

1 TIMOTHY

1:1-2 *Who is Timothy?*

The general consensus among bible commentators is that Timothy was one of Paul's converts from his first apostolic mission journey which took in Lystra, Timothy's home town. He joined Paul on his second mission journey and helped him and Silas establish the churches at Philippi and Thessalonica (CP Ac 16:1-12; 17:1-15; 18:1-5; Php 2:19-23; 1Th 1:1-5; 2:1-12). Paul became Timothy's mentor - his father in the faith - teaching and encouraging him in many areas of ministry until God called him to be an apostle also (CP 1Th 2:6; 1Ti 1:1-3, 18; 4:1-16; 2Ti 1:1-6; 4:1-5).

1:18 *What were the prophecies that "went before" on Timothy which Paul refers to here?*

Timothy had received spiritual gifts by prophecy through the laying on of hands by Paul and the elders of the church (CP 4:14-16; 2Ti 1:6, 4:5). The *presbytery* in 1Ti 4:14 are the ruling elders of the church (CP Ac 14:21-23; 20:17-21, 28; 1Pe 5:1-3). The gifts Timothy received qualified him for the work of the ministry as apostle, evangelist and teacher. He also had the gift of exhortation (CP 1Th 1:1 and 2:6 with 1Ti 4:13). For a more detailed study on ruling elders see comments on Ac 11:27, 20:17, Ro 11:13, Eph 4:11-12, 1Th 5:12-13, 1Ti 3:1-7, 1Pe 5:1-3, and author's study *The Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

1:20 *Who were Hymenaeus and Alexander and what does Paul mean that he delivered them unto Satan?*

These two men had cast away their faith and become blasphemers (CP V19 with V20). *Blaspheme* here means to speak evil of, slander, hurt the reputation. *Delivered unto Satan* means to excommunicate from the church - disfellowship. The purpose for this was remedial, not punishment (CP 1Cor 5:1-13; 2Th 3:14). Hymenaeus was also a false teacher who taught that the resurrection was past, causing many to depart from the faith (CP 2Ti 2:16-18). Alexander is also mentioned in Paul's second letter to Timothy but whether he and Alexander in 1 Ti 1:20 are one and the same is not known (CP 2Ti 4:14). There are three other references to the name Alexander in scripture but it is unlikely that they also refer to the Alexander in 1Ti 1:20 (CP Mk 15:21; Ac 4:6; 19:33-34).

2:8-15 *Does the prohibition of women exercising authority over men in the church only apply to the women of Paul's era because of their cultural background or does it apply to all women in all ages?*

What Paul says here has nothing to do with the cultural background of the women of his era, as many in the contemporary church claim to justify the ordination of women in the church today. What Paul is dealing with here has to do with church order and the position of men and women in the church for all time. In V 8 Paul wants men, as opposed to women, to conduct public worship in the church. *Men* here is

from the Greek word **aner**, which refers specifically to a male person. In V12 Paul forbids women holding down any position of authority over men in the church. The word *teach* here means "teacher" (CP Ac 13:1; 1Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11-12; 1Ti 4:13). Women cannot be teachers to instill doctrine and instruct men. They can teach other women, girls, children (boys and girls), and they can assist their husbands and others in their ministerial duties (CP Ac 18:24-26 with 1Cor 16:19; Ro 16:1-15; Php 4:3; Tit 2:3-5). Women can also educate, proclaim the truth, exhort, pray and prophesy (CP Ac 2:17-18; 21:8-9; 1Cor 11:5). But women cannot be ordained to public office in the church and exercise authority over men (CP 1Ti 2:11).

Being silent "with all subjection" means that women must submit themselves to God's order for the church which Paul is laying down here. In V13-14 Paul explains his opposition to women in leadership positions in the church is found in the original order of creation, and in the circumstances of the fall of man (CP 1Ti 2:13-14). Man (Adam), was formed first, then woman (Eve). Man was not deceived but woman was, and it is as a result of women's vulnerability to deception, and her subordinate role to man in the Divine order, that prohibits women from exercising authority over men in the New Testament church (CP Gen 2:18, 21-23; 3:1-6, 13-16). Women's subordinate role to men in the church was not decided by Paul due to the culture of the day. It was established by God as part of His Divine order of creation (CP 1Ti 2:15).

This is one of the most intensely debated scriptures in Christendom. It provides a rationale for Paul's prohibition of women in leadership positions over men in the New Testament church. The salvation spoken of in V15 is not salvation in the ordinary sense of the word, as when repentant sinners put their faith in the atoning work of Christ to be saved from eternal damnation. Here it means that childbearing, rather than occupying a position of leadership in the church, is women's primary function in God's eternal order. It is in the discharge of that function, through the faithful performance as a wife and mother in raising up Godly children, that a woman will find fulfillment in God's purpose for her. (CP 5:14). Being a wife and a mother is a more important role for a woman to fulfill in God's order than occupying a leadership position exercising authority over men in the church. Women still have to work out their own salvation though "... if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (CP Php 2:12-13 with Jn 6:27 and 2Pe 1:10-11).

There are also some in the church who claim that *man* in 1Ti 2:12 refers to a husband, and *woman* to a wife. They believe that this teaching only concerns husbands and wives, as in 1Cor 14. But that is not correct. In 1Ti 2:12 Paul is referring to women generally, because all women who profess Godliness, regardless of their marital status, are to dress modestly and not draw attention to themselves in the assembly by any form of immoderate conduct (CP V9-10). This clearly proves that Paul is dealing with the general conduct of all women in the church in 1 Ti 2:8-14, not with the relationship between a husband and wife, as in 1Cor 14 (CP 1Cor 14:34-35). Some in the church

argue against this teaching on the basis of Paul's teaching in Ga 3:28, that there is no distinction between men and women; that they are all one in Christ. But that has nothing to do with what Paul is saying about women in 1Ti 2:8-15 (CP Ga 3:28). Paul is speaking in spiritual terms here. There will always be distinctions between the races, social classes, and the sexes in the natural realm, but not in the spiritual realm. Men and women are one in Christ and equal in rights and privileges regarding gospel benefits. There is no longer any gulf between Jews and Gentiles, masters and slaves, and male and female. All are one in unity, in rights, and in privileges, and comprise one body, of which Christ is the head (CP Jn 10:16; 17:11, 20-23; Ro 3:22, 10:12, 12:5; 1Cor 12:12-14; Eph 1:22-23, 2:11-22; Col 3:11). The only difference between Christians is their function within the body of Christ (CP Ro 12:4, 6-8; 1Cor 12:7-11, 28-31; 2Cor 10:13; Eph 4:11; 1Ti 2:12-15; 1Pe 4:10).

There is no mandate anywhere in scripture that permits women to teach or exercise authority over men in the New Testament church, regardless of their cultural background. What Paul forbade under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the first century church is forbidden in the contemporary church also – God's word stands forever (CP Psa 119:89; Lu 21:33; 1Pe 1:23-25). There is no allowance in scripture whatever for God's word to be adapted to suit cultural changes in women that justifies their ordination to public office in the contemporary church, as many would have us believe (CP 1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:4-9).

These scriptures clearly teach that those to whom God has committed the government and direction of the New Testament church are men – bishops who are also called elders. Their names are interchangeable. The Greek words **episkopos** for bishop, and **presbuteros** for elder, both only refer to a male. This is further confirmed by the fact that anyone aspiring to the office of bishop or elder must be the husband of one wife, if married. There is no provision here for a woman to aspire to that office – they are excluded by scripture. Likewise deacons who assist the elders in their ministry, also can only ever be male. Like bishops, they too must be the husband of one wife, if married (CP 1Ti 3:8-13). *The husband of one wife* means literally a "one-woman man", not given to infidelity. We learn here also that there is no authority for women deacons – so-called deaconesses – in the New Testament church either.

Those who argue for women deacons claim that the Greek word **gune**, referring to wives in V11-12, also means women generally – without reference to marital status – and that is correct. But whether it refers to a woman generally, or a wife specifically, is determined by the context in which it is used. Here it is clearly used in a husband and wife relationship (CP V12). This is not referring to women deacons, but the wives of men deacons if they are married. The same as 1Ti 3:1-7 refers to male bishops or elders and their wives if they are married. This also refutes the teaching in the church that Phebe was a so-called deaconess in the church at Cenchrea (CP Ro 16:1-2). This simply teaches that Phebe was a servant of the church in Cenchrea. It does not mean that she was a deacon as

outlined in 1Ti 3:8-13, as many Christians have been led to believe.

We get a better insight into Phebe's ministry in the church at Cenchrea from a study of the word *succorer* by which Paul described her in V2 (KJV). This defines her as caring for the affairs of others; who helps and aids them from her resources (CP Ro 16:2). *Succorer* is from the Greek word **prostatis**, which is the feminine form of patron, or protector. It was used by the Greeks to describe those who care for and entertain strangers in their home. Phebe was evidently a woman of means who ministered to the needs of others in the church at Cenchrea and looked after Paul and his companions on his apostolic mission journeys there.

Those who argue for women leaders in the New Testament church curiously interpret the fact that three times in scripture Priscilla's name is used before her husband, Aquila, as proof that she was more prominent in the first century church than he was. This is claimed despite the fact that the other three times she and Aquila are referred to in scripture, Aquila is named first. Suffice it to say, in accordance with scripture, she assisted both Aquila and Paul in their ministries. They were also tentmakers, like Paul (CP Ac 18:2, 18, 26; Ro 16:3-4; 1Cor 16:19; 2Ti 4:19). We see in these scriptures that Aquila and Priscilla also had a church in their home.

To sum up here, there are many women who served with great distinction in the first century church, but none in a leadership capacity. In searching the scriptures we can only find male leadership in the New Testament church as the model for relationship between the sexes, and we should accept that at face value as God's order for His church. We cannot supplant God's order and replace it with another. However admirable it may be for women to want to serve God in this capacity, it can never be. God has decreed the New Testament church to be under the authority of men only, and until He revokes that decree women who undertake leadership roles in the church are not in His Divine order. It should be noted in closing here too that notwithstanding that the Old Testament bears record to God using women in leadership positions, it has no bearing on His purposes for women in the New Testament church. We must abide by New Testament teaching. (See also comments on Ro 16:1-2; 1Cor 14:34-35; Ga 3:28; Eph 4:11-12; 1Ti 3:1-7, 3:8-13 and author's studies *The Church and Women and God's Order for the New Testament Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**).

2:9-10 *What exactly does Paul mean by what he says here?*

Paul is admonishing women in the church here to dress discreetly and modestly and not to adorn themselves with elaborate hairstyles and showy, expensive jewellery. Christian women must never dress in a way that passes the bounds of proper reserve which could provoke or excite others to impure or immoral thoughts and desires. They have to exercise sound judgement in the way they dress. It must never be in a way that draws attention to their body, but in

the way that reflects their Christian profession – with decorum and modesty (CP Ro 12:1-2; Ga 5:13; Eph 4:27; Tit 2:11-12). A Christian woman's real adorning is her good works (CP 1Ti 2:10; 1Pe 3:1-6). In 1Ti 2:9 Paul also forbids women in the church wearing extravagantly expensive clothes. This is not teaching against women dressing nicely and wearing some jewellery, but against unnecessary extravagance.

This admonition applies to all believers, men as well as women, and it does not apply only to clothes, but to the believers' complete lifestyle. Regardless of their wealth, believers cannot justify any unnecessary extravagance in any form, whether it be for expensive clothes and jewellery, or anything else that panders to fleshly desires while there are others of God's children in the world who have absolutely nothing (CP Lu 16:19-31). See also comments on Lu 16:19-31 and 1Pe 3:1-6, and author's studies *How Christians are to Love One Another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith** and *Christians' Obligations to One Another Financially* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

3:1-7 *Who are bishops in the Divine order for the New Testament church?*

(CP Php 1:1). *Bishops* is simply another name for the ruling body of elders to whom God has committed the oversight of the New Testament church (CP Tit 1:4-9 with Ac 20:17, 28 and 1Pe 5:1-4). The word *overseers* in Ac 20:28 also means bishops. They are both derived from the same Greek word **episkopos** (CP Ac 1:15-20). Here we learn that apostles are also bishops. Judas Iscariot forfeited his bishopric - the office, charge, or duty of an overseer in the New Testament church – when he betrayed Jesus. He also forfeited his apostleship and eldership at the same time. *Bishop* is simply another name for elder. **Episkopos** is equal to **presbuteros** the Greek word for elder or presbyter. The terms bishop/overseer, elder/presbyter and pastor/shepherd all refer to one and the same person. However, although they all refer to one and the same person, the terms are not synonymous – they do not all mean the same: *elder/presbyter* refers to the man, *bishop/overseer* refers to his office, and *pastor/shepherd* refers to the work he does (CP 1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:4-9). These scriptures not only confirm that it is the elders to whom God has committed the direction and government of the local New Testament church, but they also teach that the elders are all men. The Greek words **episkopos** for bishop, and **presbuteros** for elder, both only refer to a male. Also, the fact that anyone aspiring to the office of a bishop or elder must be the husband of one wife if married, is further confirmation that elders can only ever be men, not women as well. Likewise deacons can only ever be men also, for they too must be the husband of one wife if married (CP 1Ti 3:12). Scripture does not teach that a bishop, elder or deacon can be the wife of one husband. The "husband of one wife" means literally "a one-woman man," not given to infidelity.

There is just as much confusion concerning elders in the contemporary church as there is concerning apostles and prophets. Sadly, not many Christians know who the elders really are in the Divine order for

the church. They simply see them as having been a long-time member of the church, but that is only a part of what qualifies them as elders (CP Eph 4:7-16). This clearly spells out for us that the men who function in the ministry gifts of V11 are the ones God has designated as the ruling elders in the New Testament church. Christ gave these men to the church and ordained them to remain there while ever the church exists and we do not have to look for any one else in scripture beyond them as the elders to whom God has committed the direction and government of His church. The ruling body of elders in the church consists of apostle/elders, prophet/elders, evangelist/elders and teacher/elders who collectively and co-equally pastor the church (CP 1Pe 5:1-4). Peter highlights the co-equality of the ruling body of elders in his statement here "...who am also an elder." This "elder" is not **presbuteros** but **sumpresbuteros**, which means literally "one on the same level with" - a fellow elder or co-presbyter. This is further confirmation that the Divine order of government in the local New Testament church involves a plurality of elders co-equally. Peter is addressing a plurality of elders from each of the local churches at Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia in this letter (CP 1Pe 1:1). His admonition to them is similar to Paul's admonition to the elders in the church at Ephesus in Ac 20:28 but with the added injunction that they are not to "...lord it over their congregations." This means that they are not to rule them in a high-handed, autocratic way. Some who are opposed to the concept of a plurality of elders co-equally ruling the New Testament church teach that in 1Pe 5:1 Peter is identifying with the elders as an apostle and with the people as an elder, but that begs the question, why? He had already identified himself as an apostle to the elders and people alike in 1:1, and in 5:1 he simply asserts to the elders among them that he and they are co-equals in the Divine order of government in the church. We should accept that assertion at face value, not look for hidden agendas behind it (CP Ac 14:21-23).

Here for the first time in scripture we see elders being appointed in the local church. They were already presiding over the church at Judaea when Paul and Barnabas took the relief money there from Antioch (CP Ac 11:29-30). They were also already presiding with the apostles over the Jerusalem church when Paul and Barnabas went there to settle the question of Gentile circumcision at Antioch (CP Ac 15:1-6). In Ac 14:21-23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the churches they had previously pioneered on their first apostolic mission journey in Ac 13 (CP 1Ti 1:1-4; Tit 1:4-5). We learn in 1Ti 1:1-4 that elders who had already been appointed in the local church at Ephesus were teaching error so Paul left Timothy there in the foundation ministry of apostle to straighten them out. Tit 1:4-5 teaches that Paul likewise left Titus in the foundation ministry of apostle in Crete to appoint elders in the local churches there (CP Eph 2:19-20). We see in all these scriptures a definite biblical pattern whereby elders are appointed after local churches have been established by apostles. The elders collectively then become the presbytery, responsible for the direction and government of the church. This is not teaching that elders are appointed by men, but that those functioning in the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11

are acknowledged and ordained to ministry in the church by the apostle or the ruling body of elders in accordance with the Divine will (CP 1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6; 4:5). The word "presbytery" in 1Ti 4:14 is referring to the ruling body of elders who prophesied over Timothy and laid hands on him to bring forth his ministry gift of apostle (CP 1Ti 3:1-7). The term "desire" in V1 means to stretch oneself out in order to grasp or touch something. It includes the idea of reaching after or seeking. However believers desiring the office of bishop/overseer/elder/presbyter must have the desire first confirmed by the word of God as outlined in V2-7, and also by the church as outlined in V10.

This means that nobody can be ordained an elder based solely on desire, burden, vision, administrative ability, business acumen, the call of God some may feel they have on their life, or even Bible College training. The requirements for ordination are stipulated by God and stand as absolutes in God's order for church government. Moral issues are not all that is involved. Spiritual maturity and faithfulness in service are just as important. Men must first prove their faithfulness in lesser areas of ministry before seeking promotion to the highest office in the local New Testament church (CP 1Ti 3:8-13). V13 here teaches that those who serve faithfully as deacons obtain for themselves a position of trust and influence in the church. This is a definite promise of promotion for those faithful in the lesser things first. There are still more scriptures proving the plurality of elders as the ruling body co-equally in the local church which we need to examine (CP Php 1:1). "Bishops" here are the ruling elders or presbyters (CP 1Ti 5:17). "The elders that rule well" are those who preside over the local church (CP He 13:7, 17, 24). "Them who are to be obeyed" again are the ruling elders. *Obey* here means to assent to; follow (CP Jas 5:14). James also teaches a plurality of elders ruling the church co-equally here. He does not refer to any one man but to the plurality of elders co-equally.

The number of elders in any church will depend entirely upon the size of the congregation. The apostle who pioneers the church may be the only one to start with, but others should be appointed as quickly as they are seen to be functioning in any of the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11, and can satisfy the requirements God has laid down for their ordination in 1Ti 3:1-7 and Tit 1:4-9. They then become co-leaders in the church with the apostle (CP Ac 15:1-27; 21:17-25). These scriptures clearly confirm all that the foregoing scriptures teach - that the direction and government of the local New Testament church is not vested in the ministry of one man alone as it is in the contemporary church, but in the plurality of elders co-equally. James alone did not decide on what action to take concerning the question of Gentile circumcision in Ac 15 as some teach. The Greek construction of the phrase "wherefore my sentence is ..." in V19 according to Kenneth Wuest's "Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament" is "...wherefore as for myself, my judgement is ..." James is simply putting forward his opinion on the issue the same as Peter did in V7-11, only he was more explicit than Peter by also proposing what action they should take. The fact that they all agreed to the action

proposed as Chapter 15 clearly emphasizes, proves the co-equality in the plurality of elders involved.

There were a number of apostles present with the elders in Ac 15 but only James was present when Paul returned to Jerusalem in Ac 21. On both occasions though the elders were co-equal with the apostles in receiving Paul and his companions and in the decision making process which ensued. There is nothing in any of these scriptures to indicate that James, who appears to be resident apostle in the Jerusalem church in Ac 21, outranked the elders who presided over the church with him. However, the mantle of spokesman for the apostles and elders falls upon the apostle as the one set first in the church in the foundation ministry. In the absence of the apostle the next in line is the prophet, and after him the teacher. This is the Divine order (CP 1Cor 12:28). There is no need to look beyond what scriptures teach about government in the New Testament church (See also comments on Ac 1:15-17, 6:16, 11:27, 13:1-4, 20:17; Ro 11:13, 16:1-2; 1Cor 12:28; Ga 3:28; Eph 2:20 (A), 4:11-12; Php 1:1; 1Ti 3:8-13; 1Pe 5:1-3 and author's study *The Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**).

3:8-13 *Who are deacons in the Divine order for the New Testament church?*

Firstly, we need to note here that deacons, like bishops – the subject of the preceding study – can only be men: they too must only be the husband of one wife (CP V2, 12). This does not mean, as some believe, that deacons or bishops have to be married - Paul was not married (CP 1Cor 7:6-9). The literal interpretation of what "the husband of one wife" means is that the husband has to be a one-woman man, not given to infidelity. It also does not mean, as others believe, that a deacon or bishop can only ever be married once, that they cannot remarry if their wife dies, because scriptures encourage remarriage if a spouse dies (CP Ro 7:2-3; 1Cor 7:39).

The term *deacon* primarily denotes a servant - one who ministers to the needs of others - without reference to the character of the work. In the New Testament, **diakonos**, the Greek word for deacon is used to refer to domestic servants (CP Jn 2:5,9); civil rulers (CP Ro 13:3-4); Christ (CP Ro 15:8; Ga 2:17); the followers of Christ in relation to their Lord (CP Jn 12:26; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7; 4:7); the followers of Christ in relation to one another (CP Mt 20:26; 23:11; Mk 9:35; 10:43); the servants of Christ in relation to preaching and teaching (CP 1Cor 3:5; 2Cor 3:6; 6:4; 11:23; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23,25; 1Th 3:2; 1Ti 4:6); a servant of the church (CP Ro 16:1); servants in the church (CP Php 1:1; 1Ti 3:8,12), and false apostles – servants of Satan (CP 2Cor 11:15).

We can see from those scriptures that the term *deacon* has a much broader application than most Christians in the contemporary church realise. The general conception of deacons among Christians in the contemporary church is that they do most of the menial tasks in the church - they open the hall up for meetings, switch on the lights, arrange the seating, distribute the emblems for communion, and take up the collection, etc, but as is seen here scriptures do not

teach that. The confusion surrounding deacons in the contemporary church emanates from the teaching that the role of deacons in the New Testament church is defined in Ac 6:1-6, yet scriptures do not designate the seven men in Ac 6:1-6 who were chosen to distribute the alms and minister to the material needs of the Greek widows in the church at Jerusalem as deacons (CP Ac 6:1-6 with 1Ti 3:1-13). It is obvious from 1Ti 3:8-13 that the office of deacon in the New Testament church is more than dealing with temporal things as distinct from spiritual things. Temporal things have to be dealt with, but to limit the office of a deacon to just dealing with temporal things is to limit the effectiveness of the church in God's eternal purpose. In the context of 1Ti 3:1-13 it is significant that the term deacons is used side by side with bishops, or elders. This indicates that deacons are assistant ministers or that they assist the ruling elders in the performance of their duties. They are the scriptural counterparts to the non-scriptural assistant pastors and elders in the contemporary church (CP Php 1:1). The qualifications for deacons, like bishops, and their role in the New Testament church, are defined in 1Ti 3:8-13 not in Ac 6:1-6 as so many Christians in the contemporary church have been taught.

It should be noted here also that although deacons assist the elders in the performance of their duties they have no ruling authority in the New Testament church. Their ministry office as 1Ti 3:13 clearly teaches is a proving ground leading to greater responsibilities, but it is not a leadership position to start with, and for any local New Testament church to be under the authority of a "board of deacons" is totally unscriptural. We cannot supplant God's order for the church and replace it with another. He has decreed the church to be under the authority of ruling elders, not deacons. (See also comments on Ac 6:1-6, Ro 16:1-2 and Php 1:1 and author's study *The Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**).

3:15 *How is the word "house" defined here?*

Paul is not referring to a building here but to the people who constitute the *Church of the Living God* – believers. He is writing to show them how they ought to conduct themselves as those to whom God has entrusted the defence and support of the Gospel. *House* is better translated *Household* – a reference to believers as the Household of God (CP Ga 6:10; Eph 2:19; He 3:6; 1Pe 4:17). *Pillar and ground of the truth* in 1Ti 3:15 is used figuratively of the Church as that which upholds the truth of God (CP 1Pe 2:9).

3:16 *What profound truth is Paul highlighting here?*

Paul is highlighting the Deity of Jesus here; that Jesus is God. This truth was hidden in the Old Testament age, but revealed under the new covenant.

Most Christians believe that Jesus was eternally the Son of God. The argument against this however is that Jesus could not eternally be the Son of God because eternity is timeless - it has no beginning or end, whereas Jesus, as man, and as the Son of God, did have a beginning. He was brought into being;

begotten of God (CP Gen 49:10; Nu 24:17; Psa 2:7; Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; Mt 1:18-25; Lu 1:26-35; 2:11; Jn 1:14; Ga 4:4; Php 2:5-8; He 1:5-6; 5:5). But before He took on human form at His incarnation, the person we now know as Jesus Christ had no beginning. He was not begotten; He did not come into being; He was not the Son of was God – He was God (CP Nu 21:4-9 with 1Cor 10:9; Psa 45:6-7; Isa 6:1-5 with Jn 12:37-41; Mic 5:2; Jn 1:1-2; 3:13; 8:56-58; 17:5; Ac 20:28; Ro 9:5; Php 2:5-8; Col 2:8-10; 1Ti 3:16; Tit 2:13; He 1:8-12; 2Pe 1:1-2; 1Jn 1:1-2; 3:16; Rev 1:8, 11, 17-18; 2:8; 3:14; 21:6; 22:13). Every one of these scriptures teaches that the pre-incarnate Jesus always existed as God. He was an equal member of the Godhead from all eternity (CP Isa 52:12). Jesus was a spirit being and carried out the Divine plan of creation (CP Psa 90:2, 102:25-27; Jn 1:3, 10; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; He 1:2, 10-12, 11:3; Rev 3:14).

Jesus is also seen in His pre-incarnate state many times in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord. In most of the Old Testament scriptures the Angel of (from) the Lord (Jehovah) is regarded as Deity, yet is distinguished from Jehovah. The Angel of Jehovah is one person in the Godhead, and Jehovah who sent Him, is another. As the Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Jesus spoke to Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, after Sarah dismissed her and later cast her out altogether (CP Gen 16:7-13; 21:17-18). He was one of the three angels who visited Abraham, and rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah (CP 18:1-5, 9-22; 19:24). He wrestled with Jacob (CP 32:24-30 with Hos 12:2-5). He spoke to Moses out of the burning bush (CP Ex 3:1-14 with Lu 20:37; Ac 7:30-38). He was the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night that guided the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan (CP Ex 13:21-22 with 14:19-20, 24). He stood in the way of Balaam, and made his donkey speak (CP Nu 22:22-35, 38). He was the captain of the host of the Lord who instructed Joshua how to destroy Jericho (CP Josh 5:13 - 6:5). He told Gideon how He would use him to free the Israelites from the Midianites who had kept them in servitude for seven years (CP Judg 6:11-24). He was the fourth man King Nebuchadnezzar saw walking through the flames in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (CP Dan 3:8-28). V25 should read "... and the form of the fourth is like a Son of the Gods," not "and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God", as the KJV renders it. Nebuchadnezzar had no knowledge of the New Testament revelation of the Son of God, born of the virgin Mary. He acknowledged in V28 that the being he saw in V25 was the Angel of the Lord - angels are sometimes referred to as Sons of God in the Old Testament (CP Gen 6:1-4; Job 1:6, 38:7). Jesus was also the rider of the red horse standing among the myrtle trees who spoke to Zechariah near the close of the Old Testament (CP Zech 1:7-17).

In all those scriptures the Angel of the Lord (Jehovah) is regarded as Deity, yet is distinguished from Jehovah, which proves He was an equal member of the Godhead. Other scriptures referring to the pre-incarnate Jesus as the Angel of the Lord are Gen 22:11-18; 24:7, 40; 31:11; 48:16; Ex 23:20-23; 32:34; 33:2; Nu 20:16; Judg 2:1-4; 13:3-6, 9, 13-21; 1 Ki 19:5-7; 2 Ki 1:3, 15; 1 Chr 21:15-17; Psa 34:7;

35:5-6; Eccl 5:6; Isa 37:36 with 2 Ki 19:35 and 2 Chr 32:21; Isa 63:7-9; Dan 6:22; Zech 3:1-10; 12:1-8. Bible scholars generally agree that the foregoing scriptures all refer to the pre-incarnate Jesus as the Angel of the Lord. In all other places in scripture where the Angel of the Lord is found, the term refers to ordinary angels. The pre-incarnate Jesus also visited Daniel and spoke to him in Dan 10:5-6 (CP Dan 10:5-6). Many Christians believe that this was the angel Gabriel but that is not correct (CP Dan 7:9 with Rev 1:12-15). The man referred to in all these scriptures is the same person - Jesus. His clothing was fine linen; His loins were girded with a golden girdle; His hair was like pure wool; His eyes were like lamps of fire; His arms and feet like polished brass and His voice was like a multitude - the sound of many waters. Gabriel did not speak to Daniel in Dan 10 until V10 (CP V10-14).

Clearly scriptures do not teach that Jesus was eternally the Son of God, but that he became the Son at His incarnation. This in no way refutes the Christian doctrine of the *Trinity* - the three in one Godhead - as this study clearly teaches that Jesus, as we know Him, was an equal member of the Godhead from all eternity (CP also Zech 13:7). Fellow here refers to the one we know as Jesus being a fellow-God with Jehovah (CP Mt 26:31). See also comments on Mt 1:18-21, 3:16-17; Lu 1:35(B); Jn 1:1, 5:16-23, 12:41; Ac 13:33, 20:28; Php 2:5-8; Col 2:9; He 1:5, 5:5; 1Jn 5:6-9; Rev 1:8, and author's studies *Jesus – Eternally God* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith, The Doctrine of the Trinity** and *Jesus* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

4:1 *How are we to understand what Paul says here?*

Paul is speaking here of Christians defecting from the faith – apostatising. He is not teaching that there will be a great apostasy by the church at the end of the church age, as many believe. *In the latter times* refers to the entire period of time subsequent to the time Paul wrote this epistle until the end of the church age when Christ comes again to take all the saints of God back to heaven with Him (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18). *Times* in 1Ti 4:1 is not speaking of time as such, but seasons or periods (CP Ac 2:16-17; He 1:1-2; 9:26; 1Pe 1:19-20; 1Jn 2:18). Throughout scripture the Holy Spirit repeatedly warns of believers departing from the faith in all eras (CP Mt 24:4-12; Ac 20:29-30; He 3:12-13, 6:4-6, 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22). These scriptures all prove that salvation is not an unforfeitable possession in this life – it only becomes unforfeitable at the end of this life for those sowing to the Spirit. (See also comments on 2Ti 3:1; He 3:12-13, 6:4-6, 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22 and author's study *Regeneration and Sanctification Defined* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

4:4-5 *What does it mean here that all food is sanctified by the word of God and prayer?*

This means that no food is to be rejected by believers on the basis of rejecting it being a prerequisite for

salvation (CP V1-3). Everything God created for food is good if received with a prayer of thanksgiving (CP Ro 14:14; 1Cor 8:7-13, 10:23-31; Col 2:14-17). When we offer up thanks to God for the food we are about to eat, it is sanctified – made holy by God. The custom of offering up thanks for food goes as far back in scripture as 1Sam (CP 1Sam 9:13). Both Jesus and Paul also offered up thanks (CP Mt 14:19; 15:36; 26:26-27; Ac 27:35).

4:10 *Does this mean that all men will be saved?*

No, although this scripture, together with Col 1:20, is used by some to teach that. This teaching is called "Universalism" (CP Col 1:20). *All things* here refer to all things in the created universe. This teaches that the whole universe of things, material as well as spiritual, will ultimately be restored to fellowship with God (CP Ro 8:19-23; 2Pe 3:10-13; Rev 21:1). This includes humans too, but only those who have accepted Christ as saviour (CP Mk 16:16; Jn 3:16-18, 36, 5:24, 6:40, 47, 20:31; 1Jn 5:10). What Paul is alluding to in 1Ti 4:10 is that God has made salvation available to all men through the atoning death of Christ (CP Jn 1:29 with 1Jn 2:2). See also comments on Col 1:20.

4:12 *How are we to understand what Paul says here?*

It is obvious from Paul's admonition to Timothy here to let no one despise his youth, that Timothy was a comparatively young man in contrast to the older members of the assembly. The word *despise* here means to hold in contempt. Paul is telling Timothy in effect to assert the dignity of his office and not let anyone push him around because of his youth. He had to be an example to the church in his speech (CP Col 4:6); conduct (CP 1Pe 1:15, 2:12, 3:16); self-sacrificial love (CP Jn 15:13; Jas 2:14-17); spirit (CP Ga 5:16-17, 22-25); faithfulness of commitment (CP 1Cor 4:2; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7); sexual purity (CP 1Ti 3:2). If Timothy lived by these rules, his youth would no longer be the subject of contempt. (See also comments on 1Ti 1:18, 5:23, 6:14, 6:20, 2Ti 1:7).

4:14 *See comments on 1Ti 1:18*

5:8 *What does this mean exactly?*

This emphasises the seriousness of Christians failing to provide for relatives in need, particularly their own immediate family. Christians guilty of this repudiate their faith and are worse than unbelievers, denying the very truths which Christianity teaches. An obvious lesson to be learned from this is that churches should have benevolence funds established for widows and others in genuine need to draw from (see also author's studies *How Christians are to Love One Another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith** and *Christians' Obligations to One Another Financially* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

5:17-18 *Are there two classes of elders in the church – ruling and teaching?*

No, this does not mean as some Christians believe, that there are two classes of elders in the church – ruling and teaching. God has committed the oversight of the New Testament church to the plurality of elders co-equally (CP Ac 11:27, 20:17, 28; Eph 4:11-16; 1Ti 3:1-7; 1Pe 5:1-3). What Paul is saying in 1Ti 5:17-18 is that the elders who are totally committed to the oversight of their assembly, and especially those who direct so much time and effort into teaching and instruction in the word are doubly worthy of honour, which doubtless means that they should also be paid more generously than those who are not so committed (CP Ac 20:17-31; 1Cor 15:10; 1Th 5:12-13; 2Ti 4:2-3). See also comments on 1Cor 9:1-2 and 2Cor 9:6.

5:19 *What do we learn from what Paul says here?*

We learn from this that no Christian can accuse another of blatantly sinning against God's word unless there are two or three witnesses to prove it. This rule applies for every Christian, not only the ruling elder referred to here (CP De 19:15; Mt 18:15-17; 2Cor 13:1-2). The word *witnesses* denote those who can state categorically what they have personally seen, or heard, or know. They must have first-hand knowledge of what occurred. It cannot be hearsay – they cannot just be pedlars of gossip or tale-bearers (CP Ex 23:1; Lev 19:16; Psa 140:11; Pr 16:28; 17:9, 26:20). God's purpose for this is to ensure that no one can be falsely accused or judged on the strength of a false accusation (CP Ex 20:16, 23:1; De 19:15-20; Psa 50:19-20; 101:5; Pr 10:18, 11:9). God laid down the requirement for two or three witnesses in order for greater accuracy and objectivity to be gained when judging the matter, and a judgment can never be made on the basis of hearsay (gossip), or on the testimony of only one witness (CP De 17:2-6).

5:22 *What does Paul mean by what he says here?*

There are two schools of thought among Christians as to the meaning of what Paul says here. One is that he is commanding Timothy not to hastily ordain any man to public ministry in the church. Each one must be tested and proved first, otherwise Timothy will be implicated in any sins an unwise choice may commit. The other view is that Paul is referring to the sinning elder in V20-21, and commands Timothy not to hastily restore him to fellowship in the church, or Timothy will be implicated in his sin (CP V20-21). Both views have merit, and they both teach that Christian leaders must always conform to scriptural requirements for the ordination of any man who aspires to public ministry in the church (CP 1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9). See also comments on 1Ti 3:1-7.

5:23 *Is Paul encouraging intoxicating drink here?*

No, Paul is simply encouraging Timothy here to not only drink water, but a little wine as well for medicinal purposes. Because of fermentation, wine also acts as a medicine for mild stomach disorders which frequently unsettled Timothy. Paul was not advocating that Timothy drink wine as a beverage,

because elsewhere in scripture he warned against addiction to alcohol (CP Ro 13:13; 1Cor 5:11; 6:12; Eph 5:18; 1Th 5:6-8; 1Ti 3:3, 8; Tit 1:7). Paul also knew the penalty God had laid down for drunkenness (CP Pr 23:21; 31:4-5 with 1Cor 6:9-10; Ga 5:21). Paul does not forbid the responsible and temperate use of alcohol, but the abuse or incessant use of it. It should be emphasized here that Timothy was not suffering from a recurring grave illness which could not be healed, as many in the church believe, but simply a mild stomach disorder – probably digestive trouble – which a little wine would settle.

Timothy was a timid young man who was allowing himself to be treated contemptuously by some in the church at Ephesus because of his youthfulness, and it was upsetting him (CP 1Ti 1:3 with 4:12 and 2Ti 1:6-8). In 1Ti 4:12 Paul was encouraging Timothy to assert the dignity of his office and not let anyone push him around by showing himself to be an example to the church in Ephesus. Paul lists six areas (KJV), in which Timothy was to be an example to the church: *word* – speech (CP Eph 4:25, 29-31; Col 4:6); *conduct* – righteous living (CP 1Pe 1:15, 2:12, 3:16); *love* – self-sacrificial love (CP Jn 15:13; Jas 2:14-17; 1 Jn 3:16-18); *Spirit* – (CP Ga 5:16-17, 22-25); *faith* – faithfulness of commitment (CP 1Cor 4:2; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7); *purity* – especially sexual purity (CP 1Ti 3:2). If Timothy lived according to these rules, his youth would no longer be the subject of contempt.

6:1-2 *See comments on Eph 6:5-9*

6:6-10 *Is Paul speaking against Christians acquiring material wealth here?*

No, Paul is simply speaking against Christians coveting material wealth (CP Psa 49:16-19; Ecc 5:13-17). The word contentment in 1 Ti 6:6 speaks of an inward self-sufficiency as opposed to the desire of outward things (CP Pr 30:7-9 with Mt 6:24-34 and Lu 12:15).

There are numerous scriptures in the Bible concerning Christians and wealth that will come as a surprise to a great many believers, and in light of some of the prosperity doctrines sweeping the church we need to know just what these scriptures say. In Mk 10:25 (also in Mt 19:24 and Lu 18:15) Jesus said "...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." This assertion by Jesus highlights for us the radical nature of the discipleship to which He has called us (CP Mk 10:17-27). The rich young ruler here did not get saved - he failed the test of discipleship. He sincerely wanted to be saved, but on his terms, not the terms Jesus has laid down. He was not prepared to forsake all for Jesus, which is one of the conditions of salvation laid down by Jesus. This does not teach that believers have to sell or dispose of all their possessions in order to be saved but it does teach that believers must place all their wealth and possessions at the service of God **once they are saved** (CP Lu 14:25-35).

Jesus uses three parables here to stress this teaching: the parable of the tower builder; the parable of a warring king; and the parable of savourless salt, so we can be under no misapprehension as to what He is

teaching. Jesus is stressing the qualifications for discipleship and that nobody can be saved unless they meet them. V26-27 teach that we are to love Jesus above all else, including our family and our own life. We must be prepared to suffer rejection and persecution and even lay down our life if need be for Jesus. That is part of the cost Jesus warns us to count in the parable of the tower builder in V28-30, which teaches that before anyone begins to build they should be sure they will be able to pay the full cost of the building. Likewise anyone following Jesus must also be sure that they are willing to pay the full cost involved in being a Christian. While the benefits of the gospel are solely on the basis of personal choice, complying with the conditions for appropriating those benefits are part of the cost of that choice. If we choose to follow Jesus we must comply with the conditions He has laid down. Salvation is a paradox – it is both free and costly. Free because Jesus has already paid for it with His life's blood, yet there is a cost in terms of its impact upon those that would follow Jesus. Jesus demands that all that we have – wealth, material possessions, family, even our life – must be placed at the service of God. This requires our total renunciation of all self-interests and ambitions and everything else that would take precedence in our life over the things of God.

In the parable of a warring king in V31-33 Jesus illustrates for us the impossibility of being saved unless one is willing to forsake all for Jesus. The word *forsaketh* in V33 means to place in order; to assign to different places; to allot; to take leave of; to farewell; to dismiss; to renounce. In this context it carries the notion of putting something aside to prevent it from being a hindrance or gaining excessive control. The parable of savourless salt in V34-35 teaches us that like salt that loses its saltiness has no value and is thrown out, so disciples who no longer contain the characteristics of discipleship - total consecration to the service of God and complete surrender to the authority of Jesus - are of no value either. To get the full impact of what Jesus is teaching here we need to read the literal English rendering of Lu 14:25-35 from the Greek. This is what it says according to **Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament**:

"Now, many crowds were journeying along with Him. And having turned around, He said to them, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters in the event that they become hindrances to his supreme love for me, yes, moreover also his own life in the same manner, he is not able to be my disciple. And whoever is not taking up and carrying his own cross and coming after me, is not able to be my disciple.

For, who is there of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first, having seated himself, compute the expense, whether he has sufficient resources for its completion, lest perchance, having laid the foundation and not being able to complete it entirely, all who examine it with a view to carefully observing its details should begin to be mocking, saying, this man began building operations and did

not have sufficient resources to complete them entirely?

Or, what king on his way to an open encounter with another king in war, having seated himself, does not first take counsel with himself whether he is able with ten thousand to go to meet the one who is coming against him with twenty thousand? In the event that he does not think himself able to do so, while he is still a long way off, having sent an ambassador, he requests details looking toward peace.

Therefore, in the same manner, everyone of you who does not in self-renunciation bid farewell to all his possessions, is not able to be my disciple.

Therefore, the salt is excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well adapted to the purpose for which it is in existence. But if also the salt lose its strength and flavour, by what means shall it be restored to its original state?

Neither for the land nor for the manure pile is it fit. They throw it outside. He who has ears to be hearing, let him be hearing."

Opinions are divided among Christians as to what exactly is the "eye of a needle" Jesus refers to in V25 of Mk 10. Some take it literally. Others believe that it refers to a small gate within the main gate in the city wall through which a camel laden with goods could not pass unless it was divested of its load, which symbolises the rich man's possessions. There are yet others who suggest that the word *camel* is a mistranslation of the original Greek and should be *cable*. It is really not important whether Jesus is referring to a camel or a cable; to the literal eye of a needle or to a small gate within the main gate in the city wall – He has clearly made His point: just as it is impossible for a camel (or a cable) to go through the eye of a needle (or a small gate within the main gate in the city wall), so it is impossible for a rich man to get into heaven without God. God can even save a rich man, but as this incident teaches, the rich man's heart must be changed, by having its attachment to material riches replaced by attachment to the only true riches, "treasure in heaven" (CP Mk 10:24). It is not easy for anyone to enter the kingdom of God "...for strait is the gate and narrow the way", but it is most difficult of all for the rich (CP Lu 12:13-21).

This is called the parable of the rich fool. It is a grim warning for Christians against making material possessions or riches the focus of this life at the expense of their souls in the next life (CP Mk 8:36). This is a warning for Christians, not heathens. In Jesus' perspective riches are an obstacle to salvation because as He teaches here the acquisition of wealth for the sake of it is covetousness, which is futile and self-defeating, for the end of it is death. Jesus goes on to teach that a Christian's life is not to be spent accumulating material possessions and wealth which neither gives life nor provides security, because death separates from things. *Abundance* in Lu 12:15 means more than is needed; surplus to needs. The fate of the rich man in the parable

generalises the fate of all who are more concerned with possessions than the things of God. This does not mean that we are not to labour for our own or our family's needs - we are obliged to do that and God will bless us (CP Pr 13:11; Ecc 5:18-20 with 1Ti 5:8). Working to meet our needs has nothing to do with covetousness. *Covetousness* in the context of this study is greed for material things and the desire to have more, and what Jesus teaches here should challenge every one of us to be constantly re-evaluating our lifestyles to ensure that our heart is centred on heavenly treasure and not on treasures on earth.

Many Christians who would never consider themselves to be materialistic in the strict sense of the word nevertheless live as though material things are extremely important, yet in the parable of the rich fool Jesus shows us that the desire for wealth and material possessions directly conflict with the purpose of God for His children, and that the selfish amassing of wealth and possessions by Christians indicates that they no longer see life from the vantage point of eternity. Their goal and fulfilment is no longer in God but in themselves and their possessions. It may not start out that way but that is how it will end up (CP De 31:20; 32:12-18; Hos 8:14; 13:6). *Jeshurun* in De 32:15 is a symbolic name for Israel. Because of their wealth and success the Israelites had become self-sufficient, thinking that they did not need God and His word. Likewise, when we have an abundance of blessings we are also tempted to feel self-sufficient and that we do not need to seek God and His help. History has repeatedly shown that in time of ease and plenty God's people are most prone to forget Him and stop seeking His face (CP Pr 20:21; 28:16, 20-22).

Riches and possessions are only temporary. They should not be the object of a Christian's life. The desire for them cause Christians to sin, and just as the Old Testament children of God forsook Him after they acquired wealth and possessions, so too according to scripture will New Testament Christians (CP 1Ti 6:9-12). Paul's perspective of those desiring wealth is the same as Jesus'. He teaches us here that the pursuit of wealth debases the mind, destroys Godly traits and makes Christians selfish, proud and avaricious which all lead to destruction and perdition. *Perdition* refers to the state after death wherein exclusion from salvation is a realised fact, wherein man, instead of becoming what he might have been in God is lost and ruined forever. This is a warning to those inside the church, not outside it. This is for believers, not unbelievers. In this context *perdition* - from the Greek word **apoleia** - is the final destiny of Christians who determine to be rich. It refers to separation from God Himself in fulfilment of Jesus' warning in Mk 10:24-25 that it is only with great difficulty that the rich can enter the kingdom of heaven. This desire for wealth is not a passing emotional thing, but the result of a process of reasoning. It applies to all grades of wealth and Paul's warning to Timothy to flee it in 1Ti 6:6-11 applies to all Christians whose ambition is to have more money than that which satisfies their everyday needs (CP Psa 37:16; Pr 15:16; 30:7-9; Ecc 5:10-17; 6:9; Jer 45:5; Ro 12:16; Php 4:11-13; 1Ti 6:6-10; He 13:5-6).

These scriptures all teach the same thing: godliness with sufficient material blessings to meet our everyday

needs should make us content with life. Money and the abundance of material things do not give life meaning and thus cannot bring real happiness. Ecc 5:10-17 teaches that in general an honest working person can sleep more peacefully after working all day than those who accumulate riches. The fear of the wealthy is that something will happen to cause them to lose everything. But even if they do not lose anything they can take nothing with them when they die. It is sad that so many Christians work so hard for an abundance of earthly possessions instead of working to lay up treasures in heaven. The word *conversation* in He 13:5 means manner or way of life. Our way of life has to be without the desire for more than that which will satisfy our everyday needs. This is what Jesus meant in Lu 12:15 when He said "...a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Covetousness and financial fear are overcome by a contentment founded upon the assurance of God's constant presence and His promises throughout scripture to provide for His children's needs (CP Ex 23:25-26; Psa 23:1; 34:9-10; Mt 21:22; 2Co 9:8; Php 4:19). In the light of this assurance we may boldly respond to our circumstances with a declaration of confidence in God. Here is the literal English rendering of 1Ti 6:6-10 from the Greek, according to **Kenneth Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament**:

"But Godly piety associated with an inward self-sufficiency which is its natural accompaniment, is great gain; for not even one thing did we bring into this world, because not even one thing are we able to take out. And having food and clothing, by these we shall be fortified sufficiently; but they that are after giving the matter mature consideration, desire to be wealthy, fall into temptation and a snare and many hurtful cravings which drown men in destruction and perdition; for a root of all the evils is the fondness for money, which certain ones bending their effort to grasp, have been led away from the faith and have pierced themselves through with many consuming griefs."

None of this teaching denies the promises of God in scripture to prosper His children (CP De 28:1-14; Josh 1:1-8; Psa 1:1-3; 112:1-3; Pr 3:9-10, 8:20-21, 21:20; 3Jn 2). But all God's promises are conditional and must be kept in context (CP De 8:10-19). This scripture teaches how Christians must guard against pride and backsliding when God does prosper them. Prosperity brings with it the temptation to be arrogant, causing us to forget that God is the source of all blessings, and it is because it is God Himself who gives us the power to get wealth, wealth itself is not sinful. It is the pursuit of wealth and our misuse of it that is sinful (CP Psa 39:4-7). This teaches us that God has given unto each one of us a certain life span in which our faithfulness toward Him will be tested and determined. How we spend that span of life will determine our destination in eternity (CP Mt 7:21-27; Ro 2:13). We can spend our span of life chasing wealth and material things for our own self-gratification or we can spend it doing the work of God's word, which is the only way we can be saved (CP Psa 49:1-20). Whilst this is a call to all mankind, as Christians we need to know what it is saying to us. It stresses both the futility of trusting in riches, and the

transitory nature of all that the world has to offer. Anyone at all whose life consists in an abundance of earthly possessions or in worldly pleasures or fame rather than in seeking after God and His kingdom will perish (CP 1Jn 2:15-17). Only those totally consecrated to the service of God and completely yielded to the authority of Jesus will be redeemed from the grave (CP Ecc 2:18-23).

All these scriptures teach the same thing. They are a true picture of man in his best state. All his imaginations, plans, schemes and ways soon come to nothing. He heaps up earthly treasure for himself and does not even know what will really happen to it after he dies (CP Pr 23:4-5). No human labour has any enduring value if it is not dedicated to God (CP Ecc 6:1-2). Dedication to work as its own reward is a vain pursuit. The ability to enjoy what we have depends on a right relationship with God. Without God it is all in vain. The rich fool in Lu 12:15-21 gave no thought to the things of God. He mistook the purpose of life, imagining it consisted in the abundance of possessions rather than it being a channel of blessing for others of God's children in need. Scriptures teach that the primary purpose for Christians even getting a job is to help others in need (CP Eph 4:28). Jesus equates our treatment of others in need with our treatment of Himself (CP Pr 19:17, 21:13, 22:9 with Mt 25:31-46). Our Christian walk is not only a spiritual walk, it must also serve the needs of others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ (CP Jas 2:13-17; 1Jn 3:16-19). What we do of the work of the word proves our Christian consecration to the service of God, and confirms our love for God and each other. This is the acid test of Christianity by which we know whether we are following the example of God's love to others. If we are not willing to give of our material things to others in need, we certainly would not lay down our lives for them like God expects us to, and like Jesus did for us. 1Jn 3:16 is the exact counterpart of Jn 3:16 (CP Jn 3:16).

All the scriptures studied thus far very clearly warn Christians against making temporal wealth the object of life, and they are but a few scriptures of many in God's word concerning this (CP Mt 6:19-21,24). Here Jesus equates the desire for wealth with serving *mammon*. Mammon refers to earthly riches.

Jesus sees in the desire for earthly riches a self-centred covetousness, a life-goal totally opposed to God which claims men's hearts, and therefore estranges them from God. Jesus solemnly warns us that we cannot be faithful to God and also covet wealth. Covetousness is idolatry, and although no Christian would say that money is God, many are guilty of worshipping it (CP Eph 5:5; Col 3:1-6). It needs to be restated: covetousness is idolatry, and behind every idol are demons, and although Christians pursuing wealth would not worship idols made out of wood or stone, they are in reality worshipping the demonic forces behind idolatry. Thus Jesus' statement that "we cannot serve God and mammon" in Mt 6:24 is essentially the same as Paul's admonition to the church at Corinth that Christians "cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils" (CP 1Cor 10:1-7, 14-22). The majority of Christians see these passages as merely referring to food sacrificed to idols and idolatrous feasts, but there is

much more to it than that. Paul teaches here that although an idol is nothing in the world, it does represent something that is not the true God. An idol is not only an image of something, it is also a representation, whether corporeal or imaginary, or some other thing. Idolatry can involve professing allegiance to God and His word while at the same time giving equal or greater allegiance to someone or something else. As Christians we must learn to distinguish between the things of God and that which is of the devil. We cannot compromise ourselves with the things the world loves because that which is esteemed by the world is an abomination before God (CP Lu 16:13-15).

Christians must ever be alert to the danger of being seduced from their allegiance to God by the allurements of riches and earthly possessions. We must guard against any preoccupation at all with material things lest they become more important to us than the things of God (CP Mt 13:3-9, 22). This is the parable of the sower and the seed and it perfectly describes what the end is for Christians caught up in the pursuit of wealth. We are concerned here with what the parable teaches about the deceitfulness of riches. The teaching in this parable centres on the soils, not the sower or the seed. The soils represent those who receive God's word and how they respond to it. The term *deceitfulness of riches* means that wealth gives a false impression whether by appearance, statement or influence - a false sense of security. *Choke* here means figuratively to overpower. The false sense of security emanating from earthly riches overpowers the word of God in Christians and prevents them bearing fruit for the kingdom. They have been seduced by their wealth from continuing in the things of God. This is the same teaching as in 1Ti 6:10: those that coveted after wealth "erred from the faith". *Erred* in this context means seduced. They also were seduced by their wealth away from God (CP 1Ti 6:10).

Christians succumbing to wealth and material possessions are yielding to forces in opposition to the nature of the word of God which they have received for their salvation. This is made very clear in 1Co 10:14-22: we cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils. We cannot have both salvation and covet earthly things. The rich young ruler in Mk 10:17-27 wanted them both, but he could not have them. That is why he failed the test of discipleship, and we will fail it too if we persist in chasing after riches on earth instead of storing up treasure in heaven. We cannot serve God and mammon (CP Rev 3:14-20). This is called the letter to the church at Laodicea. It is one of seven letters to seven churches Jesus addresses in Rev 2 and 3, and while these seven churches actually existed at the time of John's revelation, they are also representative of all churches since then, and the letters have an ongoing application for all generations since then too - they are for the admonition of both the corporate body of the church and for each one of us individually. The Laodicean church is a lukewarm church, but churches are people - Christians - so a lukewarm church is made up of lukewarm Christians - in this context Christians who have compromised God's word with worldly things. In their self-sufficient prosperity and worldliness Laodiceans have excluded Jesus from fellowship with them. They see themselves as rich, increased with goods and needing nothing, but Jesus sees them as poor, blind, wretched, miserable and

naked. He counsels them not to lay up treasure for themselves on earth, but to store it up for themselves in heaven. He then issues an invitation for anyone who will repent to be restored to fellowship with Him, otherwise they will be rejected (CP Job 31:13-28). What Job says here should be the testimony of every believer in Christ because one day, like Job, we will all have to give an account to God for everything we lavish on ourselves and withhold from others (CP Lu 16:19-25).

This is called the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, it is not teaching that the rich man went to hell just because he was rich and Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom just because he was poor. Neither affluence nor poverty determines our eternal state, but the life we live on earth. The rich man went to hell because his life was consumed with self-centred living, not caring about others of God's children worse off than himself. He fared sumptuously every day while Lazarus went hungry. In his self-indulgent lifestyle the rich man violated God's two greatest commandments (CP Mt 22:34-40). Lazarus went straight to paradise where all the righteous dead went before Christ's death and resurrection. Christ took him to heaven with Him when He "ascended on high" (CP Eph 4:8-10). Lazarus was declared righteous, not because he was poor, but because he found his help in God. Lazarus' name depicted his relationship with God – it means "God has helped" or "God, the helper". The significance of his name suggests that Jesus meant Lazarus to symbolize all the outcasts of society who have no other help but God (CP Mt 5:3; Lu 4:17-18). The parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches above all else that men cannot profess reverence for God while at the same time living only for the fulfilment of their own self-gratifying desires.

God says it is only our love for others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ, that proves our love for Him, and we cannot honestly say we love them if we are not prepared to give of our material possessions to them, which is what we learned in both Jas 2:13-17 and 1Jn 3:16-19 (CP Jas 2:13-17, 26 and 1Jn 3:16-19 with Ga 6:7-10). Anyone who claims to be a born again believer who at the same time consciously sows to their flesh is guilty of mocking and despising God and will forfeit their place in His kingdom. One of the best illustrations of how God's children can get caught up in self-centred living and forfeit His blessings is to be found in the Old Testament book of Haggai the prophet. There is much prophetic teaching in Haggai, but for the purpose of this study we will only be looking at the admonition in it for the church today (CP Hag 1:2-10; 2:10-15). God's children in Haggai's time had forfeited God's blessing because of their apathy towards the things of God. They were preoccupied building and beautifying their own houses while God's house remained desolate. They needed to be reminded of their obligation to God, so God used Haggai to rebuke them. God's purpose was to motivate them to reorder their lives and their priorities so they could resume building His house. This same obligation is ours today and God's rebuke to them is for us today also.

Many of us are so busy with our own lives and self-interests that we too are neglecting to build God's house. We do not have to physically build the temple

like the children of Israel had to do in Haggai's time, but we are responsible for extending God's kingdom by the giving of ourselves into it. Haggai's call to the Israelites to consider their ways is a call to God's children in all ages to consider their ways. And as Haggai insisted that God's work must come first with the Israelites, so too it must come first with us. God's kingdom and His righteous concerns must be the first and foremost priority in our lives. We cannot live self-seeking lives apathetic to God's purpose, or we will also be cut off from His blessing. Haggai's admonition for the Israelites then is the same for the church today. We must make the work of God a priority by committing what we are, what we have, and all that we do to Him. We must turn from selfish ambition and personal agendas to focus on advancing His kingdom (CP Lu 12:22-32). Jesus is not teaching here that Christians cannot make provision for their physical and financial needs to be met, but that there are to be no life-style excesses in so doing (CP Lu 16:1-9).

This is known as the parable of the unjust steward. Jesus is using this parable to draw the disciples' attention to resources that are not being used by God's children to advance His kingdom. This is also an admonition for the church today and it behoves us to heed it. This is an unusual parable, and it has been the subject of many and varied interpretations and explanations, but it is simple to understand when we are clear in our mind what it does not teach. Firstly, it does not teach that Christ condones the cunning deceit of the steward – note in V8 that it is the steward's own lord who commends his ingenuity, not the Lord Jesus. Jesus simply contrasts the shrewd foresight of the steward in using present opportunities to ensure his future earthly well-being, with the lack of foresight of the children of God in not using their earthly resources for their future heavenly well-being. The point He makes is that worldly men in their sphere to scheme and provide for themselves are wiser than the children of God in their sphere; unbelievers are shrewder in handling their own temporal affairs than Christians are in handling the affairs of God. This should impress upon us how vital our stewardship is as a test of our relationship with God. Secondly, the parable also does not teach that by using the mammon of unrighteousness we can buy our way into heaven. The mammon of unrighteousness refers to our material wealth and Jesus is telling us to use that wealth to win souls to Christ, so that when we get to heaven they will be there to welcome us. For Christians the "everlasting habitations" in V9 refers to heaven as our eternal home. Souls won through the deployment of our finances now will become our joy and crown of rejoicing in eternity (CP 1Th 2:19-20). Paul won the Thessalonians to Christ and founded the church in Thessalonica through the financial support of the Phillipian church (CP Php 4:15-19). V19 only applies to those who give into the kingdom. It does not apply to those who do not. The core teaching of the parable of the unjust steward is not that believers are to make friends of material wealth, but to make friends by means of it. We must use all the temporal resources at our command for God's purposes on earth in order to secure our place in heaven; if the people of the world know how to use worldly possessions and apply materialistic ways to ensure their earthly well-being how much more should Christians use the resources at

their command to ensure their heavenly well-being (CP 1Ti 6:17-19).

Believers with wealth and possessions must see themselves as not being rich but merely stewards of that which is God's. They must be generous, ready to share, and rich in good works (CP 2Co 8:13-15; Eph 2:10). Whatever we have belongs to God and whenever we use it to advance His kingdom we are merely redistributing the wealth He has entrusted to us (CP 1Chr 29:10-16). See also comments on Mt 6:24, 19:23-26; Lu 12:13-15, 12:16-21, 12:33-34, 16:19-31; 1Cor 10:14-22; 2Cor 12:14, and author's studies *Christians and Wealth* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, *Conditions of Entry into Heaven* and *Haggai – the Significance of his Messages for Today* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)** and *Christians – Flee from Idolatry* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

6:14 *What commandment is Paul referring to here that Timothy has to keep?*

The commandment Paul refers to here is found in V 11-13 (CP V11-14). Timothy had eternal life but the fact that Paul commanded him here to lay hold of it and ensure that he was free from censure until Christ's coming, proves that eternal life is not an unforfeitable

possession until final salvation comes with the coming of Jesus (CP V12; Jn 10:28 with Col 1:22-23; 1Pe 1:3-5 and He 3:13-14). This clearly refutes the teaching by some in the church that once saved means always saved (see also comments on Mt 7:21, 12:30, Jn 15:2, 2Cor 13:5, Php 2:12-13 and author's study *A Scripture Guide for the Christian Walk* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

6:16 *See comments on Jn 1:18 and 14:7*

6:17-19 *See comments on 1 Ti 6:6-10.*

6:20 *What is it that was committed to Timothy's trust?*

That which was committed to Timothy's trust was the sacred truth of the Divine revelation of God – the gospel (CP 1Cor 4:1; 1Th 2:3-4; 1Ti 1:18-19; 4:6-11; 6:13-16; 2Ti 1:11-14; 3:16-17). While Paul is charging Timothy in 1 Ti 6:20 to guard the gospel truth he has been entrusted with, this admonition is for all Christians. We must all proclaim the pure and full gospel, and always be ready to defend it whenever it is attacked, distorted, or denied (CP Psa 119:46; Mt 5:13-16; Php 1:16-17; 1Ti 3:15; 1Pe 2:9 and 3:15). See also comments on Mt 5:13-16; 1Ti 3:15 and 1Pe 3:15).