***The Universal Church - PH07-02

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 1:1***

There were a few points that we didn't complete in our study about the young man Timothy who was the associate of Paul. We are looking at the first verse of the first chapter in the book of Philippians. We stopped with Timothy, and I'd like to tie that up before we go with something new. We were talking about the fact that Timothy had been advised to take some alcohol because he had a gastric disorder. We discussed the place of alcoholic beverages in the life of a Christian, and the practice and the use of such by believers. There are certain principles that the Word of God lays down. There are certain things that the Bible says, and we can't go beyond what it says. While it never tells a Christian not to drink, it is very definitive over the fact that a Christian is not to become drunk.

**The Use of Alcoholic Beverages by Christians**

There are four spiritual principles that are to be applied. These bring us to the conclusion that certainly in our society the best course of action for a believer is to lay off the booze altogether, and to have no part of it in any form. These principles are:

1. **The Law of Liberty**

The law of liberty is found in 1 Corinthians 8:8. Under this law, a Christian could drink sparingly. He could drink short of becoming drunk. However, nothing is gained by drinking, and the potential danger to yourself and to others in our society and in our day is very very great. So the principle of your personal liberty here must be tempered by the advisability of exercising that freedom.

1. **The Law of Expedience**

The second law is the law of expedience which we have in 1 Corinthians 6:12. Drinking is rejected entirely under this law by a believer for this day because it just is not wise under the circumstances in which we live. Alcohol is probably is the most destructive force that we have in our society. We are inclined to think it is drugs, because we hear a lot about that. However, that is probably not the case. It is alcohol that is the thing that is eroding the moral fiber of our nation more than anything else.

We've already indicated to you earlier that that destruction affects all of us when those who are in governmental leadership use alcoholic beverages. The Bible forbids those who are in places of authority of government to use alcohol. By the same token, we may extend that wisdom to all those who are in positions of leadership where other people are dependent upon their decisions and upon their influence. So in the United States, drinking is a hindrance to a clear witness for Christ. It is very difficult for you to stand around at a cocktail party blowing your boozy breath across the room at somebody else, and witness to him about Christ. It's just inherent in our society. So the law of expedience says, "Don't drink."

1. **The Law of Love**

There is also the law of love which we have in 1 Corinthians 8:9 Drinking here is rejected because of the destructive effects that it has on a weaker Christian. There are certain things that love for your brethren will keep you from doing. You can do them. Maybe you can even do them in full freedom without any destructive effects. However, if it's going to hurt some other Christian, then lay off. Lay off when it will be in his presence. Lay off when it will be destructive to him. Restrict your freedom under those circumstances where it will not have destructive effects. Many cannot drink in moderation, and it's cruel for you to hazard their lives by giving them an example for you to drink and for them to pick up the idea, "Well, that's alright to do." That's why it is a hazardous thing for you to do anything that has involved in it spiritually destructive effects. You may be able to handle it, but if you do it in the presence of people who look to you who are influenced by you, and they may be weaker, they may do the same thing, and they may be spiritually injured and destroyed perhaps by it.

1. **The Law of Supreme Sacrifice**

The fourth law is the law of supreme sacrifice (1 Corinthians 9:1-6). What a Christian is free to do and would like to do is set aside. The motivation here is the glory of God. This is not motivated by legalism to gain favor with God. It is motivated by seeking to bring glory to God. So there are certain things as the law of supreme sacrifice that you just don't do in order that God may be honored by your life. I know that Satan often will say to a Christian, "You sure are a legalistic nut because you won't do this. You won't go to these movies. You won't go and buy these books." The law of supreme sacrifice says, "I'm not going to do certain things. I'm not going to do certain things even if I were free to do them, because they would be destructive to the glory of God. I'm not legalistic because I say I won't do certain things, and because I teach my children not to do certain things."

So these four laws will help govern and guide our attitude toward alcohol. Perhaps they will give some perspective to you when somebody comes up and says, "The Bible doesn't say you can't drink." Those who want to drink will bring that up to you frequently. While we grant that to be true, we at the same time, insist on recognizing these four principles which tell us that today it is not the point of wisdom for a Christian to drink, and he gains absolutely nothing by engaging in it.

Just to tie this up, there is one thing more we ought to say about Timothy. While he was a great spiritual leader, Timothy did seem to have a tendency to shyness or to timidity which motivated Paul to challenge his beloved son on this courage that he was encouraging Timothy to have in a ministry. In 1 Timothy 1:18, 1 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Corinthians 16:10, and 1 Timothy 4:12-16 are all passages where you pick up signals that Timothy was a little timid, retiring, hesitant, or something less than he should have been in his forcefulness in the ministry. That may be part of why we have the advice that is given to him here in the section we've been looking at.

About 15 or 16 years has passed since Timothy's call in Lystra to the time of Paul's death in Rome. They had been close associates the whole time through unbelievable trials. They had a mutual respect and a deep affection in the Lord, and their camaraderie in the Lord's service grew over the years. The spiritual gifts of each of these two men found maximum expression in the presence of the other. There is a great deal of the Lord's work which is destroyed when Christians who should be working together decide to shove off and work someplace else. Their spiritual gifts then become ineffective in their maximum productivity, and so do those (in some degree) in those whom they have left behind. God brings together combinations that click. When you take it upon yourself to cut out of that combination, you are taking upon yourself a very serious responsibility. Timothy and Paul stuck together right to the end.

Two epistles are addressed to Timothy, and he is associated in several others in greetings with Paul. He comes through as a sharp, retiring, but a kind person. God knows we need more of those among Christian leaders. He was sharp, and perhaps a little retiring, but at least kindly disposed.

**The Church**

Now we are picking up our next segment here in Philippians 1:1. I want to look at the phrase in this section, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus." "Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi." This letter you will notice is addressed to two places. It is to "the saints who are in Christ Jesus," and "who are at Philippi." These two places reflect two aspects concerning the doctrine of the church. The church, first of all, is an organism. The church is also an organization. These two words are important words, for they give us the two distinct differences concerning the church. Organization has to do with the local church. Organism has to do with the universal church. The organism is also the invisible church. It is the body of Christ. The organization is the visible aspect of the body of Christ in various localities.

So Paul addresses this letter, first of all, to the body of Christ of believers who are part of the body of Christ everywhere. At the same time, he writes it specifically to the church which is located visibly in the city of Philippi, which consisted of many congregations all over the city of Philippi. Each of them was led and directed by one pastor-teacher authority which God had provided. He writes to the saints in this body of Christ and in the city of Philippi. You know that the word "saint" means "set apart." These are the people who make up the church. The words "in Christ" constitute a technical term which refers to the body of Christ. It is a term used in the Christian age for those who are believers. You have this relationship expressed in John 14:20 where "we are in Christ, and he is in us."

**Denominations**

The practice today is often to emphasize the local church, and become so preoccupied with how to run the local church, that we forget all about the fact that the church, first of all, is the body of Christ. It is an invisible union of all believers cutting across all denominational lines. We sit down and say, "Here we've got a local church. We've got a group of believers. These folks have gathered together at the corner of 6th and Nursery, and have constituted themselves a local assembly by the name of Berean Memorial Church. God has provided the leadership in various phases that it needs. He's provided them with the facilities, and He's provided them with the finances to the extent that God's people have not robbed God of giving those finances."

Now what are we going to do in that local church? Well, the first thing we have to decide is how are we going to operate? What are the basic guideline principles? For example, we've got to take an offering. There are any number of ways to take an offering. Who's going to decide how to take an offering? If we get a good Christian businessman in here, he's going to think of some way that's a pressure system because that's how he's used to working out in the business world. Or we're going to get somebody who's a totally carnal individual, and he reacts himself only as people put pressure on him. So, therefore, we say, "How are we going to finance the Lord's work?"

Well, it's the most natural thing in the world for this man to say, "Well, we have to figure out a pressure system." I know some churches where every Sunday they list in the bulletin what the members gave the Sunday before, one-by-one. The first thing you do when you get to church is you open the bulletin and you get all the hot scoop. "Hmm, look at this guy. Boy, does he have a salary, and he gave five bucks last week." Right down the line. That's putting the screws down in order to get the money because that's how this person thinks concerning himself.

Now if we're going to find how to do this the Lord's way, we have to pattern our local church organization on the fact that it is, first of all, an organism. It is the body of Christ. What is true about the organism, and what is true about the church age, is the groundwork upon which we must express all of our local church operation. Of course, the primary guiding principle of the church age is grace. That's the guiding principle in the local church. Your denominational peculiarities are unimportant. Don't get tangled up in somebody's denominational peculiarities. Remember that you can have a group that doesn't call itself a denomination. However, if you have a group that has a certain thrust, they will have certain characteristics. They will idealize one or very few leaders. It will head up in them, like Martin Luther, or John Calvin. It will center up toward one individual.

Secondly, they will devise peculiar terms that indicate who is in and who is out. If you can tell who is in by the terms they use, you can tell who is out by the terms they don't use. These are peculiarities. Then they will have traditions. They will have ways of doing things. If you're not careful, you'll think that these ways come directly out of the Bible. Very frequently, they are ways that are simply the preference of the leader.

Whole denominations have grown out of the fact that some man who is the influential originator didn't like (for example) singing with a piano. So he looked in the Word of God, and he says, "God's people sang unto the Lord from their heart--not from the piano," and out goes the piano. So they don't allow any musical instruments in there for people to sing with. However, that just happened to be the peculiarity of that leader, and the congregation and the people who follow all think that this came from God. Denominations have these traditions and it's okay if you want to you. Go ahead. Sound like a bunch of old crows and don't have any piano to help you along. But don't say that this is something that comes out of the word of God.

**The Definition of Church**

Alright. We begin with, of course, the meaning of the word "church," and we need to define what the church is all about. And boy, this is a confused issue. Here is where you have the battlegrounds. I will tell you right now that in this session, you are going to hear what is a minority report. Most of what you hear in this session, the vast number of churches reject this. Basically, the word "church" comes from the Greek word "ekklesia." "Ekklesia" is made up of two words: the word "ek" which means "out," and the verb "kaleo" which means "called." So we have from this word the basic easy meaning "called out," or "that which is called," or "a called out group." We usually translate it by the word "assembly," as conveying that idea of a group called out of a larger group. So we call them an assembly.

This word was an ordinary word in the Koine Greek language. People all over the New Testament world were used to using the word "ekklesia," and they used it in terms of some kind of an assembly. Usually it referred to a political assembly. You have this used, for example, in Acts 7:38, Acts 19:32, Acts 19:39, and Acts 19:41. All of these are pre-Christian uses of the word. It simply means any kind of an assembly. Among the Greeks, it was used of the freemen of a Greek city state who would be called together to conduct the business of the state and to make decisions. They were the assembly. Only the freemen could vote. The rest of the slave population and the non-citizens were not allowed to vote. They were not part of the assembly. However, the called group who were franchised and could vote, they were the assembly. They were the "ekklesia." They conducted the business of the city.

Now the Jews also had a word that was the equivalent of this. They had a word for an assembly group--for a called out group. When the Old Testament Scriptures were translated into Greek in that Septuagint version that you're acquainted with, the Septuagint translators used the word "ekklesia" in Greek for the Hebrew word "kahal." "Kahal" is the equivalent in Hebrew of this Greek word. When they translated the Septuagint, every time they came to "kahal," they used the Greek word "ekklesia," indicating that the Jews also had a similar word for an assembly--a called out group. Usually in English we have this word translated as "congregation," and it referred to when the Jews were gathered as an assembly to the door of the tabernacle when the silver trumpet was blown, and they were called together to come to receive some instruction or an announcement. When they were gathered together, those who were qualified to come and receive this instruction or this announcement, they were the "kahal" group. They were the "ekklesia." They were the assembly. They were the called out congregation.

So when this word comes into the New Testament, we have it coming out first of all from the Greek world, and we also have it coming out from the Hebrew world. Each of them had an idea concerning a special group called out. To the Greeks, it was a self-governing democratic body. To the Jews, the called out assembly was a theocratic society ruled over by their heavenly King. God the Holy Spirit took the word "ekklesia;" meshed these two meanings; and, came up with a totally new concept that became a technical word for a special body of believers that he was forming, called the "church." This body of believers began on the day of Pentecost. It will end when you and I (those living and dead) are suddenly caught up to meet the Lord in the air in the rapture, and the church age is over.

In other words, the church is a special entity. It began at Pentecost, and it ends at the rapture, and it has been almost 2,000 years long thus far. This is the church age. What exists here is the "ekklesia," the church of the living God. So the church is a group of people called out of our society today from among Jews and gentiles. It is neither just a Greek civic assembly, nor is it just a congregation or a synagogue. It is a distinctive group.

In 1 Corinthians 10:32, we have the three main human groups that God deals with. 1 Corinthians 10:32 reads, "Give no offense neither to the Jews (that's one group) nor to the Greeks (the gentiles--that's another group) nor to the church of God (and that's the third group)." All of humanity this day is in one of these three groups. You are either a gentile (which you are if you are not related by birth to the Jewish race), or you are a Hebrew, or (if you have left those two categories through salvation in Christ) you have now become a Christian and you are part of the church, the body of Christ. Everybody is in one of those three categories right now. It is not right, as you often hear these dummies of the religious world who love to talk on these talk programs where they contrast Jews and Christians, as if those were the two groups that we have--Jews and Christians.

The contrast in our society is basically Jews and gentiles, and some of us have left one of those groups, and we are Christians. That is the true contrast from the Word of God. These are never intermingled. You will find in Scripture where the Jew began, and you will find in Scripture (in the book of Revelation) where the Jew ends. You will find in Scripture where the gentile began, and you will find in Revelation where the Gentile and his program ends. You will find in Scripture where the Christian began, and you will find in the book of Revelation where the Christian program ends. Every program (all three) run parallel to one another, and they are never intermingled. They never at any point come together, and such a notion is wrong.

That's exactly what religious leaders are doing with the doctrine of the church today. That's why you come into a church, and you see an altar up there. I've had people ask me, "How come you don't have an altar in your church?" So I say to them, "Well, what is an altar for?" They say, "For sacrifices." I say, "Well, there's your answer. We don't kill any goats; sheep; pigeons; or, even church members anymore with that kind of stuff." That's why we don't have an altar." It just seems to shock them. It hits them, and they had never thought of that. They think that they can still go through their rinky-tink motions and call it a sacrifice.

Then I point out to them, "Of course, if you are Roman Catholic, at least you do have a good reason for the priest having an altar, because every Sunday morning he steps up to that altar, and he kills Jesus Christ all over again in the form of the Lord's Supper. He is sacrificing Christ all over again. And when you walk up there you get the bread, he gets the wine, and Christ has been again sacrificed, and you have stepped one more step up toward heaven. He is sacrificing. They understand that that's what an altar is for."

However, for Protestants to have an altar is a violation of this principle of the separate entity of the church. They brought that over from the Old Testament. For a Protestant to give you the idea (or even a Catholic) that if you want to get to God, you must come through some human agent (a priest), that idea is coming over from the Old Testament. That was right in the Old Testament. They didn't go to God directly. They went through their priest. All of your worship was through that way. You sacrificed with your animals, and that's how you approached God, and so on.

The "ekklesia," from these two basic meanings, demonstrates to us that it has contact with both Jews and the Greek world, but the church is a thing unto itself. It is a serious error for you to mix these. That's where you come up with holy days. You wonder why it is that come Christmas and everybody's running out to church for the Christmas Day service, or Easter. Oh, boy, they turn out for Easter like crazy. As soon as Easter comes, all the churches are getting ready for big crowds; more ushers; and, more people at the door to handle the cars. Why? Because people think of Easter as a holy day. They think of Christmas as a holy day. There are no holy days. In the Old Testament, indeed there were. Now, in the age of grace, the age of the church, every day is a day unto the Lord, and no day is different from any other day.

You may choose to use a certain day, as we do the Lord's Day Sunday, as a day of worship which in right and truth we should. However, there is nothing that you do on Monday that you could not do on Sunday. In your Christian liberty, you choose to set Sunday aside for the personal spiritual welfare and blessing of your soul. So the rituals; the altars; the holy days; the priest mediations; and, all the little legalisms to gain merit are a thing of the past. The church means a called out group of believers from Jews and gentiles unto the Lord.

**The Origin of the Church**

Now what's the origin of the church? Judaism was God's way of dealing with people in the Old Testament. However, Christianity is His way of dealing in the New Testament. They are two totally different systems. Judaism is one thing, and Christianity is totally different. However, because Judaism is the older and well-established system, having been around for hundreds and hundreds of years, it is very difficult for people to get over the fact of doing things like the Jews did, and to accept the idea that Judaism is dead, and Christianity is now in. This was a problem in the early church.

In Acts 15, you may read about the church council, which was the conference that they held in order to settle this issue: is Judaism dead, and is Christianity something new? If Judaism is the plant, and Christianity is the bud or the blossom of that plant, then Christianity has to go back to Judaism for its ways of doing things. Then Christianity would be connected in some way to Judaism, but that is not true. When people think that, that's when they come up with holy days, altars, priests, and all the rest of their nonsense. Judaism had been set aside. It was an exclusive way of life for the Jewish people. It will yet come into operation when God returns to dealing with His people. However, now all that pertains to the Old Testament is dead, and it's out. All that pertains to the age of grace has been revealed to us in the epistles.

You people who have some squeamish conscience about going out and eating shrimp because it was forbidden in the Old Testament can be encouraged by the fact that the New Testament says that all foods are now permitted to us to be received with thanksgiving. It's a different order of things. The church had a separate beginning from Judaism. You find this in John 1:17. Israel rejected Jesus Christ as her Messiah (Romans 15:8, John 1:11). They rejected His offer of the kingdom. He came to fulfill what had been promised to the Jewish people, and they rejected Him and would not have Him.

So the order of work here is, first of all, to perform His mission to the Jews. When He was rejected and crucified, the groundwork was laid for His work of a new thing which was a secret in the Old Testament, and that is the church as a body of Christ. So Jesus turned from the Jewish rejection to preparing and to bringing in the age of the church (Matthew 15:14, Matthew 16:4). In Matthew 16:18, we have one of about two major places that the church is referred to in the gospels. There is no reference to the church of the Old Testament, and there is no reference to the church in the gospels, except in Matthew 16:18 and in John chapter 13-17. That's all that you have as references to the church. This is because the gospels are the completion of the Old Testament Scriptures. It is the epistles that deal with church truth.

You can see what a terrible thing it is when so many people go to church, and in most churches especially of a liberal tendency, they will hear sermon after a sermon out of the gospels, and they are hearing preaching out of the area of Scripture that is not dealing with the distinctive privilege and position that they have as the body of Christ in the age of the church. Do you realize that you are in the relationship to our Lord as a bride is to her husband? You have a relationship that no other saints in all of history have had. None of the Old Testament people will ever be related to the Lord Jesus Christ in the intimacy that will be yours. You and I have a great privilege in living in the age of grace. What a disaster and what a tragedy it is that most Christians are denied an understanding of what their heritage is to be able to enter into that.

**Matthew 16:18**

In Matthew 16:18, the Lord crossed out of Palestine and moved into Caesarea Philippi. Interestingly enough, when He was on gentile ground, he made a statement in Matthew 16:18, after he had asked Peter and the disciples, "Who am I?" They told him all the confused ideas people had about who He was. Then He said, "What do you think?" They said, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." Then in verse 17, the Lord commended Peter for this insight, and told him that he had not arrived at this by his good human wisdom and judgment, but that God had made this clear to him. This was a spiritual truth. Verse 18 says, "And I say unto you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." He said, "You are Peter; I'm going to build my church; and, the rock upon which I will build it is this which you have just declared about Me, namely that I am the Christ, the son of the living God." They did not reject him as had the other disciples.

Following this recognition, notice what the Lord said when they recognized Him as deity. He said, "Upon this rock," and the Greek word is "petra." "Petra" means "rock," and it refers here to Jesus Christ. It means rock in the sense of a solid sturdy foundation, hard and immovable. In 1 Corinthians 10:4, the Lord is referred to as a rock. In Psalm 18:31, our God is called this kind of a rock. "Petra" is a hard monstrous immovable platform--something upon which a foundation can be built. However, He said in verse 18, "I say unto you," just after Peter had made his confession, "You're God." Jesus said, "I say unto you that you are Peter." The word Peter is "petros." "Petros" means a detached stone--something that you can pick up and you can throw. It is a chip off the rock. What the Lord is saying here (in a clever play on words) is, "You're a little stone. You're a chip off the block. And upon this immovable foundation and massive rock, I will build my church."

Now what is the immovable and massive rock upon which Christ would build? We have to go back to the context. The declaration just made about Him, "You, Jesus, You are a man--the God man. You are the one that God has sent to be the Savior of the world. You are our Messiah, as Jews. You are our Lord, as Christians." The world did not understand this, and they rejected this. Now the Roman Catholic Church takes this verse and says that Christ was talking about Peter as being the rock. However, the Greek language puts the lie to that, for what He was doing was pointing out to Peter that he was a chip off the solid foundation of the rock. Believers, in 1 Peter 2:1 shows that Peter understood this. 1 Peter 2:1 tells us that believers are all living stones, being put together to build up the structure of the church. God the Holy Spirit is building one living stone upon another and building His church. We have also first Peter 2:4-9 (a more extended passage on that). Peter knew he was one of the living stones, and not the pope. Jesus Christ would be the foundation.

Notice the words that the Lord uses: "I will build my church." These are very significant words. The first word here is "I," which tells us that the church is to be built by Jesus Christ. It is to be accomplished by the Lord alone from heaven. Secondly, "will" indicates that its future in time from that point. As of the time that Jesus stood in Caesarea Philippi and made this declaration, He had not built the church. The church had not come into being.

In the next session, I'm going to take you into a little more detail on when the church came into being, and to show you that the church never was in the Old Testament. This is where the battle lays. People and religious leaders say, "Oh, yes, the church. Israel was an assembly in the wilderness because the Bible calls Israel an 'ekklesia' in the wilderness." That's right. But you have already been informed that Israel was an assembly in the terms that it was a gathered group out of the masses of paganistic humanity, and it was gathered as a special group. This was just like when the Greeks gathered for a political purpose, they were an assembly. That is not the technical use of the word "ekklesia" that the Holy Spirit uses concerning those who are in the body of Christ. When Jesus said this, "I will build my church," He was showing that it was a future thing. Up to that point, it had not yet been done. Now we know that he was looking ahead to the day of Pentecost, the day of the birthday of the church, the day the church began.

Next He says, "I will build." The word "build" reveals to us that the church is to come into existence by a gradual process, over a period of time (Ephesians 2:20-22). That is that every living stone is to be added to the next living stone. One believer is added to another believer (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Matthew 16:19 speaks about the keys of the kingdom of heaven, given here, first declared to Peter, and later given to all the apostles. They had the keys of the kingdom. You have the keys to the kingdom of heaven. This is the prerogative of witnessing. You have the ability to walk up to a person and open the door to heaven to him. As the Lord says, "You also have the opportunity to keep your mouth closed, and not open the door for him." That constitutes the keys to the kingdom.

That was given to you because the church is a thing that is built. The church is a structure which is gradually building. It is not completed. It is not established. "I will build." When it is completed, it is removed. The church will not be on earth one second after the last believer destined to be placed into that building is there. As soon as that last believer is in, we're gone. It's all over. The end has come. "I will build *my*" indicates that the church belongs to Christ. It is His body and His bride. "My church" is that technical word for the distinctive group from Jews and gentiles called out to become Christians. This new body officially began on the day of Pentecost.

**Pentecost**

We have shown you that the meaning of the word "church" is "that which is called out." It has a starting place. John 14:16-20 gives us a picture of the relationships that would exist in the church age with the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is in heaven, and the Spirit is our comforter here on earth. Acts 1:5 tells us that the baptism of the Holy Spirit will happen on the day of Pentecost. John 14:20 tells us we're going to have this relationship of Christ in us and we in Him. Acts 11:15 tells us that the baptism of the Holy Spirit did take place on the day of Pentecost. That baptism was the beginning of the church age.

Here was the situation. 120 Jewish age believers were gathered in the upper room. They were already regenerated. They were already sealed. They were born again people. They were destined for heaven. They could not be lost. However, they were Jewish Age believers. They were gathered in prayer. Before the Lord left, He said, "You wait in Jerusalem. You are the vanguard of a whole new age. You are the first of a whole new group of people that God is calling out. It has been a secret up to this point. I have now (in these 40 days that I've spent with you) introduced you to that magnificent secret of the church. Not a single breath concerning this is to be found in the Old Testament. Through my ministry, only what I referred to on an occasion to you did I give you the faintest glimmer, back at the last supper. I talked to you for quite a bit on what it would be like to live in the church age (John 13-17). Now I'm going to leave you. For you to accomplish the work of witnessing requires a new relationship to the Spirit of God. You stay in Jerusalem until this relationship is established." That relationship was the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

So on the day of Pentecost, 120 believers (separate entities) were fused together and made an organism, and the body of Christ began. That's what the baptism of the Holy Spirit does for a believer today. It places you into Christ. All of this idiotic talk that the Pentecostals do about asking people who want to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an ignorance and a deception and a delusion. This is because anybody who is a believer already has that baptism. He is already in union with Christ.

So the church started in one local spot in Jerusalem. In 30 years, it had covered the world because of the ministry of the believers of that day. We're told in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that Christians are added to the body of Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We know that this took place (the church universal began) on the first occasion of the baptism of the Holy Spirit which was on the day of Pentecost. So in Jerusalem, these believers were fused together (Acts 1:12-13, Acts 2:1-4). These 120 believers were now indwelt by the Holy Spirit; they had been baptized into the body of Christ; and, they proceeded to preach the gospel to these devout Jews (not saved) who were present for the Passover feast, and to witness to them (Acts 2:3-5). At that point, these believers were filled with the Spirit. When they were baptized, they were also filled. Today, when a person is born again, he is immediately filled with the Spirit. That means that he is immediately in temporal fellowship. He is in the inner circle. When he sins, he leaves the inner circle, but he never leaves the outer circle of his eternal fellowship.

These were Jewish believers. At the same time as they were formed into the church, they became Christians, and they were no longer Jews. They were now Christians. Later when Cornelius came in with a gentile contingent, when Cornelius and his house were saved, they ceased to be gentiles, and they became Christians. The day you believed in Christ as Savior, you ceased to be either a Jew or gentile, and you became a Christian. When your salvation took place, another thing also took place. You received a spiritual gift--at least one, and possibly more.

These people at Pentecost also received spiritual gifts because this is how the body is to be built. One of the gifts that was evident was the gift of tongues. Now we've gone over this elsewhere, but just to remind you, the gift of tongues was to authenticate God's messengers and the message that they brought. This had to be a strong message. This is because the people were going to ask, "After hundreds of years of Judaism, and all of a sudden are you men going to stand up and tell us that Judaism is dead, and that Christianity is in?" That was hard to believe. "Yet, when we see these spectacular miracles of God performed, we know that God is with you."

Secondly, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 14 that this was a sign to the Jews that the fifth stage of their cycle of discipline was now approaching. That fifth stage meant that not only were they to be under a military domination of a foreign power, which they were at that time, but they would be scattered from their land all over the earth, which they were until the state of Israel began in 1948. These people were filled with the Spirit. They were baptized on the day of Pentecost. That same thing happens to everybody today who becomes a believer. The Pentecostals today make the mistake of not understanding that the gift of tongues was evidenced for a very specific reason. They had to be able to demonstrate to all these people in their native languages that God was speaking to them. They had to demonstrate to the Jews that they were hearing the Word of God from gentile tongues which was a sign that they were through, and that their only hope now was to turn to Christ the Savior. The Pentecostals make the mistake of relating speaking in tongues to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It had nothing to do with that. They were just two totally separate things that happened to occur coincidentally.

So as a result, these believers were placed in Christ, and they had now received the baptism the spirit, the indwelling of the spirit, and a spiritual gift. They already had regeneration and sealing. Now they were in the church. They had all the five things that you receive when you're born again. There was a period in the transition from the Old Testament to the church age when there were apostles here, when sometimes the apostles would lay their hands on people to give them the baptism of the Holy Spirit and bring them into the church. However, those were apostolic hands; that was apostolic authority; and, it was a transition period. As you go through the events of the book of Acts, you discover that the normal situation then arises, as in Cornelius's case, that they believed and immediately were baptized by the Holy Spirit.

This was the origin of the church. Christ said, "I will build my church." The new body officially began on the day of Pentecost. You can read about that in Acts 2:1-4. Next time we'll pick up the purpose of the church; the nature of the church; and, then we'll go into the expressions of the local church.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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