

# The Mission & Work of the Church

## Introduction:

Peculiar restrictions were placed upon Israel and were to affect her separation in righteousness from the rest of the world at that time. Heathen nations could see the obvious difference in Israel and their peoples and know that the God of Israel was not just a tribal god or figment of a superstitious imagination, but rather that He was a holy and righteous Sovereign. Israel was to be a light in the gross darkness of ignorance and superstition if willing to harken unto God and live as He directed. Today, the true Church is to fulfill those functions. To be the “called-out ones” of the New Testament (Covenant), we find this command penned: *“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”* (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). This promise corresponds with the prayer of our Saviour that we should *“...not of the world...”* but neither should we be *“...of the world...”* (John 17:15-16). We who compose the Church are still in the world physically but spiritually we cannot belong to a realm of unrighteousness. Jesus prayed: *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”* (John 17:17). And truly His word will set us apart from those who disobey it if we adhere to it.

The glorious truth of what the Church is becomes more personal with this declaration made by the Apostle Peter: *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”* (1 Peter 2:9).

We will discuss the commission to evangelize; the need to provide fellowship; the preservation of the divine ordinances; the establishment of a community for the gifts of the Spirit and the offices in which to abound; but all of these functions and reasons for existence remain subsidiary to the greater purpose, that of being the “called out ones” of God.

These truths might well be summarized by the inspiring words that tell us: *“For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”* (Philippians 2:13-15).

## Contents:

Lesson 1: Mission of the Church .....	2
Lesson 2: Ministry of Preaching .....	3
Lesson 3: Ministry of Pastors .....	4
Lesson 4: Ministry of Witnessing .....	5
Lesson 5: Emphasis of Missions.....	6
Lesson 6: Attraction of the Gospel .....	7
Lesson 7: Power for Energetic Endeavor.....	8
Lesson 8: Faith for Progress .....	9
Lesson 9: Commission to Teach .....	10
Lesson 10: Need for Revival.....	11
Lesson 11: A Vital Resurrection.....	12
Lesson 12: Christ the “First Fruits” .....	13
Lesson 13: The Saints' Rewards .....	14

# Lesson 1: Mission of the Church

**Scripture Reading:** John 17:1-21

**Memory Verse:** *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil.”* (John 17:15)

**Introduction:** Understanding the mission of God's Church requires an accurate concept of the Church. The word “church” is translated from the Greek word “ecclesia,” and means “that which is called out.” While this definition might not seem particularly illuminating to a carnal mind, it reveals much to the truly converted Christian.

The Church plainly meets a great need in this world of sin and darkness. It is a vessel of light, and an example of righteousness in the midst of a wicked and perverse society. The Church brings glory to God by manifesting the difference between His ways and the ways of evil men; at the same time showing the great superiority of God's way. As Christ in the world showed the great contrast between the higher ways of God and the baser actions of mankind, just so does His body, the Church, carry out the same function today. Jesus prayed for those whom He had commissioned and delegated to carry out this task. He prayed for them to be set apart for this function and empowered that they might perform this glorious work.

Surely it would be scripturally appropriate to say then, that the first and primary mission of the Church of God is to be “called out.” The very first order of business is to be separate and to “... keep ourselves unspotted from the world ...” Many things are certainly essential and important but to be separate takes precedence overall. What good is a church that will do what God has commanded, if it will not be the instrument that will cause the glory for its actions to redound to the praise of Jehovah?

In a practical sense, we as members of the Body of Christ, need often to examine ourselves, asking if we are truly maintaining the position of individual and personal separation. As a local body of believers, each assembly needs to review constantly its posture and see if it corresponds to God's desire for a separate people – a “called out” people. Indeed, the Church that Jesus returns for will be a “... *glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*” (Ephesians 5:27).

## Lesson Questions:

1. What is the primary reason for the existence of the Church? Ephesians 1:3-12 (Note especially verses 6 and 12).
2. Explain how Israel was typical of the Church today. Acts 7:38; Leviticus 20:26; 2 Corinthians 6:11-18.
3. How many 21st century Christians remain separate in a world that is moving toward enforced unification? Ephesians 4:17-32; 5:1-11. (Give examples or instances of what your local church or group is doing to show its separation from the world.)
4. Who comprises the Church? Acts 2:47; John 17:3; Ephesians 4:4-15.
5. Who is the head of the Church? Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15.
6. Name some characteristics of members of the true church. Romans 6:11-18; 1 John 3:1-10.
7. Who has the authority to maintain or remove our names from membership in God's Church? Malachi 3:16-18; Exodus 32:32; Revelation 3:5; Romans 8:38-39.
8. What was the price required for the establishment of God's Church? Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27.
9. Describe the foundation upon which the Church of God is built. Matthew 16:13-18. Harmonize this truth with Luke 6:47-48.
10. Is there another reliable foundation, in case this one does not suit us today? That is, can we begin with the “commandments” as our main tenet of faith? 1 Corinthians 3:11.

## Lesson 2: Ministry of Preaching

**Scripture Reading:** Titus 2

**Memory Verse:** *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”* (1 Corinthians 1:18)

**Introduction:** The word “preach” sometimes means: to proclaim, to announce, to tell, to cry out, to command, and to use boldness in freely speaking. As the Scriptures employ the term, however, there is inherent in all of these definitions the understanding that preaching is the declaration of God's will by God's messengers. The sermon a preacher delivers might be defined as: a speech given with the unction of God's Spirit; declaring God's will.

Paul's preaching demonstrated something more than his mental agility and oratorical prowess; it proved the power of the Holy Spirit's ability to take a person and use him to declare “... *all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27). Preaching is to be unctionized or anointed by the Spirit of God, and the force of what is said and how it is said makes it evident that God's will is being declared. The words of Paul, for instance, were words of power, truth, and life. He was not lecturing in a monotone about a dead philosophy but was expounding about a living Savior. As such an act, preaching is vitally useful in bringing sinners to repentance.

These messages from God were intended for salvation of unbelievers and the edification of believers. As such, they must be understandable. The preacher of the New Testament (Covenant) must preach simply and directly.

No better advice could be found as to what a Preacher should preach than that which is provided in the instructions to Timothy: “Preach the word ...”

Besides, “rebuking, reproof, and exhorting,” and in addition to “instruction in righteousness,” preachers are also required to preach “doctrine.” Correct beliefs are the very foundation of Christianity whose Christ is the very truth. It also behooves the preacher of today to warn his hearers of false teachings and concepts. It is important subject materials, as our Lord testified by His example.

### Lesson Questions:

1. How does God provide for necessary faith and belief for one's conversion? Romans 10:8-17; 1 Corinthians 1:21.
2. Should eloquence and literary composition be the primary objectives of a preacher? 1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:4-5.
3. Was Paul's success as a preacher due to the utilization of his natural talents and acquired training? 1 Corinthians 2:1-4; 2 Corinthians 10:10.
4. Harmonize Question 3 with the requirement of being, “... apt to teach ...” and “... having sound speech ...” in 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9; 2:1-8.
5. To whom does preaching seem foolish and unprofitable? 1 Corinthians 1:18-23. Why? 1 Corinthians 2:14.
6. How should Christians regard preachers and preaching? 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2:5; 1 Timothy 5:17.
7. Should preachers be supported in God's work on a full-time basis? Acts 6:2-4; 1 Corinthians 9:6-14; 1 Timothy 5:18.
8. Can preaching ever be direct? 2 Corinthians 3:12. What examples are given that this is permissible? Luke 4:16-21; Acts 7:51; 13:46-47.
9. Are all men who are recognized by society as ministers really God's appointed ministers? Jeremiah 23:31-32; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15.
10. Do preachers have an example that they are to “practice what they preach”? 1 Corinthians 9:27.

## Lesson 3: Ministry of Pastors

**Scripture Reading:** 1 Peter 5:1-10

**Memory Verse:** *“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not be constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;”* (1 Peter 5:2)

**Introduction:** There is nothing mysterious about the role of a pastor. It is simply one of the ministries that God has ordained and set in order in the Church. The word “pastor” might just as well have been translated “shepherd,” except for the need to differentiate between one who ministers to the children of God and one who tends to literal sheep. The very obvious and real meaning of the word “pastor,” then, is one who feeds and cares for the people who comprise God's flock or Church. We may well understand this truth simply by noting the many references that Christ Himself made to the relationship between Himself, as “chief Shepherd,” and His sheep.

Almost any can bake, if the baking is a TV dinner, or nearly any person could prepare his own meal, if it were only a can of soup. But real planning and talent are behind the preparation of a sumptuous banquet. The relationship is much the same with spiritual food. If any pastor wants to enhance his ministry, the preparation must be his first order of attention. One or two days a week are not an excessive amount of time for the pastor to spend preparing a Sabbath “meal” for his congregation. The results of adequate prayer and preparation before preaching will pay off in rich dividends for the Church so nourished.

These are days when a true pastor has his work cut out for him. There is much heresy afoot, and dreadful temptations beckon on every hand to the ill-fed and unwarned member of a church fellowship. But Christians who are properly fed and warned against the delusions of Satan will never succumb to these dangers. The pastor who concerns himself with breaking this bread of life to those people over which the Holy Ghost has appointed him, will enjoy a rewarding and satisfying work.

### Lesson Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word “pastor”? Define.
2. Did the Apostle Peter receive a commission to be a pastor? John 21:15-17. What exhortation did he give others to follow the same calling? 1 Peter 5:1-4.
3. What are some of the duties of a pastor alluded to in John 10?
4. Did the Apostle Paul ever assume any pastoral responsibilities? Acts 20:28-29; 1 Corinthians 3:2.
5. Describe the perfect Christian relationship between pastors and their congregations. 1 Peter 5:2-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17.
6. Who is the Chief Pastor and best example of pastoral responsibility? Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 5:4; John 10:11.
7. Are there any false pastors? Describe how they differ from truly God-called ministers. Jeremiah 23:21-32; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15.
8. What and when will be the fulfillment of Jeremiah 23:1-6?
9. Give three general phases of a pastor's work. Ephesians 4:11-12.
10. What is the great requirement for spiritual leadership and responsibility on the part of pastors and other ministers? 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 2:7; 1 Peter 5:3.

# Lesson 4: Ministry of Witnessing

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 1:1-11

**Memory Verse:** “Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people.” (1 Chronicles 16:8)

**Introduction:** In the general sense, every person who becomes a Christian, by repenting of sin and trusting Jesus Christ for salvation, becomes a qualified witness. Once Christians have felt the transforming power of the Gospel in their own lives, gratitude demands that it be shared with others by telling them of this experience.

In the early ministry of Christ, we find active witnessing on the part of those men who found Christ to be the Messiah, or “Anointed One” of the Lord. One of the first witnesses was Andrew who immediately introduced his brother, Simon Peter, to Christ. Next, Philip of Bethsaida went to Nathaniel and said to him, “*We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph*” (John 1:45).

The Lord does not require us to perjure ourselves. He needs no one of us as His lawyer. He only desires that we tell others exactly what we have found Him to be. The early disciples who walked and talked with Christ did not need to build a case for His being the Messiah. They only needed to state the things that He had done. The life and deeds of Christ and His own statements concerning His identity will always suffice.

Many words of great worth have been penned urging us all to become soul-winners. It is time well spent that Christians devote themselves to learning techniques of winning others to Christ. And yet, there is no patent formula that improves upon the practice of constantly telling others what Christ has done for you.

Witnessing should be as natural to a Christian as talking about fishing is to the man who loves to fish. Indeed, Christianity is so much more wonderful than anything else in life that it should always remain our first order of business and our favorite topic of conversation. We are witnessing to its vitality when we treat it as the primary concern of our lives.

Some would relegate all witnessing to the ministers while others would shift this responsibility to a non-existent class of “laity.” The evident truth of the Scriptures demands, however, that we recognize witnessing and testifying to be the duty of every believer.

## Lesson Questions:

1. Why was John the Baptist sent into the world? John 1:6-8. What did Christ say about him? Matthew 11:11.
2. What two things are mentioned in Psalm 89:1 that we can talk about to others in our witnessing endeavors?
3. What other testimony is valuable in attempting to win others to Christ? Psalm 40:1-3; Acts 26:9-19.
4. Is it characteristic for a converted person, who truly knows Jesus to tell others about Him? Matthew 12:34-35; Acts 4:19-20.
5. How effective was the early apostolic witness? Acts 2:37; 4:33; 10:44.
6. What factors account for successful witnessing? Acts 5:32; 18:28; Romans 1:16.
7. Discuss what factors hinder our witnessing for the Lord. 2 Timothy 2:15; Matthew 26:69-74.
8. What supernatural element is involved in assuring believers that what they have accepted is truth? Romans 8:16; 1 John 5:9-13.
9. According to John 7:38-39; Revelation 22:17; Acts 1:8, who should witness and invite others to come to a knowledge of Christ? Is it only the pastor's job?
10. How far should a person go in witnessing for Christ? 2 Timothy 1:7-8; Revelation 12:10-11.
11. What distinction is made in the Scriptures about the rewards of effective witnesses? Daniel 12:2-3; Proverbs 11:30; James 5:20; Luke 19:15-27; Matthew 25:20-30.

## Lesson 5: Emphasis of Missions

**Scripture Reading:** Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20

**Memory Verse:** *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”* (Matthew 24:14)

**Introduction:** There was a period of time in Bible history when God seemed to be dealing almost exclusively with the nation of Israel. During the ministry of Christ, however, one could see the national aspect of the plan of God for Israel fading into relative obscurity and becoming subsidiary to the plan God had for revealing His salvation to all of mankind.

In keeping with this world-wide offer, Christ began to teach His disciples just how comprehensive His efficacy would be. He instructed them: *“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd”* (John 10:16). To clarify this matter further, God granted a vision to the apostle Peter revealing this all-important truth. After this revelation from God, Peter could affirm: *“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him”* (Acts 10:34-35).

With the way thus paved, the first congregation could begin to extend its influence and carry its message beyond the borders of Israel. The command that Jesus gave to go into all the world became understandable to minds that were no longer occupied with preserving national distinctions. The “untouchables” of Samaria, the superstitious heathen of Asia Minor, and the polytheistic Greeks were all to share with them in this marvelous salvation. And so, it was that the First Century Church took the commands of Jesus literally and began to proclaim Him and His kingdom everywhere.

Also, the need for the Gospel is a many faceted need. Jesus commanded His disciples to teach the nations *“to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”* (Matthew 28:20). This command entails a great deal. We must know what Jesus taught, what He practiced, and that for which He prayed. His disciples, in obedience to this command, have written things that Jesus desired for us to teach to the nations, and the Holy Spirit has preserved them for our instruction.

Missions, both home and foreign, are greatly emphasized in the New Testament, and efficient ways to evangelize in all areas of the world are surely to be desired. God's Church will want to be a good steward of its time and talents in this very important undertaking.

### Lesson Questions:

1. Were the Israelitish Christians surprised when they finally realized that the Gospel was to go to the Gentiles also? Acts 10:45; 11:16-18.
2. Did Jesus try to prepare His disciples for this “universal” distinction of the Gospel? John 10:16; 12:46-47; Mark 11:17; Matthew 10:10-14; 19:28; Luke 22:28-30.
3. What promise can we claim as we do mission work in Jesus' name? Matthew 28:20.
4. How did the first distribution of missionaries in the Early Church come about? Acts 8:1-4.
5. How did Paul demonstrate that the “watchman's” responsibilities (Ezekiel 3:17-21) were still applicable to the Early Church and its missionaries? Acts 13:49-52; 20:26-27.
6. Who, or what determines the area in which we may do our missionary work? Acts 13:2-4; 15:7; 16:6-10; Galatians 1:15-17.
7. Are we only obligated to reach a particular race or segment of society? Romans 1:14-16.
8. What did the needs of the heathen spur the first missionaries to do? Acts 17:16-17.
9. What happens to superstition and ignorance where true missionary work succeeds? Acts 19:18-20, 23-27.
10. Will there be any missionaries during the Millennium? Isaiah 52:6-12; 2:1-4; 11:10-11; Micah 4:1-3; Acts 3:19-21; Luke 22:28-30; Matthew 19:27-28; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26.

# Lesson 6: Attraction of the Gospel

**Scripture Reading:** John 3:1-21

**Memory Verse:** *“And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, is not this Joseph's son?”* (Luke 4:22)

**Introduction:** The Gospel has appealed to such a cross-section of humanity that one must conclude it to be of universal attraction (more, of course, in the Western World). Men who are wealthy have accepted it as their greatest asset, while those impoverished have accepted it as their only treasure. Men of letters and those unlearned alike have been transformed by its power. Why is this Gospel such an attractive declaration and story? Simply because it pertains to both God and man – revealing God's will for man and the good news of the Kingdom of God. It is the only divinely comprehensive, life-giving philosophy. It is all of this because it has been prepared by the mind of God and not concocted by the finite and fallible minds of men.

The Gospel is more attractive by example than by precept. As a sinner views the wondrous transformation that the Gospel has produced in the life of an acquaintance, his own desire for this beautiful life is stimulated. The beauty of the Gospel was personified in Christ. He was personally the message of God to man in flesh and blood. He was the “good news” as well as the Preacher of “good news” or Gospel.

Any person who hears enough of it to be truly converted, cannot consider it anything less than the greatest opportunity of his or her life. The beauty of this Gospel is attested to by the fact that true Christian converts receive it so joyfully. Many embrace it as the thing they have so long desired. Some may never have associated it with that insatiable hunger for something until they found this Gospel of their salvation.

The harmony and assurance that characterize a child of God cause the Gospel to attract others. The person who is at peace with God and who is assured of eternal life, cannot help but exhibit a confidence and happiness that will interest others in the assurance and consolation of Christianity.

## Lesson Questions:

1. What aspect of the Gospel should be stressed in order to win converts? John 3:14-15.
2. Did the Gospel of Jesus appeal to men and women from all walks of life? John 3:1-2; 4:28-29; Luke 19:2-3; Mark 5:18-19; 7:26-28.
3. How are Christians used in making the “good news” attractive to others? John 5:13-16; Acts 4:13.
4. Discuss how the contrast of the old way of life helps to emphasize the beauty of Christian living. Ephesians 2:1-13.
5. How are people drawn to Christ and to the beautiful story of salvation and redemption? Matthew 16:17; John 6:44.
6. Explain the whole panorama of the Gospel that we are privileged to see that many others desired to see. Luke 10:23-24; Matthew 13:16-17.
7. In view of Luke 4:18-19, discuss the attractiveness and the message of the Gospel.
8. What should our attitude be toward spreading such a glorious Gospel? Romans 1:14-17. What did the Gospel mean to Paul?
9. Relate how other things become insignificant when one becomes acquainted with Christ. Philippians 3:8.
10. Discuss the magnetism of the Gospel. What was there in Christianity that first drew you to it?

# Lesson 7: Power for Energetic Endeavor

**Scripture Reading:** John 16:7-16

**Memory Verse:** *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8)

**Introduction:** Where did the Early Church get its power? The actions of the first local church were vital and effective. One cannot help but note the vast difference between the revolutionary power of this first church and the apparent weakness of most of our contemporary assemblies. This contrast points up a great need in God's Church today. We need to answer the above question: “Where did the Primitive Church get its power?”

The same formula for success that was employed by the Early Church will be amazingly adaptable to our modern situation. We can be successful and progressive whenever we learn from the Early Church that the direction of the Holy Spirit is the key to productive and harmonious congregational effort.

As the disciples listened for the voice of the Spirit, they heard it. As they went forth, they depended on a measure of God's Spirit to convict and convert their hearers. They exhibited a faith that God would do things, and He did. How different would our assemblies act if they were possessed with this selfsame spirit of expectancy – this anticipation that an act of God awaited their obedience to the next command?

No wonder the Early Church could not fail – possessed as it was by an inherent promise of redemption and a daily reminder of the presence of God. Under these conditions, Christian lives became powerful and dynamic. We may as well concede that there will be no great movement of impetus in the existing “church world” of today unless the motivation of the Holy Spirit accomplishes it. Neither can a local congregation make any tremendous strides forward spiritually except its members are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps too much is said today about methods and too little about motivation. If motivation is the Spirit of God, the resulting methods will be appropriate and effective.

## Lesson Questions:

1. Define “Holy Spirit,” “Comforter,” “Spirit of truth,” “Spirit of God,” and “Spirit of Christ.” John 14:16-17, 26; 16:13; Romans 8:9, 11, 14. Are they synonymous?
2. How was the Early Church to be equipped for its tasks? Acts 1:8.
3. Did the Apostles and other early Christians do their great works by their own abilities? Acts 3:12; 4:33; 6:8. Discuss.
4. How did Jesus set the example for us of depending upon the Holy Spirit and Divine presence of God for victory? Luke 4:14; Acts 10:38. In view of this, should we not much more depend upon the Spirit of God?
5. Besides the impetus and power for accomplishment, what else will the Holy Spirit provide for us? John 14:26; 16:13; Romans 15:13; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30.
6. What privileges are bestowed upon Christians by the Spirit of God? Philippians 3:10-11; John 1:12; Colossians 1:13-14.
7. Is this “power” Christ's to bestow through the Spirit? Matthew 28:18. Discuss the promise of this bestowal as related in Matthew 28:20.
8. In view of this vital “power,” discuss the bestowal of “power” even in the Millennium, as related in Revelations 2:26-27.
9. Discuss the significance and seriousness of the “grieving” of the Holy Spirit and the “sealing” of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30. Who are privileged to receive the “Spirit of truth,” and who are excluded? John 14:17.
10. As final admonition, are we, by faith, enjoined to accept and utilize this promised power? Ephesians 6:10. Discuss.

## Lesson 8: Faith for Progress

**Scripture Reading:** James 2:14-26

**Memory Verse:** *“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”* (Proverbs 3:5)

**Introduction:** Christians’ faith is much greater than anything possessed by faithless men. As one minister has said: “Faith is the eye that sees the invisible—the hand that touches the intangible—the ear that hears the unutterable.” Faith is all of this, and more. It is believing God when every other source of information says “not to believe God.” It is to trust in “divine providence” that is not seen, felt, or heard. It is to proceed with the next item on God's agenda while being perplexed that God seems to have chosen such a seemingly illogical move. It is believing when you cannot understand and obeying even when you are fearing the repercussions.

We must possess and exhibit faith if we are to accomplish any real and decisive victories in the spiritual realm. We must not wait for the accomplishment of each logical step before launching out into endeavors and programs that are challenging. We must ask only if a venture is the will of God and if He is leading us to do it. The answer that “God is in a program only if He removes all difficulties and obstacles before we are called upon to begin it,” is not necessarily true. Sometimes we are called to face the “walls of Jericho” that are yet intact. We must see them as “fallen walls” through the eye of faith, and not wait expecting them all to fall before assembling our armies.

These are the days when churches do not construct new buildings unto they are forced to and have 85% of their funds in a bank account. Contrast this with the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his own opportunity for material prosperity for that which he saw by faith. What kind of faith do we possess if we cannot do the things that faithless men exclaim are impossible? If we would only venture those things that even a businessman would do on a calculated risk, how much faith would we have?

It seems there is an affliction of unbelief and faithlessness is rampant. Perhaps it is because we desire the comfort and assurance of things that are tangible. We need constantly to meditate on the perfect truth that *“things which are not seen are eternal”* (2 Corinthians 4:18). We are not limited to the tangible, the visible, or the material. We can count things promised as consummated. We can accept those things hoped for in the will of God as present victories. The adherents of this true philosophy of faith can never taste defeat. They cannot be stopped nor side-tracked. We may be *“perplexed, but not in despair”* (2 Corinthians 4:8). We believe we shall overcome this world and all obstacles and see the establishment of God's kingdom, for *“if God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:31-32).

### Lesson Questions:

1. What is faith, and how can it be acquired? Hebrews 11:1; Romans 10:17.
2. How is living faith manifested by the true Christian, and is it gauged by devotion and action? James 2:18; Luke 5:20.
3. In view of pleasing God by faith, what is found in Hebrews 11:2, 6; Revelation 17:14?
4. How are we justified in the eyes of God? Acts 15:8-9; Romans 3:28; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:24.
5. While living a Christian life, are we always to see the material conclusion of God's program for us? 2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:1, 13. Discuss.
6. To what extent are we to go in trusting and obeying God? 1 Timothy 6:11-12; Revelation 2:10.
7. How may faith be our defense in these trying times? Ephesians 6:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; 1 John 5:4.
8. What is found in 1 Corinthians 2:5, concerning a substitute for real faith in God?
9. How can we have faith despite evident obstacles and present difficulties? 2 Corinthians 4:18. Explain.
10. How is faith made alive and perfect, and how is it related to victory? James 2:17-18, 20-22; 1 John 5:4.

## Lesson 9: Commission to Teach

**Scripture Reading:** 2 Timothy 3

**Memory Verse:** *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”* (Matthew 28:20)

**Introduction:** In this lesson we place emphasis on what might be called the rest, or remainder, for the Great Commission. Who could count the worthwhile volumes that have been written about the first part of those delegated responsibilities to the Church? Many sermons are preached to congregations telling them to go forth to convert and baptize as Christ commanded. And yet neither can we ignore the rest of that command. We must accept our obligation to teach these “born-again” and baptized believers all of the things that Christ commanded.

How true it is that it costs us something to know the truth of the Scriptures! Truly, it is pitiful that multitudes of people in the major denominations know so very little truth. However, those who are aware of truth, but not particularly interested in sacrificing to disseminate it, are also to be pitied.

We, therefore, cannot shy away from our responsibilities to do as Paul did in teaching the entire commission of Christ. Notice his statement to the elders of Ephesus: *“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27). We all would benefit by adopting this same attitude. It is not enough for us to teach only the things that the orthodoxy of our times approves; but we are to teach all that Christ taught, practiced, and predicted. We are obligated to declare the whole counsel of God.

In teaching the “whole counsel of God” and the full Gospel we are faced with the real task of preaching and teaching the whole, comprehensive Gospel. We must not allow ourselves to be side-tracked into unprofitable specialization. We are not a “cult” or a “fringe society” with a pet doctrine or system of religion. We help compose the “called out” Church, commissioned to teach every command and precept given by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### Lesson Questions:

1. Why should the needs of those around us prompt us to relate the things that God has revealed to us through His word? Acts 17:16-17.
2. How much of God's will is important? Deuteronomy 8:1-3; Matthew 4:4; 7:21.
3. What is our source of authority to teach and practice according to the Scriptures? 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; Matthew 28:19-20.
4. How did the organized Pharisaic religion of Christ's time differ with Christ and true religion-Christianity? Matthew 23:1-4, 23.
5. What was the origin of most opposition to Christ's teaching? Contrast Matthew 16:21; 26:3-4 with Matthew 21:9 and Mark 12:37.
6. Should we be persecuted by others for our Scriptural peculiarities? What should our reaction be? Matthew 5:12; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:59-60.
7. What is our obligation under the Great Commission? Matthew 28:19-20. What is required to fulfill it? Doesn't it include some provision for development and activity beyond conversion?
8. As we seek to obey all of the Gospel delivered to us, it is well that we guard against a breakdown between theory and practice. What was the Apostle James' instruction that should be helpful to us in this relation? James 1:22-25.
9. How do we obey all of the Gospel that we have received? Galatians 2:20. Is it a matter of exercising our own power that accomplishes this victory?
10. Are you known to your acquaintances only by your peculiar doctrines, or do they know that it is your intention to practice the entire Gospel of Christ? Discuss.

# Lesson 10: Need for Revival

**Scripture Reading:** 2 Chronicles 15:1-9

**Memory Verse:** *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”* (2 Chronicles 7:14)

**Introduction:** After studying some of the very basic and simple concepts of Christianity in this series of lessons, who could say that we do not stand in dire need of revival? Many of us have felt the chilling winds of orthodoxy cooling our ardor for God. Too often we have detected an aura of complacency in our own religious surroundings. The cry of this age, therefore, should be “revival,” as lukewarmness and unbelief flourish and general crime constantly increases. Our prayer today should be for a revival in our churches that will turn people from the sin of indifference and unbelief to genuine faith and trust in God.

While revival and evangelism are not synonymous, neither are they completely separate concepts. They often are coincidental and simultaneous. King David made that clear, in individual cases at least, by his inspired prayer: *“Restore unto me the joy of my salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee”* (Psalm 51:12-13). David said simply that whenever he was revived spiritually and upheld by God's Spirit, he would be successful in winning others to that same experience. How marvelous this truth is! What an avalanche of revival this prayer would start if it were the sincere prayer of all of us.

Perhaps our concept of revival today is too closely linked with the idea of a week of special meetings, featuring a guest speaker. Sometimes such a program does give vent to revival and spiritual refreshing if conducted properly. But generally speaking, our sights need to be aimed at the practical goal of a spiritual refreshing that permeates our individual lives in a permanent fashion. We need to pray for a revival that elevates us to the next higher rung of our “spiritual ladder” and completes a vital stage of development for us. Such a reviving provides continual and lasting benefits.

The practical results of true revival are many. A few of them include: better attendance at Sabbath School and worship services; more personal evangelism; a more equitable distribution of the work of the Church; a marked spiritual growth; increased Bible study; more fervent prayer; more zealous witnessing for Christ and His cause; and greater joy, peace, and happy anticipation in the present and future work of God's kingdom. Since revival is so needful and its benefits so desirable, why not covenant together to pay the price of united revival this coming year? Of course, we cannot commit anyone else to this, but each individual can be responsible for himself. It will be well worth all efforts made.

## Lesson Questions:

1. What led to the revival in King Josiah's reign? 2 Chronicles 34:18-19.
2. Was the revival after Israel's return from captivity of the same nature? Nehemiah 8:9; 9:2-3, 33.
3. Does the vision of God's righteousness sometimes result in repentance and subsequent revival? Job 42:5-6, 10; Daniel 1:7-9. What part does “godly sorrow” do in bringing revival? 2 Corinthians 7:10.
4. Although given to Israel nationally, couldn't the promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14 be applicable to any local church, or group of churches? Discuss.
5. How may the sentiment, desires, and requests of David's prayers be used in preparation of our hearts for revival and spiritual refreshing? Psalm 51:5-13; 139:23-24. Discuss.
6. In view of success in individual and collective revival, consider and discuss Joshua 7:7-13; Proverbs 28:13.
7. According to Acts 2-3, was there a revival at Pentecost? Select special verses from these two chapters for discussion.
8. What generally hinders revival and success in the spiritual life? Isaiah 59:1-2; Revelation 3:14-16.
9. Do worldly pleasures, material prosperity, and plenty tend to dull zest for revival? Revelation 3:17. In view of this, discuss conditions at the “flood,” “Sodom,” and in the case of “a certain rich man.” Genesis 6; 18:23-33; 19:1-20; Luke 12:16-21. What warning is found in 1 John 2:15-16?
10. Discuss revival accomplishments you would like to see in your church group. What plans do you suggest for such accomplishments?

# Lesson 11: A Vital Resurrection

**Scripture Reading:** John 20:19-31

**Memory Verse:** *“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”* (1 Corinthians 15:14)

**Introduction:** *“If a man die, shall he live again?”* (Job 14:14). The significant extent of Christ's bodily resurrection to the Christian faith is that if Jesus was not resurrected, there will be no resurrection for mankind (1 Corinthians 15:12-13). Certainly, our Savior was resurrected! All anxiety and doubt should be dispelled by the truth of God's record of this miraculous event and by a living experience with the risen Christ.

“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay,” said the angel. For ages, the question has been: “If a man die, shall he live again?” This question was impressively answered in the affirmative by the genuineness and glory of the risen Christ and the conclusive truthfulness of the empty tomb.

Yes, the bodily resurrection of Christ answered the above question – man will live again; he will be resurrected, because Jesus truly came forth victoriously from the grave (even according to the “sign” of His Messiahship, Matthew 12:39-40). This question contrasts life with death and teaches that the person is not alive (conscious) when he is dead. Will the dead ever be conscious again? Will they ever live, move, or come back from the dead? Will the same personality ever exist again in the resurrection?

Of all the world's religions, only Christianity has a resurrected Savior whose resurrection further ignited the flames of Christianity, now burning continually after twenty centuries. Had Christ not been raised and appeared to many witnesses, Christianity would have faded quickly from view as a phantom star. There would have been no martyrs to the Cause. There would have been no “Christians” for hungry lions in Rome's arenas if Christ were dead.

There were nine appearances recorded by the evangelists who saw Him; three revealed by Paul and one in which Paul said that Jesus appeared to more than 500 brethren – all at one time! Paul said that some of these 500 were still alive to testify at the time his letter was written to the Church at Corinth (about 59 A.D., 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). In these appearances, Jesus spoke and acted as He had done before death. He ate with them; they touched Him and talked to Him, and thus, were all convinced that He was alive and bodily risen from the dead.

## Lesson Questions:

1. What did Paul say of the Gospel and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? 1 Corinthians 15:1-9.
2. What Scripture did Paul probably have in mind, according to 1 Corinthians 15:3 [last part]? Review briefly Isaiah 53.
3. Why was Paul called in question by religious and civil authorities? Acts 23:6; 24:21-25.
4. What was the logic of Paul's defense before Agrippa? Review briefly Acts 26 [especially verses 12-19].
5. What are some of the infallible proofs of the bodily resurrection of Christ? Matthew 27:66; 28:2-6; Luke 24:36-43; Acts 1:3.
6. Who were witnesses of these things? Acts 3:15; 4:33; 10:41.
7. According to Acts 4:1-3; 5:18-19; 7:59-60; 6:25-26, 37; 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, what type of witnesses did God choose?
8. Of what great importance is Jesus' resurrection to believers? 2 Corinthians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Romans 14:9; John 11:25; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:12-19.
9. Describe the ascension of our risen Savior. Acts 1:9-11. What promise was made at that time? Acts 1:11.
10. Discuss Stephen's view of Christ. Acts 7:54-56. Where was Jesus at that time?

## Lesson 12: Christ the “First Fruits”

**Scripture Reading:** 1 Corinthians 15:1-20

**Memory Verse:** *“But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.”* (1 Corinthians 15:20)

**Introduction:** The first fruit is the very earliest or very first of the harvest of that which follows. In ancient times, also, the firstborn son was often given special recognition and double inheritance. Jesus Christ is called the *“first fruits of them that slept.”* In speaking of the resurrection of the dead, Christ is called the “first fruits” of the resurrection, *“afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming”* (1 Corinthians 15:23). At the resurrection of the righteous, they are to exchange the earthly image (mortality) for the heavenly image (immortality). Because Christ is the first fruits of the general resurrection of the righteous, He is therefore also called the “first fruits” of immortality.

In all of the previous miracles of people being raised from the “sleep of death,” they were restored to their homes, their people, and their previous mortal life. They had a restoration of their human, mortal bodies that were still subject to death. So, they were not the “first fruits” of immortality. These miracles were similar to healing miracles by which mortal life is extended (John 11:43-47; Luke 7:12-15; 8:49-55).

By reading 1 Corinthians 15:20-38, the meaning of Christ’s resurrection as a “first fruit” is made clear. He was “first fruits” of the resurrection of the righteous dead-of the future, general resurrection of the righteous – when all the saints to that time will receive immortality together and on whose bodies death will have no more power. Notice the future tense in all the texts in this lesson which refer to that event. Christ was the first to rise from the dead in His own likeness as a heavenly being. He was the “first fruits” of immortality that comes to the righteous at the resurrection (Romans 6:8-9). Christ’s resurrection was the “first fruits” of the resurrection of those dead in Christ to be raised in the “first resurrection” at His return, for then only would they receive immortality – not before.

Christ was sent to earth, as required by the redemption of mankind from sin and death. Without His resurrection, the Plan of Redemption would have failed, and all mankind would have perished without hope beyond this life. The Gospel would be powerless without His resurrection, as it would be in vain without His return and final work in the redemptive Plan.

To all those who believe and obey Him, of all generations, Christ’s sacrifice was not, and is not, in vain. The time is coming when *“He will swallow up death in victory ... will ransom them from the power of the grave ... will redeem them from death ... O grave, I will be the destruction”* (Isaiah 25:8; Hosea 13:14)

### Lesson Questions:

1. What is meant by Christ’s being the “first fruits” of the resurrection to immortality “of them that slept”? 1 Corinthians 15:20-23; [Lesson Commentary].
2. How is death described in the Scriptures? 1 Corinthians 15:20, 51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16.
3. What did David and Isaiah say concerning the condition of man [soul] in death? Psalm 6:5; 115:17; Isaiah 38:18.
4. Do the dead know anything? Ecclesiastes 9:5; Isaiah 38:18.
5. When did Job expect to escape from the sleep of death? Job 14:10-15; 19:25-27.
6. Is it possible for the “soul” to die? Ezekiel 18:4; James 5:20; Revelation 16:3. What, then, is meant by “soul”?
7. Is God able to destroy both soul and body? Matthew 10:28.
8. Do any of the righteous receive their rewards and immortality before other saints do? Hebrews 11:39-40; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16.
9. With what bodies will the saved come forth in the first resurrection? 1 Corinthians 15:52-54.
10. Who was the first to rise from the dead with immortality? Review 1 Corinthians 15:35-49.

# Lesson 13: The Saints Rewards

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 65:17-25

**Memory Verse:** *“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”* (Matthew 25:34)

**Introduction:** It is indeed satisfying to meditate on the rewards that God has in store for those who come to Him through Christ Jesus. There is first the reward of eternal life. What else does mankind desire as much as even fleeting and temporary life? Of all our possessions, we try most desperately to retain this life. This present life may be beautiful, but eternal life is a prize to be desired above all temporal and transitory assets. God will *“render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life”* (Romans 2:6-7). The righteous children of God will surely taste of indescribable joy, in the day that immortality (“eternal life”) is granted to them. This is doubtless the sweetest joy that awaits the righteous, overcoming saints.

The reward will include the restoration of righteous dominion over the earth and element for the eternal joy of the righteous. While on earth, Jesus previewed the restoration of authority to the righteous over the rest of creation. Jesus stilled the waves; walked on the water; caused the cock to crow at just the right time; and exercise knowledge and control over even the fishes of the sea. Scriptural promises of a “tamed asp” and a “domesticated lion,” do not have to be considered figuratively and symbolically in the light of what Christ did as the “second Adam” while He was on earth. No doubt the blessings provided under auspices of the restored dominion will prove to be much greater blessings than most of the saints will have anticipated. Wondrous blessings will ensue when the curse is lifted from this tired and trouble-weary world (earth). *“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now”* (Romans 8:22).

A further aspect of our rewards includes an increase of knowledge and understanding. God's inspired word records this promise: *“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: But when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known”* (1 Corinthians 13:9-12). Our age witnesses a vast accumulation of technical information, but it is painfully evident that understanding and wisdom are lacking in utilizing it. It will certainly be rewarding in God's real and peaceful kingdom when we become part of a society having wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of the Lord.

## Lesson Questions:

1. When will Christ [literally and from His throne] begin His work of judgment and granting of rewards? 2 Timothy 4:1-8; Matthew 25:31-34, 45; 24:44-51; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 2:25-27; 22:12.
2. What is meant by “the judgment seat of Christ,” as found in 2 Corinthians 5:10?
3. What is the greatest reward of all? Mark 10:29-30; John 3:16; 10:27-28; Romans 6:23; 1 John 2:25.
4. Will the righteous receive their rewards at death, or will they await the return of Christ and the resurrection? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 22:12; 1 Corinthians 15:23, 42-45; Matthew 25:31-34; John 14:3.
5. Will there be surprise and disappointment at Christ's true judgment? Matthew 7:21-23; 25:41-45; 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 20:26-28.
6. What kind of a church will Christ return to claim for His own? Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 12:17; 14:12.
7. Discuss the Kingdom as being the reward for saints of “all ages.” Matthew 8:11; Luke 13:28-29; Daniel 7:18, 27; Hebrews 11:39-40.
8. Will the saints have responsibilities along with rewards during the “Millennial Age” of the Kingdom? 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; Revelation 2:25-27; Matthew 19:28; Isaiah 66:19.
9. Have any saints already received their reward, and are they in “heaven” as is commonly supposed? John 3:13; Acts 2:34; 1 Timothy 6:12-16; 1 Peter 3:21-22; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8.
10. Are the deceased wicked presently suffering the “torment of flames in hell,” as their reward? Ecclesiastes 9:5; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:7-8; Jude 1:6; Hebrews 9:27; John 5:28-29; Malachi 4:1.