

SCRIPTURE RESEARCH - VOL. 1 - NO. 15

(Inside front cover)

THANKSGIVING

"AND BE YE THANKFUL ." Col. 3:15

There are just five points which we desire to set forth in this consideration of an important subject. They are:

{ God the source }

1. RECOGNITION: { and } as to all good.

{ Christ the medium }

{ the blessings }

2. POSSESSION: { by } that we have.

{ God's grace }

{ Divine estimation }

3. VALUATION: { vs } as to actual worth.

{ human supposition }

{ of the material }

{ and temporal }

4. APPRECIATION: { and } as to heart { of the spiritual }
and head.

{ and eternal }

{privately }

5. EXPRESSION: { and } as unto God

{Publicly } through Christ.

I. RECOGNITION.

Ex. 15:11. "Who is like unto Thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders?"

A proper recognition and acknowledgment of the incomparableness of God is essential to all true thanksgiving. God's priority and superiority in the universe must become a settled fact in the mind. This is basic.

By way of contrast, one cannot escape the conclusion as to his own littleness viewed in the light of God's greatness. Men are self-centered and self-willed unless God's incomparable greatness, goodness, and glory become evident to their minds. When there is any attempt to deify humanity, it is evident that there has been no true conception of Deity.

According to 2 Tim. 3:2, "Men shall be lovers of their own selves." This is because they are not lovers of God. Unthankfulness follows logically.

But, what is the secret for a proper recognition of God, the source of all good? Christ, who is the medium. "For out of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things; to Him glory unto the ages" (Rom. 11:36, Cp. Col. 1:15-17). In connection with these texts, read 1 Chron. 29:10-13. Then, in the 14th verse, David, by way of contrast, cries out, "But who am I?" etc.

There is no knowledge of God apart from Christ (cp. John 1:18 and 14:9). There are no blessings from God apart from Christ (Cp. Gal. 3:13, 14; Eph. 1:3). Therefore we read In Eph. 1:20, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and Father in The Name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. POSSESSION.

Not only is a recognition of God as the source and Christ as the medium of blessing essential to thanksgiving, but also a knowledge, insofar as possible, of our possessions by God's purpose, power and permission.

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WHAT DID PAUL MEAN BY:

**"THAT GOD WOULD OPEN UNTO US A DOOR OF
UTTERANCE TO SPEAK THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST?"**

**Col. 4:2-5. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with
thanksgiving;**

**"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of
utterance, to speak the MYSTERY OF CHRIST, for which I am
also in bonds:**

"That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."

The answer to this question is found in:

Eph. 6:18-20. "Praying always with prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. —

"And for me that utterance may be liven unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL.

"For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak".

The point is not that Paul might have a place in which to speak the "Mystery of Christ" or in which to make known the "Mystery of the Gospel," but that he might have the boldness to speak as he "ought to speak." This is made clear by comparing in parallel the two passages above:

Col. 4: 2-5 EPH. 6:18-20

- 1. "Continue in prayer" 1. "Praying always**
- 2. "Watch in the same" 2. "Watching thereunto"**
- 3. "Praying also for us" 3. "Praying – for all saints and for me"**
- 4. "That God would open 4. "That utterance may be unto us a door of utterance" given unto me that I open my mouth boldly"**
- 5. "to speak the MYSTERY 5. "To make known the MYSTERY OF CHRIST" OF THE GOSPEL."**
- 6. "For which I am in bonds" "For which I am an ambassador in bonds"**
- 7. "That I may make it manifest 7. "That therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak" as I ought to speak"**

Paul was not asking prayers that he might have an open door of opportunity. The open door he wanted was an open mouth — that he might open his month boldly "to speak the Mystery of Christ" and "to make known the Mystery of the the Gospel."

Why pray for boldness?

It requires boldness to preach and teach "The Mystery." "The Mystery of Christ," "The Mystery of the Gospel," the "Fellowship of the Mystery," the "Glory of the Mystery," "the Mystery of God," ...

And this was "THE DOOR OF UTTERANCE" for which Paul prayed.

J. Clyde Stillion

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

(Text: Colossians 2:8-10) by William B. Hallman

The greatest discovery that any human being can make is the discovery of the all-sufficiency of Christ and the utter worthlessness of man without Him. Christ is all, and in Him we have all. Without Him we are nothing -- absolutely nothing. It makes no difference how many times we multiply ciphers; they will be devoid of all magnitude or quality until we place some digit before them. But once a digit is placed before them, they take on meaning, value, and significance.

"Christ is all" is the covering principle of this Book of Colossians. Look at the following verses: "That in all things He might have the preeminence" (1:18); "In Him should all fullness dwell," (1:19); "In Him dwelleth all The Fullness of The Godhead bodily" (2:9); "In Him, Which is the Head of all principality and power" (2:10); "Christ is all and in all" (3:11). I am sure we all can

sing with Charles Wesley, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want, more than all in Thee I find."

Browning wrote: "I say, the acknowledgement of God in Christ, accepted by that reason, solves for thee all questions in the earth and out of it, and has so far advanced thee to be wise." And it was Bishop Moule who said: "No surer test according to Scripture can be applied to anything claiming to be Christian teaching. Where does it put Jesus Christ? What does it make of Jesus Christ? Is He something in it, or is He all?"

This Epistle of Colossians is a positive presentation of the antidote to every form of heresy. Epaphras had come to Paul at Rome with the news that real danger of false teaching had beset the church at Colosse. This new heresy called Gnosticism was a...

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...of Judaic Ritualism and Oriental Mysticism (see 2:16-18). These Colossians were asked to accept something in addition to Christ. They taught that Christ was not sufficient, not unique. They taught an additional philosophy (vs. 8); an additional astrology (vs. 8 – "elements of the world" have to do with stars and planets); an additional circumcision (vs. 11); additional ascetic rules and regulations (vs. 16, 20-23); and additional worship of angels (vs. 18).

When anyone says that we are to be saved or kept by the Law, they have never understood the phrase, "Complete in Him." "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Romans 10:4). When anyone suggests that we can add to our salvation by doing something, they have never understood the phrase, "Complete in Christ." "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). When anyone suggests that water baptism in any form is necessary for salvation, or as a testimony to one's faith, or the door to the church, he does not understand the

phrase, "Complete in Him." We are "Buried with Him in baptism" (Colossians 2:12). When we are told that we must keep the Sabbath, we know men do not understand the completeness we have in Christ. "The Sabbath days which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17).

The word translated "fullness" in 2:9 is in the Greek the word *pleroma*, and the word "complete" in 2:10 is the word *pepleromenoi*. This latter is a perfect passive participle of the word *pleroo*. The words mean "to make full, to fill up, to fill to the full, to diffuse throughout, complete, nothing wanting." So the great word in this Epistle, both with reference to Christ and to the believer in Christ, is this word *pleroma* or *pleroo*. This fulness is worked into the very structure and language of the Epistle (see 1:9; 1:19; 1:24; 1:25; 2:2; 2:9; 2:10; 4:12; 4:17).

Not only in Colossians, but in the whole Bible we have

Tributes to Jesus Christ. He is seen in every promise, parable,

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...prophecy, type, poem, narrative, allegory, and symbol. He is likened to the sun, the stars, the shepherd, the lamb, the lion, the door, the cornerstone, the foundation, the bread and the wine. Everything about Him is superlative. He is The "Lord of Lords", "The King of Kings," "The Fairest Among Ten Thousand."

Nothing can go beyond completeness. You can add nothing to it. You might as well try to purge a sunbeam, or purify the whiteness of the newly-fallen snow as to add to that which is already perfect. And it is not only true that all fullness dwells in Him, " but also that we are "complete in Him."

One day Michelangelo went into the studio of the young painter, Raphael, and, finding him gone, left without

leaving his name. But before he went, he took a piece of chalk and wrote on the canvas of the poor and meager design of Raphael bold and sweeping line with the word *amplius* (wider). When Raphael returned and saw this, he knew immediately who had been there and done this. He thus changed his style. So our Lord points to His fullness and our narrowness and emptiness, and challenges us to partake of His fullness -- His *pleroma*.

It is the privilege of every person to recognize their completeness in Christ. This can be done first,

By Recognizing Christ's Fullness

For in Him dwelleth all the
fullness of the Godhead bodily
(Col. 2:10).

Alford paraphrases this verse:

For in Him all The Complete
perfection essential to the
Godhead abides corporeally,
substantially, and really, and
not in the manner of shadows.

Christ's fullness is resident in His Person ("in Him" - *en auto*). This phrase is given the emphatic position in the verse, and...

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...draws our attention first to the One Who has the fullness. The Holy Spirit wants us to see Him, even before we see His fullness. This is important!

We must also recognize the Permanence of this fullness in the word "dwelleth" - *katoikei*. This word means "to settle down, to be at home." Deity is at home in Christ, and dwells so in a permanent way.

There is also the Plenitude of this fullness as seen in the words, "all the fullness of The Godhead" - *pan to pleroma tes Theotetos*. To make this matter exceedingly clear, the Apostle uses the word *pan* (all), emphasizing that the fullness is complete. There is no portion of the plenitude that is not present. Paul is pointing out further by the use of the word *Theotetos* (Godhead) that not the mere quality of God resides in Christ, as seen in Romans 1:20 by the use of the word *Theiotes*, but the absolute essence of God dwells in Christ. Christ is not merely like God, that is Divine, but He is *Theos* - God. This was Paul's declaration against the Gnostics before Athanasius had to oppose Arius (who said that the Son is not of the same substance as The Father, but was created as an agent for creating the world), or the modern cults of Theosophy, Bahaiism, Unity, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc.

In this Fullness of Christ we also recognize the place in the word "bodily" - *somatikos*. This is an adverb modifying the verb "dwell," pointing to the manner. It means "bodily," or "in bodily manifestation." This does not mean a mystical dwelling, or a mere spiritual dwelling, or a limited bodily dwelling. It does mean an eternal bodily dwelling. There can be only one tenable explanation and that is that Christ was and is God. All The Fullness dwelt in Him before the incarnation, during the incarnation, and continues so permanently. Since "in Christ" the plenitude dwells permanently and bodily, there is the manifestation that gives the lie to all forms of Gnosticism, which perverts the truth about the person of Christ.

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If the foregoing exposition is true, and it is, then certain things follow in logical sequence.

Christ is Head of all creation. "For by Him were all things created ... all things were created by Him, and for Him (Colossians 1:16-17). In creation Christ is preeminent. Every form and kind of matter, simple and

complex, was created by Him. The atom and the star, the sun and the clod, every grade of life from the worm to the angel, every order of intellect and being around and above us, the splendors of Heaven and the nearer phenomena of the earth are the product of the first-born of all creation. Three prepositions are used in relation to Christ as Creator - *en, dia,* and *eis* - "in Him," "through Him," and "for Him." Christ is the source, the means, and the end of all creation. He is also the conserver of all "By Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17). He impresses upon creation its unity and solidarity, making it a cosmos instead of a chaos. He feeds the sun with fuel, and the sparrow with corn. He guides the planets in their courses, and keeps the heart beating in man. He cares for the tiniest insect that makes the coral and the mightiest leviathan which plows the deep. He guides the seraph and the cherub in their interspatial missions. The helm of the universe is in His hands that were nailed to Calvary for you and me. Everywhere we behold His footprints; out of every storm and solitude we hear His voice across the darkness saying: "It is I, be not afraid."

Christ is also the Head of all redemption. "And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself" (Colossians 1:20). He is both the "Author and Finisher" of our faith; the "*Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End*" of our redemption. When He cried, "It is finished," it was finished. Nothing was left undone, and nothing need be added. In the incarnation He became both God and man; in the crucifixion He became our means of peace and provision for every spiritual blessing; in the resurrection He became our power over death, the grave, and Lake of Fire; in His ascension and seating at God's right...

...hand, He became our guarantee of all future glory with Him. Nothing has been left undone for our future glorification with Him "in the Heavenlies."

Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body. "And He is the Head of the Body, the Church" (Colossians 1:18). The head is the glory of the body. There the chief beauty of manhood dwells. Christ is fairer than all. We are circumcised with Him, baptized with Him, risen with Him, ascended with Him, and seated with Him in glory. What a complete identification! It is the head which unifies the body, coordinates all its movements, regulates all its actions. From the head comes the mandate which lifts the hand and moves the foot.

Christ is again the Head of our Hope. "When Christ Who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). Christ takes care of all our sorrows, sufferings, trials and tribulations. Matthew Arnold shows the failure of the Greek religion to take into account the sorrows of life. It was only a fair weather religion. Twenty miners were once buried in a coal pit in Wales, standing in water to the waist, until but five remained. Yet they were singing, "In the deep and mighty waters there is none to hold my head, but my only Saviour Jesus, Who was offered in my stead." The South Sea Islanders have a palm tree that they use for bread, drink, clothing, shelter, light, material for books, cordage for boats, and for needles. So our Lord Jesus Christ is all and in all. We are God's heavenly people; our citizenship is in Heaven, and from thence we look for our Saviour. "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

The "fullness" of Christ is but half of the story. The apostle hastens on to show the other side. So we must also,

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Recognize The Christian's Fullness

"Ye are complete in Him" (2:10). Note our present possession in the words "ye are." This word in the Greek holds the emphatic position. "Beloved, now are

we the sons of God" (1 John 3:2). Note also our present position -- "in Him." Again the Greek gives this an emphatic location. "In Him" is the richest little phrase in all of Paul's Epistles. This is the sphere of the believer's life. It is a sphere, not a mere circle. We are "in Him" surrounded above, beneath, beside, and all around. So nothing can come from without to harm us, and with Him within, we should be "more than conquerors." "In Him" we have all that He has, and He is our fullness, our complement, our completeness. See also our past perfection as believers. The word is *pepleromenoi*, and means "complete, filled full, perfected." This is a perfect, passive participle, so it represents a past perfect work. Demosthenes used the word here translated "complete" in describing a ship fully manned. Truly our ship is fully manned, from prow to stern, by her Captain Who steers the vessel, stills the storm, guides through rocks and reefs, feeds the crew, fills every need, and brings the vessel to its desired haven.

If we are "complete in Him," and we are "by grace through faith," then it follows what Paul sets forth in this Epistle.

We are complete without philosophy. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments (elements) of the world, and not after Christ" (2:8). We need no sophisms of this world to prop our faith. There is nothing new in philosophy except old error. One day three friend philosophers came to Job to comfort him and to set him straight as to his thinking. These three represent the reasonings of the best of men. Eliphaz reasons on human experience (4:8; 5:3; 15:17) -- "Even as I have seen," "I have seen," "I have seen." It is what he had seen, heard, and felt. Bildad comes with human tradition (8:8, 10) -- "For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age,"

"search of fathers." Zophar reasons on human merit (11:13-14)--

"If thou prepare thine heart." This is the gospel of humanism. Six thousand years of human gropings after wisdom have not given men the true knowledge of God, nor His ways with man. Man's reason is inadequate to understand either the will or way of God. If man by his own reason could find God, and His way of redemption, then there would be no need of a revelation. Like little David we are content with the sling and the stones. As for the armor of philosophy, we leave that to proud Goliath to wear. "Spoil you," says Paul. The word is *sulagogon*, and means "to carry off as a captive, a slave, as booty." It is used of kidnapping and plundering a house, also seducing a maiden.

We are also "complete in Him" without ceremonies.

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or the sabbath days (Col. 2:14, 16-17).

All these ceremonies had their day. They belong to the time of shadows; we now have the Substance, Christ. "Finished are the types and shadows of the ceremonial law." Circumcision, sacrifices, Passover, water baptisms, temple services, priestly functions, etc., are but "beggerly elements" of a past age, encumbrances no longer needed. Who looks for the moon as long as the sun is shining? We are in the day of the substance, not in the night of the shadows. But man is so prone to be religious, and add something to Christ. He must "touch," and taste," and "handle" something.

Again, we are "Complete in Him" without any human merit.

For by grace are ye saved
through faith; and that not of
yourselves: it is the gift of God:
Not of works, lest any man
should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

All our righteousnesses are but filthy rags. If we were "dead in sins," and we were, how could a dead man do anything?

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He cannot see, hear, touch, smell, speak, or walk. So how utterly foolish it is, like Zophar, to talk about preparing one's heart to appease God or to merit His favor.

Therefore, if "in Him" there dwells all "the fullness of the Godhead bodily," and we are "complete in Him," let us live as those who know this fullness! The Pauline doctrine of Christ is His absolute "fullness," His *pleroma*. And the doctrine of the members of His body is the doctrine of "ye are complete in Him." Christ should therefore command all our worship, our admiration; our love. There is at our disposal the infinite merit of His righteousness; the infinite efficacy in His blood; and the infinite power of His resurrection and glorification.

The celebrated artist, Danneker, was asked by Napoleon to paint Venus for the Louvre. He declined. An enormous sum was offered him, but still he declined. The little emperor angrily demanded the reason. "I have just painted Christ," was the answer, "and I can never lower my brush to paint such an inferior subject as Venus."

Let us therefore sing:

Now blest in heavenly places
In Christ at God's right hand;
And filled with all His fullness
Complete in Him to stand.
Sing to the praise and glory
Of Him Who thus hath shown,
Such gracious love and mercy,
To call us for His own.

(This message by Pastor William B. Hallman,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was given at the Ewalt
Memorial Bible School Conference.)

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CIRCUMCISION

by Russell H. Schaefer

The Hebrew word translated circumcision is *muwlah*, fr. *muwl*; a primary root to cut short, fig. to destroy, cut down. Physiologically it has a reference to a blunting or cutting off. The Greek word *peritome* is derived from *peri*-around and *temno*, to cut. Biblically, circumcision as a rite is first mentioned in Genesis 17:10. Ancient Egypt and other nations practiced circumcision -- some on both sexes. In all advanced societies it is today practiced medically as a health measure.

The Covenant Of Circumcision

Circumcision is severally spoken of as A COVENANT, A SIGN, A TOKEN AND A SEAL (Genesis 17:10, 11; Romans 4:10, 11). The TOKEN and the SIGN are likely the same thing. The SIGN of circumcision is associated by the Apostle Paul with the events of Genesis 15:6,

Abraham's being declared righteous while uncircumcised, and the Sign of affirmation being added some 13 years later. This was the external attestation of the covenant made with Abraham and his seed; this was called "The Seal of Abraham" by the rabbis. The covenant aspect of circumcision is mainly in view in the Genesis account, since Abraham's being declared righteous was not a result of a covenant, but simple faith on Abraham's part in the declaration of God concerning his seed -- the seed that was to finally Issue in THE SEED, Christ (Galatians 3:16; Genesis 15:3-6, cp. Romans 4:1-5). The covenant that was made in Genesis 15:1-18 is repeated in Genesis 17:1-16 with the addition of circumcision as the token of that covenant. In Genesis 17:10, circumcision is spoken of as "This is My Covenant." It must be remembered that with each covenant made there was an accompanying CUTTING OF THE COVENANT (Genesis 15:18, made-cut [Hebrew text]), that is, a Sacrifice was slain and the covenanting parties each took part in the offering and assented to the terms of the covenant. The offering...

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...that CUT the covenant made with Abraham and his seed is recorded in Genesis 15:9, 10. The animals for sacrifice are selected, slain, sectioned, placed on the altar, and then the pieces were laid cut in their original shape. The flame that consumed the sacrifice tokened the acceptance by God. When God's flame passed between the pieces, the cutting of the covenant was complete. Death had taken place, the substitute assumed the liability and responsibility of the covenantor. In the case of Abraham, he assumed no terms, observed no agreements, since during the final stages consummating the cutting of the covenant Abraham slept and God became the sole covenantor. God assumed the obligation and hence it became an unconditional covenant. Knowing the frailty of the flesh, how often we say "I will" to God, but "don't" do as we say or think. God let Abraham sleep as a dead

man while He assumed the surety of the covenant. So Christ did for us while we were dead in sins. It is upon this basis and this basis alone that circumcision was called a COVENANT with Abraham and his seed after him (Genesis 17:10-13). This became a token of the whole covenant transaction between God and Abraham.

Some Unique Items On The Covenant

It was to be initiated upon male children at eight days of age (Genesis 17:12, cp. Leviticus 12:3), an age when they would have nothing to say about the covenant, perpetuating its unconditional character. The covenant was "cut" once for all. It was to be borne by succeeding generations. Without this sign, the offending individual was to be "cut off" from his people, i.e., put to death (Genesis 17:14). The rite that made it into a covenant was not the mere CUTTING OFF, as may be commonly supposed, but a sign CUT INTO THE FLESH. This distinction, is stated in Genesis 17:13, "My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." The cutting off of the flesh is certainly a great truth, for unaided, Abraham could not produce life nor righteousness that was acceptable to God. It is true that the old flesh should be put to...

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...death -- be cut off -- but centered as the act of circumcision is on the instrument of pro-creation Within the context of Abraham's seed and their birthright, it was fitting that the mark of the covenant be branded in their flesh. It would hence denote that sacrifice of which God was the sole Covenantor and the ensuing covenant.

The partaker of Israel's Passover was to be circumcised beforehand (Exodus 12:43-48). It was the tie of Israel as a nation with the covenant made with their forefather, Abraham.

The Interpretation

That DEATH, or that which symbolized death, as the proper interpretation of circumcision is seen in the following texts as translated in the Authorized Version:

Psalms 58:7 "Cut in pieces." (the wicked)

Psalms 90:6 "Cut down." (Children of Man compared to grass.)

Psalms 118:10, 11, 12 "Destroy" (The nations)

The Part For The Whole

While the act of circumcision was placed upon the procreative organ of man, this part was not the limit inferred from the act, since the act was symbolical of the whole man. Moses spoke of his lips being uncircumcised, feeling the need of redeemed and purified lips to speak the holy words of God (Exodus 6:12, 30). Jeremiah speaks of Israel's needing to circumcise their ears and hearts to hear the word of God and thus avert judgment (Jeremiah 4:4; 6:10; 9:25, 26). Without the heart being circumcised, there was no love for God (Deuteronomy 30:6). It was Stephen's burning accusation of Israelites being "uncircumcised in heart and ears" that precipitated his death in Acts 7:51. In his definition of a true Jew (Romans 2:29), Paul states that he possesses that circumcision of the...

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...heart and spirit -- not merely in the letter. Thus, we are given an insight into the true meaning of circumcision. The outward rite was not the end of the matter, nor was it to be an end in itself. The meaning was lost upon many a Jewish heart, as other rites were upon the early church in Acts. This was just as the Sacrificial Sin Offering, the Burnt offering, was meaningless unless the offerer saw beyond this innocent victim to the great Kinsman-Redeemer and His Sacrifice for Sin. Romans 2:24-29 affords us an interesting commentary on God's response to the

physically uncircumcised Gentiles being reckoned as circumcised for doing by nature the intents of His Holy Law. The Jewish law-breaker on the other hand, though being physically circumcised, was reckoned as uncircumcised. While the child of the covenant from birth, still it must be borne in mind that each Jewish father was to instruct his children so that they would know and love God. Like David of old, he could cry when sin overtook him, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Thus, his circumcision was also to be inward, of the heart and of the spirit. We will see more of this later in the study.

Circumcision And The Book Of Acts

During the time covered by the Book of Acts, circumcision was practiced by Jewish believers but was not binding upon Gentiles (Acts 21:19-25). For the Jew this rite was a divine command and, according to 1 Corinthians 7:18-20, he was not to seek its effacement, nor were the Gentiles to seek it. In itself, Paul states, circumcision is nothing, for certainly the scoring of the flesh is nothing, but he also states in the same text that the keeping of the commands of God are everything. Only as the Jew kept the commands of God did his circumcision lend weight to his claim of being a Son of Abraham and a true child of the Law (Romans 2:25). The moral involved has a grim warning for us who claim to understand so much of God's grace: If we show no grace and testify not of our Christ, one may well question of what we have has reached beyond the mere flesh.

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The great uproar recorded in Acts 21:28, 29 was triggered by this issue. The context of the circumcision party with Peter in Acts 11:2 centered around the question of Peter's going in to men uncircumcised and eating with them. The debate as to whether Gentile believers were to be circumcised was resolved in Acts 15:1-29. Paul's UNCIRCUMCISION GOSPEL in the

Galatian letter was founded upon a singular premise, "That Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:2). Not the Gospel he preached among the Jews — for to them he would preach the New Covenant, of which he declares he was an able minister (2 Corinthians 3:6), of which preaching Acts 24:14-17; 26:6, 7; 18-23 and 28:23 are an example. The statements in Galatians respecting circumcision, uncircumcision, days, feasts, etc. have as their context Paul's Gospel to the UNCIRCUMCISION. The Jewish Law had been done away for RIGHTEOUSNESS for those who believe. It had not been done away as Israel's national constitution, as Israel's moral code, as a law concerning Israel's dietary, religious, and civil legislation. We Gentiles suppose it to have been Israel's grounds of righteousness with God, and with many it became this, but Israel's law was both secular and religious. It was not divided as our laws into voluntary religious laws and into compulsory civil laws. The Gentile of Paul's day more nearly approached our concept that is, a division between church and state. The believer was justified by faith in Christ's completed redemptive work on his behalf -- without works. Without works he was counted as the believing seed of Abraham and heir according to the promise (Galatians 3:29). Paul's argument was, "Why then place yourselves under a dying and soon to be replaced economy?"

The Fulfillment Of Circumcision

Circumcision as a rite would only cease if the covenant which it spoke was operative, or the symbolism of which it spoke was fulfilled in its anti-type. In Galatians 5:11-12, Paul states that he no longer preached circumcision. He, of course, had never preached circumcision to Gentile believers. Paul unmistakably links this

...cessation with the offence of the cross. The death of Christ had a distinct bearing on the rite of circumcision, so much so that to submit to the symbolical rite after

Christ had fulfilled the type and symbolism, to then submit to circumcision, was to make in effect the work of Christ profitless (Galatians 5:2). Aside from this, circumcision supposed that the one so covenanting would put himself under the obligations of the law, including animal sacrifice (Galatians 5:3). Succinctly, to seek justification by law (works after the righteousness of God without the law was manifested and declared (Romans 3: 21) would be a falling from grace (Galatians 5:4). The symbolism of circumcision -- cutting off, destroying, dying -- met its grim reality in the death of Christ, according to Colossians 2:11 and 12a:

**In WHOM also ye were
circumcised (with a circum-
cision not handwrought by the
putting off of the body of the
flesh) by the circumcision of
Christ, co-buried with HIM ...
" (Nestle-Marshall Text)**

In His death Christ was CUT OFF for us. He bore our sins, and the plaintive cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me," brought near our great redemption and brought type and anti-type together. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "He was cut out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken," (Isaiah 53:8).

In Christ the believer is completed (Colossians 2:10). In Christ the believer is CIRCUMCISED WITH A CIRCUMCISION MADE WITHOUT HANDS (Colossians 2:11). Sharing Christ's sacrifice, God in Christ assumes our liabilities, our sins and the responsibility for providing a perfect Savior. No wonder Paul could write:

**And you, being dead in your
sins and the un-circumcision of
your flesh, hath He quickened
together with Him having**

forgiven you all trespasses.
Colossians 2:13

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Because of this identification with the Divine cutting off of Christ, it is written of the believer:

We are the Circumcision
which worship God in spirit,
and rejoice in Christ Jesus,
and have no confidence in the
flesh.

Circumcision, being fulfilled in Christ's death, renders the rite void, especially in this dispensation when no significance is attached to any ritual performed by the flesh, or any rite or ordinance performed on the flesh.

To continue the rite (aside from medical or hygienic reasons) is to practice what Paul called "flesh mutilation" in Philippians 3:2, and, of this and/or any other rite one can impose on another, we are to beware. Let us rather always rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3).

THROUGH THE FOG

QUESTION: Is the "Golden Rule" of Matt. 7:12 a reliable foundation for Christian salvation?

ANSWER: It certainly is not. The so-called "Golden Rule" of Matt 7:12 reads:

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

This verse constitutes a very excellent standard of ethics, but is not a basis for salvation.

God's plan for salvation is made clear in Eph. 2:8, 9:

"By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any should

boast." Cp. 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 3:21-27. (H. N. B.)

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NEW TESTAMENT

(Workbook)

(In this and subsequent issues, we will present portions of the Ewalt Bible School's course of lessons. The workbook programming and testing is to induce attention and retention of the subjects studied. Your text book will be th e B i b l e .) .

INTRODUCTION

"And He said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

(Luke 24; 25-27)

The Lord Jesus Christ is the One of Whom all God's inspired ministers spake. The Bible is a Christo-centric Book. He is the subject, whether the ministry of John the Baptist, the twelve, or the Apostle Paul. All spoke of Him.

It has pleased God to call and appoint various ministers to set forth His various purposes in Christ. He so directed the lives, the speaking and the writings of these men so that their ministries would be unfolding His purposes as they relate to Israel, the nations, the Bride, and to the Church which is His Body, etc.

"Let the Word concerning

Christ

Dwell as a rich treasure

in your hearts"

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Multiple choice testing. One choice will be correct.

Example: John the Baptist, according to Acts 13:24, first preached before the manifestation of Christ, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel_____.

1. The nations 2. Italy 3. Israel

THE LORD'S FORERUNNER

1. John the Baptist and Elijah are intimately related in Scripture; of both it is said, "Behold I will send My _____ before thy face.

1. Prophet 2. Priest 3. Messenger

Scripture: Malachi 3:1; Mark 1:1-4; Matthew 11:2-10

2. Of John's birth, an angel said, "Many of the _____

_____ shall he turn to The Lord their God.

1. Children of Men 2. Children of Israel

3. Children of God

Scripture: Luke 1:16.

3. John was to be sent before The Lord in the _____

_____ of Elijah.

1. Spirit and Power 2. Mission and Ministry 3. Incarnation and power

Scripture: Luke 1:17

4. When asked by the priests and Levites, "Art thou Elijah?"

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he said, "_____."

1. I am 2. I may be 3. I am not

Scripture: John 1:21.

5. If Israel had received the Kingdom (and the King) of which John spoke, then indeed the _____ role of John would have been fulfilled.

1. Messenger 2. Forerunner 3. Elijah

Scripture: Matthew 11:14, 15.

6. Because the message and ministry of John the Baptist failed to produce the repentance of the Nation of Israel and faith in the Messiah he announced, Christ could project the coming of Elijah into a yet future period. Of Elijah's coming, Christ said, "... Elijah truly shall first come, and _____ all things."

1. Restore 2. Destroy 3. Prepare

Scripture: Matthew 17:10, 11.

7. By the time covered by the 17th chapter of Matthew is reached, it is clear that John's message and ministry have come to a close. John has been imprisoned and _____.

1. Sentenced 2. Killed 3. Sent away

Scripture: Matthew 17:12, 13, Cp. Matthew 14:10; Mark 6:16-29.

8. Not only was John the Baptist's message, ministry, and role as the Lord's forerunner set aside by Israel's unbelief and rejection, but the _____ was/were to be rejected fully and slain.

1. Disciples 2. Apostles 3. The Lord Himself

Scripture: Matthew 17:12, 13.

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9. The Kingdom _____.

1. was set up. 2. was not set up 3. was at hand (nigh) but withdrawn.

Scripture: Luke 19: 41-44

10. Israel's King was _____.

1. Crowned 2. Rejected and Crucified 3. Exiled

Scripture: Luke 23:38.

11. The context of the verses dealing with the coming of Elijah (Malachi 3:1-3; 4:1-6) are fraught with
_____.

1. Blessings 2. Revival 3. Judgments

THE LORD'S FORERUNNER

(HIS BACKGROUND)

1. Both of John's parents came from a lineage of

1. Kings 2. Prophets 3. Priests

Scripture: Luke 1:5.

2. The names of John's parents were
_____.

1. Zacharias and Elizabeth 2. Joseph and Mary

3. Isaac and Rebekah

Scripture: Luke 1:5

3. The parents of John were _____ in years.

1. Young 2. Middle aged 3. Old

Scripture: Luke 1:7.

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4. Abraham and Sarah, Manoah and his wife, as well as the parents of John, all experienced the super-natural power of God so as to show that the child was of God's special giving for a special purpose.

The miracle was in the fact that the parents were too _____ or barren.

1. Young 2. Ill 3. Old

Scripture: Luke 1:7; Hebrews 11:11; Genesis 21:2;

Judges 13:2.

5. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was of the ancient priestly order of (Gr.) *Abia*, (Heb.) *Abijah* that had retained their identity from the Babylonian Captivity. This course of *Abia* was the _____ of the twenty-four "courses" into which the Priesthood had been arranged.

1. First 2. Third 3 Eighth

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 24:10.

6. Zacharias and Elizabeth, except when they journeyed to Jerusalem, made their home outside of the pretentious Priest-centres (*Oph-el*-quarter in Jerusalem or in Jericho) but lived in

_____.

1. The hill country of the desert. 2. The hill country of Juda (Judaea) 3. A city in the hill country of Juda.

Scripture: Luke 1:39.

7. In contrast to the bigotry, the self-glory, and unspiritual externalism of the Rabbinism, Pharisaicism, and the Scribes, of the parents of John the Baptist it is written that they were _____.

1. Both righteous before God. 2. Both sinless before God. 3. Both faultless before God.

Scripture: Luke 1:6.

8. While the sacrifice was prepared for the altar by the priest to who this lot had fallen, another lot (the third cast) fell to the priest who was to offer incense, which symbolized Israel's accepted prayers. According to the *Talmud* (5:2) this honor was given to a priest only once in his lifetime. As Zacharias ministered within the Holy Place and spread the incense on the altar of Gold, over the red coals from the altar of sacrifice, an Angel appeared on the south side of the altar, near the golden candlestick. This Angel's name means, "The Might of God." He is better known to us as

_____.

1. Michael 2. The Angel of the Lord 3. Gabriel

Scripture: Luke 1:19

9. Typical of angelic ministry to Israel is Gabriel is being sent to Daniel in answer to his prayer (Daniel 9). The substance of Gabriel's communication to Daniel was the restoration of Jerusalem and the coming and cutting off of _____.

1. Israel 2. Messiah 3. Daniel

Scripture: Daniel 9:24-26.

10. The first coming of Christ was accompanied with a ministry of angels (Luke 1:26; 2:9, 10, 13); the second coming of _____ shall likewise be accompanied by angels.

1. Elijah 2. John the Baptist 3. Christ

Scripture: Matthew 24:31; 13:39-41; I Thessalonians 4:16;

2 Thessalonians 1:7.

(To be continued)

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(Inside back cover)

It has been said, "To be thankful is to be thoughtful." One may be wrong, however, in his thinking. Has one anything for which to be thankful?

A person was heard to remark, "I don't get what is coming to me." Well, thank God you don't!

Our blessings, thank God, are not on the basis of what we think is coming to us, or what we feel we deserve; but of the goodness and grace of God. It is our privilege to know our blessings in Christ, but not without knowing and having Christ. Having Him, we have all (cp. 1 Cor. 3:22, 23).

3. VALUATION.

What is the actual value or worth of things? Shall our conclusions be reached by human supposition or by Divine estimation? God's will as to the valuation, possession, and utilization of things is alone of any real consequence. Unless one values as God values, he may

find himself in possession of that which ultimately proves to be deceptive and destructive.

The Sacred Scriptures alone give us the Divine estimation of things. A true valuation is essential to real thanksgiving. There is such a thing as a false thanksgiving (cp. Lu. 18:11).

Profit is the determining factor in true valuation. Note the following texts: Matt. 16:26; Jno. 6:63; 1 Cor. 13:3; 1 Tim. 4:8; 2 Tim. 3:16.

4. APPRECIATION.

True valuation savours of some appreciation. To the extent one appreciates to that extent is one in condition to offer thanksgiving. A thankless soul is unappreciative. Gifts and goodness mean little or nothing. We have instances in the Word of God of unappreciativeness (cp. Lu. 17:12-18; Rom. 1:21).

When spiritual and eternal things are properly valued, then material and temporal things are never overestimated. Thus there will be due appreciation to the glory of God.

5. EXPRESSION.

Appreciation must give evidence of itself. Thanksgiving is but the expression of appreciation.

In his private and personal communion with God, one may and ought to give expression of heartfelt thanks. In his public and general contact with others, one may and ought to give God the praise through Christ. Why not?

If the order of our message is logical, then, beginning with God as the source and Christ as the medium of all good, it is fitting that the expression of our appreciation be unto God the source, through Christ the medium.

"And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and Father through Him."

HOWARD NATHANAEL BUNCE, PH. D.