

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Bible Study Curriculum “Spirit of Pride”

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Self-will”

Introduction

Often, people who are obstinate and stubborn are called strong-willed. Sometimes, what we are actually trying to say is that they are “self-willed.” In fact, having a strong will can be a positive attribute. However, when a person’s strong will conflicts with God’s authority, then it becomes self-will, pride, and is ultimately destructive, both to the individual and to others. In today’s lesson, we will see that Christians should humble themselves and submit to the will of God.

Key Verse

“I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (Jn. 5:30).

Lesson Summary

The story of the prodigal son illustrates the destructive nature of pride (Lu. 15:11-20). This younger son desired his inheritance, saying, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me” (v. 12). Afterward, he left home with all of his possessions to pursue his own will and desires (v. 13). This young man was determined to live his life by his own rule, not regarding the will of his father. His foolish pride robbed him of sound judgment and led him to squander all that he had received from his father (vv. 13-14). Pride left him hungry and empty-handed (vv. 14-16). Fortunately, his hard circumstances humbled him, causing him to see the error of his way and led him back home (vv. 17-20). Clearly, being self-willed is a destructive evil. James wrote of those who devise their plans and conduct their lives without considering God (Ja. 4:13-16). Such pride is evil, because it exalts self-will and ignores the will of God. The apostle Peter warned of false teachers in the church who would cause many to stray from the truth (2 Pe. 2:1-2). These last days’ deceivers and the people deceived by them are those who “despise government” (v. 10). Peter described them as “presumptuous” and “selfwilled” (v. 10). As followers of Jesus Christ, we must guard ourselves against self-will and the spirit of pride. Jesus, our example in righteousness and holiness, asserted his own submission to the will of the Father (Jn. 5:30). He did not come in order to please himself, but to carry out God’s will (Jn. 6:38). Perhaps, no other occasion in the life of Christ demonstrates this better than his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Though he prayed that he might possibly escape what was coming, he ultimately surrendered to the will of God, saying, “nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mt. 26:39). Christ’s pattern of submission helps us to see our own obligation to do the will of God. Coming to terms with God’s will and doing his will are the marks of a true Christian (Mt. 26:42; 7:21).

Scripture Study

Self-will: A destructive evil – Lu. 15:11-20; Ja. 4:13-16; 2 Pe. 2:1-2, 10
 Submission to the will of God – Jn. 5:30; 6:38; Mt. 26:39, 42; 7:21

Conclusion

As followers of Christ, we should not pursue our own will, but rather the will of our heavenly Father. Admittedly, doing God’s will is not always an easy task. Nevertheless, we will never regret the final outcome of pleasing him. While following self-will ends in destruction, fulfilling the will of God secures eternal life.

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“Self Promotion”

Introduction

Everyone enjoys being appreciated and promoted. A young adult is hired for a job with a promising future. He/she works hard, giving one hundred percent to the success of the company. After several years of faithful service, perhaps nothing is more rewarding than receiving an unexpected promotion. The feeling of promotion is exhilarating. Although promotion is a desirable and honorable goal, self-promotion is a prideful pursuit. In today’s lesson, we will consider the negative aspects of self-promotion within the fellowship of the church.

Key Verse

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Ph. 2:3).

Lesson Summary

The apostles, James and John, are prime examples of self-promotion. They approached Jesus with a rather odd request, saying, “Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory” (Mk. 10:37). Jesus replied, “Ye know not what ye ask” (v. 38). Then he further corrected their misdirected pursuit (vv. 39-40). The negative reaction of the other ten apostles to James’ and John’s request created a teachable moment. Jesus told them not to seek preeminence, but rather seek to serve (vv. 42-45). Opposing the spirit of pride which he saw among the people, Jesus taught a parable about being an invited guest to a wedding feast (Lu. 14:7- 11). He explained how a guest should take the least desirable seat, rather than taking the best seat at the feast. By taking the lowest seat available, an individual does not take a position of honor which belongs to another. Moreover, by taking the lowest position, that individual receives due honor and praise upon being promoted (receiving a higher seat). To this Jesus added, “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (v. 11). Clearly, we should avoid self-assertion, attempting to push ourselves in front of others. In fact, the love of God “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up” (1 Co. 13:4). Believers should not be braggers and boastful of themselves, nor of their accomplishments. Trying to build up ourselves in the eyes of others comes from the spirit of pride. Instead, we should promote Jesus Christ and lift up his worthy name (Ph. 2:9). In regard to our spiritual consecration, we also should avoid self-assertion. In Matthew 6:1-6 and 6:16-18, Jesus cautioned us about our motives. We should never give charitably to gain the praise and recognition of others (vv. 1-4). We should not pray to gain the attention and admiration of others (vv. 5-6). Likewise, fasting is not for public display, but rather to be done unto the Lord with discretion (vv. 16-18). In other words, our religious practices should never be used to lift up ourselves. In fact, Jesus criticized the religious leaders of his day for their hypocrisy and pride, because their motivation was self-assertion, desiring “to be seen of men” (Mt. 23:5-7). We should avoid this temptation.

Scripture Study

Seeking self-promotion – Mk. 10:35-45; Lu. 14:7-11

Avoiding self-assertion – 1 Co. 13:4; Mt. 6:1-6, 16-18; 23:5-12

Conclusion

The spirit of pride causes one to push himself in front of others, whereas Christ calls us to give greater consideration to others than to ourselves (Ph. 2:3). Self-promotion works against the Spirit of Christ and his desire for the fellowship and unity of the church.

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Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Self-Righteousness”

Introduction

People sometimes have an attitude of superiority, feeling that they are better than others. Certainly, some fare better than others in a variety of ways, such as physically and economically; but none of us is more valuable or superior to others in the sight of God, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Ro. 3:23). Everyone needs to be saved. This fact relegates all of humanity to the same level: lost without God. Thus, our true value and worth depend on our relationship with Jesus Christ. In today’s lesson, we will see that our value and worth in Christ are not a cause for pride and a superior attitude, but rather for humility.

Key Verse

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Ro. 10:3).

Lesson Summary

The Scriptures teach: “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Ro. 3:10; Ps. 14:1, 3). Yet many religious people attempt “to establish their own righteousness,” as opposed to righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ (Ro. 10:3). Trusting in themselves, they rely on their own goodness for eternal life. This mindset corresponds to self-righteousness, a symptom of pride and what the Scriptures describe as “filthy-rags” in the sight of God (Is. 64:6). Recognizing the problem of self-righteousness among the people, Jesus told them the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Lu. 18:9-14). The Pharisee prayed in the temple, despising others and justifying himself (vv. 11-12). But the publican prayed for God’s mercy (v. 13). God has respect for a humble spirit of repentance, but self-righteousness and the spirit of pride come under his judgment (v. 14). Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for putting on the appearance of righteousness when their hearts were actually full of sin and hypocrisy (Mt. 23:25-30). In fact, he condemned the Pharisees who justified themselves, and said to them, “For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Lu. 16:15). Anytime Christians begin to inflate themselves, they are heading for certain trouble, unless they repent and correct their course (18:14). Satan is subtle and knows how to stroke the human ego. If individuals fall prey to self-righteousness and the spirit of pride, God will resist them (Ja. 4:6; 1 Pe. 5:5). The apostle Paul admonished the believer “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly” (Ro. 12:3). As faithful followers of Christ, even the good works which we do are no longer ours, but rather they are works of God’s grace through us (1 Co. 15:9-10; Ga. 2:20). The credit for all that we accomplish belongs to God. Christ is our undeserved righteousness and the very source of our good works (Ep. 2:10). From this perspective, we have no cause for pride and self-righteousness. Accordingly, Paul cautioned the saints about looking down on others; he instructed them not to place themselves above others, but to lower themselves in humility (Ro. 12:16).

Scripture Study

An abomination – Ro. 3:10; Ps. 14:1, 3; Ro. 10:3; Is. 64:6; Lu. 16:15; 18:9-14; Mt. 23:25-30
Our humiliation – Ja. 4:6; 1 Pe. 5:5; Ro. 12:3, 16; 1 Co. 15:9-10; Ga. 2:20; Ep. 2:10

Conclusion

Self-righteousness is not compatible with the Spirit of Christ. Jesus said, “Without me ye can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5). Our ability to be righteous and to bear the fruit of righteousness is completely dependent on our relationship with him. Keeping this truth in our hearts will help us to overcome the destructive spirit of pride.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum “Adultery and Fornication”

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Sensuality”

Introduction

We live in a sensual, lustful world. For example, turning on the television can become a rather risky act, because we never know what will show up on the TV screen. Often the commercials are more disturbing than the programs themselves. Suggestive language, provocative images, and sexual innuendoes are injurious to the soul and offensive to the Holy Spirit. As Christians, we must guard ourselves against sensuality. Key Verse “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Ro. 12:2).

Key Verse

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Ro. 12:2).

Lesson Summary

Sensuality and sexuality are not the same. Sexuality is a major part of the natural composition of humankind. It is not dirty or shameful, in and of itself, for God created man in his own image, and made them male and female in order to procreate and inhabit the earth: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Ge. 1:27-28). Moreover, after God created man, he made the woman “out of man” to be his companion and helper (2:18-25). They were literally a match made in heaven. The distinction and attraction between the two were “very good” in the sight of God (1:31). From the beginning, the Lord placed sexuality safely within the marriage relationship between a man and his wife (2:23-24; He. 13:4). Nevertheless, though sexuality itself is not sinful, we must secure and protect our hearts in order to prevent our desires from becoming sensual and lustful. For if we pervert God’s original plan and purpose in our natural desires, they become sensual desires driven by vile, unrestrained lusts, which result in sexual immorality. Thus, sensuality is the doorway to sexual sins. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrha are historical examples of God’s judgment against sexual immorality (2 Pe. 2:6; Ge. 19:4-11). Because righteous Lot saw and heard the vile wickedness of the people, his soul was vexed continually (2 Pe. 2:7-8). In spite of God’s historical judgments, the world today with its godless system continues to promote sensual pleasures which gratify the desires of the flesh (Ep. 2:2-3). These pleasures are strategically advertised through various media and flaunted through the lifestyles of the unredeemed. As sanctified and Spirit-filled Christians, we should critically monitor all that we see and hear. Our eyes and ears give sensually-driven words and images entrance into our hearts. By quickly closing the door to sensuality, we keep our hearts from being affected and infected by it (2 Pe. 2:9). Furthermore, we should guard our talking and conversations to avoid opening that door. The world often turns sexuality into a joke and a jesting matter. But this grieves the Holy Spirit (Ep. 5:3-4, 11-12; 4:29-30). We respectfully should keep sexuality where God originally placed it – safely within the marriage relationship.

Scripture Study

Sexuality – Ge. 1:27-28, 31; 2:18-25; He. 13:4

Sensuality – 2 Pe. 2:6-9; Ge. 19:4-11; Ep. 2:2-3; 5:3-4, 11-12; 4:29-30

Conclusion

The apostles warned of the last days when mockers would “walk after their own ungodly lusts” (Jude 17-18). Jude described them as “sensual, having not the Spirit” (v. 19). He called them “filthy dreamers” and compared them to: 1) the Hebrews whom God destroyed in the wilderness, 2) the fallen angels reserved unto judgment, and 3) those destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrha (vv. 5-8). In contrast to these, Jude admonished the saints to be spiritual: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost” (v. 20).

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Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“An Infected Heart”

Introduction

Infections stem from the presence of bacteria in the body. Such infections may begin as a small, localized problem, but potentially can make the whole body sick. At first, people may be unaware of having an infection, until it affects their normal functions. A number of side-effects are associated with infections, such as pain, inflammation, vomiting, fever, and even death. Clearly, infections should be taken seriously. Like bacteria, sensual desires and fleshly lusts infect an individual’s heart and cause him/her to sin. James wrote, “And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Ja. 1:15).

Key Verse

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mt. 5:28).

Lesson Summary

Satan is subtle and crafty; he knows when to tempt and how to lead into sin and error. He seeks to captivate the human mind with sensual thoughts and images. When this happens to an individual, sexual sin surely lies at the door of one’s heart (Mk. 7:18-23). Amnon, the firstborn son of King David, committed fornication with his half-sister, Tamar (2 Sa. 3:2; 13:1). His disgraceful downfall began with sensual thoughts and desires for her (13:2). His sinful desires moved him to deceive her and ultimately to rape her (vv. 3-14). Clearly, Amnon surrendered his thoughts and then his heart to sexual immorality. This world is filled with sexual vulgarities and perversions. Nevertheless, these vices cannot hurt us as long as they do not enter into our hearts (Mk. 7:18-19). For this reason, Solomon warned his son, saying, “Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths” (Pr. 6:25; 7:25). Adultery and fornication do not emerge instantly, but like bacteria, sensual desires grow into filthy, sinful infections. Before committing the actual acts of adultery and fornication, these sins first infect the heart (Mt. 5:28; Mk. 7:20-23). By the time the sinful acts are publicly exposed, they are already firmly rooted in the heart of an individual. Thus, the acts of adultery and fornication substantiate the presence of sin in one’s heart. Solomon instructed his son in the law and commandments of the Lord: “My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments; For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart” (Pr. 3:1-3). Likewise, as we keep the Word of God in our hearts, we keep sin out of our lives (Ps. 119:11). Purity begins in the heart, not in external actions. We are not holy simply because our speech and actions appear holy. We are holy because our hearts are sanctified and made pure by the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, our speech and actions are holy because our hearts are pure and holy (Mt. 12:35). As saints of God, we must resist sensual temptations and keep our hearts pure, bearing in mind the promise: “blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (5:8).

Scripture Study

Infecting our hearts – Mk. 7:18-23; 2 Sa. 13:1-14; Pr. 6:25; 7:25; Mt. 5:28

Protecting our hearts – Pr. 3:1-3; Ps. 119:11; Mt. 12:35; 5:8

Conclusion

We cannot stop temptation from coming our way, but we can turn our thoughts away from sensuality and toward the Word of God. As we meditate on the Holy Scriptures, our minds and hearts are sanctified by the truth (Jn. 17:17). Through securing and protecting the desires of our hearts, we keep ourselves from sin and transgression (1 Th. 4:3-4).

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Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Works of Wickedness”

Introduction

Adultery and fornication are among the first-mentioned works of the flesh in the Scriptures (Mk. 7:21-23; Ro. 1:29-32; Ga. 5:19-21; Ep. 5:3-7; Co. 3:5-9). The works of the flesh arise out of a sinful heart. After sensual lusts infect the heart of an individual, the works of the flesh await an opportunity to manifest themselves in many wicked ways. In today’s lesson, we will examine the spirit of adultery and fornication as “works of wickedness.”

Key Verse

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness” (Ga. 5:19).

Lesson Summary

In Galatians 5:19-21, the apostle Paul identifies specific works of the flesh, beginning with adultery and fornication. He next mentions uncleanness and lasciviousness. This is significant. All four of these terms are related to sensuality. Adultery and fornication have interconnected meanings (see the Monthly Summary). Fornication (porneia) in its broad meaning includes adultery (moicheia). Whereas adultery and fornication refer more to the action of sexual sin, uncleanness and lasciviousness refer more to the attitude or spirit behind such wickedness. In other words, adultery and fornication arise from impure and uncontrollable desires. Thus, adultery and fornication along with uncleanness and lasciviousness comprehensively mean every imaginable work of sexual sin, without having to give a detailed list of these sins and transgressions. Paul’s brief list is therefore inclusive of all of the sexual vices we face in our world today: premarital sex, extramarital affairs (infidelity), divorce and remarriage, cohabitation, polygamy, prostitution, homosexuality and lesbianism, bisexuality and transvestism, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, and pornography. Furthermore, sexual sins are typically linked to other vile works of wickedness. Their placement at the top of Paul’s list affirms their prominence. For example, fornication is historically connected to idolatrous and pagan rituals, and even to demonic worship. Paul rebuked the church at Corinth because of fornication and idolatry (1 Co. 6:15-20; 2 Co. 6:16-17; 12:21). Reflecting on Israel’s transgressions, Paul warned the church at Corinth to forsake fornication and idolatry: “Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” (1 Co. 10:7-8, 14, 19-20; Ex. 32:1-7; Nu. 25:1-9; Re. 2:14). Demonic spirits, often termed “unclean” spirits in the Gospels, promote every filthy and wicked work. Concisely, sexual sins are analogous to a savage-like spirit and indicate one’s total depravity (Ro. 1:21-28).

Scripture Study

Works of wickedness – Mk. 7:21-23; Ro. 1:29-32; Ga. 5:19-21; Ep. 5:3-7; Co. 3:5-9

Fornication and idolatry – 2 Co. 6:16-17; 12:21; 1 Co. 10:7-8, 14, 19-20; Ex. 32:1-7; Nu. 25:1-9; Re. 2:14; Ro. 1:21-28

Conclusion

While adultery and fornication have become commonplace and even glamorized in western culture, God’s church must not become tolerant of such wicked practices (1 Co. 5:1, 9-13). We have an obligation to stand up and declare the truth of God’s Word, saying, “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience” (Ep. 5:6).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

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Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“A Deceptive Spirit”

Introduction

The nature of sin is deceptive. Sexual sins do not present themselves as destructive and deadly, but rather as glamorous and beneficial in fulfilling one’s personal desires and needs. These sins operate on a premise of self-fulfillment and self-justification. While a repentant sinner is justified by faith and made righteous by the blood of Christ, sinning can never be justified. Thus, adultery and fornication stem from a deceptive spirit.

Key Verse

“Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Ro. 1:25).

Lesson Summary

When Solomon instructed his son in the wisdom of the Lord, he warned him to avoid the adulteress. He portrayed her as a deceiver, whose words seem sweet and smooth, when, in fact, she is bitter and deadly (Pr. 5:1-5). Indeed, those who yield to the sins of adultery and fornication have surrendered themselves to a deceptive spirit (2 Pe. 2:12-14). The apostle Peter described such sin and corruption in the church as “spots and blemishes” (v. 13). These corrupt ones, “having eyes full of adultery,” are both deceived by sin (“cannot cease from sin”), and they themselves are deceivers, “beguiling unstable souls” (v. 14). The apostle Paul warned against them, saying, “Let no man deceive you with vain words” (Ep. 5:3-6). Sexual immorality results from embracing and promoting lies. Paul writes of those whom God turns over to sexual perversion and debauchery (Ro. 1:24-28). These are the ones who replace “the truth of God” with a lie, rejecting his truth to pursue their own will and desires (v. 25). Lies and “deceitful lusts” produce adultery and fornication, but God’s truth produces “righteousness and true holiness” (Ep. 4:17-25). If adultery and fornication arise in the house of God, these sins do not readily disclose themselves as wickedness, openly nor publicly, but rather seek to hide their sinful practices under a cloak of righteousness. Jesus boldly confronted the problem of religious hypocrisy, saying, “Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Mt. 23:28). Professing believers may present themselves as people of God, when actually they are inwardly unclean (v. 27). In the story of David and Bathsheba, we see the way adultery works (2 Sa. 11:5-17, 26-27). After this sin takes root in one’s heart, and an individual commits the sinful act, adultery often leads to greater wickedness through further deception, lies, and hypocrisy.

Scripture Study

Deception – Pr. 5:1-5; 2 Pe. 2:12-14; Ep. 5:3-6

Lies – Ro. 1:24-28; Ep. 4:17-25

Hypocrisy – Mt. 23:27-28; 2 Sa. 11:5-17, 26-27

Conclusion

Sexual immorality permeates the world at all levels of society. Therefore, the church must cry out against this wickedness. We must remain on guard, lest adultery and fornication infiltrate the fellowship of the church through deception, lying, and hypocrisy. As such, the church must preach and teach against sexual immorality, confronting the lies and deceptions of the enemy.

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Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“God’s Judgment”

Introduction

Other than the illumination of the Holy Spirit, context is the most important aspect of Biblical interpretation. Pulling individual verses, and even passages of Scripture, out of their specific context can lead us to a faulty interpretation and application of the Scriptures. However, when a verse is interpreted in its immediate context, the context itself clarifies the meaning and proper application of the Scripture. In today’s lesson, we will examine Luke 16:18 in its specific context.

Key Verse

“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (He. 13:4).

Lesson Summary

In Luke 16:18, Jesus taught the permanence of marriage between one man and one woman for a lifetime commitment. His teaching condemns the one who puts away and remarries, and also the one who marries the divorcee. Thus, it clearly condemns the divorcee for remarrying. In other words, when a marriage is dissolved by man and remarriage takes place, adultery and fornication unavoidably result. In Luke 16, the context of Jesus’ teaching against adultery and fornication explains the seriousness of God’s judgment against sexual immorality. His teaching against adultery is prefaced by the permanence of God’s Word (vv. 16-17). The Word of God does not pass away – his truth does not fail (v. 17; Mt. 5:17- 19; 24:35). Moreover, the permanence of God’s Word contrasts the religious hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who seek to justify their unrighteousness (v. 15). Furthermore, self-justification is placed in the context of those who serve the god of this world (mammon), rather than the one, true God (vv. 13-14). Finally, Christ’s teaching against adultery is followed by the story of God’s eternal judgment against sin (vv. 19-25). The Lord will judge sin finally with the flames and torments of hell (vv. 23-25). Among the prevalent corruptions of humankind are adultery and fornication. These sins alone will take innumerable souls to their eternal doom. God’s Word against adultery and fornication will never change. However, many will seek to justify their sinful marriage relationships, choosing the god of this world above the one, true God. That which was spoken of the rich man is true of so many today: “remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things” (v. 25). Many professing believers choose to satisfy and comfort themselves in this life, yet do so in disobedience to the commandments of the Lord. Many religious groups seek to justify sinful marriages because of comfort and mammon, but this is an abomination in the sight of God. According to his Word, God will judge adultery and fornication with hell-fire (He. 13:4). What is the solution for those caught in sexual immorality? Repentance and turning from one’s wicked way is God’s solution (Lu. 16:27-31). The sinner may be justified by faith; but his sinning will never be justified and made righteous. Thus, one cannot continue in a relationship of adultery or fornication, yet remain justified in the sight of God. In Luke 16, Jesus’ teaching is clear: while faith and repentance lead to his mercy, self-justification results in God’s judgment against adultery and fornication. When members of the church refuse to repent of their disobedience, discipline becomes necessary for the continuing health of the church (1 Co. 5:1-13). Without discipline, adultery and fornication can infect the whole body (vv. 6-7). When firm and loving attempts at restoration fail, we must remove a rebellious member from the fellowship (membership) of the church (vv. 2, 11-13). The purpose of such discipline is the ultimate restoration and salvation of the soul (v. 5).

Scripture Study

Judgment of God – Lu. 16:13-25

Discipline of the church – 1 Co. 5:1-13

Conclusion

God will judge adultery and fornication. For this reason, discipline is so important. When the church disciplines an erring member, this action unmistakably affirms that God will judge the rebellious works of the sinner. Therefore, the church should lovingly seek to restore erring members, but discipline those who refuse to repent of their sinful ways.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum "Spirit Baptism"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

"The Promise"

Introduction

A promise is a binding commitment to fulfill one's word: an obligation to do all that one has said. These days, taking a person at his word is risky. People say one thing but then do another. A man and woman stand before witnesses to pledge their undying devotion to one another in holy matrimony, only later to break their covenant by divorce and remarriage. Politicians make fair speeches filled with appealing words – promises they will never keep. Although man's word is unreliable, God's Word is trustworthy. He will do all he has promised in his Word.

Key Verse

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Ac. 2:39).

Lesson Summary

Without a doubt, we are living in the last days when "perilous times shall come" (2 Ti. 3:1-5). However, in these uncertain times of great opposition to our faith, God's Word gives us "a strong consolation," because he has made binding promises and cannot lie (He. 6:13-18; Nu. 23:19; 1 Sa. 15:29; Ti. 1:2). In fact, this world will one day pass away, but his Word will never pass away (Mt. 24:35; see also Mk. 13:31; Lu. 21:33; 2 Pe. 3:7, 10-13). The Word of God proves reliable and his promises faithful. 2 Cor. 1:18-20 teaches us that God is true and his promises also are true. God's Word is not uncertain: his Word is not "Yes" one minute and "No" the next. All that he has promised to us in Christ will forever stand true. When God said it, he meant it. His Word to us is "yes" and "amen" ("so be it")! Therefore, we can count on the Word of God, today, tomorrow, and the next day, even until the Lord comes again. God's Word will remain true for all eternity (Ps. 119:89; 1 Pe. 1:25). While the last days are indeed perilous, they also are full of promise. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:16-18; Jl. 2:28-29). When Jesus prepared the disciples for his departure and for their future work and ministry in the church, he prophesied of the coming of the Holy Ghost, saying, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Lu. 24:49). Jesus referred to the Holy Ghost as "the promise of my Father." Luke recorded these same words in Acts 1:4-5; "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Again, the baptism with the Holy Ghost is the promise of the Father. Jesus said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Lu. 11:13). The Holy Spirit is the Father's promise to his children. We can be sure he will fulfill his promise and give his Spirit to all who ask.

Scripture Study

God's word is true – He. 6:13-18; Nu. 23:19; 1 Sa. 15:29; Ti. 1:2; Mt. 24:35; 2 Co. 1:18-20; Ps. 119:89; 1 Pe. 1:25
The promise of God – Ac. 2:16-18; Jl. 2:28-29; Lu. 11:13; 24:49; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:38-39

Conclusion

When the Holy Ghost was poured out on the church according to the Word of God, Peter understood that the baptism with the Holy Ghost was God's promise to every believer, even to all future generations (Ac. 2:38-39). Therefore, every believer should pray and seek to be baptized with the Holy Ghost – the promise of the Father.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum "Spirit Baptism"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Outpouring of the Spirit”

Introduction

In this lesson, we will examine the behind-the-scenes details surrounding the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, when Christ’s promise to baptize with the Holy Ghost was first fulfilled in the church. By reflecting on the experience of the New Testament church, we will be able to more fully understand the baptism with the Holy Ghost and build our expectation for the outpouring of the Spirit in the church today.

Key Verse

“And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit . . .” (Ac. 2:18).

Lesson Summary

Before he ascended, when Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost (Jn. 15:26; 14:26), he told his disciples to “wait” and “tarry” for the promise of the Father” (Ac. 1:4; Lu. 24:49). They were to remain in Jerusalem until they were baptized with the Holy Ghost “not many days hence” (Ac. 1:5). However, “waiting” and “tarrying” should not be understood as passive in the sense of being idle until something occurred, but rather the apostles waited in active anticipation and expectation for the promise. For them, following Christ’s directives to wait and tarry took on a practical expression. Leading up to the day of Pentecost, the church “continued” to seek God for the fulfillment of his promise. They believed the promise and then took faithful action in order to prepare themselves to receive the Holy Ghost, praying and making supplication (Ac. 1:13-15; 2:1). Therefore, Christ’s disciples actively embraced the promise of the Spirit by faith (Ga. 3:14). True faith in the Word of God requires faithful action on our part for “faith without works is dead” (Ja. 2:17, 20, 26). Clearly, God’s promises in no way relinquish the church from responsibility; instead his promises expect faithful action and obedience from us. Today, we should not sit back and relax waiting on God to send Holy Ghost revival in the church. Instead, when we “tarry” we must embrace God’s promise by faith continually seeking the face of God for the outpouring of the Spirit among us (He. 11:6). God will surely fulfill his Word because he is faithful to keep his promises, but only those who remain faithful to God can expect to receive from the Lord (Ja. 1:6-8; He. 11:33). Furthermore, the church had unity in their waiting and tarrying. Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, gave emphasis to this characteristic within the fellowship of the church when they assembled to receive the promise. In regard to their praying, Luke wrote, “These all continued with one accord” – note the words “all” and “one” which indicate a comprehensive togetherness, a cohesion (1:14). All who were in the upper room had one mind (Ph. 2:2). They were pulling together (Ph. 1:27). Today, a great challenge in the church is motivating all of the church to pull in unison and move in the same direction. The apostles’ unity “continued” and persisted as they prayed for the promise of the Holy Ghost (Ac. 1:14; Ro. 12:2; Co. 4:2). On the day of Pentecost, Luke again noted the unity of the church in the disciples’ coming together – “they were all with one accord in one place” (Ac. 2:1). This context of unity was directly connected to the coming of the Holy Ghost (v. 2). In other words, to think of the outpouring of the Spirit on a divided people is absurd (Ep. 4:3). The emphasis of unity in the outpouring of the Spirit is evident in that the Spirit “filled all the house,” he “sat upon each of them,” and “they were all filled,” as opposed to a partial or limited outpouring (Ac. 2:3-4).

Scripture Study

Wait for the promise – Jn. 14:26; 15:26; Lu. 24:49; Ac. 1:4-5, 13-15

Faith to receive – Ga. 3:14; Ja. 1:6-8; 2:17, 20, 26; He. 11:6, 33

Unity in the church – Ac. 1:14; 2:1-4; Ep. 4:3; Ph. 1:27; 2:2

Conclusion

Like the New Testament church, we also should wait and tarry, praying and supplicating in order to receive the promise of the Father. Those who desire to be baptized with the Holy Ghost should seek for the promise, and by faith expect to receive the spiritual blessing. Moreover, the saints of God should join together in one accord to receive a mighty outpouring of the Spirit in the church today.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum "Spirit Baptism"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Speaking in Tongues”

Introduction

Today’s subject has been a topic of widespread debate in Christian circles. Some groups have denied the authenticity of speaking in tongues in our day, limiting this practice to the era of the New Testament church. Others accept speaking in tongues but confine it to a private expression like individual prayers. Still others have misunderstood the spiritual purpose of speaking in tongues and its place in the church. In this lesson, we will clarify the role and importance of speaking in tongues.

Key Verse

“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries” (1 Co. 14:2).

Lesson Summary

Speaking in tongues is the ecstatic utterance of a language other than one’s own, spoken by the divine enablement of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the Spirit and spoke in other languages “as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Ac. 2:4). Contrary to the teaching and practice of some Christians, nowhere in the Scriptures should speaking in tongues be made fundamental to salvation. Instead, speaking in tongues is directly connected to the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Ac. 2:4, 6, 8, 11; 10:44-46; 11:15; 19:1-7; see also Abstract of Faith under “Speaking in Tongues”). When believers are baptized with the Holy Ghost, they always speak in tongues which confirms their experience. Tongues are an external witness of the indwelling Spirit – the Holy Ghost manifesting his abiding presence in the life of the believer (Mk. 16:17). Therefore, speaking in tongues is a normative experience among Spirit-filled Christians. Though speaking in tongues is a sign following believers, it is also a sign to unbelievers (1 Co. 14:21-23; Ac. 2:6-12). [Note: This writer has witnessed the role of speaking in tongues in bringing unbelievers to Christ. On one occasion, after the Holy Ghost had uniquely manifested himself in tongues, a sinner man came forward with his wife to accept Christ as Savior. His background was completely incompatible with the Holiness-Pentecostal tradition. As the pastor was praying with him at the altar to receive salvation, the man’s wife also prayed at the altar, simultaneously receiving the baptism with the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues.] Furthermore, tongues serve to edify the church itself. Individually, speaking in tongues builds up a believer because his spirit communicates with God in mysteries (1 Co. 14:2, 4, 14; Ro. 8:26-27). When the Holy Spirit prays and intercedes through a believer in this way, his faith is built up (Ju. 20). However, when the Spirit-inspired language is interpreted (see interpretation of tongues, 1 Co. 12:4, 10; 1 Co. 14:27-28), the tongues serve to edify all of the members of the church, fulfilling a much greater purpose in the body (1 Co. 14:5, 12-13).

Scripture Study

The witness of the Spirit – Ac. 2:4, 6, 8, 11; 10:44-46; 11:15; 19:1-7; Mk. 16:17

A sign to unbelievers – 1 Co. 14:21-23; Ac. 2:6-12

Self-edification – 1 Co. 14:2, 4, 14; Ro. 8:26-27; Ju. 20

Edifying the whole body – 1 Co. 14:5, 12-13

Conclusion

How should we think about speaking in tongues? Tongues are inseparable from the work of the Holy Ghost in the church. Holy Ghost-baptized saints will speak in tongues. In fact, when writing to the church at Corinth, Paul encouraged the saints in regard to the practice of speaking in tongues in the church (1 Co. 14:5, 18, 39). Nevertheless, excessively speaking in tongues is not an indication of superior spirituality (vv. 19, 23, 40).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum "Spirit Baptism"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Filled with the Spirit”

Introduction

God’s plan in Jesus Christ is to indwell his people. When Jesus promised to send the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, he said, “Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Jn. 14:17). While God desires to dwell with his people, he desires even more for his people to remain consecrated and filled with his Spirit. Certainly, every born again believer should seek to be filled with the Spirit.

Key Verse

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ep. 5:18)

Lesson Summary

On the day of Pentecost, the fullness of the Spirit came into the church through the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Jl. 2:28-29; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:1-4, 14-18). When the saints in the upper room were baptized with the Spirit and spoke in tongues, devout Jews of every nation were also in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost (2:5). The Spirit dynamically came into the room with manifestations like wind and fire, filling not only “the house where they were sitting,” but filling every believer as well (vv. 2, 4). Some 120 saints, perhaps more, received the Holy Ghost baptism with the evidence of tongues, experiencing the fullness of the Spirit in the depths of their souls. When the Jews in the city heard about this strange phenomenon and came to see what was happening, they actually heard the saints speaking the wonderful works of God in their many diverse languages (Ac. 2:6, 11; 1 Co. 12:10). This spiritual manifestation was met with mixed reviews. Realizing that all of these saints were Galileans, all of the Jews were astonished, asking, “What meaneth this?” (Ac. 2:7, 12). But some mocked this mighty move of God refusing to hear his voice, saying, “These men are full of new wine” (Is. 28:11-12; Ac. 2:13). To sinful, fleshly men, this manifestation of the Spirit was reminiscent of intoxication. Of course, Peter contended that they were not drunk at all, but rather that God poured out his Spirit upon them and they were filled with the Spirit (Ac. 2:15, 18). These saints of God were not filled with alcohol but were under the influence of the Spirit, being baptized with and full of the Holy Ghost. Intriguingly, the apostle Paul explained the will of God for the church, admonishing not to drunkenness (intoxication) but to “be filled with the Spirit” (Ep. 5:17-18). Being filled with the Spirit and being baptized with the Spirit are interrelated, yet not exactly the same. The baptism with the Holy Ghost is a onetime experience that immerses us into the fullness of the Spirit. However, as Spirit-baptized believers, we can and should be filled with the Spirit again and again. For example, after the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter and John, along with the saints, were again filled (not baptized) with the Holy Ghost. When they prayed in one accord, the place where they were assembled shook; and then they were filled with the Spirit and spoke God’s word boldly (Ac. 4:23-32).

Scripture Study

Baptized into fullness – Jl. 2:28-29; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:1-5, 14-18

Like drunken men – Ac. 2:6-13; Is. 28:11-12

Be filled with the Spirit – Ep. 5:17-18; Ac. 4:23-32

Conclusion

Through the baptism with the Holy Ghost, God desires to fill up his church continually with his spiritual life and presence. As the Holy Spirit fills all of the members of the church individually, God fills the church with his Spirit corporately. In this way, the church functions as the temple of the living God: “an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ep. 2:21-22; 1 Co. 3:16; 2 Co. 6:16).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum "Spirit Baptism"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Empowerment”

Introduction

Have you ever felt weak or inferior as a Christian, not because of anything you did wrong, but you simply felt insufficient to meet some challenge in your life? At some point, every child of God feels this way because we are limited in our humanity. But our weaknesses are not a problem for God. The apostle Paul declared, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Co. 12:9, 10). Jesus said, “For my strength is made perfect in weakness” (v. 9). Therefore, we are to understand that our strength is not in our humanity, but that we stand by the power of God.

Key Verse

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ep. 3:20).

Lesson Summary

We fight a spiritual and formidable enemy (Ep. 6:12; 2 Co. 10:3), but Jesus Christ has given us the spiritual power and authority to overcome Satan (Jn. 1:12; 2 Ti. 1:7). For this reason, the Scriptures place responsibility on us: “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ep. 6:10); and “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Co. 16:13). Truly, we can be strong in the Lord when we are full of the Holy Ghost. Jesus gave us his example to follow. He showed us how to be strong in resisting the enemy’s temptations (Lu. 4:1-13). He demonstrated how we should be filled with the Holy Ghost and spiritual power. Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost, emerged from his forty-day temptation in the power of the Spirit which thereafter characterized his earthly ministry (vv. 14-15). He evidenced the power of the Spirit in his life through exercising authority over demonic spirits, sicknesses, and diseases (vv. 30-36, 39-40). However, Jesus not only demonstrated the power of God in his life and ministry, but he also gave this same power of God to the church (Lu. 24:49). The baptism with the Holy Ghost, the fulfillment of Christ’s promise (and the Father’s) to the church, empowered the saints and enabled them to speak and act beyond their human ability (Ac. 1:8; 2:4, 43) – it was a baptism of power! One of the primary reasons the Holy Ghost was given was empowerment. For example, the apostle Paul testified that spiritual power, that is, the power of the Holy Ghost, distinguished his ministry (1 Co. 2:1-5; Ro. 15:18-19). In fact, he insisted on God’s power as the basis of his effectiveness in the ministry (1 Co. 2:4-5). In the Old Testament, many were powerfully used by the Holy Ghost to perform tasks and duties for the Lord. Among them were the judges of Israel. Samson, a Nazarite and judge, illustrates this point (Jud. 13:5; 16:31). The Bible explains, “And the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the spirit of the Lord began to move him at times” (13:24-25). The Holy Spirit would come upon Samson mightily and he would do great exploits (14:6, 19; 15:14-15). But today, under the New Covenant with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit fills us and his power actually indwells us. Not only does the Holy Ghost move upon us, but now his power is working in us (Ep. 1:19; 3:16, 20; Co. 1:29).

Scripture Study

Be strong – Jn. 1:12; 2 Ti. 1:7; Ep. 6:10; 1 Co. 16:13

Christ’s example – Lu. 4:1-15, 30-36, 39-40

Baptism of power – Lu. 24:49; Ac. 1:8; 2:4, 43; 1 Co. 2:1-5; Ro. 15:18-19

Indwelling power – Jud. 13:24-25; 14:6, 19; 15:14-15; Ep. 1:19; 3:16, 20; Co. 1:29

Conclusion

As Spirit-baptized believers, we have an unlimited supply of God’s power available to us (Jn. 7:38-39). Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, the power of God resides within us. When we consider that God can do anything, that nothing is beyond his power, and that Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and in earth, we are comforted to know we also can do great things by his Spirit that dwells in us.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Who Is the Holy Ghost?"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Comforter”

Introduction

Sometimes we need a friend to talk to and encourage our hearts. Other times, we need a counselor to advise us in our decisions. Perhaps, we just need to know someone is there – that we are not left alone. Maybe we need assurance that everything is going to work out in the end. Whatever we need, “the God of all comfort” and consolation can supply (2 Co. 1:3-4). In today’s lesson, we will see that the Holy Ghost comforts us in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Key Verse

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (Jn. 14:16).

Lesson Summary

For some three years, Jesus walked with his disciples teaching and instructing them in the truth. They heard his voice, saw his actions, and physically touched the Lord (1 Jn. 1:1). During that time, he daily was with them conversing and sharing in their lives and experiences. Jesus called and empowered his disciples (Mt. 10:1); he gave them commands and sent them forth to minister (Lu. 9:2-6); and he encouraged and even reproved them (Mt. 16:17, 22-23). Indeed, Jesus was their comforter – their spiritual mentor, guide and counselor. But soon, according to God’s will, he was scheduled to depart from them. Jesus told his disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (Jn. 14:2-3). Although he was leaving, he nevertheless promised not to leave them alone on their own without a comforter (v. 18). Jesus promised to send them another Comforter, the Holy Ghost (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). The Holy Ghost took over right where Jesus left off (16:12-14). Although the Holy Spirit was different from the Lord Jesus in person, he was not different in his work and ultimate purpose. Like Jesus, he also came to comfort – thus he is “another” comforter. Therefore, the Spirit came to assist and console the saints of God in the same ways that Jesus comforted them. The Holy Spirit came to continue Christ’s role as helper and guide in the lives of his disciples. Though Jesus left them physically when he ascended to the Father, the Holy Ghost was Christ’s spiritual presence, not only abiding with the disciples, but actually indwelling them. Thus, Christ abides at the right hand of the Father in heaven, but he also abides in our hearts through his indwelling Holy Spirit. Because Jesus was leaving them, the disciples were heavyhearted and filled with sorrow (Jn. 16:5-6, 20-22). In this context of sorrow, Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost (Jn. 16:7). Of course, this speaks to the comfort of the church today. In times of great sorrow and tribulation, we have the consolation of God’s Spirit, for Jesus said, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mt. 28:20). The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, came to fill the church with Christ’s joy and peace until he comes again (Ro. 14:17; 15:13). The disciples, of course, did not want Jesus to leave them; nevertheless, it was absolutely necessary that he go away. Otherwise the other comforter, the Holy Ghost, would not come (Jn. 16:7). Clearly, the Holy Ghost is now here in a special way to comfort the church and to help every believer in his Christian walk.

Scripture Study

Jesus was comforter – 1 Jn. 1:1; Mt. 10:1; Lu. 9:2-6; Mt. 16:17, 22-23

The Holy Spirit as comforter – Jn. 14:2-3, 16, 18, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 12-14

Comforting our sorrow – Jn. 16:5-7, 20-22; Mt. 28:20; Ro. 14:17; 15:13

Conclusion

In what sense does the Holy Ghost comfort and help the church? When we are in need, the Holy Ghost will be there to lend his support. Certainly, the Holy Ghost was not sent to do everything for us. He did not come to do the work for us while we sit back and do nothing. Instead, we must take up the responsibility of Christ’s mission, and as we do so, the Holy Ghost will help us along the way, especially doing what we cannot do. He will not leave us alone, comfortless, but he will teach, guide, and lead us into God’s will in Christ. He will do mighty works through us to the glory of God. He will manifest the presence of Christ through us. Today, the Holy Ghost continues to support the saints, just as Jesus did when he walked upon this earth.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Who Is the Holy Ghost?"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Teacher”

Introduction

God has given teachers and placed them in the body of Christ. They are gifts to the church. The teaching ministry edifies the body through expounding the Word of Truth and equipping the saints for service. While teachers are instrumentally essential, even critical, for the spiritual growth and perfection of the church (Ep. 4:11-13), the primary and most important teacher in the church is the Holy Ghost. In today's lesson, we will see that the Spirit is the one who actually teaches and establishes the saints in the truth of Jesus Christ and God's Word.

Key Verse

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Jn. 14:26).

Lesson Summary

When God spoke of a future time of restoration for the people of God, he promised to make a new covenant, saying, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Je. 31:31-34). No longer would the Word of God be written (engraved) merely in tables of stone, but it would be written inwardly – in fleshy tables of men's hearts by the Spirit of God (2 Co. 3:3-8). Under this new covenant through Jesus Christ, the true knowledge of God cannot be taught by the precept of men but by the Holy Ghost himself indwelling us (Is. 29:13; He. 8:10-11; 1 Jn. 2:26-27). The Spirit writes (engraves) the Word of God upon our hearts. Furthermore, God has placed his Spirit within us to be an ever-abiding Teacher. When Jesus promised the Holy Ghost, he said, “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Jn. 14:26). The Spirit's work is teaching. He will give us understanding in all things – whatever we need from God in order to fulfill the mission of Christ and the church. Specifically, the Holy Ghost will teach us all things pertaining to Christ and his teachings (Jn. 15:26; 16:14-15). Moreover, until the Spirit reveals the truth of Jesus Christ within our hearts, we have not learned Christ, heard him, and been taught by him (Ep. 4:20-21). The knowledge of the truth is therefore more than head-knowledge and knowing facts about Jesus Christ; it is a relational, spiritual knowledge of God's saving grace and his love in our hearts (Ro. 5:5; Ep. 3:19). Finally, the Holy Ghost is the one who guides the church into all truth. Jesus plainly taught his apostles, saying, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (Jn. 16:12). Jesus left many things unsaid – truths that the Holy Ghost would later reveal to the apostles from the Word of God: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (v. 13). The Holy Ghost would even reveal “things to come,” future insights relevant to the church (v. 13). The apostle Paul explained that the Spirit of God is the key to discerning the depths of the knowledge of God (1 Co. 2:9-14). While the wisdom of the natural man is limited, the Holy Spirit is unlimited in his ability to reveal Godly wisdom and give spiritual understanding to the saints. Since the Word of God was divinely inspired and spoken by the Holy Ghost (2 Ti. 3:16; 2 Pe. 1:21), we need the Spirit to reveal and unlock the depths of the knowledge of God's Word in the church today. Certainly, as we rely on the Spirit of truth for guidance and direction, he will take what is of Christ and reveal it to us from God's Word (Jn. 16:15).

Scripture Study

Written inwardly – Je. 31:31-34; 2 Co. 3:3-8; Is. 29:13; He. 8:10-11; 1 Jn. 2:26-27

Learning Christ – Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:14-15; Ep. 4:20-21; Ro. 5:5; Ep. 3:19

The revealer – Jn. 16:12-13; 1 Co. 2:9-14; 2 Ti. 3:16; 2 Pe. 1:21; Jn. 16:15

Conclusion

As disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, we never stop learning about God and growing in the knowledge of his love and truth. Even the most knowledgeable and spiritually established among us still have something to learn in their relationship with Christ. Therefore, all of the members of the church are students of God's Word, and the Holy Ghost is our Teacher.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Who Is the Holy Ghost?"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Intercessor”

Introduction

Jesus taught “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Lu. 18:1). We should “pray without ceasing” and daily intercede with God, making our petitions known (1 Th. 5:17; 1 Ti. 2:1; Ph. 4:6). As saints of God filled with the Spirit, not only do we pray, but the Spirit also prays with us on our behalf and through us for others. As we seek God, the Spirit is our intercessor. In today’s lesson, we will see why we need the intercession of the Spirit when we pray to the Father.

Key Verse

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ep. 6:18).

Lesson Summary

Why do we need the Holy Spirit to make intercession when we pray? First of all, we do not always know how we should pray or for what we should pray (Ro. 8:26). Have you ever come to a spiritual roadblock or to a point that seemed to be a dead-end in your life, and you needed divine direction and guidance because you were uncertain of what to do next? Even when the will of God is clear, the specifics surrounding his will may not be so clear (1 Co. 2:11). We are therefore limited in our human understanding of what and how to pray. In regard to this, Paul used himself as an example when writing of his own infirmities and weaknesses. At one point, Paul was afflicted and prayed three times for his deliverance, but the Lord would not take this affliction from him. Instead, the Lord promised to give him sufficient grace (2 Co. 12:7-9). Clearly, Paul wanted to be free from his “thorn in the flesh,” but God had something different in mind. What we think is best, our perspective, does not always align to God’s mind and thinking. When we do not understand the perfect will of God, the Spirit helps and assists us as we pray. Moreover, he prays and intercedes in ways that go far beyond our human ability in order to make our praying effective (Ja. 5:16; He. 4:15-16). Humanly, we cannot ascend up to God (Jn. 3:13). Instead, when we pray, we rely on God to condescend to our lowly condition (Ps. 8:4; Ps. 136:23; Lu. 1:48). However, when the Holy Ghost prays on our behalf, he translates our prayers uniquely and communicates our need directly to God. Paul described the Spirit’s intercession as “groanings which cannot be uttered” (Ro. 8:26). “Groanings” indicate intercession from deep within the believer. The indwelling Spirit prays in and through us with groanings that surpass any words we ourselves can speak, clearly distinguishing his prayers from our own. When Paul instructed the saints to be strong and spiritually armored, he admonished them to pray in the Spirit: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication **in the Spirit**” (Ep. 6:18). This kind of praying is faith-building (Jude 20). Finally, when we pray in the Spirit, we receive great consolation and comfort. God searches our hearts as we pray. Our own prayers fall short of God’s perfect will, therefore we need the Holy Spirit to help us because he always prays in perfect agreement with the will of God (Ro. 8:27). Although we might not understand his groanings, God knows the mind of the Spirit: he understands the utterances of the Spirit and knows exactly what we are praying when we cry, groan, weep, and speak in tongues. When we consider all three of these aspects of praying in the Spirit, we see how important the Spirit is in our prayer life. We need the Spirit to make intercession for us “according to the will of God” (1 Jn. 5:14-15).

Scripture Study

The Spirit helps us – Ro. 8:26; 1 Co. 2:11; 2 Co. 12:7-9

His groanings – Ro. 8:26; Ja. 5:16; He. 4:15-16; Ep. 6:18; Jude 20

God’s will – Ro. 8:27; 1 Jn. 5:14-15

Conclusion

Every believer desires the assurance of knowing that “all things work together for good” (Ro. 8:28). But we cannot presume the blessings of Romans 8:28 without the operation revealed in verses 26-27. Only as we pray and intercede by the Holy Ghost can we be fully persuaded that we are praying according to the will of God and have the full assurance that God is working on our behalf “for good.”

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Who Is the Holy Ghost?"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Witness”

Introduction

In today’s lesson, we will see the importance of the Holy Ghost in the witness of the church. The Spirit is vital to the success of our mission and evangelism because he is the life and power of our witness. He gives force and impetus to our efforts, enabling us to be true, effective witnesses of Jesus Christ in the world.

Key Verse

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Ro. 8:16).

Lesson Summary

The writer of Hebrews explained that the Holy Spirit is a witness of Christ to us, not an external witness only, but an *indwelling* witness (He. 10:15-16). “Because the Spirit is truth,” the Spirit of God always gives witness to the truth *within* the believer (1 Jn. 5:6-10). His witness always agrees with and confirms the Word of God (v. 7). Thus, every true child of God has the *inner* witness of the Spirit of truth abiding in him (Jn. 14:17; Ro. 8:14-16). Regarding the ministry of the Spirit, Jesus taught that the Spirit of truth would speak to the church, not of himself, but rather declaring the things pertaining to Christ and his church (Jn. 16:13-14). The Spirit has a voice. Historically, the Spirit’s ministry through holy prophets has been an important part of God’s plan for the church (2 Pe. 1:21). The Spirit speaks specifically to the needs in the church in every generation where believers will receive his wise counsel (1 Co. 2:13). When writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul declared, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith” (1 Ti. 4:1). The Holy Ghost spoke specifically to warn the church of a falling away (see also 2 Ti. 3:1; 4:4; 2 Th. 2:3). Warnings are an important part of the Spirit’s witness to the church especially in times of apostasy (Re. 1:10, 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Moreover, not only does the Spirit speak to the church within the fellowship of the saints, but the Holy Ghost also speaks through the church to the world of sinners, the unchurched, and the scattered sheep. Jesus assured us that the Holy Ghost would fill our mouths with the right words when we give our defense of the gospel (Mt. 10:17-20; Lu. 12:11-12). We can therefore depend on the Holy Ghost to speak a true witness of Christ through us (Jn. 15:26). However, since the Holy Ghost is our inner witness, we must remain filled with his Spirit after being baptized with the Holy Ghost. Only when our testimony is saturated with the Holy Ghost are we assured of being true, effective witnesses of Jesus Christ. Finally, the apostles were eye-witnesses of Christ’s ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension (Ac. 2:21-22, 25; Lu. 1:1-2; 24:46-48; 2 Pe. 1:16). Their witness was authorized by Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:18-20), but also empowered by the Holy Ghost (Ac. 1:8). Although the apostles were Christ’s eye-witnesses, the Spirit himself was/is God’s witness having raised Jesus from the dead (Ro. 8:11). Therefore, we are not eye-witnesses, but we are Christ’s faithful witnesses, having received the same power and anointing of the Holy Ghost, who not only raised up Christ but has quickened us spiritually through faith in Jesus (Ac. 5:32; Ep. 2:1, 5-6).

Scripture Study

The inner witness of the Spirit – He. 10:15-16; 1 Jn. 5:6-10; Jn. 14:17; Ro. 8:14-16

The Spirit speaks to the church – Jn. 16:13-14; 2 Pe. 1:21; 1 Co. 2:13; 1 Ti. 4:1; Re. 1:10; 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22

The Spirit speaks through the church – Mt. 10:17-20; Lu. 12:11-12; Jn. 15:26

We are his witnesses – Ac. 2:21-22, 25; Lu. 1:1-2; 24:46-48; 2 Pe. 1:16; Ro. 8:11; Ac. 1:8; 5:32; Ep. 2:1, 5-6

Conclusion

The world today desperately needs a true witness of Jesus Christ. With some seven billion inhabitants on the face of the earth, fulfilling the mission of the church is humanly impossible. Therefore, we must rely on the Holy Ghost to empower our witness and help us finish Christ’s mission. Clearly, he came for this purpose.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Edification of the Body”

Introduction

When writing to the church in Corinth, Paul stated, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Co. 12:1, 8-10). Why did the Lord place spiritual gifts in the church? The apostle Paul did not want the saints to misunderstand the function and purpose of these gifts. By explaining God’s will concerning spiritual gifts, the saints would know how the gifts should operate in the church, and at the same time be able to discern the spirit of error. In today’s lesson, we will examine God’s purpose in the operation of spiritual gifts.

Key Verse

“Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church” (1 Co. 14:12).

Lesson Summary

Paul taught the principle of the edification of the body as an objective/goal for the church (Ep. 4:12). Jesus Christ wants his body, his church, to be edified, built up, and established in the faith (Ep. 4:13). Since the church is not one member but many members in one body, each individual member should seek to benefit the whole body (1 Co. 12:14, 20). In the same way that each part of the physical body serves to support the needs of the whole man, each individual member of the church should serve to build up the corporate whole of the church. For example, we should build each other up through cultivating love and peace among ourselves (Ro. 14:19; 12:10; He. 10:24), by comforting and supporting each other (1 Th. 5:11, 14), and by speaking gracious words of encouragement to one another (Ep. 4:29; He. 10:25). However, an unhealthy body is one in which a particular member becomes sick, no longer serving to strengthen the body, but rather draining life from it. The church at Corinth was spiritually immature and prone to fleshly attitudes and behaviors (1 Co. 3:1-3). Paul wrote to the church to correct them on many divisive issues, spiritual gifts being one of them. He wrote to instruct them and to clarify the work of the Spirit and spiritual gifts. God has given a variety of spiritual gifts, but the same Holy Ghost operates all of them (1 Co. 12:1, 4-6, 11) – that is, there are many gifts but one mind of the Spirit. Paul taught edification as a basic guiding principle in the operation of spiritual gifts in the church. As we “covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Co. 12:31), we should always seek to edify the church above our own will and desires (1 Co. 14:3-5, 12, 26). The gifts of the Spirit manifest through individual members, not only for their own edification, but even more so for the profit of the whole church (1 Co. 12:7; 14:5). The operation of the gifts should benefit all of the members, rather than satisfying the will of one or two. Moreover, the Lord distributes spiritual gifts among the members of the church in such a way as to unite the body of Christ (1 Co. 12:24-26). “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him” (v. 18) – and he has set them in the body with gifts. However, the spiritual gifts are not for the individual’s use; for such use would produce division and disrupt the harmony and unity of the church. But the Spirit operates the gifts through individual believers to produce mutual care and support among all (v. 25). In this way, the whole church suffers and rejoices together, sharing a common experience in the Spirit (v. 26).

Scripture Study

The principle of edification – Ep. 4:12-13, 29; 1 Co. 12:14, 20; Ro. 12:10; 14:19; He. 10:24-25; 1 Th. 5:11, 14

Edification through spiritual gifts – 1 Co. 3:1-3; 12:1, 4-7, 11, 31; 14:3-5, 12, 26

The unity of the body – 1 Co. 12:18, 24-26

Conclusion

The spiritual gifts are given for the good of the whole body. They should operate within the church to build up and unite, not tear down and divide. In 1 Co. 13:1-13, Paul went on to explain that the key to edification in the operation of spiritual gifts is love. When the operation of spiritual gifts is motivated by love, the gifts will function to edify the body of Christ.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Wisdom and Knowledge”

Introduction

Throughout the Scriptures, God gave certain individuals special gifts of wisdom and knowledge to help them in their service to him. Bezaleel was filled with the Spirit “in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship” for the building of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:30-35). The prophet Daniel was a man full of godly wisdom, knowledge, and understanding who became a chief ruler in Babylon (Da. 5:5-14), and of course, the wisdom and knowledge of King Solomon is well known (1 Ki. 3:5-12). Today, God has given us spiritual gifts of both wisdom and knowledge in order to help us serve Christ and build up his church (1 Co. 12:8).

Key Verse

“For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Pr. 2:6).

Lesson Summary

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit” (1 Co. 12:8). The apostle Paul appropriately listed wisdom and knowledge at the beginning of the spiritual gifts, not because they are more important than the others but likely because they are the basis of understanding among the spiritual gifts – a wise place to begin. Wisdom and knowledge are similar, and often operate in an interrelated way (Ep. 1:17; Co. 1:9), yet they are distinct and separate attributes. So what are the differences between wisdom and knowledge? “Wisdom” (*sophia*) indicates a depth or quality of “understanding” (1 Co. 2:7, 10, 13), while “knowledge” (*gnosis*) indicates an increase or a quantity of “insight” (Co. 1:10). Wisdom is the foundation of all spiritual knowledge and understanding. A wise man seeks the knowledge of God, but a fool refuses his knowledge and instruction (Pr. 1:5, 7, 22; 15:14). For the sake of distinction, wisdom has the capacity to grow in knowledge, but knowledge without wisdom may prove unskillful, even destructive. For example, knowledge means comprehending the right answer; wisdom means the ability to understand and communicate (explain) the answer. Knowledge understands what to say; but wisdom knows when and how to say it. Thus, knowledge should **build** upon wisdom (Pr. 4:7). Solomon, who God endowed with wisdom, explained this **building** principle in Proverbs 24:3-5. Literally speaking, the wisdom (the “know how”) to construct a building is necessary in order to build a house; then after it is built, further knowledge is necessary to finish and beautify the rooms throughout it (vv. 3-4). Knowledge builds upon wisdom. Likewise, wisdom is comparable to being strong; whereas knowledge is like becoming stronger and stronger (v. 5). Again, knowledge builds upon wisdom. Clearly, wisdom and knowledge are interrelated and should complement one another. We need both gifts operating within the church. Paul’s unique designation of these special gifts, referring to them in terms of “the word” of wisdom and knowledge, demonstrates that God’s Spirit supplies both wisdom and knowledge through individual members of the body for the edification of the whole church. “The word” indicates something spoken. In these gifts, the Holy Spirit enables a believer to speak and communicate an understanding needed within the body of Christ. Therefore, these gifts clearly are not operated by the Spirit for the individual’s benefit alone, since both gifts are manifested as “the word,” and words are spoken in order to be heard. The Holy Ghost then moves through one member to *speak* wisdom or to *speak* knowledge for the benefit of the other members. Furthermore, “the word” also implies the written Word of God, thus, the Spirit enables an individual believer to understand wisdom and knowledge consistent with the Holy Scriptures, and as a result, to speak by the gift. Thus, these gifts of the Spirit will never contradict the principles of sound teaching based on the Holy Scriptures, for the Spirit always agrees with the Word of God.

Scripture Study

Examples of wisdom and knowledge – Ex. 35:30-35; Da. 5:5-14; 1 Ki. 3:5-12

Comparing wisdom and knowledge – Ep. 1:17; Co. 1:9-10; 1 Co. 12:8; 2:7, 10, 13; Pr. 1:5, 7, 22; 15:14; 4:7; 24:3-5

Conclusion

The church needs wisdom and knowledge to fulfill its mission, but this means individual members of the body must be yielded to God as instruments of the Spirit (Ro. 6:13). God desires to speak through us words of wisdom and knowledge to give help and guidance to our ministries; but we must be spiritually prepared to be used of the Spirit (2 Ti. 2:21).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Faith”

Introduction

How important is faith to every believer? How important is faith in the life of the church? In Hebrews 11:6, faith is essential to our acceptance with God, for we cannot please him unless we believe in him (Jn. 3:16). Truly, we cannot serve the Lord and follow him in discipleship without genuine faith and trust in Jesus Christ. In today's lesson, we will consider the importance of faith itself and the significance of the spiritual gift of faith.

Key Verse

"But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (He. 11:6).

Lesson Summary

Because faith in Jesus Christ is required for salvation, faith is a gift of God's grace. That is, every man has the capacity to believe the gospel and follow faithfully in Christ's service. When Paul wrote to the saints in Rome, explaining about gifts of grace functioning in the body of Christ, he explained that God has distributed to every believer "the measure of faith" or "a measure of faith." "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man *the measure of faith*" (Ro. 12:3). Paul was explaining that the gifts of God are just that, gifts given to us from the Lord. We are not so special in and of ourselves. Instead, God has blessed and equipped us by his grace with special abilities in order to serve him by faith. So every member of the body has the faith to serve the Lord and benefit the whole church in some unique way, because "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Ro. 12:3-6). Thus, none are excluded in God's plan, but every member of the body has the faith it takes to please God. "The measure of faith" enables an individual to believe in God, embrace his Word, trust in Jesus Christ, obey his commandments, and to serve the Lord faithfully. In other words, when God calls a person to follow Jesus Christ and serve him, he also supplies him with the necessary faith to please the Lord in all things. "The measure of faith" itself is therefore a gift of God's grace. How does faith impact the church, its mission and ministry? Faith in Jesus Christ is powerful – it can move mountains (Mt. 21:17-22). Though Jesus referred to a literal mountain when teaching his disciples about faith, he actually meant that any major obstacle in our lives could be moved through faith. By faith, nothing is impossible with God (17:20); therefore, Jesus compelled us to believe in him, abide in him, and ask in his name (Jn. 14:1; 15:7; 16:23-24), for great and mighty works are ours for the asking (Jn. 14:12-14). To help the church reach its fullest potential, God has given the spiritual gift of faith as a special, divine enablement to believe in God's Word and to receive freely from the Lord (1 Co. 12:9). Reasonably, this gift could be exercised by the Spirit through an individual in order to receive a blessing from the Lord personally or to administer a blessing upon another member of the body. Either way, the gift serves to edify and build up the body of Christ, fulfilling the joy of the Lord in the church. Genuine faith is spiritually productive – it produces good works through the believer that validates his faith (Ja. 2:17-26). Therefore, anytime this spiritual gift operates through a member of the body, something profitable is taking place in the life of the church: prayers are being answered; souls are turning to Christ; saints are being encouraged; and many other blessings are being received.

Scripture Study

The measure of faith – He. 11:6; Jn. 3:16; Ro. 12:3-6

The power of faith – Mt. 17:20; 21:17-22; Jn. 14:1, 12-14; 15:7; 16:23-24

The spiritual gift of faith – 1 Co. 12:9; Ja. 2:17-26

Conclusion

Indeed, faith itself is a gift of God, and faith in God is powerful. Clearly, when the spiritual gift of faith is operating through individual members of the body, the church is strengthened because faith in Christ produces good works among us. When we see God working in the church by the gift, the faith of the whole church is emboldened to continue asking and believing for even greater works. In this way, the spiritual gift of faith operating in the church helps the body of Christ to grow in faith and proves essential in fulfilling the mission of the church.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Healings and Miracles”

Introduction

The world is filled with suffering, needy people. In Matthew 9:35, Jesus had been travelling village to village, teaching, preaching, and healing the sick. At one point, Jesus looked on the multitude and was overwhelmed by what he witnessed. The people were like sheep without a shepherd. There were so many needy people everywhere that one man simply could not minister to them all (vv. 36-38). In today's lesson, we will see that the Spirit has placed the gifts of healing and the working of miracles in the body of Christ in order to help us minister to those in need and to magnify the name of Jesus.

Key Verse

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ep. 3:20).

Lesson Summary

The Lord is our healer (Ps. 103:1-3). A major part of Jesus' earthly ministry was healing the sick and diseased (Mt. 8:13-17). He provided healing for all through his atoning work – through his sacrifice when he shed his blood and died on the cross. Moreover, Jesus suffered and died for the healing of the whole man: mind, soul, spirit, and body. By his stripes we are (were) healed (Is. 53:4-5; 1 Pe. 2:24). Healing is therefore possible for everyone who believes in Christ (Mk. 9:23). While healing is provided through Christ, it is accomplished by the power of the Spirit. Jesus himself healed the sick by the power of the Holy Spirit, and he promised to baptize every believer with that same Spirit and power (Jn. 1:32-34; Lu. 4:18; Ac. 1:5, 8; 2:39). In fact, the Holy Spirit has placed "gifts" of healing in the body of Christ (1 Co. 12:9). When Paul referred to healing, he wrote in terms of "gifts" rather than "gift." Since the Spirit demonstrates many healing gifts through individual members of the body as he wills (vv. 7, 11), we can conclude that God can and does heal all types of sicknesses, diseases, and oppressions (addictions, mental illnesses, cancers, emotional scars, to name a few) by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ. We should consider, however, that healings in this present world are not entire or absolute. Though someone is completely healed of an illness (Ac. 3:16), his body remains imperfect. For example, the Lord may heal my broken bones, so that I walk again, yet I still suffer with arthritis in my body. Also, the person through whom the gifts of healing flow should not be confused with the person being healed. In other words, the Spirit could use me to bring healing to another person, while I continue to suffer through my own infirmity (see the apostle Paul's suffering in 2 Co. 12:7-9). Such distinctions only serve to remind us that the gifts of healing are not ours to exercise as we please, but the gifts are operated by the Spirit through members of the body as it pleases God (1 Co. 12:11, 18). Likewise, the Spirit also gives the working of miracles for the edification of the whole church and for the glory of Jesus Christ (1 Co. 12:10). Miracles are indeed supernatural works of God's Spirit and power. Although healings and miracles are in many ways similar, for many healings are nothing short of miraculous signs (Jn. 4:46-54), perhaps the primary distinguishing mark of a miracle is that it defies human explanation, leaving us in awe and wonder of God's mighty power and glory (Lu. 8:25; 9:42-43; Jn. 2:23; 6:14; 7:31). Consider, Jesus turned water into wine (Jn. 2:1-11), multiplied the loaves and fishes (Lu. 9:12-17), calmed the raging storm (Mt. 8:24-27), walked on water (Mk. 6:47-51), cast out devils (Lu. 8:26-37), and even raised the dead to life again (Jn. 11:32-45). Through the spiritual gift of the working of miracles, Jesus can still do mighty wonders by his Spirit in the church today. Since the gift of miracles is the work of the Spirit and not of man, this gift should never exalt an individual member of the body but rather bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ (Ac. 8:9-24).

Scripture Study

Gifts of healing – Ps. 103:1-3; Mt. 8:13-17; Is. 53:4-5; 1 Pe. 2:24; Mk.9:23; Jn. 1:32-34; Lu. 4:18; Ac. 1:5, 8; 2:39; 1 Co. 12:7, 9, 11, 18; Ac. 3:16; 2 Co. 12:7-9

Working of miracles --1 Co. 12:10; Jn. 4:46-54; Lu. 8:25; 9:42-43; Jn. 2:23; 6:14; 7:31; Ac. 8:9-24

Conclusion

By the gifts of healing and the working of miracles, God's Spirit is powerful and active in and through the church enabling us to fulfill Christ's mission in the world. Certainly, the needs of mankind are much greater than Zion Assembly can humanly fill, but God's Spirit is able to do above and beyond all we can possibly imagine (Ep. 3:20).

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Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts II"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

“Prophecy and Discernment”

Introduction

In 1 Corinthians 12:10, Paul identified the gift of prophecy and the gift of discerning of spirits. In today's lesson, a general explanation of these two gifts will be provided, and then the relationship of these gifts to each other will be explained. As we will see, these gifts are essential to the healthy functioning and spiritual balance of the church.

Key Verse

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith” (Ro. 12:6).

Lesson Summary

First, what is the gift of prophecy? Down through the ages, God has spoken by his Spirit through prophets revealing his will for mankind (He. 1:1-2; 2 Pe. 1:21). Although the *office* of prophet is no longer needed since the foundation of the church has been laid (Ep. 2:20; 1 Co. 3:10), God nevertheless speaks through “prophets” today. We typically call them “preachers.” Moreover, though God has finished speaking in as far as the Holy Scriptures are complete, he continues to speak through individuals by his Spirit to the church today through the gift of prophecy (Ro. 12:6). The Holy Ghost anoints individual believers to speak God's word with power and authority (1 Co. 2:4-5; 1 Th. 1:5). In the gift of prophecy, believers declare the Word and will of God with the unction of the Holy Ghost (Ac. 2:18; Re. 19:10; Ac. 21:10-11). On the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke by the gift of prophecy when he “lifted up his voice” and preached the baptism with the Holy Ghost to the multitude: declaring their experience to be the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Ac. 2:12-18). The gift of prophecy continues to work in this same manner – the Spirit clarifying and declaring the mind of God in the church. Second, what is the gift of discernment? To discern means to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error. Discernment therefore requires righteous and spiritual judgment in the church (1 Co. 2:15; 5:12). The church has the responsibility of both “**proving** what is acceptable unto the Lord” (Ep. 5:10) and **reproving** “the unfruitful works of darkness” (v. 11). We must be able to prove the right and reprove the wrong. The gift of discerning of spirits is the divine ability to distinguish the nature of spirits, whether they are of God or not (1 Jn. 4:1). Of course, the one exercising this gift must himself know the truth and word of God, for by knowing the Spirit of Truth, one recognizes spirits of error. Reasonably then, the gift of discernment has as much to do with discerning truth as discerning error (1 Jn. 2:21; 4:5-6). Third, what is the relationship between the gifts of prophecy and discernment? The gift of prophecy is the divine enablement to speak the words of God by the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It functions to provide divine understanding and guidance for the ministry and mission of the church. God speaks by this gift of the Spirit through individual members to direct the course of the church. The potential danger regarding the gift of prophecy is when someone speaks in error and leads the church contrary to God's will. The apostle Peter decisively warned against false teachers who follow after greed and the lust of the flesh, being “presumptuous” and “self-willed” (2 Pe. 2:1, 3, 10). Likewise, the apostle John implored the faithful to “try” (test, prove) the spirits “because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1). Hence, the gift of discerning of spirits is given to keep the church from such error. On this note, we should keep in mind that the Spirit of prophecy is also the Spirit of discernment. Therefore, the church should not be fearful of the gift of prophecy because the same Spirit has also given to the church the gift of discernment (1 Co. 12:4). These two spiritual gifts provide the necessary check and balance within the church. The church should be neither spiritually gullible nor suspicious. Instead, we should give the Spirit complete liberty to speak in the church (1 Th. 5:19-20), because we are enabled to discern fully the true Spirit of the Lord (v. 21).

Scripture Study

The gift of prophecy – He. 1:1-2; 2 Pe. 1:21; Ro. 12:6; 1 Co. 2:4-5; 1 Th. 1:5; Ac. 2:12-18; Re. 19:10; Ac. 21:10-11

The gift of discernment – 1 Co. 2:15; 5:12; Ep. 5:10-11; 1 Jn. 2:21; 4:1, 5-6

Balance in the church – 2 Pe. 2:1, 3, 10; 1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Co. 12:4; 1 Th. 5:19-21

Conclusion

Clearly, the gifts of prophecy and discernment should operate in the church for the edification of the whole body. When the word of the Lord goes forth with the inspiration and power of the Spirit by the gift of prophecy, and the saints exercise the gift of discernment in their spiritual experience, the church can then hear from God freely with the confidence and assurance of knowing the truth.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

“Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues”

Introduction

Tongues refer to spoken language. When thinking of languages, several typically come to one's mind. But literally thousands of languages are actually spoken in the world today. Some languages, like English, are widely international and intercultural, and extend worldwide geographically, while other languages like Telugu in India are more limited to an ethnicity or people group. Spoken languages are complex, yet basic and elemental to human interaction and communication (Ge. 11:1-9). Thus, the ministry of the church centers on the exercise of language among us. In today's lesson, we will see how the Spirit supernaturally uses language to speak through us and to us in order to edify the church.

Key Verse

“To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Co. 12:10).

Lesson Summary

Tongues and interpretation of tongues have to do with divine communication: our communicating with God and his communicating with us (1 Co. 12:10). Most of the time, when we pray, we talk to God in our own native tongue or in a language we already know and speak. Because we who speak and those who hear us already know the language, everyone understands and benefits from what is communicated in the church. But at times, the Holy Ghost prays through us supernaturally in “unknown” tongues which we do not know and cannot speak by our own ability; for we speak directly to God in the Spirit in mysteries and thus are individually edified by the Spirit in a special way (1 Co. 14:2, 4, 14). All Spirit-baptized believers speak with “unknown” tongues because tongues-speech is the evidence of the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Ac. 2:4; 10:44, 46; 19:6). There is also the gifts of divers (that is, diverse or different) tongues and interpretation of tongues, which the Spirit may exercise and demonstrate in the church as he wills (1 Co. 12:10). Through the gift of diverse tongues, the Holy Ghost can speak through Spirit-baptized believers in languages which are actually known and understood. Although the individual who speaks has no understanding of what is spoken, someone in the gathering of the saints may fully comprehend the language because it is his own native tongue (or a language he understands). For example, all of the saints who are gathered together may speak Spanish, except for a few who speak Swahili and cannot understand the worship. The Holy Ghost can speak Swahili through one of the Spanish-speaking members in order to edify the whole body. We find an example of this spiritual gift on the day of Pentecost when every man heard the wonderful works of God in his own language (Ac. 2:4-11). When the Holy Ghost fell on the saints and they spoke with other tongues, the nearby crowd was ethnically diverse because the Jews from many nations had traveled to Jerusalem for the feast. The gift of diverse tongues operating through individual believers enabled the onlookers to understand what was being spoken by the Spirit (v. 11). Of course, this manifestation of the Spirit served as a powerful witness for Jesus Christ (Ac. 2:38-39; Jn. 15:26). Nevertheless, the majority of the times when we speak in tongues, as evidenced by Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 14, we speak in “unknown” tongues (that is, no one but God understands what we are saying). Therefore, we primarily speak to God in mysteries when we speak in tongues. Unless the Spirit is speaking by the gift of diverse tongues to someone who already understands the spoken language, the only other way we can understand the tongues is by the interpretation of the Spirit. God has given the gift of interpretation of tongues in order to provide understanding for the edification of the whole church (1 Co. 14:5-14). Paul instructed the church to pray for the operation of the gift of interpretation (v. 13). When thinking about tongues and interpretation of tongues, we should keep in mind that the Spirit is not limited by any language for God understands and speaks all languages. Thus, that which God speaks by the Spirit, he can also interpret by the Spirit. Yet when no interpretation is given by the Spirit, the individual believer should be quiet in the church (the *ekklesia*) and speak “to himself, and to God” (vv. 27-28).

Scripture Study

Tongues – 1 Co. 14:2, 4, 14; Ac. 2:4; 10:44, 46; 19:6

Diverse tongues – Ac. 2:4-11, 38-39; Jn. 15:26

Interpretation of tongues – 1 Co. 14:5-14, 27-28

Conclusion

The apostle Paul's emphasis on spiritual gifts is the edification of the body. Speaking in tongues edifies individual believers. The gift of diverse tongues edifies those who understand the spoken language. The interpretation of tongues edifies the whole body.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts II"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

“Signs Following Believers”

Introduction

Signs are an important means of communication. They convey thought, ideas, principles, direction, and so on. The significance of any sign is not the sign itself, but the idea it communicates and represents. For example, the purpose of a street sign is not its cosmetic appearance, but rather to identify a location. Therefore, an attractive sign bearing the wrong street information has no value and is confusing. In fact, it may even cause you to go in the wrong direction. In today's lesson, we will see the importance of “true” signs following believers in the mission and ministry of the church.

Key Verse

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Mk. 16:20).

Lesson Summary

Miraculous signs and wonders accompanied Jesus' earthly ministry. The Spirit worked all kinds of miraculous signs through him, signs which confirmed that he was indeed the Christ, the Son of God, the Word made flesh (Jn. 1:1, 14, 32-34; 14:9-11; Mt. 11:1-6; Lu. 4:18-19). Jesus taught that his disciples would continue in this same ministry of miraculous (supernatural) signs through the power of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost (the Comforter, the Spirit of truth) would indwell and enable believers to do mighty works in Jesus' name, “that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (Jn. 14:12-17). After Christ's resurrection and before his ascension, he instructed the church regarding signs following believers, providing a representative list of miraculous wonders. Believers will cast out devils, speak with new tongues, take up serpents, be protected if they drink something deadly, and lay hands on the sick and heal them (Mk. 16:14-19). Indeed, the Holy Ghost manifested great wonders through the ministry of the New Testament church. For example, Peter did so many signs among the people that they brought their sick into the streets, hoping his shadow would fall on them when he passed (Ac. 5:12-16). Also, Paul sent handkerchiefs or aprons (“prayer cloths”) to the diseased and spiritually tormented, and they were healed and delivered (Ac. 19:11-12; see also 28:1-10). Such mighty works of the Holy Ghost characterized the New Testament church. Nevertheless, while Jesus taught about miraculous signs and wonders that follow believers, he also warned in the last days of deception and false prophets with their “great signs and wonders” (Mt. 24:4, 11, 24). Understanding that “signs” and “lying wonders” can be deceptive (2 Th. 2:8-11; Re. 13:11-16), how then should we think about miraculous signs in the mission and ministry of the church? A miraculous sign must communicate (corroborate, confirm) truth in order to be a true sign. Miraculous signs follow believers, but they actually serve to confirm the preached word, rather than the messenger himself (Mk. 16:20). Therefore, when we witness a manifestation of the Spirit, a supernatural work of God, our focus should not be on the messenger, per se, but rather on the Word of God, for signs serve to confirm the Word, Jesus Christ (Ac. 4:29-30; 6:7-8; 8:4-7, 12-13). Moreover, only when the preached word aligns with the truth of God's Word should we accept any accompanying signs as a true work of God. Christians who automatically accept outward manifestations as a confirmation of the messenger place themselves at a great risk for deception. By keeping our focus on the Word and the Spirit, not the signs or the messenger, we avoid this critical error.

Scripture Study

Jesus and miraculous signs – Jn. 1:1, 14, 32-34; 14:9-17; Mt. 11:1-6; Lu. 4:18-19; Mk. 16:14-19

The New Testament church and signs – Ac. 5:12-16; 19:11-12; 28:1-10

Lying wonders – Mt. 24:4, 11, 24; 2 Th. 2:8-11; Re. 13:11-16

Signs confirm the Word – Mk. 16:20; Ac. 4:29-30; 6:7-8; 8:4-7, 12-13

Conclusion

Although signs and wonders serve an important function in the witness of the church in these last days, we should not be overly preoccupied with miraculous signs, but rather focused on proclaiming the truth of God's Word in the power of the Spirit. As we declare the truth with God's anointing and power, the Spirit will confirm the Word with signs following, as needed.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts II"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

“A More Excellent Way”

Introduction

In Zion Assembly Church of God, we want to be our very best – we want to excel in all that we endeavor to do for Christ. The gifts of the Spirit are vital when striving for excellence because these gifts enable us to minister beyond our own human capabilities. While all of us have certain God-given gifts and abilities, the gifts of the Spirit take us beyond ourselves and limitations, giving us supernatural ability to minister to others and build up the body of Christ. In today's lesson, we will consider the Spirit's most excellent gift.

Key Verse

“But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way” (1 Co. 12:31).

Lesson Summary

The spiritual gifts are operated by the Holy Ghost through individual members of the church in order to build up and strengthen the whole body of Christ. Although the nine spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 are extremely important to the spiritual health of the church and to the fulfillment of the mission of the church, the apostle Paul showed us “a more excellent way.” He instructed the saints to “covet earnestly the best gifts,” but emphasized the superior gift of God's Spirit – LOVE. Paul explained that the love that God demonstrated toward us in Jesus Christ is being poured out in our hearts by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ro. 5:5, 8). From the moment we are gloriously saved (that is, justified and regenerated by the Holy Spirit) we experience God's great love in our hearts. When we are sanctified by the same Holy Spirit, we are immersed deeper into the love of God in Christ. When we are baptized with the same Holy Ghost, we are immersed even deeper into the love of God in Christ. Even as we are refilled with the Holy Ghost, again and again, we continue to plunge into the greater depths of God's love in Christ. In fact, the immeasurable love of God can be known only in Christ through the inner-working of the Holy Spirit (Ep. 3:16-19). Thus, every Spirit-filled believer possesses the divine enablement to go “deeper, deeper in the love of Jesus.” Indeed, no other gift of God furthers the mission of the church and builds up the body of Christ like the love of God. Paul described divine love as the superior gift in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. He emphasized love above speaking in tongues. The ability to speak in diverse tongues, even in angelic, heavenly languages, has no value whatsoever without divine love. Such tongues are nothing more than a loud, reverberating noise, like a gong (v. 1). The apostle also elevated love above other gifts like prophecy and faith. Although we might consider someone with deep prophetic revelations and supernatural manifestations of faith to be highly important, still such an individual is nothing without love (v. 2). Moreover, divine love is greater than any charitable and sacrificial work that we do. Unless God's love abides in the believer through the indwelling Spirit, even the most virtuous acts provide no eternal benefits (v. 3). Essentially, Paul placed divine love above the spiritual gifts, because these gifts are meaningless apart from God's love. Furthermore, the apostle clarified the qualities of divine love. The love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Greek: *agape*) is distinctly different from mankind's love (Greek: *phileo*), because man's love can be motivated by fleshly, sinful passions and desires. Such worldly, fleshly love is inferior, and may even be hypocritical, impure, self-centered, and subject to change (Ro. 12:9-10). When Paul described the last days, he explained that people will be “lovers of their own selves” (*philautoi*), “covetous” (*philarguroi*, those who love money), “without natural affection” (loveless, perverted affections), “despisers of those that are good” (*aphilagathoi*, those who do not love the good), “lovers of pleasures [*philedonoi*] more than lovers of God [*philotheoi*]” (2 Ti. 3:1-4). On the contrary, the love of God is steadfast and true, devoted, pure, selfless, and unailing (1 Co. 13:4-8).

Scripture Study

A more excellent way – 1 Co. 12:31; Ro. 5:5, 8; Ep. 3:16-19

Love: The superior gift – 1 Co. 13:1-3

The qualities of divine love – Ro. 12:9-10; 2 Ti. 3:1-4; 1 Co. 13:4-8

Conclusion

A well-noted hymn of the church reads, “O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forevermore endure, the saints' and angels' song.” Love is a more excellent way – the superior gift of the Spirit excelling all others. Let every member of the church desire to excel in spiritual gifts, and above all, seek to excel in love.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts II"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

“Prophecy”

Introduction

The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Truth. His work in part is to teach the truth, testify of Christ, and guide into all truth (Jn. 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13). The many manifestations of the Spirit are given to comfort the believer and confirm the word of God, the truth. In today's lesson, reflecting on the gifts of the Spirit, we will consider the priority of the spoken word of God.

Key Verse

“Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy” (1 Co. 14:1).

Lesson Summary

In 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, the apostle Paul taught about spiritual gifts, encouraging the saints to desire them (v. 31), because the gifts of the Spirit edify and build up the body of Christ. The gifts are necessary for the health of the church. Nevertheless, in chapter thirteen he went on to explain that spiritual gifts in the absence of divine love prove to be meaningless and profitless for the church (vv. 1-3). Paul then urged the church to make love its first priority, rather than spiritual gifts (1 Co. 13:13; 14:1). Nevertheless, he again exhorted the saints to desire spiritual gifts but then gave greater emphasis to prophesying (14:1). In other words, Paul was attempting to establish divine order in the church in regard to the operation of spiritual gifts. We must be yielded to the Holy Ghost in order to be used by God, but we, as instruments of the Spirit, are not out of control in the exercise of spiritual gifts. The Spirit desires order in the church; otherwise, Paul would not have taught order (1 Co. 14:39-40). Specifically, Paul contrasted prophesying with speaking in tongues (vv. 1-5). He considered both prophesying and speaking in unknown tongues to be divinely inspired communication. In both cases, God is speaking through individual members of the body. However, Paul gave the greater importance to the one who prophesies, simply because his words are spoken with understanding, whereas speaking in tongues remains a mystery without an interpretation (vv. 2, 5). Speaking in tongues edifies the one who speaks, but prophesying edifies all who hear. Speaking in tongues spiritually builds up the individual believer, but prophesying builds up the whole church (vv. 3-4). Clearly, Paul wanted the saints to have the freedom to speak in tongues when they gathered together, but his greater desire was that they prophesy in the church (vv. 5, 18-19), because the spiritual goal in our gathering together as one body is the edification of the whole church. Personal spirituality and communion with God are expressed in deep and mysterious ways, even humanly inexpressible ways, and thus the need for speaking in tongues. Paul declared, “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all” (v. 18). But our corporate spirituality in the church must attain a practical, applicable, and meaningful expression in order to benefit the whole body. In other words, individuals may speak in tongues, weep and groan in the Spirit, and shout and rejoice with joy unspeakable, and while this is spiritually edifying for the individuals who are so exercised of the Spirit, yet if such expressions do not produce something concrete, tangible, and beneficial for the whole church, many believers will not receive what they need in order to thrive spiritually. Paul explained it thus, that not only people, but inanimate things have sound. For example, instruments have distinct sounds by which they are identified. If their sounds have no distinction, then they cannot be identified for particular purposes, as when an alarm is sounded. In the same way, when we speak in the church, we must speak in distinct ways that communicate something concrete and understandable. Otherwise, people depart from the house of God spiritually unfulfilled (vv. 6-11). Therefore, when addressing spirituality in the church, Paul's focus was not on tongues, but rather on the spoken word of God. When the Word is declared among the saints with the inspiration and anointing of the Spirit (that is, when we prophesy), the church is greatly strengthened in the will and mind of Christ. Prophesying edifies, exhorts, and comforts the church when it is done decently and orderly (vv. 3, 29-33).

Scripture Study

Divine order in the church – 1 Co. 12:31; 13:13; 14:1, 39-40

Prophesying rather than tongues – 1 Co. 14:1-5, 18-19

The spoken word of God – 1 Co. 14:3, 6-11, 29-33

Conclusion

Believers prophesy in various ways, such as in preaching, teaching, witnessing, testimonials, praise, and prayer. Moreover, many powerful messages from the Lord have been given from the pew (members), as well as the pulpit (ministers). When members of the body are yielded to the Holy Ghost, he will inspire them to declare the word of God in many wonderful ways in order to establish the church in the truth.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part One"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“Job’s Recovery”

Perhaps no other narrative in the Bible inspires faith like the life of Job. To summarize his life’s story, he had it all, he lost it all, but in the end, he gained everything. His experience from start to finish is a remarkable story of unwavering faith in God, especially in the face of suffering. The incredible trials of his faith and his ultimate victory inspire us with hope when facing the greatest of challenges. In today’s lesson, *Job’s Recovery*, we will consider the necessity of keeping the faith when everything around us literally falls apart.

Key Verse

“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:22).

Lesson Summary

The Bible explains that Job was “a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil” (Job 1:1, 8). He understood that God is holy, and therefore he followed after holiness and desired to please the Lord. In addition to his personal piety, his dedication and faithfulness as a man of God are evident by his continual offerings on behalf of his sons and daughters (1:4-5). Thus, Job functioned as a priest interceding with God for his whole family. Moreover, he was extremely prosperous, making him “the greatest of all the men of the east” (v. 3). In every sense of the word, Job was successful: spiritually, personally, and financially. Indeed, he was a godly man of great influence and prominence among the people in the land of Uz. Clearly then, not because of anything he was doing wrong but rather because he was doing everything right, Satan desired to destroy this blessed man of God (vv. 9-12). After Satan attacked him, Job literally lost everything he possessed, including his sons and daughters (vv. 13-19). He was broken by this experience and completely humbled before the Lord, yet through it all, he maintained his integrity and faith in God (vv. 20-22; 2:3). Could his situation have become any worse? Up to that point, all that he held dear was taken away, but Job himself was unscathed (1:12). The Accuser then challenged the Lord, saying, “Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face” (2:5). The Lord gave Job into the hand of Satan – the only thing Satan could not touch was his life (v. 6). When the Devil struck Job with sores all over his body, head to toe, his wife did not comfort him and support his faith. Instead, watching him suffer, she spoke foolishly and tempted him to “curse God, and die” (vv. 9-10). Likewise, when his three friends arrived – Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite – they provided little comfort and no lasting support. After mourning with Job for seven days (vv. 11-13), these “friends” spoke to Job unjustly regarding God’s hand in his circumstances (42:7). Certainly, Job’s condition was pitiful. He was a man of God who lost all that he possessed: his wealth, his children, and his health. He was emotionally broken (3:1-3) with no man to comfort him. Essentially, Job was left with nothing but his faith in God. Yet in the end, all that Job needed was his faith in God. When all was said and done, Job came to realize the greatness of a holy God, and he understood that God’s ways are so much greater than man’s limited knowledge and temporary circumstances (42:3; Ro. 11:33-36). Job finally said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (42:5-6). Through it all, Job humbled himself, and in the end, God delivered him (vv. 7-10). Job fully recovered, not because he was wealthy, or did good works, or was influential among the people, but simply because God is faithful and Job persevered in his faith (1 Co. 10:13; Ja. 1:3). He believed and trusted the Lord to the finish, no matter what (Ja. 5:11).

Scripture Study

Job, a successful man – Job. 1:1-5, 8

The trail of Job’s faith – Job 1:9-22; 2:3-6

When no one understands – Job 2:9-13; 3:1-3; 42:7

Job’s humility and healing – Job 42:3; Ro. 11:33-36; Job 42:5-10; Ja. 1:3; 5:11; 1 Co. 10:13

Conclusion

True, real faith perseveres and endures to the finish (2 Ti. 4:7). When everything around him said, “Give up,” Job held on and trusted the Lord. Was it easy? Of course not! But through all of his questions, frustrations, and insecurities, he believed God, and by faith he fully recovered. Like Job, we must hold on to our faith in God, even when our circumstances appear hopeless, because our hope is never in our physical circumstances, but our hope is in the Lord our healer (Ex. 15:26; Ps. 103:3).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part One"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

“Hannah’s Cry”

Introduction

Hannah’s Cry is a lesson that demonstrates how adverse conditions can actually work for our good when we have the faith to believe and trust in God. Trials can either make us bitter or make us better. The outcome depends on our spirit (attitude) and perspective. We should always believe that God is working in our lives, even in the hardest situations, in order to bring us to “an expected end” (Je. 29:11).

Key Verse

“And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore” (1 Sa. 1:10).

Lesson Summary

Today’s study is the backdrop and setting of one of Israel’s greatest leaders, Samuel, who was a priest, prophet, and judge in Israel (1 Sa. 2:18; 3:19-21; 7:9, 15-17). The story of Samuel begins with a woman named Hannah. She was loved and favored by her husband, Elkanah; but she was barren and had no children because the Lord had closed her womb (1 Sa. 1:1-5). Did this mean that God was against her? In the eyes of some, Hannah was despised (vv. 6-7), but in the eyes of the Lord, she was highly favored. Although her husband dearly loved her and gave her preferential treatment in his household, his love could not change her adversity or satisfy her deep longing and need for a son (vv. 5-8). Her affliction produced emptiness and sorrow in her heart; and her grief brought her to a place of brokenness and humility before the Lord. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (Ja. 5:10). The Lord closed her womb, but he did so with purpose. He allowed her sorrow to bring her to a place of desperation in order to use Hannah. God needed a yielded vessel to accomplish his divine will. Because of her affliction, Hannah “was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore” (1 Sa. 1:10). She reached the point that she was selfless in her petition. Her desire for a son was no longer merely to satisfy her need, but she became willing to surrender her child to the service of the Lord (v. 11). “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Ro. 8:28). She came to the place where she had a sorrowful spirit and poured out her soul in prayer, expressing her abundant grief to the Lord (vv. 15-16). Then God heard her cry and gave her a son, whom she named Samuel (vv. 17, 19-20). The psalmist David exclaimed, “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry” (Ps. 34:15). What did the Lord want from Hannah? – Complete surrender to his will and purpose. God had something much greater in mind than giving a son to a sorrowful woman – this child would be forever “lent to the Lord.” God fully intended to raise up a courageous leader in the house of Israel – a leader completely dedicated to serving the Lord and performing the word of the Lord (vv. 24-28). But it took barrenness (v. 5), adversity (v. 6), sorrow, weeping (vv. 7, 8, 10), and affliction (v. 11) to bring forth God’s will through Hannah. The answer to her cry meant so much more than becoming a mother. Her selfless supplication and healing ultimately brought about deliverance for God’s people, for Samuel eventually led Israel to victory over the Philistines (1 Sa. 7:3-4, 8-15).

Scripture Study

Hannah’s barren condition – 1 Sa. 1:1-8

Her affliction and petition – Ja. 5:10; 1 Sa. 1:10-11, 15-16; Ro. 8:28

The answer to her prayer – 1 Sa. 1:17, 19-20, 24-28; 7:3-4, 8-15

Conclusion

The story of Hannah inspires every believer to face adversity with courage and faith, knowing that God is our healer. Hannah could have become a miserable, bitter woman without faith and hope. But instead, she cried out to God with all of her heart. Amazingly, the prayer of one woman changed the course of Israel. God took her need and did something remarkable through Hannah. Out of her deep despair, she prayed, and God healed her body. Through her healing, she then became the mother of one of the most influential spiritual leaders in the history of the church.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part One"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

"Naaman the Leper"

Healing depends on both faith and obedience. Why? If we truly desire to be healed, then we must receive healing on God's terms, not ours. That is, we must not only exercise faith in God, but also submit to his will. Therefore, resistance to the will of God can actually stand in the way of our being healed. To receive healing from the Lord, we should be submissive and obedient to God's word.

Key Verse

"Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Ki. 5:14).

Lesson Summary

Naaman was the general of Syria's great army. He was a respected, honorable, and valiant leader. Because of his military accomplishments he was highly favored by the king of Syria. Although he was notably successful, he nevertheless had a plague of leprosy, an incurable skin disease (2 Ki. 5:1). In Israel, since leprosy was not treatable, the disease was controlled and contained by isolation until an individual was cleansed (or healed) from the disease. The priests of God functioned somewhat like doctors, determining what was a true leprosy according to the law of God, and pronouncing when an individual was unclean or clean (Le. 13:1-46). Naaman's wife had a servant, a young maid who was a captive from Israel (2 Ki. 5:2). She spoke to Naaman's wife about the prophet Elisha, saying, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy" (v. 3). When the king of Syria heard this good news, he sent Naaman with a letter unto the king of Israel, requiring that he should be healed. The prophet Elisha called for Naaman to come to him, but when Naaman arrived at his house, the prophet did not come out to greet him (Le. 13:45-46). Instead, he sent word that he should go to the Jordan river, wash in the river seven times, and be healed. [Note: Compare Elisha's instructions with the requirements of the law for cleansing in Leviticus 14:1-20.] Being a high-ranking and important official in Syria, Naaman was angry because Elisha did not come out to him in person and pray an elaborate prayer over him. He was expecting the prophet to do something demonstrative and miraculous. But instead, the prophet sent a messenger specifying God's requirements for Naaman: 1) Go and wash yourself; 2) You must wash in the Jordan; and 3) You must wash seven times. Naaman considered these requirements to be unreasonable, and, at first, he was unwilling to do them. The more he talked about it, the more irritated he became – "Why should I wash in the Jordan; why not wash in the rivers of Damascus?" He left Elisha's house outraged. God actually asked very little of Naaman, yet he allowed pride to stand in the way of his obedience and his healing. His servants exercised greater wisdom in convincing him to lay aside his foolish pride and obey the words of the prophet. Naaman then went to the Jordan, washed seven times, and was cleansed from his leprosy (vv. 4-14). Interestingly, scholars typically trace the origin of the word "Jordan" to the Hebrew verb, "yarad," meaning "to descend" (R. Laird Harris, Ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, Moody Press, 1980, p. 402.) Naaman had to descend. His spirit had to come down and be humbled. He had to become willing and submissive to God in order to be healed. He dipped seven times in the Jordan River. He came up the first time, but nothing happened. Then the second, third, and fourth, but still nothing changed. Each time he went down and came back up, did Naaman consider what he was doing? He was no longer the man in charge, but he yielded his will to the will of God. He followed the specific instructions of God's prophet, washed in the inferior waters of Jordan, and humbled his prideful spirit (Ja. 4:10; 1 Pe. 5:6-7). He obeyed, and when Naaman came up the seventh time, he was completely healed.

Scripture Study

Naaman's disease – 2 Ki. 5:1; Le. 13:1-46

The cure – 2 Ki. 5:2-10; Le. 14:1-20

Humility and obedience – 2 Ki. 5:11-14; Ja. 4:10; 1 Pe. 5:6-7

Conclusion

Desiring to be healed and the willingness to be healed are not precisely the same. Since healing depends on God's terms, we must be willing to submit ourselves to the will of God in order to receive our healing from him. An individual can actually desire healing but not desire the will of God in his life. Such resistance stands in the way of healing. We should have the faith to submit ourselves to Jesus Christ and obey the word of God in order to be healed.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part One"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

“Hezekiah’s Healing”

Introduction

Truly, we do not always understand what God is doing in our lives and exactly why he is doing it; but we can be fully assured that God completely understands us even when we do not understand ourselves. He knows our sorrow and interprets the meaning of our tears. In today’s lesson, we will see the results of crying out to God in faith.

Key Verse

“I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore” (2 Ki. 20:3).

Lesson Summary

“In Adam all die” (1 Co. 15:22) – every human being is mortal and eventually experiences death (Ro. 5:12). But no child of God should want to depart this life before his appointed time (Ec. 3:1-2). Although we have an eternal home awaiting us, God has a temporal purpose and service for each individual (1 Co. 12:18). We should therefore desire to live out our lives to the fullest extent and accomplish all that we can do for the Lord, while we have the strength and the opportunity to serve (Ph. 1:23-24). Certainly, we should not desire to finish our course in this world, until God is completely finished with us (2 Ti. 4:5-7). As children of God, we should seek to live out God’s purpose in our lives. Hezekiah reigned as king over Judah for twenty-nine years. His father, Ahaz, had been a corrupt leader, following the wickedness of the kings of Israel, and even making a sacrifice of his son (2 Ki. 16:1-4). However, Hezekiah was a spiritual reformer, following righteousness and turning the nation back to the Lord. He found favor with God. In fact, the Bible acclaims him as the greatest of the kings of Judah because he trusted the Lord and kept God’s commandments (2 Ki. 18:1-8). Nevertheless, Hezekiah became severely sick and faced imminent death. The Scriptures described his illness in terms of a boil in his body (20:7). Perhaps, he had some type of cancer. The prophet Isaiah told him to get his house in order because he was going to die (20:1). Reasonably, the king could have accepted his “hopeless” condition and prepared himself for death, for the prophet came to him, saying, “Thus saith the Lord” (v. 1). After all, how does one contend with God? Yet Hezekiah appealed to the mercy of the Lord; “then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord” (v. 2). He believed the word of the Lord and understood the gravity of the moment, but he also believed that God was able to change his dire circumstances. He did not argue with God or contest the will of God. Instead, Hezekiah wept and prayed, reminding the Lord that he had served faithfully over Judah (v. 3). Hezekiah felt desperate, for everything seemed to be quickly coming to an end. He immediately cried out to the Lord, and the Lord heard his despairing cry (vv. 4-5). Because Hezekiah believed in God’s power to heal and called on the name of the Lord in tears, his circumstances miraculously changed (v. 6). Had he accepted his original prognosis, his life would have been cut short. But he came boldly to God, obtained mercy, and found grace for his need (He. 4:16). Truly, our high priest can “be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (He. 4:15). Because of his faithfulness, Hezekiah stood out as the greatest of the kings. Through faith and humility, he recovered and continued to reign over Judah for another fifteen years.

Scripture Study

Living God’s purpose – 1 Co. 15:22; Ro. 5:12; Ec. 3:1-2; 1 Co. 12:18; Ph. 1:23-24; 2 Ti. 4:5-7

Hezekiah’s life – 2 Ki. 16:1-4; 18:1-8

Facing death with faith – 2 Ki. 20:1-7; He. 4:15-16

Conclusion

The Lord is ever mindful of our needs (Mt. 6:8). He hears our prayers and sees our tears (2 Ki. 20:5). Certainly, none of us are sovereign. We do not always know the will of God in our lives in every situation. Therefore, we should appeal to the mercy of the Lord, even when faced with inevitable death. When we cry out to God in faith and humility, we can be sure that he will answer according to his divine will and purpose for our lives.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Two"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

“Serpent of Brass”

Introduction

Some forty years after the children of Israel left Egypt, near the completion of their wilderness wanderings, King Arad the Canaanite attacked Israel and took prisoners (Nu. 20:23-26; 21:1; 33:37-40). When this happened, Israel vowed to utterly destroy the cities of the Canaanites if the Lord would only give them the victory. God gave the Canaanites into their hands; and they completely destroyed their cities (Nu. 21:2-3). Although their enemies fought against them, whenever Israel called upon the name of the Lord, God was their defense, and he fought mightily against their adversaries. Nevertheless, as the writer to the Hebrews explained, Israel was hard-hearted and continually grieved the Lord, sinning against him and breaking his commandments (He. 3:7-19). In today’s lesson, we will see how Israel’s sinning brought sickness and suffering upon them.

Key Verse

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (Jn. 3:14).

Lesson Summary

Throughout Israel’s wilderness wanderings, God used adversity (hard circumstances) to prove his people’s faithfulness (De. 8:15-16). Would they trust the Lord and hold fast to his commandments? Unfortunately, they often failed to trust and obey the Lord. God gave Israel victory over the Canaanites, but soon they forgot. The children of Israel became discouraged and complained against the Lord God, saying, “Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?” (Nu. 21:5). To their own demise, the children of Israel murmured against God. On this particular occasion, they were weary because of the difficult journey. They had no food and water; and they were tired of eating manna (see also Nu. 11:6). But rather than crying out to the Lord for strength and provision, they grumbled against God and found fault with their leadership (vv. 4-5). The Lord never claimed that Moses was flawless, but he was perfect for the job of leading Israel. Like Jesus, Moses often endured the opposition of sinners against him (He. 12:3)? The Lord never promised that the way would be easy, but he did promise to bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 13:1-5). Because of their disobedient spirit, God judged his people with “fiery serpents.” Many people died from these venomous snakebites (Nu. 21:6). Murmuring, grumbling, and complaining are more than mere negative words – these practices are actually destructive to the peace and holiness of God’s church, arising from a bitter, infected spirit within a person, and thus defiling the temple of God (He. 12:14-15; 1 Co. 3:16; Ep. 2:21-22). For this reason, God judged his people with “fiery serpents.” Their error and consequential judgment stand as a warning to the church. The apostle Paul wrote, “Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these happened unto them for ensamples” (1 Co. 10:9-11; Ro. 6:23). Their rebellious spirit literally brought this judgment upon them. Likewise, today people also suffer in various ways (physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually) because they have a bitter, antagonistic spirit. Bitterness produces a resentful, fault-finding attitude, causing people to blame others and even God for their circumstances. In this way, sin defiles many people, and as a result, they suffer the consequences (He. 12:15; Ga. 6:7). However, when the people humbled themselves, repented, and looked to the Lord for mercy, they were saved. God told Moses to make a serpent of brass and lift it up on a pole for all to see. When the people were bitten, if they looked to the serpent of brass, they were healed and lived (Nu. 21:7-9).

Scripture Study

The sin of grumbling – De. 8:15-16; Nu. 21:4-5; He. 12:3; Ex. 13:1-5

The results of sinning – Nu. 21:6; He. 12:14-15; 1 Co. 3:16; Ep. 2:21-22; 1 Co. 10:9-11; Ro. 6:23; Ga. 6:7

Looking to Jesus – Nu. 21:7-9; Jn. 3:14-16

Conclusion

The remedy for a bitter spirit is not pharmaceuticals (medicines/drugs). The answer is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Like the serpent of brass, Jesus was lifted up on the cross for our salvation and healing (Jn. 3:14-16). Through faith in him, we experience forgiveness and peace with God (Ro. 5:1). When the inner, spiritual man is healed through faith in Christ, the whole man experiences the resulting effects of such healing – physically, mentally, and emotionally (see Ja. 5:14-16).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Two"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“The Centurion’s Servant”

The apostle John wrote, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Jn. 1:1-3). Being the creator and sustainer of all things (He. 1:2-3), the Son of God certainly has the power to heal mankind. Jesus has all power and authority (Mt. 28:18). We can therefore place our trust and confidence in his ability to meet our needs. In today’s lesson, we will consider a remarkable example of faith in the authority of the Word.

Key Verse

“When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Mt. 8:10).

Lesson Summary

Jesus entered the city of Capernaum, preaching the gospel and teaching the multitudes with authority (Mk. 1:21-22; Lu. 4:31-32). Although Jesus grew up in Nazareth (Lu. 4:16), Capernaum, located on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee, served as his home and ministry base (Mt. 4:12-16; Mt. 9:1; Mk 2:1). From there, Jesus traveled and ministered throughout the region of Galilee (Mt. 4:23-25). In Capernaum, a Roman centurion sent word to Jesus, pleading for his immediate help. Centurions were military officers placed over one hundred soldiers. Therefore, a centurion was an officer having authority, yet serving under authority. He understood what it meant to give orders, and to receive orders and carry them out (Mt. 8:5, 9; Lu. 7:8). In this regard, the centurion recognized and respected the spiritual authority of Christ. He petitioned Jesus, not for himself, but rather for the healing of his servant who severely suffered with palsy (paralysis). Of course, we have no way of knowing his specific, medical condition – only that his servant was “grievously tormented” and at the point of death (Mt. 8:6; Lu. 7:2). At first, the centurion sent word by the Jewish elders, who then urged Jesus to come and heal this servant (Lu. 7:3). How did this Roman come in contact with the ministry of Jesus? Who told him about Christ? Had he seen Jesus and heard him personally? Had he witnessed his miracles? The Jews honored the centurion because he had shown them special favor in building them a synagogue (Lu. 7:4-5). According to Luke, Jesus’ ministry was well-known in Capernaum and Galilee; he taught and preached in the synagogues and demonstrated the authority of his word by casting out demons (Lu. 4:31-37, 44). It would seem that Jesus taught in the very synagogue which the centurion had built for the Jews. Regardless, he knew that Jesus had the authority to change the situation. Feeling the urgency of his plea and being moved with compassion, without hesitation, Jesus said, “I will come and heal him” (Mt. 8:7; Lu. 7:3-5). However, the centurion displayed a unique, unparalleled quality of humility and faith (Mt. 8:10; Lu. 7:9). Just before Jesus arrived at his house, the centurion sent word again, saying, “Lord, trouble not thyself” (Lu. 7:6). He felt unworthy for Jesus to enter his home; he even felt unworthy to come to the Lord in person (vv. 6-7; compare with v. 4). Moreover, he so respected Jesus’ authority that he believed his servant would be healed if Jesus would simply “speak the word” (Mt. 8:8; Lu. 7:7). The centurion firmly believed in the authority and life-giving power of Jesus’ word. The Lord then said, “Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee” (Mt. 8:13; Lu. 7:10).

Scripture Study

The setting of the story in Capernaum – Mk. 1:21-22; Lu. 4:16, 31-37, 44; Mt. 4:12-16, 23-25; 9:1; Mk. 2:1

Matthew’s account – Mt. 8:5-13

Luke’s account – Lu. 7:1-10

Conclusion

When Luke wrote about this healing, he included more specific details of the actual event. However, Matthew wrote from the simple perspective of the centurion (a Roman gentile) and included more of the words of Christ. In Matthew, a gospel heavily directed toward Jewish readers, Jesus alluded to the inclusion of the gentiles (non-Jews) in the kingdom of God (Mt. 8:10-12). Indeed, the Lord is not concerned about nationality, ethnicity, or the color of one’s skin. Rather, he is looking for people of all nations who have genuine faith in his Word. By faith in the authority of the Word, the Roman centurion received his petition from the Lord, and his servant was made whole. We too may be healed through faith in the authority of the Word and his great compassion.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Two"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“The Faith of Friends”

Who is a true friend? The Bible says, “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Pr. 17:17). A true friend will “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Ro. 12:15). A friend is someone who stands by your side when all others forsake you. He does not leave you when adversity comes. He empathizes with your suffering and offers support when you are weak and helpless. In today’s lesson, we will see how the faith of friends moved them to action and helped to transform a man’s life, physically and spiritually.

Key Verse

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mk. 2:5).

Lesson Summary

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after ministering throughout the region of Galilee, the news spread that he was back in town, and soon a multitude gathered at the house. While Jesus was preaching to the crowd, four men came to the house carrying their sick friend who was lying on his bed paralyzed (Mk. 2:1-3; Lu. 5:18). Clearly, he could not come to Jesus on his own. Many people are like the paralyzed man – something formidable stands in the way of their coming to Jesus. The enemy has them spiritually paralyzed – spiritually immobilized and bound to a bed of hopelessness. If left to themselves, they may never come to Jesus. Who will help them find their way to the Lord? Someone must take an interest in them and make the difference in their lives. Consider the effort that was required to help this one soul. First of all, it took four men to bring one soul to the Lord. Clearly, each man carried one corner of the bed. Each one carried his part of the load and bore the burden for their friend. God is looking for faithful people who will spiritually bear up and encourage the feeble and faint (Ga. 6:1-2). We must reach out to help the weak and weary, bringing them to Jesus in order to be healed. In this case, however, by the time they arrived, they could not enter the house because the crowd was blocking the entrance. Of course, these men could have easily given up and returned home. But this would mean giving up on their friend, giving up on Jesus, and ultimately giving up on themselves. Genuine faith moves us to faithful action. They could have accepted defeat; but real faith in Christ found a way. Rather than hanging their head low in despair, these men continued to look up in faith and expectation. Their faith took them higher, above their circumstances, up to the rooftop. Genuine faith inspires us to rise to the occasion and do whatever is necessary in order to help others find Jesus. These men removed the roof tiling and let down their friend to the Lord (Mk. 2:3-4; Lu. 5:19). What did all of this mean to Jesus? “When Jesus saw their faith” (Mk. 2:5) – their actions translated into faith for the healing and salvation of their friend. We must have enough faith to move us toward the salvation and healing of unsaved family and friends. Indeed, the world is looking for answers to their sicknesses, problems, and suffering. They look to medicine, therapy, philosophy, and nature, to name a few, whereas the ultimate answer for the healing of mankind is the Lord Jesus Christ (Ex. 15:26). Even if a physician is consulted, it is Christ who ultimately heals. We must be convinced of this truth! Whether they realize it or not, the sinner and unbelieving are counting on our steadfast faith to make the difference in their lives. We should therefore be willing to go the extra mile in order to bring them to Christ, our healer (Mt. 5:41).

Scripture Study

Paralyzed people – Mk. 2:1-3; Lu. 5:18

Bringing them to Jesus – Mk. 2:3-4; Lu. 5:19; Ga. 6:1-2

Faith to make the difference – Mk. 2:5; Lu. 5:20; Ex. 15:26; Mt. 5:41

Conclusion

The story of the paralyzed man with his experience of salvation and healing places great emphasis on the faith of friends. Our faith plays a critical role in the deliverance of others. As we exercise faith in Christ, we are leading the way for others to come to Jesus. In turn, as we bring lost people to the Lord, God will honor our faith, both saving and healing those who look to him for their deliverance (Mk. 2:6-12).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Two"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

“Gratitude”

Introduction

Gratitude is an attitude of appreciation and thankfulness for that which one has received from another. When a recipient has a sense of being unworthy, he genuinely appreciates the gift and the giver. Appreciation should be expressed and is often accompanied by the words “thank you.” Saying “thank you” is more than an appropriate sentiment; it acknowledges the value of what has been given. When we receive and then express gratitude, we recognize that we have undeservingly received something of worth. Thus, gratitude is the opposite of entitlement and privilege. When we receive healing from the Lord, faith in Jesus Christ should produce gratitude in our hearts.

Key Verse

“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God” (Lu. 17:15).

Lesson Summary

On his way to Jerusalem as he entered an unnamed village, Jesus encountered ten lepers. How long they had suffered in this pitiful condition is uncertain. The Scriptures only describe their shunned condition — the people “stood afar off,” Lu. 17:12 — and the fact that one of the men was a Samaritan (v. 16). The story reveals how all ten of the lepers were healed. They cried out to Jesus, and he said, “Go show yourselves unto the priests” (v. 14). When they believed and obeyed, going to the priests, the men were healed (vv. 11-14). They received a life-altering blessing from the Lord that they could never attain for themselves. Does God owe us anything? As Jesus explained, “We are unprofitable servants” (Lu. 17:10). Anything we receive from the Lord is by his grace and mercy — blessings which we do not deserve. The lepers cried out to Jesus, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” (v. 13). When we believe in Jesus for our healing, we are appealing to his tender mercy and compassion toward us. He endured suffering for our healing (Is. 53:5). As our faithful high priest who suffered in the flesh, he understands our suffering and knows how to help us. We not only believe in his ability to heal, but we also believe that he truly cares for our needs (He. 2:17-18; 4:15-16). Although ten were healed, only one man, a Samaritan, returned to glorify God (Lu. 17:15-16). Why did the other nine fail to return and give thanks to Jesus Christ? Were they truly thankful for their healing? When we consider the response of Jesus, the depth of their gratitude appears insufficient to produce a public display of thanks and praise, for Jesus said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger” (vv. 17-18). Because he was healed by the Lord, the Samaritan expressed his gratitude in the following ways: 1) he returned to Jesus, 2) he lifted his voice in praise to God, 3) he fell down at the feet of Jesus, and 4) he gave thanks to Jesus. Because he returned and gave thanks, the Samaritan’s healing was confirmed by the great high priest: “Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole” (v. 19). In Luke 17:5, the apostles said to Jesus, “Increase our faith.” How much faith does healing require? Jesus explained the power of faith in terms of a tiny, mustard seed: “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you” (Lu. 17:6). Healing does not require a great, big faith in God, but rather faith in a great, big God. The one leper who turned back exercised faith in the power and compassion of Christ to heal his body. However, his faith not only resulted in healing but also in a genuine expression of gratitude.

Scripture Study

Jesus healed the lepers – Lu. 17:11-14

Jesus’ mercy and compassion – Lu. 17:10, 13; Is. 53:5; He. 2:17-18; 4:15-16

Giving praise and thanks to the Lord – Lu. 17:15-18

Faith and gratitude – Lu. 17:19, 5-6; Ps. 103:1-5

Conclusion

“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Ps. 103:1-5). As our healer, Jesus Christ is worthy of all praise and thanksgiving.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Three"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction “By Prayer and Fasting”

Following Jesus Christ means being his disciple, and following his discipline and way of life. Certainly, prayer is a primary part and central focus of our Christian discipline. Jesus dedicated himself to prayer, sometimes praying throughout the night (Lu. 6:12). Though prayer itself can often be a challenging discipline, perhaps the greater challenge of our Christian discipline is prayer with fasting. In today’s lesson, we will consider why we need to pray and fast.

Key Verse

“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Mt. 17:21).

Lesson Summary

Is there a formula for being healed? Did the Lord give us a procedure to follow in order to be healed? If healing could be obtained merely on the basis of a certain procedure or formula, the whole world would be healed. Instead, we receive healing on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ (Mk. 9:23). We certainly cannot make God heal us against his will, but we can obtain healing from the Lord by exercising faith in him (1 Jn. 5:13-15). The writer of Hebrews explained the nature of our faith, saying, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (He. 11:1). When you hope for something or place your hope in someone, but you have no observable proof for your hope, this is faith. Faith should be built upon truth, but by its very nature faith is not observable (Ro. 8:24). In other words, God is real, and this truth is factual. But we have no way of empirically proving God’s existence. Therefore, we experience the reality of God and all of his blessings by faith (He. 11:6). Faith is the primary requirement for healing. But what do we do when our faith is weak (Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31)? After all, some needs are greater than others, and exercising faith can be more challenging at times. In Matthew 17:14-21, a man came to Jesus, kneeling, and pleading for his son to be cured. The nature of the problem was spiritual – his son was possessed by a demon that mentally and physically tormented him. Matthew described him as “lunatic, and sore vexed;” Mark explained that he had a “deaf and dumb” spirit that often convulsed him and attempted to destroy him (Mt. 17:14-15, 18; Mk. 9:17-18, 20-22, 25-26). The man first brought his son to Jesus’ disciples, but they could not cast out the demon and cure him (Mt. 17:16; Mk. 9:18). Jesus responded with great disappointment, saying, “O faithless and perverse generation” (Mt. 17:17; Mk. 9:19). Likewise, when Jesus called upon the father to exercise faith for the healing of his son, the father cried, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mk. 9:23-24). After Jesus cast out the demon and cured the son, the disciples asked, “Why could not we cast him out” (Mt. 17:19; Mk. 9:28)? Jesus blamed their failure on lack of faith – “because of your unbelief” (Mt. 17:20). Jesus taught, “Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not . . . ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Mt. 21:21-22). Jesus said, “And nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Mt. 17:20). However, if we find ourselves in the position of the disciples or this father, needing to believe God for spiritual deliverance but lacking in faith, is there a way to build up our faith in God? “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Mt. 17:21; Mk. 9:29). Jesus instructed us to pray and fast for spiritual deliverance. Some satanic strongholds are so strong and powerful that exercising faith to cast out the demons requires prayer and fasting.

Scripture Study

Faith and healing – Mk. 9:23; 1 Jn. 5:13-15; He. 11:1, 6; Ro. 8:24

When faith is weak – Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 17:14-20; Mk. 9:14-28

By prayer and fasting – Mt. 17:21; Mk. 9:29

Conclusion

Satan has many captives, people who are spiritually bound, not only by sin but by demonic strongholds in their lives. Spiritual bondage keeps them sick, oppressed, and tormented physically, mentally, and emotionally. They need to be delivered. Spiritual deliverance and healing comes by prayer and fasting.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Three"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

"Cry Out to Jesus"

In today's lesson, we will study the healing of blind Bartimaeus. Through this healing, Jesus Christ demonstrates his power and ability to turn our lives in a completely different direction. The story explains a miraculous change – a dramatic transformation from a blind beggar to a born again believer. In Mark 10:46-52, we will see how one man's healing began with a desperate cry.

Key Verse

"And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me" (Mk. 10:48).

Lesson Summary

As Jesus left Jericho, blind Bartimaeus sat along the roadside begging. His physical impairment (blindness) kept him enslaved to his poverty and pitiful circumstances. He received no government assistance each month. No agencies provided for his welfare and living. Apparently, begging was his main source of survival. Day by day as the people passed, he sat by the highway asking for alms – "Alms for the poor; alms for the blind." Apparently, he became known by his sad condition; he was *blind* Bartimaeus. No doubt, his emotional and social afflictions were as great as his physical illness. He had no sense of pride and dignity, for he was a beggar and marked by the tools of his trade: a beggar's garment and his beckoning cry (Mk. 10:46-47). Spiritually speaking, many dwell in the blindness, poverty, and misery of sin, begging for a better life. They hope for some kind of temporary relief from their spiritual poverty, only to find they are trapped in their miserable circumstances, not knowing how to escape from their sinful imprisonment. When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was passing on the street, his cry suddenly changed. No longer was he asking for money. He was now pleading for mercy. "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me" (v. 47). Money was not the cure for his condition. Blind Bartimaeus needed mercy. The Lord's mercy and grace was the ultimate answer for his problems (Ps. 27:7; 33:18-22). What had he heard about Jesus of Nazareth that moved him to cry out? Mark recorded many healings and miracles in his gospel. Perhaps Bartimaeus had heard how Jesus healed those with leprosy (Mark 1:40-42), healed the paralyzed (Mark 2:10-12), delivered those who were demon-possessed (Mark 5:6-8), raised the dead (Mark 5:40-42), healed the deaf mute (Mark 7:33-35), and especially healed the blind (Mark 8:22-25). Clearly, he knew that Jesus was able to heal the sick and diseased. When Bartimaeus cried to Jesus, many tried to discourage him, but this did not prevent him from crying out. Their opposition only provoked him to cry out all the more (10:48). In Psalm 34:15, David wrote, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." Crying out in faith will gain the attention of Jesus. Notice, his crying actually stopped Jesus in his tracks (v. 49). Clearly, Bartimaeus would not be denied. Knowing Jesus could help him, he shamelessly maintained his persistent plea until the Lord called for him. True faith is persistent (Lu. 11:8-9; 18:5-7). Casting away his beggar=s garment, an expression of his faith, he came to Jesus and asked to receive his sight (Mk. 10:50-51). He did not come to Jesus clutching onto his beggar=s garment. Instead, he cast away this hopeless garment of despair. When he came to Jesus, he did not intend to return to this garment. Figuratively, Barimaeus released the thing that held him captive, and casting it away by faith, he left his security blanket and came to Jesus. Likewise, we must come to Jesus in faith with the expectation of healing and deliverance in our lives.

Scripture Study

Blind Bartimaeus – Mk. 10:46

Jesus, the healer – Mk. 10:47; Ps. 27:7; 33:18-22; Mk. 1:40-42; 2:10-12; 5:6-8, 40-42; 7:33-35; 8:22-25

Crying out to Jesus – Mk. 10:48-49; Ps. 34:15; Lu. 11:8-9; 18:5-7

Expecting to be healed – Mk. 10:50-51

Conclusion

Bartimaeus came to Jesus a blind beggar, but then he "followed Jesus in the way" (Mk. 10:52), as a born again believer and disciple of Christ. When he came to Jesus and was healed, his life was radically transformed because he placed his faith in the One who could change his life forever. Jesus still changes lives today. Will you trust him and cry out?

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Three"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“Touching Jesus”

On occasion, doctors and psychologists talk about the power of human touch. Physical touch is a powerful influence in our lives. In today’s lesson, we will consider a different kind of touch — a divine touch — when a woman touched Jesus in a special way, the results were powerful.

Key Verse

“And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me” (Lu. 8:46).

Lesson Summary

In Luke 8:43-44, Jesus instantly healed a woman who was suffering a long-term illness: “And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd.” Matthew’s gospel explains, “And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole” (Mt. 9:20-21). On the surface, the woman’s behavior, that is, touching Jesus’ garment in order to be healed, may seem a little strange. After spending all of her money on physicians without any cure, we see her reaching out to touch a man’s garment with the expectation of healing. To the unbelieving, her actions may have seemed absurd, but they were not uncommon among those who believed in Jesus Christ. In Mark 6:56 the Bible explains that everywhere Jesus went, they brought the sick to be healed, and begged “that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.” Therefore, the incident of the woman’s healing was also experienced by many others. The sick and suffering were reaching out to touch Jesus’ garment, and when they touched only the border (or hem), they were healed. Was there some kind of healing power in Jesus’ clothes themselves? (For additional discussion, consider Acts 19:11-12.) This woman was not being superstitious at all. Clearly, she believed that Jesus had so much power to heal her that she needed only to touch his clothes in order to be made whole. By reaching out in this way, she was exercising and expressing her faith. Faith moved her to push her way through the crowd in order to grasp his garment (Mk. 5:24, 27). Indeed, faith moves a believer to act in faith and receive from the Lord (Note: Consider Abraham, He. 11:8). When she came forward to confess that she was healed, Jesus responded, “Daughter, be of good comfort: **thy faith** hath made thee whole; go in peace” (Lu. 8:47-48; Mk. 5:33-34; Mt. 9:22). Christ’s words reveal the power of our faith in his ability – “Your faith has healed you.” Surprisingly, when the woman was healed, Jesus asked, “Who touched me?” (Lu. 8:45). “Who touched my clothes” (Mk. 5:30). Many people in the crowd were touching Jesus, but her touch was different because her faith in Christ caused his virtue to flow out of him (Lu. 8:46; 6:17-19). He did not see her touching him; Jesus did not have physical perception of her touch. Instead, Jesus spiritually felt her touch; he actually knew when she touched the border of his garment, because he knew when virtue moved out of him and into her (Mk. 5:30-32). During Jesus’ earthly ministry, many who were sick and suffering were physically reaching out to touch his garment; all those who reached out in faith and spiritually touched him were healed (Mt. 14:35-36).

Scripture Study

Reaching out – Lu. 8:43-44; Mt. 9:20-21; Mk. 6:56

Exercising Faith – Ac. 19:11-12; Mk. 5:24, 27, 33-34; He. 11:8; Lu. 8:47-48; Mt. 9:22

Touching Jesus – Lu. 6:17-19; 8:45-46; Mk. 5:30-32; Mt. 14:35-36

Conclusion

The woman with the issue of blood touched Jesus by faith, and, in turn, because of her faith, Jesus touched her. The results were indeed powerful. She received a divine touch from the Lord. To be healed, we must reach out and touch Jesus in faith and confidence for our healing.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Three"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“For the Glory of God”

The world of full of suffering people –physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. When we see people suffering with great needs, what do we think in regard to their suffering? In today’s lesson, we will gain the perspective of Christ and learn to minister to others in their suffering for the glory of God.

Key Verse

“Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be manifest in him” (Jn. 9:3).

Lesson Summary

Jesus’ disciples saw a blind man, a beggar, and quickly jumped to an erroneous conclusion, thinking that he or his parents must have sinned in some great way that resulted in his blindness (Jn. 9:1-2, 8). The disciples were thinking along the lines of the Hindu concept of *karma*: By doing enough good deeds, good things will happen to you; but doing too many bad deeds will result in bad things happening in your life. So if you are blind, you must have done something really bad to bring blindness on yourself; or perhaps, if you were born blind, then your parents must have done something really evil that caused you to be blind. However, “good” things sometimes happen to sinful people; and “bad” things sometimes unfortunately happen to righteous people, take Job for example (Job 1:1). Therefore, we sometimes suffer not necessarily because we have committed some great sin, but rather due to the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden, the results of a sin-cursed world, and our spiritual adversary Satan (Ge. 3:15-19; 1 Pe. 5:7-11). Of course, this point does not preclude the rebellious actions and sinful lifestyle that may result in natural, negative consequences or God’s judgment: for we reap what we sow (Ga. 6:7). God is a just God in all his ways. Nevertheless, the bottom line is that both the righteous and the wicked suffer in this fallen world. Many people suffer in various ways beyond their ultimate control. Therefore, we simply should not judge one another when suffering adversity, because God is judge. In fact, passing judgment on others and their families will not help them or benefit us in the least (Mt. 7:1-2). Since suffering is unavoidable in this world, Jesus does not want us to focus on why we suffer adversity as much as he wants us to see how God can work through our needs and suffering, and, in turn, draw us near to himself. Jesus wants us to see how our needs can actually serve to glorify God in our lives (Jn. 9:3). Certainly, none of us desire adversity, sickness, or afflictions, but from a divine, eternal perspective, can anything good come from our suffering? How can we make sense of our suffering? Jesus is the answer for humanity’s needs – he is the light in a dark world (vv. 4-5). Only the Lord can take a bad situation and turn it for good (Ro. 8:28). Only the Lord can take a person’s greatest weakness and turn it into their greatest strength (2 Co. 12:10). Only the Lord can demonstrate his power and grace through our suffering and frailty (2 Co. 12:9). Only the Lord can take the trials of our lives and use them to perfect our faith (Ja. 1:3-4). Therefore, human adversity is a divine opportunity for Christ to work in and through our lives. The disciples were focused on the man’s human condition, that is, the cause of his blindness and suffering. However, Jesus was focused on the divine opportunity – what God could do through this unfortunate situation. After Jesus spat in the dirt and made clay, he smeared it on the eyes of the blind man, and then sent him to wash away the clay from his eyes. The man washed in the pool of Siloam and received his sight (Jn. 9:6-7, 10-11).

Scripture Study

Suffering: the human condition – Jn. 9:1-2, 8; Job 1:1; Ge. 3:15-19; 1 Pe. 5:7-11; Ga. 6:7; Mt. 7:1-2

Suffering: the glory of God – Jn. 9:3-5; Ro. 8:28; 2 Co. 12:9-10; Ja. 1:3-4

Suffering: divine opportunity – Jn. 9:6-7, 10-11

Conclusion

Jesus miraculously healed the blind man. At that point, the cause of his blindness was irrelevant and immaterial. All that mattered was that he was healed and could glorify God in his healing. Indeed, healing serves an even greater purpose than obtaining wellness. When we are healed from sickness and suffering, it serves to glorify and exalt the Lord and his mighty power.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Three"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“Look on Us”

If Jesus walked the streets of your city today, what kind of ministry would he have? No doubt, he would do the same kind of works he did in Galilee. His ministry was one of “teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Mt. 9:35). He did this in homes, in the temple, in synagogues, on the hillside, and in the streets. He used every available opportunity to fulfill his mission. But Jesus is not physically walking the streets of our cities today; instead he is fulfilling his mission through you and me. Lost and hurting people are looking to us.

Key Verse

“And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us” (Ac. 3:4).

Lesson Summary

Not long after the Day of Pentecost, Peter and John were going to the temple for prayer around 3:00 pm. A beggar, a lame man since birth, stopped them at the Beautiful gate as they entered the temple. When the man asked for money, Peter said, “Look on us” (Ac. 3:4). The man expected to receive money, but he received so much more than he could have imagined. Although Peter gave him no silver or gold, he did give him an invaluable possession; Peter shared the power of Jesus Christ with this poor, pitiful soul. He said, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk” (v. 6). When Peter took the man by the right hand and pulled him up, then his feet and ankles were strengthened. Peter declared that faith in Jesus’ name had healed the lame man – “And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (3:16). Do we really have what it takes to minister to hurting people? As Christ’s representatives in the world, being his church, we must encourage the lost and hurting to look on us for their answers. If they cannot look to us and find Jesus, then where will they go to find the Lord? We must reach out and give Christ’s strength to the weary and weak. No longer was this man laying and begging at the gate of the temple, but now he “entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God” (vv. 1-8). God used Peter, an ordinary fisherman, to bring forth this life-changing transformation. How? When Jesus commanded his disciples to go and preach the gospel to all nations (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15), he empowered them to accomplish this mission by baptizing them with the Holy Ghost (Lu. 24:48-49; Ac. 1:8). With the power of the Spirit, he sent them forth to continue his ministry of preaching the gospel and healing the sick (Mt. 9:35; Ac. 4:29-30). In other words, Jesus gave them his authority and his power. By this same authority and power, the church must be spiritually prepared and ready to administer healing in the name of Jesus (Ac. 3:4, 6; Mk. 16:18; Ja. 5:14-15). Christ is the one and only Savior, and there is none other (Mt. 11:1-6; Ac. 4:12; Ep. 5:23). Likewise, the church is authorized and empowered by Christ to carry out his mission, and there is none other. Should the world then look to another besides the church for their healing and deliverance when the Lord has sent the church into the world with the good news of salvation and healing through Jesus Christ (Jn. 17:18)? When we see the poor, oppressed, sick, and suffering, we must not turn aside and ignore their needs, as if God has commissioned another in our place (Lu. 10:30-32). Rather, we must look them in the eyes and say, “Look on us.”

Scripture Study

Healing through faith in Jesus’ name – Ac. 3:1-16

Authorized and empowered – Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15; Lu. 24:48-49; Ac. 1:8; Mt. 9:35; Ac. 4:29-30

Look on us – Ac. 3:4, 6; Mk. 16:18; Ja. 5:14-15; Mt. 11:1-6; Ac. 4:12; Ep. 5:23; Jn. 17:18; Lu. 10:30-32

Conclusion

Today, the mission of Christ is incumbent upon us; there is still much work to be done. The Lord is counting on the church to accept our responsibility in fulfilling his Great Commission (Mt. 24:14). The world desperately needs the salvation and healing that come through Christ alone, and people are looking to the church for the answers. We must share the hope of Christ with the lost, sick, and oppressed, declaring, “Look on us.” Indeed, hurting people are depending on the church, and we must be spiritually prepared to minister to their needs.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Essentials"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

"The Trinity"

Lesson Outlines

October 4

Topic: *The Trinity in Creation*

Texts: Ge. 1:1; Ps. 148:4-5; Is. 45:12, 18; Re. 4:11; Jn. 1:1-3, 10, 14; Co. 1:16-17; Jn. 10:30; 17:22; Ac. 5:3-4; Ge. 1:2; Job 26:13; 33:4

Key Verse: Ge. 1:26

Main Point: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all credited with creation, and yet there is one God.

October 11

Topic: *Three Distinct Persons*

Texts: Mk. 1:9-11; 9:2-7; Jn. 12:22-30; 11:41-42; Mt. 10:32-33; 11:25-26; Mk. 1:10-12; Jn. 14:16-17

Key Verse: Jn. 14:16

Main Point: God exists in three distinct persons and not as one God playing three roles.

October 18

Topic: *The Unity of the Three Persons*

Texts: De. 6:4; Mk. 12:29; Is. 43:10-11; Jn. 10:30, 37-38; He. 1:1-3; Jn. 14:8-11; 5:17; 1 Jn. 4:8; Jn. 17:23; 15:9; 3:16; 15:13; Ro. 5:5

Key Verse: 1 Jn. 5:7

Main Point: All members of the Trinity exist in perfect unity and harmony as one God.

October 25

Topic: *Christ in the Trinity*

Texts: Mt. 1:23, Jn. 1:1-3, 10; 8:38; 1 Ti. 3:16; Jn. 1:14; Mk. 1:1; Jn. 3:16; 1 Co. 8:6; Ro. 15:6; Ac. 5:3-4; De. 6:4; Mk. 12:29

Key Verse: Ph. 2:6

Main Point: Jesus is not a man specially honored by God to be called his Son. Rather, Jesus is God, and he is an equal part of a triune God.

In this month of *Faith-N-Focus*, we will be studying about the Trinity as we begin a quarter of lessons in the *Doctrine of Christ*. The nature of God and especially his "triune" nature is a great mystery. In Deuteronomy 6:4, the Bible declares, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" At the same time 1 John 5:7 says, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1 Jn. 5:7).

How can there be three and yet only one? This is the mystery of the Trinity. I am always leery of a person who claims they can fully explain the essence and nature of God. How can a finite man explain an infinite God? Someone once said, "It is a simple law of science: for something to contain something, the container must be larger than what is contained." In other words, you cannot put 16 ounces of milk into an 8 ounce glass. It just will not fit. In the same way, for our minds to understand the triune nature of God would require our minds to be big enough to contain God. This is impossible, and we should feel comfortable with the fact that we cannot fully grasp or appreciate the mysterious nature of an infinite God.

At the same time, God has chosen to reveal certain features of His triune nature through the Holy Scriptures and by revelation of his Holy Spirit (1 Co. 2:11-12). Through the word and the Spirit we can catch a glimpse of his divine nature so that we can say as Moses, "O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?" (De. 3:24).



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Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"The Trinity"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction "The Trinity in Creation"

The term "Trinity" refers to the fact that God is one God (De. 6:4) existing in three persons – the Father, the Son (Word), and the Holy Spirit (1 Jn. 5:7). In today's lesson, we will see the triune God present and operating at the creation of the universe and of man.

Key Verse

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Ge. 1:26).

Lesson Summary

One of the first doctrines we are taught in the Bible is that God created the heavens and the earth (Ge. 1:1; Ps. 148:4-5; Is. 45:12, 18; Re. 4:11). Though belief in a creator is under assault in society today, the belief in God as our creator is essential to our Christian faith. The writer of Hebrews tells us that it is "impossible" to please God without faith (11:6); and he explains that part of our faith is believing in God as our creator (11:3). On the sixth day of creation God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Ge. 1:26; see also 1:27). It is here we get our first clue to the triune nature of the Creator God for he spoke in the plural, saying, "Let **US** make man in **OUR** image, after **OUR** likeness . . ." God is obviously referring to himself in the plural and not himself and someone else, for it says in the next verse, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Ge. 1:27). Scripture clearly teaches of Jesus' active presence at creation. Colossians 1:16 declares, "For by him [*Jesus*] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth." Paul continues on to write, "All things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (vv. 16-17). In John chapter one, he refers to Jesus as the Word (v. 14). He declares in verse one that Jesus is God, and in verse three confirms the fact that Jesus is the creator of all things, saying, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (v. 3). John again confirms Jesus' role as creator, saying, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him" (v. 10). So Scripture makes it clear that God created the heavens and the earth (Ge. 1:1) and that Jesus created the heavens and the earth (Jn. 1:10). Thus, Jesus is God, he is the creator, and he and the Father are one (Jn. 10:30; 17:22). Scripture also declares the Holy Spirit is God. A careful reading of Acts 5:3-4 shows that Peter clearly equated Ananias lying to the Holy Ghost as lying to God. Genesis 1:2 confirms the Holy Spirit's presence at creation, saying, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Job not only confirms the Holy Spirit's presence at creation but also his active participation, saying, "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4). Again, Job said, "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13). Clearly, we see a "triune" God active in creation.

Scripture Study

God is the Creator – Ge. 1:1; Ps. 148:4-5; Is. 45:12, 18; Re. 4:11

Jesus is God and Creator – Co. 1:16-17; Jn. 1:1-3, 10, 14; 10:30; 17:22

The Holy Spirit is God and Creator – Ac. 5:3-4; Ge. 1:2; Job 33:4; 26:13

Conclusion

By looking at all of these Scriptures together, we are left with the inevitable belief that God exists in three persons and that all three persons of the Trinity were present and active in the creation of the universe and of man. Such knowledge should make us cry as the hosts of heaven – "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Re. 4:11).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"The Trinity"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

“Three Distinct Persons”

Introduction

This month we have been studying the mystery of the “Trinity” – God exists as one God in three persons. Today we will be discussing the three distinct persons of the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Though some claim God only plays three “roles,” Scripture clearly shows God existing in three persons with each interacting with the other while still existing as one.

Key Verse

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16).

Lesson Summary

Through the centuries many theologians have attempted to explain the mystery of the triune God. Hundreds of years ago one religious leader compared the Trinity to a shamrock or “three leaf clover.” He explained that just as a clover has three leaves and yet is one clover, God is three persons and yet one God. Though this and all analogies come up short of explaining the unexplainable God, it does help to illustrate the distinction of each member of the Trinity. We see these three persons interacting in various places in Scripture. On the day Jesus was baptized, Mark records, “And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mk. 1:10-11). In this event, we see all three persons of the Trinity acting together and yet separately. We see the Son being baptized. We see the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus in the form of a dove. We hear the voice of the Father saying, “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Here we see one God interacting as three separate persons. Mark further records this distinction in the next verse writing, “And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness” (Mk. 1:12). Once again, we see the Son and the Spirit described as separate persons. The distinct persons of the Trinity are seen again in Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit. “And I [*the Son*] will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth . . .” (Jn. 14:16-17). Here we see the Son is going to speak to the Father who will give the Holy Spirit to the believers. Once again, we see three distinct persons who are all described in various places as God. Peter speaks of this again when the promise of the Spirit was fulfilled on Pentecost: “Therefore [*Jesus*] being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Ac. 2:33). Jesus was at the Father’s right hand, who gave the Holy Spirit in whom Peter and the others were baptized. Clearly, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons.

Scripture Study

The Father interacting with the Son – Mk. 1:9-11; 9:2-7; Jn. 12:22-30

The Son interacting with the Father – Jn. 11:41-42; Mt. 10:32-33; 11:25-26

The Holy Spirit interacting with the Son – Mk. 1:10, 12; Jn. 14:16-17

Conclusion

From the interaction of the persons of the Trinity, we can see that God exists in three persons. The Son spoke to the Father. The Father spoke to the Son. The Spirit speaks of the Son while not speaking of himself. The Father spoke from Heaven to the Son while the Holy Spirit came and sat upon the Son in the form of a dove. Though it is mysterious and unexplainable, clearly the one true God exists in three distinct persons.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"The Trinity"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction

“The Unity of the Three Persons”

This month we have been studying the Trinity – the fact that God exists as one God in three persons. Last week, we showed the members of the Trinity in the Bible acting as three distinct persons. In today’s lesson, we will examine the unity of the three persons of the Trinity.

Key Verse

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” (1 Jn. 5:7).

Lesson Summary

Although the Bible clearly teaches the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, it also teaches there is one God (De. 6:4; Mk. 12:29; Is. 43:10-11). This is a great mystery which is difficult if not impossible to comprehend. While there are many Scriptures which show the three persons of the Trinity are distinct persons, there are also many Scriptures which speak of their perfect oneness. The unity of the members of the Trinity is so close that they act as one and never in opposition. In John 5:17 Jesus said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” In other words, the Father and Son are continually working together. He confirmed this unity again in John 14:10 where he said, “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” Jesus emphasized this unity again in John 10:30 when he said, “I and my Father are one.” A few verses later he said, “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him” (Jn. 10:37-38). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit always work together perfectly as one. In John 8:29, Jesus said, “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” Notice the word, “always.” There is never a time the Son acts in opposition to the Father. The will of the Son is perfectly united with the Father’s will; thus the writer of Hebrews described the Son as “the express image of his [*the Father’s*] person” (He. 1:3). This means Jesus is the exact representation of the Father inasmuch that Jesus told the apostles, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9). In Hebrews 10:7, Jesus said, “Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” The will of the Father is the will of the Son and the Holy Spirit. In John 17:21, Jesus prayed to the Father for the church, and said, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.” Thus, Jesus used the oneness of the Father and Son as the perfect example of unity. The Trinity is one God in three persons with one will acting in perfect harmony. Not only are their actions the same, but their heart is the same as well. God is love (1 Jn. 4:8). The Father loved us and sent His Son (Jn. 3:16). The Son loved us and gave his life (Jn. 15:13). It is the Holy Spirit’s presence in our hearts which enables us to know the love of the Father and the Son (Ro. 5:5). The Trinity has one mind, one purpose, and one heart.

Scripture Study

There is only one God – De. 6:4; Mk. 12:29; Is. 43:10-11

The Trinity acts with one mind – Jn. 10:30, 37-38; He. 1:1-3; Jn. 14:8-11; 5:17

The Trinity has one heart – 1 Jn. 4:8; Jn. 17:23; 15:9; 3:16; 15:13; Ro. 5:5

Conclusion

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct persons, yet they comprise one God. They share the same essence (eternal, all powerful, all knowing, etc.). They share the same attributes (love, patience, kindness, justness, and so on). They share the same mind (there is no divergence of thought or will). They are distinct and yet in perfect harmony. They are three persons and one God.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"The Trinity"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction

“Christ in the Trinity”

This month we have been studying the Trinity. The one, true God exists as three distinct persons. In today’s lesson, we will discuss Jesus’ place in the Trinity. Though some erroneously teach Jesus was not God and others teach he was “a” god distinct from the creator, we will show Jesus is “the” God existing as the “Son of God” in the holy Trinity.

Key Verse

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Ph. 2:6).

Lesson Summary

A search of the Scriptures clearly shows that Jesus is God. Matthew said that Jesus’ birth was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy which states, “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Mt. 1:23). Jesus is “God with us.” He is not “a” god with us. He is the one and only GOD. John 8:58 states, “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” Notice, Jesus did not say, “I was,” but rather, “I am.” This was clearly a reference to Exodus 3:14 – “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” Jesus was stating he was the “I AM” of the Old Testament. He was not a different God, but he was indeed the same God who spoke to Moses and sent him to Egypt. This is clearly how the Jews understood Jesus’ statement for they took up stones to stone him for they believed he had blasphemed by claiming to be God. While Jesus is clearly God, he is also called the “Son of God.” Throughout Scripture he is called the only begotten of the Father (Jn. 1:14; 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:9). On more than one occasion, the Father himself identified Jesus as his only begotten Son (Mt. 3:17; Mk. 9:7). On numerous occasions Jesus spoke to the Father, and on one of these occasions the Father responded back to him (Jn. 12:28). Clearly, Jesus is God, and yet he is clearly not the Father. We also see from the Scripture that Jesus is not the Holy Spirit. In fact, on the day Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and sat on Jesus. Jesus showed this distinction again when he promised to go away and send the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:33, Peter confirmed the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise, saying, “Therefore [Jesus] being by the right hand of God [the Father] exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.” Jesus was on the right hand of the Father, and he sent the Holy Spirit to fill the disciples. Once again, we see Jesus as part of a holy Trinity which makes up ONE God. Let us sum up what we know from Scripture. Jesus is God (Jn. 1:1; Jn. 8:58). At the same time, the Father is identified as God (1 Co. 8:6; Ro. 15:6), and the Holy Spirit is identified as God (Ac. 5:3-4). Though all three are identified as God, we are clearly taught there is one God (De. 6:4). The fact that three distinct persons are identified as God and that there is only one God can only be reconciled by accepting that Jesus is part of a triune God consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Scripture Study

Jesus is “The God” – Mt. 1:23, Jn. 1:1-3, 10; 8:38; 1 Ti. 3:16

Jesus is the “Son of God” – Jn. 1:14; Mk. 1:1; Jn. 3:16

The Father and the Holy Spirit are God – 1 Co. 8:6; Ro. 15:6; Ac. 5:3-4

There is one God – De. 6:4; Mk. 12:29

Conclusion

As has been stated many times in the lessons this month, the Trinity is a great mystery. God exists as three persons. While it would be foolish to think we could completely comprehend an incomprehensible God, we can understand certain facts because God has revealed them in Scripture. One of these inescapable facts is that Jesus is both God and the Son of God. Jesus is God, but he is part of a holy Trinity.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies "Essentials"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

“Christ in Scripture”

Lesson Outlines

November 1, 2020

Topic: *Christ from the Beginning*

Texts: Jn. 1:1-3; Co. 1:17; Mi. 5:2; Ex. 3:14; Jn. 8:58; 17:5, 24; Re. 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13

Key Verse: John 17:5

Main Point: Scripture clearly tells us of the eternal existence of Jesus.

November 8, 2020

Topic: *Christ in Prophecy*

Texts: Mi. 5:2; Is. 53; Ps. 16:10; Ex. 12:1-13; Ge. 22:1-13; Ac. 3:22-26; 7:23-35

Key Verse: 2 Peter 1:19

Main Point: Christ can clearly be seen in the prophecies of the Old Testament.

November 15, 2020

Topic: *Christ in the Gospels*

Texts: Mt. 1:22; 4:14; 8:17; 4:23; Mk. 1:27; Jn. 11:43-44; Mk. 4:41; Jn. 1:3; Mt. 3:17; Mk. 9:7

Key Verse: 1 John 1:13

Main Point: The Gospel writers give us a clear revelation of Jesus.

November 22, 2020

Topic: *Christ in Revelation*

Texts: Da. 7:13-14; Mt. 26:64; Ac. 1:9-11; Jude 14; Re. 19:11-16; Jude 15; Lu. 1:32-33; Re. 11:15

Key Verse: 1 Timothy 6:15

Main Point: The New Testament reveals the Christ of the future who will come again and reign in power.

In this month of Faith-N-Focus, we will be studying the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Holy Scriptures. Jesus challenged the religious leaders of his day to “**Search the scriptures;** for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and **they are they which testify of me**” (Jn. 5:39). The writer of Hebrews quoted Jesus as saying, “Then said I, Lo, I come (**in the volume of the book it is written of me,**) to do thy will, O God” (He. 10:7). Throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, we see Jesus clearly revealed. In the books of the Old Testament we read the prophecies concerning his coming. Some of these prophecies are veiled in “types” and “shadows.” Some of them so clearly speak of him, it is hard to believe that people can read them and not see Jesus.

In the Gospels we read of his appearance in the flesh. His teachings helped people to understand what God is all about; and his loving interaction with the people of that day revealed the heart of God toward man. He did not speak as a rabbi trying to interpret the Word of God; instead, he spoke with the authority with which only the author could speak (Mt. 7:28-29). His boldness prompted the people to say, “Never man spake like this man” (Jn. 7:46).

In the final book of the Bible, John was caught up into heaven and into the future where he saw the glorified Christ. He was no longer the simple carpenter’s son. He was now the victorious and reigning “King of kings and Lord of lords.” John was so overwhelmed by his first encounter with the glorified Christ that he fell at his feet as a dead man (Re. 1:17). From Genesis to Revelation, from the beginning to the end, Jesus is seen clearly revealed in Scripture. He is the Savior of prophecy, the incarnate God, and the coming King whose kingdom will never end!



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Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Christ in Scripture"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction "Christ from the Beginning"

Every December 25th people around the world celebrate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem some 2000 years ago. While this was the beginning of Jesus' earthly life and ministry, it would be a grievous error to think this was where his life began. In this lesson, we will establish the eternal existence of Christ.

Key Verse

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5).

Lesson Summary

There are four accounts of the life of Christ in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Mark begins his account of the life of Christ with Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. Matthew and Luke begin their accounts of Christ's life on earth with his birth in Bethlehem. John, on the other hand, is different. He begins his account long before Bethlehem by establishing Jesus' eternal existence – his identity with God before creation. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word . . ." He then identifies the one whom he calls the "Word" by saying in John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us," obviously referring to Jesus. He says again in John 1:2, "The same was in the beginning with God." Through these verses, John clearly established Jesus as the "eternal" God. Jesus himself verified his eternal existence in the beautiful prayer he prayed in John 17:5, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." In this verse Jesus plainly verified the fact that he shared the glory of the Father before the world ever existed. We see him again confirming his eternal existence in John 8:58, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." In this verse, he not only claimed to have existed before Abraham (who lived 2000 years before Christ) but also claimed to be eternal by calling himself "I am." To the Jews and Christ's disciples, the inference was unmistakable. By referring to himself as the "I am," he was claiming to be the "eternal" God (Ex. 3:14). Even the very prophecy which foretold of his birth in Bethlehem confirmed his eternal existence: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Mi. 5:2). While the apostle John was on the isle of Patmos, he received a glorious revelation of the end of human history. At the beginning of this revelation, he encountered the glorified Christ, who identified himself as the eternal one, "Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last" (Re. 1:11). In fact, on three other occasions in the book of Revelation, Jesus referred to himself in this manner. Without a doubt, Jesus is the beginning, and as such, he existed long before taking human form in Bethlehem.

Scripture Study

His eternal existence confirmed by others – Jn. 1:1-3; Co. 1:17; Mi. 5:2

Christ confirms his eternal existence – Jn. 8:58; 17:5, 24

The eternal Christ confirmed in the Revelation – Rev. 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13

Conclusion

All true believers in Christ agree Jesus is alive today. They also believe Christ will live and reign forever and ever. As far as you can go forward into eternity, Jesus will be there. It is also the same in the past. Jesus has always existed. Long before Abraham, long before Adam, as far as you can go back, the Son of God has always existed.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Christ in Scripture"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction

“Christ in Prophecy”

Before Christ ever arrived on the scene in Bethlehem, his coming was foretold over the course of many centuries and throughout the books of the Old Testament. In Acts 3:24 Peter declared, “Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.” In today’s lesson, we will examine the Christ of prophecy.

Key Verse

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pe. 1:19).

Lesson Summary

In our key verse the apostle Peter is recalling his experience on the “Mount of Transfiguration” where he heard the voice of God the Father acknowledging Jesus as his only begotten Son. As wonderful as this event was, Peter said we can be even more certain Jesus is the Christ by his clear fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Jesus even challenged the unbelieving religious leaders of his day by saying, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (Jn. 5:39). Events such as his birth in Bethlehem (Mi. 5:2), his death on the cross (Is. 53), and his resurrection from the dead (Ps. 16:10) were prophesied hundreds of years before the fact. Some of the Old Testament prophecies such as Isaiah 53 (written 700 years before his birth) were so clearly fulfilled by Jesus that it is hard to imagine how anyone could read them and not see him as the Christ. Besides the specific spoken prophecies, there are numerous events which foreshadowed his coming. For example, we see Christ’s death as our substitute in the story of the Passover lamb in ancient Egypt (Ex. 12:1-13; 1 Co. 5:7) and in the numerous animal sacrifices offered throughout the centuries for the sins of the people. We also see God giving his beloved son foreshadowed in Abraham’s offering of Isaac (Ge. 22:1-2) and God’s provision of a substitute offering, providing a ram to replace Isaac that he might live (Ge. 22:8-13). Furthermore, we understand Christ as the only means of salvation in the familiar story of Noah and the ark (Ge. 6:12-18). These, and many other Old Testament stories, foretold of the life and mission of the Christ fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. These prophecies were so clear that the apostles used them to preach the Gospel of Christ. In Acts 2:22-32 Peter declared Jesus as the Christ by proclaiming Christ’s resurrection from the dead as a fulfillment of Ps. 16:10. Both Peter and Stephen claimed that Jesus was the “prophet like unto Moses” by comparing Jesus’ rejection as Savior to the initial rejection of Moses as savior by his contemporaries (Ac. 3:22-23; 7:23-35). Paul and Peter both pointed to Jesus as the prophesied seed (descendant) of Abraham whose life would bless the whole world (Ge. 22:18; Ac. 3:25; Ga. 3:16). The fact is, there are so many prophecies fulfilled by Jesus, one could spend a lifetime preaching and teaching them and still there would be more to preach!

Scripture Study

Christ’s life and ministry foretold – Mi. 5:2; Is. 53; Ps. 16:10

Christ’s ministry foreshadowed – Ex. 12:1-13; Ge. 22:1-13

The gospel preached using prophecy – Ac. 3:22-26; 7:23-35

Conclusion

After examining just some of the Old Testament prophecies which Jesus fulfilled, is it any wonder Jesus said in Hebrews 10:7, “Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” The Old Testament clearly declares Jesus as the Christ, leaving us with a “sure word of prophecy.”

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Christ in Scripture"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction

“Christ in the Gospels”

In our previous lessons, we spoke of Christ’s eternal existence as well as looking at the many prophecies which foretold of his first coming. Today, we will discuss the revelation of Jesus as recorded by the four Gospel writers who were inspired to document the events of his incarnation.

Key Verse

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn. 1:3).

Lesson Summary

There are four books in the New Testament which describe the life of Christ. When you put all four Gospel accounts together, you get a clear revelation of Christ and his teachings. Though all four gospel writers recorded the events of Christ’s life, they were all inspired to approach it from different angles. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recorded the miracles of Jesus, yet Matthew seemed to focus on Jesus’ fulfillment of prophecy. He used this fulfillment of prophecy as evidence of Jesus’ identity as the promised Messiah and the incarnate Son of God (Mt. 1:22; 4:14; 8:17). For this reason, his gospel was believed to have been written initially to the Jews who were particularly familiar with the Old Testament prophecies. Today, the gospel of Matthew is an invaluable tool in showing the flow of the Old Testament into the New Testament. Luke, the physician, and Mark, the evangelist, were both companions of the apostle Paul as he evangelized the Roman and Gentile world (Ac. 12:25; 2 Ti. 4:11; Co. 4:14). However, Mark has often been identified with the apostle Peter, and his book has even been called, “The Gospel of Peter.” While Luke and Mark recorded many of the same miracles as Matthew, they seemed to have been inspired to focus on the miracles themselves as evidence of Jesus’ identity. Who else but the Son of God could do such wondrous works (Mk. 8:27; Lu. 8:25)? John is different than all the rest. While he wrote about some of the miracles of Jesus, he focused almost exclusively on verifying the deity of Jesus the Christ. For this reason, he did not begin his gospel by recording the events of Jesus’ birth but by confirming his eternal existence as the Son of God (Jn. 1:1, 14). John was not writing simply to record events, but he wrote to make sure that his readers knew Jesus was no ordinary prophet or teacher – he was God manifested in the flesh to “take away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29; 3:16). All the Gospel writers worked together to confirm his identity by recording the miraculous nature of his virgin birth (Lu. 1:35), the witness of the Holy Spirit at his baptism (Jn. 1:32-34), and the audible testimony of the Father on more than one occasion (Mt. 3:17; Mk. 9:7). They confirmed his identity by giving examples of his power over all sickness (Mt. 4:23), demonic powers (Mk. 1:27), death (Jn. 11:43-44), nature (Mk. 4:41), and sin itself (Mk. 2:9-12). While his teachings and miracles were important, all of the gospels culminate with the death of Christ, his resurrection, and his ascension back to Heaven. These four men were not simply biographers. They were “Gospel” writers. Theirs was a written revelation of God’s redemptive plan for man centered in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Scripture Study

Christ confirmed by fulfilling prophecy – Mt. 1:22; 4:14; 8:17

Christ confirmed in signs & wonders – Mt. 4:23; Mk. 1:27; Jn. 11:43-44; Mk. 4:41

Christ confirmed by the Father and the Spirit – Jn. 1:32-34; Mt. 3:17; Mk. 9:7

Conclusion

The gospels work together to give us a clear revelation of Jesus’ first coming. They record his teachings and the supernatural signs and wonders which accompanied his ministry. Having taught man, he then gave his life to take away our sins. He rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven. This is the Christ of the gospels and the gospel of Christ.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Christ in Scripture"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction “Christ in Revelation”

In our previous lessons, we have discussed Christ's existence eternally in the past. In other words, he has always existed. However, the Scriptures not only tell us of the Christ of the eternal past, but also of the Christ of the eternal future. Not only has he fulfilled prophecy, but he will continue to fulfill prophecy by coming again to earth and reigning forever.

Key Verse

“Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Ti. 6:15).

Lesson Summary

The first time Christ Jesus came to earth, he came to be our suffering Savior. However, Scripture teaches us he will come again as a conquering king (Re. 19:11-16). The return of Christ is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity. He will come again in power and with great glory. At his trial, Jesus told the High Priest, “Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Mt. 26:64). This was a clear reference to Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 7:13-14 which states the Messiah will come in the clouds and rule an eternal kingdom. As Jesus ascended into heaven, two angels confirmed to the apostles the future return of Christ, saying, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Ac. 1:11). How did he ascend into Heaven? Acts 1:9 says, “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.” He left in the clouds and he will return in the clouds. Even Enoch, just seven generations after the creation of Adam, prophesied of Christ's return in power. It is recorded in Jude 14 where Enoch is quoted as saying, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands [myriads] of his saints.” He goes on to say, he will come in power to execute judgment (Jude 15). John also saw the Christ of the future coming in great power. “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war” (Re. 19:11). He confirmed Enoch's prophecy by saying he saw the saints of Heaven following Jesus on white horses (19:14). During this second coming, his identity will not be veiled for “on his vesture and on his thigh [he will have] a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (19:16). In 1 Timothy 6:15, Paul wrote that even though many have doubted his identity, “in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate [Supreme Ruler], the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” At that time he will sit upon his throne and rule forever (Lu. 1:32-33). The entire world will acknowledge his identity for Philippians 2:10-11 declares, “At the name of Jesus every knee should [shall] bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should [shall] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Every king, every demon, and even Satan himself will bow before Jesus and acknowledge his lordship!

Scripture Study

Christ will return in the clouds – Da. 7:13-14; Mt. 26:64; Ac. 1:9-11

Christ will come as conquering King – Jude 14; Re. 19:11-16

Christ will judge the world and reign forever – Jude 15; Re. 19:11; Lu. 1:32-33; Re. 11:15

Conclusion

Christ is coming again and he will reign forever in power and glory (Re. 11:15). He will judge the world (Jude 15) and cast out all that offend (Mt. 13:41). “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mt. 13:43). Every eye shall see him, and all will acknowledge Jesus as the eternal king!

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Christ in Scripture"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction

“Incarnation”

Today’s lesson discusses the “Incarnation.” The word “incarnation” means to become flesh, and it refers to the fact that God took on flesh and dwelt among men. Jesus was not simply another prophet, another philosopher/teacher, or another good man. He was God who came in the form of man to fulfill a specific mission.

Key Verse

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14).

Lesson Summary

Who was Jesus of Nazareth? Was he an ordinary man or was he God? There can be no question as to Jesus’ claims. In John 8:58, he identified himself as the “I am.” This was clearly a reference to the statement by God in Ex. 3:14, “And **God said** unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM . . .” Though the Jews saw this as blasphemy, Paul wrote in Philippians 2:6-7 that Jesus “thought it not robbery to be equal with God . . . and was made in the likeness of men.” The apostles saw Jesus as God, for John said in John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” He then wrote in verse 14, “And the Word [God] was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” In 1 Timothy 3:16, Paul wrote, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.” Clearly, God the Son became flesh and dwelt among man. Why did he do it and why is the doctrine of the “incarnation” so important? There are three main reasons. First, God became flesh and dwelt among us so that God could reveal himself more clearly to mankind. After all the prophets had written, the Jewish people still did not understand God’s personality, his motives, or his intentions for man. For this reason, God came and dwelt among us so we could clearly see who he really is. Jesus was the last and greatest revelation of God. The writer of Hebrews called Jesus, “the express image of his [*the Father’s*] person” (He. 1:3) or, in other words, the exact representation of the Father. In fact, Jesus told Phillip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9). Therefore, God came in the flesh so that we could know him. The second reason Scripture gives for God becoming flesh is that we might know we have a God who understands our temptations and frailties. The writer of Hebrews stated, “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest” (He. 2:17). Though God always understood our troubles, by becoming a man, we can have even more confidence our Creator understands our needs (He. 4:15). The final and most important reason God came in the flesh was to give his life for mankind (Mt. 20:28). Some ancient false teachers tried to say Jesus had only appeared to come in the flesh. John called these men “deceivers” and “antichrist” (2 Jn. 7), for if God had not come in the flesh then he could not have died for our sins. In fact, we can rest assured that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was sufficient for our sins because of who he was. He was no ordinary man. He was the Son of God, manifested in the flesh, who gave his life for our sins. It was enough!

Scripture Study

God came in the flesh – Jn. 1:1, 14; Ph. 2:6-7; 1 Ti. 3:16

Christ became flesh to reveal God – He. 1:3; Jn. 14:9

Christ became flesh to be a faithful high priest – He. 2:17; 4:15

Christ became flesh to die for our sins – Mt. 20:28; 1 Ti. 1:15; 2 John 7

Conclusion

Jesus was God in the flesh. He came to reveal himself to man. He came to show his understanding and compassion. Most importantly, he came to give his life for our sins. When we could not get to him, God came to us!

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Jesus the Christ"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction “Earthly Ministry”

The few years that Jesus walked on the earth were the most important years in human history. Jesus knew he only had a short time so he made sure he used every moment efficiently. He had to prioritize his time to be about his “Father’s business.” His example challenges us to redeem the time and focus on what is important to God.

Key Verse

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people” (Mt. 4:23).

Lesson Summary

How do we sum up Jesus’ earthly ministry? If you examine it closely, you will find Jesus spent most of his time on earth doing two things. He evangelized and taught. Jesus spent much of his time on earth with sinners. He was constantly reaching out to the “poor” (Mt. 11:5; Lu. 4:18). By “poor” we are not speaking of those who merely had no money, but of those who realized their spiritual poverty and utter dependence on the mercy of God (Lu. 18:13; Mt. 5:3). When the religious hypocrites questioned why he spent time with sinners and not with them, he explained he had not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners (Mt. 9:10-13). Most of the religious people never admitted their spiritual poverty while the prostitutes, tax collectors, and so on, knew they were spiritually bankrupt (Lu. 7:44-47). Still today, Jesus’ focus is on saving the lost, resisting the proud, and extending grace to the humble (Lu. 19:10; 1 Pe. 5:5). As the “Great Physician,” he was and is constantly focused on the spiritually sick (Mk. 2:17). Jesus also spent a great deal of time teaching (Mt. 5:2; 13:54; Lu. 4:15). Much of his teaching was to explain God’s gospel plan. He taught about the necessity of his death for sin (John 3:15-17), as well as the universal call to every man to come and be a part of his eternal kingdom (Mt. 22:9; Lu. 14:23). Jesus taught about the conduct of the righteous. He did this through long discourses (Mt. 5-7) and by being a living example before their eyes (John 14:9). He laid out new standards for those who, unlike those under the old covenant, would be filled with the Spirit of God. His “born again” disciples would do good and be holy because it was written on their hearts and not on tables of stone (He. 8:10; Ro. 2:14; 2 Co. 3:2,3). He taught more than good conduct. He taught us good character. He taught us to “be” and not simply to “do” (Mt. 5:3-8; 23:25-26). Jesus taught us to do our deeds with God as our audience and seeking to please him in contrast to the hypocrites who did all their deeds to be seen of men (Mt. 23:5; 6:4, 6). He taught about integrity and honoring one’s word through discourses pertaining to swearing and being faithful to one’s marriage vows (Mt. 5:33-37, Mk. 10:1-12). He taught extensively about forgiveness and mercy. He made sure his disciples understood they could not be his disciples without being merciful (Mt. 6:15). He taught them to be ready to surrender their lives in this world for the life to come (Mt. 6:19-20). He taught about servant leadership and even demonstrated the concept by washing the disciples’ feet on the night before his crucifixion (Jn. 13:14; Mt. 20:27). He taught and taught and taught until he ascended to the Father!

Scripture Study

Jesus Evangelized – Mt. 4:17, 23; Mk. 1:14; Lu. 4:18; Mt. 9:10-12

Jesus Taught – Mt. 5:2; 13:54; Mk. 4:2; 10:1; Jn. 8:2

Conclusion

Jesus worked feverishly and passionately to reach out to the lost (Jn. 9:4). He taught by word as well as by embodying his teachings. He demonstrated compassion for the hurting, longsuffering for the disobedient, passion for the lost, and servitude to the Father. Jesus was God’s “visual aid” to help mankind understand what true godliness and holiness looked like. He used every moment, every event, and every circumstance as an opportunity to pour knowledge into his disciples. He gave himself completely to the task of evangelizing and teaching. He calls us to do the same.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Jesus the Christ"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction

"Death and Resurrection"

In the last lesson, we discussed Jesus' earthly ministry, much of which was spent evangelizing, teaching, and training. As important as these activities were, they were not the primary reason for Christ's coming to the earth. In today's lesson, we will discuss Christ's most important purpose – his death and resurrection.

Key Verse

"Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day." (Lu. 9:22).

Lesson Summary

Contrary to what some people think, Christianity is not merely a philosophy of how to treat your fellow man. At its core, Christianity is about God's plan to redeem man and give him a place in his eternal kingdom. Jesus' death on the cross was not the tragic end to the life of a good man or philosopher; rather, his death on the cross was the reason he came. This distinguishes Christianity from all other religions, and this is why Christianity can never be made to be one of many valid paths to eternal life. Jesus is the only way (Jn. 14:6; Ac. 4:12). If there was another means, Christ suffered in vain (Ga. 2:21). Man could not save himself so God provided himself a "lamb" (Ge. 22:8). Man's attempts to attain righteousness outside of God's provided means (the cross of Christ) is insulting to God and Christ's sacrifice (Mt. 22:11-14; Is. 64:6). In 1 Timothy 1:15, Paul said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Jesus made clear his purpose for coming by telling his disciples, "For even the Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45). His very name, *Jesus*, means "Jehovah is Salvation," and it was given to him because his purpose was to "save his people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21). As he faced his imminent crucifixion, Jesus embraced the destiny of the cross telling his disciples, "For this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). The events surrounding Jesus' death on the cross were recorded by all four Gospel writers. Each described his humiliation as he was mocked, slapped, beaten, scourged, and crucified by both the Jews and Romans. He endured unspeakable torture, and yet he could have called a host of angels to deliver him at any moment (Mt. 26:53). Nails did not hold him to the tree but rather his love for you and me. He gave his life to pay the penalty for the sins of man (He. 9:28; Is. 53:5-6). Adam brought sin and death, but Jesus brought life and righteousness (Ro. 5:19). Upon dying for our sins, his body was laid in a borrowed tomb. All four of the Gospel writers give witness to the fact that three days later he rose again. Jesus' resurrection was inevitable (Ac. 2:24), and yet it gives clear evidence to the acceptance of his sacrifice for mankind (Ro. 4:25). In the Old Testament, if the high priest would have entered the holy of holies with an unacceptable offering, he would never reemerge. He would have died for his sacrilege (Le. 10:1-2). Had Jesus been a fraud, God most certainly would not have raised him from the dead (Ac. 17:31). However, Jesus did rise again giving assurance to all that his sacrifice was accepted by the Father (Is. 53:11). When he arose he became the "firstfruits" of a great resurrection which the faithful will experience (1 Co. 15:20, 23). Because he lives we will live also (Jn. 14:19).

Scripture Study

The Gospel of the cross – 1 Co. 1:18, 23; 15:3-4

Jesus died for our sins – 1 Ti. 1:15; Mk. 10:45; Jn. 12:27

Jesus rose for our justification – 1 Co. 15:20, 23; Jn. 14:19; Ro. 4:25

Conclusion

Jesus death and resurrection is the centerpiece of the Gospel message (1 Co. 1:18, 23). We were all sinners headed for judgment and hell (Ro. 3:23; 6:23). However, God intervened and sent his only begotten son to be our substitute. This is the Gospel we preach, and it is the Gospel which has been preached from the beginning (1 Co. 15:1-4).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Jesus the Christ"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction “Present Day Ministry”

In our past lessons, we discussed Jesus’ birth, earthly ministry, and his death and resurrection. Those events happened nearly 2000 years ago. Where has Jesus been since then, and what has occupied his time? In today’s lesson, we will discuss the present day ministry of Jesus.

Key Verse

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Ro. 8:34).

Lesson Summary

After Jesus had risen from the dead, he appeared unto many of his disciples teaching them the principles of his kingdom (Ac. 1:3). Forty days later he took them to the top of a mountain where he was enveloped by a cloud and caught up into heaven right before their eyes (v. 9). Scripture confirms his arrival in heaven. Hebrews 10:12-13 says, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” Peter confirmed this fact explaining the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as evidence that Jesus was in Heaven (Ac. 2:33), and further explained that Christ’s resurrection and ascension fulfilled the prophecy given to David hundreds of years earlier (Ps. 110:1; Ac. 2:34-35). As Stephen was stoned to death, his eyes were opened and he actually saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father (Ac. 7:55-56). We know that Jesus ascended to the Father’s right hand, but what has he been doing since then for almost 2000 years? Multiple times Scripture confirms Jesus is at the Father’s right hand making intercession for all of mankind. He is interceding for sinners who come to the Father asking forgiveness in his name. Hebrews 7:25 says, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Jesus, the one who died for the sins of the world, is now at the Father’s right hand interceding on behalf of the repentant (Ro. 8:32)! Not only can sinners come to Christ but if the Christian is overcome by temptation, he can ask forgiveness in Jesus’ name. John wrote, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate [*go between*] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 Jn. 2:1). What great confidence we can have in God’s forgiveness when we realize Jesus, who died for our sins, is interceding on our behalf! Paul said, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Ro. 8:34). One of the greatest facts you will ever come to understand is that Jesus is deeply concerned whether you make it to heaven or not. He is actually at the Father’s right hand rooting for you to make it! In our time of need, Jesus is our one and only great high priest. We can come to the Father in his name and find all the help we need to sustain us in this life. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession . . . Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (He. 4:14-16). Jesus lives forever to make intercession for us!

Scripture Study

Jesus ascended to the Father’s right hand – Mk. 16:19; He. 10:12-13; Ps. 110:1; Ac. 2:33-35; 7:55-56

Jesus intercedes for the repentant sinner & backslider – He. 7:25; Ro. 8:32; 1 Jn. 2:1-3; Lu. 22:31-32

Jesus intercedes for those in need – He. 4:14-16

Conclusion

Jesus did not die for us and leave it there. He ascended to the Father’s right hand where he is constantly making intercession for us. He interceded for us when we came to be saved, and he continues to intercede on our behalf. Do you need forgiveness, restoration, or strength for the journey? Take it to the great high priest!

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Jesus the Christ"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Bruce Sullivan

Introduction “The Head of the Church”

Throughout Scripture there are many titles given to Jesus. He is our Savior, Lord, King, Master, Bridegroom, and so on. Today we will be discussing another one of his titles. He is Christ – the “Head” of the church.

Key Verse

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Co. 1:18).

Lesson Summary

There are many passages of Scripture which refer to Christ as the “head” of the church, but what does this title mean? Although the term “head” is used in a variety of ways, all usages refer either literally or figuratively to the human body. In the human body it is the head that rules. Though each member of the human body has a specific ability and responsibility, it is the head which sends the signals to the entire body telling it what to do. In the same way, the Bible teaches that the church is the “Body of Christ” and Jesus is the head of that body. As such, Christ instructs the church (both corporately and individually), and the body moves and acts in submission to his will (Ep. 4:15-16; Co. 2:19; Ep. 5:24). As his body, the church physically represents Christ on the earth. It is our responsibility to present his plan of salvation and his teachings to the world (Mk. 16:15; Mt. 28:19-20). Because we are his body, and not the head, we have no right to make up our own doctrine. Thus, the church is not a legislative body, per se, but essentially a judicial body only. We do not make the laws, but we simply receive instruction from the head and then clearly convey those instructions to the world. We “bind on earth what has been bound in heaven” (Mt. 16:19, literal Greek translation). The foot or hand does not control the body. Only the head controls the body. The head does the thinking and the body simply obeys. In secular society, the term “head” is commonly used to convey the idea of being in charge (for example, “corporate head” or “head of state”). When society uses such terms, they are acknowledging the one who is called the “head” as the ruler or leader. In the same way, Christ is the “head” of the church and we are forever subject to his rule. As ruler of the church, he taught us about true leadership – servant leadership. He rules with absolute love. 1 Corinthians 13:5 teaches that love is always looking out for the best interest of the object of affection. Thus, Christ rules the church with our best interests in mind as the motivation for his actions (Ep. 5:25, 28; Mt. 20:27). Those whom he sets as leaders in the church or in the home must lead in the same loving manner (Ep. 5:25, 28; Mt. 20:27). Because Christ gave himself for the church and purchased the church with his own blood (Ac. 20:28; Ep. 5:25), we owe everything to him. We are who we are and have what we have because of our connection or relationship to the head. We have no standing outside of him and nothing to glory in outside of our connection to him. Let me give you an example. In Great Britain, Kate Middleton sits in an exalted position. She may one day be queen but it will only be because of her relationship to her husband, the soon to be King William. In the same way, the church is only honored because of our relationship to Christ. We will one day reign with him (2 Ti. 2:12) but only because of our relationship to him. It is his kingdom and his throne. The head alone bears the crown! Knowing this, the body exalts the head at all times. “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ep. 3:21).

Scripture Study

Christ is the head – Ep. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:23-27; Co. 1:18; 2:10, 19

Christ reigns supremely – Ep. 5:24; Re. 11:15

Christ receives all the glory – Co. 1:18; 1 Ti. 6:15; Re. 5:11-14; Ep. 2:6-9

Conclusion

Christ is the head of the church instructing his body and reigning over his body with love. He has exalted his body to sit with him in heavenly places (Ep.2:6-9), but he is and always will be the only head – the Savior of the body.