

## The Great Commission Missionary Institute

The Great Commission Missionary Institute is a practical instrument of Baptist associations, fellowships or churches to enlist and train large numbers of dedicated Christian workers to disciple and evangelize the unchurched people of their community and to open new work in unchurched communities.

Required Courses	Classes	Hours
Missions	<i>The Great Commission Is Personal</i>	6
Personal Ministry	<i>Your Little Flock Ministry</i>	6
Disciple Making	<i>Teach to Save Lives</i>	8
Discipleship	<i>First Steps in Christian Discipleship</i>	8
Church Planting, Growth	<i>The Church on the March</i>	9
Spiritual Basis of Ministry	<i>Spiritual Power</i>	6
Pastoral Leadership	<i>The Pastor God Uses</i>	6
Pastoral Ministry	<i>Pastoral Ministries in the Church*</i>	6
Biblical Homiletics	<i>Preach the Word</i>	10
Biblical Homiletics	<i>Dramatic Preaching, Stories of the Bible</i>	12
Christian Doctrine	<i>Doctrines of the Bible*</i>	12
Family	<i>Ministry to Families*</i>	9
Christian Leadership	<i>Dynamic Spiritual Leadership</i>	6
Christian Stewardship	<i>Your Prosperity Pleases God</i>	6
Elective Courses	<i>(Listed separately)</i>	12
Total hours:		120

### Certificates Offered

Certificate of Study                      First 60 hours  
 Diploma of Missionary Preparation    Final 60 hours



# The BAPTIST MESSAGE *for the* WORLD

GREAT COMMISSION MISSIONARY INSTITUTE



A Gateway to World Missions  
[churchstarts.com](http://churchstarts.com)

*"Every Community on Earth Deserves a New Testament Church"*



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## **Church Starts International**

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Chapter One:

## A PRICELESS HERITAGE



Baptists believe that in a true sense, our movement did not begin in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, but at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, when Jesus began to form his first church. This is because the Baptist movement proposes simply to give new birth to the life, doctrine and practices of the Primitive Church as closely as may be possible.

For this reason, from the beginning, the people others have chosen to call “Baptist” have said that our only rule of faith and practice is the New Testament. These words are easy to read and to say, but they have cost the life blood of many thousands of Christians whom we count as our spiritual forefathers.

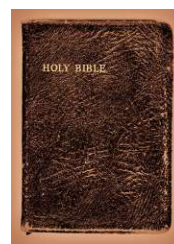
**THE NEW TESTAMENT HERITAGE.** The primitive Christian movement began with Jesus Christ himself. We believe that Jesus founded the Church, beginning it when he called his first followers, the twelve Apostles. Others were called, forming a band of 72 disciple-messengers. After his resurrection, Jesus was seen by more than 500 followers, persons who had been baptized by the 12 Apostles. On the day of Pentecost, the power of the Holy Spirit came upon the church and another 3000 people received the Lord and were added to the church that Jesus had established. He had proclaimed, *I will build my church*. For that reason, we believe that Jesus himself and not Peter or any other of the Apostles was the founder of the church.

But Jesus was more than the Founder of the church. He was and is its Savior and Authoritative Lord. Besides that, he is the supreme message of the church.

### 1. Who founded the New Testament Church?

- John the Baptist     Simon Peter     Jesus Christ

The doctrine of the church of Jesus Christ was very simple, and, at the same time, very profound. The essence of its message is that Christ is the only provision of the compassionate God for a sinful and lost world. Jesus Christ came not only to reveal God, serve and teach people. He came to give his life, *a ransom for many*. Christ's salvation is for *all who believe in him* (John 3:15). It is for everyone who receives him as Lord and Savior, repenting their sin (rebellion against God). Salvation is given independently of any effort on the part of people because **by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.** (Ephesians 2:8-9).



The first book to be published was the Bible itself. For the first time, the majority of priests were able to hold and read the Bible. Many felt that the teachings of the New Testament did not agree with what they had believed and taught. They saw that salvation comes by means of faith alone, and many accepted the fact that baptism should be a testimony of faith rather than a mean of attaining salvation. For this reason, many put aside the existing custom of baptizing babies and asked that all who truly believed in Christ be baptized.

**THE ANABAPTIST HERITAGE.** We believe that Christianity degenerated much in the centuries following the time of the Apostles. Paul had said that the gospel is ***the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth*** (Romans 1:16). However, the Christians of later centuries began to believe that salvation depended on other things as well. These included such things as baptism, church attendance, confession to a priest, faithfulness to prayer, etc. Works became so important that salvation by Christ alone lost its significance.

The first error was to believe that baptism was indispensable for salvation. For this reason, the official church began to baptize babies, something which was very contrary to the teachings and examples of the New Testament. Later, the Roman Catholic church, for reasons of convenience, stopped baptizing by immersion and began to baptize by sprinkling. All of this was approved by the head Bishop of the church, who, according to the church, was God's voice for the church.

During this dark period in the history of Christianity, there were great men of God who preached Christ and demonstrated the power of God in their lives. Nevertheless, the great majority of people who were called “Christians” were such in name alone, without experiencing the true power of the gospel in their lives.

A large part of the problem was the scarcity of the Bible. During the first 14 centuries of Christianity, every Bible had to be copied by hand because there was no other way to do it. In 1440, only 52 years before the discovery of America, Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press with moveable type. This invention, more than any other, changed the history of humanity as well as the history of Christianity. Recently, a group of international historians declared Gutenberg to be the most important human being of the second millennium.

Understandably, this caused great consternation within the established church. Its leaders began to give these new “heretics” the name of “anabaptists,” which means “those that baptize again.” The Anabaptists were persecuted and killed for their faith.

2. What human invention changed the history of Christianity? The \_\_\_\_\_. How did it so affect Christianity?

The publication of the Bible gave initiative to other Christian movements. The monk, Martin Luther, was the most famous and most influential of the “Reformers.” He, like the anabaptists, based his faith on the fact that ***a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*** (Romans 3:28). Luther recognized that in the New Testament baptism was only for believers, but he did not insist that his followers be baptized. On the contrary, he preserved the custom of the baptism of infants into what came to be known as the Lutheran Church. We believe that this decision had to do with the political reality in which Luther lived. He felt that it was necessary that the Lutheran Church have the military support of what became known as the Lutheran states. To have this support, the church had to count all the citizens of any state as its members. To assure this, Luther felt it necessary to continue with the baptism of babies, thus making sure that every new citizen be a member of the church.

On the contrary, the Anabaptists said that the faith that saves must be true and personal, and not a faith imposed by the church or the state. On insisting that only believers could be baptized, the Anabaptists also insisted in the liberty of conscience. They defended the rights of unbelievers as well as those of Christians. Unless the unbeliever had the right to remain in his or her unbelief, there was no assurance that those who claimed to be Christians truly were. For this reason, the Anabaptists were the first persons in modern history to insist on the separation of church and state, and to fight for the liberty of conscience.

3. What Christian group was the first in history to insist on the separation of church and state? \_\_\_\_\_. What were some of the principles of the Anabaptists?

The Catholics and the Lutherans (and, soon, other groups like the Presbyterians and Anglicans) entered into long years of religious wars, trying to conquer or to hold European states for their own churches. By law, every citizen of every state had to be a member of the state church. Therefore, Catholics suffered in Lutheran states and the Lutherans suffered in Catholic states.

By contrast, the Anabaptists suffered in ALL the states. Many thousands of them perished at the hands of Protestants and Catholics. Many were drowned in rivers or lakes because “the Anabaptists like to be baptized.” In all the history of Christianity, there is not to be found a group that was more valiant or more true to their Biblical principles than those who were called “Anabaptists.”



**THE BEGINNINGS OF THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT.** In the early Seventeenth Century, in Holland, and later in England, the Baptist movement was born, out of Anabaptist roots. The Baptists were different from the Anabaptists principally in that the Baptists began to baptize by immersion, being the first Christians of the modern era to return to this New Testament practice.



4. What was the first Christian group of the modern era to return to the New Testament practice of baptizing believers by immersion? The \_\_\_\_\_.

With the passing of time, the Baptist movement extended to almost all of Europe and to North America. The first Evangelical foreign missionary of the modern era was a Baptist, William Carey, of England. He was supported by the first Evangelical missionary organization of the modern era, the Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. In 1792, Carey left for India, where he and other Baptist companions planted the Gospel and started New Testament churches. These have multiplied many times over in that half-continent.

The first missionary from the American colonies, Adoniram Judson, was not a Baptist but, instead, a Congregationalist. He was inspired by the published missionary letters of Carey, and he would visit Carey before going on to Burma, where he hoped to plant the Gospel of Christ. Thinking that Carey would give them Baptist doctrinal arguments, Judson and his valiant wife carefully studied the New Testament during their long trip, preparing anti-Baptist arguments. But, to everyone's surprise, they became convinced that the Baptists were right, reflecting more accurately the teachings and practices of primitive Christianity seen in the New Testament. Carey's surprise was that when this couple showed up at his door in India, they asked him for baptism by immersion, identifying themselves as Baptists.

The young missionary couple sent a letter to their sending churches in America, withdrawing from that denomination. This left them without any financial support, living on the other side of the world from their homeland. Shortly after, another Congregationalist missionary arrived in India: Luther Rice. He was surprised and anguished by the decision of his companions but, after studying the Scriptures with them, he also decided to be baptized by immersion and become a Baptist.

These three young missionaries made a decision that resulted in great historic consequences. They agreed that the Judsons would go on to Burma to open Christian work in that country while the bachelor Rice would return to the United States to seek economic support from the Baptist churches for the mission.

The Judsons gave their lives to Burma. After many years of suffering, rejection, poverty, imprisonment, illness and even torture, God gave them their first convert. Suddenly, the Gospel took root in that land that had been totally pagan, and thousands received Christ. Today, Baptists number in the hundreds of thousands in Burma and all are spiritual descendants of those brave young missionaries who were driven by their Biblical convictions.

The work of Luther Rice was possibly even more impressive than that of his companions in Burma. Rice, with his strong Baptist and missionary convictions, rode horseback throughout the American states, challenging Baptists to unite to support the foreign missionary cause as well as missions in America. Never marrying, he became the spiritual mover by which Baptists formed their first national convention, which became the origin of the great Baptist conventions today. The organization of Baptist conventions in the United States made possible the sending of thousands of Baptist missionaries to nearly 200 nations in the world today.

5. Briefly describe the accomplishments of William Carey, the Judsons, and Luther Rice.

The Baptist movement extended to the whole world, but not simply because of missionaries. It was advanced by the simple distribution of the Bible in many languages and countries. In different parts of the world, Christian groups, studying the Bible, formed churches after the pattern of the New Testament. They discovered that their doctrines and practices were those of the Baptists, and they joined with them, also accepting their name. This especially happened in Eastern European countries such as Russia and Romania. It also happened in Latin America. Guatemala is an example of this.

**THE WORLD-WIDE SPREAD OF THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT.** Almost in every country and region of the world are to be found Baptist churches. This is due to the fact that as people build their faith and their churches on the New Testament alone, they become Baptists even without knowing it. It is also due to the missionary emphasis of Baptists from the beginning. Baptist churches join together in associations, conventions, societies and other organizations to spread the gospel within their countries and beyond them. The freedom of Baptist churches from higher ecclesiastical authority has contributed to the rapid spontaneous expansion of Baptist work across the globe.



Because of their emphasis upon the Scriptures as the only safe foundation for doctrine, Baptists have been innovators of Bible teaching efforts. Baptist pioneers, for example, were the first to create Sunday schools and vacation Bible schools. In addition, Baptists have created thousands of schools, and hundreds of colleges, universities and seminaries across the face of the world. Bible teaching and Christian education have been constant emphases of Baptists from their beginning. This is because we believe that every person is of great worth in God's eyes, and deserves the godly personal growth that only a Bible-based education can provide. Your study of this booklet is a part of that world-wide effort.

With the passing of the years, many have not understood the convictions of the Baptist pioneers. Not having had to suffer, they seem to ignore the importance of the principles for which the pioneers suffered. Every new generation must not only remember the glorious history of their origin but must return with all seriousness to the pages of the New Testament to reaffirm its principles, its beliefs and its practices.

Something which distinguishes the Baptist people from all the other Christian movements is that the modern Baptist does not have to remember what the first Baptists taught to be a good Baptist. It is only necessary to return to the same New Testament that inspired those pioneers and base one's faith, teachings and practice on it. A Baptist church is simply the church that is based entirely on the foundation of the New Testament, without accepting any other base or authority.

6. To be a member of a Baptist church, is it always necessary to be baptized by immersion?

Yes  No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Chapter Two:

**AN EXCLUSIVE FOUNDATION**

Many people ask why there are so many religions and why, even among Christians, there are so many different churches and denominations.



In the previous chapter, note has been taken as to why different denominations exist. Outstanding leaders led to the formation of new movements within and without Christianity. Although human leadership is a factor, there is still a more fundamental matter. This factor is the basis of revelation of a religion. Each religion recognizes the existence of gods or of a god, and each religion claims to base itself upon the divine revelation received from its god or gods.

**RELIGIONS OF MULTIPLE FOUNDATIONS.** The majority of religions, and even of Christian denominations, have more than one basis of revelation upon which they base their beliefs. For example, the Muslim religion is based primarily upon the writings of their founder, Mohammed, who claimed to be a prophet of God. At the same time, Muslims recognize parts of the Bible as being inspired, but always hold that the Koran, written by Mohammed, is superior to the Bible.

1. Religions are different in that:

- Some do not believe in gods or a supreme god.
- They have different bases of what they consider to be revelation on which to base their beliefs.

The Mormons also claim to accept the Bible as an inspired book, but they prefer to accept the teachings of their founder, Joseph Smith, as the “last word.” Therefore, their faith is based principally on the Book of Mormon and other books which they consider to be inspired. It should not surprise us that Mormonism, in its roots, is very different from Christianity. Their religion could not exist without the books of their founder.

In like manner, those who prefer to call themselves “Jehovah’s Witnesses” insist that their faith is based on the Bible. Even so, they will confess that a person cannot know the truth about God with only the Bible. According to them, it is necessary to read and accept the teachings of certain books to arrive at a knowledge of their truth.

2. If Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses claim to accept the Bible as God’s revelation, why are their doctrines so different from those of Christian churches?

The Roman Catholic Church, likewise, is built upon a multiple revelation. That is to say, first of all, the Catholic church does believe that the Bible is God’s inspired word and is the foundation of the Christian faith. However, that church does not accept the Bible as the only true basis of

faith. Our Catholic friends believe that Christ has left the pope, the Bishop of Rome, as the present voice of Christ on earth. Everything the pope may say “ex cathedra” (from the throne) is as inspired as the Bible itself. Besides, it is the “last word” from God. For that reason, the pronouncements of the pope and certain councils are superior to the Bible. They can replace the oldest divine teachings found in the Scriptures. Catholicism also accepts many of the religious traditions the church has accumulated throughout the centuries as inspired. Although these traditions often do not agree with the Bible, for the Catholic church, they are faithful expressions of the truth.



3. The Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Catholic church are alike in that each one is based on multiple revelations.

- True     False

Evangelical movements have also used multiple foundations on which to build their doctrine. For example, the Seventh Day Adventists accept the Bible as the Word of God. Nevertheless, they believe that it is wrong to eat meat in spite of the fact that a divine voice commanded Peter to eat meat of every kind (Acts 10:15). This they can do with a clear conscience because the founder of their movement, according to them, was a true prophet of God and her revelations, even when against the plain teachings of the Bible, are superior to the Bible. That is because her revelations are more recent than that of the Bible itself.

More recently, there have been many prominent Evangelical leaders, especially of what is known as the “NeoPentecostal” movement that have claimed to have visions and revelations that, for them, are as important as the Bible itself.

For example, there was a well-known pastor in Guatemala who had written his own prophetic epistle that was, according to him, “under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit”. His epistle was even read in the church as if it were on the par with Paul’s epistle to the Romans!

Another well-known preacher claimed that the Holy Spirit revealed to him that he was John the Baptist reincarnated. Later, the same Holy Spirit, he said, let him know that he was Christ Himself. His followers had trouble accepting that, so in a later “revelation” it was clarified that he was not the Christ, but that he had the spirit of John the Baptist.

Most Evangelical groups are much more responsible than these that have been mentioned. Nevertheless, they add to the Bible the teachings or Biblical interpretations of their founders as bases of their faith. Even when it seems that the Bible does not agree with some of these teachings, they, for respect of their venerated founders, cling to their teachings as the final truth.

4. There are many Evangelical churches that add to the Bible the teachings or interpretations of their founders as bases of their faith. Describe some of these in class.



Another growing error among Christians is to give great importance to dreams and supposed “revelations.” In many churches, the members come together to tell one another their dreams and how they interpret them. In some, preachers will speak of their dreams or revelations and claim that they are the latest word from God. Wherever this is common, the tendency is to move farther and farther away from the Bible as the true and certain revelation of God.

**THE EXCLUSIVE BASE OF BAPTIST FAITH.** Baptists are different from the majority of Christian churches in that we base ourselves exclusively on the New Testament as the foundation of our faith and practice. We do not deny that God can give visions to men or women, but we can never accept teachings from any source that goes against those of the Bible, and, especially of the New Testament. There were prophets in the time of Paul and the Apostles, but God never gave them visions or revelations that went against the teachings of Christ and the Apostles. We are, in a special way, THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK, because we do not accept any other revelation to be equal to the Bible.



We base ourselves, especially, on the New Testament, because the church of Jesus Christ was and is a church of the New Covenant and not the Old. There has been a tendency to bring names, customs, rules or commandments of the Old Testament and apply them to the church. Unconsciously, churches are being taught to return to the slavery of the Law, blotting out the power of salvation that comes through faith alone. As an example of this, many modern praise songs make no mention of Christ, the Cross or of the gospel, but only of Jehovah. If they speak of salvation, it is the salvation of Israel in crossing the sea on dry land.

Baptists are distinguished in that we insist that the faith of Jesus Christ has only one foundation, an exclusive foundation, and that foundation is the Bible in general and the New Testament in particular.

For many years, Baptists did not want to write any formal declaration of faith. They had any kind of creed, apart from the Bible itself. In more recent years, different declarations of faith and doctrine have been written and accepted by Baptists. However, none of these has been declared as the “official” faith of the Baptists. Rather, we insist that the New Testament is our one rule of faith and practice. This principle has much importance for us, because it dictates the message of salvation that we preach and accept.

5. Baptists, in contrast to the majority of denominations, insist that the New Testament is the true and only basis of our faith.

Yes  No



## Chapter Three:

**A GENUINE SALVATION**

Many believe that all Evangelicals preach the same gospel. That is to say that we explain in the same way how one can be saved and what salvation means. Sadly, this is not true. Even among Evangelical preachers can be heard different “gospels.” This, more than anything else, endangers the Evangelical movement in many parts of the world.



This same tendency comes to influence the Baptist movement as well. Since the time of Paul, there have been “Christian” preachers who preach *another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed* (Galatians 1:6-8).

Many believers think this was only a problem in the First Century and that today we all preach the same gospel. We hope to correct this error in the following pages.

1. According to the author, what is the greatest danger to the Evangelical movement today?

- Religious persecution.
- The preaching of “different gospels.”

Baptists are not responsible for what others preach, but, yes, before God we are very responsible for what we preach. How can we know if the gospel we preach is the Gospel? Paul said simply that the true gospel is that which we have preached unto you. It is precisely the same gospel announced by the Apostles, without adding or subtracting anything. With that, we are in full accord since the only basis for our faith is the New Testament. But what does the New Testament teach about the gospel and salvation?

**THE GOSPEL AND SIN.** The gospel is only “good news” if we understand the desperate condition of sinful men and women. Many think of sin as a matter of doing certain things that do not please God. In reality, sin is much more than this. Sin, in its very essence, is rebellion and independence from God and His will. Christ came to be our King and Lord, to govern, save and use our lives for the glory of God. He always expressed the gospel in terms of “the Kingdom of God.” By this, he was not referring to some kingdom that was yet to come. He spoke of a kingdom that had already come to earth and into which one must be born spiritually. Therefore, **except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God** (John 3:3). Nor was the kingdom to come with pomp and great show. **The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God IS WITHIN YOU** (Luke 17:20-21).



2. Which is the best definition of sin?

- It is doing bad things.
- It is living in rebellion and independence from God and His will.

3. What Kingdom was Jesus talking about?

- A kingdom that would come at the end of the world.
- A spiritual kingdom which is already within those who trust and obey Christ.



Our King and Lord came to earth not only to show us God, but to save us by the means of the death of His Son. **The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many** (Matthew 20:28). When dying on the cross, Christ accepted the full curse that was on us because of our disobedience to God. **Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us** (Galatians 3:13). Jesus accepted the complete penalty on the cross for our rebellion, freeing us forever from its eternal consequences.

The apostles preached that there was a need for two things to be saved. In a real sense, these are just two different sides of the same coin. They required 1) repentance and 2) faith. Repentance has to do with what we leave behind and faith for what we receive.

4. What two things did the apostles preach that we must experience to be saved?

R \_\_\_\_\_ and F \_\_\_\_\_

**REPENTANCE.** Peter demanded **Repent, therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out** (Acts 3:19). When the Jews asked what they should do, he replied, **Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ** (Acts 2:38). We cannot help but notice that Peter gave his evangelistic invitation in a way that is different from much we might say today! Who is right: Peter or us? To understand better, let us try to understand Peter's words.

If man's problem is that of his sin, which means his rebellion and independence from God, his salvation depends on his renouncing that rebellion and submitting self to Christ as Lord and Savior. To enter the kingdom, one must pronounce loyalty to the King, renouncing a life of rebellion and independence from God. We are like guerillas who have gotten the news of a complete amnesty. To benefit from this amnesty, we must believe that it is really offered to us and to accept it, renouncing our rebellion and affirming our subjection to the King.



Jesus said that if anyone wanted to follow him, that person must **deny himself and take up his cross** (Matthew 16:24). Repentance is nothing less than denying oneself. It means giving up on self-rule, renouncing the authority of the “big I” over one’s life. How can one truly follow Jesus Christ if he or she is still the king and lord of one’s life? Every life must have only one Lord. In like manner, when Jesus talked about taking up the cross, He was speaking of an instrument of death in this case, death to personal self-rule. In modern language, Jesus would say, Take up your electric chair and follow me!



Peter said, “*Repent and be converted.*” Converted means a half turn in life. Before, we followed our own desires, walking farther and farther from God and His will for us. When we are converted, we turn our back on our selfish life to walk in the Way of Jesus.

Throughout the world, there is a great need for the Biblical emphasis on repentance, because, without sincere repentance, there is no salvation.

5. If one has never repented of the self-centered life.

- That person is a weak Christian.
- That person has not yet been saved or forgiven of sin.

Understanding repentance, we can understand better what faith is. Every group that calls itself “Christian” recognizes the need of faith for salvation. But, what kind of faith will save?

**THE FAITH THAT SAVES.** *He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life*, writes the Apostle John. The question is: What does it mean to believe on the Son? The Bible itself says ***Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble*** (James 2:19). Obviously, the devils are not saved. What do they lack?

We know many people who say they believe in God. They claim to believe in Jesus Christ. But there is nothing in their lives that demonstrate a spiritual transformation, a true conversion, or a new birth. Are they saved? If not, what do they lack?

There are churches of different denominations that baptize their babies and when they come to adolescence, the church celebrates a “confirmation” of their faith. In their confirmation, they are asked a number of questions based on a creed of their church. For example, Do you believe in God? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Do you believe he died for the sins of the world? Yes, yes, yes. And so goes the list of questions, all of which are answered with a yes. With the confirmation, it is believed that the individual is a true Christian because he or she believes everything that is necessary. But are they right? The problem is that most people who say yes to all the elements of a creed do not demonstrate, to our satisfaction, evidence of a new birth. Their religion is one of a creed and ritual, but not of newness of life.



Although we Baptists do not speak of “confirmation” or of “creed,” we often do the same thing. We hastily evangelize our friends many times with a tract called “the Plan of Salvation.” We ask, “Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God? Yes.” “Do you believe in God?” Yes. “Do you believe you are a sinner?” Yes. “Do you believe Christ died for your sins?” “Do you accept Jesus as your Savior?” Yes. “Wonderful! Thank God, you are now a Christian?” If talking to a Catholic, the person is surprised because he already answered all of those questions affirmatively when he was confirmed. Now, we announce that he is saved, but neither we nor the person see any difference in his being. He doesn’t come to church, he is never baptized as a believer; there is no change in his lifestyle. So we ask, “What did we do wrong?”



We made a mistake by not explaining to the person what it means to BELIEVE in Jesus in a way that he will be saved.

The faith that saves is not simply an intellectual decision or a sentimental one. Saving faith speaks of a profound moral decision. It is a faith that brings repentance. If a person says he believes in Jesus but never renounces the selfish life which is independent of God and His holy will, that person is deceived in regard to the faith. He has the same kind of faith that devils have.

For this reason, the Apostles always emphasized the Lordship of Christ as their principal theme. It is believed that the first Christian creed was simply ***Jesus Christ is Lord*** (Philippians 2:11). The Apostles spoke much more of Christ as “Lord” than they did of him as “Savior.” That is because for Jesus to be one’s Savior, he must first become his Lord. Imagine that a person is deathly sick and says he believes the doctor can cure him, but he refuses to put his body into the hands of the doctor. Of what value is his supposed “faith” in the doctor? Unless we submit ourselves to Christ, how can he save us?

6. The Apostles mainly emphasized that Jesus is:

- Lord
- Savior

7. Why must Jesus be Lord in order to be our Savior?

Paul said that ***if you declare with your mouth “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*** (Romans 10:9). We are not to confess that Jesus is “a lord.” Jesus is THE LORD, the only one there is. That means that for you, there is no other Lord. You yourself are no longer the lord of your life. Jesus is YOUR Lord. That is something the devils cannot say.

We confess Jesus Christ as Lord only if we believe what the New Testament says about him. We sincerely believe that ***Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us*** (Romans 8:34, NIV). A person can believe everything the Bible says about Jesus without “believing in him.” Many come to know and believe everything the Bible says about Jesus without accepting him as Lord and Savior because they believe it costs them too much to deny their rule over their own lives. To receive Jesus as Lord and Savior is a moral decision. It is a decision that we can only make in the power of the Holy Spirit.

To believe in Jesus Christ is to surrender to him, as a bride gives herself to her husband, uniting her life and all her hope in the life of the one she loves. Without this kind of faith, Jesus is unable to save the person who comes to him.



When a person surrenders in faith to Jesus, God begins to work a series of miracles in his or her life. At the very moment of receiving Christ, one is a new creation: ***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*** (2 Corinthians 5:17). One becomes a new creation of God in Jesus Christ, enabled and motivated to do God's good works: ***For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*** (Ephesians 2:10).

The faith that saves is a real faith, as we have noted. The salvation it produces is a real salvation, demonstrated by a life that is changed and is proved by its permanence in the life of the person who is saved.

8. How is real salvation demonstrated in the person who is truly saved?

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## Chapter Four:

**AN ETERNAL SALVATION**

We Baptists believe that, based on the New Testament, salvation is not only genuine, but also that it is eternal.



Perhaps you think everyone believes this way, but, sadly, that is not true. Many believers have no security of an eternal salvation, because they think salvation is a very insecure possession. They think they have salvation today but can lose it tomorrow. This is not what Baptists believe. What is the truth?

1. Many believers today do not have any security of an eternal salvation.

True     False

In the course of Christian history, many thinkers had a problem with the question of a salvation that comes only by faith. Where do works come in? Therefore, with the passage of time, the official church began to teach that salvation is based on two factors: faith and works. They might have expressed it in this way: *FAITH + WORKS = SALVATION*.



The Catholic church has never denied the importance of faith for salvation, but it declared that faith had to be accompanied by works to achieve salvation. However, since no one is sure of being able to fulfill all the necessary works, according to some Catholic thinkers, it is necessary that a person have an opportunity after death to make up for excess sins. From this idea was born the non-Biblical belief in a purgatory. Although Purgatory amounts to suffering after death, it is a doctrine of false hope in that it offers heaven to the sinner by means of a period of suffering in purgatory after death.

Catholicism has taught that apart from our faith in Christ, on dying the soul is put in a balance. If one's good works are more than one's sins, the person will go to heaven. If not, the person will go to Purgatory to suffer for one's excessive sins (if the person has been baptized) or will go eternally to hell (if not baptized). For this reason, our Catholic friends have no security of going to heaven when they die because they have no way of being sure about the balance of their sins and good works.

The Evangelical movement, in contrast, has insisted that no one will enter heaven because of his or her good works. ***For by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*** (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is God's GIFT to us and is not to be paid for by any works we may do. If we could enter heaven because of our good works, we could glory in heaven because of them, and not because of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Even so, there is a false doctrine that grows in the midst of the Evangelical people that endangers this Biblical truth. More and more, Evangelical preachers are announcing the old message that man is saved by works more than by faith. They do not speak of "works;" instead they now talk about "faithfulness." But when listened to carefully, it is understood they are talking about a faithfulness to do works. As an example of this, in many churches, the pastors are falsely teaching that a person can only be sure of salvation by attending church faithfully. In some churches, they literally have to go to church every night of the week to be sure of salvation.

2. How are sinners saved by God?

- by their good works, their faithfulness  
 by their faith, which results in faithfulness and good works.

The author of this book believes that the false doctrine of salvation by being faithful to certain works is the consequence of a mistaken evangelism. People have been urged to believe in Jesus without explaining what it means to "believe" in him. There has not been an emphasis on repentance, renouncing self and receiving Christ as the Savior and Lord of one's life. As a consequence, many people received as members of the churches are not truly saved, and they cannot live like they were saved. This lack of evidence of a new life causes much concern on the part of pastors and they begin to demand that people "be faithful." Each preacher comes up with his own list of works that must be done to be "faithful."

Most of their lists of requirements are applied to the women. They must not use makeup, not wear slacks, not cut their hair, etc. Many churches have all night prayer vigils. Some of these seem to be with the idea that God has to take into account the suffering of the body, which is a payment for sins. In like manner, some speak of "the sacrifice of praise" in which the congregation must stand for long periods of time. The physical discomfort of this activity is seen by many as being a way the participants can pay for their sins and be forgiven, not believing in the sacrifice of Christ for the full payment of sins.

This doctrine of salvation by faith + faithfulness has many different expressions. But it is not the faith of the New Testament. The fact is that it is old Catholic doctrine reborn in the Evangelical movement. But the old Catholic faith, although also being mistaken, is more hopeful than this new kind of Evangelical faith, as will be explained later.

3. Describe some of the things many Evangelicals believe they must do for God to be able to



forgive their sins and save them.

It is interesting to note that the works to which we are called to be faithful are all works of the flesh. That is, in themselves, they are not spiritual works like love, faith, self-control, humility. They are works that any person is capable of doing. For example, any person, spiritual or not, can avoid using makeup. This is no proof that one has Christ. Even healthy rules like no smoking is no proof, in itself, that the person is a Christian. Millions of non-believers do not smoke. Even so, the lists of rules to which one must be faithful to be accepted by God get longer and longer. This is a modern revival of being saved by Law except different preachers describe the Law in different ways.



Some preachers find obscure rules in the Old Testament and teach their churches to obey them, telling them that they are obeying the Bible in ways that no others are doing. This, they say, proves that their church is "the best." What it actually proves is that the church has decided that it is saved by being faithful to the Law. To these, James says they cannot pick and choose what parts of the Law they will obey. If they will be saved by the Law, they must obey the entire Law, and that without any failure. **For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all** (James 2:10).

More and more, Evangelicals are not sure of possessing salvation. That is because they cannot be sure of their faithfulness. They can trust Christ, but they know they cannot trust themselves. For this reason, in many churches little is heard about salvation through Christ, but much is heard about the duties of Christians. This, some think, is because Christ has already done his part and there is no great need to emphasize that. They believe that it is more important to give full attention to the faithfulness of the believers, requiring them to fulfill all the rules of "holiness" that may occur to the preachers. But who is completely faithful? No one. And if no one is such, what hope is there for the Christian?

4. Many Evangelicals are not sure about their salvation because they cannot be sure of their own faithfulness.

- True     False

Some explain that we must be "sufficiently faithful." But, where is the line between being "sufficiently faithful" and being "insufficiently faithful"? If a person is almost faithful enough and dies lacking just a little, he or she will go into the lake of fire. Another Christian, who was just a little bit better was just barely sufficiently faithful. This person will spend eternity in the glory of heaven. Is this not a doctrine of salvation by works? Will not this give room for boasting in heaven, because those who are there met the requirements while others did not? And where is the dividing line between sufficient faithfulness and insufficient faithfulness? If such a line



exists, it is not to be found anywhere in the Bible. It is a doctrine from Satan himself.

The old Catholic doctrine is much more comforting because it offers, at least, Purgatory for those whose faithfulness was inadequate. Those Evangelicals who believe that salvation is denied to those who were insufficiently faithful, believe these will go to hell without any further hope. It is easy to understand why many Evangelicals, as well as Catholics, Mormons and "Jehovah's Witnesses" are alike in that they suffer deep doubts about their salvation.



5. In what way are many Evangelicals becoming like Catholics, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses? Why is this happening?

What a contrast is seen in Paul's attitude! ***I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*** (2 Timothy 1:12). Paul KNEW and WAS PERSUADED. Modern human doctrines neither know or are persuaded, because they are not trusting in Him who is powerful to keep that which they have committed unto him, but are half trusting in themselves, trusting in their faulty "faithfulness."

6. According to 2 Timothy 1:12, Paul was sure of his salvation. Why?

- He trusted in his own faithfulness and in the power of his spiritual life.  
 He trusted exclusively and completely in Him in whom he had believed (Jesus) Who was powerful to keep him for the final day of judgment.

A doctrine that salvation depends on one's faithfulness as much as on God does not glorify the Lord nor does it satisfy the saints. We have already seen that everyone must doubt they have fully done their part. It is as if Christ paid \$1,000 and maybe I have to pay 10 cents. There are two problems: In the first place, I don't even have 10 cents! Secondly,



if I had to pay even one cent, salvation would not be a gift of God as the Bible says. Instead of being a gift, it would be a great bargain. I pay little, but receive a lot. This is a totally un-Biblical idea. ***He who has the Son, HAS LIFE*** (1 John 5:12, RSV). There is no mention of works, faithfulness, keeping rules or any other such thing. We believe that our salvation is a free gift of GOD and is due to the glory of God and His Son Who gave us salvation. He will not share His glory with anyone.

Having the Son, I HAVE life and this life is ETERNAL from the moment I received it. Many seem

to doubt that eternal life is really eternal. If eternal life can be lost, as they believe, it was not eternal life. It was only a temporary state of life that had possibilities of converting, at the time of death, into eternal life. This is not what the New Testament, the only basis of our faith, teaches.

7. As Baptists, we believe that whoever has sincerely repented and surrendered in faith to Christ already HAS eternal life and that ETERNAL LIFE will never be lost.

Yes     No

It may be helpful to answer those who claim that salvation can be lost by appealing to Revelation 2:10: **Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.** This speaks of those who endure “ten days” of tribulation without denying Christ. It can be explained by Jesus' words **By their fruits ye shall know them** (Matthew 7:20). Those who are truly redeemed and transformed will endure even the worst persecution. Faithfulness is a fruit of salvation and not the cause.

It is again necessary to say that we Baptists are not responsible for what others teach. But, yes, we are responsible for what we teach. Today, there are many false “winds of doctrine” blowing, even within the Evangelical movement. But we serve our church, our community, and even our brothers and sisters in other churches, by affirming the clear and basic teachings of the New Testament. We become a lighthouse of the Truth in the midst of a people that is confused and disorientated.



## Chapter Five:

**A SUPERNATURAL POWER**

As has been observed, there is a tendency to try to guarantee one's salvation by keeping many rules that are considered as evidence of "enough faithfulness" to be saved. To Christians who made this same mistake, Paul wrote, ***Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*** (Galatians 3:3).



This teaches us two things: First we cannot be made perfect or be guaranteed of our salvation by anything we ourselves do, by our "faithfulness" or by works we do in our own power. Salvation is exclusively and totally a work of God, received by our faith. Secondly, salvation is the work of the Spirit. It is started by a special work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. John speaks of salvation as being a ***birth by the Holy Spirit*** (John 3:6).

1. On man's part, salvation comes by faith. On God's part, salvation is made real in us through a divine work of God's Holy Spirit which we receive by faith.

True     False

**THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SALVATION.** Paul, like John, identifies the Holy Spirit as being responsible for bringing salvation into our very being. He writes: ***And you also became God's people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation. You believed in Christ and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit he had promised. The Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people*** (Ephesians 1:13-14a). This passage is very important and proves the falsehood of some new and popular doctrines that are now heard in many churches. It explains how salvation is brought about in a person:

1. *And you also became God's people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation.* One must first hear the true message, the Good News, the Gospel, that brings salvation. Paul also wrote, I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believeth. Romans 1:16. No one can be saved without first hearing the Gospel.

2. *You believed in Christ.* It is not enough just to hear the good news about salvation through Christ. It is necessary to believe in him as one's Lord and Savior.

3. *and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit he had promised.* God makes us His own when we trust in Christ, and He marks us as His own people by giving us the promised Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who makes us new people. He gives us our Spiritual new birth. This is God's stamp of ownership of us who have repented and given ourselves in faith to His Son, Jesus Christ.



4. *The Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people.* When we receive Christ, we receive the Holy Spirit as well, but we have not yet received everything God has promised his people. At the end of time, on the "Day of Jesus Christ" we shall be fully transformed to be like Jesus Christ. But, even now, the Holy Spirit gives evidence that we belong to God because we now have spiritual power to live a radically different life through the Spirit.

In summary, the Holy Spirit comes to transform us in the moment of our spiritual rebirth and He continues to live and work in us every day of our earthly journey. We are instructed ***"do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."***(Ephesians 4:30). Instead, we should be ***filled with the Spirit*** (Ephesians 5:18). ***Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*** (Galatians 5:25). This means that the beginning of the Christian life is a work of the Holy Spirit and the continuation of the Christian life is made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.

How can we be sure to be faithful unto death? This does not come by keeping church-dictated rules in the power of the flesh. That is not true "holiness." On the contrary, we must place all our faith in God Who seals us and works in us through the divine person of the Holy Spirit in us.

2. The beginning of the Christian life is the work of the Holy Spirit and the continuation of Christian life must be done in the power of the H \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_.

**MODERN ERRORS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT.** During the past century, many erroneous teachings about the Holy Spirit have been taught.

For example, many teach that the Holy Spirit does not work in the moment of salvation, but only afterwards. They say that we must first receive Christ and later receive the Holy Spirit. This teaching is completely against many passages of Scripture, including some which are given above.

Those who teach in this manner base their opinions on the events of the day of Pentecost. They point out that the disciples first believed in Christ and later received the power of the Holy Spirit. We respond that, historically, this had to be the case. Jesus himself said that they could not receive the Holy Spirit while he was still with them (John 16:7). Historically, it was necessary for the disciples to know Jesus before they could receive the Holy Spirit, Who came after Jesus was gone from the earth. There is not a single verse of the Bible that teaches that Christians today must first receive Christ and later receive the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, there are many verses that show that to receive Christ as Lord and Savior, we can only do it with the help and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Besides this error, many teach that no one has received the Holy Spirit unless they speak in tongues, basing their arguments on the same events of the day of Pentecost.

There are many problems with this point of view. In the first place, the Bible says, *If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ* (Romans 8:9). If only those who speak in tongues have the Holy Spirit, no one else has the Spirit and they do not belong to Christ. It would be necessary to say that it is necessary to speak in tongues to be saved a requirement that is contrary to all the Biblical passages that explain how to be saved.

The only Epistle that mentions speaking in tongues is 1 Corinthians. In that letter, Paul indicates that not all Christians speak in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30). He assures us that the Holy Spirit dwells in the body of every Christian (1 Cor. 6:19).

3. The Epistles teach that every Christian must speak in tongues.

True  False

4. Paul taught that all Christians have salvation but that not all Christians speak in tongues.

True  False

In the book of Acts, there are four special occasions when the Holy Spirit came, with different miraculous signs, over the believers:

- 1) with the Jews
- 2) with the Samaritans
- 3) with the Gentiles, and
- 4) with the disciples of John the Baptist

These were very special moments in history, accompanied by several signs, including speaking in existing foreign languages that others could understand, flames over the head of each true believer, accompanied by a sound like a rushing mighty wind. In the same book, many conversions are described and in none of them was there a speaking in tongues or instructions to speak in tongues. As examples: when the eunuch received Christ and baptism, there is no mention of speaking in tongues or that Philip told him it were necessary or even normal. The same thing is true of the conversion of Lydia or of the jailor and his family. There is no evidence that these persons spoke in tongues and certainly the Bible does not give the slightest idea that the salvation of these people depended upon their speaking in tongues. If it were necessary, we can be sure the Bible would carefully explain it.

In 1 Corinthians. Chapters 12 and 14, Paul emphasized that the gift of tongues was a gift of least importance that had to be used with great caution. He said there were other divine gifts of greater importance that they should desire, like the gift of preaching (prophecy). The supreme gift is love (1 Corinthians 13). Paul never identifies speaking in tongues with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.



When Paul describes the Corinthian church in chapters 12 and 14, we note that those who said they spoke in tongues were very prideful of having an ability that was of little use. **Indeed, no one understands them** (1 Cor. 14:2, NIV). Paul closes by saying, **I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue** (1 Cor. 14:19, NIV)

Paul insists that **If anyone speaks in a tongue...someone must interpret.** (1 Cor. 14:27). The majority of churches that claim to speak in tongues do not obey this Biblical command.

5. Paul warned in 1 Corinthians that the gift of speaking in tongues was a gift of little importance which had to be used with much care.

True  False

In all the controversy which has resulted, there has been a tendency by everyone, including Baptists, to overlook the true significance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This is that apart from the Holy Spirit, the believer has no power to live the Christian life nor to fulfill one's spiritual mission.

6. The most important significance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is that, apart from Him, the Christian has no power to live the Christian life nor to fulfill the spiritual mission to which he has been called.

True  False

**THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN.** There is probably no theme of greater importance to the genuine Christian than the matter of the work of the Holy Spirit in his or her life. This theme includes a series of great truths generally ignored by most of God's children. For example, many fear to lose their salvation simply because they do not realize that the defense of their salvation is in the hands of the Holy Spirit who lives within them. Many Christians are defeated in their spiritual lives because they do not know how to live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This theme is so important that it requires more attention than can be given in this general doctrinal study. Another small book published by Church Starts International provides the basis for several hours of study. Called **SPIRITUAL POWER: THE FULLNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOUR LIFE**, it was written by this author, with the conviction that Christians need a simple and basic Bible study on how to experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit and to walk, day after day, in His power. There are other excellent books on this subject. It is important that every church have such a study on the principles and reality of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of each Christian. Such a study will help the church members to not fall prey to many "modern" false doctrines of the Spirit.

In a small space, we will summarize the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of each Christian:

1. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, making possible genuine repentance and faith, the only means of salvation (Mark 2:17).
2. The Holy Spirit regenerates the believer in an action that is also called “new birth,” “the baptism of the Spirit,” “the sealing of the Spirit.” This is a work that is completely done by God to produce a new creature in Christ, enabled to do good works. These will be works done in the power of the Spirit, and for the glory of God alone (John 3:3 and 7, Titus 3:5-6, Mark 1:8, Acts 1:4-5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13).



3. The Christian's rebirth by the Holy Spirit “dresses us” with Christ himself (Galatians 3:27), enabling us to live a new life.

4. The fullness of the Spirit's power in one's life depends on several things:

- a. Spiritual cleansing by means of the confession of sin (1 John 1:9).
- b. The death of “the big I”, renouncing the egocentric control of life (Luke 9:23, Romans 6:11, Galatians 2:20).
- c. Crowning Christ as the absolute Lord of one's life. That your major desire be to obey Christ, even as he desired to obey his Father (John 4:34, 5:30).
- d. Receive and walk in the Holy Spirit by faith (Galatians 3:14).

There are many false teachings today about how to prove the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life. An old teaching, that still has many followers, is that the speaking in tongues is proof of the Spirit. In more recent times, false preachers have claimed strange unbiblical proofs, such as “falling in the Spirit” or “being slain in the Spirit”, in which the preacher touches or hits one's head and the person falls backward, proving they have been “slain in the Spirit.” Other strange, ungodly and anti-biblical manifestations of the Spirit are claimed. These have included uncontrolled laughing, making sounds like animals, crawling on the floor like animals, and other strange acts unknown in the Scriptures. These false teachers will come up with still other such “manifestations of the Spirit,” because people grow tired of the old ones and want something new. It makes no difference to these preachers that the Bible does not affirm what they teach, because they claim that God is speaking through them and what they say is more up-to-date than the Bible. These preachers have even been heard to say, “Put away your Bible. You will not need it. Now God is going to speak directly through me.”



Not only are these acts strange to the Bible, but they are contrary to everything the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit. The false teachers and preachers who introduce these “manifestations” say that they are to humble the people being touched. It is better said that they are meant to humiliate the children of God rather than to edify or build them up, as is always true of the real works of the Holy Spirit. It is Satan who tries to humiliate God's children, so Christians should be aware and refuse to hear or give attention to men who are inspired by the Evil One.

7. Mention some of the false manifestations or signs of the Holy Spirit put forth by false preachers today.

In all of these things, false or misguided preachers try to prove the presence and power of the Holy Spirit through things that prove nothing and often are intentionally deceitful. Many people are misguided, because in their spiritual immaturity, they want to see fantastic manifestations of God's power.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day told Jesus, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.” He answered, “**This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.**” (Luke 11:29). In this, he referred to the miracle of his resurrection, which far surpasses any other miracle.

How, then, can we see if a person is experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit? Jesus answered clearly, “**By their fruit you will recognize them**” (Matthew 7:16, NIV). But what fruit? In that, the Bible is very explicit: **The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** (Galatians 5:22-23).

Notice how superior these proofs are to those taught by erring or false teachers. Their proofs are of no value either to the Christian or to others. Their proofs can all be falsified. Their proofs have nothing to do with personal holiness. Their proofs do not glorify Christ in any way.

The proofs, or fruit, of the Holy Spirit can be imitated for a short time, but, quickly, the truth comes out! The Spirit-filled life, in contrast, is one of steady love, enduring joy, deep peace, persistent patience, uncommon kindness, true faithfulness, beautiful gentleness and powerful self-control. This is the true work of God in the life of the Christian who walks in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a work that blesses the Christian and everybody the Christian touches. It glorifies Christ, because it shows through the lives of common human beings what Jesus is like. It is **Christ in you, the hope of glory** (Colossians 1:27). False preachers do not announce this, because they cannot produce it in their followers nor can they demonstrate it in their own lives. In the years to come, if Jesus tarries, they will produce many more new and strange “manifestations” or proofs of the spirit. However, if they are truly spiritual manifestations, we can be sure they are the manifestations of evil spirits.



Besides the POWER of the Holy Spirit are the Spirit's GIFTS. God created every human being with different abilities and physical and mental characteristics. When we experience our Spiritual rebirth, we also receive different spiritual gifts for the ministry or ministries God proposes for us. The theme of Spiritual gifts is vital, and requires a detailed study that cannot be included in this one.

**THE SIN OF EVANGELICALS IN REGARD TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.** With Satan's inspiration, Evangelicals have dedicated much attention to arguments about the least of all spiritual gifts that of speaking in tongues. At the same time, we have kept silent about the far more important teachings regarding the Holy Spirit in the life of each Christian. How many Christians know how to be full of the Holy Spirit? How many walk daily in the Spirit? (Galatians 5:25) How many Christians try to live the Christian life in their own power, the power of the flesh? How many suffer frequent or constant defeats by living without the power of the Holy Spirit, saddening the Spirit every day?

Our sin has been to not study seriously what the New Testament teaches about the spiritual life of the believer. It is hoped that the study of this book of Biblical doctrine will create a thirst within your church to continue studying, in detail, these essential Biblical themes for the sake of the joy and power of the church and its members.

The power of the Holy Spirit is essential for the full development of the Christian priesthood God gives every Christian. The Christian priesthood is the subject of the next chapter.

9. Briefly, what has been the major sin of Evangelicals about the Holy Spirit?



Chapter Six:

**A SPECIAL PRIESTHOOD**

We Evangelicals speak little about the priesthood, and, in that, we are mistaken. Possibly, we say little about this matter because of the differences of opinion we have about the priesthood with our Catholic friends. The truth is that the New Testament has much to say about the priesthood, and what it teaches is of great importance for every Christian. Besides that, the doctrine of Christian priesthood is one of the fundamental foundations of the whole Baptist ecclesiastical system.



**THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE OLD COVENANT.** Most people know that God created a priestly order in the Old Testament times with the divine ordination of Aaron, Moses' brother. The whole tribe of Levi was divinely named as a priestly tribe. When Jesus lived in Palestine, the Levitical priests still administered the sacrifice of animals in the great Temple of Jerusalem. The chief leaders of the Jewish priesthood became his enemies. They achieved his crucifixion, and, later, worked against the early Church. Saul, for example, received letters of authority from the leading priests to arrest the Christians in Damascus.



We believe that the Levitical priesthood was ended by God with the death of Christ, His Son. When Christ died, God tore the veil of the Holy Place from top to bottom, indicating that the time of animal sacrifice was over as was the Levitical priesthood. Jesus was the "Lamb of God", the sacrifice of which all the previous sacrifices were symbolic. To doubly affirm the end of the Jewish priesthood, the Jewish Temple was completely destroyed in 70 A.D., ending forever the sacrifice of animals.

**THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.** We therefore see that the traditional priesthood was ended with the death of Christ, who is our High Priest. ***Christ entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the High priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own...so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many*** (Hebrews 9:24b-25, 28a).

1. Who is our supreme High Priest? \_\_\_\_\_

Before, only the Jewish high priest could enter the Holy Place of the Temple, and only one time every year. Now, we who belong to Christ have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19). The Holy Place, for us, is not in the ruins of the Jewish temple, but before the very throne of God in heaven itself.



What does all this mean for us? It means that the death of Christ, once and for all, gives each one of us the right of approach to God in a way that is very superior to the right which was reserved in the past to the High Priest of the Jewish people. He, once a year, could enter into the very presence of God, carrying the blood of an animal. We, in any moment of the day or night, can enter boldly before the throne of God's grace through the merits of Christ Jesus and the blood he sacrificed for us. We are made priests of a much higher grade than that of the Jewish priesthood. Sadly, most Christians do not understand the importance of our priesthood or we are tragically careless of our privileges as priests of God.

Peter affirmed these truths when he wrote, ***You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect*** (1 Peter 1:18-19, NIV). Then he adds: ***You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light*** (1 Peter 2:9, NIV). We are now the Israel of God; we are the holy nation, the people belonging to God. In other words, we are the privileged and beloved people of God. This has nothing to do with our race or nationality, but because of the incomparable price of the blood of the Son of God.

2. In contrast to the old Jewish priests, we can enter at any moment into the very presence of God.

True  False



We are more than a holy nation. We are a royal priesthood. "Royal" because Jesus Christ ***made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father*** (Revelation 1:6, NIV). We are of Christ's royal family. Although in the world, our position may seem as being very humble, the truth is that we are "princes in rags." The administration of God's Universe will be put into our hands under the rule of Christ our King. And, from now on, we are God's priests, the only priests God has apart from Christ himself.

What are our functions as priests? They can be summarized as three privileges and responsibilities:

First, we are authorized to intercede before God for others. For this reason, the New Testament commands us to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. ***With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints*** (Ephesians 6:18b, NIV).

Second, Peter declared that ***you were chosen and called by God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light*** (1 Peter 2:9, NIV). As God's priests, we are sent to give ample testimony of the goodness of Christ, as the one who called us out of darkness into light. Our message is not theoretical. It is a message based on personal experience.

Third, as God's priests, we have a capacity to understand ***"the mind of Christ"*** (1 Corinthians 2:16). The will and the truths of God are revealed to us. No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ***What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us*** (1 Corinthians 2:12). As Baptists, we understand that God has not left just one high priest and bishop who can understand the truth and the will of God. On the contrary, God has a whole people with whom He can speak directly, through the Word of God and His Spirit -- all the people of God.



3. Mark the three functions we have as the priests of Christ:

- We are authorized to intercede for others, standing in the presence of the Lord.
- We are sent to give testimony about Jesus.
- We are sent to hear the confession of sins of others.
- God gives us the capacity to understand "the mind of Christ", distinguishing God's will for our lives and for the life of our church.

**THE LOSS AND THE REDISCOVERY OF THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.** In the first century of Christianity, the century in which the New Testament was written, all true Christians were considered to be priests of God. The pastors of the churches were called "elders, presbyters, pastors or bishops." But they were never called "priests" because it was understood that every Christian was a royal priest.

However, the Christians in those first centuries were surrounded by the "priests" of the pagan religions. Those priests ministered in large and beautiful temples, while God's people preached mainly in houses. With the supposed conversion of the Emperor Constantine in the Fourth Century, the government began to give pagan temples, now in little use, to the Christian movement. The temples were quickly filled with "converts" of convenience, people who simply were looking for the favor of the emperor and his officials. Christianity began its tragic decline.

The new "Christians" of convenience asked why there were no gods in the temples. What kind of a temple has no gods? The Christian leaders did not believe in gods, but they decided to put up statues of Christ and the Apostles as a way to teach the people. The multitudes did not understand even the essence of Christianity and began to worship the statues, praying to them.



The pastorate also began to change radically. Before, there were many "elders" who preached and taught in a multitude of houses in every city. Now, all the Christians began to meet in a few large temples. There was need for fewer pastors. Out of this situation came an exclusive pastorate, appointed by politicians and high church authorities that were given authority. These pastors began to be called "priests", being seen similar to the pagan priests they had replaced. This title is still used by the pastors of some churches today. When this happened, the Biblical concept was lost that every true Christian is a priest before God and is a priest to serve the people. In other words, God's people lost their priesthood.

4. In the course of Christian history, the people of God lost their priesthood, which was taken over by ecclesiastical authorities.

- True     False

The Anabaptists were the first, in the modern era, to rediscover the "priesthood of the believer." They, and later, the Baptists, recognized that all their members were priests of God and they simply called their leaders "pastors."

Martin Luther and other reformers in his time, in their great majority, began to speak about the "priesthood of the believer." With the exception of the Anglican church (Episcopal church), they stopped calling their pastors "priests" and recognized that all Christians are priests. Nevertheless, they did not carry this truth to its fullest conclusion. They retained many aspects of a priestly authority of the pastors over those who were baptized.

For example, they left, in different manners, the authority over the churches in the hands of bishops or councils. Outside church authorities ruled over the believers and the churches. It was believed that these authorities had more wisdom in these matters than the members.

The Anabaptists, and later, the Baptists, insisted instead that the priesthood of the believer means that every believer has the gift of the Holy Spirit and can understand the will of God, especially in regards to the affairs of the local church. They formed groups of truly converted Christians who began to work together in a truly democratic manner. They believed that God could and would reveal his will to the whole congregation of saints and not only to a pastor or to a bishop who was not even a member of the local church.

A practical conclusion of this truth was that every Baptist church should be a spiritual democracy, a democracy in the sense that the whole church meets to seek and find God's will for the church. As a complement of this practice came the conviction that every church should be autonomous, under the direct rule of Christ, its head.



It is recognized that this system of church government, like any other, can show defects or be badly used. For example, to be autonomous does not mean to be independent. The churches of the New Testament were autonomous, but they were not independent. On the contrary, they were interdependent. Baptists, although they create autonomous churches, have surprised everyone by their sense of unity and collaboration. This is because the Spirit of Christ unifies the churches. To the degree that the Holy Spirit governs the churches, there is harmony and cooperation between them. This has given rise to the formation of local associations of Baptist churches and state and national Baptist conventions. Every Baptist church may have a mission program, and, at the same time it should cooperate with other Baptists to have ministries and mission efforts that require the cooperation of many churches.

Churches that are independent, separated and isolated are churches that often abuse their autonomy and are deaf to the loving and unifying voice of the Holy Spirit. Independent churches are commonly under the rule and authority of their pastors and do not seek God's leadership by democratic methods.

5. It is best to say that a Baptist church is:

- Independent     Autonomous

The democracy of the local church does not imply that the pastor should not have spiritual authority in the church. Some churches think their pastor is simply an "employee" of the church that pays him to do his work. While the church should amply support its pastor financially, he is much more than a simple employee of the church. As the spiritual leader of the church, he must answer to the Lord of the church. This does not give the pastor authority to abuse his position or override the decisions of the church. It does affirm that he is called by the church and its Lord to be the spiritual leader of the congregation. As such, he deserves and should have deep respect of the church.

**CHURCH BUSINESS MEETING.** On clear evidence that the church has a shared priesthood is seen in what is commonly called "the church business meeting." This may be monthly or every trimester and is when all the members of the church meet to deal with the Lord's business. Although we call the church "a spiritual democracy," the truth is that the church should not be governed according to the wishes of the members, but rather according to those of Christ, the true head of the church. The government of a Baptist church should be that of a kingdom, under the orders of the King. Even so, the will of the King is expressed through all the members of the church, united in prayer. The church should entrust many details of its work to the pastor, the deacons, and its elected workers. However, the matters of greater importance should always be presented to the entire church for decisions. The selection of a pastor, the naming of the deacons and workers, the budget and its progress, and the principal plans of the church necessarily are brought to the consideration of the entire church.

If Christ has the last word in these decisions, the church should be unanimous, or near unanimous, in its decisions. If there remains much difference of opinion about a matter, this means that the church has not yet found the will of its Lord. It is better to delay a decision until there is general agreement. Every person who expresses an opinion in the business meeting should do it with humility, respecting the feeling of others and recognizing his or her own capacity to be in error. The love and unity of the church, apart from Christ Himself, is its greatest treasure and should be kept with all care and with full respect for every member's opinion. There will be times when a minority of the membership may speak more clearly the will of Christ than the majority. Therefore, the church business meeting is an important and delicate spiritual exercise on the part of all the members--all of whom are priests of God.

**THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD AND THE MINISTRIES.** The priesthood of every Christian not only brings privileges in the government of the church but also presents him or her with great privileges and responsibilities in the church's ministry. In the old system, in which the pastor was seen as THE PRIEST of the church, the major duty of the members was to attend faithfully and to do what their pastors told them to do. Now, when the Christian recognizes that he or she is a priest, chosen directly by God, it is necessary to accept one's personal ministry responsibility. This means answering to Christ in all things, and not simply to respond to the church or pastor. Individual ministries vary greatly between Christians, based on the difference of particular spiritual gifts and special opportunities the Lord gives each one.

6. As members of a Baptist church, we not only have more voice in the church's decisions but we also have more personal responsibilities.

- True     False

In light of the ministries God gives to his holy servants, that is, to all of His called and chosen people, we strongly believe there is no people of greater importance or influence than the people of God. The democracy of a Baptist church is an expression of confidence on the part of God in His beloved chosen people. Baptists, let us not disappoint our God! In close fellowship with one another, let us fulfill our priestly ministry.



## Chapter Seven:

**A PEOPLE ON A MISSION**

In his last moments with his church, Jesus left us a mission that is humanly impossible, but is completely possible with his power. ***All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: 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. Amen*** (Matthew 28:18-20).

This mission is possible because all power has been given to our Commander and He promises to be with us every day in which we are fulfilling the mission. It is a Commission with enormous dimensions, made completely possible because of the presence and power of Christ in our midst.

This Commission has several clauses, and each one of them is of great importance to every member of His body. Let us examine them:

**I. GO YE.** Four letters that contain so much! Jesus did not ask anything of us that he himself did not do. ***And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd*** (Matthew 9:35-36).

Jesus was the greatest missionary that the world has ever seen, and he commands us to do the same thing with our lives as he did with his. If all of God's people would have taken seriously this last and great command of the Lord, the world would have been converted centuries ago and Christ would already have returned for his people.

1. Tell what things are seen in Jesus' life that prove that he was the world's greatest missionary.

There is much evidence that Baptists are a missionary people. There are Baptist churches in almost every country of the world and Baptist missionaries have been the first to go to many countries. On the local level, as well, Baptists are a missionary people. Every Baptist church is called and authorized to open mission work wherever the Lord should indicate. No Baptist church is subject to any superior ecclesiastical authority that can limit it in its missionary work. Every Baptist church is directly responsible to its Head, Jesus Christ, the very person who commanded it to be missionary.



We thank God that many of our churches are going out into the world and multitudes are being saved. The buildings of the truly missionary churches are being filled with the results of the churches' efforts. Egocentric churches, in contrast, tend not to grow, but to decline in attendance and in spiritual authority. Our goal, as Baptists, is that EVERY Baptist church go out into its community and its nation with the Word of God, and to leave behind, forever, the fatal customs of limiting its important activities to the church building.

2. Comments: What is your church doing right now to go out into the lost world and minister to it? What new activities do you want to see it engage in?

**II. MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL PEOPLE** (literal translation).

Christ ordered that we make disciples of all peoples and of every ethnic group including our own! It seems hard for us to understand that Jesus is commanding us to go out of the church to make disciples. In our modern Baptist culture, we propose to make disciples of those who take the initiative to come to church and receive Christ. We first "evangelize" and then we "disciple." Obviously, we do not understand the command of Christ.

Christ, in contrast to what we do traditionally, commands us to go out into the world and disciple the un-baptized. He is talking about a missionary invasion in every part of the world. But, how can we do it?

Latin American Evangelicals, including Baptists, are discovering how to do it. Churches that are obedient to the Great Commission are sending their members to the neighborhoods that surround their church as well as to distant communities to gather people who are not yet converted for friendship and Bible study. They are making disciples of them, in accord with Christ's clear command. They gather groups of children, young people, women, couples, workers, students, prisoners, etc., and they lead them to the Word of God. By means of discipleship, they evangelize them and prepare them for baptism and service for Christ.

Many parts of the world, are passing through a great economic and moral crisis, in which families and society itself are in danger of disintegration. This reality is encouraging multitudes of our neighbors to seek God, and the first to reach them will enjoy a great harvest of souls. For Baptists to take full advantage of this extraordinary opportunity, we need two great changes in our form of working.

First, we must change from being congregations completely closed in our buildings and become churches that invade the world that surrounds us. We must carry the Word of God to places where the people are, instead of vainly waiting for the world to come to our services and activities.

Second, we must learn to invite the people in the world to something which interests them. If we simply take our worship services out into the world, the people generally will show little interest. The world is drawn to Christ but not to our worship services. To “disciple” the world, we go out especially to make students of the people of the world. What we must teach is nothing less than the Word of God. It is necessary to deal with current themes of great interest in everyday life, and help our neighbors to discover for themselves what the Bible has to say about them. We do this in a normal and attractive manner from their perspective. Rather than to talk to them about having a Bible study, we invite them to gather for a meeting in which all present will discuss some vital issue, like friendship, stressfulness, family happiness, loneliness, etc. The meetings should be times of fellowship, fun, and lively discussion. We use Bible stories as case studies, and instead of telling people what to believe, the discussions help them to express their feelings and guides them to the great Bible teachings that change their lives.



3. Exchange ideas: Describe ways in which your church could go out into the world and make disciples, teaching them the Bible.

Our old ways of teaching the Bible do not work well in the modern world, and groups that are taught in the old way quickly decline in attendance and interest. The Church on the March is a movement of which this book is a part, is a Baptist answer to this reality and supplies Biblical materials that are mostly based on dramatic Bible events. Above all, they encourage the groups to talk and to discover for themselves the truths of God found in His Word. Groups of people of the world increase in attendance in this kind of Bible study and those who attend come to know Christ, to be baptized, and to join the churches that came to them.

**III. TEACHING THEM TO DO ALL THOSE THINGS I HAVE COMMANDED YOU.** Jesus was very explicit in that we should teach others TO DO everything he commanded us to do. This is his call to action for every true son or daughter of God. As churches and as Christ's priestly people, we have a sacred commission to TEACH others EVERYTHING Jesus commanded us to do, and then DO IT.

The church's teaching must be very practical. We must not only teach what people should BELIEVE, but also what we should DO. This speaks of a life that is clean and straight that reflects the glory of the Lord in his people. It also speaks of every child of God literally fulfilling the Great Commission. Our primary goal in making disciples out in the world is not the number of professions of faith, but of baptisms and the training of the baptized as new workers who join us in discipling the world. This is the strategy practiced by Jesus and commanded by him. It is the only strategy that will enable us to win the world for Christ.



It is doubly important that we Baptists respond to this command. First, the world is lost and without hope until it is disciplined. Second, as the People of the Book, Baptists are salt in the Evangelical world to demonstrate the Way of the Lord. In our work to bring the world to Christ, let us also help to rescue the Evangelical movement from the debilitating and fatal errors which are becoming so common among our people. Evangelicals, in great numbers, are turning away from the Bible. We Baptists can help bring them back before it is too late. Let us function as the salt of the earth.

Summary: What are some of the most important Biblical truths you have learned in the study of this book? How can these truths change your life and the life of your church?