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Church of God Mission Academy

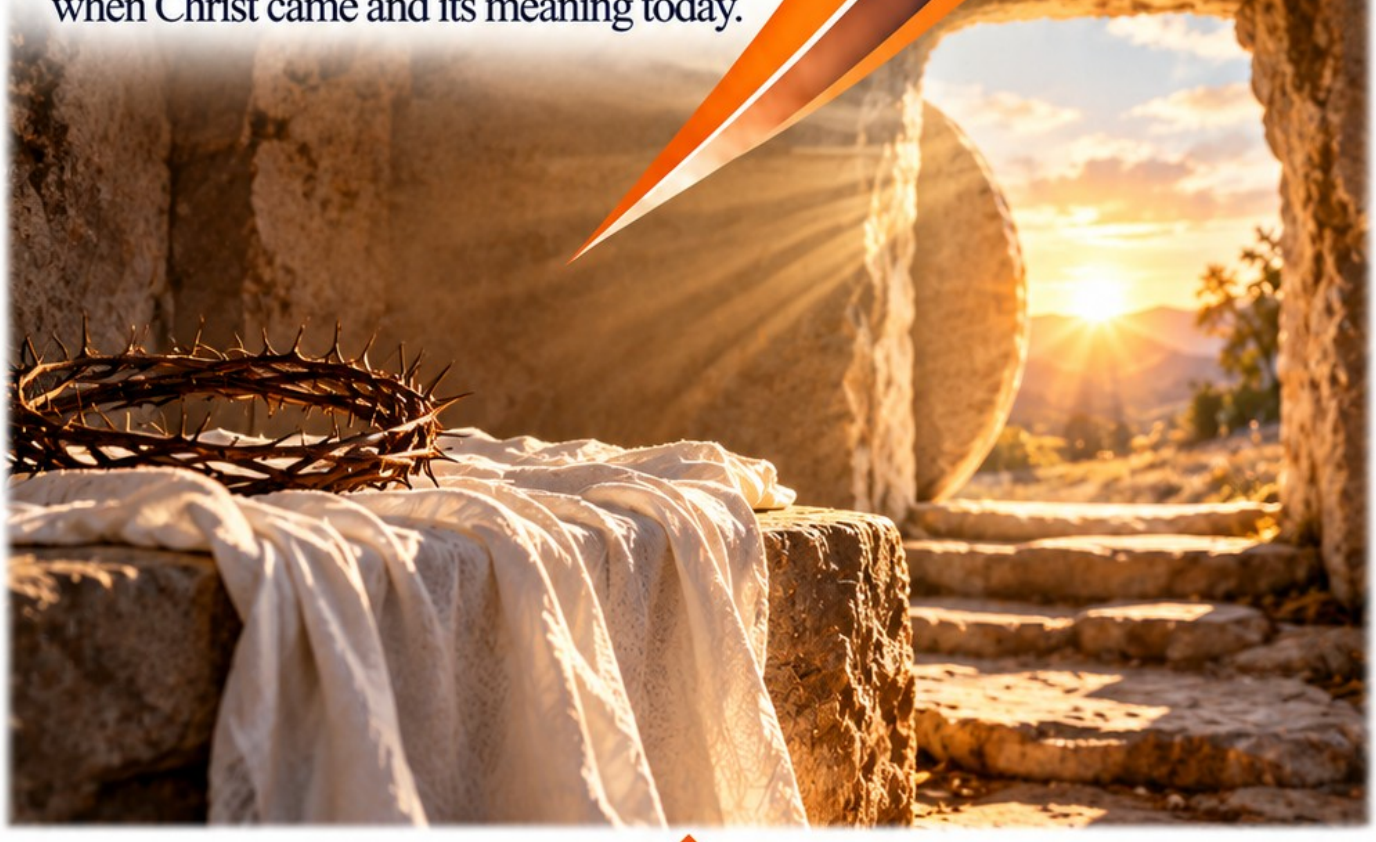
STUDY GUIDE 69

Ordinances Fulfilled in Jesus Christ

STUDY GUIDE 2 OF 12:

The Reality Has Arrived

An overview of what changed when Christ came and its meaning today.



Equipping and empowering for effective service

2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

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Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

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PREFACE

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The Old Covenant contained figures, shadows and outward ordinances that pointed forward towards Jesus Christ. These included sacrifices, priesthood, ceremonial washings and other visible practices through which God taught His people concerning the greater spiritual reality that was to come.

The writer of Hebrews explains that these outward ordinances were imposed *"until the time of reformation."* He then announces the great turning point in **Hebrews 9:11**: *"But Christ being come."* The One to whom the shadows pointed had arrived, bringing the reality that the former covenant could only represent.

These things were not meaningless. They were given by God for an appointed purpose and an appointed time. They taught, represented and prepared God's people for the greater spiritual reality that was still to come.

The sacrifices pointed forward. The priesthood pointed forward. The tabernacle, washings, appointed days and ordinances all pointed forward.

They were preparing the way for Jesus Christ. Then Hebrews gives the great turning point: *"But Christ being come."*

Those words are important because they mark the turning point in the teaching of Hebrews 9. The writer is no longer speaking only about figures and shadows that pointed forward. He now directs our attention to Jesus Christ, the One in whom those figures and shadows find their fulfilment.

The former covenant was preparatory. God gave its sacrifices, priesthood, tabernacle, washings and outward ordinances for an appointed purpose, and each pointed beyond itself towards the greater spiritual reality found in Jesus Christ. Their significance must therefore be understood in relation to His coming and the New Covenant He established.

This Study Guide now considers the next question: What happened when Jesus Christ came?

If the shadows were pointing towards Him, then His coming must have brought something greater than the outward forms themselves. We therefore need to understand what changed when the reality arrived, whether the former shadows still remained necessary, and whether the believer now possesses the spiritual reality to which those shadows pointed. This Study Guide will trace that movement from the turning point expressed in the words *"But Christ being come"* to its New Covenant conclusion: *"Ye are complete in him."*

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why do the words But Christ being come mark a change in the purpose of the former covenant shadows?

Personal Reflection

What does the arrival of the Person represented by those shadows mean to your understanding of fulfilment? What difference should this make to your own response?

Action Step

What do you want to examine more carefully about relying on outward representations now that Christ has come? State one specific conclusion you need to correct or confirm in the Bible, and how it will affect your conduct.

INTRODUCTION

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The Old Covenant contained God-given figures, shadows and outward ordinances that pointed forward to Jesus Christ. These included sacrifices, priesthood, ceremonial washings and other practices that prepared God's people for the greater spiritual reality to come.

Hebrews 9 explains that these outward requirements had an appointed purpose and duration. The writer then announces the decisive turning point: *"But Christ being come."* The One to whom the shadows pointed had arrived, bringing the greater reality those outward forms could only represent.

This raises the central question of this Study Guide: Has the spiritual reality to which the shadows pointed already arrived in Jesus Christ, or are believers still waiting for its fulfilment?

This question is especially important when considering the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Many Christians understand His Second Coming as a future event. However, Jesus promised His disciples that He would come to them, that the world would see Him no more, and that He would dwell within His people.

We must therefore examine what Jesus Christ accomplished through His sacrifice, what He promised concerning His coming as the Holy Ghost, and how that promise was fulfilled at Pentecost. We will then consider how His indwelling life establishes the New Covenant reality within every born-again believer and what this means for outward ordinances.

The believer does not depend upon an outward representation of Jesus Christ because Christ Himself dwells within everyone who is born again. The spiritual reality is found in the Person, not in the ceremony.

Because the believer has received Jesus Christ through the new birth, Scripture declares: *"Ye are complete in him."*

Personal Response

Key Truth

How are Christ's completed sacrifice, His promised coming and the believer's completeness connected?

Personal Reflection

Which of these connections do you most need to understand more clearly? Explain. Is there a familiar expectation of yours that now needs reconsidering?

Action Step

How could considering what Christ has already accomplished guide your own approach to outward ordinances? Examine where you have placed your confidence. What will you change to keep that confidence in Jesus Christ?

BUT CHRIST BEING COME

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The writer of Hebrews explains that the first covenant contained outward requirements, including meats, drinks, ceremonial washings and carnal ordinances. These were not human inventions but belonged to the covenant order God had established for Israel. They served an appointed purpose, teaching spiritual truths and pointing forward to the greater reality that would come in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:10 establishes an important limitation upon these outward requirements: they were *"imposed on them until the time of reformation."* The word *"until"* shows that their observance had an appointed limit. The writer then identifies the decisive turning point in the following verse: *"But Christ being come."*

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 9:11-12**:

> *"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."*

The opening words of **Hebrews 9:11** announce an important change:

> *"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come"*

The words *"But Christ being come"* identify the decisive turning point between the outward former covenant order and the greater spiritual reality established through Jesus Christ. What had previously been represented through sacrifices, priesthood, ceremonial washings and a physical sanctuary was now finding its fulfilment in Him.

Under the former covenant, these things had an appointed purpose. They were not meaningless religious customs but figures and shadows that directed God's people towards the reality that would come through Jesus Christ. However, they could not provide the complete spiritual reality to which they pointed.

Jesus Christ did not come simply to introduce another collection of outward religious ceremonies. He came to accomplish what the former covenant had represented. His sacrifice

obtained eternal redemption, His priesthood fulfilled the purpose of the former priesthood, and through Him the reality of the New Covenant was established.

The words *"But Christ being come"* therefore announce more than the arrival of another teacher or prophet. They identify the coming of the One in whom the promises, figures and shadows of the former covenant find their fulfilment. The appointed preparation had reached its purpose because Jesus Christ Himself had come.

From the Figure to the Reality

Hebrews 9 establishes an important distinction between the former covenant and the greater reality brought by Jesus Christ. The writer describes the outward sanctuary and its services as *"a figure for the time then present."* He then explains that the meats, drinks, divers washings and carnal ordinances were imposed *"until the time of reformation."*

The expression *"time of reformation"* identifies an appointed change in covenant order. It does not describe the restoration, improvement or continuation of the former ceremonies in another form. The writer immediately directs our attention to Jesus Christ, the greater High Priest, whose saving work accomplished what those outward services could never accomplish.

The former covenant provided figures of sacrifice, cleansing, priesthood and access to God, but those figures could not themselves provide eternal redemption. **Hebrews 9:12** declares that Jesus Christ entered the holy place by His own blood, *"having obtained eternal redemption for us."* The distinction is therefore not simply between older and newer religious practices, but between outward representation and the completed saving work of Jesus Christ.

This establishes an essential principle for examining the ordinances. A practice may have been commanded by God for an appointed purpose without being intended to continue permanently. Its continuing authority must therefore be determined from Scripture according to the covenant under which it was given and the spiritual fulfilment accomplished through Jesus Christ.

The former outward order was appointed *"until the time of reformation."* When Jesus Christ came and accomplished the reality to which those figures pointed, the believer received something greater than the representation. The Person is greater than the ordinance, and the completed reality in Jesus Christ is greater than the shadow that pointed towards Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is Christ's eternal redemption greater than the repeated sacrifices of the former covenant?

Personal Reflection

What does His completed sacrifice clarify about where confidence for salvation belongs? What does this reveal about an assumption you have held?

Action Step

Is there a religious performance you have treated as completing Christ's saving work? Explain what this means for your own confidence in Him. Identify one practice or belief you will test against the Bible, and explain what you are prepared to change.

He Taketh Away the First, That He May Establish the Second

The writer of Hebrews makes the change from the former covenant to the New Covenant even clearer.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 10:9**:

> *"Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."*

Hebrews 10:9 establishes a clear distinction between the first covenant order and the second. Jesus Christ did not come to add the New Covenant to the former covenant so that both would continue together. The writer declares:

> *"He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."*

This change does not mean that the former covenant was wrong or that its ordinances were meaningless. God had appointed its sacrifices, priestly services and ceremonial requirements for a particular purpose. Their purpose was preparatory, and they could not accomplish the complete spiritual work that Jesus Christ would bring through His own sacrifice.

This distinction is especially important when examining outward ordinances. We cannot assume that a practice remains binding upon the New Covenant Church simply because God commanded it under the former covenant. Its appointed purpose, covenant setting and fulfilment in Jesus Christ must all be considered before concluding that it remains a continuing requirement.

At the same time, the removal of the former covenant order does not mean that God's people are free to disregard His commandments. The New Covenant establishes the inward life of Jesus Christ, through whom obedience, holiness, love and service are expressed. The believer does not obey in order to complete salvation, but because Jesus Christ already dwells within through the new birth.

The change from the first covenant to the second was therefore greater than a change in outward religious administration. Jesus Christ fulfilled the preparatory purpose of the former order and established the greater spiritual reality. The figures and shadows had pointed forward to Him, and in Him their appointed purpose was fulfilled.

The first covenant served its appointed purpose, but Jesus Christ established the second. The believer now possesses the reality in the Person to whom the former figures and shadows pointed.

This prepares us to understand what Hebrews says next. What came in Jesus Christ was not another version of the former outward order.

It was *"A greater and more perfect"* reality.

A Greater and More Perfect Tabernacle

The writer of Hebrews not only declares that Jesus Christ has come but also explains the greater reality established through Him. **Hebrews 9:11** describes *"a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building."* This stands in contrast to the earthly tabernacle that God commanded Moses to construct.

The former tabernacle was a physical sanctuary containing appointed furnishings and divisions. The priests carried out their service within that earthly structure according to the requirements of the Law. Its construction and ceremonies were divinely appointed, but they could not provide the complete spiritual access to God that would come through Jesus Christ.

The greater tabernacle described in Hebrews is not another earthly building constructed by human hands. It belongs to the greater heavenly and spiritual reality established through the priestly work of Jesus Christ. His ministry accomplishes what the former priesthood, sanctuary and ceremonies could only represent.

This distinction is important when considering outward ordinances. The New Covenant does not depend upon the continued observance of former sanctuary ceremonies in order to provide access to God. Jesus Christ has fulfilled the purpose towards which that outward service pointed, and the born-again believer now enjoys a living spiritual relationship with Him.

The earthly tabernacle therefore served its appointed purpose as a figure. It pointed beyond itself towards the greater reality that would come through Jesus Christ. The believer now possesses the Person whose saving work provides what the outward sanctuary could never accomplish.

Not by the Blood of Goats and Calves

The writer then makes another important contrast. Under the former covenant, animal blood was repeatedly offered.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 9:12**:

> *"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."*

Under the former covenant, animal sacrifices were offered according to the requirements God had established. These sacrifices taught important truths concerning sin, sacrifice and the giving of life. However, the blood of animals could not accomplish the eternal redemption God's people needed.

Their appointed purpose was to point forward to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The repeated offerings testified that something greater was still required. The complete saving reality would come through Him.

Hebrews 9:12 establishes the difference between the shadow and the reality. The former sacrifices depended upon the blood of animals, but Jesus Christ entered the holy place by His own blood, *"having obtained eternal redemption for us."*

The former sacrifices were repeated, but His sacrifice was sufficient and accomplished what those outward offerings could never accomplish.

Notice that Scripture says Jesus Christ has *"obtained eternal redemption."* Redemption is not presented as something that must later be completed through the believer's observance of an outward ordinance. Jesus Christ accomplished the saving work, and the person who is born again receives the spiritual life and salvation made possible through that completed work.

This distinction is fundamental to understanding the New Covenant. Animal sacrifices could represent the need for redemption, but they could not provide the eternal redemption towards which they pointed. Jesus Christ fulfilled what they represented, and His saving work does not require an additional ceremonial action to make the believer spiritually complete.

The movement from the former sacrifices to Jesus Christ was therefore greater than a change in the outward form of worship. It was the fulfilment of the saving purpose towards which those sacrifices had pointed. The shadow represented redemption, but Jesus Christ obtained eternal redemption.

The Shadow Had an Appointed Purpose

The shadows of the former covenant were not mistakes or meaningless religious customs. God appointed them for a particular purpose and period. Through sacrifices, priesthood, tabernacle worship and ceremonial washings, He taught His people spiritual truths that would find their fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

The purpose of these shadows was preparatory. They could represent sacrifice, cleansing and access to God, but they could not themselves produce the spiritual reality. Their value was found in what God intended to accomplish through Jesus Christ, not in the ability of outward performance to provide salvation.

This distinction helps us understand why a God-given ordinance need not remain a permanent New Covenant requirement. The question is not simply whether God originally commanded the practice. We must also consider its appointed purpose, the covenant under which it was given and whether Scripture establishes its continued observance after its fulfilment in Christ.

Jesus Christ has come, and the former covenant shadows have reached their fulfilment in Him. The representation has given way to the greater reality found in the Person. We must therefore examine what Scripture declares concerning His sacrifice, the putting away of sin and the eternal redemption He accomplished.

He Appeared to Put Away Sin

Later in the same chapter, the writer returns to the appearing of Jesus Christ. He now explains the purpose for which Christ appeared and contrasts His one sacrifice with the repeated

sacrifices of the former covenant. The saving reality had come in the Person to whom those sacrifices pointed.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 9:26**:

> *"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."*

The writer is describing what Jesus Christ accomplished through His manifestation in flesh. He came to deal with sin through His own sacrifice, fulfilling what the repeated animal sacrifices of the former covenant could only represent. The shadows pointed forward, but the saving reality was accomplished in Jesus Christ.

The expression *"put away sin"* is especially important. Jesus Christ did not offer Himself simply to introduce another ceremony through which the believer could complete the work of salvation. His sacrifice accomplished the saving work that the former covenant sacrifices could never accomplish.

Hebrews also emphasises that Jesus Christ appeared *"once."* Under the former covenant, sacrifices were offered repeatedly because those sacrifices could not provide the complete spiritual reality. Jesus Christ, however, offered Himself, and His sacrifice does not need to be repeated or supplemented by an outward religious action.

The person who is born again receives the salvation accomplished through Jesus Christ. The believer does not receive part of salvation at the new birth and then complete it through water baptism, communion or another outward ordinance. Salvation is complete in Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice fulfilled what the former offerings had represented.

Hebrews 9:26 therefore establishes a decisive difference between the shadow and the reality. The former sacrifices pointed forward to the putting away of sin, but Jesus Christ accomplished that saving work through the sacrifice of Himself. The shadow represented the work to come; Jesus Christ accomplished the reality once.

The End of the Age

Hebrews 9:26 declares that Jesus Christ appeared *"in the end of the world."* The Greek word translated *"world"* in this expression is AION, which refers to an age or period of time. The expression must therefore be understood within its Scriptural setting rather than automatically interpreted as the destruction of the physical earth.

The writer of Hebrews is explaining the fulfilment of the former covenant order. Throughout the chapter, he contrasts its repeated sacrifices, earthly sanctuary and ceremonial requirements with the greater saving work accomplished through Jesus Christ. The subject is the change from the former covenant order to the spiritual reality established through Him.

Hebrews 9:26 speaks of an appearing that had already occurred. Jesus Christ had appeared in flesh to put away sin through the sacrifice of Himself. His manifestation in flesh and His sacrifice took place while the former covenant age was reaching its appointed fulfilment. The expression *"end of the world"* therefore refers here to the conclusion of that former age rather than the destruction of the physical creation.

The sacrifices, priesthood, tabernacle and ceremonial ordinances had pointed forward to what Jesus Christ would accomplish. **Hebrews 9:10** explains that the outward requirements were imposed *"until the time of reformation,"* while **Hebrews 9:11** identifies the decisive turning point with the words *"But Christ being come."* These statements belong to the same Scriptural explanation of the transition from the former covenant to the New Covenant.

This distinction is essential when examining the ordinances. We must not assume that every reference to the *"end of the world"* concerns a future destruction of the earth. The covenant setting, the events being described and the fulfilment accomplished through Jesus Christ must determine how the expression is understood.

The former covenant age reached its appointed fulfilment through Jesus Christ. Its outward shadows had served their preparatory purpose, and the greater spiritual reality had come. The end of that age was the fulfilment of what the shadows anticipated, because Jesus Christ Himself had come.

Christ Was Once Offered

The writer continues in Hebrews 9 by contrasting the completed sacrifice of Jesus Christ with the second appearing that follows. His sacrifice for sin had already been accomplished and would never need to be repeated. The writer now turns from that completed offering to another aspect of Christ's coming.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 9:27-28**:

> *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."*

Jesus Christ was *"once offered to bear the sins of many."* His sacrifice for sin was complete and did not need to be repeated. The former covenant sacrifices had pointed forward to this saving work, but Jesus Christ accomplished what those repeated animal offerings could never accomplish.

His first appearing in flesh brought the shadows to their fulfilment through His own sacrifice. He did not need to offer Himself repeatedly because His saving work was sufficient. The Person accomplished the reality towards which the former sacrifices had pointed.

The writer then introduces another appearing. Having declared that Christ was once offered to bear sin, he says that He would appear *"the second time without sin unto salvation."* This second appearing is therefore distinguished from His sacrifice for sin and is not presented as another offering or repetition of the work already accomplished.

Three expressions require careful examination: *"the second time," "without sin,"* and *"unto salvation."* These words are essential to understanding the purpose of the appearing described in **Hebrews 9:28**. We must allow Scripture to establish their meaning rather than assume beforehand how or when that appearing would occur.

The words of Hebrews must therefore be considered alongside the promises Jesus Christ made concerning His coming to His disciples. This will help us understand the relationship

between His completed sacrifice, His promised coming as the Holy Ghost and the salvation received by those who are born again.

Christ was once offered to bear sin. His sacrifice was complete, and the second appearing must be understood in the light of that finished saving work.

A Second Appearing

Hebrews 9:28 declares that Jesus Christ would appear *"the second time without sin unto salvation."* The writer distinguishes this appearing from the sacrifice through which Christ had already borne the sins of many. His sacrifice was complete, and the second appearing was not another offering for sin.

The words *"without sin"* must be understood in relation to the preceding declaration that Christ was *"once offered to bear the sins of many."* The writer is not suggesting that Jesus Christ had previously been sinful. He is distinguishing His completed work of bearing sin from the purpose of the second appearing.

The expression *"unto salvation"* is equally important. The writer connects this appearing with salvation and identifies those who would receive its benefit as *"them that look for him."* We must therefore consider what it means to look for Jesus Christ and how His promised appearing relates to the salvation received through Him.

There is also an important distinction between the work Jesus Christ accomplished through His sacrifice and the believer's reception of that salvation. His sacrifice provided the complete foundation for redemption, while those who are born again receive the saving life of Jesus Christ within them. The completed work made salvation possible, and the new birth brings that saving life into the believer's experience.

Two questions must therefore be answered from Scripture. Who are *"them that look for him,"* and how does His promised second appearing relate to their salvation? These questions must be answered from the words of Scripture rather than from an assumed future physical event.

Hebrews 9:28 must therefore be examined alongside the promises Jesus made concerning His coming to His disciples and the fulfilment of those promises at Pentecost. The sacrifice had already been completed; the second appearing concerns the promised coming through which His saving life would become the inward reality of His people.

Who Looks for Jesus?

Hebrews 9:28 declares that Jesus Christ would appear *"unto them that look for him."* This raises an important question: Who are these people, and what does it mean to look for Jesus Christ? The answer must be understood through the connection the verse makes between His appearing and salvation.

Those who recognise their need for salvation must turn to Jesus Christ because eternal life is found in Him. The outward ordinances of the former covenant could point forward to His saving work, but they could not provide the spiritual life that He alone gives. The saving reality is found in the Person rather than in the outward representation.

Jesus illustrated the necessity of believing in Him by referring to the serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness.

Jesus said in **John 3:14-15**:

> *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."*

Jesus connected believing in Him with receiving eternal life. The saving benefit is not obtained through the performance of an outward ceremony but through Jesus Christ Himself. Those who look to Him in faith receive the life that only He can give.

We must therefore distinguish between looking to Jesus Christ for salvation and expecting to see Him physically appear. **Hebrews 9:28** speaks of those who *"look for him"* and connects His appearing with salvation. The expression must be examined according to that saving purpose rather than automatically understood as watching the natural sky for a future bodily appearance.

To understand how this promise was fulfilled, we must consider what Jesus Himself taught concerning His coming to His disciples. He promised that He would come to His people, that the world would see Him no more, and that He would dwell within those who belong to Him. These promises provide the foundation for understanding His coming as the Holy Ghost at Pentecost.

The question is therefore not settled by assuming that *"look for him"* describes people waiting for a future physical appearance. We must consider the purpose of the appearing, its connection with salvation and Jesus Christ's own explanation of how He would come to His people. Those who look to Jesus Christ for salvation receive the Person whose indwelling life is the New Covenant reality.

Salvation Is a Present Reality

Hebrews 9:28 connects the second appearing of Jesus Christ with salvation. The writer declares that Christ would appear *"the second time without sin unto salvation."* We must therefore consider when the salvation accomplished through His sacrifice became available to those who believed in Him.

The book of Acts records that people were being saved and added to the Church following the coming of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. Salvation was not presented as something believers had to await until another future age. Through the preaching of the Gospel, people were born again and received the spiritual life found in Jesus Christ.

Luke wrote in **Acts 2:47**:

> *"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*

Notice that the Lord was adding those who were saved to His Church. The Church was not being formed through outward religious membership or ceremonial observance. Those who received salvation through Jesus Christ belonged to Him, and the Lord added them to His Church.

This establishes that salvation was a present reality following Pentecost. People were receiving the saving life of Jesus Christ and becoming members of His one spiritual body. Salvation was not postponed until another age or another physical appearing.

We must also understand how this present salvation relates to the second appearing described in **Hebrews 9:28**. The availability of salvation confirms that the saving work of Jesus Christ was already effective, but the timing and manner of His appearing must be established from His own promises and their fulfilment in Scripture. We must allow His words to explain how He would come.

Jesus told His disciples that He would come to them. He explained that the world would see Him no more, while His people would continue to know Him through His indwelling presence. He also promised that the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, would come and abide with them for ever.

These promises direct our attention to Pentecost. When the Holy Ghost came, Jesus Christ fulfilled His promise to come to His people as Spirit. His saving presence became the New Covenant reality experienced by those who were born again.

Christ's appearing *"unto salvation"* in **Hebrews 9:28** was fulfilled at Pentecost, when He came as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people. Hebrews 9, the promises of Jesus Christ in John 14, and their fulfilment recorded in Acts 2 establish this truth. The completed sacrifice provided the foundation of salvation, and His coming as Spirit brought His saving life into the experience of His people.

The essential truth for our study of ordinances is that salvation is not awaiting a future fulfilment. Jesus Christ has come, His saving work has been accomplished, and every born-again believer now possesses His indwelling life. Salvation is complete in the Person, not completed through an outward ordinance.

The Question We Must Now Answer

Hebrews 9 distinguishes between Christ's completed sacrifice and His second appearing *"without sin unto salvation."* His sacrifice was accomplished once, so we must now determine how Scripture explains this second appearing.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus promised that He would come to His disciples. He said the Spirit of truth was with them but would be in them, and that although the world would see Him no more, His disciples would continue to know Him.

Jesus was therefore preparing them for a change from His bodily presence beside them to His indwelling presence within them.

The question is: How and when did Jesus Christ fulfil His promise, *"I will come to you"*?

We will examine John 14 alongside Acts 2 to understand why COGMA identifies the coming of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost as the fulfilment of Christ's promised return.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does Hebrews distinguish Christ's sacrifice for sin from His second appearing unto salvation?

Personal Reflection

What do you understand more clearly about the difference between Christ providing salvation and a person receiving His life? Which part of your own understanding does it challenge?

Action Step

As you consider Christ's promise to come to His people, what do you need to examine more carefully in His own words? Name one choice in your own life that should change because of this truth, and explain why.

THE SECOND COMING WAS FULFILLED AT PENTECOST

BACK TO CONTENTS

Hebrews 9:28 speaks of Jesus Christ appearing *"the second time without sin unto salvation."* The writer distinguishes this appearing from Christ's completed sacrifice for sin and connects it directly with salvation. To understand its fulfilment, we must therefore examine what Jesus Himself promised concerning His coming to His people.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus prepared His disciples for the end of His bodily presence among them. He did not teach that His departure would leave them without His presence until a distant future time. Instead, He promised that He would come to them again and establish a greater spiritual relationship in which He would dwell within them.

The question is therefore not simply whether Jesus Christ would come again, but how He promised to come and when that promise was fulfilled. His own words must determine the nature of His coming rather than an assumed future physical appearance.

Jesus identified the promised Comforter as the Spirit of truth who would dwell within His disciples. He then made the personal declaration, *"I will come to you."* These statements belong together and provide the foundation for understanding His promised return.

The following Scriptures will connect the coming of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost and the fulfilment of Christ's promise at Pentecost. This is essential to understanding why the New Covenant believer now possesses the indwelling life of Jesus Christ rather than waiting for the spiritual reality towards which the former ordinances pointed.

Jesus Promised That He Would Come

Before His crucifixion, Jesus prepared His disciples for the time when He would no longer be with them in bodily form. However, He made it clear that they would not be left without Him. He promised that He would come to them in another manner.

Jesus said in **John 14:16-18**:

> *"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."*

Jesus speaks of *"another Comforter."* The Greek word translated *"another"* is ALLOS, which commonly describes another of the same kind. However, the identity of the Comforter must not be established from this Greek word alone, but from Jesus' complete explanation in John 14.

Jesus identifies the Comforter as *"the Spirit of truth."* He then describes an important change in the relationship between Himself and His disciples. The Spirit was *"with you"* but would be *"in you."*

At that time, Jesus Christ was physically present with His disciples. They could see Him, hear His words and walk beside Him, but He was preparing them for a greater spiritual relationship that would not depend upon His bodily presence. The distinction between *"with you"* and *"in you"* therefore points towards His promised indwelling presence.

The clearest statement comes in **John 14:18**:

> *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."*

Jesus personally identifies Himself as the One who would come to His disciples. His promise concerning the Comforter must therefore be understood together with His declaration, *"I will come to you."*

This agrees with the Scriptural revelation that Jesus Christ is the one true God and that the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Christ. The coming of the Comforter did not mean that Jesus would remain absent while another independent divine Person took His place. It was the fulfilment of His own promise to come and dwell within His people as Spirit.

The distinction is therefore between Christ's former bodily presence with His disciples and His promised spiritual presence within them. This greater New Covenant reality was fulfilled at Pentecost when Jesus Christ came as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do Jesus' promises in John 14 connect the Comforter with His own coming to dwell within His people?

Personal Reflection

What has the difference between Christ being with His disciples and being in them helped you understand? What difference should this make to your own response?

Action Step

What does Christ promising to dwell within His people mean for your own understanding of the new birth? Explain what you want to consider more carefully. Examine your own confidence before God. What belief or response must change because spiritual life comes from Christ?

Paul Confirms This Spiritual Identity

Paul later confirms the spiritual identity of Christ with the indwelling Spirit.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 3:17**:

> *"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."*

Paul's declaration is direct: *"The Lord is that Spirit."*

Paul also speaks of the indwelling Spirit as both *"the Spirit of God"* and *"the Spirit of Christ."*

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

The Lord Jesus Christ is not presented as absent from His people while another divine Person provides the spiritual life they receive. Paul identifies the Lord with the Spirit through whom believers experience His presence.

Romans 8:9 strengthens this understanding by identifying the indwelling Spirit as both *"the Spirit of God"* and *"the Spirit of Christ."*

Within the same verse, Paul speaks of *"the Spirit of God"* and *"the Spirit of Christ."* He is not describing two different Spirits but the one Spirit by whom a person belongs to Jesus Christ.

The conclusion is equally important: *"if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."* A person does not first belong to Christ and then receive His Spirit through a later experience. The Spirit of Christ is received at the new birth, and every born-again believer possesses His indwelling life.

These Scriptures explain the promise Jesus made in John 14. The Comforter is not another independent divine Person who replaces Jesus Christ. The promised coming of the Comforter is the coming of Jesus Christ Himself as Spirit to dwell within His people.

The meaning of ALLOS must therefore remain subordinate to the complete testimony of Scripture. Jesus declared, *"I will come to you,"* Paul declared, *"Now the Lord is that Spirit,"* and **Romans 8:9** identifies the indwelling Spirit as *"the Spirit of Christ."* These declarations belong together and identify the One who came at Pentecost.

The New Covenant believer does not await another experience to receive His Spirit. Jesus Christ Himself dwells within everyone who is born again. This is the living spiritual reality to which the former outward ordinances pointed.

The distinction between *"with you"* and *"in you"* is fundamental to understanding the coming Jesus Christ promised. During His earthly ministry, He was present with His disciples in bodily form. They could hear His teaching, witness His works and walk beside Him, but He was preparing them for a greater spiritual relationship in which He would dwell within them.

Jesus did not promise simply to restore the same outward relationship His disciples had already experienced. His words directed them towards an abiding spiritual presence. The Comforter would dwell within His people, and Jesus personally declared, *"I will come to you."*

This promised indwelling presence became a reality at Pentecost. Jesus Christ would no longer be known by His disciples through His former bodily presence among them but through His own Spirit dwelling within them. The change was not the replacement of Jesus Christ by another divine Person, but the fulfilment of His promise to come to His people as Spirit.

This distinction is essential to understanding the New Covenant. The believer does not depend upon Jesus Christ being physically present beside them in order to possess His life. Through the new birth, Jesus Christ Himself dwells within every believer, bringing the spiritual reality that outward ordinances could only represent.

The New Covenant relationship is therefore greater than an outward relationship with Christ. He is not simply with His people as He was during His earthly ministry, but in them through His Spirit. The believer possesses the Person, and His indwelling life is the continuing reality of everyone who is born again.

The World Would See Him No More

Jesus continued in **John 14:19-20**:

> *"Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."*

Jesus made an important distinction concerning how His disciples would know Him after His departure. During His earthly ministry, He was physically present among them, and both believers and unbelievers could see Him with their natural eyes. He was preparing His disciples for a different relationship in which His presence would be known spiritually.

Jesus declared in **John 14:19**:

> *"Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also."*

The words *"the world seeth me no more; but ye see me"* establish a clear distinction. Jesus was approaching the end of His bodily presence among them, after which the world would no longer see Him in the same outward manner. His disciples, however, would continue to know Him because their relationship with Him would become an inward spiritual reality.

Jesus explained this further in the following verse.

Jesus declared in **John 14:20**:

> *"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."*

The words *"but ye see me"* must therefore be understood together with *"I in you."* Jesus was not promising that His disciples would continue seeing His physical body after His departure. He was directing them towards the New Covenant relationship in which His own life would dwell within them.

This is significant when considering the expectation of another future physical coming of Jesus Christ. His promise in John 14 concerns a coming in which *"the world seeth me no more,"* while His people know Him through His indwelling presence. His promised coming must therefore be understood in harmony with these words rather than assumed to require another public bodily manifestation.

"At That Day"

Jesus said in **John 14:20**:

> *"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."*

The expression *"at that day"* is important because Jesus connected a particular time with a spiritual understanding His disciples would receive. At that day, they would know the relationship expressed in His words, *"ye in me, and I in you."*

Jesus was preparing His disciples for an inward spiritual reality that would be greater than His former bodily presence among them. They had known Him as One who walked beside them, taught them and spoke with them face to face. He was now preparing them to know Him through His indwelling presence.

The surrounding verses explain this promised change. Jesus had already declared that the Spirit of truth was *"with you, and shall be in you."* He had also promised, *"I will come to you,"* and explained that the world would see Him no more while His disciples would continue to know Him.

These declarations belong together. The disciples would move from knowing Jesus Christ through His bodily presence among them to knowing Him through His Spirit dwelling within them. The words *"at that day"* therefore point to the fulfilment of His promise to come and make His presence an inward reality.

The book of Acts records that this promise was fulfilled at Pentecost when the Holy Ghost came upon the disciples. The One who had been with them fulfilled His promise to be in them. The New Covenant reality expressed in the words *"ye in me, and I in you"* had arrived.

This does not describe a second work that believers must seek after the new birth. Pentecost established the New Covenant reality in which everyone who is born again receives the Spirit of Christ. Jesus Christ Himself dwells within His people, and His indwelling life is the foundation of their relationship with Him.

The significance of *"at that day"* is therefore found in the fulfilment of Jesus Christ's promise. The disciples were not waiting for another physical appearance but for the promised indwelling presence of the One who had said, *"I will come to you."* At Pentecost, Jesus Christ came as Spirit, and His abiding presence within His people became the continuing reality of the New Covenant.

He Would Make His Abode Within His People

Jesus repeated the same truth in **John 14:23**:

> *"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."*

The words *"we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"* describe more than a brief appearance followed by another departure. Jesus was promising an abiding spiritual presence that would establish a continuing relationship with those who belong to Him. His coming would result in a permanent dwelling within His people.

The word *"abode"* directs our attention to the permanence of this relationship. Jesus had already promised that the Comforter would abide with His people for ever. He now explains that His coming would establish an enduring spiritual dwelling rather than restore only the former outward relationship His disciples had experienced during His earthly ministry.

Jesus also connects this abiding relationship with love and obedience. He says, *"If a man love me, he will keep my words."* This does not mean that obedience earns the indwelling life of

Jesus Christ, but that love and obedience are expressions of the spiritual life already received through the new birth.

Christ dwells within His people, and His life is expressed through their conduct. The believer does not obey in order to make Christ come and dwell within, but obeys because the life of Christ is already present within. Christian conduct is the fruit of the indwelling Person.

The expressions *"my Father"* and *"we will come"* must also be understood consistently with the Scriptural revelation of one God in Jesus Christ. Jesus is not teaching that two separate divine Persons will independently enter the believer. The same Lord who declared, *"I will come to you,"* promised to make His abode with those who belong to Him.

This agrees with Paul's declaration in **2 Corinthians 3:17**:

> *"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."*

The abiding presence promised by Jesus Christ is the indwelling presence of His own Spirit. The believer does not possess an outward representation of Christ while waiting for Him to arrive at some future time. Every born-again believer already possesses His life within.

John 14:23 therefore strengthens the testimony concerning Christ's promised coming. His coming would establish a permanent spiritual relationship in which He would dwell within His people. This is the New Covenant reality fulfilled at Pentecost and received by everyone who is born again.

The Comforter Is the Holy Ghost

Jesus then identified the Comforter directly.

Jesus said in **John 14:26**:

> *"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."*

Jesus identifies the Comforter in **John 14:26** as *"the Holy Ghost."* This is important because it establishes who would come to His disciples and fulfil the promise of an abiding spiritual presence.

Earlier in the chapter, Jesus had declared, *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."* He also promised that the Spirit of truth would dwell within His disciples. These statements belong together: the coming of the Holy Ghost would fulfil Jesus Christ's own promise to come to His people.

The Comforter was not another independent divine Person replacing an absent Christ. Jesus Christ is the one true God, and the Holy Ghost is His Spirit. His coming would therefore establish the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ within those who belong to Him.

Jesus also explained that the Comforter would teach the disciples and bring His words to their remembrance. This was not a departure from the teaching of Jesus Christ, but the continuation of His work through His own Spirit.

The promise was fulfilled at Pentecost when the Holy Ghost came upon the disciples. Jesus Christ had not abandoned His people. He had come to dwell within them as Spirit, establishing the New Covenant reality He had promised.

This truth is fundamental to understanding the fulfilment of the ordinances. The believer does not depend upon outward ceremonies to possess the spiritual reality they represented. Everyone who is born again receives the indwelling Spirit of Jesus Christ and possesses His life within.

God Is Spirit

The manner of Christ's coming must also be understood according to the nature of God.

Jesus said in **John 4:24**:

> *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*

God is Spirit. Although Jesus had manifested Himself in flesh and walked among His disciples in a physical body, the flesh was not the eternal nature of God. The truth remains: God is Spirit.

Therefore, when Jesus returned to dwell within His people, He came according to His spiritual nature. The New Covenant reality was not another continuing physical manifestation; it was God dwelling within His people by His Spirit.

Christ Is No Longer Known After the Flesh

Paul later explained that believers no longer know Christ according to His former fleshly manifestation.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:16**:

> *"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."*

Notice the words, *"though we have known Christ after the flesh."* Then Paul says, *"yet now henceforth know we him no more."*

Paul is not saying that believers no longer know Jesus Christ. He is saying that they no longer know Him after the flesh. The manner of knowing Christ had changed.

The Church now knows Jesus Christ through the reality of His indwelling Spirit. This agrees with Jesus' words, *"the world seeth me no more,"* and *"I in you."*

The Spirit of God Is the Spirit of Christ

Paul shows clearly who dwells within the believer.

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

Paul uses the expressions *"the Spirit of God"* and *"the Spirit of Christ"* in the same verse. He is identifying the one Spirit who dwells within everyone who belongs to Jesus Christ.

This confirms Jesus' promise concerning the Comforter: *"shall be in you."* At Pentecost, Jesus Christ fulfilled His promise to come as Spirit, establishing the New Covenant reality of His indwelling presence.

The Lord Is That Spirit

Paul makes this truth even clearer.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 3:17**:

> *"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."*

Paul's declaration, *"The Lord is that Spirit,"* identifies Jesus Christ with the indwelling Spirit. The promised Comforter is not a separate divine Person replacing an absent Christ. Jesus Christ Himself comes as Spirit to dwell within His people.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 2:20**:

> *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

Notice Paul's declaration: *"Christ liveth in me."* Jesus Christ was not physically standing beside Paul as He had stood beside His disciples during His earthly ministry. Paul possessed the indwelling Spirit of Christ, and that same spiritual life is received by everyone who is born again.

This is the New Covenant reality: Jesus Christ Himself dwelling within His people.

Pentecost Fulfilled the Promise

The promise Jesus gave in John chapter 14 was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

Luke wrote in **Acts 2:1-4**:

> *"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

The coming of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost fulfilled the promise Jesus Christ had made to His disciples. He had declared that the Spirit of truth was with them but would be in them, and He had personally promised, *"I will come to you."*

Acts 2 records the fulfilment of that promise. Jesus Christ came as Spirit to dwell within His people, establishing the New Covenant reality of His indwelling presence. His promised coming was fulfilled at Pentecost in A.D. 31.

This began the Gospel Day experience in which everyone who is born again receives the Spirit of Christ. The believer does not need a later spiritual experience to receive Him, nor can an outward ordinance provide His indwelling life.

His First Coming Was in Flesh

The first coming of Jesus Christ was His bodily manifestation.

John wrote in **John 1:14**:

> *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

Jesus Christ came in flesh. He lived among men, suffered, was crucified and offered Himself for sin. This is the appearing described in Hebrews 9 when the writer says, *"hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,"* and *"Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."*

That was His first coming. It was bodily and was connected with His sacrifice for sin.

His Second Coming Was in Spirit

Hebrews 9:28 speaks of Jesus Christ appearing *"the second time without sin unto salvation."* His first appearing in flesh accomplished the sacrifice for sin, and that saving work did not need to be repeated. His second appearing therefore had a different purpose.

Jesus Christ fulfilled His promise to come to His people as Spirit at Pentecost in A.D. 31. He came to dwell within them, bringing the salvation accomplished through His sacrifice into the experience of those who believed in Him.

Jesus had promised, *"I will come to you."* His first coming was His manifestation in flesh, through which He accomplished the sacrifice for sin. His Second Coming was His return as the Holy Ghost to dwell within His people.

Every person who is born again now receives His indwelling life. The sacrifice was completed once, and His second appearing brought the New Covenant reality of Christ within.

The Second Coming Was Unto Salvation

This brings us back to the argument of Hebrews 9.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 9:28**:

> *"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."*

Hebrews 9:28 connects Christ's second appearing with salvation. Jesus had promised to come to His disciples as Spirit, and Acts 2 records the fulfilment of that promise at Pentecost in A.D. 31.

The events that followed confirm the connection. The Gospel was preached, people responded to the Word of God, and the Lord added those who were saved to His Church. Christ had come as Spirit, and salvation became the present experience of those who received His life through the new birth.

Luke wrote in **Acts 2:41**:

> *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."*

Then Luke wrote in **Acts 2:47**:

> *"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*

The second appearing of Hebrews 9 is *"unto salvation."* At Pentecost, the Gospel Day reality of salvation became active in the lives of those who believed through the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Those who looked to Jesus for salvation received Him, and the Lord added the saved to His Church.

Christ in You

Paul described this spiritual reality in Colossians.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:26-27**:

> *"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:"*

Notice the words, *"but now is made manifest."* The mystery was not still waiting for a future age; it was now manifest. The mystery itself was expressed in the words, *"Christ in you."*

This is the reality Jesus had promised. He said, *"shall be in you," "I will come to you,"* and *"I in you."* At Pentecost the promised reality came. Jesus Christ came to dwell within His people as Spirit.

The Second Coming Is Not Still Future

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is not an event the Church must still await. His promised return was fulfilled at Pentecost in A.D. 31 when He came as the Holy Ghost to dwell within His people.

Jesus promised, *"I will come to you,"* and declared that His disciples would know the reality expressed in the words *"I in you."* Paul confirmed this spiritual identity when he wrote, *"The Lord is that Spirit."*

The New Covenant Church therefore possesses the promised presence of Jesus Christ now. Every born-again believer receives His indwelling Spirit at the new birth. His Second Coming has been fulfilled, and the spiritual reality to which the former shadows pointed has arrived.

Christ Now Dwells Within His People

The fulfilment of Christ's promised coming brings us back to the subject of ordinances. Under the former covenant, outward practices represented spiritual realities that would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Under the New Covenant, the believer possesses Christ Himself through the new birth.

The believer does not depend upon an outward ceremony to receive His life. Jesus Christ dwells within everyone who is born again, and His indwelling life is the spiritual reality to which the former shadows pointed.

Jesus Christ has come, and salvation is a present reality. We must therefore examine water baptism, communion and feet washing in the light of what the believer has already received in Him.

Why This Is Essential to the Ordinances

The fulfilment of Christ's promised coming is central to understanding the ordinances. The former covenant shadows pointed forward to spiritual realities fulfilled in Jesus Christ. His sacrifice obtained eternal redemption, and His promised coming as Spirit at Pentecost established the New Covenant reality of His indwelling presence.

However, an important distinction must be made. The fact that an outward ceremony cannot produce salvation does not, by itself, prove that the ceremony is no longer required. We must also establish whether Scripture appointed it for a limited covenant purpose or as a continuing requirement for the New Covenant Church.

This requires each ordinance to be examined carefully. With water baptism, we must determine what the outward water represented and whether its purpose was fulfilled in the spiritual baptism received through Jesus Christ. With communion, we must determine whether the bread and cup were intended to continue or pointed towards the spiritual fellowship now found in Christ.

The same principle applies to feet washing. We must distinguish between the outward washing and the humility, love and service expressed through the indwelling life of Jesus Christ. A practice cannot be declared permanent simply because it appears in Scripture.

We must therefore ask when each practice was commanded, to whom it was given, what it represented and whether Scripture establishes its continued observance under the New Covenant.

The foundation is now established. Jesus Christ fulfilled His promised coming at Pentecost in A.D. 31, salvation is received at the new birth, and every born-again believer possesses His indwelling Spirit. The ordinances must now be examined in the light of the spiritual reality already received in Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do John 14 and Acts 2 explain the fulfilment of Christ's promised coming at Pentecost?

Personal Reflection

What has this teaching clarified or challenged in your understanding of Christ's presence today? Is there a familiar expectation of yours that now needs reconsidering?

Action Step

How could the believer's present possession of Christ guide your own thinking about outward ordinances? Examine where you have placed your confidence. What will you change to keep that confidence in Jesus Christ?

FULFILMENT DOES NOT LEAVE US WITH LESS

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Before examining water baptism, communion and feet washing individually, we must understand what their fulfilment means for the believer. Someone who has practised these ordinances for many years may feel that something important is being lost when their continued observance is questioned.

However, the fulfilment of an outward ordinance does not remove the spiritual truth it represented. The believer does not lose cleansing, fellowship, humility or service when a ceremony reaches the end of its appointed purpose. These realities are found in Jesus Christ and expressed through His indwelling life.

The question is therefore not simply what outward practice has ceased, but what greater spiritual reality has been received. Biblical fulfilment brings us from the shadow to the reality, not from something valuable to something empty.

Jesus Came to Fulfil

Jesus said in **Matthew 5:17**:

> *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."*

Jesus did not come to destroy what God had previously given. He came to fulfil it. This distinction is important. To fulfil something is not simply to remove it and leave nothing in its place. It is to bring it to the purpose towards which it was pointing.

The Law and the prophets were not wrong. The sacrifices, priesthood, washings and ordinances were not wrong. They had been given by God for an appointed purpose. But they were pointing forward to something greater.

Jesus Christ came to fulfil that purpose. Therefore, fulfilment does not mean emptiness. It means that the reality to which the shadow pointed has come.

The Picture Gives Way to the Reality

Consider a photograph of someone who is far away. It may be valuable because it reminds us of that person, but it cannot replace their actual presence. When the person arrives, our attention naturally moves from the photograph to the person.

The same principle applies to the shadows of the former covenant. God appointed outward practices to represent spiritual realities that would come through Jesus Christ. They served an important purpose, but they could not provide the reality themselves.

Jesus Christ has now come, and the believer possesses His indwelling life through the new birth. Fulfilment therefore does not leave us with less. It brings us from the outward representation to the greater spiritual reality found in Him.

The picture pointed towards the Person. The shadow pointed towards the reality. Jesus Christ is the One to whom they pointed.

The Shadow Was Never Greater Than the Reality

The spiritual reality fulfilled in Jesus Christ is greater than any outward practice that represented it. Ceremonial washing could represent cleansing, an appointed day could represent rest, and an outward meal could represent fellowship. None of these practices could provide the spiritual reality itself.

The same principle applies to humility and service. Washing another person's feet may demonstrate an outward action, but true humility and service come from the indwelling life of Jesus Christ. The ceremony cannot produce that life.

When an outward shadow reaches its appointed fulfilment, the believer has not lost the spiritual truth it represented. Jesus Christ provides the greater reality, and His life within produces what outward ceremonies could only illustrate.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does fulfilment bring a greater spiritual reality rather than leave the believer with less?

Personal Reflection

How does the illustration of a photograph and the person's arrival help you consider a familiar ceremony? What does this reveal about an assumption you have held?

Action Step

If questioning an outward ceremony feels like losing something, what do you want to understand about the reality found in Christ? Identify one practice or belief you will test against the Bible, and explain what you are prepared to change.

We Receive What the Shadow Represented

This is the key principle we must understand before examining the individual ordinances. When a shadow is fulfilled, we do not lose the spiritual truth it represented. We receive the spiritual reality itself.

- The outward form gave a picture of cleansing. Jesus Christ provides true cleansing.
- The outward form gave a picture of fellowship. Jesus Christ provides true fellowship.
- The outward form gave a picture of rest. Jesus Christ provides true rest.
- The outward form gave a picture of access to God. Jesus Christ is the way.
- The outward form gave a picture of righteousness. Jesus Christ is our righteousness.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 1:30**:

> *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:"*

Notice where these spiritual realities are found: *"In Christ Jesus."* Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. We do not lose these things when the outward shadow is fulfilled. We receive them in Jesus Christ Himself.

Fulfilment Brings Us to the Person

The former covenant shadows pointed forward to Jesus Christ, but the New Covenant brings the believer into the reality of His indwelling life. His promised coming was fulfilled at Pentecost, and everyone who is born again now possesses His Spirit within.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 2:20**:

> *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

The words *"Christ liveth in me"* establish the difference between outward representation and spiritual reality. The believer possesses Jesus Christ Himself, and His life within is expressed through obedience, holiness, love and service.

We Must Not Turn the Shadow Around

The shadows of the former covenant pointed forward to Jesus Christ and prepared God's people for the spiritual reality that would come through Him.

Once that reality has arrived, we cannot assume that an outward shadow remains a New Covenant requirement simply because it can still illustrate an important spiritual truth. Scripture must establish whether the practice was intended to continue after its appointed purpose was fulfilled.

This distinction is essential when examining water baptism, communion and feet washing. We must determine what each practice represented and whether Scripture establishes its continued observance after its fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

Applying the Principle to the Ordinances

When examining water baptism, communion and feet washing, we must establish what each outward practice represented, whether its spiritual fulfilment has come in Jesus Christ, and whether Scripture requires its continued observance under the New Covenant.

Water baptism directs our attention to spiritual cleansing and the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Communion concerns true fellowship with Jesus Christ and His people, while feet washing points to humility, love and service. These realities are not produced by outward ceremonies but are found in Jesus Christ and expressed through His indwelling life.

The fulfilment of an ordinance does not remove the spiritual truth it represented. The essential question is whether the outward practice still has an appointed place under the New Covenant now that the greater spiritual reality has come in Jesus Christ.

Fulfilment Does Not Mean Loss

The fulfilment of an outward ordinance does not mean that the spiritual truth it represented has disappeared. Jesus Christ has fulfilled what the former shadows anticipated, and the born-again believer possesses the greater spiritual reality through His indwelling life.

The believer has not been left with less because an outward ceremony has reached the end of its appointed purpose. Cleansing, fellowship, humility, service and spiritual rest are found in Jesus Christ. The outward form could represent these realities, but only Christ could provide them.

The Sabbath provides a clear example. Its outward observance belonged to the former covenant, while the spiritual rest it represented is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Examining this example will show how a God-given outward practice can reach its appointed fulfilment without the believer losing the spiritual reality it represented.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does a ceremony's inability to save not settle whether the Bible requires its continued observance?

Personal Reflection

What does this distinction help you recognise about reaching careful conclusions concerning ordinances? Which part of your own understanding does it challenge?

Action Step

How could examining the purpose and continuing authority of an ordinance guide your own belief without treating it as a source of salvation? Name one inherited expectation you will reconsider and explain how Christ's fulfilment changes your response.

A SIMPLE EXAMPLE: THE TRUE SABBATH REST

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The Sabbath provides a clear Scriptural example of an outward practice that pointed towards a greater spiritual reality. God commanded it under the former covenant for an appointed purpose, yet Scripture identifies it as a shadow rather than the final reality.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:16-17**:

> *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."*

Paul specifically includes *"the sabbath days"* among the things described as *"a shadow of things to come."* Their significance must therefore be understood in relation to Jesus Christ, whom Paul identifies as the reality.

The question is not whether God originally commanded the Sabbath. He did. The question is what spiritual reality it represented and how that reality is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The Sabbath Pointed Towards Rest

Under the Old Covenant, Israel ceased from ordinary labour on the Sabbath day. The outward command involved:

- A particular day;
- Ceasing from physical work;
- Physical rest.

But that outward rest pointed towards a greater spiritual rest.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 4:3**:

> *"For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world."*

Notice who enters into rest. The writer does not say that those who observe a particular day enter into rest. He says, *"We which have believed do enter into rest."* The true rest is received through faith.

The writer continued in **Hebrews 4:9-10**:

> *"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."*

This rest is greater than ceasing from physical labour for one day. It speaks of entering into God's rest and ceasing from dependence upon our own works. The believer rests in what God has accomplished in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Gives the True Rest

Jesus Himself directed people towards this greater rest.

Jesus said in **Matthew 11:28-30**:

> *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

Notice where Jesus directs us: *"Come unto me."* He does not direct the believer to a particular day. He directs the believer to Himself.

Then He says, *"I will give you rest."* The Sabbath shadow pointed towards rest. Jesus Christ provides the reality.

The Lord of the Sabbath

Jesus said in **Matthew 12:8**:

> *"For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day."*

Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is not greater than Christ. The shadow is not greater than the Person to whom it pointed. The Sabbath had its appointed purpose. But the greater reality is found in Jesus Christ.

We Have Not Lost What the Sabbath Represented

This example helps us understand fulfilment. If the Old Covenant Sabbath is no longer imposed upon the believer as a literal requirement, have we lost what it represented? No. We have received the greater reality.

The shadow was physical rest on an appointed day. The reality is spiritual rest in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the shadow was a day. The reality is Jesus Christ.

We have not lost the rest that the Sabbath represented. We have received the reality to which it pointed. This is what fulfilment means.

The Principle for the Ordinances

The Sabbath shows how a God-given outward practice can fulfil its appointed purpose in Jesus Christ. The outward observance represented rest, while the believer now possesses the greater spiritual rest found in Him.

This principle applies to water baptism, communion and feet washing. For each practice, we must establish its Scriptural purpose, the spiritual reality it represented and whether Scripture requires its continued observance under the New Covenant.

Fulfilment does not remove the spiritual reality represented by the outward practice. Jesus Christ provides that reality, and every born-again believer possesses His indwelling life.

This leads to Paul's important declaration concerning the believer's spiritual completeness: *"Ye are complete in him."*

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the Sabbath illustrate the difference between outward rest and spiritual rest in Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

What does resting in Christ rather than depending on your own works mean to you?

Action Step

Is there something you want to trust Christ about more clearly as you consider His invitation to rest? Explain. What assumption will you examine, and how will your response change if it does not agree with the Bible?

YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM

BACK TO CONTENTS

The Sabbath has shown how an outward shadow finds its spiritual fulfilment in Jesus Christ. This brings us to a truth that must govern our understanding of water baptism, communion and feet washing: the born-again believer is already complete in Him.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:9-10**:

> *"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:"*

Notice the connection. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Jesus Christ, and the believer is *"complete in him."* Spiritual completeness is not something obtained through an additional ceremony or later religious experience.

This completeness is received through the new birth when Jesus Christ comes to dwell within the believer. Outward ordinances cannot add to the spiritual life already received in Him.

We must therefore examine their Scriptural purpose without treating them as necessary additions to Christ's completed saving work. The believer is complete in Jesus Christ.

All the Fulness Is in Jesus Christ

Paul declares in **Colossians 2:9** that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Jesus Christ. The word *"Godhead"* refers to deity or Godhood, while the Greek word THEOTES expresses the state of being God, not simply possessing divine qualities.

The word *"Godhead"* does not mean three divine Persons. Paul is declaring that the entire fulness of deity dwells bodily in Jesus Christ. He is not one part of God, but the full manifestation of the one true God.

Paul immediately connects this truth with the believer: *"And ye are complete in him."* Because all the fulness of God dwells in Jesus Christ, nothing is lacking in Him. The born-again believer

possesses His indwelling life, and no outward ordinance can add to the spiritual completeness already received in Him.

What Does It Mean to Be Complete?

To be complete in Jesus Christ means that nothing necessary for salvation is lacking. The believer receives His spiritual life at the new birth, not through a series of ceremonies or later experiences that progressively complete salvation.

Paul declares, *"Ye are complete in him."* Water baptism, communion and feet washing therefore cannot supply something missing from the salvation already received in Jesus Christ. Our spiritual completeness rests entirely in Him.

Christ Plus Nothing

The believer's spiritual completeness cannot be expressed as Christ plus an outward ordinance. Salvation is complete in Jesus Christ, and nothing performed outwardly can add to the life received through the new birth.

Consider the three ordinances:

- Christ plus water baptism does not produce greater spiritual completeness.
- Christ plus communion does not produce greater spiritual completeness.
- Christ plus feet washing does not produce greater spiritual completeness.

Paul declares, *"Ye are complete in him."* Jesus Christ does not provide part of salvation and leave an outward ceremony to supply what is missing. The born-again believer is already complete in Him.

This does not remove the question of obedience. Whether an outward practice remains commanded under the New Covenant must still be established from Scripture. Our completeness in Christ establishes that no ceremony can add to salvation; Scripture must establish whether its outward observance continues.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the fulness of God in Jesus Christ explain the believer's completeness in Him?

Personal Reflection

What does the difference between completeness in Christ and religious performance clarify for you? Is there a familiar expectation of yours that now needs reconsidering?

Action Step

How could this truth guide your own confidence before God when you think about ceremonies you have performed? Identify one personal response you will make, trusting in Jesus Christ rather than your own religious effort.

Jesus Christ Is Not One Part of Our Completeness

Jesus Christ does not provide one part of salvation while outward religious practices provide another. All the fulness of God dwells in Him, and every born-again believer receives His spiritual life in full.

An outward ordinance may represent an important spiritual truth, but it cannot make Christ or the believer more complete. Our salvation and spiritual standing rest entirely in Him.

This does not remove the importance of obedience. Obedience cannot be treated as an additional means of completing salvation. Whether an outward practice remains a New Covenant commandment must be established from Scripture, while the believer's obedience is expressed through the indwelling life of Jesus Christ.

Completeness Does Not Remove Obedience

We must also be careful not to misunderstand this truth. Saying that the believer is complete in Jesus Christ does not mean that obedience or holiness is unnecessary. It does not mean that the commandments of Jesus Christ no longer matter.

Jesus said in **John 14:15**:

> *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."*

The believer is called to obey Jesus Christ. We are called to walk in truth, live holy lives, love one another, forgive, serve, show mercy, walk humbly and keep the commandments of Jesus Christ.

But there is an important distinction: Obedience does not make us complete in Christ. We obey because we have received Christ. Our obedience is not an attempt to add something to Jesus Christ. It is the expression of the life we have already received in Him. This distinction will become increasingly important as we continue through this Study Guide.

Our Completeness Is Not Produced by Religious Performance

An outward religious action can be performed correctly and still not produce the spiritual reality. A person can carry out a ceremony, others can witness it, and the outward form can appear completely correct. But no outward action can add to the completeness already found in Jesus Christ.

This means that our confidence cannot rest upon the fact that we have performed the correct religious ceremony. We do not stand before God and say that we are complete because we have been water baptised, received bread and a cup, or washed another person's feet. Paul directs our confidence somewhere else. He says, *"Ye are complete in him."* Our confidence therefore rests in Jesus Christ.

The Believer Already Has the Reality

The Old Covenant shadows pointed forward to Jesus Christ, but the promised reality has now come. His Second Coming was fulfilled at Pentecost in A.D. 31, and everyone who is born again receives His indwelling Spirit.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 2:20**:

> *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

The words *"Christ liveth in me"* express the New Covenant reality. The believer possesses Jesus Christ Himself, not simply an outward representation of His life. No religious ceremony can add to the spiritual completeness already received in Him.

This confirms Paul's declaration in **Colossians 2:10**: *"Ye are complete in him."*

Nothing Can Make the Reality More Complete

No outward ordinance can improve upon the spiritual reality found in Jesus Christ. The believer receives His life at the new birth, and nothing performed outwardly can add to that completeness.

This does not remove the need to determine whether Scripture commands a practice under the New Covenant. However, no ceremony can complete the salvation already received in Jesus Christ.

Paul's declaration remains: *"Ye are complete in him."*

Complete in the Person

This is the great difference between the shadow and the New Covenant reality. Under the former covenant, the people had outward pictures. Under the New Covenant, the believer has the Person.

The shadow could point towards cleansing, rest, access to God and fellowship. But the believer has Jesus Christ, in whom those spiritual realities are found.

This is why fulfilment does not leave us with less. We have received the Person in whom the spiritual reality is found. And because we have received Him, we are complete in Him.

The Question We Must Carry Forward

The born-again believer is complete in Jesus Christ. His indwelling life provides the spiritual reality that the former covenant shadows could only represent. No outward ordinance can add to the salvation already received in Him.

This does not diminish obedience to Jesus Christ. His commandments remain important, while obedience, holiness, love and service are expressed through His indwelling life rather than performed to obtain spiritual completeness.

As we examine water baptism, communion and feet washing, two questions must remain before us:

- What spiritual reality did each outward practice represent?
- Does Scripture establish its continued observance under the New Covenant?

The believer's completeness in Christ establishes that no ceremony can produce or complete salvation. Scripture must then determine whether each outward practice remains required.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does completeness in Christ preserve the importance of obedience without making obedience complete salvation?

Personal Reflection

How does this distinction help you understand the relationship between Christ's life and Christian conduct? What does this reveal about an assumption you have held?

Action Step

Choose one decision of your own involving obedience. How could responding to Christ differ from trying to earn spiritual completeness? State what you will do differently in that situation, and why.

SUMMARY: THE REALITY HAS ARRIVED

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The Old Covenant contained God-given figures, sacrifices, priesthood, ceremonial washings and outward ordinances that pointed forward to Jesus Christ. These were not meaningless practices. God appointed them for a particular purpose and period to prepare His people for the greater spiritual reality that would come through Christ.

Hebrews explains that these outward requirements were imposed *"until the time of reformation."* The decisive change is then announced in **Hebrews 9:11**: *"But Christ being come."* The One to whom the shadows pointed had arrived, and their appointed purpose was fulfilled in Him.

The Sacrifice for Sin Has Been Accomplished

Jesus Christ did not come to establish another system of sacrifices or outward ceremonies. He came to accomplish what the former covenant could only represent. The repeated sacrifices pointed forward to His own sacrifice, through which He obtained eternal redemption.

His sacrifice for sin was accomplished once. The former offerings could not provide the complete spiritual reality, but Jesus Christ fulfilled their purpose through the sacrifice of Himself. The New Covenant therefore rests upon His completed saving work, not upon ceremonies belonging to the former covenant.

The Promised Coming of Jesus Christ Has Been Fulfilled

Hebrews 9:28 distinguishes Christ's completed sacrifice from His appearing *"the second time without sin unto salvation."* To understand this appearing, we examined the promises Jesus made concerning His coming to His disciples.

Jesus promised that the Spirit of truth, who was with them, would be in them. He personally declared, *"I will come to you,"* and explained that the world would see Him no more while His people would know His indwelling presence.

These promises were fulfilled at Pentecost in A.D. 31 when Jesus Christ came as the Holy Ghost to dwell within His people. His Second Coming was not another bodily manifestation to the world but His coming as Spirit, establishing the New Covenant reality of Christ within.

The Church is therefore not waiting for a future physical Second Coming. Jesus Christ has fulfilled His promised return, and everyone who is born again receives His indwelling Spirit.

Fulfilment Does Not Mean Loss

The fulfilment of the former covenant shadows does not remove the spiritual realities they represented. Jesus Christ provides what the outward forms could only illustrate.

The Sabbath gives a clear example. Under the former covenant, it required rest from physical labour on an appointed day, yet Scripture identifies the Sabbath as a shadow and directs believers towards the greater spiritual rest found in Jesus Christ. The believer has not lost the reality because the outward shadow has reached its fulfilment.

The same principle must guide our examination of water baptism, communion and feet washing. We must establish what each practice represented, whether its spiritual fulfilment has come in Jesus Christ, and whether Scripture requires its continued observance under the New Covenant.

Complete in Jesus Christ

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:9-10**:

> *"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:"*

All the fulness of God dwells bodily in Jesus Christ, and the believer is *"complete in him."* Nothing necessary for salvation is lacking in Christ, and no ceremony or later spiritual experience is required to complete the salvation received through the new birth.

This does not remove obedience, holiness, love or service. These are expressions of the indwelling life of Jesus Christ, not outward works through which salvation is completed. An ordinance may illustrate an important spiritual truth, but it cannot provide the inward life that Christ alone gives.

Spiritual completeness and the continuing obligation to perform an outward practice are therefore separate questions. The believer is already complete in Christ, while Scripture must establish whether a particular practice remains commanded under the New Covenant.

The Reality Has Arrived

The central truths of this Study Guide are clear. The Old Covenant shadows pointed forward to Jesus Christ. His sacrifice accomplished eternal redemption, His promised Second Coming was fulfilled at Pentecost, and His indwelling Spirit is received by everyone who is born again.

The believer does not depend upon outward ordinances to obtain or complete the spiritual life already received in Jesus Christ. The purpose and continuing authority of each practice must be established from Scripture according to its covenant setting and fulfilment in Him.

The shadows pointed forward, but Jesus Christ has come. The promised reality has arrived, and the born-again believer is complete in Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do Christ's sacrifice and His return at Pentecost fulfil the former shadows?

Personal Reflection

Which expectation about Christ's presence or your spiritual completeness has changed for you?

Action Step

Name one ceremony-based belief you will examine in the Bible, and explain what you will change to trust Christ alone.

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

What change do the words But Christ being come announce in Hebrews 9? Explain how Christ's eternal redemption differs from what the former sacrifices and sanctuary could provide.

2. Understanding

How does the Sabbath illustrate fulfilment without spiritual loss? Use the teaching in Colossians 2 and Hebrews 4 to explain the difference between an appointed day and rest received in Christ.

3. Personal Reflection

The teaching identifies Pentecost as the fulfilment of Christ's promise to come and dwell within His people. What has this challenged, clarified or strengthened in your own understanding of His Second Coming?

4. Response to Truth

Fulfilment means receiving the reality rather than losing what a shadow represented. How does this lead you to reconsider your own attachment to an outward ceremony? Explain without assuming that your conclusion has already been settled.

5. Action Step

Christ obtained eternal redemption through His own sacrifice. When you consider your own confidence before God, is there an outward religious action you have treated as completing His saving work? Explain what you now understand or are still considering.

6. Early Response

Have you already begun reconsidering whether an outward religious action completes Christ's saving work when thinking about your own confidence before God? If yes, explain what you now understand or have done differently. If not, explain what you are still considering or what has made it difficult for you to begin.

7. Ongoing Practice

How could Christ's completed redemption continue to guide your response when you feel pressure to rely on a ceremony for spiritual completeness? Explain how you could keep obedience important without treating it as a way to complete salvation.

8. Doctrinal Clarity

How do **Hebrews 9:28***, Jesus' promises in John 14 and their fulfilment in Acts 2 support the teaching that Christ's Second Coming was fulfilled at Pentecost? Explain the difference between His completed sacrifice and His coming as Spirit unto salvation.*

9. Living the Truth

A person says that because a ceremony cannot save, the Bible cannot require it. How would you respond using the distinction between completeness in Christ and the continuing authority of an outward practice?

10. Final Response

How do Christ's completed sacrifice, His fulfilled coming at Pentecost and His indwelling life explain why the believer is complete in Him? Describe what this has made clearer to you and what still needs careful thought.