The lives of some who speak in tongues are such that one would never say that they had received the Holy Spirit.

A few remarks are relevant here:

- (a) The Bible distinguishes between the gifts of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12) and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). The former is an experience aimed at the strengthening and equipping of the believer, while the latter is concerned with the state of holiness that applies to a person. In truth, the person desiring the baptism with the Holy Spirit must purify his life. (There are many cases where people did not receive the gift before putting right certain matters). On the other hand, after receiving the Holy Spirit, a person can sin again without forfeiting the gift. This simply illustrates how long-suffering God is.
- (b) Baptism with the Holy Spirit strengthens the spiritual nature received at the re-birth, but there is no indication that it will eradicate the sinful nature of a person. Even the Spirit-filled Paul had to exclaim: "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing... What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:19,24). Therefore the believer is commanded not only "...be filled with the Spirit (Ephes. 5:18), but also "...live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:16).
- (c) When some people speak in tongues, it is really the Spirit fighting alongside the person and interceding for him with God, because of his spiritual condition. Speaking in tongues under these conditions often means battling with intense inner conflicts and even grief.
- (d) It must be admitted, that some folks speak in tongues without communicating with God. One could say they speak in tongues without any God-given love in their hearts (sign of the weak condition of their spiritual lives). One could equate their 'tongues' with the resounding gong or clanging cymbal of I Cor. 13:1. Speaking in tongues then becomes something habitual and it is no longer Spirit-driven utterance.

Therefore, where the BHS is not accompanied by a dedicated mode of living / way of life, very little good can come of it.

4.6 The Holy Spirit is received through faith, so because I believe, I must also have the Holy Spirit, even though I have never spoken in tongues.

This approach is wrong, for the following reasons:

- (a) It is true that man must look in faith to God for receipt of the Holy Spirit, but the actual receipt is a realistic experience. Faith in the heart is a quiet, concealed experience, while the BHS is a powerful experience that cannot remain hidden. When someone is baptized with the Holy Spirit, people around that person will see and hear it (Acts 2:33).
- (b) How is a person to know that he has received the BHS if he has to rely on faith alone? Merely believing that 1 million rand is coming my way for missionary work, does not mean that I have it already. Faith and practical experience must go together (James 2:14-25). It was precisely the outward manifestation that

convinced Peter that Cornelius' group had received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45-46).

- (c) If faith was all that was needed to receive the Holy Spirit, Philip could just have told the Samaritan believers to believe and they would have the Holy Spirit; then it would've been unnecessary to send John and Peter from Jerusalem, and no laying on of hands would've been required.
- (d) If faith alone was the criterion when it was believed that someone had received the BHS, a Church father like Augustine would not have stated that they followed the apostles' example when they laid hands on the Samaritans and prayed for the endowment with the Holy Spirit. Their expectation was then that the recipients would speak in new tongues.

LECTURE 23 THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (cont.)

1. The necessity of the BHS

1.1 As a power for witnessing

The Lord Jesus promised His disciples: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...” (Acts 1:8). With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost this promise went into action. We immediately notice the change in Peter. Formerly he did not have the courage to acknowledge Christ as his Master before that servant girl; he even denied Christ to save himself. But on the Day of Pentecost he appears to be fearless when he accuses the Jews of murdering Christ and he delivers a powerful plea that the mob must repent. And Peter, the newly active, courageous and fearless witness of the Cross remained changed after Pentecost, yes, for the rest of his life.

Even Peter’s preaching ministry underwent a radical change. We find no evidence that he won over any souls before that Pentecost Day, but after being baptized with the Holy Spirit, one message from Peter was sufficient to bring 3 000 to repentance. Here we must acknowledge the presence of a supernatural power and authority, just as Paul later admitted: “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power...” (I Cor. 2:4). See also I Thess. 1:5. Peter’s experience was shared by the other apostles, for we read in Acts 4:33 - “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.”

But it was especially the exercising of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that made them such mighty witnesses. The power of this small group of Christians turning the world upside down, cannot be explained in terms of the intellectual thrust of the Christian faith. No, there was a driving enthusiasm that emanates from a divine experience - the Pentecostal equipment.

1.2 As substantiating evidence for others

In I Cor. 14:22 the Word explains that tongues serve as a sign for unbelievers. When the latter hear people using tongues that they had never been taught, it serves not only to stimulate surprise and interest with them, but it also serves to convince them that God is with the speakers. Experience has shown repeatedly, that the exercise of this gift leads many hardened hearts to open up to the Gospel of Christ.

And what is true for tongues, applies also to the other gifts of the Holy Spirit, e.g., the gift of healing (Acts 3).

1.3 As a sealing of believers

Paul refers to this aspect when he writes to the Ephesians: “Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit...” (1:13). In Biblical times, especially in the East, great value was attached to sealing. The signet ring was a normal component of a man’s equipment. He placed his seal on documents to authenticate them, and when objects were marked in this way, it was an indication of ownership. Likewise, the BHS is God’s seal on the believer, to indicate that he belongs to Him and that he carries the mark of divine authority.

While the devil can get a person to entertain doubts about his salvation, the BHS bans all that uncertainty. The recipient experiences the baptism very clearly and others can see and hear that God has really accepted you. That is why Peter could say about the Cornelius group that “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them...” (Acts 15:8).

At the very least, the BHS will strengthen a person’s faith and help him to overcome temptations.

1.4 To convince people of sin and righteousness and judgment

Paul refers to this aspect when he writes to the Ephesians: “Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit...” (Ephes. 1:13). In Biblical times, especially in the East, great value was attached to sealing. The signet ring was a normal component of a man’s equipment. He placed his seal on documents to authenticate them, and when objects were marked in this way, it was an indication of ownership. Likewise, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is God’s seal on the believer to indicate that he belongs to Him, and that he carries the mark of divine authority. While the devil can get a person to entertain doubts about his salvation, the BHS bans all that uncertainty. The recipient experiences the baptism very clearly and others can see and hear that God has really accepted you. That is why Peter could say about the Cornelius group that “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them...” (Acts 15:8).

At the very least, the BHS will strengthen a person’s faith and help him to overcome temptations.

1.4 To convince people of sin and righteousness and judgment

This was promised when Jesus referred to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was soon to come (John 16:8). The mere listening to the Gospel facts is not sufficient to bring a sinner to faith and conversion. A divine operation is also needed to bring a conviction of sin and a sense of being lost, to that soul, and to help him further to come to a genuine faith in Christ. Therefore the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, as displayed in the Spirit-filled life, is absolutely necessary with the preaching of the Gospel. This is especially true when the gift of prophecy operates persuasively, e.g., in I Cor. 14:24-25, “But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”

1.5 For teaching and guidance

When Jesus’ time on earth was running out and He still had to entrust the enormous task of world evangelization to His disciples, He realized that they really needed a Guide that could teach and lead them. So He promised them: “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come” (John 16:13). For further examples see Mark 13:11 and John 14:26. We also find instances of clear guidance of the apostles by the Holy Spirit in Acts 8:39, 13:2 and 16:6.

1.6 For comfort and encouragement

The Holy Spirit is called the **Comforter** in the Authorized Version of John 14:16,26, 15:26 and 16:7, and its encouragement function comes to the fore in Acts 9:31. How essential these functions are, becomes evident from the following:

- (a) Since the Lord Jesus' Ascension, the believer has no personal revelation of God, and in a sense he is lonely like an orphan. But with the BHS, the presence of God becomes very personal and real for the believer, because he knows that God is in him and with him (John 14:16-20).
- (b) It does happen that times of unrest and strife overtake the believer, but when he turns to God in prayer, he finds peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). Even the believer who feels discouraged, can experience the power of the Holy Spirit over himself and, like the first disciples, he can once more live and preach the Gospel (Acts 4:31).
- (c) Man is carnally minded and weak, but there is still the promise: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Rom. 8:26).

1.7 For edification of the assembly

In I Cor. 14 we find that edification of the congregation through the workings of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is repeatedly mentioned (verses 3,4,5,12 and 26). To build up the congregation, we need:

- the gift of wisdom to solve problems;
- the gift of knowledge to reveal important matters;
- the gift of faith to continue the good fight;
- the gift of healing to heal the sick;
- the operation of power to subdue the forces of nature and evil spirits;
- the gift of prophecy to convey the purpose and message of God to others;
- the discernment of spirits to frustrate the Evil One's work;
- the gift of tongues to edify the speaker and to convince unbelievers; and
- the gift of interpretation of tongues, to make the messages received clear to everyone.

So, for all these reasons it is essential that every believer will receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

2. How to share in the BHS

2.1 A misconception done away with

There is considerable support for the idea that the Holy Spirit was poured out once, on the Day of Pentecost, that all Christian believers have it now and needn't look for it any more. Our answer is that, although the Holy Spirit is responsible for your re-birth and stays with you to a greater or lesser degree after you become a believer, the BHS is a separate experience which you will be personally aware of when it happens. It is true that the Holy Spirit was given to the Church on the Day of Pentecost, but this does not mean that all believers have now automatically received the baptism. Although Christ died for the whole world, this does not mean that every single person has now been saved - no, only those who personally believe in Him. Similarly, although the BHS is for everyone, one must have the personal experience before you can say that you have received it. It

is also noteworthy that the Holy Spirit was poured out, not only on the Day of Pentecost, but also on various other occasions.

2.2 Prerequisites for the BHS

The following prerequisites apply:

2.2.1 Obedience to the Gospel (Acts 5:32)

Addressing the crowd of people on the Day of Pentecost, Peter said: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Here we learn that conversion and water baptism precede the baptism with the Holy Spirit. For the water baptism exceptions in the order of things do occur, e.g., the Cornelius group (Acts 10:44-48).

2.2.2 Inner purity. As His Name indicates, the Holy Spirit is holy, and whoever desires to receive Him, must also be pure. Therefore, if someone desires the BHS, he must surrender himself unconditionally to God to purify him from all unrighteousness.

2.2.3 Faith. All heavenly gifts require faith (Mark 11:24). Faith includes knowledge and confidence (Heb. 11:1) and he who desires the gift of the Holy Spirit in his life, must firstly have knowledge about the Holy Spirit as taught in the Bible, and secondly, he must trust that the BHS is also meant for him personally. He who believes this, will also display a strong desire to receive the Holy Spirit. In this connection, see the experience of the disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6).

2.3 How the Holy Spirit is received. Just as in the case of salvation, individual experiences of the Holy Spirit differ. The following are the more common possibilities:

2.3.1 By praying and waiting for it. According to Luke 24:49 Jesus commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they are filled with the Holy Spirit. They persisted with prayer and supplication in the upper room (Acts 1:13-14). According to Acts 2:2-3 they must have been seated when the Holy Spirit came on them. The tongues of fire appeared to have been an unique experience, but over the centuries that followed, reports of similar experiences were received.

2.3.2 By laying on of hands and prayer. This is also a possibility, as we first saw it in Acts 8:14-17 and 19:6. But the case of the Samaritans indicates that the former procedure was not followed by each and every early Christian, not even by Philip, the renowned preacher. Two apostles from Jerusalem had to come and perform this function. But in the long run, this procedure was not limited to apostles only, e.g., in Paul's case, when a disciple in Damascus, was sent to Paul (Acts 9:10-19).

2.3.3 Suddenly and unexpected. This we encounter in the history of Cornelius & company: "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message" (Acts 10:44). This way of receiving has been repeated many times since. The Spirit has suddenly come on people lying in bed, walking in a street, below ground in a mine, etc.

2.4 Hindrances to receiving the Holy Spirit. Some children of God find it very difficult to receive this gift, and usually one of the following stumbling blocks are preventing the blessing:

2.4.1 Unbelief. Some people do not believe that the BHS is real, and so they cannot apply faith and ask for it. Good teaching, witnessing by others and opportunity to witness the baptism of others, will help these folks to develop unreserved faith in the Spirit baptism.

2.4.2 Sin. This always brings up a barrier between God and man (Isa. 59:2), and experience shows that even a small transgression may prevent the BHS. When such a person is seriously desiring the baptism, he / she must put right whatever the Lord lays on their heart.

2.4.3 Too many disappointments. Where praying for the baptism has taken place without result on many occasions, these persons have begun to believe that the blessing is not for them, that they are unworthy, etc. Teaching is necessary but also a sympathetic examination of the experiences of the person when he or others prayed for the filling in the past.

2.4.4 Unwise actions by those who try to help. Sometimes those who have already received the BHS tend to get so keen for other believers' sake, that instead of praying for their baptism, they resort to various methods to bring on the BHS. This distracts the seeking soul's attention (he / she should focus on the Lord) and negates the fact that it is only the **Lord** who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. No physical body motions / actions can replace **His** role.

2.4.5 Ignorance. Some people have the idea that they must perform certain actions, like falling down, clapping their hands, praying aloud, etc., before they can receive the Holy Spirit. This unnatural, contrived approach is not only wrong, but is often the cause of inner conflict which in turn can become a stumbling block as far as the baptism is concerned.

2.4.6 Wrong expectations. There are also folks who anticipate falling unconscious, or jumping around exuberantly, or falling to the floor, etc., when the BHS takes place. Consciously or sometimes unconsciously they seek these phenomena, instead of simply trusting the Lord, knowing that our Heavenly Father will never give His children something bad (Luke 11:13).

3. Closing remarks on the role of the Holy Spirit

In conclusion, we would like to plead for a broader perspective and a balanced viewpoint on these matters. I therefore quote from David Matthew's 'Church adrift', pp 167-168: "The presentation of a fully rounded gospel has, in fact, been hard to find, except in some Pentecostal circles. Such a gospel, combining a strong Bible content with Holy Spirit life and power, has tended to produce lasting conversions. As the old saying has it: all word and no Spirit makes you dry up; all Spirit and no Word makes you blow up; but Word and Spirit together make you grow up! It's a *three-fold cord*, however, that isn't easily broken. If the Word of God and the Spirit of God are two of the three vital strands, the third is without question the *people* of God."

And that brings us to a discussion of Christ's Church on earth...

LECTURE 24 Ecclesiology

(Doctrines about the Church)

We find organized forms of worship of a Supreme Being among all peoples on earth. In this lecture we will concentrate on the Christian Church - its origin, its nature, its government, its work and its authority.

1. The origin of the Church

1.1 *Ekklesia*—This Greek word means: an assembly; a congregation; an assembly for worship, a church; the whole body of Christian believers. Our word ‘church’ derives from the Greek adjective *kuriakos* meaning: of or belonging to the Lord. The Church is therefore that group of persons called by the Lord Jesus through His Spirit from the world and from sin, to be with Him eventually.

1.2 The Jewish people and the church idea. Some people reckon that the Jewish people of the OT could also be called a church. In actual fact the Jews were an ‘*ekklesia*’, a group of called people, but it would not be correct to call them a church. Much of what we read in the OT is the salvation history of a particular nation whose religious laws were also the national laws. The children of Israel were a nation on the basis of physical and purely national relationship - children of the same ancestor - and not because they all followed the same religion. In times of religious decay, Israel was just Israel as always. After the Babylonian exile, the true religion was supported by a group separate from the nation. And in Christ’s time, we find a Jewish church, a group of people sharing the same religious convictions. In Greek their meetings were called *sunagoge*, a noun based on the verb *sunago* meaning, to gather together, bring together, to collect.

1.3 Establishment of the Christian Church. During His ministry on earth, Jesus made use of the Jewish synagogues and although He encountered so much resistance from the religious leaders, His followers did not start a separate church until the Day of Pentecost. Christ did the preparatory work and the church came into being through His Spirit and His disciples. On the Day of Pentecost, the disciples received the equipment that would enable them to evangelize the world and organize it into congregations. And it was in Antioch that the disciples were called ‘Christians’ for the first time (Acts 11:26).

2. The nature of the Church

2.1 Organism and organization An *organism* is an organic structure; something that acts as a unified whole; a living animal or vegetable. Example: from the original seed a complete tree develops with all its branches. Cut off one of the branches and that branch will die. An *organization* on the other hand, is an organized system, body or society. Here the constituent parts each originates on its own and is capable of existing independently. Examples: a committee, a building, a flower arrangement a motor car, etc. With the church concept we have both an organism and an organization. Note the statement in I Cor. 12:27 -- “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” This reflects the *organism* aspect of the Church - all members sprout from Christ, are born from His Spirit (John 3:3-6) and they are continuously dependent for their spiritual life on the Life core, Jesus Christ. Just as a human body with all its parts and organs develops from a fertilized ovum, and a body part would die if separated from the body, so every member of the Church is a new birth from God and if a member gets separated from God, he would spiritually die. But the Church is a *spiritual* organism and in this sense not something that can be observed in a physical sense (John 15).

At the same time the Church as spiritual organism, is revealed in various organizations. When members of the Church get together to worship as an assembly, to build a church, to care for the poor and the widowed, to do mission work, etc., then we have an organization in the Church or spiritual organism. All organizations in the Church because of the one or other mutual reason among the members. When aim and circumstances change, the organizations also change. And even when a member leaves an organization, he remains he remains part of the spiritual organism or Body of Christ. All Christian churches, groups, meetings, committees, etc., are organizations in the Church.

2.2 The visible and invisible church. These concepts are closely related to the preceding discussion. The visible church is that aspect of the Church that we can see: assemblies and congregations (including all organizations), ministering of the Word and the sacraments, the confession and changed lives of members, etc. This church includes the true believers, but also many who are not in Christ. The invisible church, on the other hand, includes all who are truly in Christ, i.e., the spiritual organism as a whole. This is the Church as seen through the eyes of faith. Its scope stretches beyond that of the visible church, including departed saints as well as future believers. It clearly differs from the visible church in that it only includes true believers, i.e., people who are in Christ. Although we have two distinctly separate concepts here, they do overlap to the extent that the visible church may include true believers.

2.3 The Church and denominations. The Church of Christ on earth is a spiritual unity comprising all who are in Christ, no matter to which organization such persons belong, or their language, race, etc. The various Christian denominations, like the Lutheran Church, the Calvinistic churches, the Methodists, Wesleyans, Baptists, Pentecostals, etc., all of them are organizations wherein the Church of Christ is revealed to a greater or lesser degree. The question: why so many denominations? can only be answered by doing a detailed study of Church History. Suffice it to say, that as long as members of the different denominations are genuine believers, there the spiritual unity does exist, and where their members allow the intrusion of 'extra' religious matters to push aside the true faith, there the spiritual unity dwindles accordingly.

2.4 Church membership. Apart from denominational requirements for membership, there is basically only one way to membership of Christ's Church, and that is to become one with Christ, to be saved by Christ—"And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). At this point we must distinguish between the membership of immature or feeble-minded persons and that of responsible adults. Both groups become members of the Church or Body of Christ because of His atonement on Calvary (II Cor. 5:18-19). In the case of an unaccountable person, the status of 'saved' seems to apply. Note the following pronouncements by Christ Himself:

Small children: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14).

The feeble-minded: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

The requirements for mature adults are faith and conversion (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), and baptism in water serves as sign of their induction into the Church (Acts 10:47-48). The members of Christ's Church are called by various names:

Christians - Acts 11:26; Disciples - Acts 6:7; Brothers & Sisters - James 2:15; Friends (NIV), Dearly beloved (AV) - Rom. 12:19; Believers - Acts 5:14 (AV); Saints - I Cor. 1:2; and the Elect - II Tim. 2:10.

- 3. Church government.** Just as the human head controls and governs the body by means of the nervous system, so Christ reigns in His Church by means of human instruments.

3.1 Church meetings. Various congregations could send representatives to a central meeting (Acts 15:1-21) or, one particular congregation could hold a meeting (Acts 6:2). Depending on the extent to which the meeting submits to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they can afterwards report: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..." (Acts 15:28). By means of the latter approach, the will of God can be carried out in His Church.

3.2 The office of eldership. The apostles played a central role in the organization and government of the Early Church, in fact, they laid the foundation of the Christian Church (Ephes. 2:20). It so happened that an apostle also regarded himself as an elder (I Peter 5:1; II John 1:1) and we will therefore concentrate on the office of elder. In the NT two different names are used for 'elder':

- (a) The Greek *presbuteros*, a comparative used where two or more persons are compared, therefore: *older* or *elder*. See Acts 14:23; I Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5,6; Rev. 4:4,10.
- (b) The Greek *episkopos*, an overseer; a superintendent; a guardian; a bishop. See Philip. 1:1; I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7; I Peter 2:25.

So two words originally, but both refer to one and the same office. The apostle Paul, e.g., used both words while addressing the Ephesian elders - Acts 20:17,28. The elders for each congregation were appointed by the apostles or overseers already in office (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). Their duties included:

- = management of the congregation (I Tim. 5:17; I Peter 5:1-3)
 - = to teach and to admonish (I Thess. 5:12)
 - = to care for and protect the congregation (Acts 20:17,28-29)
 - = to care for the sick (James 5:14); and
- = to decide about spiritual matters (Acts 15:6). In due course, one elder in a congregation became leader and *pastor* (Latin for 'shepherd').

3.3 The office of deacon (Greek *diakonia* - service, ministration, a serving, relief; the office of a deacon, e.g., Rom. 12:7. The Greek for 'deacon' is *diakonos* e.g., I Tim. 3:8,12). Deacons were appointed for matters like charity work, table service (probably the Lord's supper - Acts 6:2). The members of the congregation chose them (Acts 6:5).

As regards quality of spiritual life, both elders and deacons had to live exemplary lives and they must not be recent converts (I Tim. 3:1-13). An extra for the elders was that they must be able to teach and to govern (I Tim. 3:1; I Peter 5:1-3).

4. The work of the Church

4.1 The agent for bringing the Gospel to humanity. It was the Lord's will that the Church, as started by the apostles, should bring the Gospel to people. This includes the preaching of the Word, administering the sacraments and providing channels for the Holy Spirit to work through the believers and their testimonies, and any gifts that they might have received from the Lord (I Cor. 12).

Here we must include all forms of missionary work. We reject the Roman Catholic view that salvation is in the *exclusive* hands of the Church, and more in particular, the RC Church. The Lord uses the Church as an important channel, but that does not restrict Him; repentance and true faith can come without the Church as intermediary. We also reject the Calvinistic doctrine that seems to award the children of Church members a special spiritual status (members of a so-called 'covenant of grace'), that other children do not have. No, the only difference between the children of pagans and believers is, that the latter have better opportunities to hear the Gospel and be interceded for, as they grow up. But without repentance they are lost - exactly as any unregenerate unbeliever.

4.2 To promote mutual fellowship as well as mutual encouragement, exhortation and assistance, it is essential that members of Christ's Church will get together in some or other form and will also take action together.

4.3 The promotion of moral standards. The Church has a message for every sphere of life: educational, social, political, etc., and it is the Church's duty to uphold Christ's principles in all these fields.

4.4 Care for those in need of aid. Another duty of the Church is to care for the poor, the widow and the orphan (James 1:27; 2:15-16).

5. The Authority of the Church

5.1 The nature of this authority. Its not based on external force but on the Church's divine calling. On this point we reject the old Catholic view that the interests of the Church may even be defended and promoted by armed force. The authority of the Church lies in its message of forgiveness of sins and eternal life, and he who rejects this, is subject to the wrath of God. The Church's influence in life, is therefore of a moral nature: by upholding moral standards and by so many lives that have been changed by the preaching of the Gospel.

5.2 Discipline. As an organization the Church also has its guidelines and rules, and the principles they stand for must be protected - even to the extent of punishing infractions. Examples in the Bible: Matt.5:23-24; 18:15-17; I Cor. 5:3-5,13; II Cor. 2:6-8; II Thess. 3:6. The basic principle here is to try a personal reprimand first, to effect repentance in the wrongdoer. If he refuses to respond, bring him before a council or committee. If this is also fruitless, the matter must be laid before the congregation, and when even this fails, his membership must be cancelled and he must be regarded as an unregenerate sinner (Matt. 18:15-17). To protect the office bearers of a congregation against false accusations and thereby impairing the Lord's work, it is required that an accusation can only stand if supported by at least two witnesses (I Tim. 5:19).

LECTURE 25 Sanctification

1. What is Sanctification?

Sanctification is that spiritual process that enables the believer to become more and more like Christ, living a life increasingly free of sin and evil. We note the following aspects of sanctification:

1.1 The development of the divine nature. With the re-birth we receive, alongside our human and sinful nature, a divine nature (II Peter 1:4). Sanctification means the development of the divine nature, i.e., the character of Jesus Christ takes progressively form in us. This development can also be seen as a form of spiritual growth, as reflected in texts like the following: “May the Lord make your love increase and overflow...” (I Thess. 3:12) and “...to do so more and more” (I Thess. 4:10).

“...and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants...” (Ephes. 4:13-14).

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory...” (II Cor. 3:18), etc.

1.2 A consecration. The Greek word for ‘sanctification’ is *hagiasmos*. Its verb *hagiazō* means to dedicate, to make holy, to honour as holy; to sanctify. These Greek words are used in Matt. 6:9; 23:17; Luke 11:2; I Cor. 1:2,30; I Thess. 4:3; 5:23; Heb. 9:13; 12:14; I Peter 3:15 and Rev. 22:11. And then there are other portions of Scripture that also support the consecration / dedication idea, e.g., John 17:15; Rom. 12:1; and II Cor. 6:17. The more we turn our backs on sin, the more the divine or Christlike nature will develop in us.

1.3 The production of spiritual food. The old man’s sinful nature reveals itself in carnal attitudes and characteristics, e.g., jealousy, quarrelsomeness and discord, sexual immorality, drunkenness, debauchery, etc. (I Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:19-21). In contrast, the divine nature in man displays spiritual attitudes and characteristics, e.g., love, joy, peace, patience, self-control, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness (Gal. 5:22).

The degree to which the latter characteristics, known as the fruit of the Spirit, are revealed in a person’s life, is an indication of how far the process of sanctification has already progressed in your life. The fact that the Bible calls it fruit (*karpōs*) is an indication that it is something that is cultivated in a person’s life and eventually, depending on favourable or unfavourable conditions, it can develop to maturity. Sanctification could also be described as the influence of the Spirit in a person’s life so that the image and the characteristics of the Lord Jesus come more and more to the fore in his life.

4. Practical and accredited Holiness. In I Cor. 1:2 and many other parts of Scripture, believers are addressed as saints or the sanctified. In other references believers are exhorted to strive towards sanctity (Heb. 12:14; I Peter 1:16). This suggests two aspects of sanctity:

- (a) the holiness accredited to someone because of his status as a believer, and
- (b) the holiness that someone reveals in his daily life, in other words, practical sanctification.

The accredited holiness is received when a person believes in Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. Because of His death of atonement on the cross, the Holiness of Christ is accredited to every believer (I Cor. 1:30; 6:11; Heb. 10:10; 13:12). While accredited holiness is based on the death of Christ, practical holiness flows from the process of sanctification in the life of man, and means the development of the divine nature, consecration, dedication and the production of spiritual fruit.

2. How sanctification takes place

Sanctification is a spiritual process wherein both God and man take part. Because of the atonement on Calvary, the work of the Holy Spirit and the cooperation of man, practical holiness becomes possible. The following demands are made on man:

2.1 Self-denial and crucifying the old man. To live without sin, we must be saved from the origin of sin, namely, the sinful nature or old man in us. This is achieved by regarding it as dead, crucified with Jesus, and faithfully trusting that it is powerless, and further on to deny it any opportunity to stage a come-back. “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin” (Rom. 6:6). Here the ‘done away with’ is a translation of the Greek verb *katargeo* which means: to make idle, to render inoperative; to bring to naught. Just as a doorbell will cease to function once the wire cable is loosened, so the sinful nature cannot produce sins when we live a life of self-denial and regard ourselves in Christ and dead to sin, willing only to live for Him (Gal. 2:20). To render the sinful nature powerless and keep it that way, often requires much prayer, confession, vigilance and even fasting. Here we can apply and trust James 4:7 -- “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”, and Rom. 7:24-25 -- “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

2.2 An active life through the Spirit Sanctification is not merely a negative approach to life, i.e., beware of sin, self-denial, withdrawal, etc. It is also a positive approach, whereby goodness is promoted in order to eliminate the sinful. “...overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21), can form the keynote to sanctification. Where there is light, darkness automatically retreats. See also I Peter 2:15. Keeping yourself occupied with the good, serves a dual purpose, namely

- (a) the sinful is thereby pushed aside or displaced, and
- (b) the Holiness of Christ comes to the fore in your life.

It is therefore very important that we allow the Holy Spirit to produce the good in our lives. This explains the exhortation in Gal. 5:16 -- “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” In other words, give the Holy Spirit full control in your life and you will think, speak and act according to divine principles.

2.3 Submission to the Word of God. The Bible is a book with holy principles; apply these and you will have holiness in your life. By reading God’s Word and keeping His commandments, my character is formed according to the image of God. My whole being is ennobled and it keeps me near God, the Source and Imparter of holiness. How striking the High Priestly prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17). Just as a bathtub filled with water can wash a body clean, so, obedient submission to the Word of God cleanses the soul like a bath (Eph. 5:26).

3. Erroneous ideas about sanctification

3.1 Perfectionism. There are people who spread a doctrine usually referred to as the ‘Second Blessing’. According to this view a believer in Christ does not receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit until some time after his conversion. This second experience is supposed to sanctify the entire person, enabling the believer to live a more profound religious and moral life than is possible without it. The implication is that the old sinful nature is completely blotted out. They base their view on texts like Rom. 6:6 -- “...so that the body of sin might be done away with,” and I John 1:9 -- “...he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”; Rom. 7:24-25 : “Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!” and Ps. 51:10 -- “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me”; etc.

If it could be true that our sinful nature can simply be wiped out of existence, then man could return to the pristine condition of Adam and Eve before the Fall. That would mean that man would be immortal, would never fall sick and that his offspring would be likewise, because they would not inherit any sin. In other words, we would have *perfect* people. As this is impossible, this idea of sanctification is totally wrong. When we examine the texts quoted in the previous paragraph more closely, they do not really support perfectionism, e.g., “done away with” in Rom. 6:6 actually means ‘to make powerless or non-operative’ - not ‘obliterated’. With Rom. 7:24-25 the following verse (26) provides the full perspective: the sinful nature is still there, but God’s law exerts a stronger pull! Remember that the same Paul admitted in verse 18: “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do good, but I cannot carry it out.”

In the same way, when we look closely at Ps. 51:12 and I John 1:9, both refer to a release that follows on real repentance and a genuine confession, whether by a new convert for the first time or by a believer for the umpteenth time. Forgiveness of sin and cleansing go together. But, to be saved of the sinful nature needs self-mortification, a walk with the Spirit and obedience to God’s Word.

3.2 Sanctification is impossible. Some people maintain that victory over sin is impossible on earth; this is simply part of human existence - spiritual defeat is inevitable. It is true that all have sinned and tend by nature towards the sinful, but, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the hold of sin on us can be broken - to the extent that to sin is no longer inevitable. “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). So, God can demand sanctification from man (I Peter 1:16). See also I John 2:1 -- “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin”, and I Thess. 5:23 -- “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept *blameless* at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

3.3 To be sanctified means to be strictly legalistic. There are proponents of sanctification who reckon it must affect the way you dress, your attitude under different circumstances, lots of Bible reading and praying, abstinence in many things - in other words, for them sanctification means the application of certain rules of piety, plus a whole gamut of do’s and don’ts.

It is true that sanctification will affect a person's life style, but then it should flow from the way God's Spirit affects one's life and not be the superficial adherence to all sorts of rules. In short, sanctification is not something external; it should emanate from deep inside. So, preach Jesus Christ and His principles, and sanctification becomes such a life urge that religion becomes a joy, instead of a system of oppressing rules and regulations.

We must encourage people to follow our model, Jesus Christ, and make His characteristics their own; let holiness become a desirable ideal. No person can by adopting some or other lifestyle become holier, but he can allow the Holy Spirit to make that which was made possible for him in Christ through grace and grace alone, applied in his life (Gal. 5:1-5,18).

4. The importance of sanctification

It is important for every believer to strive towards sanctification, because:

4.1 It is God's will. The Lord hates sin and unrighteousness in any form, but He takes delight in pure, undefiled lives. This explains the exhortation in I Peter 1:16 -- "Be holy, because I am holy." Note also I Thess. 5:23 -- "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," and Heb. 12:14 -- "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."

4.2 It is the key to a more worthy Christian life. In I Cor. 13 we see that without the love, the main fruit of sanctification (Gal. 5:22), all gifts are worthless and every sacrifice useless. The famous chapter on love is therefore preceded by the words: "And now I will show you the most excellent way." How many talented preachers have a powerless ministry, because their personal lives leave much to be desired. How wonderful this earthly life would not have been if all nine fruits of the Spirit could've been displayed in people's lives.

4.3 A sanctified way of life is a powerful witness for Christ and the Gospel.

There's a world of people around us who never read or study the Bible, and a Christian's way of life might be their only reminder of Christian truth. This fact is pointed out in II Cor. 3:2-3 -- "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." See also I Peter 3:15-17.

4.4 It will determine my reward at God's judgment seat.

In Rev. 22:12 we read that the Lord "will give to everyone according to what he has done." That which was accomplished in our lives by the Spirit of God, will be lasting and worthwhile, while that which was prompted by the old man, will only produce shame and disgrace. "If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames" (I Cor. 3:12-15).

5. Conclusion. This subject is ably summarized by Michael Cassidy, founder of African Enterprise: "...sanctification is a process that springs out of the conversion experience and is made possible through our justification by faith. The Christian's ultimate goal in sanctification, as Thomas a Kempis affirmed, is the Imitation of Christ. Such a goal is, of course, not fully attainable in this life due to the stubborn resistance of our 'old natures'. However, the Holy Spirit is thankfully engaged in renewing and purifying us towards levels of Christlikeness which no one could even remotely achieve without supernatural assistance. As this renewal progresses, we become set apart for God's glory, much as the nation of Israel was set apart in the Old Testament.

"As the Christians make their way down the road of sanctification, their own faith is deepened, the love of Jesus becomes more evident, and the gifts of the Spirit are manifested much more clearly and decisively. Sanctification is certainly no easy venture,

and trials and tribulations will be the lot of all of us all along the way. But it is actually these trials and hardships which provide the Christian with opportunities to grow in Christ... May we all hang in on the bumpy and difficult Pilgrim Path to godly living for our Lord Jesus Christ” (from: ‘Theologically Speaking’, July 1997).

LECTURE 26 The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Being God's children, we have become participators in the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). Naturally, that nature should be revealed in the life of the Christian. This is effected in two ways:

- (1) by the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a person's life (I Cor. 12:1-11), and
- (2) by displaying the fruit of the Holy Spirit, i.e., the divine change in the life or character of man (Gal.5:22). The lecture on Sanctification applies here.

1. General

1.1 The differences between gifts of grace, workings and ministries

In I Cor. 12:4-6 it is stated: "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men."

1.1.1 Workings of God. These refer to direct action by God with no human intermediary. Examples:

- the burning bush (Exod. 3:2);
- the earth swallowing Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their families; their 250 fellow rebels consumed by fire (Num. 16);
- the visits by angels, voices from heaven, the saving of souls, baptism with the Holy Spirit, etc.

1.1.2 Gifts of grace (charismata). These are divinely bestowed powers or talents; free gifts of grace, e.g., the gift of speaking in tongues, or the gift of healing the sick. These are the gifts of the Holy Spirit and they are listed and discussed in I Cor. 12:8-10 and I Cor. 14.

1.1.3 Ministries. These are the various forms of service that the Lord intended for His Church, and described in I Cor. 12:28-30. As a certain gift(s) operate(s) in the life of a believer, he becomes fit for one of the ministries.

1.2 Do the gifts of the Spirit still apply today? In Lecture 21 we gave reasons why the baptism of the Holy Spirit is still for today. Those same reasons, slightly modified, also apply to the charismata and today's believers:

1.2.1 In Mark 16:17-18 we read how the Lord promised supernatural gifts to all who believe - in other words, these gifts were not restricted to the Early Church only.

1.2.2 In Rom. 11:29 we are assured that God's gifts are irrevocable; He will not cancel what He promised man or bestowed on him.

1.2.3 In the Early Church the manifestation of the spiritual gifts was a common occurrence (Mark 16:20; Acts 19:11; I Cor. 12 & 14, etc.). Why would the Lord suspend this for the same Church later on?

1.2.4 It is not God's will to deprive believers of the gifts (I Cor. 1:7); on the contrary, we are strongly encouraged to desire the greater gifts (I Cor. 12:31).

1.2.5 The fact that the spiritual gifts are not restricted to the apostolic period, is proved by the many instances of gifts operating, especially during revivals. And even today, we find many examples of supernatural healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues and the interpretation thereof, miraculous powers, etc.

1.3 The purpose of the Holy Spirit's gifts. In Lecture 23 we expanded on the purpose of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, and those points also apply here. We name a few:

1.3.1 The gifts bear witness to the existence, the omnipotence and the presence of God. It serves to convince the materialist and those who dabble in the supernatural by means of Satanic powers, that there is only one true God (Acts 4:30; 5:12; 8:13; 14:3; etc.). So God cooperated with signs and wonders to promote the spreading of the Gospel.

1.3.2 The spiritual gifts serve as aid to overcome human weakness and are thus part of man's equipment for his spiritual calling (Luke 12:11-12; Rom. 8:26).

1.3.3 According to I Cor. 14:2,3,12 another function of the gifts is to build up the Church, and to strengthen, encourage and comfort the believers. We must therefore regard the spiritual gifts as revelations of God that may even suspend the laws of nature for the time being.

1.4 Control of the gifts. According to I Cor. 12:4-6 the gifts of the Spirit are controlled by God's Spirit, and as far as man is concerned, they are not his permanent property or natural talent for use at will. The Spirit will decide where, when and for how long. "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines" (12:11). the only 'control' man has is to allow or exclude the gifts in his life; he must also discern the right moment for the gift to operate, e.g., in the assembly. He can nullify the working of a gift in his life by a sinful and loveless life (this underlines I Cor. 13).

1.5 Classification of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The nine gifts are usually divided into three groups:

1.5.1 The gifts of revelation, i.e., the message of wisdom, the message of knowledge and the gift to distinguish between spirits.

1.5.2 The gifts of power, namely, faith, the gift of healing and the gift of miraculous powers.

1.5.3 The gifts of inspired utterances, i.e., prophecy, different kinds of tongues and the interpretation of tongues.

2. The gifts of revelation

2.1 A message of wisdom. "To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom..." (I Cor. 12:8). 'Wisdom' (Greek *sophia*) is the quality of being wise and the ability to make right use of knowledge. E.g., a person is confronted by a deep ditch - too wide for jumping over and too deep to scramble through. When he looks around, finds a plank and uses it correctly, we can credit him with wisdom of a certain degree.

The spiritual gift of wisdom, However, is not natural insight or intelligence. The latter can be a characteristic of any unbeliever (John 14:7). The gift of wisdom is only given by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:8,11) as He wills. The spiritual gift of wisdom is something apart from a general insight in spiritual matters and is also not the wisdom that Solomon refers to in Proverbs 1:5. When a Christian feels that he / she needs wisdom, James advises: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault; and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). But the spiritual *gift* is something different - not a Christian virtue or an ability that is always available. The *gift* is worked in a person only at the moment that he needs it, e.g., Luke 12:11-12 : "When

you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

While natural wisdom and even spiritual insight and know-how, are mainly dependent on knowledge already available, the spiritual *gift* of wisdom is a direct revelation from God - it can't be deducted from available facts. We further notice that it is a 'message' ('word' in AV), in other words, it is something that God puts in the thoughts of the person and the latter translates it into words or deeds. A practical example of the application of the gift: In an ecclesiastical meeting an impasse or stalemate was reached, with indications of an unavoidable rift and parting of the ways. After a time of prayer, the Spirit revealed a solution to one of the persons there and guided him to express it in the right words. And what the meeting then heard, was the God-given solution to the whole matter. See also Acts 15:28.

2.2 A message of knowledge. “...to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit” (I Cor. 12:8). The Greek for 'knowledge' is *gnosis* which can also mean 'understanding'. Ordinary knowledge comes to you via your senses of vision, hearing, taste and the senses of touch and smell. Add to this the activity of reasoning. But when knowledge comes as a gift of the Spirit, it is a revelation from God. In many cases the natural sources of knowledge could never have produced the knowledge of the gift. This gift is not a thorough knowledge of the Bible and the Christian doctrine - although the Spirit can assist you with these as well - because both come via the natural learning / knowledge processes.

The message is literally a 'word' (Gr. *logos*) which I can transfer from my mind as speech or I can write it down, or I can act on it. This revelation comes to man when the Spirit decides it is time. Example: When Ananias and Sapphira appeared before Peter, a word of knowledge revealed to him that both of them were lying (Acts 5:3,9). This revelation can also come in the form of a vision, e.g., when Ananias of Damascus was ordered by the Lord to go to Saul (Acts 9:10-16).

There is a close relationship between the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge, and there are occasions when they operate together. Through the gift of knowledge, John on Patmos discerned the conditions in the seven churches of Asia Minor, and by means of the gift of wisdom, he sent evaluations and advice to them (Rev. 2&3).

2.3 Distinguishing between spirits (I Cor. 12:10). The Greek for 'distinguishing' is the noun *diakrisis* which can mean: 'ability to decide', or, 'dispute'. By means of the gift of knowledge we can obtain unique knowledge about things in the visible world, but the gift of distinguishing spirits, provides knowledge and judgment re spirits. When dealing with people, the recipient of the gift will not deal with the person as such, but with the spirit operating through that person, whether it is good or evil.

This gift is not about the ability to criticize and it is also not a psychological insight in the behaviour and motives of people, neither is it a form of mind-reading or a sort of intuition. It is a supernatural working of the Spirit in the life of an individual. Don't underestimate the influence of spirits on man (Ephes. 6:12). Even in the lives of children of God, when they have moments

of thoughtlessness or lack of devotion, an evil spirit can reveal itself, either by something said, or harmful behaviour or by a negative attitude.

Satan is a big imitator and he can imitate things about the Holy Spirit. Then the gift of distinguishing is absolutely essential in a congregation, to identify false piety, harmful influences, delusive spirits, etc., and to take action. This is why a stern warning is given in I John 4:1 -- “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Sometimes when a person is sick or suffers from a disability, it is because of an unclean spirit in the life of that person. This spirit must be distinguished before it can be driven out. The latter measure is *not* included in this gift (it requires the gift of miraculous powers).

Examples of the gift of distinguishing spirits:

- Christ distinguishes Satan speaking through Peter in Matt. 16:23;
- Paul discerns the *true* origin of the fortune-telling slave-girl’s religious pronouncements, and drives out the evil spirit in Acts 16:16-18.

LECTURE 27 THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (cont.)

3. The Gifts of Power

3.1 Faith (I Cor. 12:9). The Greek word for 'faith' is *pistis*, which can also mean: belief, persuasion, conviction, assurance, faithfulness and honesty. But the spiritual gift of faith is unique. It is not natural, human faith, the trust in visible things - trusting the tap for water supply, the bank for taking good care of your money, etc. The gift is also not saving faith, because that is a condition for getting saved. But the gift of faith is something that a person receives *after* he qualified for salvation through his faith. It is something towards which the believer must strive (I Cor. 12:31). The *faith* of the gift is also different from the faith mentioned in Jude 1:3 -- "...the faith that was once entrusted to the saints." This faith is the *doctrine* preached to them, the Gospel.

The gift of faith is a special working of faith by means of which supernatural things take place. The Spirit is here working in the life of a person, enabling him to trust God to do the supernatural. It is often about protection and the providing for personal needs. It may follow a revelation, e.g., when that ship in Acts 27 was in serious trouble due to the terrible storm, Paul declared with calm confidence that not one life would be lost (Acts 27:21-25). At times the faith gift is a positive reassurance that God will protect you in grave danger, e.g., when Paul shook off the poisonous snake and acted as if nothing was amiss (Acts 28:3-6). A more recent example is the faith displayed by George Mueller of Bristol. The way God provided for his orphanage is well-known, but the gift of faith also proved too much for a confirmed agnostic:

George Mueller once addressed an Edinburgh audience in a hall packed to overflowing. "A well-known agnostic, inspired by curiosity, pressed his way into the hall. Just when the preacher began to deliver his address, a young mother attempted to leave the building because her baby began to cry rather loudly, but the crowd was so great that exit was impossible. Mr. Mueller came at once to the troubled mother's help by saying: 'Will that dear mother sit down, and we shall ask Jesus to put baby to sleep.' The mother quietly took her seat, and the great assembly reverently bowed their heads while Mr. Mueller prayed as follows: 'Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, be pleased to put this baby to sleep.' Immediately the child went to sleep, to the evident astonishment of the audience. The agnostic was startled beyond measure and said to himself, 'If that man has a God like that, it is time for me to seek Him'; and under the power of the Holy Spirit he sought and found George Mueller's God. He became a true Christian..." (A. Naismith).

3.2 Healing (I Cor. 12:9). This gift of grace is proof of God's sympathy with His children. Some say that there is always about 1% of humanity sick. Lots of scope for this gift! This gift is non-medical and entirely the work of the Holy Spirit, as *He* wills it. But there is also room for medical procedures and when supported by a believer's prayers, God can bless the human effort. Healing as gift of the Spirit can operate when hands are laid on a sick person during prayer (Mark 16:18) or by anointing the sick person with oil before praying (James 5:14) or just by the presence of the gifted person (Acts 5:15). In the time of the apostles the gift was even effective through impartation, with articles touched by the gifted person (Acts 19:11-12).

This gift does *not* include the casting out of demons and spirits, although these entities often cause physical illness (Matt. 12:22). Exorcism falls within the operating field of miraculous powers. Also note that not all cases of supernatural healing can be ascribed to the working of the healing gift. When a person approaches the Lord with childlike faith for personal healing, or intercedes for someone else, the Lord will hear his/her prayer, for God's loving kindness is not limited to the working of the gift through a third party.

In conclusion, we must emphasize that the person with this gift is merely an instrument through which the Holy Spirit operates. Therefore, that person cannot decide who *he* is going to heal. No, the Spirit will decide when and how the gift is to operate (I Cor. 12:11). If the Spirit decides to withhold divine healing, perhaps because of sin or disbelief, or because the Lord has a special purpose with that sickness, then the gift will not function. This explains why so many patients are not healed when prayers are offered on their behalf, and why others must first go through repentance, etc., before healing takes place.

3.3 Miraculous power (I Cor. 12:10). The Greek word used here is *dunamis*, meaning: strength, power, authority, but also *a miracle* (e.g. in Acts 8:13 and I Cor. 12:12). By the way, our English words dynamo and dynamite, also derive from 'dunamis'. This gift is a revelation of God's omnipotence, especially as regards His Creation. This gift then enables a person to do things that would normally be impossible. It differs from the faith gift therein that the receiver of the latter applies faith by means of which God does certain supernatural things. When the gift of miraculous powers operates, God allows the gifted one to handle the miracle himself. Examples of this gift are (a) Moses cleaving the Red Sea by merely stretching his hand over the sea, and (b) striking the rock when water was needed.

Just as the case with the gifts of healing, this gift does not oppose the natural laws, but it is simply higher than the natural laws. Like the other gifts, it is based on a higher law - the faith in God. And when this higher principle operates, the normal, natural laws are temporarily suspended. The purpose of this gift is primarily to convince people of God's presence and omnipotence. Therefore most instances of this gift's application are in the OT and in present-day mission fields, where people have to forego the wonderful revelation of God through the written word and the preached Gospel. This gift also comes to the fore where Christians clash with the evil powers of the Adversary. Further examples of this gift are:

- an axe-head floats on water (II Kings 6:1-7);
- water is changed into wine (John 2:1-11);
- the multiplication of the barley loaves and fish (John 6:5-14);
- Elymas struck with blindness (Acts 13:6-11).

4. The Gifts of Inspired Utterances

4.1 Prophecy (I Cor. 12:10). In this group of gifts prophecy is the most important one (I Cor. 14:5). The Hebrew word for prophet is *nabi*, which reminds one of the verb *nabiya* which means to well up - like water from a fountain. Actually, in prophecy words flow spontaneously from the mouth of the prophet, because he is then under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The

Greek word for 'prophecy' is *propheteuo* which also means to speak inspired utterances; to predict. So the Holy Spirit inspires utterances in normal speech, in the local language, on behalf of the Lord.

Prophecy as a gift from the Holy Spirit differs from the OT prophet's ministry. The OT prophet was a *chosen* person who acted as God's mouthpiece, with authority. These prophets also had gifts of revelation. The NT gift, on the other hand, could be coveted by any believer and, when in action, it does not carry the same weight as the words of a 'full-time' (OT) prophet - and must first be evaluated (I Cor. 14:29). In addition, it does not include the gifts of revelation.

The gift of prophecy is *not* ordinary preaching, although some theologians (e.g. non-charismatic Bible translators) try hard to suggest that. Anyone with the basic talents to prepare a sermon can do it and even manage a fine delivery - humanly speaking. But that is not the Holy Spirit in action. On the other hand, a plain, simple-hearted person who would never venture to preach or deliver a speech under normal circumstances, may display extraordinary eloquence and profound ideas when the gift of prophecy operates through him. The preacher utters the thoughts that he himself thought out, but with prophecy the mind of the speaker is unfruitful and the words flow spontaneously from his lips, reminding one of the situation with tongues (I Cor. 14:14). The only control the person has, is to allow or to stop the flow of inspired words - see I Cor. 14:29-30. The presence of a living faith is just as important here as with the other gifts. Prophecy operates in proportion to the person's faith (Rom. 12:6).

The purpose of prophecy is the "strengthening, encouragement and comfort" of the congregation (I Cor. 14:3), convincing the sinner of his sinful state (I Cor. 14:24-25). Because prophecy is from God, He can send a message that reveals a sinner's whole life; it could also be a form of teaching. The gift of prophecy can even break through in a sermon; the Holy Spirit can take control of a preacher and from his mouth inspired thoughts can flow forth eloquently.

The striving for this gift is encouraged (I Cor. 14:39; I Thess. 5:20). But there is also a strict warning about false prophecies - something bound to occur in the end-time (I John 4:1). This necessitates the evaluation of prophecy (I Cor. 14:29). The following tests may be applied:

4.1.1 "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously" (Deut. 18:22).

4.1.2 Prophecies may not deviate from Biblical doctrine (Isa. 8:20).

4.1.3 The life style of the prophet will provide proof of the genuineness of his words (Matt. 7:15-20).

4.2 Different kinds of tongues (I Cor. 12:10). This gift resembles prophecy, except that prophecy is always in a language understandable for both speaker and hearers, whereas the speaking in tongues is in a language that the speaker does not understand and his hearers can only understand in exceptional cases. When the manifestation of the latter gift coincides with the presence of the gift of interpretation of tongues, then tongues and prophecy closely resemble each other (I Cor. 14:6).

It must be pointed out that this gift is not restricted to one tongue only. Therefore it happens that a gifted person will use now this and then another tongue. But note - this gift has no relationship to any human capacity for languages. It is far beyond the abilities of even the best unbelieving linguist. Because the Holy Spirit is responsible, these could be heavenly languages. The speaker himself, is also ignorant of the content until an interpretation is given (I Cor. 14:2, 13, 27-28).

The *purpose* of this gift can be summarized as follows:

4.2.1 It provides a divine sign to those who are ministered to (Mark 16:17,20).

It is especially a sign for the unbelievers (I Cor. 14:22) and sometimes an unbeliever understands the language spoken, as happened on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13). The latter, a language wonder, has occurred many times in the 20th century as well, especially with missionaries who apparently spoke in tongues and was then perfectly understood by the audience, or who discovered themselves conversing or preaching in a local language without special effort, and then in a language they don't know at all. The content of what they speak is then of course a message directly from the Lord to those assembled.

4.2.2 Tongues are an aid for the speaker to communicate with God. As the Bible says: "For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God" (I Cor. 14:2). "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful" (I Cor. 14:14); and "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Rom. 8:26).

4.2.3 It provides a way in which God may be glorified and magnified (Acts 2:11; 10:46).

4.2.4 Speaking in tongues edifies the speaker (I Cor. 14:4). It has the same uplifting influence on the soul as that associated with fervent prayer.

4.2.5 When the gift of interpretation comes into action, that is when tongues become edifying (a building up) for the congregation (I Cor. 14:5). Although this gift is only mentioned towards the end of the list of gifts (I Cor. 12:27-30), it was fairly common in the Early Church and it receives more attention than the other gifts mentioned in the NT (e.g. I Cor. 14).

In order to enjoy the full blessing of this gift, proper control is essential. Paul emphasizes this in I Cor. 14:27 & 28 - please look up the reference. This is a good example from I Cor. 14 - a chapter written mainly to teach good order whenever the gifts operate during a service. The idea is not to suppress or frustrate them, but to ensure orderly services to the glory of God.

4.3 Interpretation of tongues (I Cor. 12:10). This gift is closely associated with the gift of tongues and actually complements it. Through this gift the Holy Spirit enables the receiver to translate a heavenly tongue into the common language of the assembly, and in so doing, transmits God's message to the congregation. This gift is *not* a natural talent for interpreting foreign languages. Therefore I Cor. 14:13 states: "For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says." That means that the speaker prays that the Spirit of God will provide the interpretation. So this

gift is divine and just as wonderful as the gift of tongues, but it is naturally dependent on the latter. The interpretation of tongues can operate in various ways:

4.3.1 While someone speaks in tongues, another person comes under the power of the Holy Spirit and sees in a vision what the first person is saying, and then the second person reveals it to the assembly in the local language.

4.3.2 While a person is speaking in tongues, another member, urged by the Spirit, spontaneously explains what is said by the tongue speaker, without first considering what to say - somewhat like a prophecy.

4.3.3 Someone speaks in tongues, and somebody present is given the interpretation by the Holy Spirit, and then he reproduces it for the assembly in his own words.

It sometimes happens that the length of the interpretation differs from the length of the original tongue. This could be ascribed to the following:

- The interpretation is not a literal translation of a message in tongues, but an explanation of that message. Therefore, the interpretation can be longer or shorter than the 'original'.
- Another reason may be that tongues differ from one another in their relation to the language used for interpretation, i.e., Thoughts in one tongue may be explained in a few words, but a message in another one may require many sentences of explanation.

There is no Biblical requirement that a congregation must have an official interpreter of tongues; in the hands of the Holy Spirit anyone can be that instrument or agent. Of course, there can't be more than one interpreter of a particular message. The purpose of the gift of interpretation is to bring clarity about what would otherwise remain obscure. It leads to blessings similar to those of prophecy.

5. How to receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Bible advises believers to eagerly desire the greater gifts (I Cor. 12:31) and not to go without a spiritual gift (I Cor. 1:7). On the human side, the following principles must be borne in mind:

5.1 Knowledge. Knowledge about the gifts of grace and their operation is essential, as Paul states: "Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant" (I Cor. 12:1). Unless one knows what you are striving for, you may miss the target and not know exactly what to believe.

5.2 A means to an end. The spiritual gifts are not a purpose in themselves. The Lord graciously makes these gifts available to promote the spreading of the Gospel, to resist the Evil One, to rule the Church, to edify and strengthen the believers, etc. So, 'when perfection comes', and the mentioned goals become irrelevant, the gifts will fall away - see I Cor. 13:8-10. The Bible therefore teaches: "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given *for the common good*" (I Cor. 12:7). He who desires gifts from the Holy Spirit, must do his best for the Kingdom, so that gifts-in-aid will be appropriate. Example: If someone desires the gift of prophecy, he must strive with vigour to preach the Gospel to others. He must strive to do this better and better, all the time confessing his dependency on the Holy

Spirit and requesting the Lord's assistance. Then one could expect the Holy Spirit's aid and that appropriate gift will be granted.

5.3 Faithful prayer.

This has always been God's prescribed way along which any form of blessing can be obtained from Him. He who is keen on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, must have an active prayer life and learn to accept what God gives, for application in practice. When the disciples were frustrated with a recalcitrant demon, Jesus advised: "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. 17:21 - AV). How wonderful to hear the promise: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault; and it will be given to him (James 1:5).

5.4 The attitude of love.

In conclusion, the revelation of the Spiritual gifts may never be divorced from *love*. Love is a universal attitude, an element central to all religious activities. On this point I Cor. 13:1-3 is very outspoken: "If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but I have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." He then, who would like to see these gifts revealed in the congregation, through himself, must strive towards this attitude:

The interests of God first, then those of my neighbour, and then my own.

LECTURE 28

Eschatology

The doctrine about the end of time

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Although the Second Advent is taught loudly and clearly in the Bible, there are many additional facts and theories that lend themselves to a variety of interpretations. For the purpose of this study, we will restrict ourselves to the main points only.

1. The Dispensations

Before we concentrate on the end of time, it is important to get clarity about the main periods of earthly life in the wider context.

1.1 Three main dispensations

- 1.1.1** The old dispensation. This is the period from Creation to the incarnation of Christ, His First Advent. This also called the time of the Old Covenant and the outstanding feature of this period is the Law that man had to obey.
- 1.1.2** The present dispensation. This covers the time from Christ's Incarnation up to His Second Coming - also known as the era of the New Covenant. It is referred to as the Christian era or the Church Dispensation.
- 1.1.3** The future dispensation. This spans the time from Christ's Second Coming to the end. It is also referred to as the Millennium, a time of peace and righteousness.

1.2 Subdivisions. The Old Dispensation can be subdivided into the following periods:

- 1.2.1** The time of *innocence*. This covers the time from Creation to the Fall.
- 1.2.2** The time of the *conscience*. This is the time between the Fall and the Deluge.
- 1.2.3** The time of the *patriarchs*. This period includes all the leaders of the early Israelites between the Deluge and Moses.
- 1.2.4** The era of the Law. This stretches from Moses to Christ.

2. The Second Advent as a fact

2.1 The Second Coming as a certainty. This is very clearly taught in the Bible. In the NT alone there are more than 300 references to this happening. Epistles like I and II Thessalonians are practically devoted to the Second Advent. In the Gospels chapter 24 of Matthew and chapter 13 of Mark concentrate on this subject only. In the Bible as a whole the Second Coming of Christ receives far more attention than the first Coming - some reckon eight times more. The OT prophets also mentioned it - Joel 3:14,18; Zeph. 3:11,16; Zech. 14:9 - and there is reference to 'the last days' in Isa. 2:2-4 and Hos. 3:5. Angels confirmed it (Acts 1:10-11); the apostles declared it (Acts 3:19-21; I Thess. 4:16-17; I John 2:28; Jude 1:14-15); and Jesus Himself foretold it (Matt. 24).

2.2 How will He come? Christ will come to our earth in person, in the same way as He left with the Ascension (Acts 1:11). "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God..." (I Thess. 4:16). See also Rev. 1:7. He will come in glory accompanied by a heavenly host (Matt. 16:27; Matt. 25:31); II Thess. 1:7), and all will see Him (Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7).

2.3 The time of the Parousia (2nd Coming).

Through the years there have been many attempts to predict a date for the Second Coming, but always with bitter disappointment. Christ Himself stated: “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matt. 24:36). The wisdom of this arrangement is apparent. Exact knowledge, like knowledge of your date for passing on, would upset you in the continued carrying out of normal duties. We have only been given signs to look out for when *the* time is approaching. The Bible also teaches that this will come suddenly and unexpectedly (Matt. 24:27,50; I Cor. 15:52).

2.4 The purpose of His Second Advent.

Christ will come to take the believers, His children, away (John 14:2-3) and to start the end time developments - first judgment, Millennium, etc.

3. False doctrines about the Parousia

3.1 It takes place each time that a Christian dies. This is incorrect because:

3.1.1 What is described in I Thess. 4:16, will be anything but death for a Christian.

3.1.2 In I Cor. 15:51 we read that not all shall die, but that some will be changed. It is obvious that this and death could not be identical.

3.1.3 We think of the Parousia as a blessed hope ((I Thess. 4:18), whilst death can be viewed as an enemy (I Cor. 15:26).

3.1.4 With the Second Advent Christ *appears* to living folk on earth, but at the time of the Christian's death, he goes to be with Christ.

3.1.5 Christ refers to the death of John and His Second Coming as two separate events (John 21:21-23).

3.1.6 To replace the words of Scripture, where the Parousia is referred to, with the word 'death' would make the Scriptures meaningless and foolish..

3.2 The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was in fact the promised Second Advent of Christ. This is incorrect because:

So many of the promises/predictions about the Parousia were made *after* Pentecost (Phil. 3:20; II Tim. 4:8; I Thess. 4:16-17).

3.3 Christ returned in person with the destruction of Jerusalem. This could not have happened in 70 AD because:

3.3.1 Nameless sorrows accompanied the destruction of Jerusalem, even for the Christians. This does not tally with the great deliverance and joy we expect at the Parousia.

3.3.2 Events prophesied did not take place at that time. And there are various promises connected with the Second Advent, but made after 70 AD, e.g., those in the Revelation.

4. Signs of the Second Coming

The Lord has given us information about the following signs:

4.1 Wickedness in abundance, similar to conditions before the Deluge and in the days of Sodom (Luke 17:26-30).

4.2 A worldwide backsliding from the Gospel and its replacement with false doctrines

(I Tim. 4:1; II Tim. 4:3-4).

- 4.3 A dramatic increase in wicked sins.** See Matt. 24:12 and II Tim. 3:1-5.
- 4.4 The persecution of Christians.** See Matt. 24:9-10 and Mark 13 :9, 11-13.
- 4.5 Worldwide preaching of the Gospel.** See Mark 13:10.
- 4.6 Progress of knowledge and science.** See Dan. 12:4.
- 4.7 Hoarding of treasure by some,** while others suffer poverty - James 5:1-4.
- 4.8 Return of the Jews to Palestine** and their re-awakening as a nation.
- 4.9 Famines, earthquakes, wars and rumours of wars.** See Matt. 24:6-8.
- 4.10 Nations in anguish and perplexity.** See Luke 21:25.
- 4.11 Those who proclaim ‘peace and safety’ will receive a sudden shock.** See I Thess. 5:1-3.

5. The two definitive aspects of the Second Advent

When Christ comes again two separate developments will take place, namely, the rapture of believers and His visible appearance on earth. In the Bible we are informed about the Parousia, the Coming (e.g. in Matt. 24:3), but also about the Epiphaneia, the appearing or appearance (e.g. in II Tim. 4:8). With the Parousia Christ comes unexpectedly, to take His children away (Matt. 24:40-44) and with the Epiphaneia He will appear in the clouds “and every eye will see him” (Rev. 1:7).

6. The Rapture

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever” (I Thess. 4:16-17). About this event the Bible teaches us:

- 6.1** A command will be shouted but will only be heard by believers - those who have died and those still living; the sign to meet the Lord.
- 6.2** The first resurrection now takes place. About the nature of the resurrection body Scripture says little. Paul refers to it as ‘a spiritual body’ (I Cor. 15:44), which appears to be a body which meets the needs of the spirit. He expressly differentiates it from the ‘natural body’ which we now have, and we infer that a spiritual body is in some respects different from the body we now know. The spiritual body has the qualities of incorruptibility, glory and power (I Cor. 15:42-49). This ties in with Jesus’ teaching that there will be no marriages after the resurrection (Mark 12:25).
- 6.3** By this process we will be like the Lord (I John 3:2) with spiritual bodies (Rom. 8:23).

6.4 The ‘rapture’ (II Cor. 12:2; I Thess. 4:17) is expressed in Greek by the verb *harpazo* which has meanings like ‘to seize’ (John 10:12); ‘to take by force’ (Matt. 11:12); ‘to snatch away’ (Matt. 13:19); ‘to snatch out, to rescue’ (Jude 1:23). Christ will indeed snatch us away from the pending oppressions and miseries.

7. The Judgment-seat of Christ

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10). After assembling the believers, they are arraigned before the judgment-seat of Christ, and their lives and works on earth are examined by fire. Poor quality will be consumed by fire and if that is the overall finding, the believer in question will be saved “...but only as one escaping through the flames” (I Cor. 3:10-15). See also Rom. 14:10-11 and Rev. 22:12. Then every believer will be awarded his place in the hereafter.

8. The Wedding supper of the Lamb

This feast follows after the examination and purification before the Judgment-seat. This is the heavenly celebration of the union between Christ (the bridegroom) and the believers (His bride). ““Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)”(Rev. 19:7-8).

9. The Antichrist

The Antichrist is a Satanically inspired superman who will reign as world dictator. In the Bible he is mentioned only in I John 2:18,22; 4:3; II John 1:7, but the antichrist idea is widespread. It is one who *opposes* Christ, rather than one who claims to be Christ. So we can include passages like Dan. 7:7-11,21; II Thess. 2:1-12 and various references in Revelation, which deal with the strong opposition that the forces of evil are to offer Christ in the last days. The Bible sheds more light on the matter:

9.1 The spirit of antichrist has been active in the world for a long time (I John 2:18-19). There have always been those who feign godliness, or who delude people with evil doctrines.

9.2 He will be a real person (II Thess. 2:3-4); I John 2:18,22) and not some or other group or organization.

9.3 He will reign over an alliance of kingdoms (Dan. 7:23-24 and Dan. 8) and his time of authority will last until Christ comes again (Dan. 7:21-22).

9.4 He will present himself as a god (Dan. 11:36-39; II Thess. 2:3-4) and be a cruel persecutor of believers (Dan. 7:21,25; 8:24).

9.5 In Revelation he is called the beast (Rev. 13:1-8). The false prophet, called the beast coming out of the earth (Rev. 13:11), will induce people with false miracles to

worship the Antichrist's image. Those who refuse to worship there, will be killed (Rev. 13:13-15).

9.6 He will force everyone to receive a mark on the right hand or on his forehead, and those who refuse will be unable to buy or sell. The beast's number is 666 (Rev. 13:16-18).

9.7 He will lead the nations to the battle of Armageddon, where he will be conquered by Christ and then thrown, with the false prophet, alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur (Rev. 19:19-20).

10. The time of great distress

10.1 The appearance of the Antichrist, will start a time of unequalled distress and grief. "For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equalled again" (Matt. 24:21). The oppression will be aimed especially at the Jews and they will only be saved from total annihilation by supernatural intervention (Jer. 30:4-7; Dan. 12:1).

10.2 The great distress will last for 3 1/2 years (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 11:2-3; 13:5).

10.3 At this time, many who missed the Rapture of believers, because they were then unsaved, will now even sacrifice their lives for their faith and be saved (Rev. 7:14-17).

10.4 During the latter part of the distress period, God will inflict terrible plagues and woes on the ungodly (Rev. chapters 8, 9, 15, 16).

The Second Coming Of Christ (cont.)**1. His glorious appearance**

As already mentioned, the Second Advent includes the Rapture of believers (*harpazo*) and the Epiphaneia when Christ Himself will appear in the clouds for everyone to see.

1.1 With power and great glory.

With Christ's First Coming to earth He was the humble Servant who served, was rejected, mocked, ill-treated and hurried to a cruel death. With the Second Advent, however, He will appear as the King of all kings, to whom all glory, honour and power has been given. "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30b).

1.2 He appears on a white horse dressed in a robe dipped in blood

"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God" (Rev. 19:11-13). This represents Christ as the Mighty Warrior and Commander.

1.3 Followed by mighty angels and the saints.

In Rev. 19:14 it says that the armies of heaven will follow Him, "...riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen..." According to II Thess. 1:7 those armies include powerful angels, and according to Zech. 14:5 and Col. 3:4 he will be accompanied by the saints.

1.4 The appearance of Christ will be accompanied by wonders and signs in nature

This is clearly stated by Jesus Himself in Matt. 24:29 -- "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." This is supported by Zech. 14:6-7 and Rev. 6:12-14.

1.5 Christ will be visible to everyone.

This will differ from the Rapture, when He will come like a thief at night time. It is best described in Rev. 1:7 -- "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him..."

1.6 He will stand on the Mount of Olives.

"On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south" (Zech. 14:4).

1.7 One objective with His Advent is to save the remnant of Jews and to exact retribution from the enemies of God for the blood of the martyrs.

When the great tribulation reaches its climax, Christ intervenes, probably in response to the call by the souls of those killed during the tribulation (Rev. 6:9-11). Then, when it seems as if all Israel is being exterminated, He intervenes and defeats the nations surrounding the holy city (Jerusalem) - Isa. 59:16-19; Joel 3:16.

2. The battle of Armageddon

2.1 The venue.

The place where the great final battle of this world will be fought, is called Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). In Joel 3:14 it is referred to as 'the valley of decision'.

2.2 The armies of the Antichrist and the capture of Jerusalem

"Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered to make war against the rider on the horse and his army" (Rev. 19:19). These armies will attack the holy city, capture it and carry half of the population away as exiles. "I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city" (Zech. 14:2)

2.3 The great Day of the Lord.

This is the when the Lord will smash the power of wickedness on earth and establish His Kingdom here. Therefore the Bible refers to that point in time as "the day of the Lord" (Zech. 14:1) or, "the great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:14). For earth inhabitants it is going to be a terrible day, for it is written: "Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?'" (Rev. 6:15-17).

2.4 Treading the Winepress of God's wrath.

The way in which the Lord is going to destroy the armies of the Antichrist, is compared to an old-fashioned winepress wherein the grapes are crushed by human feet until there only remains empty husks and juice. "He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty" (Rev. 19:15b). See also Isa. 63:1-6.

The exact method employed for the destruction of the enemy nations is unclear -- whether they fight each other (like Ammon, Moab and Seir in I Chron. 20:23), or that the Lord strikes them with a terrible plague, or whatever. What does seem probable is bloodshed on a horrible scale, because we read: "They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1600 stadia" (Rev. 14:20). But in Zech. 14:22 it is formulated differently: "This is the plague with which the Lord will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths."

The battlefield will be strewn with corpses that are not even buried, for the Bible states: "The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh" (Rev. 19:21).

"Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather" (Matt. 24:28). All this is a gruesome portrayal of the deepest contempt and scorn which will be heaped on the enemies of God.

2.5 The beast and false prophet captured.

Not only will the armies of the Antichrist be completely destroyed, but the Bible states: "But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and

worshipped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur” (Rev.19:20).

3. The Millennium (a thousand years of peace and happiness)

In Rev. 20:1-4 we read the following:

“And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon...Satan, and bound him for a thousand years...to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended...I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image...They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

3.1 Pre-Millennialism or Post-Millennialism?

For the first three centuries of the Christian era, the Church generally believed that Christ would return one day to establish a millennial Kingdom. The early Church fathers, e.g. Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, Lactanius, and others, all supported this view, that became to be known as the Pre-Millennialism (This is essentially the school of thought that expects the Second Coming of Christ *before* the start of the 1000 years of peace on earth).

When Emperor Constantine (288-337) changed the relationship between State and Christianity, the Roman Catholic deviations started and Pre-Millennialism was replaced with Post-Millennialism (a school of thought holding that Christ will return only *after* a 1000 year period of peace on earth). The Catholics maintained that the Gospel would spread and be accepted to the point that a kingdom of peace will be established on earth. Then a short period of apostasy will follow just before the Second Advent of Christ. They also allege that Christ is already reigning on earth via His representative, the Pope. In order to exterminate the idea of Pre-Millennialism completely, a meeting at Laodicea in 360 AD decided to omit the book of Revelation from the Canon (the Bible as we know it).

With the Reformation, however, Pre-Millennialism came to the fore again. In our opinion it is the only Biblically supported point of view and the only defensible precept, for the following reasons:

3.1.1 In Rev. 20:1-3 we learn that Satan will be bound during the Millennium “to keep him from deceiving the nations.” In the meantime 2000 years have elapsed after Christ’s Ascension and there is no sign that the quoted Scripture portion is anywhere near fulfillment. On the contrary, it would seem that the devil is now freer than ever before.

3.1.2 He who believes in an earthly utopia without divine intervention, must be a dreamer who is out of touch with reality and the swelling tide of iniquity.

3.1.3 Prophecies about the Millennium, such as those in Isa. 11:6-9 and Isa. 41:18-20, have not yet been fulfilled.

3.1.4 The signs that Christ’s return is near have all appeared, but no kingdom of peace preceded them. That means that the Second Coming is so near, that a millennium can’t really be ‘inserted’ before that Coming.

3.1.5 Post-Millennialism can cause a reckless attitude or at least a spiritual slackness, while Pre-Millennialism urges humanity towards prayerful alertness (Matt. 25:13).

3.1.6 The Bible is clear on the point that the Second Coming of Christ is first - see Rev. 19:11-21 and 20:1-6.

3.2 The Kingdom of the Messiah

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13-14). With His first sojourn on earth Christ admitted to being a king (John 18:37), but He was rejected by humanity and crucified. With His Second Coming, however, He will bring the world under His rule and subject all other rulers and leaders to His own Divine rule (Dan. 7:27). “The LORD will be king over the whole earth...” (Zech. 14:9). About His reign the Bible tells us:

- (a) His seat of government will be Jerusalem (Isa. 24:23).
- (b) He will occupy the throne of David (Luke 1:32-33).
- (c) He will rule the nations with an iron sceptre (Rev. 12:5; 19:15), in other words, He will be Head of the government and no disobedience will be tolerated.
- (d) The saints will reign with Christ: “They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20:4). See also Dan. 7:22.

3.3 Conditions during the Millennium

3.3.1 There will be no more wars (Isa. 2:4) because Satan, the one who leads nations astray, will be bound (Rev. 20:3).

3.3.2 Jerusalem will be the religious centre to which all nations will go to worship, and everyone will confess the Lord Jesus (Micah 4:1-2; Zech. 8:20-23; 14:16-17).

3.3.3 For the saints this will be a period of unknown glory (Isa. 35:10; Zeph. 3:14-17).

3.3.4 Even in nature there will be a change in that weeds will be replaced by useful plants (Isa. 41:18-19) and the wild animals will change their ferocious natures (Isa. 11:6-8).

4. The last rebellion against God and Judgment

4.1 Satan, released for a short while, misleads the nations

“When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth - Gog and Magog - to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore” (Rev. 20:7-8).

4.2 God crushes the last rebellion

“They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where

the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:9-10).

4.3 The last resurrection - the resurrection of condemnation

Before the Millennium commences, the first resurrection, the resurrection of believers will take place. But... “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended” (Rev. 20:5).

4.4 The White Throne Judgment

Please make a clear distinction here:

- (a) Believers will appear before the *judgment seat of Christ* (II Cor. 5:10). This takes place *before* the Millennium (Rev. 4 and 5).
- (b) The *White Throne Judgment* is intended for those who remain dead in their “transgressions and sins” (Ephes. 2:1). Now, after the second resurrection, this judgment is that session where the unrighteous are condemned to punishment (II Peter 2:9).

Under (a) believers may suffer demerits but remain saved. Under (b) those poor souls are condemned to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

The White Throne procedure is fully described in Rev. 20:11-15.

4.5 The Book of Life

Apparently a complete record is kept of a person’s life. This book belongs to the Lamb (Rev. 13:8). The names of the saints appear therein, but the names of those who rejected God’s grace, are erased or omitted (Luke 10:20; Rev. 3:5).

4.6 The lake of fire

This is the final destination for all wickedness: first for the Antichrist and the false prophet (Rev. 19:20); then its the turn of Satan and his angels (Matt. 25:41) and finally, all those whose names do not appear in the Book of Life. And the lake of fire is the second death for all the mentioned.

5. The New Heaven and the New Earth

5.1 The present heavens and earth destroyed

“By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men... But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare” (II Peter 3:7,10).

5.1.1 The earth is doomed because it is polluted as a result of the wickedness of man and God’s curse resting on it. The heavens (including stars, sun, moon, planets, etc.) will be destroyed, apparently because they are by then also polluted by all the evil, perhaps caused by the evil spirits in the air.

5.1.2 The Greek verb translated with ‘destroy’ (NIV) or ‘dissolve’ (AV), is *luo*, which means to destroy, to tear down, to break to pieces.

5.1.3 This process of destruction will be effected by fire and terrible heat, accompanied by a roaring sound.

5.2 A New Heaven and Earth created

We have the promise of a new heaven and a new earth - “the home of righteousness” (II Peter 3:13). “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea” (Rev. 21:1).

5.2.1 The new earth will be perfect in each respect - no death, no grief or toil. God Himself will dwell with man (Rev. 21:3-4).

5.2.2 An interesting point is that the Bible starts with the creation of perfect heavens and earth and now the Bible record ends with a similar creation.

5.3 The New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9-27; 22:1-5)

“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” (Rev. 21:10). About this city we read:

5.3.1 It is called the bride, the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9) and here all the saints are gathered.

5.3.2 It is something predicted a long time ago (Heb. 11:10; 12:22).

5.3.3 It is a wonderful city, surrounded by a high wall and twelve gates. On the gates are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The surrounding wall will have 12 foundations, and on them the names of the 12 apostles will appear. Everywhere gold and precious stones will be in evidence.

5.3.4 The dimensions of the city are enormous: length = 2 200 km, and it is as wide and as high as it is long.

5.3.5 Down the middle of the main street the river of life will flow, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. On each side of the river, the tree of life will stand.

5.3.6 In this city perfect bliss will reign and nothing impure will ever enter it.

5.3.7 The throne of God and the Lamb will be in the City; the saints will see Him and serve Him, and His Name will be on their foreheads (Rev. 22:4).

5.3.8 “There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 22:5).

Death and the destinations of man

1. What is Death?

In Gen. 2:7 it is stated: "...the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" ('a living soul' - AV). So man was created in two components - the body from the earth, and the non-material spirit and soul directly from God.

With death, the soul(spirit) is separated from the body. The following Scripture references shed light on this:

* Elijah re the widow's son: "O LORD my God, let this boy's life (soul - AV) return to him! ...and the boy's life (soul - AV) returned to him, and he lived" (I Kings 17:21-22).

* Jairus' daughter: "Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up" (Luke 8:55).

The human body becomes dust again, but the soul returns to God (or a place designated by Him). "...and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccles. 12:7).

2. The immortality of the soul

Just about all religions on earth seem to hold out hope of a continued existence after death. But this concept had to develop. In the times described in the OT, the Hebrews believed that the soul of every man, good and bad alike, went to Sheol. Sheol was the land of the shades; all alike went there. They lived a vague, shadowy, strengthless, joyless life, like spectres or ghosts. In Ps. 88:12 this question is put to the LORD: "Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?"

But we find the real seed of the Jewish belief in immortality in the words of Job: "And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God" (Job 19:26). See also Isa. 26:19 and Dan. 12:2.

And then, by His resurrection, Christ abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light (II Tim. 1:10). Jesus Himself had to contend with the Sadducees, who refused to believe in any life after death. Now, 20 centuries later, we have the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses with us. They believe that man dies completely, like the animals. This assertion ignores the distinguishing feature of man - his soul and spirit. (The latter is *ruach* in Hebrew and *pneuma* in Greek).

3. The Realm of the dead

The Bible teaches us that man passes through three phases, i.e., earthly life, the realm of the dead, and then eternity.

3.1 What exactly is this world of the dead?

In Hebrew it is called *Sheol* and in Greek *Hades* (wrongly translated 'hell' in the King James version of the Bible). The place is aptly described in Job 30:23 - "I know you will bring me down to death, to the place appointed for all the living" ('to the house appointed for all the living' - AV).

3.2 The realm of the dead has two parts.

This is clearly indicated in the story Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). 'Abraham's *side*' ('*bosom*' - AV) is Paradise, the intermediate state in which souls of the just await resurrection. But there is the bleaker side of Hades, the intermediate state of the lost, awaiting judgment. Verse 23 indicates that the lost are in torment and that there is an impassable gulf between the two divisions (verse 26).

3.3 Where is the world of the dead?

There is a tendency to think of it as somewhere *below*, e.g., Matt. 11:23 and Luke 10:15. In Matt. 12:40 'the heart of the earth' is mentioned, but in all these cases it is really just a manner of speaking. The realm in question is in a totally different dimension about which we know very little.

3.4 Is it possible to return to earth from that region?

Adherents of Spiritism allege that the spirits of the dead can visit earth at free will, and even appear to people. The Bible clearly indicates that this is impossible and frowns on communication with the dead - unless a divine dispensation allows it as an exception to the rule, which was apparently the case in I Sam. 28. (Compare the latter with the clear commandment in Deut. 18:10-11). In Peter 3:19 the world of the dead is compared with a prison and for the rich man (Dives) in Luke 16 it was denied even to send a message to his brothers on earth. King David realized this when he said: "But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me" (II Sam. 12:23, referring here to his son with Bathseba).

3.5 Are the souls of the dead conscious or unconscious?

There is a strong suggestion of a sleep-like state, e.g., I Thess. 4:13-14 --

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have not hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him."

But it is unlikely that the dead are totally unconscious, because

- (a) then Jesus could not have preached to them (I Peter 3:19);
- (b) when the fifth seal is opened, the souls of the martyrs speak out loudly (Rev. 6:9-10);
- (c) the conversation between the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16).

3.6 Do the dead know and recognize?

According to Isa. 14:9-11 the answer is 'yes'. The dead will recognize people they knew on earth, when the latter arrive there. And Isa. 14 refers to the wicked; how much more would knowledge not apply to the righteous and their awareness of Christ's glorious presence.

It is, however, unlikely that the dead will know anything about people still on earth, except for memories (Luke 16:27-28; Rev. 6:10) and, *maybe*, reports by recent 'arrivals' or angels.

3.7 What is the experience like?

Although the righteous are in 'paradise', they will not experience full heavenly glory. But apparently it is still a place of happiness where comfort is given (Luke 16:25) and there is rest from labour (Rev. 14:13). The Greek for 'labour' is *kopos* meaning: labour, trouble, toil.

While the final destination of the wicked is the lake of fire, they are already suffering in the world of the dead (Luke 16:24).

3.8 What about a second chance?

This brings us to one of the most difficult

passages in the whole New Testament, namely, I Peter 3:18b-20a --

“He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.” To complete the picture we must also quote verse 6 from chapter 4 here:

“For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.”

These two portions form the doctrinal basis for that portion of the Apostolic Creed that mentions Christ’s descent into Hades. In both 3:19 and 4:6 the translators use the verb ‘preach’, but in the original Greek there is a subtle difference:

(a) In 3:19 the verb used is *kayrusso* which can mean: *to proclaim*, to publish, to preach.

(b) In 4:6 the verb used is *euaggelizo*, meaning : to bring good tidings to, *to evangelize*, to preach.

(We have italicized the more contrasting meanings) This difference may have contributed to the variety of interpretations of these verses that have been attempted over the years. We quote five of these:

(1) “It is argued that Jesus preached in Hades *only* to the spirits of the men who were sinful and disobedient in the days of Noah. Those who hold this view often go on to argue that, since these sinners in the days of Noah were desperately wicked, and desperately disobedient, so much so that God sent the flood and destroyed them (Gen. 6:12,13), we may believe that no man is outside the mercy of God. These men were the worst of all sinners; they were given another chance of repentance; therefore, the worst of men still have a chance in Christ.

(2) “It is argued that Jesus preached to the fallen angels, and that he preached, not salvation, but final and irrevocable doom... Their story is told in Gen. 6:1-8. ...they came to earth, seduced earthly women, and begat children; and because of their action...the wickedness of man was great and his thoughts were evil continually. II Peter 2:4 speaks of these sinning angels as being imprisoned... awaiting judgment. ...there are those who think that...Christ...preached terrible doom to those angels...

(3) “It is argued that Christ preached *only* to those in the past who had been righteous, and that He led them out of Hades into the paradise of God...”

[Examples (1) to (3) are from William Barclay’s Daily Study Bible (James and Peter) pp. 284-285].

(4) Peter might have had a first generation of believers in mind, who heard the Gospel during their lifetime but have since passed on. This ties in with Paul’s words of comfort and enlightenment in I Thess. 4:13-18. In other words, Jesus could have spoken to *believers* who were already in Hades [Die Bybel met Verklarende Aantekeninge, Deel III, p.689].

(5) Wolfhart Pannenburg approaches the problem from another angle:

“What, finally, is to happen to the people who have certainly heard the message of Christ but who - perhaps through the fault of those very Christians who have been charged

with its proclamation - have never come face to face with its truth? Are all these people delivered over to damnation? Do they remain shut out for ever from the presence of God which has been made accessible to mankind through Jesus? The Christian faith can say 'no' to this urgent question..." [The Apostle's Creed in the light of today's questions, p. 94].

Pannenburg's question might just suggest the possibility of a second chance, but then we draw the line with an emphatic NO! The 'second chance' is unbiblical. See the clear pronouncements in Matt. 25:26-30; Luke 16:25; John 5:28-29; Heb. 9:27; and Rev. 20:11-15.

3.9 The doctrine about 'Purgatory'.

Purgatory means:

(a) "The expiatory suffering by which, according to Roman Catholic belief, souls after death atone for the debt of *venial sins* that otherwise would lead to eternal punishment.

(b) "The place where the souls of the dead undergo this suffering." (F. Deist).
[A 'venial sin' is a grave but pardonable sin committed against the express will of God].

According to the Catholics even the righteous must suffer for a while, as demanded by a just God. Purgatory, they allege, is necessary because

Firstly, when big sins had been committed: these folks have been penitent, they are saved from hellfire because of Christ's suffering, but they have done nothing to satisfy God's righteousness.

Secondly, they are punished for mortal sins which involve a total loss of grace; these sins were never forgiven during their lifetime.

Now, the next of kin can employ fasting, prayer and celebration of the Mass to shorten a soul's stay in Purgatory. So the Catholics pray for the souls of their departed members.

This whole doctrine is unbiblical, and can be traced back to the Maccabees and the Apocrypha known by their name (204-134 BC). The Bible states very clearly that when we are 'away from the body' we will be 'at home with the Lord' (II Cor. 5:8). To the criminal on the cross Jesus promised "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). And then there is the rapture of those still alive when Christ returns: "After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever" (I Thess. 4:17). In none of these situations there is even a remote suggestion of a purgatory.

No, Christ's death of atonement was perfect and no supplementary good works or suffering on the part of man are required. Our righteousness, holiness and redemption rest solely on God's grace in Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:30).

4. The Resurrection

4.1 The Resurrection as a fact

"The most startling characteristic of the first Christian preaching is its emphasis on the resurrection. The first preachers were sure that Christ had risen, and sure, in consequence, that believers would in due course rise also. This set them off from all the other teachers of the ancient world..." L.L. Morris). Something of this already stirred in OT times, e.g., Job 19:25-27; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; Heb. 11:19.

In the NT the doctrine of the resurrection takes a place of prominence: Luke 20:27-38; I Cor. 15:3-8; I Thess. 4:16; etc. In the NT a number of people were raised from the dead on an *ad hoc* basis: Matt. 9:18-25; Luke 7:11-15; John 11:38-43; Acts 9:36-41. But the biggest guarantee for the Resurrection is Jesus Himself (I Cor. 15:12-22).

4.2 What happens when the resurrection takes place? What is meant by the 'resurrection body'?

"Of the nature of the resurrection body Scripture says little. Paul can speak of it as 'a spiritual body' (I Cor. 15:44), which appears to mean a body which meets the needs of the spirit. He expressly differentiates it from the 'natural body' which we now have, and we infer that a 'body' answering to the needs of the spirit is in some respects different from that which we know. The spiritual body has the qualities of incorruptibility, glory and power (I Cor. 15:42+). Our Lord has taught us that there will be no marriage after the resurrection, and thus no sexual function (Mark 12:25).

Perhaps we can gain some help by thinking of the resurrection body of Christ, for John tells us that 'we shall be like him' (I John 3:2), and Paul that 'our vile body' is to be fashioned 'like unto his glorious body' (Phil. 3:21). Our Lord's risen body appears to have been in some sense like the natural body and in some sense different. Thus on some occasions He was recognized immediately (Matt. 28:9; John 20:19+), but on others He was not (notably the walk to Emmaus, Luke 24:16; cf. John 21). He appeared suddenly in the midst of the disciples, who were gathered with the doors shut (John 20:19), while contrariwise He disappeared from the sight of the two at Emmaus (Luke 24:31). He spoke of having 'flesh and bones' (Luke 24:39). On occasion He ate food (Luke 24:41-43), though we cannot hold that physical food is a necessity for life beyond death (cf. I Cor. 6:13). It would seem that the risen Lord could conform to the limitations of this physical life or not as He chose, and this may indicate that when we rise we shall have a similar power." [L.L. Morris in *The New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 1088-9].

5. Hell as final destination of the wicked

5.1 Hell as a stark reality.

Hell is *not* *Sheol* (Heb.) or *Hades* (Gr.); it is not the realm of the dead. It is the final destination of the wicked, after the second resurrection and their trial before the White Throne (Rev. 20:11-15). The final destination (*Gehenna* in Greek) is represented in Rev. 20:14 and 15 as lake of fire.

There are people who deny the reality of hell on the grounds of God's great love - John 3:16; II Peter 3:9. It is, however, man's own choice to accept or reject God's great offer, the death of atonement undergone by His own Son. The rejection choice is illustrated in a way by Judas, of whom it was said that he went 'where he belongs' ('to his own place' - AV) - Acts 1:25.

To be perfect and holy, God must also be perfectly just, and that means that He must reward the good and punish the wicked. For example, how could one justify a policy that allows cruel, perverse Emperor Nero to enjoy eternity in exactly the same way as the Christians that he tortured and killed?

Hell is clearly mentioned in the Bible. The same Lord Jesus who supplied unique information about heaven, also mentioned hell, e.g., Matt. 5:22,29; 10:28; 18:9; 23:33; Luke 12:5.

5.2 A place of grief.

The experience of hell will be terrible, judging from descriptions in Scripture:

- * "...the fiery lake of burning sulphur" (Rev. 19:20)
- * "They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10)
- * "...there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:30)
- * "...will awake...to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2), etc.

5.3 A second death.

The hell experience is described in the Bible as the second death (Rev. 20:14). This implies an eternal condition of being separated from God and any hope.

5.4 Does hell destroy its victims?

Total destruction is alleged by the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists. If the victim's existence was completely ended, then the eternal torment (Rev. 20:10) could not take place; then the beast (Antichrist) and the false prophet would not exist after 1000 years in hell (Rev. 19:20; 20:10).

In Matt. 10:15 the punishment of certain towns are graded, and in Rom. 2:6 we read: "God will give to each person according to what he has done". How could this happen if towns or individuals are all destroyed immediately? That would equalize all punishments! Add to this Jesus' own description "...to go into hell, where the fire never goes out" (AV: "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched") - Mark 9:44. This cannot be reconciled with immediate and complete destruction.

6. Heaven : final destination of the righteous

6.1 Heaven - what is it?

"Heaven is the abode of God, and of those closely associated with Him. The Israelite is to pray, 'Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven' (Deut. 26:15). God is 'the God of heaven' (Jona 1:9), or 'the Lord God of heaven' (Ezra 1:2), or the 'Father which is in heaven' (Matt. 5:45; 7:21, etc.). God is not alone there, for we read of 'the host of heaven' which worships Him (Neh. 9:6), and of 'the angels which are in heaven' (Mark 13:32). Believers also may look forward to 'an inheritance...reserved in heaven' for them (I Peter 1:4). Heaven is thus the present abode of God and His angels, and the ultimate destination of His saints on earth" [Morris in Bible Dict., p. 510].

The Bible has various descriptions of this wonderful place:

6.1.1 Paradise - II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7

"Paradise is a loan-word from ancient Iranian (*pairidaeza-*) and means a garden with a wall... The only place where paradise is used in an eschatological sense is in Rev. 2:7. The promise is made by Christ that He will give paradise as a gift to the one who overcomes... paradise will come in its full glory with the final consummation. The idea of a garden of God in the world to come is strongly emphasized in the last chapters of Revelation. the symbols of the tree of life, of life-giving water, and of the twelve kinds of fruit are all witnesses to the glory of the coming paradise (Rev. 22)". [F.C. Fensham in Bib. Dict. pp 934, 935].

6.1.2 A city, the New Jerusalem - Heb. 11:10; Rev. 21:2

This city is described in Rev. 21 and appears to be well-organized and very beautiful. It will be kept pure and God's perfect, blessed will be carried out there, in all respects.

6.1.3 At home in your Fatherland

“These all died in faith without obtaining the promises; they only saw them far away and hailed them, owning that they were ‘*strangers and exiles* upon earth.’ Now people who speak in this way plainly show that they are in search of a fatherland” (Heb. 11:13-14 in Moffat’s translation). It is true that we are travelling pilgrims. We are really citizens of heaven. Just as the Israelites trekked from Egypt to the Promised Land, so the believer is travelling on his pilgrimage to his Father’s house.

6.1.4 The Father’s house with many rooms - John 14:2

This metaphor used by Jesus gives us the idea of a place specially prepared for the believers, where all of them, as children of God, will be like one big family.

6.2 The blessings of heaven.

Heaven will be a blessed resort, because of

6.2.1 That which will not be there.

There will be no physical defects and limitations -- “So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (I Cor. 15:42-44). Travail, tears and death will be absent -- “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev. 21:4). There will be no curse or disobedience -- “No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him” (Rev. 22:3). Every form of sin will be absent -- Nothing impure will enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful... (Rev. 21:27).

6.2.2 The following will definitely be there:

Shining brilliance and beauty: In Rev. 21:11-21 a description is given of the unimaginable beauty of the Heavenly City. In verse 23 it says: “The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.”

Rest: The rest described in Rev. 14:13, refers to the perfect peace, calm and bliss in the Lord. It will be rest from all the struggle and toil on old sinful earth.

Service: “The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him” (Rev. 22:3). Mere idleness will detract from the heavenly bliss; no, it will be enhanced by the glory of service to God.

Full Knowledge: “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part: then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (I Cor. 13:12). This does not imply omniscience for believers, but the answers to problems and tricky questions will be available, and above all, we will know God in His glory and power.

Joy: “...you will fill me with joy in your presence...” (Ps. 16:11). Here on earth the best of situations always turns up something awkward, some fly in the ointment. But in heaven the joy will be perfect and forever.

Intercommunication: I Thess. 4:17-18; Heb. 12:22-23

It is difficult to form a picture of the glory when the saints get together in perfect harmony!

Communion with Christ: “...I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (Philip. 1:23). Just consider meeting the Lord Jesus, our Saviour, face to face and then... staying in His presence forever!

Picture for yourself the situation of a person born blind who tried all his life to visualize mentally the world around him. How unprepared he will still be, if he suddenly received normal eyesight. This, we believe, is still a weak comparison with the believer’s unbelievable surprise when he opens his eyes THERE, because

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (I Cor. 2:9).

Heaven

*There is a land where shadows never deepen,
And sunset glories fade not into night,
Where weary hearts shall win the boon of endless blessing,
And faith is lost in sight.*

*A land where sad farewells are never spoken,
Where every loss of life is richest gain,
Where stumbling feet at last shall find a haven,
And hearts have no more pain.*

*A land where those who sigh for long-lost faces,
The loved of life whose going brought us pain,
Shall find them in the brightness of the Father’s glory,
Where we shall meet again.*

*On that bright strand the blood-washed ones of Jesus
Are safe; no more the weary feet shall roam;
They find at last all that the heart has longed for,
Within God’s house at home.*

[A. Naismith]