

for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.—Acts viii: 14, 15, 16.

In the 19th chapter of the Acts we read about Paul traveling through the upper coasts and coming to a place called Ephesus, where he found certain disciples.

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

And all the men were about twelve.—Acts xix: 2-7.

They had been baptized apparently in the wrong way. Whoever had baptized them either did not have authority to baptize or had taught them improperly; and so Paul taught them over again, baptized them properly, and laid his hands upon them. Then the Holy Ghost came upon them. They were born of the water and of the Spirit. This is the simple doctrine of Jesus Christ, that He taught in person, and that His Apostles taught wherever they went. You may take up the New Testament and you will find, all the way through, allusions to this. Paul calls these principles the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. In the 6th chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, he says:

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

And this will we do if God permit.—Hebrews vi: 1-3.

He chided some of the people, as you will read in the preceding chapter, for not understanding these things thoroughly. He said:

When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God,—Hebrews v: 12.

It seems to me that this is what is the matter with the people of this generation. Many of them who claim to be teachers tell the people that all they need to do is just to believe in Jesus, and they have need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God. What are these first principles? Let Paul answer: the doctrine of "repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." These are the first principles, the a b c d of the Gospel; and he exhorted the people who had received them to go on to perfection. These are only a few of the principles of the Gospel. It is just as Jesus taught: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We are to follow Jesus as our exemplar.

Having learned His doctrine, and obtained His Spirit, we are to live in the light thereof, and regard the things that He taught; to live together in love and in harmony, doing unto others as we would that others should do unto us, doing good in return for evil, and abiding in that spirit which Jesus Christ had with Him when He dwelt upon the earth. The essence of it all was that He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. That is the doctrine—to learn of God, to be taught of God, to walk in His ways, to keep His commandments, to live by His precepts, to be in the world but not of the world; to come out of it in spirit and approach unto God. Jesus taught that His Father is our Father, that His God is our God, and that we can approach Him; that if we ask we will receive, if we seek we shall find, if we knock the door shall be opened unto us.

That is one of the doctrines of Jesus Christ. Who is there that believes it now in the full sense in which He taught it? What did He mean by that? Why, that we can go to the Father, by Jesus Christ, that there are no barriers that God has erected between Himself and His children, but that the way is open; that He is the same yesterday, today and forever; there is in Him no variableness nor shadow of turning; and if He was a God of revelation in olden times, that He is a God of revelation still; and if it was possible for Him to reveal Himself through holy men or by direct intercourse with His children in olden times, it is just as possible now. Jesus prayed to the Father and the Father answered Him; and Jesus taught the doctrine that we could come to the Father as He did. That is another doctrine that Jesus taught that is not generally believed in these modern times. Revelation says the Christian world, was given in former times, but is not in latter times. God spake in olden times by the prophets, and also by His Son Jesus Christ; and many people entertain the idea that that was the last of His revelation, although we find God revealing Himself to the twelve Apostles whom Jesus sent out to the world, and the Book of Revelation, which is regarded as so great a mystery, was a revelation from God, through Jesus Christ, to His servant John, who was on the island of Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. The whole tenor of the New Testament is that God is the same now that He ever was in the time of the old patriarchs and prophets, and that we can go to Him and learn of Him, and that He sends Apostles and prophets, wise men and teachers inspired of Him to bring forth His word. Why should God do that in one age of the world and not do it in another? Has He changed? No; we are told that He is an unchangeable being. But who is there that really believes, nowadays, that we can approach God and obtain manifestations from Him? Who believes now that God has prophets on earth through whom He reveals His will to the people? "Oh! that is an antiquated doctrine, an old fashioned idea, belonging to the ages that are past"—what some people call the dark ages. This is what our Christian friends say. But Jesus Christ declared,

Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. (Matthew xxiii, 34, 35.)

Jesus also said that false prophets and false Christs would arise, and they would deceive many. But false Christs and false prophets teach false doctrine, and it is by that that men are deceived. True prophets, men inspired of the Holy Ghost, will teach true doctrine. The test of it is, the sayings of Jesus Christ. He that keepeth His sayings are His disciples. John said:

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed;

For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (ii John 10, 11 v)

John also says:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. (ii John 9 v.)

These are scriptural sayings; they are the words of an Apostle.

Now, we have a great many different religions in the world.

There are a great many good people belonging to them all, and some very good men preaching the doctrines of these different sects, preaching according to their training and the light they have. They have been brought up from their infancy to believe in certain dogmas, and they preach them in all sincerity. So far as that is concerned, when they preach the truth, it is good; when they preach anything that is erroneous it is not good. It is only truth that will sanctify and save. Error will not lift up anybody. Men may be sincere in error; they will also be sincere in truth; but it is the truth that does the good and that exalts. As Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

What we need is the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, and which is always true. If we receive the word of God and live by it, then we will be exalted. Christ came to reveal the will of God. He said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Here is a test. Here is a key to mankind. Who is there that knows of the doctrine?

Ask the wise divines of modern times if they know what they teach is the word of the Lord and the truth. I have asked many of them. They say they believe it with all their hearts. Most of them do, of course, though some of them preach for hire and divine for money. But many preach what they believe to be true. Have they, however, received a manifestation from God that the doctrine they teach is true? Do they know it for themselves? Have they received that witness from on high? Has God manifested himself to them? Do they believe in receiving revelations from God in these times? No; that is an old doctrine—done away with, they tell us; and so with other blessings that Christ said should follow people who believed in Him. Here is another test. In sending out His disciples to preach the Gospel, Jesus said:

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;