

Name: _____



Advanced Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 21: God the Holy Ghost

LORD'S DAY 21

Q.54. WHAT BELIEVEST THOU CONCERNING THE "HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH" OF CHRIST?

ANSWER: THAT THE SON OF GOD (A) FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END OF THE WORLD (B), GATHERS, DEFENDS, AND PRESERVES TO HIMSELF (C) BY HIS SPIRIT AND WORD (D), OUT OF THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE (E), A CHURCH CHOSEN TO EVERLASTING LIFE (F), AGREEING IN TRUE FAITH (G); AND THAT I AM AND FOREVER SHALL REMAIN (H), A LIVING MEMBER THEREOF (I).

(A)EPHESIANS 5:26, JOHN 10:11, ACTS 20:28, EPHESIANS 4:11-13;

(B)PSALM 71:17-18, ISAIAH 59:21, I CORINTHIANS 11:26;

(C)MATTHEW 16:18, JOHN 10:28-30, PSALM 129:1-5; (D)ISAIAH 59:21, ROMANS 1:16, 10:14-17, EPHESIANS 5:26; (E)GENESIS 26:4, REV. 5:9;

(F)ROMANS 8:29, EPHESIANS 1:10-13; (G)ACTS 2:42, EPHESIANS 4:3-5;

(H)PSALM 23:6, I CORINTHIANS 1:8-9, JOHN 10:28, I JOHN 2:19, I PETER 1:5;

(I)I JOHN 3:14, 19&21, II CORINTHIANS 13:5, ROMANS 8:10

The fellowship of the believers

The Holy Ghost does not only bring about fellowship between a believer and Christ, but also between believers. There is a unity of all God's children. They have all been elected by God the Father from eternity. They all have the same faith, as it is confessed in the Apostles' Creed. They are gathered by God the Son and God the Holy Ghost out of all mankind. The Church is not the work of men, but of God.

The work of the Holy Ghost

How does the Holy Ghost work? It is through a powerful calling through His Spirit and Word, "*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*" (Ephesians 5:14). At Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit into the world in a special manner. It was in the signs of wind – invisible, but powerful, overturning everything, but also life-giving; and of fire – consuming, but also purifying, enlightening, and warming. His work was observed immediately: thousands of people came to repentance. They had been elected by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and drawn by the Holy Ghost.

Christ also sends preachers into the world, moved by the Holy Ghost. They proclaim God's Word. The Holy Spirit causes that Word to work powerfully in the hearts, so that sinful and unbelieving people come to repentance and faith, working a renewal of their entire lives.

In this way, a holy (that is, cleansed by the blood of Christ), catholic (found throughout the whole world), Christian Church comes into existence. Until the last day of this world sinners will be added to that church of Christ.

Abiding grace

Christ also protects and preserves all His people by His Spirit, Word. As their King He protects them from all enemies and from all dangers which try to seduce them or tear them away from God and His service. For Christ loves His Church "*which He hath purchased with His own blood*" (Acts 20:28). Then God's child may say to his great joy, "Of this church I am a living member and shall remain so forever".

Q.55. WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY "THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS"?

ANSWER: FIRST, THAT ALL AND EVERY ONE WHO BELIEVES, BEING MEMBERS OF CHRIST, ARE IN COMMON, PARTAKERS OF HIM, AND OF ALL HIS RICHES AND GIFTS (A); SECONDLY, THAT EVERY ONE MUST KNOW IT TO BE HIS DUTY, READILY AND CHEERFULLY TO EMPLOY HIS GIFTS FOR THE ADVANTAGE AND SALVATION OF OTHER MEMBERS (B).

(A) I JOHN 1:3, ROMANS 8:32, I CORINTHIANS 12:12-13, I CORINTHIANS 6:17;

(B) I CORINTHIANS 12:21, 13:1&5, PHILIPPIANS 2:4-8

The Communion of saints

The Christian Church is called "the communion of saints". These "saints" are not sinless people, but persons whose sins have been forgiven through the blood of Christ *and* who are renewed by the Holy Ghost, so that they desire again to live according to all the commandments of God.

First of all, they have communion of faith with Christ, for the same Spirit lives both in Christ *and* in the believers. And because they belong to Christ, they are also partakers of His benefits. Paul wrote: "*But of Him* (that is: through God's grace and power) *are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*" (I Corinthians 1:30).

Gifts of the Spirit

Through the Holy Spirit, Christ also bestows many spiritual gifts upon the believers. Paul said, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*" (Galatians 5:22&23). He gives them a share of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are in Christ (Colossians 2:3). He also grants them gifts to serve in the congregation, as the apostle wrote: "*Whether prophesy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that*

teaches, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness” (Romans 12:6-8).

The mutual communion of saints

The communion of saints further infers that the believers employ their gifts which they have received for the advantage of other believers. They do this because it is their calling, but also voluntarily and with joy. He who loves Christ also loves them who are *of* Christ! And he who is *of* Christ does not live primarily for himself. He desires to live to the honour of God and to the well-being of his neighbour. As Paul wrote: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (I Corinthians 12:13, 14-21).* Believers also need to exercise communion of saints around Word and Sacrament for themselves, in order that their fervour of faith and love will continue to burn. In the epistle to the Hebrews we read, *“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and unto good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24&25).*

Q.56. WHAT BELIEVEST THOU CONCERNING “THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS”?
ANSWER: THAT GOD, FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST’S SATISFACTION, WILL NO MORE REMEMBER MY SINS, NEITHER MY CORRUPT NATURE, AGAINST WHICH I HAVE TO STRUGGLE ALL MY LIFE LONG (A); BUT WILL GRACIOUSLY IMPUTE TO ME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST (B), THAT I MAY NEVER BE CONDEMNED BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL OF GOD (C).

(A) I JOHN 2:2, I JOHN 1:7, II CORINTHIANS 5:19; (B) ROMANS 7:23-25, JEREMIAH 31:34, MICAH 7:19, PSALM 103:3 & 10 & 12; (C) JOHN 3:18, 5:24

The forgiveness of all sins

The true Christian believes the forgiveness of sins. How has this forgiveness become possible? It is because Christ has given satisfaction for sin. Although He Himself was innocent, yet He bore the penalty for sin. He bore the punishment for God’s children, in their place. Therefore their sins are forgiven them. That implies the greatest comfort imaginable. David said, *“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).*

This forgiveness not only applies to all the sins which were committed in the past, but also to all the sins which will still be committed. For the Christian still retains his sinful nature until the moment of his death. He *does* wrestle against it all his life, but he does not conquer it completely. In the midst of his grief it is now his comfort that God has also forgiven him that sinful nature. And he knows that at his death God will deliver him from it.

Sinful and yet holy

Paul, when sighing because of his sinful flesh, groans *“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”* But immediately after that, he may, when looking at the coming deliverance, exclaim with joy, *“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 7:23-25).

Even in the last judgment God does not count the sins and sinful nature against the believer. Therefore, God’s child will not be condemned in the judgment. On the contrary, God imputes to him, the perfect righteousness (that is, the perfect obedience to God’s law) of Christ. It is as if he had not committed any sin, as if he had done nothing but been obedient to the whole law of God all his life. This can only be called grace.

Questions:

1. *What is the work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost respectively, in saving sinners?*

2. *Read in Matthew 28:19&20 and Mark 16:15&16 about what the Lord Jesus said to His disciples when He sent them out into the world. Mention four important things which were said with this.*

3. *Is it necessary to go to church in order to be saved? (Romans 10:13-15)*

4. *How can we know whether we are members of the Church? (Gal. 4:6)*

5. *Why can you, after having become a living member of the Church, through regeneration, faith, and conversions, never lose that membership anymore? (John 17:11, 19 & 24)*

6. *According to God’s Word, why cannot believers do without assembling around Word and sacrament? (Hebrews 10:24&25)*

7. *Why is the article “I believe the forgiveness of sins” in the Apostles’ Creed such a comforting article?*
