

FORGIVENESS

How Can I Know,
Without A Doubt,
That I Am Forgiven?

Milton Chaney

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That I Am Forgiven?

By
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of Berryman, a classmate, McMurtry, a family friend, Sheehan, Woods, and Wolfe, my men in Vietnam. These were men I knew personally who paid the ultimate price for my civil freedom.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Objectivity, at best, is difficult. No one approaches faith in God without some degree of bias or prejudice. This makes it even more critical that one strives to determine God's teaching on any given subject instead of blindly accepting what some person says that God teaches. Solomon stated that much study is a weariness to the flesh. It takes energy and effort to do original study of God's Word. Pursuit of truth and mental or physical laziness are not compatible.

Truth is not contradictory. When two different positions are taken on any given text, it is certain that both cannot be right. Both may be wrong, but both cannot be right. The discovery process of finding truth can be fascinating and exciting but applying new found truth to one's belief system, conduct, and lifestyle can cost friendships, relationships, or even one's own life. For this reason, many just dismiss any teaching that differs from what they currently believe as heresy, instead of seriously, objectively examining the teaching in the context of biblical teaching.

No one human being knows all truth. The author reserves the right to be wrong on any subject which he believes to be truth. Any other attitude inhibits objectivity and closes one's heart to the constant pursuit of truth. Unwillingness to have one's faith challenged with evidence from God's Word promotes party spirit and arrogance. The author is convinced that what he has presented here is truth in harmony with and defensible by the word of God, but realizes that the possibility does exist the he may have assembled incomplete facts and arrived at an erroneous conclusion. He invites critical review and prayerful input from the reader and has provided contact information at the end of the last chapter.

We all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. According to the apostle Paul in the early chapters of his book to Christians at Rome, human beings are born with a moral sense of right and wrong, a conscience. Life situations, however, impact one's sensitivity to following the conscience. Of the many subjects and discussions available regarding one's obedient response to God's teaching, no subject is more important than the point at which one is forgiven of sin when one's relationship with God changes from lost to saved.

The Bible is right. The Bible will read on judgment day exactly as it reads today. Once saved, God permits differences of understanding in matters of personal faith among the saved. But He allows no differing as to the point at which original forgiveness occurs for the sinner.

Do you desire to be forgiven of every past and future sin? Are you willing to undertake the painful, but fruitful, task of shining the spotlight of God's word on your relationship with him regarding forgiveness? Once found, do you have the strength of character to pursue, obey, and share truth?

To God be the glory.

Milton Chaney
Southaven, MS, USA
February 5, 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Author's Preface

Chapter 1	Forgiveness	7
Chapter 2	How Can God Love Somebody Like Me?	13
Chapter 3	God Has Spoken	19
Chapter 4	What Is God's Will For My Life	27
Chapter 5	How Can I Locate Christ's Church?	38
Chapter 6	At What Specific Point Does Forgiveness Occur?	53
Chapter 7	Common Misconceptions	84
Chapter 8	The Security of the Believer	91

About the Author

Publisher's Note

Chapter 1

Forgiveness

The apostle Paul introduced a concept in the book of Romans, chapter 2, which is important in understanding many Biblical teachings – the idea of things *spiritual* and things *literal*.

Romans 2: 25 Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 26 So, if those who are uncircumcised keep the requirements of the law, will not their uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you that have the written code and circumcision but break the law. 28 For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. 29 Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart – it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God. [NRSV]

Forgiveness takes place in the mind of God; it is spiritual. The literal consequence of sin, however, may continue in this life even though the one forgiven has no spiritual consequence of prior sins, that is, in the mind of God. For example, a murderer may comply with God's requirements for forgiveness and have the sin debt erased in the mind of God, but he must pay the civil penalty for his actions by being locked up for life.

Humans are dual natured beings having both intellect and emotion. When one complies with God's instruction for forgiveness, intellectually he can know that God has forgiven him. However, the nature of one's past sins may be so bad that he has difficulty emotionally forgiving himself, even though he trusts intellectually that complying with the instruction from God in the "**obedience of faith**" (Romans 1:5) places one in a relationship of forgiveness with God, no matter what the past sins.

When God forgives, he remembers no more the forgiven sins (Micah 7:18,19; Hebrews 10:17). Unfortunately, in this body of flesh, human beings do not have this ability to forget, or remember no more, at will. Remembering sins of the past and struggling with them emotionally is human but does not mean in and of itself that God has not forgiven the past sins. Trusting God's forgiveness is one thing. Forgiving oneself is another issue.

2 Corinthians 5: 6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord – 7 for we walk by faith, [trust] not by sight [what makes sense] – 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. 9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

No one knows the future. Trusting God and knowing intellectually that past sins are forgiven by God helps, over time, to forgive oneself. Being forgiven of past sins and coping emotionally with the consequences in no way guarantees that the one forgiven will not sin again, or that the same sin will not be committed again.

To the forgiven, the apostle John wrote:

1 John 1: 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

Simon, one newly forgiven in the book of Acts, sinned when he wanted to go back to the sin of his old lifestyle. The apostle Peter told him:

Acts 8: 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! **21** You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. **22** Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. **23** For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

The last two Scripture references above were written to those already forgiven [Christians] instructing them how to be forgiven of *new sins* committed *after conversion*. These references do not apply to one who has never been born spiritually into the family of God. That instruction from the Bible will come later in this book.

Now the conflict.

1 John 3: 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

1 John 3: 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

The same author, John, says in chapter one at verse 8 above that the one forgiven does, in fact, sin, but here in chapter three he appears to say the opposite, that one forgiven cannot sin. Which is it?

The answer is, "Both."

Two types of sin are under consideration. Chapter one of I John is talking about a *one time occurrence*. Chapter three of I John is talking about a way of life, a lifestyle. One who lives in obedience to God lives in forgiveness and cannot make a *lifestyle* of sin but certainly can commit specific, one time, sins for which he must repent and pray (Acts 8:22).

One whose *lifestyle* is to obey God is not a hypocrite when he, in a moment of weakness, sins, but immediately repents, prays, and grows. The word hypocrite means literally to be two-faced, to deliberately act one way with one group and act another way with another group. Those who “live as sinners during the week and saints on Sunday” are in fact hypocrites and will not be in heaven if death or the second coming overtakes them in that two-faced lifestyle. Sinners who hide behind hypocrites as a cowardly excuse for not denying self and living obediently to God will not be in heaven either. “I would go to church, but there are too many hypocrites there.”

Obedying God and living for him is not about perfection and living sinless in this body of flesh; it's about obedience and forgiveness. Depending on one's background and lifestyle not everyone will struggle with the same difficulties or desires. Thank God that once one is in Christ, God is then on his side as a loving caring Father and promises to discipline and help in time of need. Speaking of Christ:

Hebrews 2: 17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. [Propitiation is a sacrifice which satisfies God's demands.] 18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

Hebrews 4: 14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as [we are, yet] without sin. 16 Therefore let us [the forgiven, Christians] draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace [undeserved kindness] to help in time of need.

1 Corinthians 10: 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. [God knows the weakness of each of us and he will not lead us to a place where the evil one can take advantage of us (Matthew 6:13). To the contrary, he “will not allow” his own to be “tempted beyond” what they can handle. Behind temptation which a Christian actually experiences is a tremendous vote of confidence from God in the Christian's ability to handle it in harmony with His teaching. Therefore, the temptation which the Christian actually experiences is a gift from God to exercise his freedom of choice. That is why James said in **James 1: 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. It is not a sin to be tempted. Jesus was tempted. It is only a sin to yield to the temptation. Yielding comes when personal desire is satisfied, violating one's personal commitment to faithfulness. The obedient look for the way of escape, to resist self and obey God.] Thank God that once one is in Christ he also has the help of those who**

have the same kind of faith as the apostles (2 Peter 1:1) and who also have experienced forgiveness and temptation.

Romans 14: 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." 12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this – not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

Galatians 6: 1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass [sin], you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; [each one] looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Sin is disobeying the will of God. The will of God is the New Covenant (Hebrews 10:9). Therefore, sin is disobeying the New Covenant. There are many ways in the New Covenant to disobey God's teaching. However, there is no sin which can be committed today, this side of the cross, which God will not forgive when his requirements for forgiveness are met. Stated another way, no matter what your specific sins are, God will forgive them when you surrender to his instruction.

Each sin has its own unique consequence. While the sin itself can be forgiven, the literal consequence of the sin will not disappear just because one's relationship with God is restored spiritually, that is, forgiven. For example, if one kills a family man, the sin of murder can be forgiven, but look at the consequences which must still be experienced by the living. Children will live without a father. The wife will live without her husband. The man's parents will live without a son. If the man had brothers and sisters, then they will have to live without him the rest of their lives. Family members of the dead man may hate and despise forever the one who killed their loved one even though the sin itself has already been forgiven by God. Another consequence for the one who killed the man is that he may have difficulty forgiving himself, but that does not mean that forgiveness from God is impossible.

Forgiveness is spiritual and occurs in the mind of God. Forgiveness occurs when one obeys the New Testament teaching to have the blood of Jesus applied to his sins. At the point of obedient compliance, God cancels the *sin debt*. He cancels the *guilt*. And he cancels the *punishment*.

Forgiveness:

- 1. The debt is cancelled.**
- 2. The guilt is cancelled.**
- 3. The punishment is cancelled.**

Man owes a sin debt to God which he cannot pay. Christ paid the sin debt for man which he did not owe. Remember 'propitiation' on page 9 at Hebrews 2:17?

Romans 6: 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. [What good is a free gift *offered* if it is never *accepted*?]

John 3: 16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Romans 5: 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. **8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Ephesians 1: 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, **8** which He lavished upon us.

Hebrews 9: 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this [comes] judgment, **28** so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without [reference to] sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

When one responds as instructed in Scripture to the "obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5) and God forgives his sins; the record, the debt, and the memory of those sins forgiven are gone forever in the mind of God.

Hebrews 10: 16 This is the covenant that I will make with them. After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, and upon their mind I will write them, [He then says], **17** And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

If God has no memory of sins forgiven, then there is no more guilt. If the one forgiven is not guilty before God because there is no memory of sin, then what is there to punish? Once the sin debt is canceled, the associated guilt and corresponding punishment are also canceled. That is forgiveness.

The one forgiven of sin no longer has to worry about going to hell.

Matthew 25: 41 Then He will also say to those on His left, Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

The one who is forgiven by God and lives in faithful submission to the New Testament (God's will) will never have to be concerned about being punished for sins that no longer exist in the mind of God. *Hell was not prepared for*

those who prepare to meet God. Death, on the other hand, is as certain as life and happens to all. Facing God after death is as certain as life and death.

Ecclesiastes 7: 2 ...for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart. (NIV)

Hebrews 9: 27 And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, 28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (RSV)

James 4: 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. (NIV)

Most people in their heart of hearts want to know that they can live in a forgiven relationship with God, die in that relationship and know that they will live in eternity with him. But the bottom line is that most do not have enough backbone to read the Bible and live by what they understand it teaches, regardless of the consequences! Rivers are crooked because water takes the course of least resistance. It is easier to follow the crowd and do wrong than to take a stand on conviction and do what one thinks is right. Granted, it is not always easy to obey one's knowledge of God's word and do what is right, but it is *always* right!

Matthew 7: 13 Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Will you be one of the **many** or one of the **few**?

I challenge you to ask the tough question of yourself, "Do I have enough character to be a spiritual example to those who know me best?" Or, put another way, "If the people with whom I associate live exactly as I do; will they go to heaven for certain, nothing doubting?"

It is my sincere prayer that you will read this book and become "one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread" by sharing it with someone you care about.

Chapter 2

How Can God Love Somebody Like Me?

God's love does not depend on a person's goodness. God made man in his own likeness but man so violated his will that he destroyed mankind with a flood, all except eight. While mankind lost his likeness of God (holiness) with sin, he never lost being made in God's image, that is, the ability and freedom to make choices. A choice that violates God's will is sin.

The Old Testament condemns sin.

Leviticus 20: 6 If any turn to mediums and wizards, prostituting themselves to them, I will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people. **7** Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am the LORD your God. **8** Keep my statutes, and observe them; I am the LORD; I sanctify you. **9** All who curse father or mother shall be put to death; having cursed father or mother, their blood is upon them. **10** If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death. **11** The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall be put to death; their blood is upon them. **12** If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall be put to death; they have committed perversion, their blood is upon them. **13** If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them. **14** If a man takes a wife and her mother also, it is depravity; they shall be burned to death, both he and they, that there may be no depravity among you. **15** If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he shall be put to death; and you shall kill the animal. **16** If a woman approaches any animal and has sexual relations with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them. [NRSV]

The New Testament condemns sin.

Romans 1: 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, **19** because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. **21** For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. **22** Professing to be wise, they became fools, **23** and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. **24** Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. **25** For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than

the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. 28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; [they are] gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

God did not give his Son's life for good people, but for sinners as just described.

Romans 3: 21 But now apart from the Law [the] righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even [the] righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

John 3: 16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. 18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

Romans 5: 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath [of God] through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Christ died for the ungodly. I am ungodly. Therefore, Christ died for me.

God loves me because he is pure holiness, but his love cannot be ignored or abused without consequence.

Joshua 24: 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you. **21** And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord." **22** And Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the Lord, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses." **23** "Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel." **24** And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord our God and we will obey His voice."

Make no mistake about it, the same God who blesses, or does good to those who do not live for him on this earth will at the second coming of Christ punish those same people for eternity. Just because the prison feeds, clothes, and provides medical care for one on death row does not mean that the prisoner will not die on his appointed date of execution. God gave his Son to die for sinners on spiritual death row so we could have a way out of sin and forgiveness for our past sinful conduct, whether done in ignorance or deliberately. Just because he gives us air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, shelter, clothing, and maybe even prosperity does not mean that he will ignore his Son's death and save eternally those who never obey his word.

God loves the obedient as an earthly father loves his children (Luke 11:5-13). When the obedient diligently strive to obey God and at times grow slack and sin; he disciplines us as an earthly father disciplines his children (Hebrews 12:1-13) because he loves us. But God, unlike man, is consistent. He blesses the obedient. He punishes the disobedient. Regarding his own Son the Bible says:

Hebrews 5: 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. **9** And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, ..."

The suffering of Christ was for each of us because of God's love. It is true that God hates sin, but he loves the sinner for whom his Son died. In fact, Jesus taught that *those who are forgiven most love most*. Put another way, the worst sinners can make the best Christians.

Jesus said to Peter:

Luke 7: 41 A certain moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, [equal to wages of 500 days] and the other fifty [wages of fifty days]. **42** When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both [undeserved kindness]. Which of them therefore will love him more? **43** Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."

How big is your sin debt to God? How bad a sinner are you? How many lies have you told? How many times have you had sex with someone to whom you were not married? How many times have you committed adultery by having sex with someone else other than your spouse? How many times have you committed adultery by breaking the covenant of marriage by divorcing your mate and marrying someone else? How many times have you broken civil law? How many people have you killed? Have you ever eaten another human being as did Jeffrey Dahmer? How many children have you abandoned? How many babies have you chosen to abort? How many times have you been drunk? How many times have you committed homosexual or lesbian acts? How many people have you raped? Have you been deceived by the devil into thinking that oral sex is not really sex? How often do you lust after someone to whom you are not married? How many times have you abused your body with drugs or alcohol? How often do you use language that you know Jesus would not use? Do you love people and use money, or do you love money and use people? Why do you think God would kill his own Son to redeem some sorry person like me? The only difference in any of us is the degree. We are all sinners. Some of us have sinned more than others, but we all have sinned and *deserve* to burn in hell for it. Christ died for sinners, period, one of whom wrote this book and one of whom is reading it.

The *offer* of forgiveness from God is about *his kindness*, not our goodness. Through Christ's shed blood God wants us to be justified, forgiven, cleansed, with no record in heaven of any of the things above which we have done. No matter how sinful the past, anyone can repent of sin and have the record washed clean in Christ's blood and live obedient to God's word with a new life. God did not prepare hell for any human being; he prepared it for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). However, every human being who chooses to live for self and be mastered by the devil and ignores or refuses God's offer of pardon gives him no choice but to send them to be with their master, the devil, for eternity. One of those people joining the devil in hell does not have to be you, dear reader. The bondage the devil has on you now will be broken when you surrender to Christ and live obedient to his will, that is, when you **accept** his offer for forgiveness. The entire sixth chapter of Romans teaches this truth.

Romans 6: 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

John 1: 17 For the law was given through Moses, [but] grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Romans 1: 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,

Because of your sins, do you feel unworthy to be forgiven by God? You are not alone. The apostle Paul did not believe that anyone was more sinful than himself, and he obeyed God.

1 Timothy 1: 15 This [is] a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

No matter the degree of one's sinfulness, Paul gives hope because he was first, as chief of sinners, in allowing Jesus Christ to "**show all longsuffering.**" No person's goodness is good enough to deserve forgiveness, but God's grace and mercy through Jesus Christ are able to bridge the gap between what we are and what we ought to be. Because of life circumstances, some of us need a bigger bridge than some others. The Bible teaches that God's love is big enough to receive all who will trust and obey. Paul said of himself:

1 Corinthians 15: 9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God [which] [was] with me.

Ephesians 2: 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, ...

Each individual is unique with different life experiences and different skills. God can use the worst of us to glorify himself in reaching out to those of similar background, interest, or talent.

Paul said to Titus the evangelist:

Titus 3: 3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and [His] love for mankind appeared, [grace] 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, [The apostles, before following Christ, had no works of righteousness with which to 'bargain.' Neither does anyone alive today. Look at the list of conduct in verse 3, in which Paul includes himself.] but according to His mercy, [Mercy is Christ's payment on the cross for our sin debt which God accepts when we surrender and obey.] by the washing of regeneration [explained in chapter 6 of this book] and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. [When I'm *justified* before God, he stamps my sin debt PAID in the blood of Christ and before him I am considered *just-if-I-had* never sinned.] 8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. [If you were on death row for murder and the President gave you an undeserved pardon, do you think it would be okay with the President if you just started killing again after your release? Absolutely not! How then can we believe the devil's lie that God will give us undeserved

pardon from spiritual death row (forgiveness of past sins) and then ignore our returning to sinning at will and still save us in eternity? "... **be careful to engage in good deeds**" means to live a lifestyle of obedience.]

God's grace is kindness extended to mankind that we do not deserve. God's free gift is the **offering** of forgiveness. God's *mercy* toward us is the death of Christ in our place on the cross which he accepts as payment for our sin debt. We must **accept** God's offer through obedience for Christ's death to be meaningful to our specific lives.

Living for God instead of self is not easy and consequently not everyone will do it. The parable of the soils in Mark chapter four represents different human responses to God's word. Jesus explained the parable of the soils to the apostles.

Mark 4: 14 The sower sows the word. [of God] 15 And these are the ones who are *beside the road* where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. 16 And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown *on the rocky [places,]* who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; 17 and they have no [firm] root in themselves, but are [only] temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are the ones on whom seed was sown *among the thorns;* these are the ones who have heard the word, 19 and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 And those are the ones on whom seed was sown *on the good soil;* and they hear the word and accept it, and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.

Which type of soil are you? Which outcome do you want for your life? Having spent your life in service to yourself, basically being your own god, will you now listen to the kindness God has extended to you which you know you do not deserve? Will you say with the children of Israel, "**We will serve the Lord our God and we will obey His voice.**" Joshua 24:24?

Everybody has somebody who looks up to them. Everybody is somebody's leader by example. What kind of leadership by example are you providing for those who look up to you?

God loved you enough to have his Son beaten and crucified on a torture stake in your place regardless of the severity of your sins.

Christ, by his action, said, "I love you this much," as he spread his arms open wide and died in your place on the cross.

My dear friend, you have the strength of character to demonstrate through your action what Joshua said in Joshua 24, verse 15, "**...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**"

Chapter 3

God Has Spoken

Jeremiah 10: 23 I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself; nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.

But what if a person decides to “direct his steps” in biblical matters? Why wouldn't that be okay, especially as long as he was honest and sincere?

Proverbs 16: 25 There is a way [which seems] right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

“... a man's way is not in himself;” but that won't keep some people from making rules and requirements for their group which cannot be found in the Bible and convincing themselves that their way seems (is) right. It is so sad that the same people don't realize that when they leave God's way and establish their own, even if it is apparently successful from a human point-of-view, the outcome is spiritual death. There is no greater deceit than self-deceit!

We should all ask the question, “Well, how then can I know which “way” to follow?

John 8: 31 Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, [then] you are truly disciples of Mine; **32** and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

In order to truly be a disciple of Christ, one must obey “**My word**.” Obeying the word, or teaching, of anyone other than Christ leads to spiritual death because no person or group of persons has the ability to “**direct his steps**.”

In this text Jesus states that “**the truth**” is the only thing that will make one free and that one can know “**the truth**” by abiding in “**My word**.”

Let's now ask Jesus the same question as did Pilate in **John 18: 38**, “**What is truth?**” He responds...

John 14: 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."

Jesus is truth. Therefore, we can know Jesus and be free. Notice that the only way to the Father is through Christ – not through any other person or group of persons.

When praying in the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to his crucifixion, Jesus said these words to the Father:

John 17: 17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. ..."

In John 8:32 above, Jesus said that the truth is all that will free one from sin. Here he says that the word of God is truth. Therefore, one can know the word of God and become free from sin. Jesus' brother, James, says exactly that in the next verse.

James 1: 21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and [all] that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and *not merely hearers who delude themselves.*

Why is the implanted word able to save the soul of the doer of the word? Because the word of God is the truth of God (James 1:21) which is all that will make one free (John 8:31, 32).

In addition to Jesus and James, the apostle Paul confirmed this same truth.

Romans 1: 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The New Testament was originally written in the Greek language of the common people. The original word here translated "power" comes from the same word in Greek from which we get the word "dynamite." The gospel is God's spiritual dynamite to blast away the shackles of sin that hold men in bondage to selfish pursuits rather than selfless commitment to God. The gospel, the word, the truth, is able to make one free when implanted in the mind of good soil and obeyed – doers of the word and not hearers only.

Since man does not have the ability to direct his own steps in his walk with God, complete dependence upon God's instruction in his written word is essential. But how can one know whether what he is following as truth is from God or man?

2 Timothy 3: 16 All Scripture is inspired by God [God breathed] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

'Script' is writing. God wrote down exactly what he wanted taught and everything essential to maintaining his will in one's life. The inspired writers who wrote the books of the Bible *did not* record differing and conflicting teachings (interpretations or explanations).

2 Peter 1: 20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is [a matter] of one's own interpretation, [The next verse demonstrates that Peter was talking about the *giving* of Scripture from God and not the mere reading of it.] 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. [The inspired writers gave God's message, not their own.]

When God communicated through the inspired writers how we are to direct our steps in following him, he did not withhold anything that we need to know to go from earth to heaven.

2 Peter 1: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; **3** seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

Since God has written down everything man needs to know to go from earth to heaven, and since his writings have been collected and printed in one book – the Bible; what do you think he expects from those of us who live, teach, preach, or write in his name regarding what we live, teach, preach or write? Does it really matter?

It matters!

1 Peter 3: 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, [you are] blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, **15** but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always [being] ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; **16** and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

When a believer makes his defense of the hope that is in him, what should be the source material for his defense? Should his “proof” be prefaced with remarks such as, “I believe,” “We believe,” “We teach,” “Our church teaches,” “My parents taught me,” “Our preacher says,” or any other such “proof” of human origin? 2 Peter 3 which follows was not given by God by accident.

2 Peter 3: 14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, **15** and regard the patience of our Lord [as] salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, **16** as also in all [his] letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as [they do] also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. **17** You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness. **18** but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him [be] the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

1 Peter 4: 11 Whoever speaks, [let him speak,] as it were, the utterances of God;

The utterances of God are the words of God. God has written down everything one needs to know to go from earth to heaven and demands that any human speaking on his behalf must give what he has already said on the subject. In

order to avoid the “**way of death**,” (Proverbs 16:25) one must demand that instruction for faith and practice be written on the black and white page of God’s word – the Bible!

The only defense one should ever accept in matters of faith is one prefaced with these words, “The Bible teaches in (book) (chapter) (verse).”

Why? Because Jesus said it’s the written word of God which will judge us.

John 12: 45 And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me. 46 I have come [as] light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. 47 And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. 49 For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. 50 And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.

The word, book, chapter, and verse, is what will judge us. The Bible will read on judgment day *exactly* as it reads today. Therefore, accept nothing more, or less, for your faith.

It is significant that three times in the Bible in approximately the beginning, the middle, and the end God says not to change his word.

Deuteronomy 4: 2 You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

If one adds to God’s word and obeys that, then he isn’t obeying God’s word, but a perversion of God’s word. If one takes from God’s word and obeys that, then he isn’t obeying God’s word, but a perversion of God’s word.

Proverbs 30: 6 Do not add to His words Lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar.

Any individual who teaches that which cannot be documented in the word of God is a liar because God wrote down “**everything pertaining to life and godliness**” (2 Peter 1:3).

Revelation 22: 18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

While the apostle John was referring specifically to the Book of Revelation, the last three Scripture references demonstrate a principle that applies to the entire library of God to man – the Bible.

The weight of evidence suggests that this last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, was written in 95 or 96 A. D.

If what the Bible says above is in fact true, then what is true of a man born hundreds of years later in the 6th century claiming *another* revelation from God and calling it the Koran? What about another mortal in the 19th century claiming the same thing and calling it the Book of Mormon? Isn't it interesting that both of these so called latter day revelations contradict each other and the Bible?! Truth is not contradictory. If all three writings were from God there would be no contradictions among them.

Titus 1: 1 Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, 2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, 3 but at the proper time manifested, [even] His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior; 4 to Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

God cannot lie. God gave the Bible which is the word of God which is the truth which is all that will save. Therefore, any teaching, written or oral, which differs from the teaching of the Bible is a lie. The source of all lies is the devil.

The principle taught in the following verse of Scripture is still true today.

Joshua 24: 15 And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Consider what God thinks about false writings and teachings, whether written or oral. He expressed himself very plainly through Paul in Galatians chapter 1.

Galatians 1: 6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is [really] not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

If, for the sake of discussion, we grant that an angel actually appeared to Mohammed and later to Joseph Smith and gave them *new* revelation, then it would have been an **accursed** angel according to God.

Consider the following contradictions:

1. Mohammed is an Arabic word meaning *the predicted Messiah*.

John 1: 41 He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah " (which translated means Christ). **42** He brought him to Jesus.

Acts 9: 22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this [Jesus] is the Christ.

2. The Koran teaches that *Jesus was not crucified* and is not the son of God (Sura 4).

If Jesus was not crucified then there is no forgiveness of sins. **Matthew 26: 27** And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave [it] to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; **28** for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."

3. The Book of Mormon has a large section which is word for word exactly like the King James Translation of the Bible. Compare Isaiah 2-14 with 2 Nephi 12-24. That is significant because the translation errors in the King James Version are copied *exactly* in the Book of Mormon. Compare Isaiah 4:5 and 2 Nephi 14:5 - "defence" should be translated 'canopy' or 'covering.' Compare Isaiah 5:25 with 2 Nephi 15:25 - "carcasses were torn" should be translated 'corpses were as refuse.'

One would think that the "angel" that appeared to Joseph Smith would have at least corrected the translation errors if he was sent by God!

What's the point? God has given to man everything he needs to know to go from earth to heaven. He wrote it down through inspired writers who wrote his message, not their own. God requires obedience to what he has said. He requires any man who speaks for him to speak his word (book, chapter, verse) that he has written down. It is God's written word, not some other person's word, written or oral, that we will account to in judgment. And, finally, how long can we depend on God's written word without needing any further communication from him?

1 Peter 1: 25 But the word of the Lord abides forever.

Again, at judgment the Bible will read *exactly* as it does today.

Consider further that there is no deceit like self deceit.

Romans 16: 17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. **18** For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

1 Corinthians 15: 33 Do not be deceived : "Bad company corrupts good morals."

2 Corinthians 11: 3 But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity [of devotion] to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11: 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.

Galatians 6: 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

1 Timothy 4: 1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3 [men] who forbid marriage [and advocate] abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

2 Timothy 3: 12 And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 But evil men and impostors will proceed [from bad] to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

1 John 3: 7 Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Revelation 20: 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Matthew 7: 22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?' 23 And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.

How can any reasoning person just ignore all these warnings of deceit, departure, and misguided faith as if the Bible didn't even address them? How can any thinking person look at how man has splintered and divided for centuries and think that God approves of and endorses the radically different teachings of all of them? If we subscribe to the devil's lie that it doesn't matter what one believes, doesn't that make God a liar in all the verses we've just read?

It *matters* what one believes for guidance to eternity.

Romans 10: 17 So faith [comes] from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

It would be very convenient for the devil and his servants if there was a period after the first word 'hearing.' Then it wouldn't matter what "bible" one uses. God specified *what* one must hear to have faith acceptable to him, "**and hearing by the word of Christ.**"

Ask yourself this question, "Am I honestly in pursuit of truth?"

Do you want to base your faith and your eternal destiny upon what the Bible teaches, or what some person *says* the Bible teaches? The two can be worlds apart. Demand that the evidence for your faith and practice in following God is printed in God's word. The *source* of one's faith is critical to forgiveness. *God has spoken.*

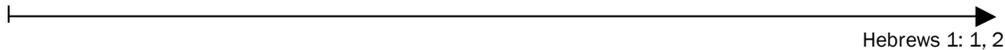
The Bible will read on the day of judgment *exactly* as it reads today. You now hold in your hand a roadmap to forgiveness, regardless of your past, documented every step of the way by book, chapter, and verse from God's word. If you have a Bible; check it out as you read. If you don't have a Bible; write to the address in the back and we will do our best to get you a Bible.

Chapter 4

What is God's Will for My Life?

Let's imagine a time line that begins with the creation of Adam and continues through today.

A
d
a
m



Everyone who has ever lived or is living now fits somewhere on this time line.

Hebrews 1: 1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, **2** in these last days has spoken to us in [His] Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

The writer of Hebrews affirms that God speaks to us today through Christ. In the last chapter we saw that the Bible has two main divisions, the First Covenant and the Second Covenant, more popularly known as the Old and the New Testaments. The Old Testament had two major periods of time in which God communicated with his people.

A
d
a
m



Before God called Moses to Mount Sinai for the giving of the basis of the Law, the ten commandments, he spoke directly to the heads of families, the Patriarchs, such as Noah and Abraham. It was their responsibility to communicate God's spoken will to the family. This period is called the Patriarchal Period. It lasted approximately 2500 years. With the giving of the Law, God spoke to his people through a mediator – Moses. This period is called the Mosaic Period. It lasted approximately 1500 years. After Moses, God chose to speak to man through his Son as mediator. This period is called the Christian Period. It has lasted approximately 2000 years and continues.

It is true that God never changes; however, he changed the way he communicated with his people: head of family, Moses, then Christ. It is true that God's revealed word is forever true, but the audience, purpose, and time of instruction must be considered. For example, "**Make for yourself an ark**" (Genesis 6:14) was instruction to Noah and does not apply to any person living today.

God, "in these last days has spoken to us in [His] Son." It will be interesting to go back to the Old Testament and learn its purpose and examine its prophecy of its own end, and why.

Jeremiah 31: 31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

The writer of the book of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah's prophecy when speaking of Christ.

Hebrews 8: 6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. 7 For if that first [covenant] had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. 8 For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; 9 Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 11 And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. 12 For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." 13 When He said, "A new [covenant]," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

The new covenant spoken of in verse thirteen was not to be a continuation of the old because the text says that the old was becoming obsolete. What was its 'fault'? Under the First Covenant there was a remembrance of sins every year, in contrast to "I will remember their sins no more" of the New Covenant.

Hebrews 10: 1 For the Law, since it has [only] a shadow of the good things to come [and] not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. [worship, see next verse] 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? 3 But in those [sacrifices] there is a

reminder of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

‘Formal’ forgiveness of sins, remembering them no more, only became possible with the death of Christ as taught in the New Covenant.

Matthew 26: 27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave [it] to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, [in contrast to that of bulls and goats of the first covenant (Hebrews 10:4)] which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."

Now we need to raise the question, “What was the purpose of the Old Covenant?” In order to see the purpose of the first covenant let’s go all the way back to Abraham, while his name was still Abram, in the book of Genesis, and examine three promises God made to him.

Genesis 12: 1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Notice the three promises: 1. Land. 2. Nation (singular). 3. Bless all families of the earth.

Genesis 17: 1 Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless. 2 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly." 3 And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ["Nations" is plural. This is the same as "all families of the earth" in Genesis 12:3 above.] 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." 9 God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a [servant] who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your

descendants. 13 A [servant] who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant." [When one party of a covenant broke covenant, it released the other party. See also Hebrews 8:9 on page 28.]

This First Covenant, the Old Testament, was a covenant of flesh. That is, a person obtained covenant relationship with God by being born to Jewish parents or bought with their money. When the child was old enough to understand language, then he had to be taught that he was a child of God and how to respond accordingly.

The promise to Abraham to make of his seed a great Nation (singular) was fulfilled in what we now know as the children of Israel, the Jews. The Land promise was fulfilled when the children of Israel entered and possessed the land of Canaan.

The third promise to bless all Nations (plural) through the seed of Abraham could not have been fulfilled during the Patriarchal Period because God only dealt with One Family at a time during this period. This third promise could not have been fulfilled during the Mosaic Period because God only dealt with One Nation, singular, during this period. This third promise could only have been fulfilled during the third period of time in the chart on page 31, the Christian Period. It was during this period that Christ instructed his disciples to go into All Nations (plural).

Matthew 28: 16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. **17** And when they saw Him, they worshiped [Him]; but some were doubtful. **18** And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

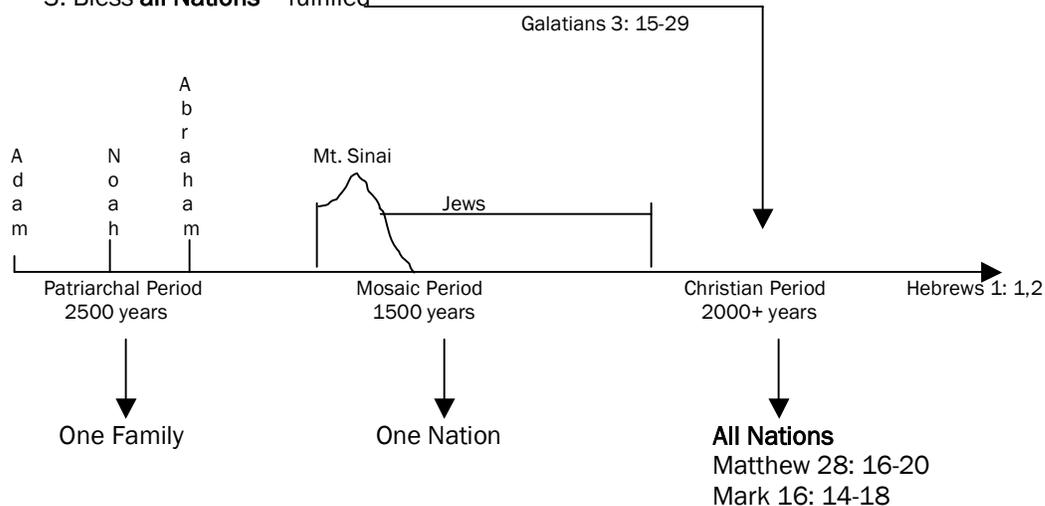
Mark 16: 14 And afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining [at the table;] and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. **15** And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. **16** He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. **17** And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; **18** they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly [poison,] it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Now let's modify our chart to reflect these three promises: 1. Land. 2. Nation (singular). 3. Bless all families of the earth, that is, become the father of a multitude of Nations.

Genesis 12: 1-3; Genesis 17: 1-13

Three Promises to Abraham

1. Nation – fulfilled, Jews.
2. Land – fulfilled, Land of Canaan.
3. Bless **all Nations** – fulfilled



The Christians in Galatia were having difficulty understanding the relationship between the old covenant and the new and Paul writes to explain it.

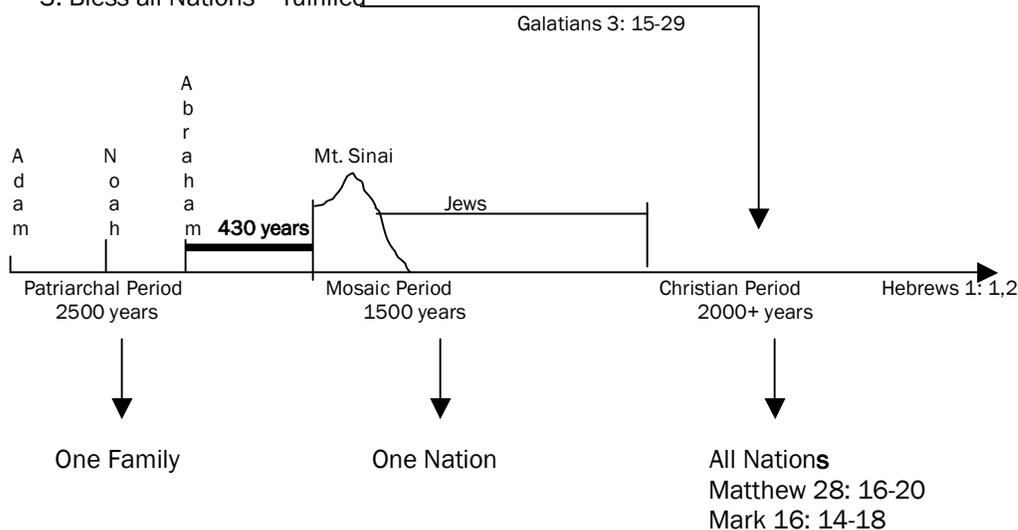
Galatians 3: 15 Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is [only] a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. **16** Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as [referring] to many, but [rather] to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. **17** What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. **18** For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. **19** Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. **20** Now a mediator is not for one [party only]; whereas God is [only] one. **21** Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. **22** But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. **23** But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. **24** Therefore the Law has become our tutor [to lead us] to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. **25** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. **26** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. **27** For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither

slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Genesis 12: 1-3; Genesis 17: 1-13

Three Promises to Abraham

1. Nation – fulfilled, Jews.
2. Land – fulfilled, Land of Canaan.
3. Bless all Nations – fulfilled



When God gave “the promise” to Abraham he intended to provide salvation through his Son, the seed. *Four hundred and thirty years after the promise* to Abraham it was necessary, because of sin (verse 19), for God to give the law, but he never intended for the law to be permanent. Notice “*until*” in verse 19 on page 31, “until the seed [Christ, verse 16] **should come.**” The First Covenant was a covenant of flesh, *physical birth*. The Second Covenant is a covenant of faith, *spiritual birth*. **Galatians 3: 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.** Only those who belong to Christ through faith are “**Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise,**” verses 26-29 of Galatians 3.

The apostle Paul used a teaching of the Old Testament familiar to his audience to help the Christians at Rome understand their new relationship to the Law.

Romans 7: 1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?
2 For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.
3 So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.

The audience was familiar with the law of marriage taught in the Old Testament which Paul just stated. Now he makes the application in verse four.

Romans 7: 4 Therefore [because of what I have just said], my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were [aroused] by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

The Roman Christians were “**made to die to the Law**” with the crucifixion of Christ and were therefore not committing spiritual adultery to be “married” to another covenant, that is, Christ. “**Made to die to the Law,**” is spiritual death and not literal. The law did not cease to exist; we still have copies of it today. The law, after being “**made to die**” to it, did not mean that it was any less God’s word. It is still his word today as much as the day it was spoken. “**Make for yourself an ark**” (Genesis 6:14) is still God’s word, but it was instruction to Noah and, as said earlier, does not apply to any person living today. “**Made to die to the law**” means that the law [the Old Covenant] no longer has jurisdiction over a person this side of the cross.

The “death” of the first husband, the Law / First Covenant / Old Testament, was accomplished “**through the body of Christ**” so those living in the Christian Period could be “married” to a new husband, the Second Covenant / Law / New Testament, without committing spiritual adultery. Since Christ’s death on the cross, the people who live on the time line during the Christian Period are to live by, or under the jurisdiction of, Christ’s Law / the Second Covenant / the New Testament.

Galatians 3: 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor [to lead us] to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

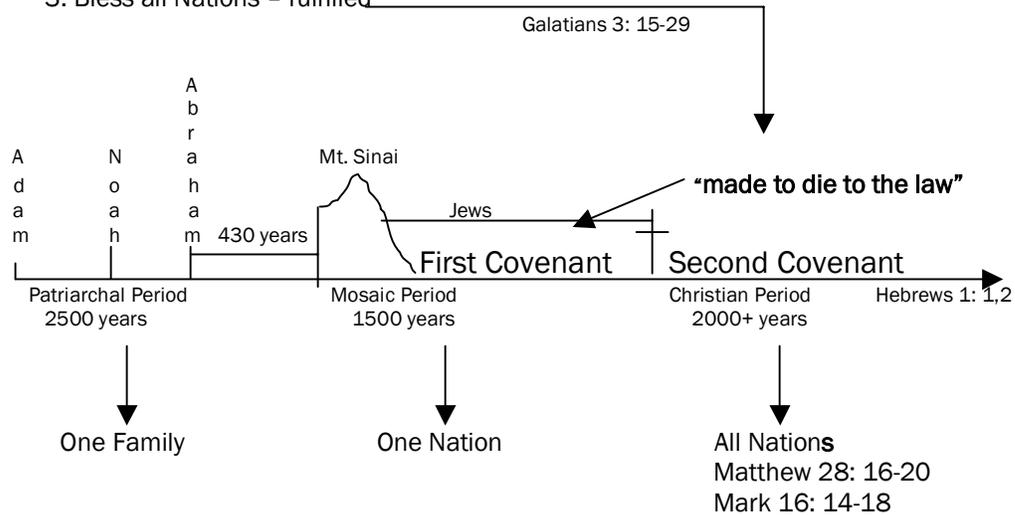
At the time Paul wrote the book of Galatians, he wrote, “**But now ... we are no longer under a tutor.**”

Paul states plainly that people living today are to live under the jurisdiction of the will of God mediated through his Son, the Second Covenant, the New Testament. The chart on the next page graphically illustrates this.

Genesis 12: 1-3; Genesis 17: 1-13

Three Promises to Abraham

1. Nation – fulfilled, Jews.
2. Land – fulfilled, Land of Canaan.
3. Bless all Nations – fulfilled



Paul was consistent. He gave the same conclusion to Christ's church in Ephesus.

Ephesians 2: 11 Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," [which is] performed in the flesh by human hands– **12** [remember] that you were at that time [during the jurisdiction of the First Covenant] **separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world** [with regard to the First Covenant]. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For He Himself is our peace, who made both [groups into] one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, **15** by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, [which is] the Law of commandments [contained] in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, [thus] establishing peace, **16** and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. **17** And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; **18** for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. **19** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, **20** having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner [stone], **21** in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; **22** in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

"At that time" in verse 12 above is the Mosaic period of time. The Law was for the Jews and not the Gentiles. As regards the Law the Gentiles were without God and without hope. But that is not the same as saying that the Gentiles were doomed to hell because the Law was not given to them. Paul addresses the law to which the Gentiles were held accountable during the period of the Law in chapter two of his letter to the Roman Christians.

Romans 2: 12 For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; **13** for [it is] not the hearers of the Law [who] are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. **14** For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves. **15** in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them. **16** on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

“**But now**” in verse 13 of Ephesians 2 above is the Christian period of time. The transition point was the cross of Christ, verse 16 in the same text.

Paul’s terminology to Christ’s church in Colossae regarding the two covenants is similar to what he wrote to the Ephesians.

Colossians 2: 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. **9** For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, **10** and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; **11** and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; **12** having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. **13** And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, **14** having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us [and] which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. **15** When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

“**The certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us [and] which was hostile to us;**” in verse 14 above is referring to the first covenant, the Old Testament. “**He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross**” is self explanatory and perfectly in harmony with what Paul wrote to Christ’s assemblies in Galatia and Ephesus. The First Covenant does not have jurisdiction over those who live under the jurisdiction of the Second.

For those faithful to God under the jurisdiction of the first covenant, which lasted to the cross, something extremely significant happened on their behalf at the cross.

Hebrews 9: 15 And for this reason He [Christ] is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption [forgiveness] of the transgressions [sins] that were [committed] under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. **16** For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death

of the one who made it. 17 For a covenant is valid [only] when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.

The writer of Hebrews affirms that Christ's death on the cross accomplished forgiveness for the faithful of the first covenant. Prior to his death animal sacrifice had to be offered as an annual reminder of sin (Hebrews 10:1-4). This annual reminder stopped at the cross where jurisdiction of the New Covenant began. There was no further need for a reminder of that which no longer existed in the memory of God. Jeremiah had prophesied, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31: 34). The writer of the book of Hebrews quoted Jeremiah's prophesy.

Hebrews 10: 8 ..."Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and [sacrifices] for sin Thou hast not desired, nor hast Thou taken pleasure [in them]" (which are offered according to the Law), 9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Thy will." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. 10 By this will [The second will, verse 9.] we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all [one time for all time]. 11 And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; [The temple was still standing at the time of this writing.] 12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. 14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, 16 "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, And upon their mind I will write them," [He then says], 17 "And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." 18 Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer [any] offering for sin.

Romans 10: 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

The Law/ the First Covenant/ the Old Testament, served its purpose of bringing us to Christ so forgiveness could be through him. Everyone this side of the cross is to live by, or under the jurisdiction of, the Second Covenant, the New Testament. How then should people today use the Old Testament? Are we to discard or disregard it? Certainly not!

Romans 15: 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me." 4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; 6 that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At the time of the writing of the book of Romans “**the Scriptures**” in verse 4 above referred to the Old Testament “**written in earlier times.**” We are to *learn* from the Old Testament but not live by it as if accountable to it. “**Hope**” in verse 4 means joyful, confident, expectation of eternal salvation. From the Old Testament we *learn* the nature of God. We can read where he told his followers to do something and if they did as instructed; he blessed them. If they did not do it, or did not do it as instructed; he punished them. From that we *learn* that he is faithful and trustworthy. When we read his instructions in the New Testament; we know from our knowledge of his nature in the Old Testament that he will bless the obedient and punish the disobedient. Therefore, trusting God’s word and responding in faithful obedience gives the “**hope**” of Romans 15: 4 above.

What is the conclusion? In chapter three we learned that God has given us everything we need to know to go from earth to heaven in his written word. In this chapter we have seen that we, today, are to live by, or under the jurisdiction or supervision of, and are accountable to the second covenant, the New Testament. God spoke through Moses as the mediator of the first covenant. God speaks through Christ as the mediator of the second covenant. Everyone this side of the cross is to follow God’s instruction through Christ given in the New Testament.

Chapter 5

How Can I Locate Christ's Church?

A discussion of Christ's church will, of necessity, include two terms – *church* and *kingdom*. The *kingdom* refers to one's vertical relationship with God, that is, the rule or dominion of God in one's heart. The *church* refers to the horizontal relationship each one in the kingdom has with each other, the body of those forgiven. These are two different words denoting two different relationships, but both words have reference to the same group of people. For example, one may refer to a married man with a child as a *husband* or a *father*. Two different words referring to two different relationships, but the same man. So it is with *kingdom* and *church*. Biblical texts referring to the establishment of the kingdom or the establishment of the church involve, therefore, the same group of people.

The First Covenant prophesied of the establishment of Christ's kingdom/church. The Second Covenant speaks of the kingdom/church as still in the future before giving the fulfillment of all prophecies in the Old Testament and texts in the New Testament pointing to a future establishment. A fascinating study will be to notice the approximate dates of the texts and related events in this discussion. The dates used in this chapter will be the dates found in the reference column of many Bibles and those from world history texts. Where then is the starting point for dating the origin of Christ's church? It begins with prophecy in the Old Testament.

The prophet Daniel plainly stated *when* God would set up his kingdom.

Daniel 2: 44 "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; ..."

Our responsibility is to determine the specific time of **"the days of these kings."** Once we have that established we then must look for biblical evidence that God did in fact set up his kingdom during that time frame. Secondly, since his kingdom, once set up, would never be destroyed, then it must still be "set up" if **"the days of these kings"** is in fact behind us.

Let's read Daniel's prophecy in context.

(NRSV) **Daniel 2: 30 But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me because of any wisdom that I have more than any other living being, but in order that the interpretation may be known to the king and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind. 31 "You were looking, O king, and lo! there was a great statue. This statue was huge, its brilliance extraordinary; it was standing before you, and its appearance was frightening. 32 The head of that statue was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 As you looked on, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue**

on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, were all broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. 36 "This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. 37 You, O king, the king of kings ~~to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the might, and the glory,~~ 38 into whose hand he has given human beings, wherever they live, the wild animals of the field, and the birds of the air, and whom he has established as ruler over them all—you are the head of gold. 39 After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over the whole earth. 40 And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron; just as iron crushes and smashes everything, it shall crush and shatter all these. 41 As you saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but some of the strength of iron shall be in it, as you saw the iron mixed with the clay. 42 As the toes of the feet were part iron and part clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. 43 As you saw the iron mixed with clay, so will they mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. 44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall this kingdom be left to another people. It shall crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever; 45 just as you saw that a stone was cut from the mountain not by hands, and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. The great God has informed the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation trustworthy.

In verse 36 above Daniel told king Nebuchadnezzar the details of his dream. The king now has no reason to distrust Daniel's explanation of the dream because the details of the dream itself were exact. When Daniel affirms the certainty of the dream and its explanation in verse 45, Nebuchadnezzar never disputes the accuracy of what he had experienced.

Nebuchadnezzar is the "king of kings" in verse 37 and "ruler over them all" in verse 38. Daniel prophesied that three other world empires would follow and that God's kingdom would be set up during the fourth.

Today we have the privilege of looking back in history and asking, "Were there world empires after Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire?"

After Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Medes and the king of the Persians joined forces to form the Medo-Persian Empire.

Next came the Grecian Empire under the leadership of Alexander the Great. The fourth and final world empire was begun by Caesar Augustus in approximately 31 B.C. and was known as the Roman Empire. In 476 A.D. the Western part of the empire folded and the empire as a whole ended. The Eastern part fell in 1034 A.D.

Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 3 He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; 4 but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

Both prophets gave the same four prophecies regarding the setting up of God's kingdom/church:

1. **days to come** At the time of writing of both prophets, the kingdom was still future.
2. **many nations** At the time of writing of both prophets, God's word was to the Jews and no other nation.
3. **out of Zion** The generic place of beginning would be Zion.
4. **the word of the LORD from Jerusalem** The specific *place of origin* for God's kingdom/church was to be Jerusalem. No other city on earth – Jerusalem.

To this point we have established two critical points from the First Covenant regarding the setting up of God's kingdom:

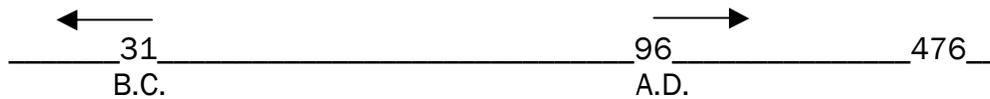
1. **Date of origin** - any group begun *before* 31 B.C. is too early and cannot be one started by God. Any group begun *after* 476 A.D. is too late and cannot be one set up by God.
2. **Place of origin** - any group begun in any city on earth other than Jerusalem cannot be one started by God.

The dateline in #1 above is a period of 507 years. That is a broad period of time for an organization to claim **date of origin**. What if we could substantially narrow this time frame – and narrow it with Scripture?

The dates of 31 B.C. and 476 A.D. are historical dates. The dates assigned to Scripture references which follow are human calculations and not actual biblical statements. They are therefore subject to further calculation. If our calculations should prove wrong, that does not prove the Bible wrong. The *relationship* of the events to one another would still be the same. For example, if it is stated that event A occurred in 50 A.D., event B occurred in 55 A.D., event C occurred in 60 A.D., and it is later determined that event A actually occurred in 45 A.D. instead of 50 A.D., then all three events would be moved back 5 years and event B would still have occurred between events A and C. For simplicity the dates used below occur in the margin of some Bibles.

Revelation 1: 9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance [which are] in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

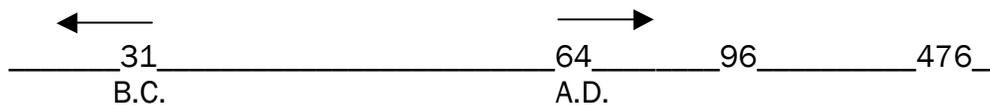
John says in this verse that he is **in the kingdom**. The date of this writing is approximately 96 A.D.



If the apostle John was already in the kingdom/church in 96 A.D., then any claim for **date of origin** of a group *after 96 A.D.* is too late for that group to be the kingdom/church that God established and of which John was a part. The apostle John eliminates them.

1 Thessalonians 2: 10 You are witnesses, and [so is] God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; **11** just as you know how we [were] exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father [would] his own children, **12** so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

The apostle Paul believed the Thessalonians to be in the kingdom in approximately 64 A.D. Any claim, therefore, for **date of origin** of a group *after 64 A.D.* is too late for that group to be the kingdom/church that God established and of which the Thessalonians were a part. The apostle Paul eliminates them.



Colossians 1: 13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The apostle Paul included himself with the Christians at Colossae as being in Christ's kingdom/church in approximately 54 A.D.

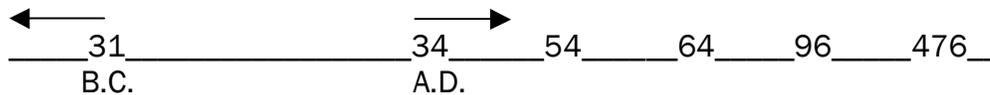


Any claim, therefore, for **date of origin** of a group *after 54 A.D.* is too late for that group to be the kingdom/church that God promised to establish. The apostle Paul eliminates them.

Acts 7: 59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on [the Lord] and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" **60** Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep. **8: 1** Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they

were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Can that which does not exist be persecuted? On “**that day**” in approximately 34 A.D. Christ’s church in Jerusalem began experiencing persecution.



According to Luke, the author of Acts, any kingdom or church claiming a **date of origin later than 34 A.D.** cannot be the kingdom/church started by God, because his church was already being persecuted in 34 A.D. Luke eliminates them.

From the time line above, established by Scripture references, it is easy to see that the ‘window’ of dates possible for God to establish/build his kingdom/church has been narrowed from 507 years to only 65 years. This is important because the more narrow the dates of origin possibilities established by Scripture references, the more man-made organizations will be eliminated. [By inspiration the apostle Paul, while still alive, said to the church leaders at Ephesus, “**For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.**” Acts 20: 29,30. Do you want to face God in judgment as a part of an organization started by man “**speaking perverse things,**” or would you rather face him as a part of his organization? The **date of origin** matters!] We will narrow this window for date of origin possibilities even more as we look at the Second Covenant and see that for a time, even under the New Covenant, the beginning of Christ’s church was still future.

Matthew 16: 13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He [began] asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" **14** And they said, "Some [say] John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." **15** He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" **16** And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." **17** And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal [this] to you, but My Father who is in heaven. **18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. **19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Notice three things from the text above. First, the establishment of Christ’s church, at the time he made this statement, is still future – “**will build,**” verse 18. Second, Peter is specifically named in this text as one to whom Christ would give “**the keys of the kingdom.**” Keys are used to obtain entrance. When Christ’s church is begun; Peter is specifically named as one instructing how to

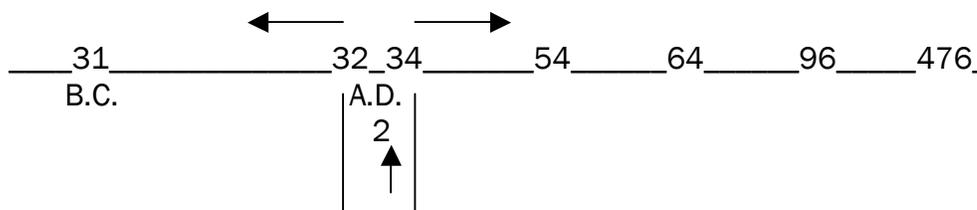
gain entrance into it. And third, in verse 18 “Peter” and “rock” are from the same Greek root word. If Christ meant to say that he would build his church on Peter, then, in Greek both “Peter” and “rock” would have to be the same gender. They are not! “Peter” is from *petros* (masculine) and “rock” is *petra* (feminine). The “rock” upon which Christ promised to build his church was the rock solid truth of the confession Peter had just made, “**Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**”

Later in Christ’s ministry he still spoke of his kingdom/church as future.

Mark 9: 1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

Observations from Mark 9:1:

1. Christ’s kingdom/church is still future.
2. The **death** in this verse is physical death. Some in Christ’s audience would still be alive when his kingdom/church was started.
3. The date of this statement is approximately 32 A.D.



According to Christ here in Mark 9:1 his church had not been started in 32 A.D. Yet in Acts 8:1 Luke says that Christ’s church was persecuted in Jerusalem. Therefore, Christ’s church had to have been started sometime between the dates of Mark 9:1 and Acts 8:1 – 32 A.D. and 34 A.D. This narrows the ‘window’ for **date of origin** from 65 years to only 2 years. These dates of possible origin are not established by some person, but by Christ and Luke by inspiration.

Assignment:

Choose any religious organization active today and research the **date or origin**. Does the date of origin fall between the time period of Mark 9:1 and Acts 8:1, 32 A.D. and 34 A.D.? If your answer is “Yes,” then you have a starting point for locating Christ’s church. On the other hand, if your answer is “No,” then who will you believe – Christ and Luke, or the person(s) who started that particular group or organization?

Other check points for locating Christ’s church today are equally important. Just before going back to heaven Christ said the following to his apostles:

Luke 24: 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 "You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." 50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51 While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising God.

The prophets Isaiah and Micah both prophesied in the First Covenant that God's kingdom would have its beginning in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-2). In the text above, in the Second Covenant, Christ states plainly that the **beginning** will be at Jerusalem. Also, he says that the **place of origin** for the preaching of repentance and remission (forgiveness) of sins *in his name* to all nations would be **Jerusalem**.

As a side note, isn't it interesting that God made a point as he wrote through Luke that **the name** in which repentance and forgiveness were to be preached was important to him? If you gave your son to save undeserving sinners, would the name in whom those sinners were forgiven be important to you? Certainly!

Lastly, the apostles were to stay in Jerusalem until they were "**clothed with power from on high.**" We know three things about the power from this text:

1. It would be for the apostles.
2. It would come from on high.
3. It would happen in Jerusalem.

In our attempt to locate Christ's church today we have established from the Bible the following check points:

1. **Date of Origin.**
 - a. Last days (Isaiah 2:2)
 - b. 32 A.D.- 34 A.D. (Mark 9:1; Acts 8:1)
2. **Place of origin.**
 - a. Out of Zion shall go forth the law (Isaiah 2:3)
 - b. Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3; Luke 24:47)
 - c. The apostles were to be clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:49)
3. **Terms of entrance.**
 - a. Peter specifically named (Matthew 16:18)
 - b. Repentance and forgiveness of sins preached in Christ's name (Luke 24:47)
 - c. All nations would have access (Isaiah 2:3; Luke 24:47)

As we examine Scripture for the fulfillment of these check points, it will not be enough to just show biblical fulfillment for *some* or *most* of them. Every single one must have fulfillment in the New Covenant. Truth is not contradictory. God never promised something that he did not complete.

Luke chapter twenty four above was written by Luke. He also wrote the book of Acts. He begins in chapter one with a brief review of where he ended in Luke twenty four.

Acts 1: 1 The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, **2** until the day when He was taken up [to heaven], after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom [‘whom’ is a plural pronoun that refers to the nearest plural noun antecedent which is ‘apostles’] He had chosen. **3** To these [apostles] He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them [apostles] over [a period of] forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. **4** Gathering them [apostles] together, He commanded them [apostles] not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," [He said], "you [apostles] heard of from Me; **5** for John baptized with water, but you [apostles] will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." [Baptism of the Holy Spirit was here specifically promised by Jesus to the apostles.] **6** So when they [apostles] had come together, they [apostles] were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" **7** He said to them [apostles], "It is not for you [apostles] to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; **8** but you [still the apostles] will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; [apostles] and you [apostles] shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." **9** And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they [apostles] were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their [apostles] sight. **10** And as they [apostles] were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. [apostles] **11** They also said, "Men of Galilee, [this statement will become important in Acts 2:7] why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you [apostles] into heaven, will come in just the same way as you [apostles] have watched Him go into heaven."

12 Then they [apostles] returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. **13** When they had entered [the city], they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James [the son] of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas [the son] of James. **14** These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with [the] women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

15 At this time [Notice the difference between “at this time” and “When the day of Pentecost had come” in 2:1 below. “At this time” is the time, or days, before Pentecost.] Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, **16** "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the

mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 "For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry." 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. 19 And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 "For it is written in the book of Psalms, `Let his homestead be made desolate, And let no one dwell in it'; and, `Let another man take his office.' 21 "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us – 22 beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us – one of these [must] become a witness with us of His resurrection." 23 So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen 25 to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." 26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

2: 1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they ['They' who? This plural pronoun must modify the nearest plural noun antecedent. What is it? 'apostles' in verse 26 of chapter 1. The original Greek text was not divided into chapters and verses but was one continuous document. Chapter and verse divisions weren't made until the early 16th century. During the 10 days prior to Pentecost, "at this time" of Acts 1:15, the 120 were together in the upper room to replace Judas the betrayer. But when the *specific day* of Pentecost arrived it was the apostles who] **were all together in one place.** **2** And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they ["they" is still the apostles in 1:26] **were sitting.** **3** And there appeared to them [the apostles] **tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.** [The plural noun antecedent for this plural pronoun still has not changed. It is still the apostles.] **4** And they [the apostles, 1:26] **were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them [apostles] utterance.** **5** Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, [The prophesied city of origin for God's kingdom/Christ's church. Isaiah 2:3; Luke 24:47.] **devout men from every nation under heaven.** [The prophesied audience for repentance and forgiveness, Isaiah 2:3; Luke 24:47.] **6** And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, [The "crowd" could not have received the Holy Spirit as did the apostles because they weren't even present. The "crowd came together" after the apostles started preaching in the native languages of those present from "every nation under heaven." The 120 present in the upper room in 1:15 could not have received the Holy Spirit as did the apostles because they weren't present with the apostles when "the day of Pentecost had come," 2:1] and were bewildered because each one of them [the crowd] was hearing them [the apostles] **speak in his own language.** **7** They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? [The crowd was from "every nation under heaven" but those speaking in the native languages of the crowd by the power of the Holy Spirit were from Galilee. The

apostles were “men of Galilee,” 1:11] 8 "And how is it that we each hear [them] in our own language to which we were born? 9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—we [the crowd, verse 6] hear them in our [own] tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." [If the “tongues” spoken by the apostles in verse 4 were not languages, verse 6, in which the multitude were born, verse 8, then how did the multitude know that what was said was about “the mighty deeds of God?”] 12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine." 14 But Peter, [specifically named by Christ to use the keys of the kingdom/church, Matthew 16:18] taking his stand with the eleven, [Not the 120. Not the multitude. It was the twelve who were promised specifically by Christ in person to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, chapter one, verse five. It was the 12 who were together in one place when Christ’s promise to them was fulfilled, 1:26 – 2:4.] raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. [Peter spoke to the locals in and around Jerusalem. The eleven were speaking in the languages of the various locations mentioned in verses 9-11.] 15 "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is [only] the third hour of the day; [9:00 A.M.] 16 but this [what you are seeing and hearing now] is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: [“What you are seeing and hearing now is fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy.” Peter was not here giving a prophecy for Christ’s church. He quotes Joel’s prophecy from Joel 2:28-30 from the First Covenant, but before he quotes it he says that “this” is fulfillment of “what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.”] 17 `And it shall be in the last days,’ [the beginning, origin, of God’s kingdom/Christ’s church, Isaiah 2:2] God says, `That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; [“all mankind” equals Jews and Gentiles. Jews: here on Pentecost. The apostles were Jews, Acts 2:5, 1:11. The Spirit was *poured* into the place where the apostles were sitting until it “filled the whole house;” thus immersing/baptizing them in the Spirit as Jesus had specifically promised only them, the apostles, Acts 1:5. Gentiles: house of Cornelius, Acts 10: 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. Peter says that Pentecost was fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, verse 16 above. Peter was not giving new prophecy for the church forever without end.] And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 Even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will grant wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. 21 [This is the end of Peter’s quote from the prophet Joel. The Jews understood that salvation/forgiveness would come through the Messiah. Peter continues speaking to convict them of killing the very source of their awaited forgiveness. In verse 37 they will cry out asking what to do about their sin of killing the source of forgiveness – the Messiah – thus asking how now to be forgiven.]

And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
 22 Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know – [The apostles preached the LIFE of Christ.] 23 this [Man], delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put [Him] to death. [The apostles preached the DEATH of Christ.] 24 But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. 25 For David says of Him, `I saw the Lord always in my presence; For He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will live in hope; 27 Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. 28 You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.' 29 Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat [one] of his descendants on his throne, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. 32 This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. [The apostles preached the RESURRECTION of Christ.] 33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. 34 For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: `The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, 35 Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." ' [The apostles preached the EXALTATION of Christ.] 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel [the Jews from every nation to whom the apostles were preaching this message in each of their native born tongues] know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ–this Jesus whom you crucified. 37 Now when they heard [this], they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, [not the 120, not the multitude, “the apostles”] "Brethren, what shall we do?" [to receive the salvation prophesied by Joel, Acts 2:21, to be forgiven of the sin of killing the very source of our forgiveness, verse 36 above] 38 Peter [said] to them, Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. 31 He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses of these things; and [so is] the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."

[Satan says: Belief + Repentance = Forgiveness + Baptism + Gift of the Holy Spirit

God says: Belief + Repentance + Baptism = Forgiveness + Gift of the Holy Spirit]

39 For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself. 40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, Be saved from this perverse generation! 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. [Can you *add* to that which does not exist? To *what* then were these 3000 *added*? They were added to Christ's church, the actual first day of which was the morning of his resurrection from the grave in Jerusalem. Hear the apostle Paul. **Colossians 1: 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning,** [Christ is the beginning, the origin, of the church, the body. But when did this happen?], **the firstborn from the dead** [The 'beginning,' the origin, day one of Christ's church/body was the morning of his resurrection.], **so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.** [After his resurrection Christ taught the apostles for 40 days concerning the kingdom (Acts 1:3). The 120, which included the apostles, in Acts 1:15 had received John's baptism of repentance, that is, they would turn from the Law to Christ (Acts 19:4) for the forgiveness of sins. John's baptism looked forward to the cross. The forgiveness of the 120 along with all prior to the cross who lived and died in faith (Hebrews 9:15) occurred when Christ died, was buried, and rose from the grave. Christ's resurrection fits the time frame we've established from Scripture references for the establishment of Christ's church. On this day, Pentecost, the apostles *announced* Christ's church to "**every nation under heaven.**" This *announcement* of Christ's church to the world by the apostles gave the terms of entrance for all nations for all time. About 3000 on that day responded to the teaching and were "**added.**"] **42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles** [those baptized with the Holy Spirit]. **44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they [began] selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. 46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.** [On this day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, as prophesied in the Old Testament and promised by Jesus in the New Testament, Christ's church is announced to the world by the apostles. They use the keys of the kingdom, that is, give the terms of entrance, and about 3000 are forgiven of sin and added to Christ's church on this first Pentecost following his resurrection. This date is approximately 33 A.D.]

Previously we established from Scripture the following check points for determining the establishment of Christ's church:

1. Date of Origin.

- a. Last days (Isaiah 2:2)
- b. A.D. 32 – A.D. 34 (Mark 9:1; Acts 8:1)

2. Place of origin.

- a. Out of Zion shall go forth the law (Isaiah 2:3)
- b. Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3; Luke 24:47)
- c. The apostles were to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49)

3. Terms of entrance.

- a. Peter specifically named (Matthew 16:18)
- b. Repentance and forgiveness of sins to be preached in Christ's name (Luke 24:47)
- c. All nations would have access (Isaiah 2:3; Luke 24:47)

Each and every one of these check points is fulfilled in Acts chapters 1&2.

1. Date of Origin.

- a. Last days (Isaiah 2:2) [**Acts 2:16-17**]
- b. A.D. 32 – A.D. 34 (Mark 9:1; Acts 8:1) [**A.D. 33, Christ's resurrection, Colossians 1:18, and Pentecost are between A.D. 32 and A.D. 34**]

2. Place of origin.

- a. Out of Zion shall go forth the law (Isaiah 2:3) [**Jerusalem sits on the mountain chain of Zion.**]
- b. Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3; Luke 24:47) [**Acts 2:5**]
- c. The apostles were to be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49) [**Acts 2: 1- 4**]

3. Terms of entrance.

- a. Peter specifically named (Matthew 16:18) [**Acts 2: 14-40**]
- b. Repentance and forgiveness of sins preached in Christ's name (Luke 24:47) [**Acts 2: 38, 41, 47**]
- c. All nations would have access (Isaiah 2:3; Luke 24:47) [**Acts 2: 5, 39**]

Christ's church began with him the morning of his resurrection in Jerusalem and was announced to the world fifty days later in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following his resurrection with the apostles giving the terms of entrance which were to apply to "**as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself**" - all nations for all time.

Use the biblical information in this chapter to find an assembly that is in compliance with *all* the check points given. *If you can't find one; start one.*

When I visited the Ukraine in 1994 with a group of missionaries we found a group of about nineteen worshipping in an apartment following only what they could read in the New Testament. They were forgiven of sins exactly as you will read in chapter 6, therefore, God added them to the same church announced on Pentecost by the apostles. They were worshipping exactly as did the first century Christians in the book of Acts.

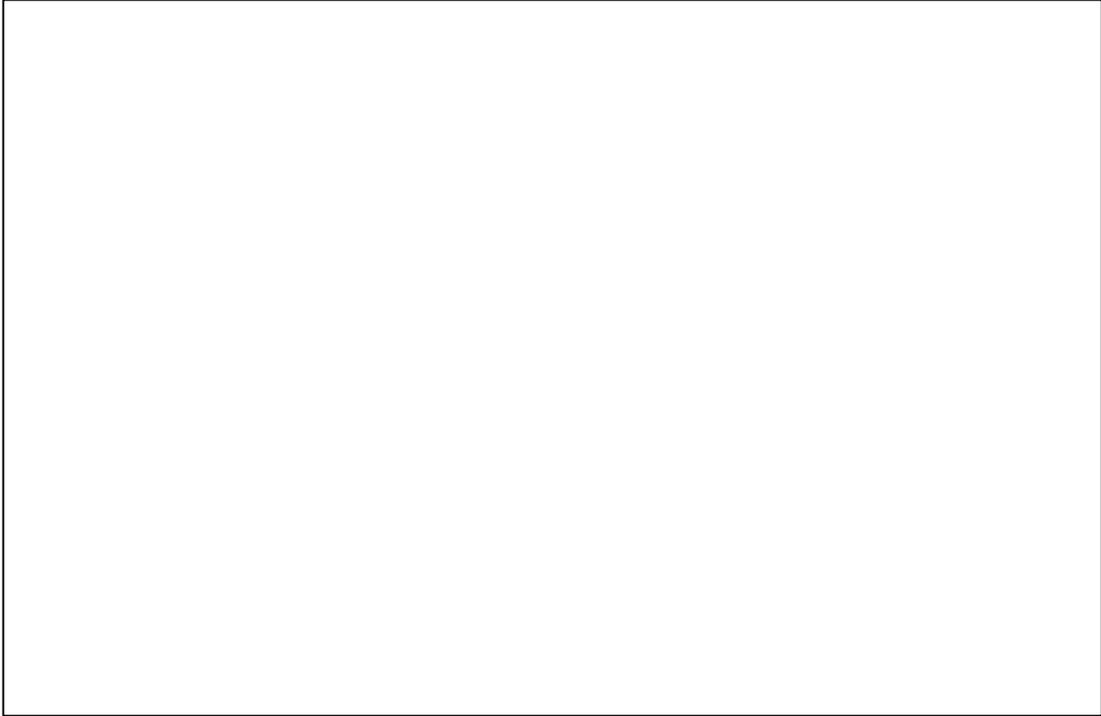
Assume for a moment that your great great grandmother wrote an original recipe for a butter cream chocolate cake that was handed down through the family with small changes made along the way. With the changes there is no way you can make the *same* cake as did your great great grandmother. Now

imagine that while researching your family tree you discover an original copy of the recipe. What do you do? Do you keep making the cake the way you have always made it and calling it your great great grandmother's butter cream chocolate cake recipe, knowing now that it really isn't, or do you *restore* the recipe and make great great grandmother's butter cream chocolate cake by great great grandmother's *original* recipe? Honesty demands restoration.

When I said above, "*If you can't find one; start one.*" I did not mean to just modify the recipe one more time and start a new denomination. I meant *restore* the recipe by going back to the *original* recipe, the New Testament, and start a group of Christians worshipping as the first Christians worshipped, nothing more, nothing less.

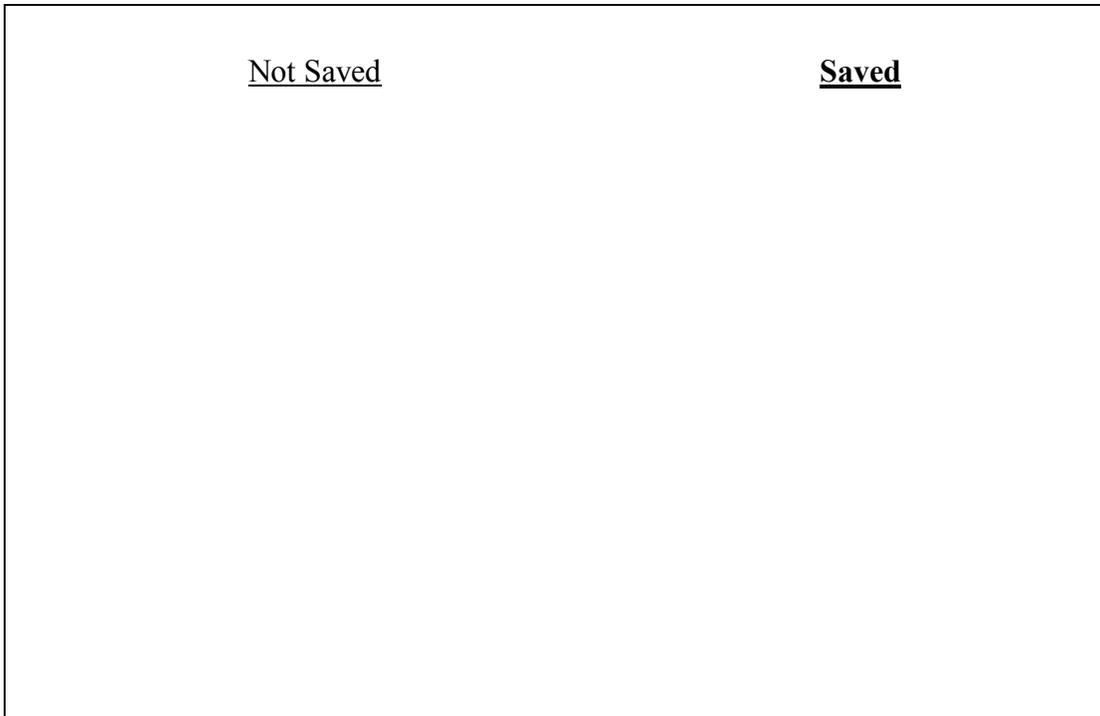
My book Now That I Am Forgiven, Now What addresses how the first century Christians worshipped.

Now, for the purpose of this discussion, let's imagine that every person on earth is in the square below. If every person on earth is in the square, then you and I are in it also, right?



Regarding one's spiritual relationship with God, no one that I know disagrees that each responsible person is either forgiven or not forgiven, saved or not saved. Do you know of a relationship with God other than these two?

Keep in mind that everybody on earth is in the square and each one is either ...



Now let's draw a line separating the two groups.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Not Saved</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Saved</u></p>
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No one I know disagrees with the fact that the saved are separated from the unsaved by the *forgiveness of sins*. If one's sins are forgiven, he is saved. If one's sins are not forgiven, he is lost. So, let's call this line separating the two groups - *forgiveness of sin*.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Not Saved</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Saved</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">F O R G I V E N E S S</p>
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The next logical question is, "Since everybody on earth is in the square, how do you determine on which side of the line any specific person belongs?" It's simple. If a person is *forgiven* then he is on the *saved* side of the line. If one is not forgiven, then he is lost. Do you agree?

The apostle Paul gives the facts of the gospel and forgiveness in 1 Corinthians 15: 1-4.

1 Corinthians 15: 1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, **2** by which also you are saved, if [Notice that salvation by the gospel is conditional upon living it, otherwise one believes in vain.] **you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.** [The apostle Paul believed a person could believe in vain.] **3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

The *death, burial, and resurrection* of Christ *for our sins according to the Scriptures* is the "**gospel**," according to the apostle Paul. The gospel is not just the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ *for our sins, according to the Scriptures*. If Christ's death had not been *according to the Scriptures and for our sins*; his death would have been like any other man's death.

No one that I know disagrees with the fact that through Christ's blood shed in his death on the cross is the only way to have ones sins forgiven. Do you know any other way to be forgiven except through the blood of Christ?

The apostle Paul wrote the *fact* of Christ's blood forgiving sins to two of Christ's churches, one in Ephesus and one in Colossae.

Ephesians 1: 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses [sins], according to the riches of His grace **8** which He lavished on us.

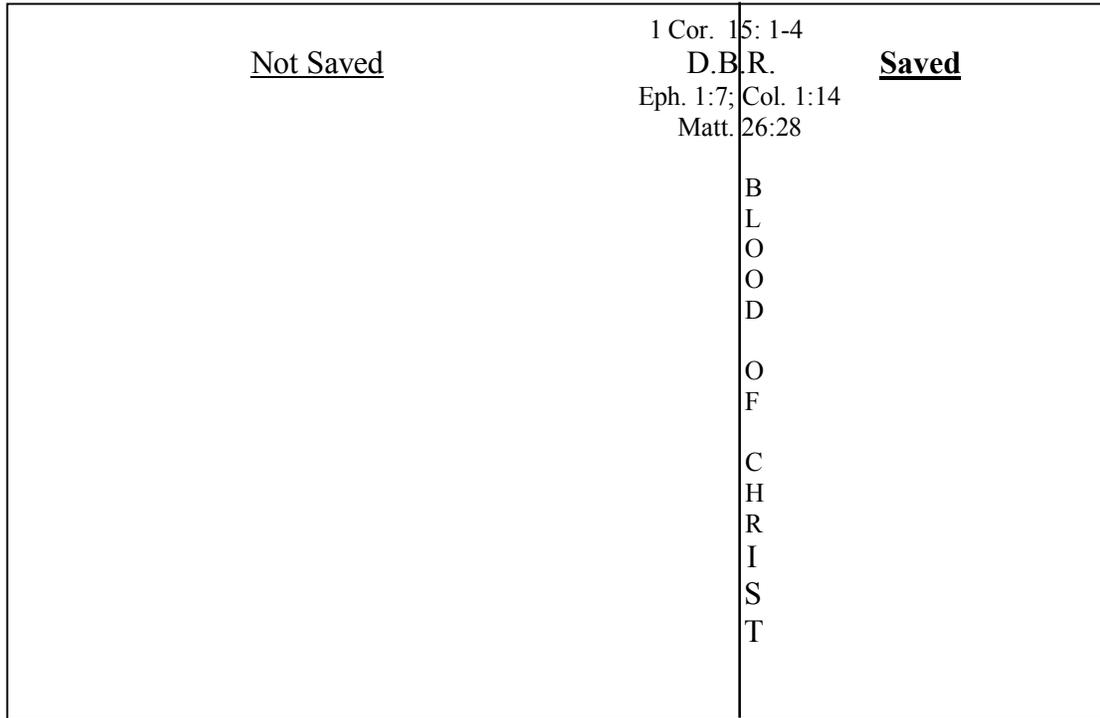
Colossians 1: 13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul taught that forgiveness of sins is only possible through the blood of Christ. That is what Christ taught the apostles when he was with them on earth.

Matthew 26: 27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave [it] to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; **28** for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

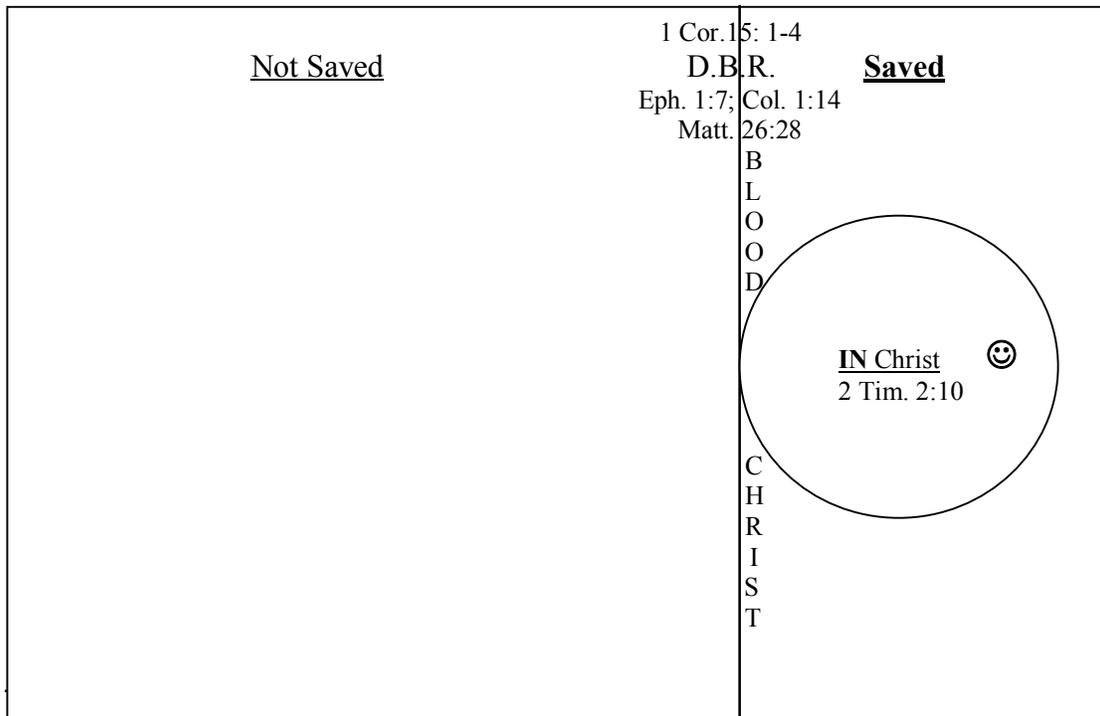
That which separates the saved from the unsaved is *forgiveness through Christ's blood*. The line in the square separating the two groups, saved and not saved, now becomes the *blood of Christ*. Everyone on earth is in the square.

Everyone who has contacted the blood of Christ is forgiven, or saved, and everyone who has not contacted the blood of Christ is not forgiven, not saved, lost.



D.B.R. on the chart stands for the **D**eath, **B**urial, and **R**esurrection of Christ.

In order to get the total picture for this discussion on our chart, let's draw a circle and put all the saved inside it. Paul wrote to Timothy that salvation is **IN** Christ.



2 Timothy 2: 10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus [and] with [it] eternal glory.

If one is IN Christ, then he is forgiven. We've already established from Scripture that the only way to get INTO Christ is to be forgiven of sins in his blood. All the SAVED in our square are now IN Christ and are in a *saved relationship* with him. Now we need to raise the question, "What does one IN Christ have to do to go to heaven and live with him eternally?" The apostle John gives the answer writing to persecuted Christians.

Revelation 2: 10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, ["until death" means 'even if it means death'] and I will give you the crown of life [heaven].

One who is in fact forgiven through the blood of Christ, saved IN Christ, and reads and lives by his understanding of God's word daily is being faithful. Faithful means trustworthy, full of faith, full of trust. If the faithful one dies in this relationship with God, or Christ comes back and finds him in this relationship with God, then heaven will be his home for eternity, according to the apostle John. Why would God require faithful living on the part of the one following his word? Can an individual decide to stop being faithful in his commitment to God and go back to living a lifestyle of sin? If God blesses forever those who live faithful to him, those IN Christ, then does justice not require that he punish forever those who become UNfaithful in their lifestyle, as well as those who have never been forgiven by his blood – those outside him, the Not Saved? The following texts were written to those IN Christ.

2 John 1: 6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. **7** For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ [as] coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. **8** Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. **9** Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. **10** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into [your] house, and do not give him a greeting; **11** for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

1 Corinthians 10: 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. **13** No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

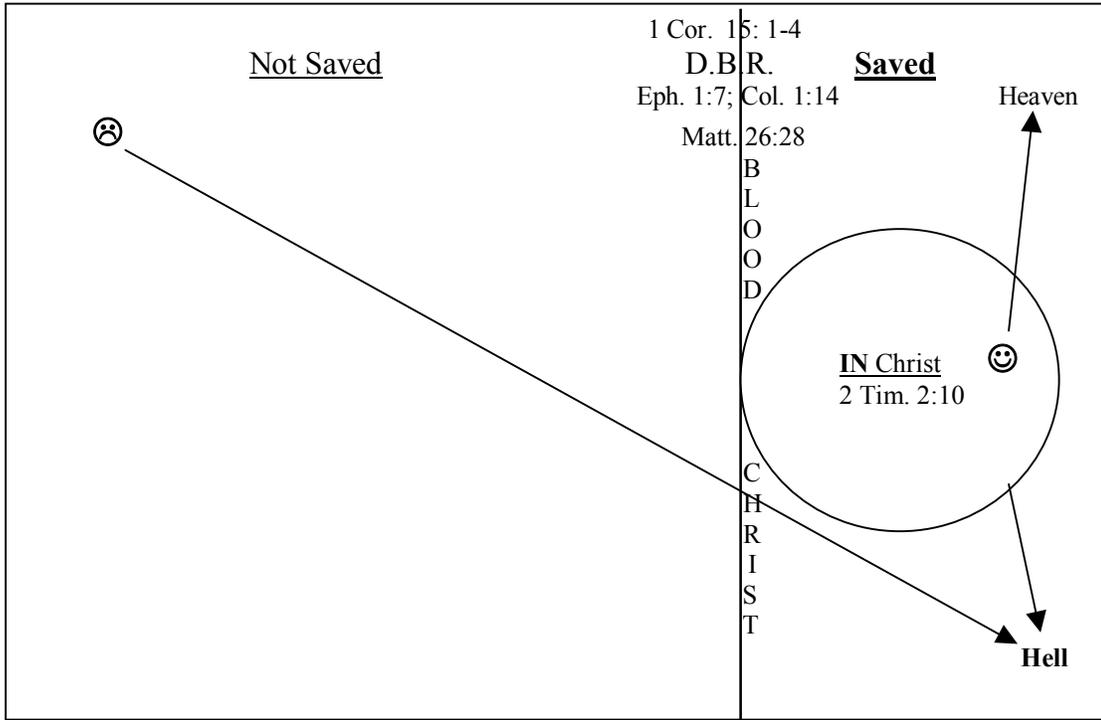
Hebrews 6: 4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, **5** and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age

to come, 6 and [then] have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. 7 For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; 8 but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

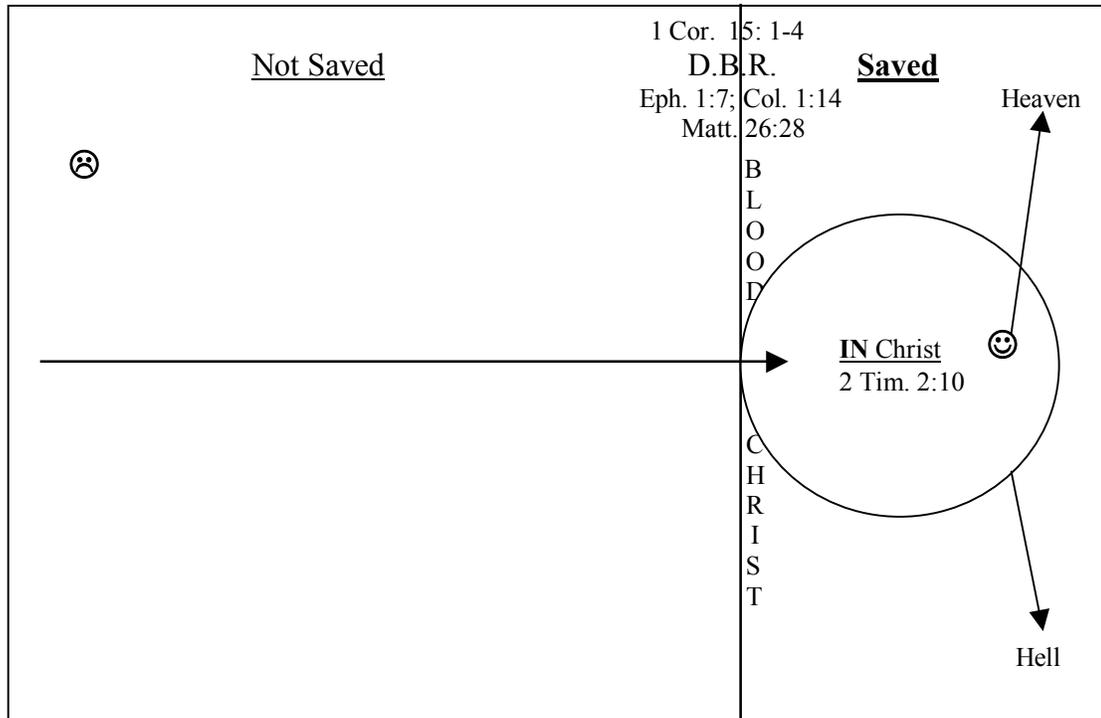
2 Peter 1: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of [the] divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in [your] moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in [your] knowledge, self-control, and in [your] self-control, perseverance, and in [your] perseverance, godliness, 7 and in [your] godliness, brotherly kindness, and in [your] brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these [qualities] are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these [qualities] is blind [or] short-sighted, having forgotten [his] purification from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Galatians 6: 1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass [sin], you who are spiritual, restore such a one [the person who sinned] in a spirit of gentleness; [each one] looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

According to the Bible, forgiveness of sin is only possible through the blood of Christ shed in his death on the cross. One who is forgiven is IN Christ and has the responsibility to be faithful to that commitment even if it means death. Those who are faithful go to heaven. Those who choose to become unfaithful, or “**fall from your own steadfastness,**” (2 Peter 3:17) go to hell if still unfaithful at death or the second coming, whichever occurs first.



Now we must raise the question, "What does the person represented by the sad face on the 'Not Saved' side of the chart have to do to contact Christ's blood, be forgiven of sins, live faithful even if it means death and go to heaven after physical death, or the second coming of Christ, whichever occurs first?"

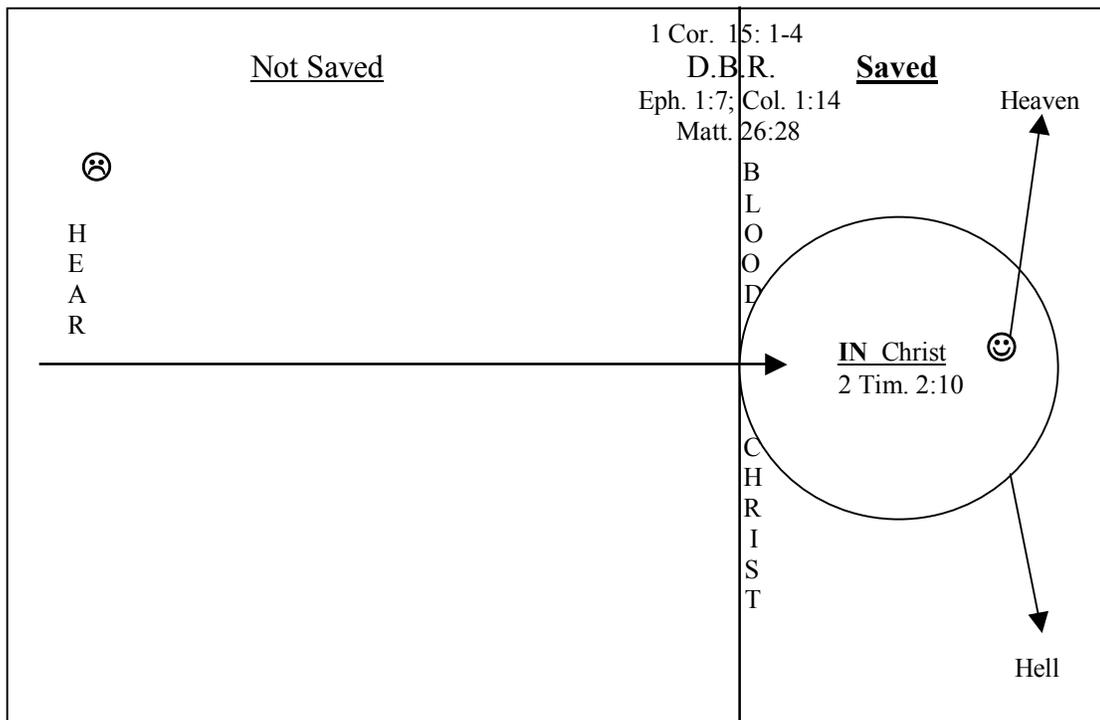


Obviously one cannot respond to that which he has never heard; therefore, the first requirement in coming to forgiveness in Christ's blood is to *hear the gospel*.

The apostle Paul wrote to Christ's church in Rome:

Romans 10: 17 So faith [comes] from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Faith in God, belief, or trust, comes by hearing. But notice that there is no period after the word 'hearing' in this verse. If one hears that the world is flat and believes it; he has faith, but is it true faith or erroneous faith? For one's *faith* to be truth one must *hear* truth. Since Paul says that one believes that which is heard, then how can one *hear error* and *believe truth*? It cannot be done! For example, from chapter 5 of this book, hearing that Christ's church was started in Galilee by John the baptizer produces faith in the hearer, but is it true faith, biblical faith, or erroneous faith? Hearing that produces biblical faith, that which God teaches – not man - can only come by hearing **“the word of Christ.”** The **“word of Christ”** says, regarding Christ's church, that Christ started his church, not John the baptizer, in Jerusalem, not Galilee. It certainly does matter what one *hears* and upon what *source* one's faith is based.



Acts 5: 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men. **30** The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. **31** He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

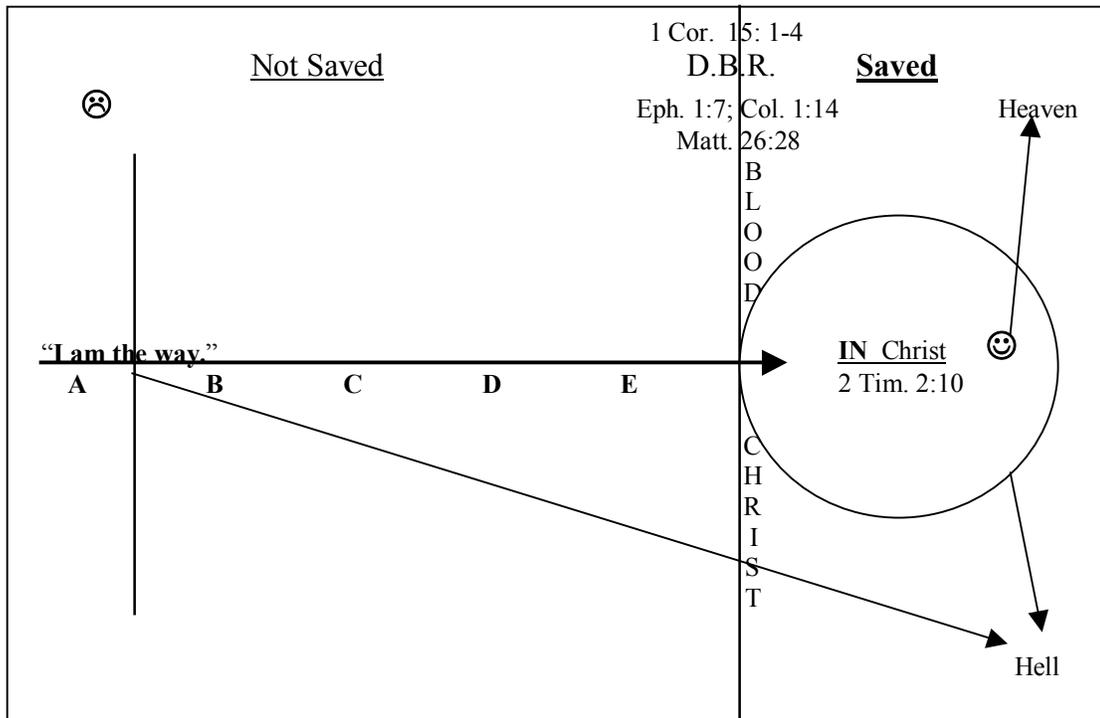
Since biblical faith, saving faith, can only come from “**the word of Christ,**” please pay particular attention to the fact that every teaching in this book comes from book, chapter, and verse of God’s word. This author has no teaching of his own. If the Bible doesn’t teach it; it cannot be believed as *saving faith*. Stated another way, if one’s faith cannot be documented in “**the word of Christ,**” then its source is not God – but the devil. God has teachers of *truth* to save and the devil has teachers of *error* to deceive. Upon which source do you want to build your relationship with God? It matters.

Acts 17: 10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. **11** Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily [to see] whether these things were so. **12** Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. [It is right to challenge with Scripture what one is taught. One’s eternity demands it.]

Now, back to our square. If an individual who is not saved **hears** that Christ *died for his sins, was buried and rose again*, according to the Scriptures, and that forgiveness is possible only through the blood he shed on the cross, but does nothing about it – are his sins forgiven? No. His sins aren’t forgiven until he does whatever *Scripture* teaches one to do to contact the blood of Christ. Only at *that* point of contact will his sins be forgiven because nothing but the blood of Christ can forgive sins. Think of it another way.

John 14: 6 Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Think of “**the way**” as a road to forgiveness. To travel this road one must travel from point A to point B to point C, etc., to reach the destination of the blood of Christ. If one begins the journey and stops at Point A and goes no further; has he arrived at the destination?



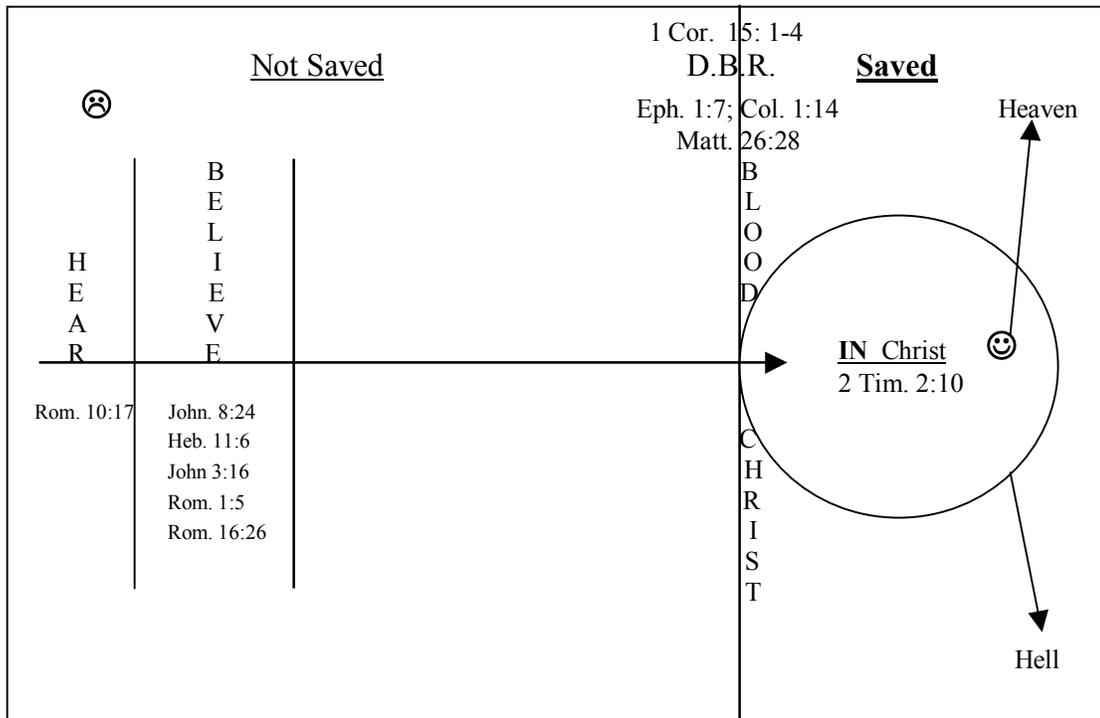
If a person *hears the gospel* but stops there; he is still on the wrong side of the line of forgiveness – the blood of Christ. He must respond to what he has heard from the Bible by *believing* “**the word of Christ.**”

What is the point of looking into a mirror if you have no intention of correcting whatever is out of place? James says it is the same with God’s word.

James 1: 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; **24** for [once] he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. **25** But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the [law] of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Believing the gospel is not optional with God. Jesus said:

John 8: 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am [He], you will die in your sins.



When one hears the gospel and chooses not to believe it; what happens when he dies in his sins?

The unidentified writer of the book of Hebrews teaches us that without faith, or belief, it is impossible to please God.

Hebrews 11: 6 And 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 seek Him.

In addition to believing in Christ one must believe that he is a rewarder of those who *seek* him. If one claims to believe in Christ but goes no further on “**the way**” to forgiveness in his blood; is that person *seeking* Him?

Now pay particular attention to one of the most widely known, yet abused, texts of the Bible.

John 3: 16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

This verse says, “**whoever believes IN Him shall not perish.**” From the chart above it is easy to see that salvation is **IN** Christ. One who gives intellectual assent to the fact that Jesus is the Christ but does not follow through with a lifestyle change that comes from the “**obedience of faith**” (Romans 1:5) is not **IN** Christ because he has not yet contacted the blood of Christ to be forgiven. One who believes Christ is the son of God and follows through in obedience to God’s teaching to contact and be forgiven in the blood of Christ is then **IN** Christ and should not go back into sin as a dog returns to its vomit (2 Peter

2:20-22) and perish, but should do whatever it takes, even if it means death, to live faithful to his understanding of God's word and go to heaven at death or when Christ comes again.

James 2: 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. **20** But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? **21** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? **22** You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; [The 'works' here are not works of merit or deserving, but works of obedience. The demons believe, intellectual assent, but do not follow through with obedience. Who in their right mind thinks demons will be in heaven just because they believed?]

It is important to note that the apostle Paul opened the book to Christ's church in Rome with "**obedience of faith**" and closed the book with "**obedience of faith.**"

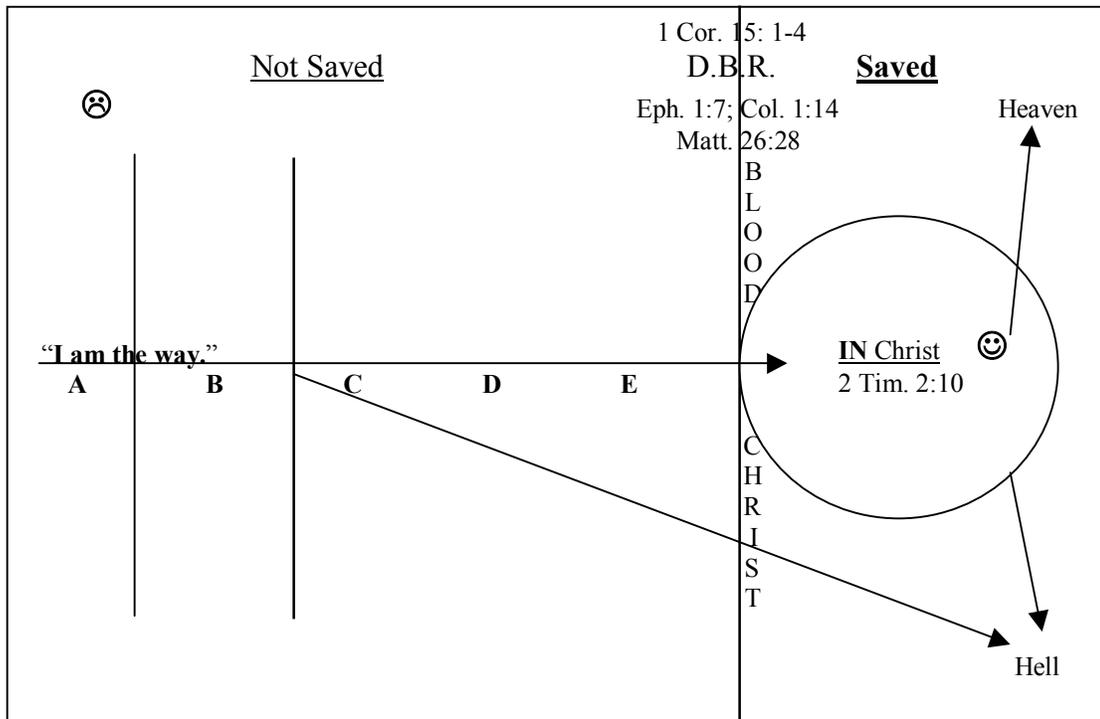
Romans 1: 1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called [as] an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, **2** which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, **3** concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, **4** who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, **5** through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about [the] obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, **6** among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; **7** to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called [as] saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 16: 25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, **26** but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, [leading] to obedience of faith; **27** to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

Therefore, anything regarding salvation said between chapters 1 and 16 of the book of Romans must be understood in the *context* of "**obedience of faith.**"

Now suppose that one seeking forgiveness *hears the gospel* (A) and gives mental or intellectual assent to the fact that Christ is the son of God, *believes* (B), but does not follow through with the "**obedience of faith**" and stops there at B on "**the way**" to forgiveness; which side of the line of forgiveness (the blood of Christ) is he still on? If he travels from A to B and goes no further, has he reached his destination? Granted, he is much closer to his destination at B than when he was at A, but is he there yet? The chart helps us to see graphically that "**whosoever believes IN Him**" (John 3:16) is the one who gives mental assent to the fact that Christ is God's son and OBEYS his teaching to

become forgiven in his blood and lives in a faithful relationship with him. One who just gives mental assent that Jesus is the Christ but does not follow through in obedience is still not saved because he has not contacted Christ's blood for forgiveness.



When giving the fundamentals of the gospel in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, the apostle Paul stated in verse 2 that some of the Corinthians could have “believed in vain.”

Remember Romans 10:17? Biblical faith comes by hearing the word of God. To demonstrate the deceitfulness of the devil Jesus stated that one could not only believe in vain, hearing something other than or different from the “**word of God,**” but also could worship in vain. If one *hears wrong, believes wrong and worships wrong*, how can he be okay with God?

Matthew 15: 9 But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts [teachings] of men.

If one *hears error, believes error and obeys error*, then he *worships* in error. Isn't eternity important enough to investigate the source of your faith? Make sure that what you believe as truth comes from the Bible and no other source, even if an angel were to tell you something different from the Bible – don't believe it!

Galatians 1: 6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is [really] not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to

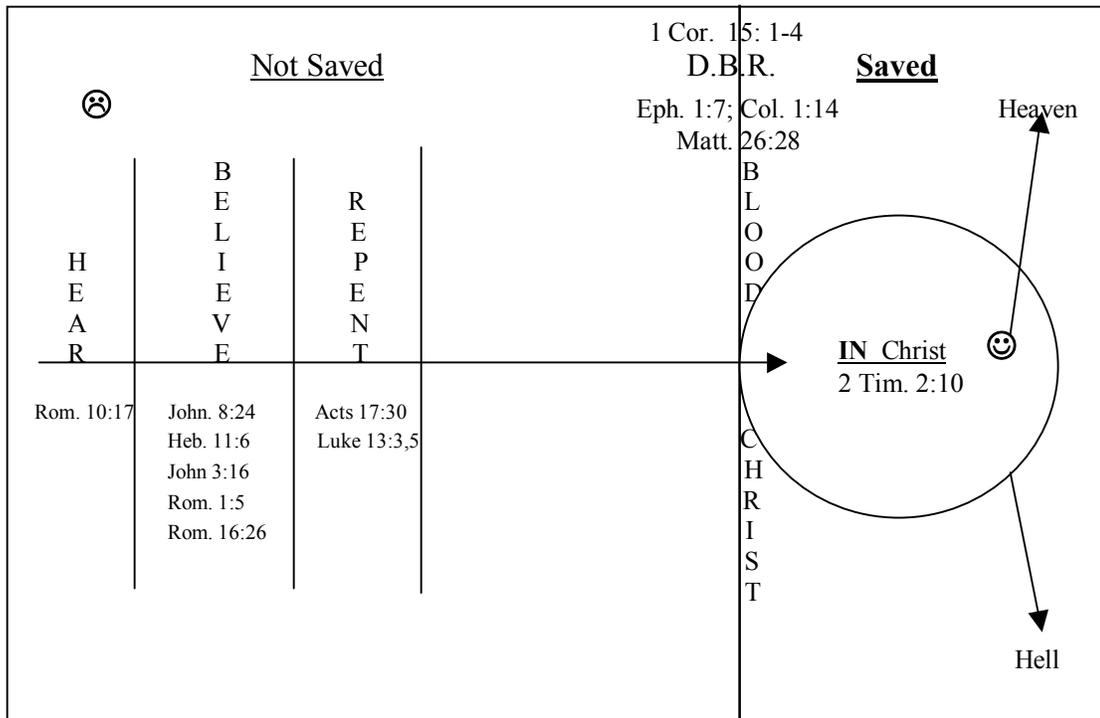
you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!
9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received [from the apostles], he is to be accursed!
[No man speaks for God unless what he speaks is consistent with the context of the whole Bible. "...what we have preached to you," is the Bible as we have it recorded today by the inspiration of God. The Bible is God's word through the various writers. Paul says that any preacher, or even an angel, that teaches anything different is accursed!]

1 Peter 4: 10 As each one has received a [special] gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **11** Whoever speaks, [is to do so] as one who is speaking the utterances of God; [No man is an exception regardless of title or the lack of one.] whoever serves [is to do so] as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Once an individual *hears the gospel* and *believes* it, Christ teaches that he must then *repent of sin*. Repentance means to turn one's life around one hundred and eighty degrees. Repentance means to die to selfish desires and live according to the desires God has for one's life as expressed in the New Covenant. Repentance takes place in one's mind. Others will only know you've repented when they see your changed conduct. Jesus made this very point with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

John 3: 7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, You must be born again. **8** The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. [Jesus is contrasting a spiritual birth of the New Covenant with a fleshly birth of the Old Covenant. A newborn baby was flesh and could be seen. One cannot see the wind but can see the *effects* of the wind. One cannot look at another human being and see that a spiritual birth has taken place, as with a physical birth under the Old Covenant, but one can see the *effects* of a spiritual birth in that person – a changed lifestyle. In verse 8 Jesus is talking about a *person* who has experienced a spiritual birth, not how the Holy Spirit works in conversion. Look at the text – "**so is everyONE who is born of the Spirit.**"

One who repents *continues* the road, 'the way,' to contact Christ's blood.



Acts 17: 22 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. 23 For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, `TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. [These people were worshipping, they had faith, they believed, but they believed in vain and were worshipping in vain. If it happened to them; can it happen to us?] 24 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all [people] life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one [man] every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined [their] appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, `For we also are His children.' 29 Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all [people] everywhere should repent, [Repentance is not optional, it is a commandment. "...all [people] everywhere" leaves no exception. It includes you and me.] 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

Repentance is a commandment. How many of God's commandments can one deliberately disobey and still expect God to save him? What if a person *hears the gospel* and *believes* that Christ is the son of God (as do the demons) but

refuses to repent and continues living as he did before he heard that Christ died for his sins? Is that okay with the one who gave his life for him? Hear Him now.

Luke 13: 1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. **2** And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were [greater] sinners than all [other] Galileans because they suffered this [fate]? **3** I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. **4** Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were [worse] culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? **5** I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." [Repentance, for one who hears the gospel and believes it, is not optional with Christ. The only two options given by him are *repent* or *perish*, that is, *turn* or *burn*.]

Matthew 11: 20 Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. **21** "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. **22** Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in [the] day of judgment than for you. **23** And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. **24** Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in [the] day of judgment, than for you."

Matthew 21: 28 "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' **29** And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he regretted it and went. **30** The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, 'I [will], sir'; but he did not go. **31** Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first."

Luke 15: 1 Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. **2** Both the Pharisees and the scribes [began] to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." **3** So He told them this parable, saying, **4** "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? **5** When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. **6** And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' **7** I tell you that in the same way, there will be [more] joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. **8** Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? **9** When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!' **10** In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Repentance is a change of mind that results in a changed life because of a changed attitude toward sin. When a sinner hears and understands that Christ took his place on the cross for the sins that he, the sinner, committed; the sinner then realizes that he, in fact, spiritually, killed the son of God just as surely as if he had been the one who drove the spikes through his hands and feet at his crucifixion. The realization is, *"Sin killed Christ. I sin. Therefore, I killed Christ! Surely I do not want to continue my present lifestyle of selfishness and sin and have to face God in judgment and explain why I had an opportunity to be forgiven by the very one I killed and chose to continue crucifying him daily by continuing a lifestyle of sin. I will do whatever the Bible teaches to correct my sinful ways and contact the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of my sins and live faithful to him, even if it means dying for my faith."* At this point the individual has had a change of heart toward Christ and sin, a desire to change his conduct or lifestyle, and a desire to be forgiven, but is he forgiven yet? He has not yet contacted the blood of Christ to be forgiven. Granted, his attitude has changed and consequently he has changed, but his relationship with God has not yet changed. *Reformation* of one's lifestyle is not the same as *restoration* of one's relationship with God. Many confuse one for the other. How can one's relationship with God change without forgiveness of sins? Think about it in terms of marriage. A boy *hears* about (or sees) a girl. Are they *married* at this point? He *believes* in what he sees enough to ask her out on a date. Are they married at the point of their first date? He then decides to turn from all other girls and date only her (he *repents*). Are they married at the point of deciding to date only each other? Their relationship as husband and wife, *marriage*, doesn't change until the ceremony of marriage. Granted, at the point of deciding to date only each other they are closer to marriage than when they first met, but they still aren't married – not until the marriage ceremony. It is the same with coming to Christ. Put another way, go back to our previous illustration of **"the way."** If this person travels from A to C and stops; has he reached his destination? If he stops here at repentance and goes no further; has he really repented?

It is true that repentance takes place in one's mind. But the fruit of repentance is changed conduct – a new lifestyle.

From a human point of view it is wonderful when a person can learn God's truth, repent, be forgiven of sins, and continue current social, religious, business, and maybe even political relationships, but that is not always the case.

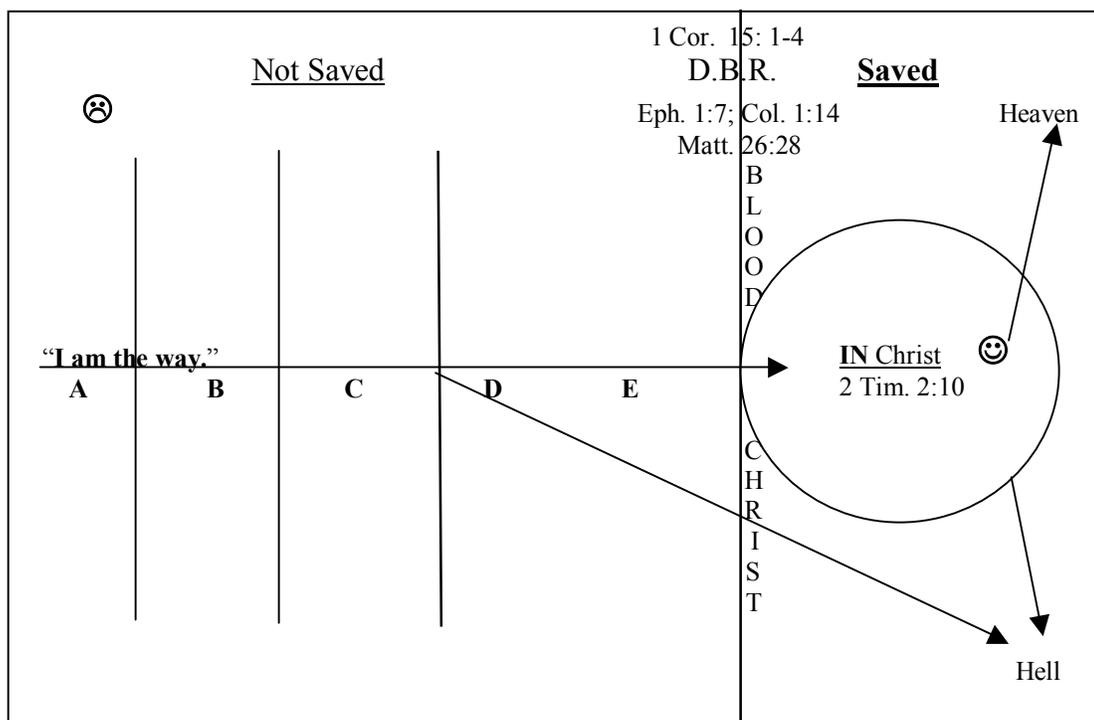
1 Corinthians 15: 33 Do not be deceived: bad company corrupts good morals.

Jesus didn't tap dance around this issue but stated it in no uncertain terms.

Matthew 10: 34 Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36 and a man's enemies will be the members of his

household. 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

Any change necessary in one's lifestyle to obey "the word of Christ," in the end, is worth it. It's a matter of eternity.



The next logical question to ask at this point is, "Since every person on earth is in the square, and each person is either saved or not saved; what does the Bible teach one who is lost to do when he *hears the gospel, believes it, and repents of sin?*" Jesus says that one must confess *him* before men.

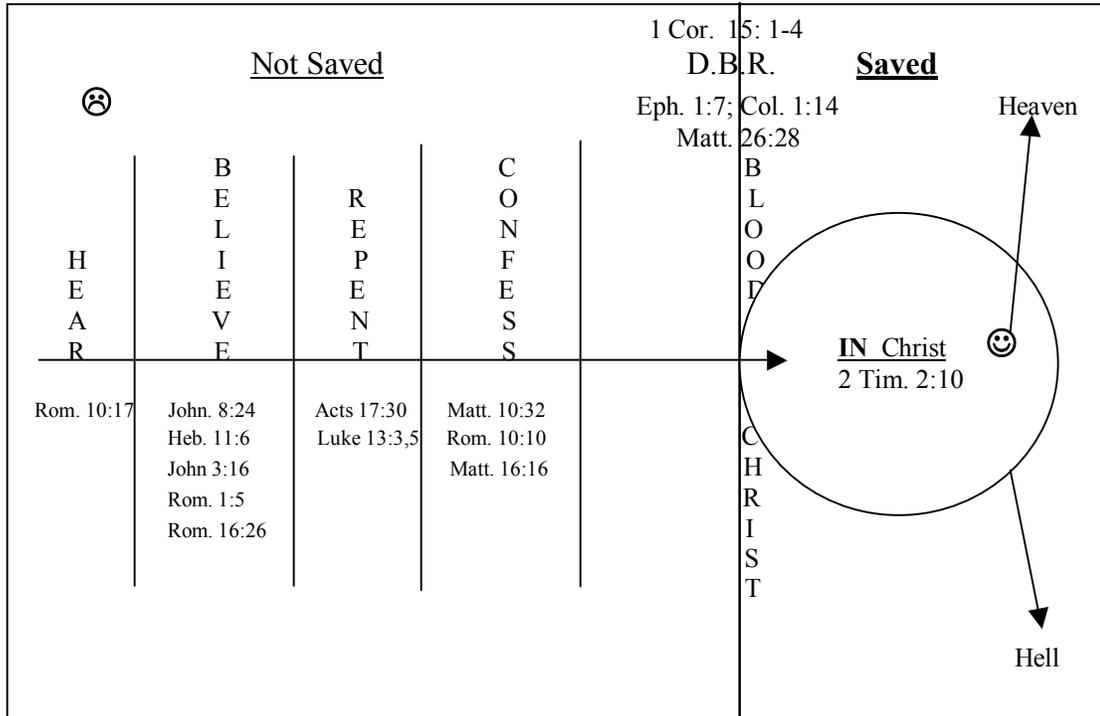
Matthew 10: 32 Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. **33** But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

Does the following confession sound familiar? Does it sound 'bible'?

"Therefore everyone who confesses that God for Christ's sake has pardoned me of my sin before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven."

Compare what you just read with the actual quote from Matthew 10:32 just above it. The confession you just read sounds very 'bible' and is the confession made by many today, but it is NOT what Jesus said to confess. Notice why it isn't.

“Has pardoned” means that pardon, or forgiveness, has already occurred. Pardon, forgiveness, comes *only* from contacting the blood of Christ and that has not happened at this point on “the way.”



We have not yet read anywhere in the Bible that the individual in the square above has contacted Christ’s blood. He, therefore, cannot confess truthfully that his sins have already been forgiven. But he can, at this point, confess faith in Christ as God’s son exactly as Christ directed, “**Therefore everyone who confesses ME before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.**”

Remember the boy and girl illustration above? A boy *hears* about (or sees) a girl. Are they *married* at this point? He *believes* in what he sees enough to ask her out on a date. Are they married at this point? He then decides to turn from all other girls and date only her (*he repents*). Are they married at the point of deciding to date only each other? After dating and getting to know each other he asks her to marry him. She accepts. He goes home and tells his mother (*he confesses*) that he has found the girl with whom he plans to spend his life. Are they married at the point of telling the world of their belief in each other and their intention to marry? Of course not! Their relationship as husband and wife, *marriage*, doesn’t happen until the ceremony of marriage. Granted, at the point of announcing their wedding they are much closer to marriage than when they first met, but *they still aren’t married!* Their relationship does not change until the marriage ceremony. This is a valid illustration because John the baptizer referred to Christ as the bridegroom. John was the ‘best man’ and the church is the bride of the bridegroom.

John 3: 27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. **28** You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, `I am not the Christ,' but, `I have been sent ahead of Him.' **29** He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. **30** He must increase, but I must decrease.

By the way, if Christ is the bridegroom and John the baptist is the best man; whose name should the bride wear?

The apostle Paul teaches that one's confession of Christ is to be made with the mouth.

Romans 10: 8 But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart – that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, **9** that if you confess with your mouth Jesus [as] Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; **10** for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. **11** For the Scripture says, **Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.** [Note that these verses come between chapter 1:5 and chapter 16:26 where Paul opened and closed the book in the context of the “**obedience of faith.**” Any explanation given to these verses must be consistent with everything else in the book of Romans that Paul had to say about salvation. Truth is not contradictory and neither does Paul contradict himself in this book. The “**word of faith**” in verse 8 and “**salvation**” in verse 10 are linked by the “**obedience of faith,**” “**believe,**” in verse 9, not just mental assent.]

Can we find an example in Scripture where someone confessed Christ with his mouth?

Matthew 16: 13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" **14** And they said, "Some [say] John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." **15** He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" **16** Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

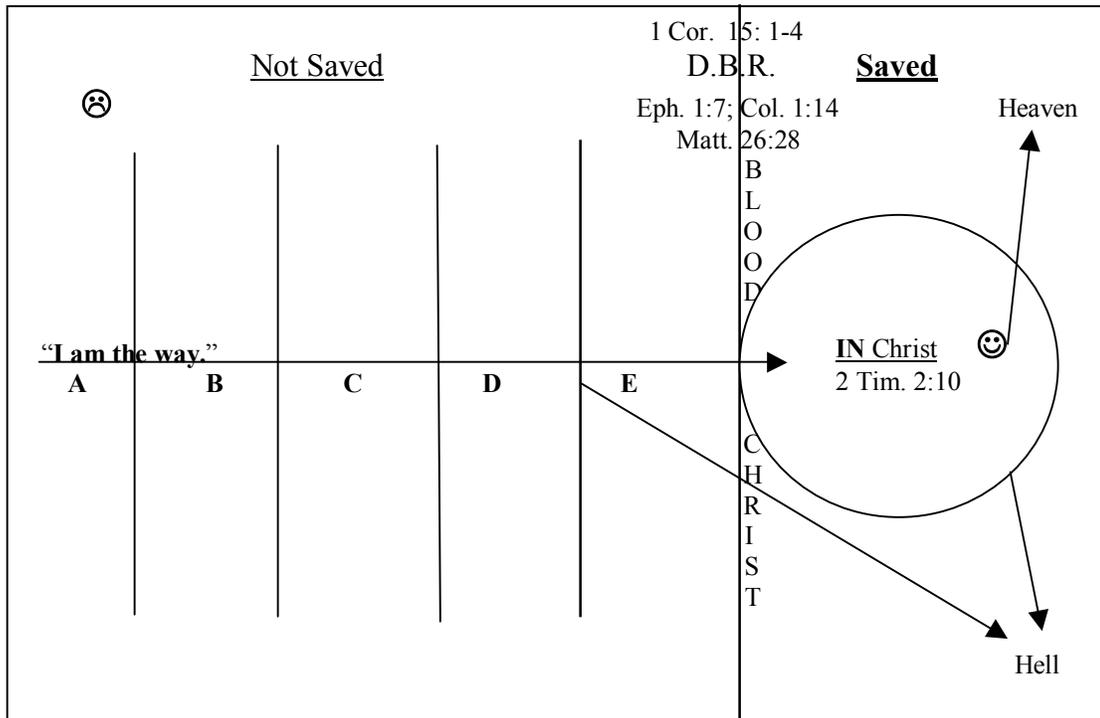
Like Peter, I confess to you reading this, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God.” Do you believe that also?

Circle one:

T **F** “I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God.”

The individual in the square below represented by the sad face *hears the gospel, believes it, repents of sin and confesses Christ*, but stops there, has his relationship with God changed? Have we read anywhere that he has contacted the blood of Christ and been forgiven of sin? If he travels “**the way**” from point A to point D and goes no further; has he reached the destination of the blood of Christ? Yes, he is much closer than when he first started on the

road to forgiveness but he is not there yet. A couple who meets, dates, dates only each other and announces their wedding plans are much closer to marriage than when they first met, but their relationship is still *Not Married*.



Before we go further let's review briefly. Everybody on earth is in the square. Each person on earth has a relationship with God and it is either Saved or Not Saved. Those who are saved are forgiven of their sins by the blood of Christ which he shed in his death on the cross according to the Scriptures and are in Christ where salvation is. All the saved who live faithful to their commitment to God, regardless of the cost, will go to heaven and anyone who abandons his faith and goes back into a lifestyle of sin will go to hell.

A sinner's relationship with God does not change until he *hears the gospel, believes it, repents of sin, confesses Christ,* and then what?

First, let's look at what happened while Christ was on the cross.

John 19: 31 Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and [that] they might be taken away. [Crucifixion was death by suffocation. If the legs were broken; the condemned man could not push himself up to breath. Legs were broken to hasten death.] **32** So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; **33** but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. **34** But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

Christ was already dead in verse 33 and his blood was shed in verse 34. *Therefore, his blood was shed in his death on the cross.* We have already established the fact that nothing but the blood of Christ will forgive sin. Now we know that His blood was shed in his death on the cross. Does it make sense that if we today could somehow get into the death of Christ, then we would be where his blood was shed that forgives sin? I'm not saying it's possible, I'm just asking, "Does it make sense?"

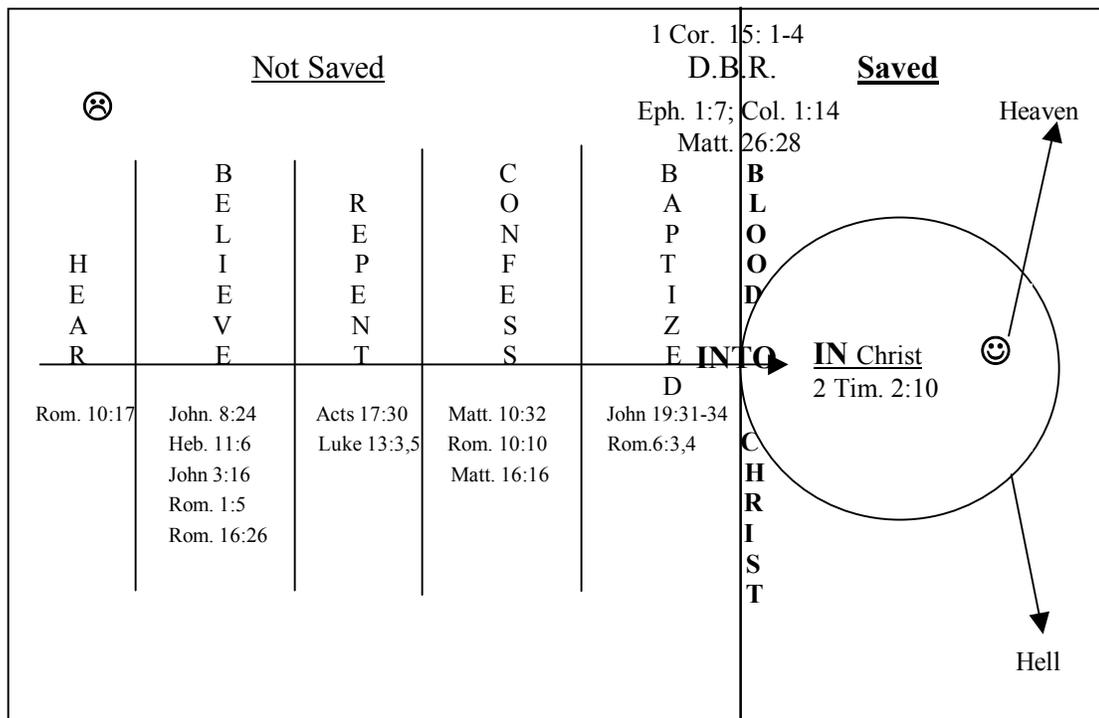
Since it makes sense that if we could somehow get into the death of Christ, then we would be where his blood was shed that forgives sin; we must now raise the question, "Does the Bible tell us how to get into the death of Christ?"

The apostle Paul answers the question in his letter to Christ's church in Rome, chapter 6. Paul was writing to those already forgiven and referring to the time when their forgiveness occurred.

Romans 6: 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Verse 3 is a rhetorical question which means that the answer is obvious. "Yes, Paul, we know that. What is your point?" The point is verse 4.

The saved at Rome understood that they were **baptized INTO** the death of Christ. Why was that important? Because the death of Christ is where his blood was shed that forgives sin. ***Baptism puts one into the death of Christ where his blood was shed that forgives sin.*** That's why it was obvious to the saved at Rome that they were "**baptized into Christ Jesus.**" Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:10 that salvation is IN Christ. Here in Romans 6:3 Paul tells us that one is "**baptized INTO Christ.**"



God is no respecter of persons. That is, he will not save one group one way and save another group another, different, way. *He saves all alike or he saves none at all.* That explains why all the apostles taught the same thing regarding forgiveness in every assembly no matter where they were. Paul, for example, wrote to Christ's church in Galatia:

Galatians 3: 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Now that you understand the relationship between baptism and the blood of Jesus, *that the physical act of baptism [burial or immersion in water] puts one spiritually into the death of Christ where his blood was shed that forgives sins,* you can understand a verse of Scripture that many have not been able to understand simply because they did not have Bible knowledge that you now have. That verse is Acts 2:38.

Acts 2: 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified. 37 Now when they heard [this], they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Peter [said] to them, Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Why did Peter tell those who had just heard the gospel, starting back in verse 14, to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins? It was because Peter knew by inspiration what we now know from the written word of God, *that baptism*

spiritually puts one into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3,4) where his blood was shed (John 19:33,34) that forgives sins (Matthew 26:28).

To keep as many people as possible from being forgiven, the devil has changed God's word as he did with Eve. The devil's argument goes like this, "...for the forgiveness of sins" does not mean in order to obtain forgiveness but means because forgiveness has already occurred." His example to prove this goes like this, "One takes an aspirin for a headache. That does not mean that one takes an aspirin in order to get a headache, but because he already has a headache." The master deceiver and father of all lies will say whatever it takes to subtly turn just one away from the truth of God's word so he will hear error, believe error, obey error, and worship self deceived in error. Please don't let that one be you. No, one does not take an aspirin in order to get a headache; he takes an aspirin for the relief of a headache already present. He took the aspirin in order to *obtain* relief, not because he already had relief! Likewise, one is baptized in order to *obtain* forgiveness of sin already present. Pay careful attention to what Jesus said in this text.

Matthew 26: 26 While they were eating, Jesus took [some] bread, and after a blessing, He broke [it] and gave [it] to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave [it] to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."

For centuries the devil and his preachers parroting his deceit from generation to generation have taken advantage of innocent people's lack of Bible knowledge and have deceived people into believing that there is no link between baptism in water and forgiveness of sin. To the contrary, however, the devil and his messengers have never, to my knowledge, tried to deceive people into believing that there is no link between the blood of Christ and forgiveness of sin. Have you ever heard anyone say, "...for forgiveness of sins" in Matthew 26:28 does not mean in order to obtain forgiveness but means because forgiveness is already past." What fool would teach that Christ went to the cross and shed his blood because forgiveness of sins had already happened?

The very nature of language is that by one statement one message is intended to be conveyed. What message was Jesus trying to convey when he linked blood and forgiveness in Matthew 26:28? "...for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." What message was Peter trying to convey on Pentecost when he, inspired by God, linked baptism and forgiveness in Acts 2:38? Peter [said] to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;" The phrase "for forgiveness of sins" is identical in koine Greek, the language in which the original text was written, the common language of the day. Notice:

Christ, Matthew 26:28, blood ... for forgiveness of sins
Peter, Acts 2:38, baptized ... for the forgiveness of your sins

The *only* difference in the two are the words *blood* and *baptized*. "...for the forgiveness of sins" is identical. Now, if "for the forgiveness of sins" with reference to the blood of Christ means that Christ's blood was shed in order to forgive sin, then why doesn't "for the forgiveness of sins" with reference to baptism mean that baptism is in order to forgive sin? Both statements are from God through Christ and Peter. I certainly would not want to be in any person's shoes standing before God in judgment trying to explain why I taught men something in His name different from what He taught through Christ and Peter! Neither would I want to be in any person's shoes standing before God in judgment trying to explain why I chose to obey the teaching of some person who taught me something different from what He taught through Christ and Peter in the Bible.

Many today teach that one is saved through "repentance and baptism" without any further explanation and without connecting baptism to Christ's blood. Without that connection it sounds as if they are teaching that the water of baptism saves. The New Testament nowhere teaches water salvation. The water of baptism does not forgive sin. The water is only the element God chose for immersion for an individual to demonstrate trust and obedience to his instruction. If God had chosen motor oil for the element in which one is to be "**buried with Him through baptism into death**" (Romans 6:4) then one would have to be buried [immersed] into motor oil. But God chose water. At the house of the first Gentile converts Peter said to the six Jewish brethren who accompanied him as witnesses,

Acts 10: 47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we [did], can he?" 48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days

This commandment was given by the same Peter that is recorded in Acts 2 on Pentecost. Peter taught by *inspiration* what we must teach from *the written word*, namely, that one immersed into water physically for the purpose of forgiveness of sins is immersed into the death of Christ spiritually where his blood was shed that forgives sin, not the water. Contrary to the way many abuse the text, the apostle Peter did not teach 'water salvation' in his first letter to persecuted Christians.

1 Peter 3: 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, [the] just for [the] unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits [now] in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through [the] water. 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "Corresponding to that" of verse 21 literally means "similarly." Similarly to what? Most people link "Corresponding to that" of verse 21 to the last part of verse 20, "eight persons, were brought

safely through [the] water.” “Corresponding to that” or “similarly” refers to the entire preceding sentence which starts in verse 18. Christ was “**put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit:**” Baptism saves *similar* or *corresponding* to this. When one repents he dies to self [*similar* or *corresponding* to Christ being put to death in the flesh] and is then buried in a grave of water [*similar* or *corresponding* to Christ being buried in a tomb] into the death of Christ where his blood was shed that forgives sin, in obedience to God’s teaching through the word [*similar* or *corresponding* to those who obeyed Christ’s teaching through Noah] and is raised to “**walk in newness of life**” (Romans 6:4) because in the mind of God the obedient sinner has been stripped of his body of flesh and clothed with Christ (Colossians 2 below). Is there any doubt in anybody’s mind that God would have saved anyone if Noah had not obeyed his instruction? Can there be any doubt now that God will forgive anyone today who does not obey his instruction?

Romans 6: 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. [“Corresponding to that,” or similarly, of 1 Peter 3 above, “put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit:”] 5 For if we have become united with [Him] in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be [in the likeness] of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with [Him], in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

Why is it that “newness of life” follows being raised from burial into the grave of water? Listen to Paul again as he addressed Christ’s church in Colossae.

Colossians 2: 6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, [so] walk in Him, 7 having been firmly rooted [and now] being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, [and] overflowing with gratitude. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. 9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; 11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

The “circumcision made without hands” was accomplished “through faith in the working of God.” Forgiveness of sins occurs in the mind of God, but it does not occur until one complies with the “obedience of faith.” Spiritual circumcision, “removal of the body of the flesh” occurs in the mind of God at the point of being “buried with Him in baptism.” Here Paul says that one’s sins

are stripped from the body of flesh at the burial with Christ in baptism. In Galatians 3: 27 above Paul also said that in baptism one is “**clothed...with Christ.**” The mental graphic for the phrase “**clothed...with Christ**” in the original language is that of putting on a piece of clothing. Now the picture is complete. A sinner *hears* that God loved him enough to send Christ to die for his sins and that Christ was in fact crucified, buried and raised from the dead by the power of God. The sinner *believes* Christ is the son of God and *repents* of sin *confessing* publicly his faith as he is *immersed* physically into a grave of water, spiritually into the death of Christ, where his blood was shed that forgives sin. At this point of contact with Christ’s blood in obedience to God’s instruction, God, in heaven, removes the body of the sins of the flesh and clothes one with Christ. When the sinner is *raised* up from the grave of water, he is raised to walk in *newness of life*. He is now spiritually a *newborn babe in Christ* who is to desire the sincere milk of the Word and grow.

In chapter 6 of Paul’s letter to the assembly of Christ’s saints at Rome he made a statement that ties in with his definition of the gospel in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 1-4.

Romans 6: 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, [Paul uses the past tense verb **were** because these are the ones immersed, buried into the death of Christ and raised to walk in newness of life in the first four verses of this chapter.] **you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,** [The *teaching* to which they were committed was the *death, burial and resurrection* of Christ *for our sins according to Scripture*, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. These are the *facts* of the gospel. One cannot obey a *fact*, but one can obey a *form or likeness* of a fact. *Like Christ died physically we die to self - repentance. Like Christ was buried we are buried with him in baptism. Like Christ was raised from the dead we are raised from the grave of water to walk in newness of life.* Romans 6:4,5] **18 and having been freed from sin,** [Notice that “**freed from sin**” follows “**obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed.**” Freedom from sin does not come before obedience!] **you became slaves of righteousness.**

With your understanding now of the connection between immersion and the blood of Christ you can understand another verse that has been misunderstood by many with regard to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Saul was blinded on the road to Damascus when Christ appeared to him and led into the city. He was three days without food and in prayer and God sent Ananias to tell him what to do to be forgiven.

Acts 22: 14 And he said, `The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. 15 For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.

Notice the order of Ananias' instruction: 1. get up 2. be baptized 3. wash away your sins 4. calling on His name. Saul would be "**calling on His name,**" number 4, *after*, not before, he completed numbers 1-3, that is, he got up, was immersed and washed away his sins. Why was Saul told to be baptized to wash away his sins? Both Ananias, here with Saul, and Peter, on Pentecost, received their instruction from the same source, God by inspiration, which is exactly what is taught by God's written word today - *baptism puts one into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3,4) where his blood was shed (John 19:33,34) that forgives, or washes away, sin (Matthew 26:28; Acts 22:16).* The water of immersion did not wash away Saul's sins; it was the blood of Christ contacted spiritually when he was buried into Christ's death in obedience to God's instruction that washed away his sins.

Revelation 1: 4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood – 6 and He has made us [to be] a kingdom, priests to His God and Father – to Him [be] the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The blood of Christ is what releases or washes away sin. Burial into his death, baptism, is where sins are released or washed away by Christ's blood. The water is only the element chosen by God into which one is immersed. Nothing but the blood of Christ forgives sin.

Remember the boy and girl illustration? Their *relationship* to each other as husband and wife did not change from single to married until the ceremony of marriage. A sinner's relationship with God does not change from 'Not Saved' to 'Saved' until the 'ceremony' of burial in a grave of water in obedience to God's instruction. In that grave Christ's blood forgives his sins, and he is clothed with Christ and raised to walk in newness of life and living faithful to the bridegroom – Christ.

Now you can see the beauty in Christ's simple instruction to the apostles just before he returned to heaven.

Mark 16: 15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 He who has believed [Babies do not have the capacity to believe.] and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

'Belief' is the first thing one who hears the gospel does in obeying Christ and 'baptized' is the last thing he does traveling "**the way**" to change his relationship from sinner to saint, lost to saved, not forgiven to forgiven. Some have asked, "Why didn't Christ say, "**but he who has disbelieved** and is not baptized **shall be condemned?**" It wasn't necessary. If one hears the gospel and does not believe it, is he going to submit to immersion in a grave of water in obedience to that which he does not believe? Christ's statement here is

parallel to his statement in **John 8:24 ... for unless you believe that I am [He], you shall die in your sins.** What if Christ had said, “He who has eaten and has digested his food shall live; but he who has not eaten shall die?” Does one digest who does not eat? Neither is one immersed who disbelieves.

Notice once again how deceitful the devil is in his teaching.

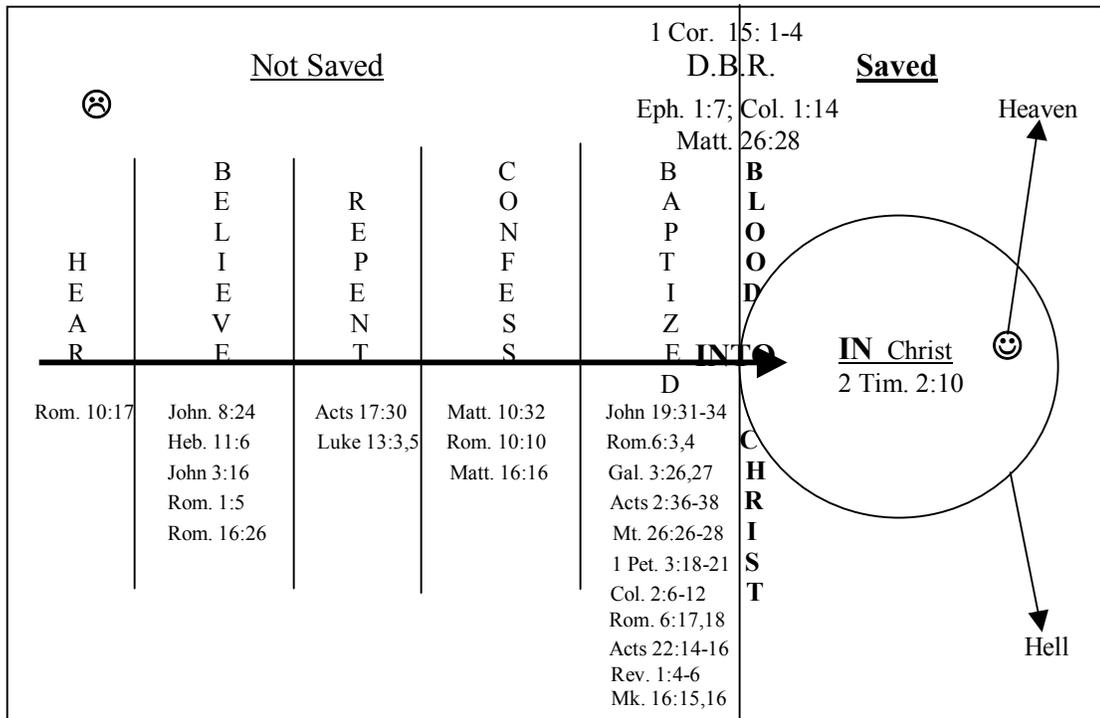
Christ said,	Belief + Baptism = Salvation
The devil teaches,	Belief + Salvation = Baptism

Will you follow the teaching of the one who died to give you forgiveness and heaven, or the one who lives to deceive you into believing a lie for a home with him in hell? The choice is totally yours. No one can make you obey Christ, but no one can keep you from it either.

The devil deceived Eve by slightly changing God’s word so that it still sounded ‘bible.’

2 Corinthians 11: 3 But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity [of devotion] to Christ. 4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, ...

Don’t allow the devil through his messengers disguised as servants of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:14) to do the same thing to you as he did Eve. What you hear, what you believe, what you obey matters to God, and your eternity.



Every person on earth is in the square above. Where, in the square, are you?

Please circle your response to the following questions.

Is there anything in the square that you do not understand? **YES NO**

Is there anything taught in the square that is not documented with book, chapter, and verse from the Bible? **YES NO**

If you have never heard the gospel before in your life, you have heard it here. Do you believe it? **YES NO**

Have you made the decision to die to selfish desires and do whatever it takes to live for God - have you repented of your sins? **YES NO**

Are you willing to confess Christ before men? **YES NO**

Can you think of one *reason* why you should not, right now, "Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name?" **YES NO**

Chapter 7

Common Misconceptions

Misconception #1 – “The church must be assembled for me to be immersed.”

Acts 16: 25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; **26** and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. **27** When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. **28** But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" **29** And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, **30** and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" **31** They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." **32** And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. **33** And he took them that [very] hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his [household]. **34** And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

This series of events began at midnight and ended with a meal in verse 34. Sometime between midnight and this meal the jailor and his family were baptized and the church was not assembled. The time to be baptized into Christ is when one learns the truth and decides to surrender to God – **“that [very] hour,”** verse 33. The church does not have to be assembled.

The jailor was a pagan, an unbeliever. When he asked what to do to be saved, Paul told him to believe. The devil and his messengers would have us believe that the context stops after verse 31, but it doesn't. Paul said in Romans 10:17 that faith comes by hearing the word of Christ, which the jailor and his family had not yet heard. Notice specifically that, **“they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house”** in verse 32. How did he and his family respond to the word of the Lord? They repented, **“And he took them that [very] hour of the night and washed their wounds; and immediately he was baptized, he and all his [household].”** Repentance and baptism are a part of the word of the Lord. Otherwise, how would the jailor and his family have known to do this in response to the question, **“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”**

The jailor and his family were told to believe in verse 31. They were told what to believe in verse 32. They repented and were baptized for the forgiveness of sins in verse 33. And in verse 34 they **“rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.”** They were *believing in God* after they heard the gospel, believed it, repented of sin, and were baptized for forgiveness; then the Bible says they were believing in God. Initial faith is intellectual assent,

repentance is faith internalized producing lifestyle changes, confession of Christ is faith stated, baptism is faith demonstrated, and faithful living is faith as a lifestyle.

Misconception #2 – “But I’ve already been immersed once. I don’t need to be immersed again.”

The word baptize means to dip, plunge, immerse, submerge, or overwhelm. It isn’t enough just to be immersed, one must be *biblically* immersed. For immersion to be Bible immersion it must meet the following criteria. First, Bible immersion must be for the right *purpose*, that is, for the forgiveness of sin as discussed in chapter 6. Second, Bible immersion must be *from the heart*, that is, a person must know at the time of immersion that he is being baptized for the forgiveness of sin (Romans 6:17 covered in chapter 6 of this book). And third, Bible immersion *must be administered*, **“that [very] hour”** (Acts 16:33), **“that day”** (Acts 2:41), upon learning the truth, not days or weeks later as practiced by those who teach that baptism has nothing to do with forgiveness. Those who teach that baptism has nothing to do with forgiveness do not baptize **“for forgiveness of sins”** as did the apostles, but only as an initiation into that particular human religious organization. To prove it to yourself ask one of their preachers, “Does one have to be baptized to go to heaven?” The answer will be an emphatic, “No!” Ask the same preacher, “Does one have to be baptized to be a member of the XYZ church?” The answer will be an emphatic, “Yes.” You might then ask one more question, “Do you mean then that it takes *more* to be a member of the XYZ church than it does to go to heaven?”

Christ’s church in the first century had a sense of urgency regarding immersion into Christ for just one reason – one outside Christ is still lost.

Acts 2: 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day [not “the next Sunday” or “when they had enough,” no, **that day**] there were added about three thousand souls.

Acts 16: 33 And he took them that [very] hour of the night, and washed their wounds, [demonstrating repentance] and immediately [not “the next Sunday” or “the next time the church assembled,” no, immediately] **he was baptized, he and all his [household]**.

Why is it so important to the apostles and those they taught to immerse immediately? Because, as established in chapter 6 of this book, a penitent believer is immersed into the death of Christ, where his blood was shed, that forgives sins. If one hears the gospel, believes it, repents of sin, and confesses faith in Christ, his relationship still has not changed from Not Saved to Saved. Any delay of immersion delays contacting Christ’s blood and being forgiven. Nothing but Christ’s blood can forgive sin and Scripture gives only one way to contact the blood.

Paul encountered a group in Ephesus who had been taught error, believed error, obeyed error, and were in error. They had already been immersed once. Paul taught them the truth, they believed truth and obeyed truth by being immersed a second time for the right reason.

Acts 18: 24 Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. **25** This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; **26** and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. **27** And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, **28** for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. **19:1** It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. **2** He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they [said] to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." **3** And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." **4** Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." **5** When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **6** And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they [began] speaking with tongues and prophesying. **7** There were in all about twelve men.

Note that these disciples in Ephesus had been baptized with John's baptism in 19:3, Paul taught them the truth in verse 4 and in verse 5 they were baptized a second time to do it right.

Why was their first baptism not acceptable?

Mark 1: 4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

John's baptism was "for the forgiveness of sins," but since Christ had not yet died, forgiveness was *future* - at the death of Christ.

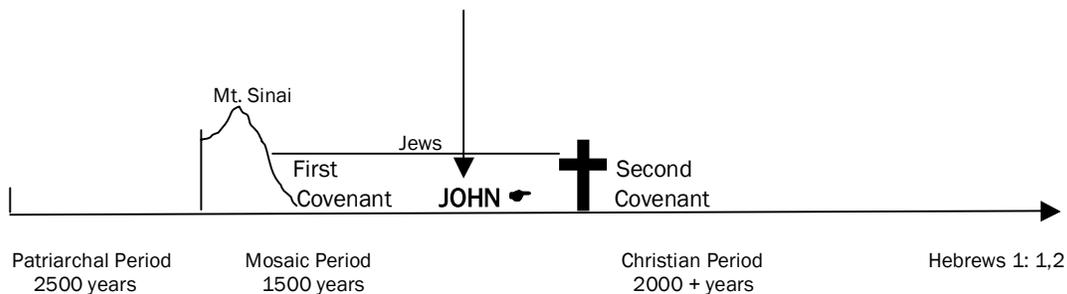
Hebrews 9: 15 For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were [committed] under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

John's audience was living under the first covenant and herein lies the key to understanding John's "baptism of repentance." Paul explained it in Acts 19:4.

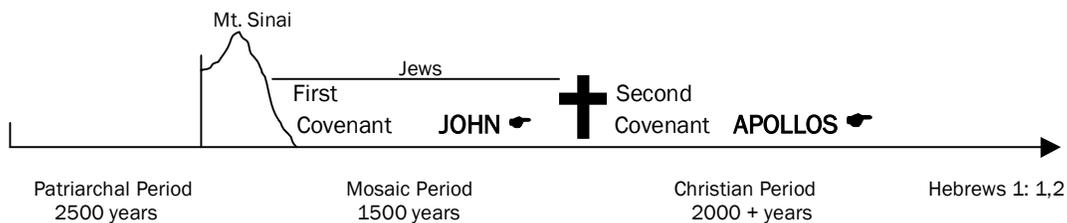
Acts 19: 4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

John's baptism was for the purpose of forgiveness of sins at the death of Christ and demonstrating a willingness to turn from the first covenant and turn to the second covenant of Christ, thus a **"baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."**

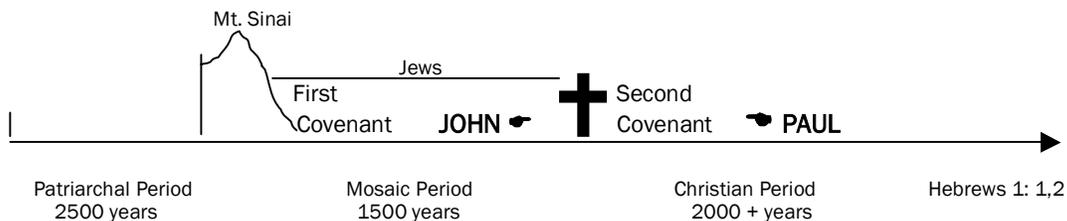
Graphically it would look like this. John was before Christ pointing people to him, his covenant, the cross and forgiveness, all of which were future for John's audience.



Apollos was preaching after Christ's death and ascension and still teaching John's baptism. Apollos was pointing people forward, or future, to Christ, his covenant, the cross and forgiveness when, in fact, all this was behind them.



The apostle Paul explained John's baptism and pointed those in Ephesus back to Christ. Realizing they had been baptized for the right reason but looking in the *wrong direction* for forgiveness made their baptism incorrect. Realizing their first immersion was out of date, they were immersed a *second* time, which was actually the first time they had been baptized biblically.



What about you? If you were baptized in the past; ask these four questions:

1. Was my baptism by immersion, “burial” (Romans 6:4)?
2. Was my immersion for the purpose of obtaining the forgiveness of my sins in the blood of Christ? (Matthew 26:28; Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16; Revelation 1:5)
3. Was my immersion “**from the heart,**” that is, did I know at the time of my immersion that it was to obtain forgiveness of my sins? (Romans 6:17)
4. Was my immersion immediate, (Acts 2:41; Acts 16:33)? Or did days or weeks pass before my immersion because I was taught that it was not necessary for forgiveness?

A “No” answer to any of the four questions above makes your baptism not in accordance with biblical teaching which we have read together directly from the Bible and is, therefore, in error. Please make arrangements right now to do it correctly, according to God’s new covenant, as did those in Ephesus. Do it for the same reason as did every single example of conversion in the New Testament – “**for forgiveness of sins.**”

Misconception #3 – “The content of chapter 6 in this book is Bible; therefore, the content of chapter 6 is what I did when I was saved.”

Those of us who believe the Bible is God’s word want to believe that what we have been taught and what we have obeyed in the past is the truth. When we hear a Bible topic discussed as thoroughly as chapter 6 discusses the point at which one obtains forgiveness and it makes sense to us, then some kind of strange chemistry takes place in the brain and we reason like this, “That is what the Bible teaches, therefore, that is what I did.” When, in fact, what I did may actually be *different* from what I now understand the Bible to teach. The best way to prevent this type of thinking is to commit one’s thoughts on the subject to writing before the subject is discussed.

Did you do the exercise on page 53? Your answer at that time defines what you thought was truth before learning in this book what the Bible *actually* teaches. Go back now to page 53 and see how you answered the question and what you wrote. Is it different from what you now know to be truth?

Misconception #4 – “I am a good person. I lead a good life. Therefore, the good master will take care of me.”

There are only two categories of people on earth with reference to a relationship with God: Saved and Not Saved. A good Not Saved person is still Not Saved.

If you have actually made this statement, do you honestly think that God will make an exception for you that he did not make for his own Son? Will he

require obedience and suffering for his own Son and yet allow you to live in disobedience and selfish pleasure and still go to heaven?

Hebrews 5: 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.

There is no deceit stronger than self deceit. If you have used this excuse to keep from being a Christian; do you really think that you can be a good sinner, not obey that for which Jesus died, never contact Christ's blood for forgiveness, live like you desire, and still live eternally in heaven with those who sacrificed personal desires and many who died for their faith? Listen to God's attitude on the subject.

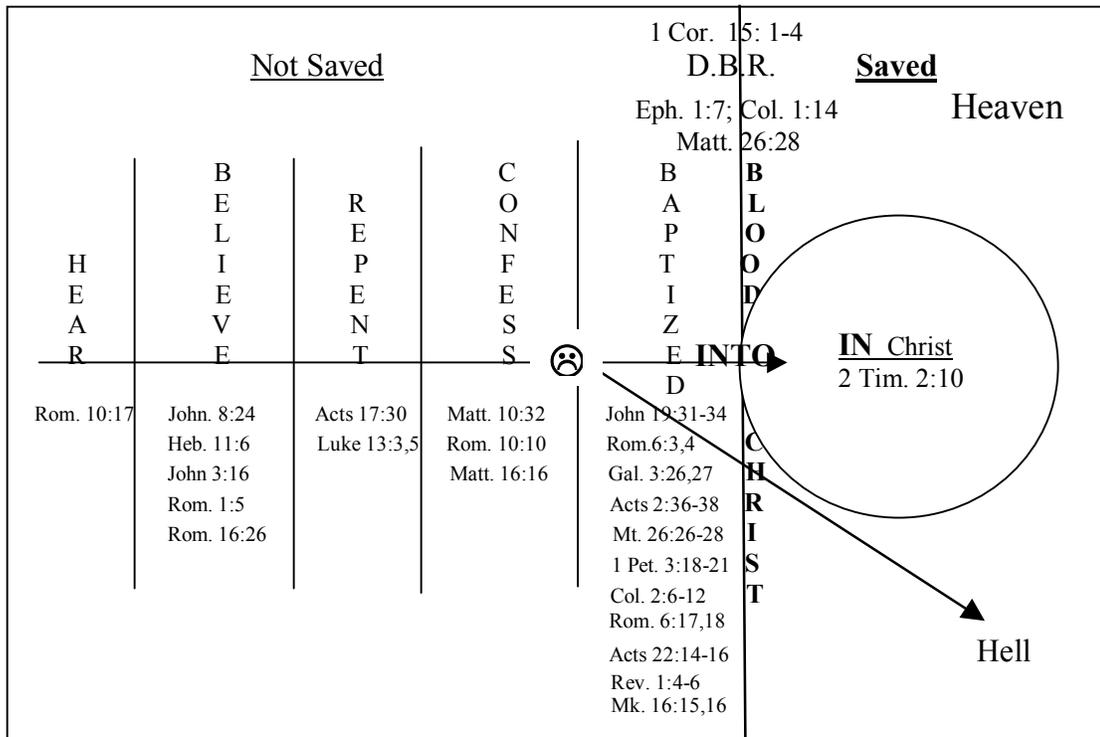
1 Peter 4: 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if [anyone suffers] as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 17 For [it is] time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if [it begins] with us first, what [will be] the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?

2 Thessalonians 1: 6 For after all it is [only] just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and [to give] relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

It is true, the good master will take care of every good person that does not obey him. But is what you have just read really the way you want the good master to take care of you when you stand before him in judgment?

2 Corinthians 7: 10 For the sorrow that is according to [the will of] God produces a repentance without regret, [leading] to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

2 Corinthians 6: 1 And working together [with Him], we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain – 2 for He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you." Behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation"



Now that you have heard the gospel, I give you the benefit of a doubt that you believe it, have repented of sin, and have confessed faith in Christ, but if you stop there, which side of the blood of Christ are you still on? Each of us is only one heartbeat away from death and no one knows the day nor the hour when Jesus will return. Do you want either of these two events to happen before you are forgiven? If you put off obedience to what you now know is truth; what excuse will you have at judgment? Judgment will not be for the purpose of determining one's guilt or innocence before God. Judgment will be for sentencing based upon how we responded to God's written instruction in this life. We die the way we live. We will be sentenced the way we died. Therefore, live today as you want to be sentenced at judgment – forgiven, or not.

Listen to God speaking to you through the apostle Peter, "**Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;** (Acts 2:38). Listen to God speaking to you through Ananias, "**Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.**" (Acts 22:16). And then hear God speaking to you through the apostle John, "**Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**"

On this date _____ I _____
was forgiven of my sins by the blood of Christ exactly as those who responded to the apostle's preaching on the first Pentecost following Christ's resurrection and he has added me to the same church to which they were added – Christ's church.

Chapter 8

The Security of the Believer

A believer in the New Testament is one who has heard the gospel and gives intellectual assent to the *fact* of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, *accepts* the Bible as God's word and *lives* in obedience to his understanding of its teaching. A believer in the biblical sense is one who is *in* Christ living faithfully.

When a person *hears the gospel of Christ, believes it, repents of sin, confesses faith in Christ, and is immersed into Christ's death for forgiveness in his blood*, that person is *in Christ*, in a *saved relationship* with Christ, and free to live life within the guidelines of biblical principles. He now has the *selfless* attitude of pleasing God first and foremost and caring for others with the same attitude as did Jesus. He is constantly looking for the opportunity to introduce someone else to Christ. He is confident of his relationship with God and fearless as to how, when, or where this life ends. He knows that death is only a transition for the believer from the here and now to the then and there; that is, this human body trusting God by faith is going to a spirit body in the presence of God for eternity. This walk of faith in Scripture is referred to in human terms as *growth*.

Just as in the flesh not everyone is at the same point chronologically, mentally, emotionally or physically, not every believer is at the same point spiritually. Babies are as much human as grandparents, but they don't know as much and are not capable of functioning at the same level as their older brothers and sisters, parents or grandparents. The growth process in humans allows for lack of knowledge and many mistakes. Adults are expected to guide, nurture, discipline, and make some concessions to children and each other. God expects the same in his spiritual body, Christ's church.

1 Peter 1: 25 But the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which was preached to you. **2:1** Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, **2** like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, **3** if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

2 Peter 3: 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. **14** Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, **15** and regard the patience of our Lord [as] salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, **16** as also in all [his] letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as [they do] also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. **17** You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, **18** but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him [be] the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Just as physical food is essential for physical growth, spiritual food is essential for spiritual growth. The best way to destroy a human being physically is to stop him from eating. The devil is the master deceiver and he uses the same tactic on the unsuspecting in the spiritual sense. If the devil told a child of God outright, "You cannot read the Bible!" most of us would read it or die! So the deceiver doesn't come straight at us.

If the devil can tempt a child of God to do things he enjoys with people he enjoys so that there is never any time to sit down and let God speak to the person through his written word, then the deceiver has accomplished his mission in a "nice" way. The person starves to death spiritually. It happens as Peter says above, he falls from his own steadfastness. Maintaining spiritual life is as simple as maintaining physical life – eat daily! Jesus said:

John 6: 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

Establish now a routine that allows time for Bible reading to allow God to speak to your heart from the inspired pages of his written word.

One of the frustrations of being a part of the spiritual body of Christ is that one cannot look at others and see with the physical eye whether or not they are spiritually dead or alive. Some who are spiritually dead may continue to attend the assembly of the saints periodically, or even regularly. They may even have a title. They may take an active part, to some degree, in the assembly, but time and conduct will expose their deadness. Many times one of these *living dead* will be intolerant of the thinking of a new Christian and create much grief for that person. Paul warned against 'older' Christians abusing the 'younger' ones who haven't grown as much in grace and knowledge. Whatever you do, do not let others discourage you in your walk of faith.

Romans 13: 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to [its] lusts. 14:1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, [but] not for [the purpose of] passing judgment on his opinions. 2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables [only]. 3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. 5 One person regards one day above another, another regards every day [alike]. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or

die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." 12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

Christian growth to the point of internalizing the confidence of the apostle John in the following texts should be the goal of every believer. Knowing that Christ's blood continually cleanses the believer and that eternal life is a present reality gives peace of mind beyond description.

1 John 1: 5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. **6** If we say that we have fellowship with Him and [yet] walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; **7** but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 2: 3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. **4** The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; **5** but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: **6** the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

1 John 2: 28 Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. **29** If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. **3:1** See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and [such] we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. **2** Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. **3** And everyone who has this hope [fixed] on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

1 John 5: 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

A believer can know that he knows Christ and that he has eternal life as he keeps His commandments, 1 John 2:3 above.

Hebrews 5: 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

A believer whose purpose and lifestyle is to obey God will commit occasionally a one time sin, but will not live in sin as a lifestyle. He will live in obedience and forgiveness and can claim the assurance of Romans 8:1.

Romans 8: 1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

In the next Bible text Paul explains what he means by “...us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” in Romans 8:4.

Ephesians 4: 17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, **18** being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; **19** and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. **20** But you did not learn Christ in this way, **21** if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, **22** that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, **23** and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, **24** and put on the new self, which in [the likeness of] God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. **25** Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one [of you] with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. **26** Be angry, and [yet] do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27** and do not give the devil an opportunity. **28** He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have [something] to share with one who has need. **29** Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such [a word] as is good for edification according to the need [of the moment], so that it will give grace to those who hear. **30** Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. **5:1** Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; **2** and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. **3** But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; **4** and [there must be no] filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. **5** For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. **6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. **7** Therefore do not be partakers with them; **8** for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light **9** (for the fruit of the Light [consists] in all goodness and righteousness and truth), **10** trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

A child of God can trust his heavenly Father to take care of him. Christ teaches:

Luke 12: 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. **28** But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is [alive] today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more [will He clothe] you? You men of little faith! **29** And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. **30** For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. **31** But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6: 31 Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' **32** For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **33** But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

God not only takes care of his own physically, he guards us spiritually.

1 Corinthians 10: 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. **13** No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Be careful of comparing yourself with others. NEWS FLASH: not everyone who professes Christianity actually lives it. When comparing yourself to others, it is easy to minimize their strengths and maximize your own, or to maximize their faults and minimize yours. To guard your heart from arrogance, always compare yourself to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10: 12 For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

Galatians 6: 3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. **4** But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have [reason for] boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. **5** For each one will bear his own load.

Matthew 13: 27 The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' **28** And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' **29** But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. **30** Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."

A large measure of the emotional security of the believer is in knowing that God is no longer an enemy but a father.

Romans 5: 1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God [Not that we are no longer God's enemy but that he is no longer our enemy.] through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult [rejoice] in hope of the glory of God. **3** And not only this, but we also exult [rejoice] in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; **4** and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; [Hope, by definition, in the New Testament means joyful, confident, expectation of eternal life, not "maybe I'll make it."] **5** and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 14: 16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; **17** for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. **18** For he who in this [way] serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. **19** So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

Just as to the Ephesians, Paul contrasted "**deeds of the flesh**" with the "**fruit of the Spirit**" when he wrote to the Christians in Galatia.

Galatians 5: 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, **21** envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24** Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. **26** Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. **6:1** Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; [each one] looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. **2** Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Philippians 4: 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Four books of the New Testament open with **grace, mercy and peace** [1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; 2 John 1:3]. **Grace** is undeserved kindness God extended to mankind offering forgiveness. **Mercy** is Christ's death in my place to make forgiveness available to me for sins I have committed. **Peace** is only possible when I know for certain, nothing doubting,

that I have been forgiven in Christ's blood in total obedience with God's word and that I live in forgiveness faithful to His word, a CHRISTian.

Look at the word CHRISTIAN. Take CHRIST out of CHRISTIAN (_____IAN) and, without Christ, _____ I Am Nothing!

Living a Christian life is not about personal perfection or living without ever sinning. It is about daily obedience and forgiveness - continual cleansing in Christ's blood in the mind of God. Before one is converted to Christ, God is one's enemy. After surrender to God's will and obedience to it; God becomes one's heavenly father who protects, provides for, and disciplines his child with love beyond human comprehension.

Is God your enemy or your heavenly Father?

Philippians 4: 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

My prayer for you is expressed in the words of the apostle Paul as he was leaving the shepherds of Christ's church in Ephesus.

Acts 20: 32 So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Please circle the correct answer:

If I were to die right now, I know for certain, nothing doubting, that I would go to heaven. YES NO

Write to me. Feel free to ask any question or make any comment. I am currently writing, Now That I Am Forgiven, Now What?

Milton Chaney

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About the Author

Milton Chaney's first experience with the Bible was at the age of twelve. He walked to a church building near his home in rural Alabama. He was given a small pocket New Testament which he read many times. He surrendered to Christ about a year later and was forgiven of sin in the same manner as he had read in the New Testament and as you have read in this book.

Milton was committed to Christ until his senior year in high school when he fell from his steadfastness (2 Peter 3:17,18) and basically lived the life of a hypocrite that year. He attended worship three times per week but secretly sinned with his close friends. He went into the Marine Corps right out of high school and was a combat engineer in Vietnam where he was wounded in the right leg, right arm, right neck, left hand, and spent nine months in military hospitals.

Milton was restored to his first love of Christ and dedicated his life to obedience to God. The sins of his adult life still haunt him. He knows intellectually that he is forgiven, but he still remembers and at times struggles emotionally with the sins of war and the consequences of sinful living. Milton says, "I am the most qualified sinner I know to write a book about forgiveness."

Where Milton Chaney went to school, if he did, is not what is important. How many degrees he has, if any, is not what is important. What is important is truth and whether or not the content of this book is truth. If the content of this book is truth today then it will be truth at the judgment when we all stand before God to give account of the deeds done in the body. The final judgment will not be to determine one's guilt or innocence before God. It will be for sentencing to heaven or hell based on whether one lived forgiven or not forgiven in this body of flesh.

No human being is without some degree of bias or prejudice. Determining and following truth is not always easy, but it is always right. Milton's attitude is, "I reserve the right to be wrong on any subject I believe to be truth. If you believe I am in error; show me in God's word where I have erred and I will correct it, regardless of cost." Milton's challenge to the reader is that you adopt this same attitude toward your continued objective pursuit of truth. If you feel that any part of this book's content is not truth; Milton invites correction, in writing. Necessary corrections will be made in the next printing.

Objectivity, at best, is difficult. Strive to be objective. Eternity is forever.

Publisher's Note

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Book of Ezekiel, Chapter 3

10 He said to me: Mortal, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart and hear with your ears; 11 then go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them. Say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD"; whether they hear or refuse to hear. ... 16 At the end of seven days, the word of the LORD came to me: 17 Mortal, ... whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. 18 If I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," and you give them no warning, or speak to warn the wicked from their wicked way, in order to save their life, those wicked persons shall die for their iniquity; but their blood I will require at your hand. 19 But if you warn the wicked, and they do not turn from their wickedness, or from their wicked way, they shall die for their iniquity; but you will have saved your life. 20 Again, if the righteous turn from their righteousness and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before them, they shall die; because you have not warned them, they shall die for their sin, and their righteous deeds that they have done shall not be remembered; but their blood I will require at your hand. 21 If, however, you warn the righteous not to sin, and they do not sin, they shall surely live, because they took warning; and you will have saved your life. (NRSV)