**Salvation/Holy Ghost**

 Week One

It is difficult to believe that the church has one father with so many different doctrines. Denominational doctrine has created sectarianism—a division of the races within the Body of Christ. Yet, the Word of God is the final say in controversy. The intent of the arrival of the Holy Ghost in the Acts of the Apostles was not only to endow the believer with power, but He also arrived to make the Body of Christ one. The Bible is the textbook or diet that is prescribed for all believers. How can we have the same spirit, eat the same meal and yet be so different?

The problem is that as Christians we are not getting the same meal. If a mother has twins born of the same bloodline, and raises one in American and one in Japan, then their diet, customs, and culture will cause them to grow up differently. It is the same with the church. Yet, if the ideology taught in the church is not the same because of our spiritual diet, or the difference in what we are fed, then our beliefs will be different. Bad theology and erroneous doctrines will corrupt, stagnate, and divide the church. It will cause one to worship in ignorance and ultimately ruin the soul.

The percentage of people who frequent church and are not students of the Bible is unclear. I believe that at least eighty percent, if not more, lack true Bible knowledge. This high percentage is unacceptable and increases the responsibility of God’s leaders to seize every opportunity to deposit spiritual truth into their lives. In other words, the prevalence of biblical illiteracy exponentially increases the responsibility of leaders to prepare the menu, examine the meal being served and then partake of it themselves before serving it to God’s people.

Anthropocentric preaching, or human-centered preaching, opposed to God-centered preaching has caused infanticide within the body of Christ and shipwrecked the faith of many. The theology of glory and an absence of the theology of the cross are causing parishioners to experience a form of Godliness without the presence of dunamis power. I believe that leaders within the Body of Christ have a tremendous responsibility to be mindful of the diet they give God’s people.

**THE CHURCH**

The church is a local and universal assembly of believers. It includes the redeemed of all ages that are born of Christ, and follow Him as Lord and Savior. The Church was prophesied by Jesus before its existence on earth:

 ***“And I say also unto thee, that thou are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18***

Thus, the church is founded by Christ, upon his death, resurrection, ascension, and the church is the body of Christ. Yet, this feat was not possible until Pentecost (***Acts 2:1-4***). There could be no church until it was fully purchased with Christ’s blood.

***“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:13***

I want to point out to the reader the importance of understanding that the Spirit and the Word are married to each other. Jesus prophesied the church in Matthew chapter sixteen, but the Holy Spirit brought full manifestation to His prophetic words on the day of Pentecost.

***“1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there cam a sound from heaven as if a rushing mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them chosen tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4***

Here we see the Word and the Spirit coming together and giving birth to the church. The Word and Spirit always go hand and hand. There will never be creation or manifestation of the promises of God in our lives until we understand the marriage of the Word and Spirit.

***“1 In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth. 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit, (Rauch) of God moved upon the face of the waters. 3 And God said, let there be light, and there was light.” Genesis 1:1-3***

Wherever there is creation and manifestation there must be a marriage of the Sprit and the Word. Pentecost brought forth the manifestation of the prophetic words of Jesus and gave birth to the church.

 The Greek word for church is ekklesia. Ekklesia means the called out ones. In ***1 Peter 2:9***, we read,

***“Be ye, are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9***

 According to this passage, the church is called out of darkness (Ekklesia) into the light of Christ. Therefore, the church is a vehicle of light in a cold, damp and dark world. The church is comprised of priests (born again believers) who are to carry the light of Christ into the world. Many Christians today do not understand that they are priests unto God. Under the old covenant, the priests made sacrifices with the blood of animals on behalf of themselves and the people. Under the new covenant, Christ has given us access to the Father by the shedding of his blood. The believer now lives under the dispensation of Grace. Therefore, we are priests unto God and our bodies are the temples of which we are priests.

 The church is God domiciling in the believer and setting up station in the earth to draw men into His kingdom. The mission of the church is to evangelize the world so that all men will be reconnected to God through Jesus Christ. The Church must preach and teach the theology of the cross if it is to be successful in winning the lost to God. The Apostolic Doctrine makes it quite clear:

***“10 Be it known unto you all, and all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was set as naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby ye must be saved.”***

***“10 That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth. 11 And that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father.” Act 4: 10-12 Philippians 2:10-11***

 Many people in the church today are preoccupied with preaching the theology of glory instead of the theology of the cross. Theology of glory focuses on building big churches, larger congregations, status quo, celebrities, personal fame and individual kingdoms. Theology of the cross focuses on advancing God’s kingdom. In the twentieth century, churches have watered down the Gospel and as a result we do not see the manifestation of the miracles that the early church experienced. I believe that miracles are present in today’s church, but can only be experienced by preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Miracles always follow preaching. Today the church is infested with human-centered and not god-centered preaching. Human-centered preaching caters to the flesh, ego, social status and emotions of men. The Spirit of God is not present in human-centered preaching. When the Spirit of God is not present our coming together is no more than a social gathering—flesh on parade.

 The Bible says that we are to pray with the Spirit and sing with the Spirit. ***1 Corinthians 14:15*** states:

***“What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the Spirit and I will sing with the understanding also.” 1 Corinthians 14:15***

I believe it is therefore reasonable to say that we should also preach with the Spirit. Intellectual sermons will stimulate the mind, but can do nothing for the heart. While preaching, The Holy Spirit takes the place of our intellect and we allow it to give progressive revelation while we preach. In other words, the Word of God is so rich it impregnates our minds and gives birth to the new revelation while we are yet preaching. When Christ, the cross and His blood are the focus of our preaching we will see the presence of the Holy Spirit anointing. “*For the testimony of Jesus is spirit of prophecy (****Revelation 14:10***).” According to ***Corinthians 6:20***, Jesus purchased the church with His blood, and therefore we must FOREVER keep the battle scars of the cross before His people.

**Week Two**

**ENTRANCE INTO THE**

**CHURCH/KINGDOM**

***There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, verily , verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old?’ Jesus answered ‘verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.” (John 3:1-7)***

 The dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus is most interesting. It reveals that entrance into the kingdom of God requires the believer to be born again. The name Nicodemus means conqueror of the people. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. He was a wealthy, educated and powerful man. He was described by Jesus as “the teacher of Israel,” implying that he was well trained in Old Testament law and tradition (***John 3:10***). He was well respected by his people and a descendant of the patriarch Abraham. Yet Jesus said to him, “You must be born again (***John 3:7***). The Greek translation of again can also mean “from the beginning” which suggests a new creation that is “from above” or that is from God. In other words, Jesus told Nicodemus that physical generation (church membership) was not enough, nor did his descent from the line of Abraham entitle him to be saved. Only, as a person with a spiritual generation, or a birth from above would he be able to see the kingdom of God. It literally means that in order to be saved there must be a transformation from God—a renewal in righteousness and true holiness (***2 Corinthians 5:11-21***).

 However, Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus and thought only in human terms. Millions today make the same mistake with the old birth and the new birth. This is the very thing Jesus did not want men to do (***John 3:12***). The truth is the former is a begetting and a coming into existence and the latter is an adoption (***Romans 8:14-16***). Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born of the water and of the spirit, not water baptism. One can be born again without water baptism. Water baptism is an ordinance of the church, but not essential to salvation (***John 28:19-20***). This is demonstrated in ***Luke 23:39-43***:

***“39 And one of the malefactors which were hanging railed on him saying, if though be Christ save thyself and us. 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And the said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when comest into thy kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Luke 23:39-43***

This passage demonstrates that we are saved by the Word of God. It shares with the reader a dialogue between Jesus and a thief who was dying on the cross. The thief acknowledged Jesus as a Lord and asks the Lord to remember him when he ascended into his kingdom. Jesus responded by saying to the thief “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise (***Luke 23:43***).” Nothing in this passage indicates that Jesus asked the thief to receive water baptism. He did not have time! The man was dying.

 Likewise, Jesus told Nicodemus “Except a man be born of the water (salvation), of the spirit (baptism), and of cleansing by the Word of God he will not see the Kingdom of God (***John 4:14, 15:3, 7:37-39***).” Since men are cleansed and born again by the Word (***1*** ***Peter*** ***1:23***) it is clear that being born of water means being born again by the Word of God. Although there is a physical water baptism, which is doctrine through symbolic action ordinance of the church, there is also a baptism in the Word of God, which is a spiritual new birth.

**THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN BAPTISM-Week Three**

**THROUGH THE WORD AND PHYSICAL BAPTISM**

 All scripture is given by inspiration of God (***2 Timothy 3:16***). I have discovered by the Holy Spirit’s anointing, that it is a waste of time to debate truth with one to whom Spirit has not revealed truth. Denominational doctrines have become scales over the spiritual eyes of the church. When one preaches denominational doctrine it closes our minds and hearts to the truth of the Gospel. I want to share truth with the reader on the distinction between baptism through the Word and physical baptism by water.

***“I indeed baptize you with water into repentance: (doctrine through symbolic action) but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire.” Matthew 3:11***

This passage of scripture reveals three baptisms. The writer speaks of water baptism (ordinance for the church) and then he speaks of baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire. The baptism of fire represents the Word of God that cleanses from sin. When the writer penned these words the church had not yet been born. This is consistent with ***Acts 2:1-4*** wherein it is stated that:

***“1…when the day of Pentecost is fully come, they were all with on accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And, there appeared unto them chosen tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4***

This passage from the book of Acts clearly reveals that the baptism of the Holy Ghost came within the church at Pentecost. In ***Acts 2:37-38*** those who heard and received the word preached by Peter received the baptism of the word into salvation. In fact, the order of the baptisms are the baptism of the Word, Holy Ghost, and then water baptism.

***“37 Now when they heard this they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles “men and brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Then Peter said unto them, “repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:37-38***

 The prerequisite to receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost is to first receive the baptism of the Word for the remission of sins. In other words, the cup is cleansed and then you pour coffee in it. No one in their right mind would pour coffee in an unclean cup. It is the same with God. He cleanses with the Word “ye are clean through the word: and He gives the receiver of the cleansing the Holy Ghost (***John 15:3***). Many denominations relate ***Acts 2:37-38*** to water baptism which is erroneous doctrine. To say that one should baptize during water baptism in Jesus name is the same as saying water baptism can remit sins. Peter was very clear in ***verse 38*** wherein he stated that “Be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” ***John 1:29*** says, “Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.” He does not make a reference to water baptism. Water baptism cannot remit sin. Here are the words of Jesus regarding water baptism.

***“ 18 And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth. 19 Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:18-20)***

 How do we know that the above passages relate to water baptism? First, in ***Matthew*** ***3:11*** John makes it very clear that he can only perform the ordinance of water baptism. Jesus alone had the power to baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire. Secondly, Jesus told the disciples (the church) to go out and baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Therefore, the church is responsible for, but limited like John, for performing the ordinance of water baptism. Water baptism is a public demonstration that one has died and has been resurrected with Christ. It is doctrine through symbolic action but t has no power to save men. Men are saved by the Word of God, which gives access to the Holy Ghost.

 Week Four

 In our churches a large percentage of the population still views water baptism as evidence of eternal salvation. Most are connected with the facility or the ministry with no authentic connection with God. The new birth or born-again experience is spiritual and comes from above. In the twentieth century there is an influx of people frequenting the church, but have no claims to the Holy Spirit. In this chapter I will refer to them as John’s disciples, the ones who say they believe but have not received the Holy Ghost.

***“1 And it came to pass that, while Appollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2 He said unto them, have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believe? 3 And they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 4 Then, said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him that is on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Acts 19:1-5 (Fix)***

 The disciples of John are very common in the church today. They have joined churches, choirs, usher ministry, dance ministries and even have become deacons. They are involved in every aspect of the pulpit without knowing whether the Holy Ghost is real. One major reason this dilemma exists in our churches today is because most ministers fail to preach the theology of the cross and they do not teach the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. Churches of today operate like McDonald’s they have a fast food approach wherein people are processed in and out to meet time schedules without experiencing a move of the Spirit. Jesus said to Necademus, “That which is born for the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit (***John 3:6***).” One cannot know, experience or worship God in the flesh. Eternal life is not physical, it is spiritual. Consider the following scripture found in ***Romans 2:28-29***:

***“28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; Neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly: And circumcision is one of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Romans 2:28-29***

When the church understands the absolute and essential need for spirit baptism (new birth) it will experience signs and wonders as did the early church. Spirit baptism is an inward metamorphoses which transforms in form or nature. When men are born again their spirit is joined to the Lord’s Spirit and the nature of God inhabits his spirit. “But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit (***1 Corinthians 6:17***).” It is imperative that the church understands the letter of the Word and the Spirit of the Word. There is an example of the letter of the Word and the spirit of the Word in Ezekiel 37:1-10.

***“1 The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of The Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley, which [was] full of bones. 2 And cause me to pass by them round about: and behold, there were very many in the Open valley; and lo, they were very dry. 3 And he said unto me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered,” O Lord God, thou knowest. 4 And he said unto me, “Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! 5 Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: “Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin and put breath in you, and ye shall live: and ye shall know that I am the Lord.” 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking and the bones came together, bone to his bone. 8 And when I beheld, lo, sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. 9 Then said he unto me, “Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, say to the wind. Thus saith the Lord God; “Come from the four winds, O Breath and breath upon these slain, that they may live.”10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came unto them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, and exceeding great army.” (Ezekiel 37:1-10)***

 Notice that in the preceding passages of scripture, Ezekiel prophesied the Word to the dry bones. This would be the letter of the Word. As a result of him preaching the Word, the Bible states that there was a noise and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone (Supra). The Church is experiencing a lot of noise, shaking and gifts coming together on Sunday mornings, but the house is dead. Noise and shaking are not authentic indications of life. One can experience noise and shaking in any disco. The Bible says, there was noise, but there was no breath in them (Supra). In ***Genesis 2:7***, God formed man from the dust of the earth, but he did not live until God blew unto him the breath of life. The sinews and flesh came upon them but there was no breath in them. The Word without the Spirit does not manifest life. Thus, the Church that operates in the letter of the Word will be dead, dry and unprofitable.

 When Ezekiel obeyed God and prophesied to the four winds, the breath of God blew unto the bones and they lived. The only way the church can experience life is by the Spirit. The preacher must teach the members of the church the importance of having the Holy Spirit in their lives. Otherwise, there can be no connection with God. The letter of the word killeth, but the spirit giveth life (***2 Corinthians 3:6***).

 It is in error to live by the letter of the Word. By resting in the letter of the law and shutting their eyes to the light, men became blind to the fact that the old covenant was abolished. Many Christians are just as blind to the same simple fact because of the universal belief that the Ten Commandments including the Sabbath, are still in force. Hence the heart shall be turned to God (filled with the Spirit) this blindness shall be taken away. The law was veiled in types and shadows of good things to come (***Hebrews 10:1***). The Gospel has practically no ceremonies in comparison. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are the only two outward rituals. The Gospel is so simple that there can be no confusion as to its terms and blessings.

 The church without the Holy Spirit is like a ship without a sail, an airplane without a navigation system; a house without lights; a car engine with no cylinders, and therefore no power. Without the spirit, the church has no direction, discernment nor power. It must go beyond the letter. “The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly (***Proverbs 20:27***).” Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (***Romans 8:9***). For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (***Romans 8:14***).