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KNOW THAT THE LORD IS GOD

PSALM 100

1 *Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!*
2 *Serve the Lord with gladness;*
Come before His presence with singing.
3 *Know that the Lord, He is God;*
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
4 *Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.*
Be thankful to Him and bless His name.
5 *For the Lord is good;*
His mercy is everlasting;
And His truth endures to all generations.

1. Know that the Lord, He is God! 3

a. Prophets. Example: ***Thus says God the Lord, Who created…*** Isa 42:5
b. He made us. 3 ***Who gives breath to the people on it*** (the earth)**...** v 5
c. ***I am the Lord, that is my name; and My glory I will not give to another.*** v 8
d. *None… shall teach…"Know the Lord",* ***for all shall know Me…*** Heb 8:11

2. Since He is God, we should honor Him as Our God

a. Make a joyful shout to the Lord! 1
1) ***We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.*** Josh 24:18,21-22
2) *…**Let them shout** from the top of the mountains…* Isa 42:11
3) Applies to every person in every country on earth. 1
b. Serve the Lord with gladness. 2
1) Come before His presence with singing. 2, 4
a) Moses and Israel: ***I will sing to the Lord, for He…*** Ex 15:1-22
b) ***The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want…*** Ps 23:1-6
2) Christians should sing to the Lord.
a) ***…let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*** Heb 13:15
b) ***…in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord…*** Col 3:16

3. The Lord is good. His mercy is everlasting. His truth endures forever.

a. Jesus ***went about doing good…for God was with Him.*** Acts 10:38
b. ***His mercy endures forever.*** 1 Chron 16:34; Ps 118:1-29
c. ***But the word of the Lord endures forever.*** 1 Pet 1:25; John 1:1-5,17; 12:48

Read Isaiah 42:10 - 43:1

THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

It is evident from beginning to end that the Bible is the Word of God. The Bible is God's means for answering many important questions that people ask: What am I? Who am I? Where did I come from? What is my purpose here on earth? Where am I going? What does the future hold for me? These questions are answered by one person — **God** — in one book — **the Bible**.

The reality is that no one can say with absolute certainty that, ***In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth***, based on the science which was developed by Mankind. No informed person has a conviction that Mankind knows all things — new information about the human body or disease or a cure for disease is announced nearly every day. A basic principle of science is that we are able to learn what is true or what is accepted as being true **through observation**. No one was present to witness Creation. Any conclusions about the origin of the physical universe based on scientific observations are only an interpretation of the available evidence. However, there is no scientific evidence that contradicts what the Bible says about Creation.

The reality is that no one can say absolutely that the Bible is the Word of God on the basis of scientific evidence. Some of the evidence which should be considered is mentioned in this lesson. God used men that He chose (called prophets and apostles) to write down the information that He wanted to be known and retained for Mankind to read and they were guided by the miraculous aid of the Holy Spirit.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God … 2 Tim 3:16-17 (also, 1 Cor 2:1-16)

… has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets. Eph 3:5

SOME OBSERVATIONS - There is a God. God created Mankind. Mankind was created in the image of God [God is Spirit; each person has a spirit which is like God's spirit, with intellect, wisdom, judgment, moral consciousness, etc.] God has revealed Himself and His will to Mankind and the Bible is that revelation. If God had given no revelation, Mankind could know that a supreme being existed (Rom 1), but could not know the person God or His will for Mankind without this revelation.

— EVIDENCES TO CONSIDER THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

(1) **Unity** of the Bible – many writers over time, but agreement throughout the Bible

(2) **Fulfilled prophecy** – example: many prophecies of O.T. fulfilled in N.T.

(3) **Archeological evidence** – digs reveal accuracy of things written in the Bible.

(4) **Scientific accuracy** – scientific statements written in the Bible are accurate.

(5) **Pre-scientific knowledge** – no device available to make knowledge possible

(6) **The style of writing** – different style than man would have used to record

(7) **Moral standard** – the greatest, the most practical, the most suited for our needs

(8) **Its Survival** over the centuries – every effort to discredit the Bible has failed

(9) **The Bible** is the work of **men** or of **God** – the only sensible choice is God

EVIDENCES TO CONSIDER THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

(1) **Unity** of the Bible: Many writers over time, but agreement throughout the Bible. The Bible is a compilation of **66 books** written by **40 different writers** over a period of more than **1500 years**. The writers lived in different regions, spoke several different languages and had different backgrounds (shepherds, kings, etc.); yet their writings share a common set of morals, principles and values, as well as a message with a common thread that ties all of the books together and shows that they had their origin from one common source—**GOD**.

(2) **Fulfilled prophecy**: Example is that many prophecies of O.T. fulfilled in N.T. Many prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in the Old Testament period. Many others were written hundreds of years before they were fulfilled in amazing detail, too numerous to name here. Over 200 prophecies in the Old Testament pertain to the person we know as the Christ which were fulfilled by **Jesus of Nazareth**.
For example, see Isa 53, which Matthew shows was fulfilled by Jesus. Mt 8:17; 27:12-14, 57-60.

(3) **Archeological evidence**: Digs reveal accuracy of things written in the Bible. Many historical facts recorded in the Bible have been shown to be accurate. One example is **the walls of Jericho**, Garstang 1929-36. (See Josh 5:13-6:27)

(4) **Scientific accuracy**: Scientific statements written in the Bible are accurate. Although the Bible is at least 1,900 years old, it contains no statements that are inaccurate with respect to geographical or historical facts or scientific information. [Most books of medicine, astronomy, geology, etc., are outdated within 50 years.]

(5) **Pre-scientific knowledge**: Scientific truths are stated in the Bible as facts hundreds of years before they were "discovered" by men of science. The suspension of the earth in space and the empty space in the north are mentioned in Job 26:7.

(6) **The style of writing**: The style of writing is unlike the writings of men. Brevity and calmness are utilized even when writing about some of the most amazing events. The creation of the world is recorded in 2 chapters. The flood that covered the earth was recorded in 3 chapters. The death of Christ was recorded in eight chapters. The writers were also impartial in what they said about people (some "heroes" had faults).

(7) **Moral standard**: The greatest moral standard it is possible to imagine was set forth in the Bible. It has purpose; it is reasonable; it is fair; it is sensible. Yet much of it was written in a culture of shameless immorality. It is the only moral standard that provides everything that human beings need, but protects all from harm.

(8) **Its Survival** over the centuries: Most books that do not work are cast aside. This book was written by unknown and often uneducated men. Their writings have been attacked by atheists and agnostics for centuries — **the Bible still stands!**

(9) **The Bible** is the work of **men** or of **God**: The only answer to this question for any reasonable person is that the Bible is the revelation of God for Mankind.

> ***All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*** 2 Tim 3:16-17

Periods of the Laws of God in the Bible

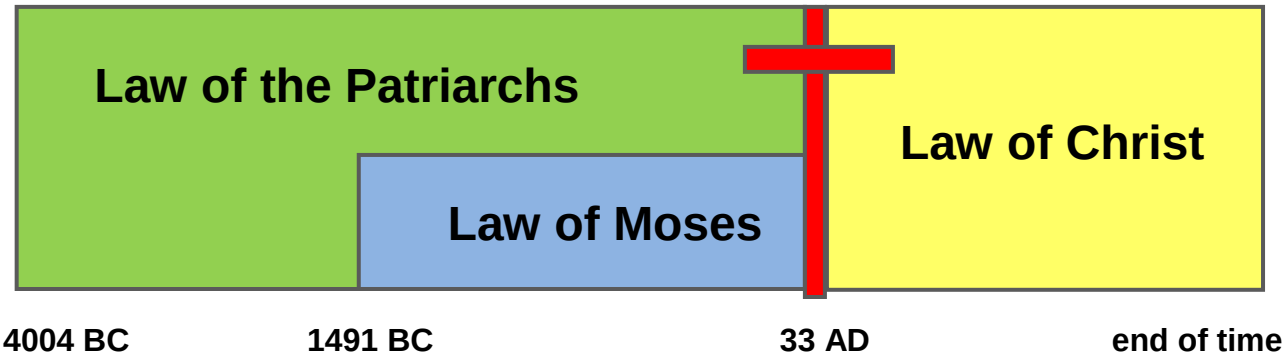
Hebrews 8:1-13

In the world today, **every human being is under one law to God**. There are 3 periods of the laws of God described to us in the Bible. During the first period of law, God spoke directly to the head of the family. The head of the family had the responsibility to say what God said. All of the family respected God and the head of the family as the person through whom God was speaking. God gave His commands, expressed His approval or disapproval of what was happening, and received praise or worship from each person (sacrifices were usually offered by the head of the family). We do find some prophets and some priests during this period. This law was not a written law and so there is little detail of what God required. We do learn some very important commands and principles which apply to all human beings for as long as the earth shall stand. The law itself was **effective until Jesus died on the cross**.

The Law of Moses was given **to the nation of Israel** and was applicable only to them. Most people are familiar with the 10 commandments of this law. This law included instruction for the family, civil law and ceremonial law. Every aspect of a person's life was directed through this law. There was a requirement to love God and keep His commandments. God dealt with the people more as a group with respect to blessings and punishments. This law was **effective until Jesus died on the cross**.

The Law of Christ was given **to everyone in the world**. It replaced the previous laws and **became effective when Jesus died on the cross.** It was preached to every person under heaven (Col 1:23). The basis of this law is faith (faith in God, faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God). Love of God, neighbor, fellow Christian and family is required. All preachers, teachers and writers of the New Testament (The Law of Christ) connected **love**, **faith** and **obedience**. If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, you will obey Him. This law was completely revealed in the first century and will be **effective until the end of time** (when Christ returns and judges the world). This law is according to God's eternal purpose and reflects His grace, mercy and love which bring eternal salvation to everyone who believes and obeys it.

PERIODS OF THE LAWS OF GOD IN THE BIBLE



LAW OF THE PATRIARCHS –

- ***And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and your descendants after you.*** Gen 9:9

This law was not a written law. Some of the specifics of the law are stated as the story of the Bible is being told. God spoke to the Patriarch (father) of the family. Adam lived 950 years, during which time God would have spoken through him. Do not murder, offer animal sacrifices in worship to God, etc. are some examples. The long life of people meant that the story of Mankind and his relationship with God did not need very many people to cover 2,500 years of history—the story is accurate.

1. Name some of the laws which are stated in Genesis, chapter 9.
2. What punishment was established by God for murder?
3. What was the sign of the covenant of God with Mankind?

LAW OF MOSES –

- ***And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel.*** Deut 4:44

This law was a written law. The specifics for observing the Passover were given to Israel just before they left Egypt. They crossed the Red Sea and came to Mount Sinai. This is where the Ten Commandments were given and many other provisions of the law. This law was given to Israel. It was a tutor to bring us to Christ.

4. The 10 commandments are the foundation of this law. Are they in effect today?
5. Ceremonial law - tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifices… Discuss the concept ***HOLY***.
6. Moral law – love your neighbor… What moral laws are in the 10 commandments?

LAW OF CHRIST –

- ***But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.*** Heb 8:6

This law was a written law. It was written by the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ who were guided by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote. Jesus taught His apostles personally and told them to teach what He had taught them. He also sent the Holy Spirit so that their message in preaching and in writing was the word of God. This law was fully revealed in the first century and has not been changed. Every person will be judged by the words of Jesus (what is in The New Testament).

7. Who are the saved? By what are they saved? From what are they saved? For what?
8. Christ is the head of the church. Who sets the rules for the church to follow?
9. Who will be the judge in the final judgment? By what will everyone be judged?

PROMISE

COVENANT

PROMISE and **COVENANT** are two significant concepts of the Bible. We want to examine what they are, how they are applicable in the Bible, and especially what they mean for us today. If we understand these concepts, we are better able to appreciate what God has done and will do for us as He has promised in the New Covenant.

1. The promise of the Father is mentioned in Acts 1:4. ***Promise*** is a commitment to someone to do something, usually within a certain time frame. Throughout the Bible, God made promises: sometimes to individuals, sometimes to families, sometimes to nations, and sometimes to everyone in the world. We learn from the Bible the nature of these promises and their value. We also learn that **God keeps His promises**. It is the assurance received from this fact, that allows us to have confidence in the promises God has made to us in the New Covenant.

- **Rom 9:1-5 -** The apostle Paul describes many things about God and His relationship with the nation of Israel. We can see many of the great blessings that Israel received on the basis of God's promises to them and God's covenant with them. We want to highlight only some of these great things.
  - ✓ **ADOPTION** – God chose them as His children. The same for us. Eph 1:4-6
  - ✓ **GLORY** – Their God was their glory—seen through the blessings from God.
  - ✓ **COVENANTS** – There are no greater covenants than those made by God.
  - ✓ **Giving of the LAW** – No other nation was blessed with such a great law.
  - ✓ **The SERVICE of God** – The privilege of serving God and worshiping Him
  - ✓ **PROMISES** – Wonderful promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel.
  - ✓ **CHRIST** – The greatest promise because of its effect for life and salvation.
- **Rom 9:6-13 -** ***Israel's Rejection and God's Purpose***
  - ✓ THE WORD OF GOD - The statement of God's Promises and Covenant
  - ✓ CHILDREN – The seed of Abraham - Israel was the offspring of Abraham.
  - ✓ THE CHILDREN OF GOD - God chose them to be His children.
  - ✓ THE CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE - They existed because of Promise.
  - ✓ THE WORD OF PROMISE - The statement of God's Promise
  - ✓ THE PURPOSE OF GOD - The Promises were given to fulfill God's Purpose.
- **Rom 9:14-28 -** ***Israel's Rejection and God's Justice***
  - ✓ I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOMEVER I WILL HAVE MERCY.
  - ✓ *GOD to PHARAOH* For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.
  - ✓ **WHO ARE YOU TO REPLY AGAINST GOD?**
  - ✓ I WILL CALL THEM MY PEOPLE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE
  - ✓ THE REMNANT WILL BE SAVED.
  - ✓ For He will FINISH THE WORK and cut it short in RIGHTEOUSNESS…

- **Rom 9:29** then **Rom 9:30-33 -** ***Present Condition of Israel***
  - ✓ 9:29 UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOTH HAD LEFT US A SEED…
  - ✓ GENTILES…HAVE ATTAINED TO RIGHTEOUSNESS…OF FAITH.
  - ✓ ISRAEL…HAS NOT ATTAINED TO THE LAW OF RIGHTEOUSNESS… BECAUSE THEY DID NOT SEEK IT BY FAITH…
  - ✓ **Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.**

- Let us look again at **PROMISE** - a commitment to someone to do something.

➢ God gave some promises to Abram as recorded in Genesis 12:1-4.

(1) LAND—CANAAN (1) Josh 23:5,10,14 (2) NATION—ISRAEL (2) Josh 23:15; Deut 4:6-8; 26:5 (3) SEED—CHRIST (3) Gal 3:16

2. ***Covenant*** is an agreement, a mutual undertaking. Used with respect to the covenant given by God for anyone who is willing to submit to God and His covenant. Jesus validated **THE NEW COVENANT** with His blood and He is the Mediator of it. Heb 9:15

- Again, Romans 9:1-33, remember the great things that God gave to Israel and that all of the Promises to Abram were fulfilled! God also fulfilled His Covenant with Abraham.

THE NEW COVENANT came into being on account of God's Purpose/Plan/Promise.

- The Seed—**JESUS CHRIST** is a principle of the New Covenant. Gal 3:16-18,26-29

➢ Heb 8:6-13 **THE NEW COVENANT** [made effective by the death of Christ]—

1) It is a better covenant than the first (old) covenant (the Law of Moses).
2) It was established on better promises [covenant is established on promises].
3) It was needed [the first covenant was insufficient to accomplish God's purpose].
4) It was not like the first covenant [exam: spiritual sacrifices rather than physical].
5) God's laws are in our minds/hearts—He is our God/we are His people.
6) God forgives our sins and forgets about them—never a greater covenant!
7) Everyone will know about this great covenant and this great God.
8) MY COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH MY GOD — **GOD & I**

We have spoken of God—His Purpose, His Plan, His Promises and His Covenant. What a great God! Romans 9 shows us the amazing relationship that He had with Israel and the wonderful God that He is—God is holy; God is love; He is full of grace and mercy; He desires a close relationship with His children. The Promise of **THE NEW COVENANT** is that **we can be saved** to walk with God in this life and throughout eternity as His dear children. Will you accept and join in His Covenant so that you can **LIVE**?

How to Understand the Bible

God's word is the most unique book ever written. This collection of 66 separate books of history, poems, prophecies, biographies, and letters tells the greatest story in human history: how God made man, how mankind fell out of favor with God, and how God provides man with a way to be rescued from the consequences of sin.

Some people are confused by this collection of different types of literature. There is uncertainty about how to understand and use this book. But God is not trying to confuse us, and His Word can be read, understood, and applied to every person's life experience so that we can please Him and serve Him, and ultimately be saved by Him.

There are some simple steps that can help us in understanding the message from this important book.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Generally the Bible is written in language that is easy to understand. Like any other written language, we must first read and understand what the Bible says. This involves answering simple questions like **who** is involved, **what** they are doing, **when** they are doing it, and **how** they are doing it.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE MEAN?

A second step in understanding God's word is determining what the Bible means. This involves determining the message of a particular scripture: **why** is this written?

HOW SHOULD I APPLY IT?

A third step in understanding God's word is determining how the Bible applies to us. This involves the personal application of God's word to our own lives: what does it mean that **I need to do**?

Let us use a couple of examples to illustrate how these simple steps can help us understand God's word. First, notice Genesis 6:13-17:

> ***And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me… Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. And this is how you shall make it…***

What does the Bible say? – God told (**who**) Noah to (**what**) build an ark, and gave specific instructions (**how**) on the size, components, and design.

What does the Bible mean? – God said the reason to build this boat (**why**) was because He was going to destroy man with a flood of water which would cover all of the earth, and the boat was the only way to escape this disaster.

How should I apply it? – God gave this command **specifically to Noah**, at a time when He had decided to destroy man because of sin. **It does not apply to us**, so there is nothing we need to do in response to this command.

Even though the command does not apply to us, we can still learn from it. We learn God's attitude toward sin. We learn that God's punishment for sin is just. We learn that man brings destruction on himself through sinful behavior. But the command was given to Noah, not to anyone else.

Let us look at an example that is somewhat different. Jesus said to His apostles,

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.
He who believes and is baptized will be saved;
but he who does not believe will be condemned. Mk 16:15-16

What does the Bible say? – Jesus told (**who**) His apostles to (**what**) preach the gospel to the entire world, and gave specific instructions on (**how**) the way to be saved and become one of His disciples.

What does the Bible mean? – The gospel is the good news of salvation, and Jesus told His apostles that it needed to be preached to the whole world (**why**) to save people who would respond to it. Those who do not respond will be condemned.

How should I apply it? – Jesus' command and promise is continuous. The gospel is still able to save people today. So the command to preach it continues. **It applies to us** – we are saved in the same way as the people in the first century—by believing and obeying the gospel. There are many examples which show this to be true, one of which is found in Acts 8:26-39. Then, once we are disciples, we are to teach others the gospel. There are also many examples for this principle; one is found in Acts 8:4.

We can learn from the scripture in Mark that the gospel is intended for the entire world, and that the only way the gospel is spread is through the teaching of the gospel message that is done by His faithful disciples. We can also learn that God saves those who obey Him, and those who do not obey Him will be condemned for eternity.

Review and Thought

1. What kinds of literature make up the Bible?

2. Why do you think the Bible is confusing to a lot of people?

3. What is the first step in beginning to understand the Bible?
   What things can we learn from a first reading of scripture?

4. What is the second step in understanding the Bible?
   What important question does this step often answer about scripture?

5. What is the third step in understanding the Bible?
   Why is this such an important step?

6. Which is the most difficult of these three steps for you?
   Why do you think so?

The Church in the Eternal Purpose of God

The Bible tells us that Jesus came to the earth to establish His church. Some men believe the church was set up because Jesus failed in His mission to establish His kingdom. But the Bible says that the kingdom and the church are the same thing—and that Jesus established His kingdom on earth, exactly as God had planned.

Once when Jesus was talking to His disciples, He asked them who they thought He was. Some people in the world – then and now – see Jesus as just a good man, or a good teacher, or a prophet. But Peter said:

> ***You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*** Mt 16:16

Jesus then said this:

> ***Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*** Mt 16:17-18

Jesus' plan was to build His church. And He built the church on the foundation of the fact which Peter confessed: **JESUS IS THE CHRIST AND THE SON OF GOD**. This church was established on the first Day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles, and thousands were baptized after Peter preached to them (Acts 2) . Then the Lord built His church of people who had been saved by their faith and obedience to the message of the gospel:

> ***And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*** Acts 2:47

Yet some people still believe that the church was established as an optional plan, because God did not expect Jesus to die. In fact, the establishment of the church on the Day of Pentecost was exactly according to God's plan.

All through the Old Testament period, God's chosen people were the descendants of Abraham – the Israelites. But it was always part of God's plan to someday include people **from all nations** to be His chosen people. God's plan was a mystery for a very long time. But when Jesus established His church, the mystery was revealed. The apostle Paul was one man who was chosen to reveal this mystery:

> ***… how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (…by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ).*** Eph 3:1-6

Paul explains this mystery, and how the church has always been part of God's eternal purpose and plan to save mankind from sin. Paul was selected as an apostle and a preacher to go to the Gentile nations and share with them

> ***…the unsearchable riches of Christ,***
> ***and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery…*** Eph 3:7-9

Paul then explains this mystery, and how the church was part of God's purpose and plan from the beginning of time:

> ***…to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church…according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*** Eph 3:10-11

Paul was playing an important part in revealing this mystery by his teaching to the saints, revealing God's wisdom to them. God made all of this known by revelation—by divine communication through the Holy Spirit, God told man of His plan, and this plan was recorded by the writers of the New Testament so that all men everywhere could know of God's plan and the blessings and promises they may receive through it.

Then Paul assures his readers that this was part of the eternal purpose and plan of God. From the beginning of time, the church was to be an important piece of how God would save mankind. The church displays God's wisdom and power, because it demonstrates how God took worthless material (sinful human beings) and molded them into a holy family of saints. He did this through His Son, who changes each of us from sinful, lost creatures into holy, righteous saints through the washing of His blood when we die with Him in baptism:

> ***Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.*** Eph 5:25-26

Review and Thought

<u>From Matthew 16:16-18, Acts 2</u>

1. Who built the church?
2. What great truth is the church built on?
3. What is the church composed of?
4. Who adds people who are saved to the church?

<u>From Ephesians 3:1-12, 5:26</u>

5. To whom did God choose to reveal the mystery of His plan for man's salvation?
6. What part does the church play in God's purpose and plan for man's salvation?
7. At what point did God decide to use the church as part of the plan of salvation?
8. How is God's wisdom and power seen in the church?

JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

Paul became Christian. He immediately began to preach that Jesus Is the Christ to both Jews and Gentiles. Acts 9:20-22

1. **JESUS** was born in the city of Bethlehem in the region called Judea. Lk 2:4,11
2. He grew up in the city of Nazareth in a region called Galilee. Lk 1:26; 2:4,51-52; Mt 2:23
3. He worked as a carpenter with His earthly father Joseph. Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55-56
4. At 30 years old, He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Jn 2:4,11
5. John the Baptist was a prophet of God. He said of Jesus:
   - ❖ ***Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*** Jn 1:29,36
   - ❖ ***This is the Son of God.*** Jn 1:34
6. Jesus was tempted by the devil; but He did not sin. Mt 4:1-11
7. Jesus began to preach, ***Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.***
8. He called 12 men to be His close disciples (later called ***apostles***), who would serve as eyewitnesses of Jesus: the person, His teachings, His miracles, and His death, burial and resurrection from the dead. Lk 9:1; 24:44-49; Acts 4:13-20; 5:27-32; 2 Pet 1:16-18
9. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached about ***Jesus of Nazareth*** whom God raised up from the dead and made Him to be both the Lord and the Christ. Acts 2:22-36
10. The apostles preached ***Jesus*** (proclaimed the good news of salvation through Him). Mk16:15-16
11. The evangelist Philip preached ***Jesus***. Acts 8:35 (8:26-39)
12. Paul preached ***Jesus Christ and Him crucified***. 1 Cor 2:1-2
13. What does the Bible say about Jesus? Lk 2:11; Jn 3:16; 1 Cor 15:1-4,25; Rev 1:5; 3:21; 17:14
14. The angel Gabriel spoke to Mary about the Son she would bear. Lk 1:26-38
15. Gabriel also spoke to Joseph about this child. Mt 1:18-25
16. Jesus was born of a virgin, just as foretold. Gen 3:15; Isa 7:14; Mat 1
17. Jesus lived a sinless life—a perfect example for every human being. 1 Pet 2:21-25

JESUS PROVED THAT HE IS THE CHRIST AND THE SON OF GOD BY THE MIRACLES THAT HE DID.

18. Jesus did many miracles, recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
    a. Jn 21:25 John said that, if everything Jesus did was *written one by one, even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*
    b. Jn 20:30-31 The miracles recorded by John are sufficient evidence for anyone—

JESUS PROVED THAT HE IS THE CHRIST AND THE SON OF GOD BY HIS TEACHINGS.

19. Jesus was a prophet/preacher/teacher of the way of God for mankind.
    a. He taught about sin and righteousness and salvation. Mt 7:28-29
    b. He taught about the kingdom—the king and citizens in the kingdom. Mt 4:17; chapters 5,6,7
    c. Taught as a person with authority. Mt 7:28-29
    d. ***No man ever spoke like this Man!*** Jn 7:45-46

JESUS IS THE CHRIST AND THE SON OF GOD

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:47

What is the church? The church, in a universal sense, is composed of all the people who have been saved by Jesus Christ and added to the church by Him. Church means *assembly*. So when saved people come together by the authority of Christ to worship God in one location, it is a church of the Lord—a local church.

The church was a part of the eternal purpose of God. Eph 3:10-12 Jesus promised to build His church. Mt 16:13-19 This church came into existence on the first Day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead in 33 A.D. Acts 2:1-47 Verse 47 speaks of the church as being in existence, for the first time in the Bible.

Jesus died on the cross for the sins of mankind. He was buried. He was resurrected from the dead by God the Father. He appeared to many people on different occasions to show that He who was dead, is now alive again. In His last appearance on the earth, He explained to His apostles how He had fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Himself. He then told them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person in the world. Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Lk 24:44-49 Jesus said,

He who believes and is baptized shall be saved. Mk 16:16

Then He told His apostles that, in Jerusalem in a few days, they would receive power from on high and they would be witnesses of Him—they would tell people about Jesus. This event occurred, just as Jesus said, and is recorded in Acts 2: the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in languages of other nations which they had not learned. This miracle prompted people to listen to Peter as he explained that this was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Joel 2). Peter told them about Jesus. He explained what David meant as he spoke of One who would come. Then he accuses those present of being responsible for the death of Jesus. Peter concludes his sermon by saying that God has made Jesus both **LORD** and **CHRIST**.

The people were ***cut to the heart*** (convinced that what Peter said was true) and asked the question, ***What shall we do?*** Peter said,

Repent, and let every one of you be baptized for the remission of sins… Acts 2:38

- Then, ***Those who gladly received his word were baptized.*** Acts 2:41

Three thousand people believed and were baptized that day and were saved.

- ***And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*** Acts 2:47

The people in the church were happy and rejoicing and praising God—they were saved from their sins and saved for eternal life in heaven. What a blessing! What a privilege! What a wonderful way of life—***a new and living way!***

NOW THE CHURCH EXISTED!

The Growth of the Church

The rapid growth of the early church is one of the more exciting and amazing parts of Luke's account of the Acts of the Apostles. Follow the description in these verses: Acts 1:15; 2:41,47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:31. Then the gospel started among the gentiles (13:2-3) and the descriptions of the gospel's effect are just as stunning (Acts 17:6; 1 Thess 1:6-9). What an exciting time it must have been!

This was all according to God's will for the apostles:

> …***you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*** Acts 1:8

The growth of the church was always about saving souls.

> ***For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*** 1 Tim 2:3-4

It was never about building up the reputation of men, creating wealth for church leaders, forming a powerful religious sect, or any other carnal aim men might have. The apostles started out with few fellow supporters, no political power and no real wealth, but their message exploded into a world that desperately needed a Savior. Acts 2:40; 8:4

What power could bring about such rapid growth? Why were so many people attracted to the message?

- First, people were attracted to the message of the gospel because they were ashamed of their lives in sin. The first chapter of Romans describes people whose religious concepts and the immorality of their lives had become so out of place as to be absurd (1:18-31; 6:20-23). Have you ever felt ashamed of your conduct?

- Second, people could see that the life of service to God made better people. Christians were driven by mercy, kindness, compassion, and most of all, love. Without Jesus, men are characterized by ***"hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions"*** and other works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21; see also Eph 2:1-4). Have you ever wanted to be a better person, but felt like you needed help to achieve it?

- Third, the dream of a life without suffering and without end gave the people hope. Many people of Jesus' day suffered economic hardship and military domination. Life was tough, as it is for many living today. These problems will always be experienced by men on this earth, but Jesus' message was of a better place, a place where the Creator lives and shares all things freely with all His spiritual family—Christians (members of the church).

The growth of the early church was not limited to a region of the world, a color of skin, a size of pocketbook, or a level of political power. The Bible concludes with these words,

And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'
And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come.
Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. Rev 22:17

Anyone—rich or poor, old or young, man or woman—can come to God through Jesus Christ. Because of this, the church of the first century grew at an amazing rate.

People must grow or they decline and die. The same is true of the inner man, the soul. The physical body follows a path set by the Creator that eventually leads to decline and death. In Jesus, we are offered a way to help the inner man to grow throughout our lives. The Apostle Paul wrote,

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing,
yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 2 Cor 4:16

Would you like a life of hope for better days, peace even when trouble besets you and love shared with those of like precious faith? **IN JESUS**, there is life, and that life resides and grows within every Christian. The story of the growth of the early church shows us the possibilities, even in troubled times. Jesus said, if our faith, though small as a mustard seed (Mt 17:20), is exercised according to the teachings of the word of God, the Bible, we can do marvelous and amazing things for God—for ourselves and for those around us we love. Are you a believer in Jesus Christ?

Review and Thought

From Acts 1-2

1. How many Christians were in the upper room before Pentecost?
2. How many were baptized on the Day of Pentecost?
3. What did God do with those who became Christians afterward? (see Acts 2:47)
4. Did the troubles with Ananias and Sapphira or with the Grecian widows slow down the growth of the church? (see Acts 5:1-14; Acts 6:1-7)
5. Is God partial to or against any man? (Acts 10:34-35)
6. What was the Apostle Paul accused of at Thessalonica?
7. How does the church help an individual Christian grow?
8. If individual Christians grow, will the church grow as well?

THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:47

The church in Jerusalem was the first church of Christ on the earth. It began on the first day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:1-47). We see in this church a wonderful example of what a church should be.

1) They heard the message of the gospel, believed it and obeyed it.
2) They repented and were baptized for the remission of their sins. Acts 2:38,41
3) They were saved – the Lord added them to the church – the church existed!
4) Church means *assembly*. When saved people come together by the authority of Christ to worship God in one location, it is a church of the Lord.

Peter concluded his sermon on Pentecost by declaring that Jesus is both **LORD** and **CHRIST**. Jesus is the head of the church. Eph 1:22-23 It is easy to understand that what the first church did in Jerusalem shows us what any local church should do.

1) ***And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*** Acts 2:42 They continued steadfastly in
   a) The apostles' doctrine (teaching). Jesus told His apostles, ***…Go…make disciples…baptizing them…teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you…*** Mt 28:18-20 The church must teach the gospel. These new Christians came together daily to receive instruction. Acts 2:46
   b) They had fellowship with God, Christ and other Christians. 1 Cor 1:9
   c) When they came together on the first day of the week, they ate the Lord's supper (breaking of bread). Acts 20:7
   d) When they came together, they prayed together. Col 3:16-17
2) ***Then fear came upon every soul…*** They had respect for God/Christ/truth.
3) ***Now all who believed were together and had all things in common…*** They shared in spiritual things and also in physical things. Acts 2:44; 4:32; 5:14
4) They were happy in their daily lives. Acts 2:46
5) They were ***praising God***. Acts 2:47 They were saved/happy. They had hope. They were praising God because of all the blessings they were receiving.
6) They had ***favor with all the people.*** Acts 2:47 They were of good character.
7) The church multiplied numerically as more and more people believed and obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:47

8) The church had problems; but those problems were solved with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and leadership of the apostles. Acts 6:1-7; 11:1-18; 15:1-32

The example of this great church continued to be a significant influence in the foundation of the church and spread the gospel in the world. 1 Tim 3:15,

THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD IS THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH.

THE CHURCH IS PERSECUTED

The church in Jerusalem was the first church of Christ on the earth. Many Jews from all over the world were saved on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47). This church was a great example of what a church should be. The Jewish spiritual leaders, who were responsible for Jesus being crucified, threatened the apostles as soon as they began to preach "Jesus". Acts 2 & 3; 4:1-22 The result was that ***they spoke the word of God with boldness.*** Acts 4:31 The number of believers was increasing, causing the Jews to act against the apostles again. Acts 5:14,17-18,25-28 The result was that ***they did not cease teaching and preaching that Jesus is the Christ.*** Acts 5:41-42

Notice the response of the apostles when they were brought before the Jewish council the first time. Acts 4:1-22 They declared the name and the power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. When they were told not to preach in this name, they said,

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

The apostles were brought before the Jewish council a second time. Acts 5:17-42 They again declared who Jesus was, and said,

We ought to obey God rather than men.

The religious leaders of the Jews decided that they should wait and see what would result from this teaching about Jesus. After about 6 months, there came to be a general persecution of Christians in Jerusalem. Acts 8:1-4 The result,

Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

The persecution of Christians caused them to be **bold** and **actively involved** in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This continued to be true throughout the early existence of the church. And, it should be the same today.

> ***Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.*** Acts 11:19-20

The Book of Revelation tells us how to overcome Satan and be victorious in Jesus Christ. Rev 1:9; 2:10; 12:10-11

> ***Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.***

Satan will lose. Jesus Christ and those with Him will win! Rev 17:14,

…and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.

The Head of the Church

When we use the word "head" to describe a person who is part of an organization of some type, it carries with it some obvious and important meanings. This is a common comparison that human beings can easily understand, because we understand that the head controls all of the functions of the body. This implies **AUTHORITY**, decision-making power, control, and leadership. My physical head controls all of the functions of my body. The head of an organization carries with it the same meaning—authority, decision-making power, control, and leadership.

Those who are members of the church have been added by the Lord when they are saved (Acts 2:47)—they are part of the body of Christ. The apostle Paul says of Christ:

He is the head of the body, the church... Col 1:18

We who are Christians are a part of this body, and Jesus Christ is the head of this body. Note two relevant texts which tell us that Christ is the head of the church:

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church… Eph 1:22

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Eph 5:23

The scriptures are very clear: Jesus is the head of the church. But what does that mean to us, who are members of the body?

1. Jesus has authority over the church.

As the head of His body (the church), Jesus has the authority to direct the activities and functions of the church. He received this authority from God the Father, who gave it to Him after He had been raised from the dead, after having paid the price for the sins of the world. Notice what Jesus said to His apostles after His resurrection:

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Mt 28:18

Jesus has the "right to rule." That means that He tells us what we are to do in the church and we are to listen and obey—we must subject ourselves to His authority over the church—what the church is, its purpose, its worship, its functions. The Bible is very clear about exactly what this means:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son… Heb 1:1-2

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus… Col 3:17

God speaks today through His Son—that is, through the New Testament (Jn 1:1). And whatever we practice in the church must be done **in His name**—that is, by His authority. Everything that Jesus has said about His church is in the New Testament. We have the obligation to do what He has said—we have no right to leave it undone or change it.

2. Jesus Christ dictates all of the functions of the church.

We are not left to try to figure out what God wants from His church. We understand from commands and approved examples what Jesus wants from us. Jesus gave specific direction and authority to His apostles. Mt 16:18-19,

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church…
and I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven,
and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven,
and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

The apostles were given authority on earth to "loose and bind" – that is, to give direction for what is right and what is wrong. Of course, it was not up to them personally to decide this, because their spiritual knowledge and understanding was miraculously inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:16-21). Jesus taught His apostles while He was on the earth and told them to teach what He had taught them (Mt 28:18-20). After He returned to heaven, He instructed them by means of the Holy Spirit. Their knowledge and teaching was therefore inerrant and was authorized by Jesus Himself. What they taught and what they wrote in the New Testament was given to them by the inspiration of God (Eph 3:3-5; 2 Tim 3:16-17). We cannot decide for ourselves what we will teach, how we will worship, when we will assemble, etc. These things have been determined by Jesus—the head of this church—and have, with His authority, been made them known to us.

The importance of this concept cannot be overstated. Multitudes of religious bodies today practice "what seems right" to them, instead of following strictly the pattern that Christ has given. How does God feel about this? Notice an event from the Old Testament:

Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it,
put incense on it, and offered <u>profane</u> fire before the Lord,
which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord
and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Lev 10:1-2

The word **PROFANE** means ***that which is not holy***. What impression do you get from this event about God's attitude toward following Him ***precisely***? Nadab and Abihu <u>did not respect the authority of God</u> to dictate how He is to be worshipped. When we imagine different ways to worship and serve that are foreign to what is revealed in the New Testament, we are not respecting properly our head, nor to the authority that He possesses to direct every activity of the church on the earth.

Review and Thought

1. Who is the head of the church? What does that mean to those of us in the church?
2. What does it mean that Jesus has authority over all things in heaven and earth?
3. How do we find out what Jesus wants the church to be and to do?
4. What mistake did Nadab and Abihu make in their service to God?

The Organization of the Church

When Peter confessed to Jesus that He was the Christ, the son of the Living God (Mt 16:16), Jesus replied with these words:

On this rock I will build my church,
and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Mt 16:18

Jesus built His church on the foundation of His deity – that He is God. He is the foundation of this church (1 Cor 3:11); He is the savior (Eph 5:23); He purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28), and He is the head of the church (Col 1:18). Since Jesus is the head of the church, He has all authority (Mt 28:18), and only He – through His word – can rightly describe for us how this church is organized.

MEMBERS – The church was established on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). On that occasion, the Bible describes how members were added to the church:

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:47

The church is composed of members—people who have been saved. Jesus died and shed His blood to purchase these people (Acts 20:28). In the New Testament, these members are simply called "Christians" (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet 4:16). Membership in the church was always preceded by obedience to the Gospel – hearing the message of the gospel, believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, repenting of past sins, confessing your faith that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God, and dying with Jesus in baptism for the forgiveness of your sins, and then raised up to a new life in Christ.

Among the members are both men and women. They are of equal value in God's eyes, but they fill different roles in His church. It is by God's design that men are to take the leading role in the worship and work of the church, as servants of the Lord. Women are supportive servants of the work of the church, setting an example of service to the Lord as godly wives and mothers.

The apostle Paul speaks of 5 areas of leadership in the church, Eph 4:11,

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets,
some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.

Apostles and prophets describes a few Christians who had miraculous spiritual gifts which were given primarily so that the gospel of Jesus Christ could be proclaimed without error to people in the first century (at the beginning of the church, they did not have the New Testament written down on paper). The apostles were the leaders in the church initially, because Jesus had chosen them and authorized them to preach what He had taught them (Mt 28:18-20). He also gave the apostles the miraculous guidance of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14,15,16). Once the revelation of the will of God was complete, the need for new revelation was no longer necessary. When the apostles died, miraculous revelation and other miraculous spiritual gifts began to die also, since the apostles were the ones who gave people these gifts through the laying on of their hands. Acts 5 There are no apostles or prophets or miraculous spiritual gifts today.

EVANGELISTS – Men who choose to serve the Lord in the capacity of public teaching are called preachers (Rom 10:14), ministers (Col 1:23), or evangelists (Acts 21:8). They have no authority over other members, but do have greater responsibility to teach the Gospel. Sometimes these men are financially supported by the church. In the New Testament, evangelists studied the Word of God diligently (2 Tim 2:15), and used the Bible as the basis for all truth which they taught (Acts 2); they condemned the use of other sources of authority (1 Tim 4). The primary work of an evangelist is to ***preach the word***: to the church, so that Christians come to have complete knowledge; and to those who are not yet saved, in order to convert them to Jesus Christ.

DEACONS – Deacons are a specified office within a local church. The word deacon comes from a Greek work that means "servant". Although they are appointed to an office in the local church, deacons do not have any authority or rule within the church. They serve the church in various ways as directed by the elders. The Bible first speaks of men who served in this office in Acts 6. This example shows that a benevolent need arose in the church—deacons were chosen and appointed to look after that work.

A church appoints men to be deacons if they meet certain qualifications: reverent, not double-tongued, not addicted to wine, not greedy for dishonest gain, holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, blameless, husbands of one wife, managing their children and home well. (1 Tim 3:8-13) They must be faithful spiritually.

ELDERS – By God's design, elders are to rule in the local church (1 Tim 5:17). This is a specified office within the church. Elders are also referred to as bishops, overseers, shepherds, and pastors, all of which refer to the same office. The appointment of elders in a local church is clear (Acts 14:23), with a plurality of elders (more than one) appointed over each church. (Acts 20:17, Phil 1:1, Titus 1:5, Acts 14:23)

Elders are to watch over the church like shepherds (Acts 20:28-32), having the souls of members as a primary responsibility (1 Pet 5:2). They are to teach sound doctrine (Titus 1:9). Elders have authority to see that God's rules for the church are carried out—they cannot make rules for God. Instead of being domineering, they are to lead by example (1 Pet 5:3). Members are to submit to their leadership. (1 Pet 5:5, Heb 13:7,17)

A church appoints men to be elders if they meet certain qualifications: blameless, husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, gentle, not greedy, not quarrelsome, ruling their house well, having believing children, not a recent convert, and well thought of by people outside the church. (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9)

Review and Thought

1. Who is the head of the church and has all authority over it?
2. How does Jesus rule over the church – His body – today?
3. Who adds members to the church, and when does He do this?
4. What is the function of the evangelist in a church?
5. What job do deacons have in the church? Who can be a deacon?
6. What is the function of elders in the church? Where do they get their authority?

THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

Introduction - The purpose of this study is to examine some biblical principles which pertain to worship, especially, the **WORSHIP** in which Christians engage in their assemblies (churches).

❖ **WORSHIP -** In the Bible, worship was always directed to God—

GOD IS THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP.

God tells us what He wants us to do to worship Him properly. When we do in worship what He has said, we reverence Him / honor Him / bring glory to Him.

❖ **WORSHIP in the Old Testament** –

- **ABEL –** The first time **WORSHIP** is seen in the Bible is in the story of 2 brothers named Cain and Abel. Gen 4 The story shows that God told them what kind of sacrifice they should offer –

- Cain refused to do what God said. - Abel offered the sacrifice just as God said.

This story is clear—worship God as He says we should and He will be pleased—worship God in a different way, and God is not pleased. The example of Abel and his worship is an example for us today. About 4,000 years had passed when the writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews gives Abel as an example of faith in God—Abel believed what God said—this was shown by the fact that he did what God said. The results are seen in the story in Genesis and also in the reference to Abel and his example of faith. Heb 11:4,

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,
through which he obtained witness that he was righteous,
God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

- **ABRAHAM –** The essence of the Genesis story of Abraham (Abram) is found in the New Testament. Abraham is called the father of the faithful. Gal 3:7 His faith is an example of the kind of faith everyone should have. Heb 11:8-10 God tested Abraham's faith by telling him to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God. He made preparation that day and rose early the next morning to go to the place where he should offer his son. The altar was prepared, Isaac was bound and placed on the altar. Abraham raised the knife to kill Isaac, but an angel stopped him. He explained what God wanted from Abraham. God was satisfied. God renewed His covenant with Abraham and commanded circumcision of all males in his household as a sign of the covenant. Abraham had faith in God, believed God. and obeyed God. Heb 11:17-19

FAITH-BASED ACTION is the kind of faith God wants.

- The action of **WORSHIP** should also be **FAITH-BASED**. Rom 10:17,

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

FAITH-BASED WORSHIP is doing what God says we should do to worship Him.

- **THE 10 COMMANDMENTS –** ***You shall have no other gods before Me…***
you shall not bow down to them
nor serve them. Ex 20:3,5

❖ **W O R S H I P G O D !**

❖ **WORSHIP in the New Testament** – Jn 4:23-24,

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

Tangible things were required in the worship of God during the period of the Old Testament. Nearly all worship in the period of the New Testament involves intangible things—**IN SPIRIT**—the heart. God is seeking people who will worship Him in spirit—this means that the inner man is using his **INTELLECT**, his **WILL**, his **EMOTIONS** and his **CONSCIENCE** in their worship of God—what a person knows and believes and has determined to be righteous in worship—his spiritual being is involved in his worship, his spirit communicates to God. But God wants a person to worship Him according to His commandments—**IN TRUTH**—what God has told us to do in the Bible, His word.

The prophet Isaiah spoke against worship which was not from the heart and not according to the teaching of God, which was quoted by Jesus, and is applicable to us today. Mt 15:8-9,

These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

Jesus is the head of the church. He has told us how to worship in our assemblies.

Col 3:16-17 We should sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to the Lord and prayers with thanksgiving to God.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

A person is to have ***the word of Christ*** within. The word is where we learn about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, fellowship with God and Christians, and proper conduct. Knowing of God's love, graciousness, and mercy, we want to have a close spiritual relationship with Him; we want to honor, praise and serve Him. The word should dwell in us as we teach and admonish one another and as we sing in our hearts to the Lord and as we pray to God in the name of Jesus. A part of worship is **SINGING** and **PRAYING**.

Jesus instituted **THE LORD'S SUPPER** before He died on the cross. We are to do this ***in remembrance*** of Him. We eat unleavened bread, which represents His body, and drink grape juice, which represents His blood. This is done in the church on the first day of the week. Mt 26:26-29; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor 11:23-34

Christians are to come together as a church on the first day of every week. In the assembly, **PREACHING** the word of God is to take place. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 14

The church also takes a **COLLECTION**, a free-will offering from its members. 1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 8:1-5

SINGING – PRAYING – EATING THE LORD'S SUPPER – GIVING – PREACHING

Workers in the Church

Jesus told His disciples that one of the main reasons He came to earth was to establish His church:

On this rock I will build my church,
and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Mt 16:18

Jesus built His church on the truth of the confession that Peter made, that **JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD**. He is the foundation of this church (1 Cor 3:11); He is the savior of the church (Eph 5:23); He purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28); and He is the head of the church (Col 1:18). But Jesus' church was not completely built all at once. The church is made up of all the saved people (Acts 2:47). And since people today are still being saved when they obey the Gospel, then it is reasonable for us to say that the church is still being built today. But who is doing this building?

Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus and explained to them about the workers that Jesus put in His church to help build it up. Notice Paul's writing:

> ***And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God…*** Eph 4:11-13

Jesus placed in His church **GIFTS—**particular people who worked as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These workers in the church have always been tasked with the same responsibility: to equip the saints for the work of ministry, and to edify the body (church). Who are these people? Let us examine.

Some of the **GIFTS** were temporary. Apostles and prophets worked to establish the foundation of the Lord's church through God's revelation and preaching and writing the message revealed. This is what Paul wrote to Christians in Ephesus:

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners,
but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone… Eph 2:19-20

APOSTLES were specially designated men who had seen the resurrected Christ, and had spent much time with Him. These men had the power of the Holy Spirit and could perform miracles to confirm the word that they taught was true. **PROPHETS** were people who had the power of the Holy Spirit to teach by inspiration. That means that the Holy Spirit told them what to teach—it came from God. It was not their own ideas. Today we no longer have living apostles and prophets with miraculous powers. Instead, we have the complete word of God. But there were other gifts that Jesus gave to men for the benefit of the church besides apostles and prophets.

EVANGELISTS (PREACHERS) – PASTORS (ELDERS/BISHOPS/PRESBYTERS) – TEACHERS

In the text of Ephesians 4, **EVANGELISTS**, **PASTORS** and **TEACHERS** were also **GIFTS** given to men for the benefit of the church. These people had a miraculous gift so that they would be able to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and confirm it. We have evangelists, pastors and teachers in the church today, performing the same function that Paul described in his letter to the Ephesians, but using the fully revealed Word of God to accomplish the work in the church which God planned and described: equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, and edifying the body (church).

All of these **workers in the church** are simply members of the church who perform certain functions—most of which relate to the responsibilities in evangelism and guidance of the spiritual family that is God's church.

EVANGELISTS are preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They instruct the saints in the teaching of the Bible, encourage them to be faithful in performing godly works, and teach the Gospel both publicly and privately. There are no special qualifications to be an evangelist, except that he be willing to ***preach the word***, the truth of the Gospel.

PASTORS are the leaders of a congregation of God's people. Pastors lead the church by their example and by their teaching and admonition. They are respected, partly because they are older, wiser, and more experienced. Pastors must meet specific qualifications before they are appointed by the church to serve (see 1 Tim 3, Titus 1). Pastors do not lead by commanding or ordering members, but rather by teaching, showing and leading. Members are exhorted to follow the lead of qualified and godly pastors (Heb 13:17). [Pastors are also called elders, bishops, presbyters.]

TEACHERS are members who use their abilities to instruct others, both publicly and privately. There are no special qualifications to serve as a teacher, but he/she should have sufficient knowledge to be able to teach others the truth of the Bible.

All of these **GIFTS** from God had a specific purpose. They satisfied the needs—***fulfill the ministry*** (2 Tim 4:5)**—**and contributed to the building up of the church, so that the members were properly equipped to do the work of the Lord in the church. These functions—evangelists, pastors, teachers—accomplish the same purpose today.

In addition to the workers we have mentioned, every Christian is to be a worker for the Lord in the church. Acts 8:4; 1 Cor 15:58; Titus 2:14; Eph 6:10

Review and Thought

1. Why does the church need the kinds of workers Paul describes in Ephesians 4?

2. Which of the workers that Paul mentions are no longer an active part of the church?

3. What function do evangelists perform in the church?

4. What function do pastors (elders) perform in the church? Where can we find the specific qualifications for these men?

5. Who can be a teacher in the church?

U N I T Y

In the book of Ephesians, Paul describes many great blessings we enjoy in Christ. One of these great blessings (described in chapter 4) is the **UNITY** we can enjoy because of Jesus' death on the cross. Spiritually, Jews and Gentiles were enemies – neither liked the other. But through His death on the cross, Jesus broke down this enmity and made peace between Jews and Gentiles. Notice:

> ***For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation..., so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross...*** Eph 2:14-16

Paul describes the unity that Jews and Gentiles enjoy in Christ. No longer were the Gentiles left out of God's grace – through Jesus, God reconciled both Jew and Gentile to Him, ending forever the harshness between races of people. Now they could be **one**.

Paul's further exhortation to the Ephesians (and to us) is to strive for this unity, putting aside personal opinions and differences, and working together for the cause of the Lord. This unity is most beautifully seen in the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God – three separate persons – is yet **one** God. He is **unified in purpose, spirit, and work**. And that is our example – it is what He expects of us.

Now let's examine Paul's teaching in Ephesians 4. **FIRST**, for unity to exist among us, we must have the proper attitude. Notice the attitudes Paul describes:

> ***I… beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*** Eph 4:1-3

- **UNITY** relies on disciples having these characteristics:
  - **Lowliness** – A humble opinion of ourselves.
  - **Gentleness** – A controlled strength.
  - **Longsuffering** – A patience or slowness in avenging wrong.
  - **Bearing with one another in love –** An attitude towards others that overlooks the shortcomings of others because of love for each other.
  - **Endeavor** – An effort to display these virtues.

Next, we must understand and appreciate the basis for our unity. Paul describes:

> ***There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*** Eph 4:4-6

Paul encourages a unified body that works together based on the unity that is displayed in the church that Jesus built. Namely:

- **One Body** – Composed of all baptized believers that God adds to the church.
- **One Spirit** – The Holy Spirit. Who guarantees our inheritance, and seals us.
- **One Hope of Your Calling** – Our hope is the ultimate resurrection of the dead.
- **One Lord** – Jesus, whom God made both Lord and Christ.
- **One Faith** – The body of truth, which has been delivered once for all time.
- **One Baptism** – Immersion in water for the remission of sins. Commanded by Jesus, practiced by the apostles and all teachers of the gospel in the 1st century.
- **One God and Father** – Father of all, who transcends us and is omnipresent.

These seven (7) "ones" constitute the unity of the Spirit that we are encouraged to keep in the bond of peace. When we display the attitude that Paul encouraged of lowliness, gentleness, long-suffering, bearing, and endeavoring, and we are unified in the one body, by the one Spirit, believing and teaching about the one Lord, faith, baptism and God, we can attain a unity that will cause the church to grow with strength.

To support this unity, Jesus has given His church many spiritual workers, who work together to properly equip the disciples to this vital work of unity. Paul expounds:

> ***And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*** Eph 4:11-13

The unity that is so important to the growth of God's church is achieved through disciples with godly attitudes, holding fast to the doctrines of unity, and using the spiritual workers God has placed in His church to grow toward a unity of the faith.

Review and Thought

1. Why is it so important for us to be unified in the things we teach and live?

2. What did Jesus accomplish in His death to help end the enmity between Jews and Gentiles?

3. What attitudes must we have to achieve unity?
   Explain what each attitude expressed in 4:1-3 means.

4. What are the seven things that Paul describes as being "one" that form the basis for our unity?

5. Who are the spiritual workers that God put in His church to help it grow into a unified body? Explain what each one of these workers accomplishes.

SALVATION

This is one of the most important concepts for every person in the world. But people have many different ideas about salvation, most of which are taught as truth in the religious world. However, we want to look at what the Bible says about salvation in simple terms that anyone can understand. What is it? What does the Bible say about it? What must I do in order to be saved?

➢ **WHAT IS IT?** To define salvation is not difficult. But to explain it in biblical terms is better. The nation of Israel was saved from bondage in Egypt. They were saved to inherit the promised land—Canaan. (This story of the people of God is found in the book of Exodus in the Old Testament.) They were saved **FROM BONDAGE**—they were saved **TO INHERIT THE PROMISED LAND**. After they left Egypt, they were given the Law of Moses—God's law for the people of Israel—a great blessing that distinguished the God of Israel from any other god that people worshiped and Israel from any other people on earth. This law connected God to Israel and Israel to God. The Law is called **THE OLD COVENANT** in the book of Hebrews. When Israel came to the land of Canaan, they refused to enter; so God caused them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, after which they did enter and received their inheritance. During the 40 year period of time, God was with them and blessed them: He gave them food to eat and water to drink; He also did not allow their clothing to wear out. So God provided for their physical needs and their spiritual needs. This is a figure of what God does for the saved in our lives. The picture for us is much the same, except that the people of God are no longer defined by race, nationality or physical location. They are all spiritual children of God who are citizens in His spiritual kingdom: we are saved **FROM BONDAGE IN SIN—WE ARE SAVED TO INHERIT EVERLASTING LIFE IN HEAVEN**. While we live here on earth, those who are saved spiritually and citizens in the spiritual kingdom will have the right to have a close personal relationship with God and receive the spiritual blessings which God provides for His people until they receive the inheritance of eternal life in heaven. **SALVATION** includes what we are saved **FROM** and what we are saved **TO**. It includes what we are saved **FOR**—what results from salvation—our relationship with God and the blessings we receive from God because we have believed and obeyed Him: we have the hope of eternal life in heaven after we depart from this life on earth.

➢ **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT IT?** The example given previously was an example of the concepts of salvation from the Old Testament; there are many other examples. God promised that, at some future time, all peoples of the earth would be blessed through one person—**JESUS CHRIST**. The New Testament tells us about His life, what He did and what He taught—Jesus fulfilled what was foretold in the Old Testament. Lk 24:44-49 Jesus Christ volunteered to come to earth to be born as a child, to grow up in a poor family, to give Himself totally to people to reveal God and the will of God and to show that He Himself was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world—**He died so that I could live!**

If Jesus was willing to die so that every person in the world could have salvation, it must be **very important**. So let us see what the Savior has to say about **Salvation**.

➢ **WHAT MUST I DO IN ORDER TO BE SAVED?**

1) **HEAR** and **UNDERSTAND** Mt 15:10 We can neither know, nor understand, unless we receive information by hearing or seeing it. At the time of Christ, there were no computers, televisions, radios, telephones, etc. There were few books. Most information was given by verbal communication—hear and understand.

2) **BELIEVE** Jn 8:24 Once we hear and understand, we can decide if we believe what we have heard. We cannot be reconciled to God without faith in God and faith in what God has said in His book—The Holy Bible. We accept that the Bible is the word of God. We accept that God had a purpose for revealing the Bible to mankind—so that we might know God and God's will for mankind. We accept what God has said, believe it, which leads to the next step that we must take.

3) **REPENT** Lk 13:3,5 The opposite of salvation is to be lost or to perish. Jesus said that we must repent or we will perish. But what does it mean to repent? The main idea is that we change our minds from one way of thinking to another. This is generally used with respect to sin—I choose not to sin anymore and I choose to obey God. So there are two aspects: (1) do not sin anymore (2) do what God says is right. If I believe what God says and I have decided to do what God says; I should be willing to confess my faith before men.

4) **CONFESS** Mt 10:32-33 Human beings often talk about the things that they like or things that they are involved in or have experienced in life. The primary thing that we are to believe: **JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD** Peter made this confession when Jesus asked who do you think I am? Mt 16:13-19 A man of Ethiopia made this confession just before he was baptized. Acts 8:37

5) **BE BAPTIZED** Mk 16:16 Look at the man from Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-39):

(a) He heard the message of the gospel. (b) He believed the gospel message.

(c) He confessed his faith in Christ. (d) He was baptized.

We can easily understand that he would repent, if we consider what he said / did. **HE WHO BELIEVES AND IS BAPTIZED WILL BE SAVED.** Mk 16:16 This simple statement was made by Jesus. He is the Christ and the Son of God. He is the Savior of the world. He has all power (authority) in heaven and on earth. Mt 28:18-20 Anyone who wants to be saved will listen to the Savior and do what He says we must do to be saved.

6) **SERVE GOD FAITHFULLY IN LIFE** 1 Cor 15:58 The Lord wants us to do what is right; but He also wants us to abound in doing what is good. If we love God and overcome the temptations of Satan, we will receive the crown of life. Jas 1:12

SALVATION begins by listening to God. If we believe God, we will do what He says.

If we love God, we will obey Him. Mt 22:35-40; Jn 14:15; 1 Jn 2:3-6; Rev 22:14

IDENTIFYING MARKS OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

1. **DESIGNER – God**. Eph 3:10-12; 1Cor 1:2
2. **BUILDER – Jesus Christ**. Mt 16:13-19; Ps 127:1
3. **FOUNDATION – Jesus Christ.** *Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* Mt 16:13-19; Eph 2:20
4. **WHERE – Jerusalem** in Judea of Palestine in the Middle East is where the church began. Acts 2:1-47; 8:1. Lk 24:45-48; Acts 1:4-8; Isa 2:2-4
5. **WHEN – 33 A.D.** The church had its beginning on the first day of Pentecost after Jesus was resurrected from the dead. (A. D. stands for ***anno domini***, a Latin phrase which means ***in the year of our Lord*** – the 33rd year from the birth of Christ.) Acts 1:8; 2:14-17,47; Isa 2:2; Dan 2:44; Mk 9:1; Acts1:8;2:14-17; Lk 2:1-5,11; Acts 2:1-4; 8:1; 11:15
6. **WHAT – The saved.** The church is composed of the people who have been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. Acts 2:47 Acts 2 records the first time that the message of the gospel was preached on the earth, that is, **salvation** from sin is available <u>now</u> through Jesus Christ—Peter preached Jesus, repentance and remission of sins based on the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is both Lord and Christ. Acts 2:36
7. **HOW – Salvation** is obtained through **faith** that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ and the Son of God in conjunction with **repentance** and **baptism** for the remission of sins. Acts 2:38; 8:12,13,34-39
8. **MESSAGE – The Gospel of Jesus Christ.** *Gospel* means *good news*—the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. This message is God's power to salvation. Rom1:16 Without this message, we cannot know what we must do to receive eternal life in heaven and avoid eternal punishment in hell. Rom 6:23; 2Thess 1:8-9
9. **NAME – The church.** During the first century, the church was referred to by many descriptive terms, but there is no proper name given in the New Testament. The phrase often used is church of Christ, because Paul used this phrase. Rom 16:16 Also, Christ purchased the church with His own blood. Acts 20:28
10. **AUTHORITY – Jesus.** Jesus has all authority. Mt 28:18 Jesus is Lord and Christ Acts 2:36 He reigns as king of His kingdom. 1 Cor 15:24-28 Jesus is the head of all things to the church. Eph 1:22-23 [Personally: God-Christ-Man-Woman (1 Cor 11:3)]
11. **ORGANIZATION – Jesus** is the head; elders/deacons/other members of the church. Eph 1:22-23; Phil 1:1; 1 Cor 12:12-14. 1 Tim 3:1-13
    a) Elders oversee and lead the church according to the commandments of Jesus. They have no right to make laws for God. They lead like a shepherd leads his sheep. 1 Pet 5:1-3 Elders are also called: bishops, pastors, presbyters.
    b) Deacons are servants of the church and function as directed by the elders.
12. **WORK –** a) **Preach/Teach the Bible** b) **Benevolence—aid needy saints**
    a) Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-16; Eph 4:11-16; 2 Tim 2:2; 4:2 b) Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 16:1-4
13. **WORSHIP – Singing / Praying / Eating the Lord's Supper / Preaching / Giving**
    Christians engage in these activities when they assemble for worship on the first day of the week. Col 3:16-17; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:1-2
14. **ENTRANCE – Hearing / Believing / Repenting / Confessing / Being Baptized**
    The actions that bring salvation are the same as needed to enter the church. Acts 2:47

SIN AND FORGIVENESS

SIN is doing something that God tells you not to do or failing to do something that God said for you to do. Everyone has sinned (Rom 3:23). The penalty for sin is death (Rom 6:23). Everyone needs forgiveness. God has provided forgiveness of sins only through Jesus Christ our savior (Eph 1:6).

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. 1 Jn 3:4

1. **What is sin?** 1 Jn 3:4
   a. God says, ***Do Not Do This!*** I do it anyway! Col 3:9; James 4:1-4; 1 Jn 2:15-17
   b. God says, ***Do this!*** I do not do it! Acts 2:38; 10:48; Lk 7:30
   c. I do what is wrong because I am ignorant of the Bible. Acts 17:23; Rom 10:3
   d. I go beyond what God has said–God says ***sing***–I sing and play. Rev 22:18; Gal 1:8
   e. I take something away from what God has said–God says ***be baptized***–I say that baptism is not necessary for salvation. Rev 22:19; Gal 1:8; Acts 20:27; Rom 1:16
2. **Sin is serious**
   a. Effect on our relationship with God. Isa 59:1-2 **BEING PAST FEELING** Eph 4:17-19
   b. Effect on lives—some examples…. Rom 1:18-32 **Sense of GUILT** Mt 27:3-5
   c. Consequences of Sin—Immediate and ultimate consequence: **DEATH** Rom 6:23
      1) Physical–way of thinking/emotions/unhappiness affect physical. Rom 1:24-31
      2) Spiritual–no relationship with God–change in other relationships. 2 Thess 3:6
3. **Pictures of Final Judgment** Acts 17:30-31
   a. 2 Cor 5:10 ***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.***
   b. Mt 25:31-46 ***34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 41 Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 46 these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.***
   c. Rev 20:11-15 ***12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.***
4. **I must be a Christian to get rid of sin, its guilt, and its consequences.** Eph 1:7
   a. For a person who is not a Christian – Eph 2:12
      1) Hear and believe the gospel—Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Mt 15:10; Jn 8:24
      2) Repent of sins committed in the past and change your way of living. Lk 13:3
      3) Confess with your mouth your faith in Jesus. Mt 10:32-33
      4) Be baptized for the remission of your sins. **God forgives you!** You die with Christ and are raised to new life with God in Christ. You are saved. Acts 2:38
   b. For a person who is a Christian – 1 Pet 2:9-10; Eph 1:7
      1) Repent and pray—ask God to forgive you. Acts 8:18-24
      2) Confess your sin to God and ask Him to forgive you—He is faithful. 1 Jn 1:9

GOD'S REMEDY FOR SIN

Jesus discusses the complete concept of why He came down from heaven to live as a man on the earth in John, chapter 3. Jesus explains this to Nicodemus: a ruler of the Jews/teacher of the Law of Moses/man of distinction. This lesson shows that God determines what is sin and God prescribes the remedy for sin: **Jesus is God's remedy for sin!** But man must do something for the remedy to take effect.

1. YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN. Jesus says this in John 3:3 and John 3:5—

3 ***…unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.***

5 ***…unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.***

It is clear that this is a spiritual birth that a man must experience to be saved. It involves ***water*** and ***the Spirit*** – **BAPTISM**.

2. Why did Jesus die on the cross? Jesus explains the purpose of His life on earth and the purpose of His death. He does so by comparing His death on the cross to the occasion when Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.

Num 21:4-9 The nation of Israel was on its way to the promised land (Canaan) when they sinned by speaking against God and against Moses. God sent poisonous serpents among them and many people died. They asked that the serpents be taken away. God said, NO! But He provided a **remedy—**Moses was to make a bronze serpent and put it up on a pole**—**when a person was bitten by a poisonous serpent, he could look at the bronze serpent and he would not die**—he would live!**

14 ***And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,*** 15 ***that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.***

JESUS ON THE CROSS — GOD'S REMEDY FOR SIN

We can easily understand God's purpose: **SALVATION—ETERNAL LIFE.**

3. The Greatness of God's Love. What God did for us exceeds our ability to comprehend— 16 ***For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*** Jn 3:16

What a Great God! What an amazing gift for every person who has ever lived on the earth! And, it is so easy to learn what is **God's Remedy for Sin**. God wants us to know—that is the only means by which God's purpose for mankind can be fulfilled. Jesus explains it so clearly.

4. God's Remedy for Sin God told Israel that any person bitten by a poisonous serpent had to look at the bronze serpent Moses had lifted up—God's remedy for sin on that occasion. Believing that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God is shown in this text to be a necessary part of God's remedy for sin. But how do we access that remedy to make it effective for our salvation: **YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN.** Each person must be baptized for the remission of his sins. Acts 2:38 Each person must come to the light and do the things which Jesus, the Savior of the world has commanded: **Jn 3:21** ***But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.*** God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have done everything that is necessary for you to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven. Each person must do his part before God will receive him. Jesus said,

He who believes and is baptized will be saved. Mk 16:16

PEOPLE WHO ARE JEWS ARE SAVED

The Old Testament of the Bible tells us about the history of mankind from Creation until 400 years before Jesus was born. Its purpose is to lead us to Christ, to teach us what we need to know to be able to accept the reality that **JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD.** It explains blood sacrifice and the necessity of blood being shed for the remission of sins.

And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Heb 9:22

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world-–the blood sacrifice. Jn 1:29 **Jesus** was crucified by the Romans on a cross: He died; He was buried in a tomb; after 3 days He was resurrected from the dead**—HE LIVES!**

At an annual feast of the Jews (Pentecost), Jews were in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven. The apostles of Jesus were baptized in the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages. This miracle caused people to pay attention to Peter as he explained that this is what the prophet Joel had written about. Then Peter began to preach the gospel —the good news that **Jesus died on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven.**

1. **JESUS** Acts 2:22-24 Peter begins by talking about Jesus—who was He? He says, you know this person and what He did while He was alive—but **YOU KILLED HIM!** 2:22 ***Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—***

2. **What happened to Jesus?** Peter tells the people what David the King had to say about what happened, and shows without doubt that David had reference to what would happen to the Christ hundreds of years later.

2:36 ***Men Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.***

3. **The Jews** believed in the God of the Bible. They knew what the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets had said about the Messiah (Christ). So they were ready to receive the Messiah as their king. But the Jewish religious leaders had Jesus put to death because of envy—He was not what they expected and He was not what they wanted. But the people in general had accepted that Jesus was the Messiah, as shown by the occasion when He entered Jerusalem like a king coming to occupy His throne. Mt 21:1-11 When Jesus died, they were confused about what to do. Lk 24:13-21 Jesus told His apostles what they should do (Mk 16:15-16), beginning in Jerusalem. Lk 24:44-49; Acts 1:8 When Peter explained what God had said in the Old Testament, the Jews understood that Jesus was, in fact, the Christ and the Son of God. Astonished, they said, What shall we do? Peter answered, 2:36 ***Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*** They heard the message of the gospel and believed it. They repented of their sins and were baptized for the remission of their sins. **They were saved!** 2:41,47

4. **What happened in Acts 2?** For the first time, the apostles preached the gospel of Jesus Christ and offered **SALVATION** to everyone who would believe, repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. This salvation was made possible by the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. These principles are the same for us, if we will be saved.

The New Testament is God's law for us.

PEOPLE WHO ARE SAMARITANS ARE SAVED

When Jesus told His apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person, He told them to preach the gospel in Samaria. Acts 1:8 Samaria was the region between Judea and Galilee. The Samaritans were a mixed race. The region was occupied by Jews. Then they were taken away and other peoples were brought in to occupy the territory. Some Jews returned and intermarried with other peoples. According to the Law of Moses, this was not permitted. But that is why the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Jn 4:9 So, when Jesus commanded that the gospel be preached in Samaria, it indicates that every person in the world has the opportunity to be saved. Rev 22:17,

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

The church began in Jerusalem. Acts 2 The church in Jerusalem multiplied in a very short time. Then Jewish spiritual leaders began to persecute the church and Christians. It seems that those who were saved (Acts 2) and remained in Jerusalem to receive instruction from the apostles, were scattered and went everywhere preaching the word. Acts 8:1-4

❖ **The gospel is preached in Samaria.** Philip was an evangelist who chose to go to Samaria to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Acts 8:5-13

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

The people heard what Philip had to say about ***Christ***. They all heeded, ***hearing*** the message and ***seeing*** the miracles. Previously they had followed a man named Simon who proclaimed that he himself was someone great.

Acts 8:12-13 ***But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.***

Notice that the Samaritans <u>heard</u> the preaching of the gospel. This included:

1) ***The kingdom of God*** We know that both John the Baptist and Jesus preached about the kingdom. This is the same one as prophesied by Daniel. Mt 3:2; 4:17; Dan 2:31-45

2) ***The name of Jesus Christ*** This expression implies the authority and the power connected to the name—Who said it? If God said it, the authority and power connected to the name ***God*** settles it—nothing anyone else says has any importance. Acts 3:1-10; 4:8-12

❖ **What did the Samaritans do when they believed?** Both men and women were baptized. What did Jesus Himself say, ***He who believes and is baptized will be saved.*** Mk 16:16 Jesus, the apostles, the evangelists and all Christians preached the same gospel. The Samaritans heard the gospel; they believed it; they obeyed it; they were saved. The Lord and Savior Jesus Christ gave us only **ONE GOSPEL** which was preached to everyone in the world in about 30 years of Jesus' death. Col 1:23 There is only **ONE SAVIOR**. If I want to be saved, I must do what my Savior tells me to do to be saved. Reading these few verses is sufficient for us to understand what the Savior has said.

PEOPLE WHO ARE GENTILES ARE SAVED Acts 18:1-18

A Gentile is anyone who is not a Jew. Some prophets of the Old Testament tell us about the salvation of the Gentiles. Isa 49:6 ***I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.*** The gospel was not yet being preached to the Gentiles. But God showed the apostle Peter a vision to teach him an important lesson about the Gentiles. Then the Holy Spirit told Peter to go to the house of Cornelius, who had been praying to God when he was told to send to Joppa for Simon called Peter. These events caused Peter to say, Acts 10:34-35 ***…I perceive that God shows no partiality. …in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.*** Peter took some Jews who were now Christians with him (they would later serve as witnesses to what happened in the house of Cornelius). The church in Jerusalem was informed that some Gentiles had been taught the gospel and obeyed it. Some in the church were not willing to accept Gentiles as equals in the church. So Peter explained to the elders, apostles and those who opposed what had taken place. Those who heard what Peter said came to this conclusion, Acts 11:18 ***Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.***

Barnabas was in Antioch. He preached in the church and also to people who were not saved. Many Gentiles were being saved. So Barnabas brought Saul (the apostle Paul) to Antioch to work with him there. After a period of time, the Holy Spirit told the church to send Paul and Barnabas out to other countries to preach the gospel. This was what Jesus said to His apostles previously. The progression: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the rest of the world. When Paul came to a city, he would go first to the synagogue of the Jews. He convinced as many Jews as possible that Jesus was the Christ. As he had opportunity, he also preached to the Gentiles. Acts 13:2 ***…the Holy Spirit said, Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them…***

This lesson is about Paul when he goes to the city of Corinth. Acts 18:1-18 It was a city of commerce, so people from many countries were there. They did not believe in the God of the Bible; most of them were idolaters. A part of the worship to their goddess was engaging in fornication at the temple, an act of worship. Paul preached to Jews and Gentiles, but began to focus on the Gentiles. Acts 18:6 The Jews opposed him and blasphemed, so Paul said to them,

Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.

1. **Paul preached first to the Jews.**

   Some rejected the message, but others responded favorably to it. ***Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household.*** Acts 18:6

2. **Paul preached to the Gentiles.**

   And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. Acts 18:6

HEARD / BELIEVED / OBEYED

3. **THE RESULTS –** 1 Cor 6:9-11,

   And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

T H E Y W E R E S A V E D !

4. **ONE MESSAGE –**

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

(a) Jesus gave only one message. (b) The apostles preached that message.
(c) The evangelists preached it. (d) Christians preached that message.
(e) The one message was for the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles.
(f) It is the only message of Salvation in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOW THAT I AM A CHRISTIAN

Now that I am a Christian, what does the Lord require of me? This question has disturbed many people. **The New Testament is the law which was given by Jesus Christ for us to follow.** But it is not just a list of things to do or not do, it always involves attitude. It takes time to learn what God requires. When a person believes in Christ and commits himself to follow Him, he will quickly learn from the Bible teaching and example of others and from the answers to questions he asks: what is the right thing to do. Most of what the Lord asks us to do is common sense:

Love God and Love Your Neighbor. Mt 22:34-40

1. **What is a Christian?**
   a. A saved person. The saved people who composed the church in Antioch were called disciples and ***Christians***. Acts 2:47

      And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. Acts 11:26

   b. A saved person is a baptized believer. Acts 2:38,41,47; 10:48
   c. A disciple is a learner / follower / adherent of his teacher–Jesus. Lk 9:57-62
   d. A Christian has confessed his faith in Christ–now he lives it daily. Heb 10:19-25
2. **Worship**
   a. **Worship of God** has always been important to the relationship between a man and his God. Jn 4:23-24

      But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

   b. Law of Moses required a memorial on the 7th day of each week. Ex 20:8-11
      - Law of Christ requires a memorial on the first day of each week. Acts 20:7
      - Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together. Heb 10:25

      1) In worship to God, there is an attitude of reverence, love, thanksgiving.
      2) In worship: sing praises to the Lord, pray to God the Father, eat the Lord's supper in memory of Jesus's death, preach, give as each has prospered.
3. **Idolatry / Morality** Ex 20:2-6; Gal 5:16-26; 1 Cor 6:9-11
   a. Idolatry was never acceptable. ***You shall have no other gods before Me.***
   b. Morality is based on what God says is moral – not on what you think / feel.
   c. ***Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? …And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*** Be pure in heart, both spiritually and morally.
4. **Other Christians**
   a. ***Love one another*** – by this all will know that you are my disciples. Jn 13:34-35
   b. ***Be one*** (united) – that the world may believe… Jn 17:20-21; Eph 4:1-6; 1 Cor 1:10
   c. Every Christian is a member of the body of Christ. 1 Cor 12:12-27
   d. Every Christian is a child of God – God is His Father. 1 Jn 3:1-2
5. **Now that I am a Christian:** I am free from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ; I live to God in the hope of eternal life; I am happy in my daily life; I rejoice in my service to God; I enjoy serving others; God is so Great and has blessed me so richly in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Eph 1:3-14 **Thank you Jesus!**

DISCERNING RIGHT FROM WRONG

… by this time you ought to be teachers … those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb 5:12-14

Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.
1 Thess 5:21-22

SOME WAYS WE CAN SIN –

1. By doing what God has forbidden.
   Gen 2:17
2. By failing to do what God has commanded.
   Acts 10:48
3. By adding to what God has said.
   Rev 22:18
4. By taking away from what God has said.
   Rev 22:19
5. By substituting for what God has said.
   Lev 10:1-3; 16:12-13

FAILING TO DISCERN because …	**ABLE TO DISCERN because …**
- **Ignorant.** Hos 4:6; Acts 3:17; Acts 17:30	- **Knowledgeable.** Mt 5:6; 2 Pet 1:5; Heb 5:14
- **Deceived.** 1 Tim 2:14; Acts 8:9-12	- **Grown Up.** 1 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:14; 5:6
- **Not willing to submit.** Lk 7:29-30; Rom 1:32	- **Submissive.** Jas 4:7
- **Not humble.** Acts 12:20-23; Prov 6:17	- **Humble.** 1 Pet 5:5-7; Phil 2:8
- **Self-centered** (or selfish). Lk 12:16-21	- **Other-centered** (Christ-centered) Mt 5:38-42; 7:12
- **Lack of Skill** (babes). Heb 5:13; 1 Cor 13:11	- **Exercise of knowledge** (full age). Heb 5:14; 2 Tim 2:15; 3:16-17
- **Willing to justify Self.** Lk 10:29	- **Repentant.** Acts 8:22; 2 Cor 7:9-12
- **Self-serving.** Rom 16:17-18; Jude 1:12-13	- **Servants of God.** Rom 16:17-18; Jude 1:12-13

PRACTICAL DISCERNMENT: Is the activity right or wrong within itself?
Is the activity right within itself, but wrong for a Christian due to certain circumstances?
What does my conscience tell me on this activity?
Would it be alright if everyone knew I did this?
What would be the condition of the Lord's church if everyone did this?
Would the Lord favor my doing this?

The Power of the Gospel

Those who have obeyed the gospel message – who have by faith confessed Jesus as the Son of God, repented of their sins, and died with Jesus in baptism – have directly experienced the influence of the gospel message on the hearts of human beings. But the power of the gospel to bring about conversion only hints at its great power to change lives. Paul wrote to the Romans:

> ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*** Rom 1:16-17

The power of the gospel is extraordinary. It does not influence by force or coercion. It does not rule by fiat. The gospel simply uses truthful words to convince people of their need for a right relationship with God. Notice its power…

1) **The power to <u>produce faith</u> in the hearts of those who hear it.**
   (See also Romans 10:17). Notice verse 17 from the above text…

For in it (the gospel) ***the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith…***

The righteousness of God is revealed through the gospel. God makes people right —they are justified—through the gospel—when they believe and obey it. This happens because of the blood of Jesus, which pays the price for sin, and cleanses people of sin (in baptism), reconciling them to God.

2) **The power to <u>produce fruit</u> in those who hear and know the truth.**

> ***…because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bring forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you hear and knew the grace of God in truth.*** Col 1:5-6

The gospel reveals the message of salvation to sinners. And the gospel also continues to inspire and instruct those who obey it, to change their lives completely and make them servants of God and man. The gospel message does not end once a person becomes a disciple through obedience. That is just the beginning. The gospel message teaches a life-long transformation into a different kind of person—a person who copies the behavior of Jesus.

3) **The power to <u>transform lives</u> in those who obey it.**

> ***I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*** Rom 12:1-2

The gospel message changes lives. It transforms people—in a spiritual sense, a person is unrecognizable from his previous self. This is in keeping with what the Bible teaches. Notice:

> ***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a <u>new creation</u>; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*** 2 Cor 5:17
>
> ***Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in <u>newness of life</u>… knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him…*** Rom 6:4,6
>
> ***For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a <u>new creation</u>.*** Gal 6:15

The new creation is not some magical or mystical aura that surrounds us. The new creation is a person who changes from a selfish, proud, carnal being into a selfless, humble, spiritually-minded servant of God and others. The gospel has the power to make people different. People who respond to the gospel and are truly converted, change their lives forever: they realize that becoming a Christian is not a fad, or something you change like your socks. Becoming a Christian means changing your life, always submitting your will to God's will. Notice how Paul describes the changed lives of Christians in the city of Corinth:

> ***Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And <u>such were some of you</u>. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*** 1 Cor 6:9-11

Paul describes some wicked people who were transformed by their obedience to the gospel. It is powerful enough to make even the worst sinner a child of God.

Review and Thought

1. How does the gospel produce faith in the hearer?

2. How does the gospel produce fruit in the obedient servant?

3. How does the gospel transform the lives of those who obey it?

4. What are the character traits of one who has been transformed by the gospel?

5. What kinds of people did Paul say the gospel had transformed?

6. Is there any life that is so evil that it is beyond the help of the gospel?

BE HOLY / LIVE HOLY LIVES

GOD IS HOLY – ***Be holy, for I am holy.*** 1 Pet 1:16

The Bible teaches that God made man in His image. Gen 1:27 Surely this was a glorious image, for God Himself is glorious. This means that man possesses a soul (spirit), unlike animals, birds and all other creatures on the earth. The Bible teaches that the soul God has placed within each of us will exist forever in one of two destinies: **heaven** or **hell**.

It is important for us to understand that everyone begins in His image. Every baby born in this world is in God's image, perfect and **HOLY**. Jesus said,

Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. Mt 18:3-5

What does it mean to be **HOLY**? *To set apart for a specific purpose*. We all have special possessions, items we value greatly and take great care not to lose or allow to be damaged or broken. Jesus taught in the passage above that even as children, we start out being **HOLY**. God brings us into the world in His image so that we can accomplish something very special–to live and become like Jesus / God–who is holy.

For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Lev 11:44

Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. Lev 19:2; 1 Pet 1:16

That means we do not live and act like men who choose to be unholy, unspecial, and without purpose in life. ***Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*** Rom 1:24-25 Eph 2:1-3,

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Do you know people who are like this? Have you come to realize that you, at times, have been like this? When we act like those written about here, we become very selfish, hurtful and harmful to others and unhappy with ourselves. We can harden our hearts even further, become unreasonable–unable to repent!

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. Heb 6:4-6

It is a shame that human beings have come to be like this. It is not the purpose for which God created us and placed an eternal soul within us. The Bible teaches that all men will one day be judged by Jesus Christ. People who have followed the teachings of Jesus Christ have been forgiven of their sins by His blood–they will be counted just, holy and righteous on that Day.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2 Cor 5:10

When God looks at man, what does He see?

For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. 1 Sam 16:7

God sees the good or evil of the heart. The longsuffering and patience of God is remarkable when we consider the evil that He witnesses in the hearts of all men, day to day. But that is not all that God see, even when considering the condition of an evil man. God sees the **potential** of that individual, the possibility if that person is willing to be humbled and willing to repent. Speaking about Jesus, the Hebrew writer said:

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Heb 2:10

God intends to bring many sons to glory through Jesus Christ. There is no sin too great, no quantity of sins too many, that the blood of Jesus Christ cannot completely remove and take them away. And God is willing, showing His love through the death of His only Begotten Son on the cross of Calvary. Jn 3:16

Now the question remains, will men truly change their lives, be saved by the blood of Christ and allow themselves to be transformed into Jesus' image and life?

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Gal 2:20

The God who created this world can do all things. He can even make you whole again, as you were when first born into this world. He can not only make you a better person, but lift you up as a beacon, so that all men may know that God is real and salvation is possible through the love of Jesus, who died that all men may be holy.

Are you willing for the love of God to live within you?

GOD OUR FATHER *Our Father in heaven…* Mt 6:9

Introduction - The purpose of this study is to think about some things which characterize a man who is **OUR FATHER**. **GOD** chose to present Himself to us as a father. So the concept of being a father must be something important / something we should consider.

CREATION –

- God created them male and female.
  The physical nature of a **MAN** is quite different from a **WOMAN**.
- God gave **MAN** responsibilities that are different from responsibilities that He gave to **WOMAN**. To man God said,
  (1) You must work – difficult. (2) You will die – return to dust.
  – Some responsibilities of man are in what God said to woman
  (1) You will bear children – difficult (2) Your desire shall be for your husband.
  (3) Your husband shall rule over you.

– **JOB** We want to consider some things the Bible tells us about Job as a father:

– **The man –** blameless, upright, feared God, shunned evil.

– **His children –** 7 sons, 3 daughters

– Job demonstrated his care / concern for his children, especially regarding their spiritual relationship with God. He sanctified them when there was even a chance that they had sinned. He offered sacrifices for each one of his children. And he did these things regularly. ***There was a man…whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.*** Job 1:1

The New Testament – ***Honor your father and your mother…And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*** Eph 6:1-4

- Someone said recently, **If you fail with your children, you fail at life.**
- The position of being a father or a mother was given by God. It is a serious responsibility. Because of the meaning of life and the importance of every human being, the function of being a parent is a 24-hours-a-day/7-days-a-week job. But the rewards these children bring to the parents and to the family defies our ability to describe. The relationships in the family are a part of the significance of my being. Parents deserve honor.
- The verses in Ephesians show the emotional and spiritual leadership of the father. No father has the right to abrogate his responsibility as a father.

THE FATHER & THE PRODIGAL – This story is well known. It tells about the love of a father for his son, in spite of the way of life he has lived. It is important to note that the father did not send his son away; the father did not force a way of life on his son after he left; he did not search for him and try to convince him to come home; but he did maintain a vigil, hoping that his son would return; and when he did return, the father received his son with open arms. We can all learn much from this story. Lk 15:11-32

WHAT IS A FATHER? — **GOD IS OUR FATHER** —

THE FIERY FURNACE

Daniel 2:46 – 4:3

During the time Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were over the affairs of the province of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of a man out of gold, which was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide (90 feet x 9 feet). It was a representation of Nebuchadnezzar, an expression of his greatness and glory. Perhaps, he chose to make it out of gold because of his God-given dream of an image which had a head of gold, representing Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom—he wanted his kingdom to be the one and only. A purpose of the giant image was to establish the worship of Nebuchadnezzar as a god, with the empire under his supreme / absolute authority.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar commanded that all the officials of the land should come together with the people and worship the gold image. Instruments of music would sound; then the people were to bow down and worship the image or they would be thrown immediately into **the fiery furnace**. When they refused to bow down and worship the image, Daniel's friends were summoned to appear before the king, who said, *Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?* He gave them another opportunity to worship the image when they heard the music or they would be thrown into the fiery furnace, saying, ***And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?*** Nebuchadnezzar was certain there was no god who could help them.

And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered the king: *If that is the case, **our God** whom we serve **is able to deliver us** from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that **we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up***. This answer infuriated the king, and he commanded that the furnace be made 7 times hotter than usual, and the men be bound and thrown into the furnace. The heat was so intense that the flames killed the men who were throwing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego into the furnace. Then, to the king's astonishment, he saw 4 men loose and walking around in the fire without being burned. And he said that ***the form of the fourth is like the Son of God***. The king was seeing a supernatural being in physical form with the 3 men—he also saw that <u>the fire had no power to harm them</u>. So he said to them: *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, **servants of the Most High God**, come out, and come here*. And the 3 men came out of the fire without being burned or even having the smell of fire on them, showing that the power of God was complete.

King Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed by this show of power from the one true God that he said: *Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God*. Then he said that no one should speak against their God because ***there is no other God who can deliver like this***. And he promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

What can we learn from this true story?

<u>Important verses to remember</u>: Dan 2:47; 3:15; 3:17-18; 3:28; 3:29; 4:25

B E L I E V I N G G O D

- ***Believe*** means ***to be persuaded of, to place confidence in, to trust.***
- ***Belief*** means ***a conviction respecting God and His Word; the believer's relationship to God.***
  [In the New Testament, ***belief*** and ***faith*** are often used interchangeably.]

The New Testament is a system of **FAITH –** in reality, **FAITH-BASED ACTION.**

- ***This is a work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.*** Jn 6:29
- ***But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who…*** Heb 11:6
- ***…for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.*** Jn 8:24
- ***I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*** Acts 8:37

There are many examples in the Bible which demonstrate **"believing God"**:

❖ Noah believed God. Noah obeyed God. God saved Noah.
Gen 6:1-9:1; 1 Pet 3:18-22; Heb 11:7

❖ ***Abraham believed God.*** Abraham obeyed God. He is called in the New Testament ***the father of all those who believe***. God blessed Abraham.
Rom 4:3,11; Gal 3:6; Jas 2:23; Heb 11:8

❖ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego believed God. They obeyed God. God saved them from death in the fiery furnace. They said, ***…our God whom we serve is able to deliver us…*** After God saved them, Nebuchadnezzar said to the world, ***…there is no other God who can deliver like this.*** Dan 3:16-18,29

❖ Jews from every nation under heaven were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. God provided a miracle that caused people to listen to Peter, the apostle. He preached about Jesus – **THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST**. The people heard the message – The same Jesus that you crucified, God has raised from the dead. And, ***God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ***. Three thousand souls believed God. They obeyed God. They were saved that day. The Lord added them to the church.
Acts 2:1-47

❖ The people of Samaria believed God. They obeyed God. They were saved.
Acts 8:5-13

❖ A eunuch of Ethiopia believed God. He obeyed God. He was saved.
Acts 8:26-39

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rom 10:17

B E I N G B A P T I Z E D

Baptize means ***to immerse***. In the New Testament, ***baptism*** is used in different ways:

1. The baptism of affliction and suffering. Mk 10:38-39
2. The baptism of fire (the judgments of God). Mt 3:11
3. The baptism of the Holy Spirit (only 2 times in N.T.):
   a. The 12 apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2
   b. The household of Cornelius when Peter began to speak ***words*** of salvation. Acts 10
4. The baptism of John (the baptizer) - **Immersion in water – *a baptism of repentance*** Acts 19:3-5 (Mt 3:5,11)
5. The baptism of Jesus - **Immersion in water *for the remission of sins.*** Acts 2:38; 22:16

BAPTISM is one of the most important subjects in the Bible. Many commands tell us of things to **DO**, baptism is the action that **SAVES** the soul of a person. 1 Pet 3:21 Hearing the gospel (Mt 15:10); Believing the gospel (Jn 6:29); Repenting of past sins (Lk 13:3); Confessing your faith in Jesus (Mt 10:32-33); are all necessary steps for a person to be saved – but Being Baptized is the step that saves a person (Mk 16:16).

I can immerse anyone or anything in water – it has spiritual significance only if the elements described in the New Testament are the elements involved in the baptism. So it is easy to understand that we must see what the New Testament tells us about baptism to know WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT MEANS, and WHAT GOD WANTS US TO DO.

TRUTH – ***Baptism*** symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus: I die with Christ; I am buried with Him; I am resurrected with Him to a New Life. Rom 6:3-5 The element in which baptism occurs is **WATER**: *See, here is **water**. What hinders me from being baptized? ... both Philip and the eunuch went down into the **water**, and he baptized him.* Acts 8:36,38 A person must be a believer. Acts 8:36-37 The essential truth that he must believe: ***I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God.*** Acts 8:37

Some religious groups "baptize" babies. Can a baby believe? If a person is not a believer, he is not qualified to be baptized. The baptizing of babies began when the **DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN** (every person inherits the sin of Adam) began to be taught. This doctrine is not **TRUTH**—it is nowhere taught in the Bible.

Some religious groups teach the **DOCTRINE OF SALVATION BY FAITH ONLY.** This doctrine is not **TRUTH**. "All you have to do is pray the **SINNER'S PRAYER**." [The **SINNER'S PRAYER** cannot be found in the Bible.] If you have "a saving experience", then a "pastor" declares that you are **A SAVED PERSON**. However, the Bible says, ***You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only.*** Jas 2:14-26 **FAITH** is necessary to salvation, but so are **WORKS**. If you believe, you will do what the Lord tells you to do.

Some religious groups add things to the Baptism of the Bible: (a) to join a church; (b) to become a Catholic, a Baptist, a Methodist…; (c) to declare submission to the Pope, the Pastor, the Founder of a church, …; (d) have conditions of studying certain books/teachings before he can be baptized; (e) and other things. Adding anything to the Baptism of the Bible corrupts it and makes it a baptism that does not save.

Jesus said, ***He who believes and is baptized will be saved.*** Mk 16:16