

3. The Agent in the process of regeneration is the Holy Spirit. An unbeliever is incapable of processing divine thought. The idea that a substitutionary sacrifice by a “man” could produce salvation and eternal life is abstruse and profound.
4. In the process of evangelizing an unbeliever, the Holy Spirit provides two ministries: (1) common grace and (2) efficacious grace.
5. **Common Grace** is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in making the gospel lucid, perspicuous, and understandable to the person who is spiritually dead.
6. **Efficacious grace** is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in making the faith of the spiritually dead person effective for eternal salvation.
7. The Holy Spirit is the sovereign executive of the gospel. The works of a person who is spiritually dead have no place in evangelism.
8. Therefore, both hearing the gospel and believing in Jesus Christ are totally non-meritorious and compatible with the grace of God.
9. Some principles and guidelines on evangelism are expressed by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer in his *Systematic Theology*:

It is true, also, that God may indict within the Christian that prayer which shall be an essential factor in the great work of inclining the lost to accept the Savior; but prayer does not determine the election of men: rather, prayer will itself be subject to the same sovereign Spirit, if prayed in the will of God. There can be no salvation apart from a preliminary, preparatory enlightenment of the unsaved by the Holy Spirit. That such a work by the Spirit is required becomes evident from certain Scriptures which set forth the inability of the unsaved.<sup>6</sup>

**1 Corinthians 2:14** But the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to Him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (NASB)

(End JAS1-62. See JAS1-63 for continuation of study at p. 621.)

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<sup>6</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, “The One Who Convicts the Unsaved,” in *Systematic Theology: Pneumatology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 6:88–89.

10. Some principles and guidelines on evangelism are expressed by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer in his *Systematic Theology*:

Inattentive or uninstructed evangelists and zealous soul-winners too often go forth assuming that all persons anywhere and everywhere are able at any time to comply with the terms of the gospel, whereas the Scriptures teach that no man is able to make an intelligent decision for Christ apart from the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit. Evangelists and preachers are called upon to face, if they will, a supernatural factor in this program of winning the lost. Because of failure to understand this factor or because of unwillingness to be restricted thus to the sovereign working of the Spirit, men invent methods which prescribe human action as the terms upon which a soul may be saved, not recognizing the truth that the lost are to be saved, not when they do some prescribed action, but only when they believe on Christ as Savior. The evangelist's problem is not one of coaxing individuals to make some public demonstration; it is rather that of creating a clear conception of the saving grace of God. No individual is capable in himself of believing on Christ to the saving of his soul, apart from the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit by which he receives the vision of Christ as Savior and is inclined to receive Him by faith. It becomes disconcerting to the evangelist's program of methods in soul winning to confront an arbitrary supernatural situation over which he or the unsaved to whom he appeals has not the slightest control. The work of the Spirit in this particular sphere of influence is sovereign. It is the point where divine election is exercised and where it makes its demonstration. It is true that only the elect will be saved.

It is true, also, that God may indict within the Christian that prayer which shall be an essential factor in the great work of inclining the lost to accept the Savior; but prayer does not determine the election of men: rather, prayer will itself be subject to the same sovereign Spirit, if prayed in the will of God. There can be no salvation apart from a preliminary, preparatory enlightenment of the unsaved by the Holy Spirit. That such a work by the Spirit is required becomes evident from certain Scriptures which set forth the inability of the unsaved.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, "The One Who Convicts the Unsaved," in *Systematic Theology: Pneumatology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 6:88–89.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** But the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (NASB)

**2 Corinthians 4:3** Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

**v. 4** in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (NASB)

11. James expresses these principles by his statement in verse 18, “He regenerated us by a spiritual birth by the word of truth, namely the gospel.”
12. This is followed by a purpose clause introduced by the preposition **εἰς (eis)**: “so that.” It indicates that God has a plan for these Jews’ lives and their lives have a purpose.
13. For hundreds of years, over 700 of the Diaspora from the Northern Kingdom and over 500 from the Diaspora of the Southern Kingdom, Jews were preserved for a purpose.
14. That purpose has to do with their chart pedigree. Their Jewish forefathers were among those taken into Assyria and Chaldea where they survived, had children, and ultimately their progeny were alive at the beginning of the Church Age.
15. That purpose is indicated by the present active infinitive of **εἶμι (eimi)**, the verb “to be.” As an infinitive it can function as a noun and a verb and translated, “of being.”
16. It is followed by the singular noun **ἀπαρχή (aparchē)**: “a first fruit.” This phrase’s translation reads, “for the purpose of being a first fruit.”
17. The verse concludes with the prepositional phrase, “of His creatures.” This noun is the plural of **κτίσμα (ktisma)**. It refers to things that are created and in this case it refers to things God has created.

18. The key to understanding this context is to examine the meaning of “first fruit” first by definition: “**ἀπαρχή** (*aparchē*): Acknowledgement of the fact that the land and all its products were the gift of Jehovah to Israel, and in thanksgiving to Him, after which the Israelite was at liberty to use the rest.”<sup>2</sup>
19. In Scripture there are several applications of the term “first fruit” and they must be addressed individually:

One of Israel's feasts appointed by Jehovah was the feast of first-fruits. The feast centered about the waving of a sheaf<sup>3</sup> of first-fruits which was waved before Jehovah at the time of harvest. It was a representative sheaf and contemplated all the sheaves of the whole harvest, since unto Jehovah must thanks be given for the increase which sowing and reaping secured. The term *first-fruits* is used variously in the Bible and each one of several applications should be considered:

**CHRIST.** Twice is Christ said to be First-Fruits and that in His resurrection. Christ as one glorified in His resurrection human body is the Antitype of the Old Testament wave sheaf. (p. 153)

**1 Corinthians 15:20** Now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

**1 Corinthians 5:23** But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that, those who are Christ's at His coming.

**BLESSINGS.** A foretaste of what awaits the child of God in glory, the blessings which are now realized by the believer because of the presence of the Spirit constitutes what is called first-fruits. These blessings are referred to as “having the first-fruits of the Spirit” in Romans 8:23.

**FIRST BELIEVERS IN A LOCALITY.** When the gospel is first preached in a locality there are those who believe and become the first-fruits of that locality.

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Levertoff, “First-Fruits,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 2:1114.

<sup>3</sup> “Sheaf (עֹמֶר [‘omer]), used as a unit of measurement of grain). The reaper with his sickle goes ahead and cuts the grain; then it is gathered into bundles by workers who follow, and the bundles are tied into sheaves. Such sheaves were used as a form of offering in the Levitical system of sacrifices (cf. Leviticus 23:10–12). Probably they were sheaves of barley, the first crop to be harvested each year in Palestine. They were used as the thank offering for the first fruits of the harvest” (J. H. Paterson, “Sheaf,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976], 5:378).

**1 Corinthians 16:15** Now I urge you brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints).

ISRAEL. Jeremiah stated: “Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, says the Lord” (Jeremiah 2:3a).

As Israel is the first in order of the unfolding of divine purpose for this world, that people became a first-fruits on an extended scale of the whole divine program. It will be observed how warning is given here to all peoples respecting the grievous punishment that shall fall on those who persecute Israel. (p. 154)

REVELATION 7 AND 14. Twice is reference made in Revelation to a company numbering 144,000. In the first instance (Revelation 7:1–8) they are identified as from the tribes of Israel. These individuals are sealed with the protective and selective seal of God. In Revelation 14:1–5 this same company—being sealed, their number cannot be increased or decreased—are seen to be the first-fruits of the coming kingdom age wherein the King shall reign from Zion. (p. 154–55)

EARLY CHRISTIANS. Christ alone is the First-Fruits in heaven. James, however, declared: “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” James 1:18). This declaration recognizes both the sovereign election of God—for it is by His own will that He was directed—and the fact of the regenerating power of the Spirit. The latter is achieved by the agency of the Word of Truth.

That the ones said to be begotten are first-fruits can be pressed no further than that they were first in order among the vast company of redeemed belonging to the Church which no man can number.<sup>4</sup> (p. 154)

20. That final highlighted sentence addresses the principle that the Jewish Diaspora in the decade of A.D. 40 is the first fruits of Church-Age believers.
21. We established in James 1:1 that the audience James addresses in his epistle is the “twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad.” The word “dispersed” is the Greek noun **διασπορά** (*diasporá*): “to scatter abroad.”

<sup>4</sup> Chafer, “First-Fruits,” in *Systematic Theology: Doctrinal Summarization*, 7:153–55.

22. The progeny of the Diaspora James addresses continues to be “scattered” and theirs will potentially remain so for generations to come until the Rapture of the Church.
23. At this point we observed a brief review of two systems of hermeneutics that developed in the early centuries of the Church Age. Cyril of Alexandria, Egypt, took the allegorical position of interpretation while Nestorius of Antioch, Syria, subscribed to the literal system.
24. This controversy may be studied in the series *Hermeneutics* available on our Web site. See the link below. [5](#)
25. The erroneous system of Cyril’s caused a millennium of erroneous analysis of Scripture which did not begin to correct itself until Martin Luther challenged this system on October 31, 1517 now over 500 years ago.
26. It was only by means of the Reformation that order was once again restored to the biblically confirmed system of interpreting the Word of God: literal, grammatical, historical.
27. From this hermeneutical approach emerged doctrines developed by text analysis as opposed to a system of allegorical imputation of multiple levels of meaning. The signal difference between the two is exegesis as opposed to eisegesis. These twain never meet.

**James 1:18**      **Having been decreed in eternity past, He regenerated us by a spiritual birth by the word of truth, namely the gospel, for the purpose of being the first fruits of His creatures. (EXT)**

**James 1:19**      **[ Paragraph 5 ] This you know [ IM #10 ], my beloved brethren. But everyone must be [ IM #11 ] quick to hear; slow to speak and slow to anger; (NASB)**

1. We have two imperative moods in this verse. They require believers to take responsibility for what their relationship with each Member of the Trinity requires of them.
2. The subject addresses the responsibilities of believers in the assembly of the local church.