

# THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Which was once for all  
delivered to the saints. – Jude 3



R. JOHN ANDERSON

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## INTRODUCTION

This book presents “the gospel of the grace of God” (Act 20:24), which is also “the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13), “the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 3:15), “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16; cf. Joh 3:16, 18, 36; 6:35, 37–40; 12:46; Mat 11:28–30; 20:28; Act 2:21; 10:43; Rom 9:33; Tit 2:11; Rev 22:17), and “the faith which was once for all handed down [delivered ESV] to the saints” (Jud 3; cf. Col 1:23) in New Testament (NT) Scripture. This presentation can serve as an introduction for those coming new to the faith or as a review for the professing Christian.<sup>1</sup> We will start “in the beginning” (Gen 1:1) and build “line upon line ... precept upon precept” (Isa 28:10–13 ESV) so that you understand the relationship between God, Satan, humanity, and sin—and why we need a “Savior” (Luk 2:10–14; Joh 4:42; Tit 1:4, 3:4; 2Pe 1:1, 11; 2:20; Jud 24–25; 1Jn 4:14; Act 5:31; 13:23; 1Ti 2:3–4; 2Ti 1:10; cf. Joh 3:14–16).

Before we begin, I would like to offer a few notes to help guide the reader:

1. You will see verse citations throughout the book. You should be reading and studying Scripture as you go along (Mat 4:4; Psa 1:2; 119:11, 105, 160; Act 17:11; Rom 15:4; 2Ti 2:15; 3:16–17; 1Pe 2:2).<sup>2</sup> You may think I’m citing more verses than necessary at times; however, realize that I’m not just multiplying verses for no reason. To arrive at the (whole) truth of what Scripture teaches (and to avoid false teachings), you must consider and harmonize in aggregate “the sum” (Psa 119:160; cf. 2Ti 3:16–17) of what is written in Scripture while also understanding that Scripture never contradicts itself. Additional verses often expand on a particular subject or view it from a different angle—you cannot pick and choose some verses and make interpretations and doctrine from them in isolation while ignoring others on the same topic. Even the verses I’ve cited are not exhaustive, but they are sufficient to establish correct doctrine. If a verse doesn’t have a citation, it was either given earlier in the chapter or will be at the end of the sentence. Citations are sometimes repeated across

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<sup>1</sup> Christians, also called disciples, saints, and brethren; the first use of the name *Christians* was in Antioch (Act 11:26; cf. Act 26:28; 1Pe 4:16).

<sup>2</sup> The verse excerpts given in this book should be read and studied in their wider context in Scripture, as in many cases, I’m only giving a fragment of the verse. The same goes for verse citations; always expand outward first to see the verse(s) in context. See the chapter “Reading and Studying the Bible” for more information.

chapters for completeness so each chapter can stand on its own.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Scripture is multifaceted, so the same verse may apply to multiple topics.

2. There is some repetition of material across chapters, which can be beneficial ([Php 3:1](#); cf. [Rom 15:15](#); [2Pe 1:12–13](#); [3:1–2](#); [Isa 28:10, 13](#)).<sup>4</sup> This also allows each chapter to serve as its own “mini study,” if you will.
3. All Bible verses are New American Standard Bible (NASB) 1995 unless indicated otherwise.<sup>5</sup> In some editions of this book, inline Bible verses may be “colored in blue like this.” There may also be a link to Bible Gateway ([biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com)), so you can click the link to read the verses. I will occasionally add annotations to verses; these are clearly marked inside brackets, such as [\[words here\]](#). I’m not altering Scripture ([Rev 22:18](#)); I’m simply trying to help by clarifying the context, adding a note, or adjusting grammar for readability. As you read and study the verses, you can confirm this.
4. The material doesn’t cover all the nuances of Christian faith and life, but it does get you started well down the true and correct “narrow” path ([Mat 7:13–14](#); [Luk 13:24](#)) to “eternal life” ([Joh 3:16–17](#); [5:24](#); [Rom 6:23](#)).
5. The careful reader will pay attention to the footnotes as they go along.
6. While it is my “duty” to present, preach, and teach the Gospel to you accurately and completely ([Num 4:27](#); cf. [Act 20:18–21, 26–31](#); [2Ti 2:2, 15, 23–26](#); [3:16–17](#); [4:1–4, 15](#); [1Co 9:16](#); [15:3](#); [Col 1:28](#); [Pro 27:6](#); [Gal 4:16](#); [Eph 4:15](#); [Joh 4:23–24](#); [Rev 18:4–5](#); [1Ti 1:3–4](#); [4:1–6, 11, 13](#); [6:20–21](#); [Eze 33:1–6](#); [Ecc 3:7](#); [Tit 1:9, 13–14](#); [2:15](#)), it is your responsibility to “be diligent” ([2Ti 2:15](#); [Heb 4:11](#); cf. [2Pe 1:10](#); [3:14](#)) about your salvation, to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” ([Php 2:12](#)), and to “test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!” ([2Co 13:5](#)). This is to make sure that you are indeed in (and “continue in”) the faith as it was given in Scripture ([Jud 3](#); cf. [Col 1:23](#)) and have not been “tricked,” “deceived,” or “led astray” from the truth and into the false teachings and “fake gospels” (paraphrase) of men, committees, councils, conferences, synods, and institutions. Moreover, my responsibility doesn’t end when you are “born again” ([Joh 3:1–8](#)); my goal is to ensure that you reach final

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<sup>3</sup> A footnote may be used for repeated lengthier citations indicating where you can find the primary citation.

<sup>4</sup> And if you’re like me, I often need to have things repeated a few times before I listen to what is being said and it really sinks in.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted material from other authors may reference different Bible translations (as marked). See also the chapter “Choosing a Bible.”



eternal salvation (heaven, eternal life), which is when you receive your “[crown of life](#)”<sup>6</sup> from Jesus on Judgment Day ([2Ti 4:8](#)). To do that, I must warn you about the many “[snares](#),” “[traps](#),” and “[pitfalls](#)” you will likely encounter that might lead you “[astray](#).” So, as we go along, I will be pointing out some of the false teachings and “[fake gospels](#)” that are popular today. I’m doing this out of care and concern for your eternal well-being ([Act 20:18–21, 26–31](#); [Rom 15:14](#); [1Co 4:14](#); [Col 1:28](#); [3:16](#); [1Th 5:14](#); [2Th 3:15](#); [2Ti 2:23–26](#); [3:16](#)). Some of the false teachings come from secular sources (obviously), but sadly (and shockingly), others come from what *appear* to be Christians and Christian churches. Jesus warned us about these “[ravenous wolves in sheep’s clothing](#)” (see [Mat 7:15](#); cf. [Act 20:28–30](#); [2Pe 2:1–3](#); [2Ti 4:3–4](#); [2Co 11:14–15](#)), as many “[false teachers](#),” “[false prophets](#),” and “[fake gospels](#)” have gone out into the world.<sup>7</sup>

7. And lastly, please remember that I am not an inspired writer; my words are merely the words of man. Don’t just accept anything I (or others) write without checking it against Scripture ([Act 17:11](#)).<sup>8</sup> I’m simply trying to “[guide you](#)” through the Gospel in a straightforward and logical manner, as Philip did with the Ethiopian (see [Act 8:26–35](#)). The only purpose of my words is to help explain God’s Word, for it is Scripture that is “[the word of God](#)” ([Luk 5:1](#); [8:11](#), [21](#); [Act 4:31](#); [6:7](#); [13:5](#); [Rev 19:13](#); [20:4](#)), “[the word of truth](#)” ([2Co 6:7](#); [Col 1:5](#); [2Ti 2:15](#); [Jas 1:18](#); cf. [Joh 17:17](#); [4:23–24](#); [Rom 3:4](#); [2Co 4:2](#); [Eph 1:13](#); [Tit 1:2](#); [Num 23:19](#); [Psa 145:18](#)), and “[the word of life](#)” (see [Php 2:16](#); [1Jn 1:1](#); cf. [Joh 1:4](#); [5:24](#))—and it alone has the “[power](#)” of life ([Rom 1:16](#); [1Co 1:18](#); [2:4](#); [4:20](#); [2Co 6:7](#); [Eph 3:16](#); [1Th 1:5](#); [2Th 1:11](#); [Heb 1:3](#); [Rev 7:12](#); cf. [Mar 9:1](#); [24:30](#); [Luk 21:27](#); [24:49](#); [Act 10:38](#); [2Ti 3:16–17](#)).

With that introduction, let us proceed along “[the Highway of Holiness](#)” ([Isa 35:8](#); cf. [Jer 6:16](#); [Isa 40:3–4](#); [42:16](#); [57:14](#); [Joh 1:23](#); [Tit 2:11–14](#); [1Pe 2:9–10](#)), on the path to “[eternal life](#)” with God and His Christ Jesus in heaven. All “[blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen](#)” ([Rev 7:12](#)).

—R. John Anderson, Church of Christ

<sup>6</sup> See the chapter “The New Testament Plan of Salvation” for verse references.

<sup>7</sup> See the chapter “Beware the Wolves” for “[tricked](#),” “[deceived](#),” “[snares](#),” “[traps](#),” “[pitfalls](#),” “[false teachers](#),” “[false prophets](#),” and “[fake gospels](#)” (paraphrase) verse references.

<sup>8</sup> See the chapter “Being a Berean” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.



THE GOSPEL OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**



## THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD

(The Good News of Salvation and Eternal Life)

*I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. – Luke 2:11*

The next few chapters provide a summary<sup>9,10,11</sup> of the Christian “faith which was once for all handed down [delivered ESV] to the saints” in NT Scripture (Jud 3)—which is “the gospel of the grace of God” (Act 20:24), “the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13), “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16), and “the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 3:15). We will start “in the beginning” (Gen 1:1) and build “line upon line ... precept upon precept” (Isa 28:10–13 ESV) in a logical and methodical manner so you understand the relationship between God, Satan, humanity, and sin—and why we need a “Savior” (Luk 2:10–11; Tit 1:4; 3:4; 2Pe 1:1, 11; 2:20; Jud 24–25; Act 13:23; 1Jn 4:14; Act 5:31; 2Ti 1:10).

### THERE IS A GOD

In days and centuries past, men understood and acknowledged that there was a God, even if they chose not to obey Him (Act 17:23; Rom 1:20–22; cf. 2Co 4:4). But in today’s modern, so-called “enlightened” society dominated by public opinion and the science of man, we must reassert that foundation before we can even begin with the Gospel message. Therefore, know that “there is a God” (Psa 58:11; Dan 2:28; cf. Gen 1:1; Deu 4:29; Psa 14:1–3; 19:1–3; 53:1–3; 90:2; 115:15; 145:18; Pro 1:7; 3:5–7; 9:10; Isa 55:6; Jer 29:13; Luk 12:5; Joh 1:18; Act 17:22–29; Rom 1:20–21; 1Co 8:6; 1Th 1:9; Heb 11:6; 1Jn 4:8; Rev 3:20; 4:11). There are no other gods (little g; Isa 44:8; 45:5–6, 18, 21–22; 46:9; Deu 4:35, 39; 32:39; 1Ki 8:60; 1Ch 16:26; Psa 96:5; Joe 2:27; 1Co 8:4; 1Ti 1:17; 2:5; Rom 1:20–25). God is not a force, a feeling, or an “it”; He is a spiritual being of immense holiness, righteousness, love, purity, power, and intelligence far beyond anything we can comprehend (Isa 6:3; 55:8–9; Pro 3:19; Rev 4:8; 1Pe 1:16; 1Jn 4:8–10).

God introduces Himself in the very first verse of the Bible (Gen 1:1) and is identified by the word “Elohim,” which conveys the quality or nature of being divine—that is, having the essential nature of deity. His

<sup>9</sup> This Gospel summary might be longer than you are accustomed to seeing, but nobody ever sat me down and walked me through things from the beginning. So that is what I am doing with you, as Philip did with the Ethiopian (Act 8:26–35).

<sup>10</sup> You can also use this summary to lead others through the Gospel.

<sup>11</sup> The material in this chapter is excerpted from our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

name is given as “YHWH”<sup>12</sup> (Gen 2:4; Exo 6:2–3) in the original Hebrew texts of the Old Testament (OT).<sup>13</sup> It is also written as “Yahweh,” “JEHOVAH”/“Jehovah,” and “LORD” in various English translations (Gen 2:4; Exo 6:2–3).<sup>14</sup> God’s name is also given in idiom form as “I AM WHO I AM” or simply “I AM” (Exo 3:13–14; cf. Joh 8:58).<sup>15</sup>

He alone is “holy” (Lev 19:2; Rev 4:8; Act 7:33; 1Pe 1:16; Isa 6:3; Psa 11:4; 29:2; 103:1), perfect, omnipotent (all powerful), omnipresent (everywhere present), omniscient (all knowing—past, present, and future), and eternal (Joh 1:1–2; 8:58; 17:5; Rev 1:8, 17–18; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13; Heb 1:10–12; 13:8; 1Pe 1:20; Exo 3:13–14; Col 1:17; Isa 9:6; 43:13; Psa 90:2; Pro 8:22–30; Mic 5:2). There is nothing unclean whatsoever in Him (1Jn 1:5; 3:5; Jas 1:17; Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8–10; Psa 5:4; 145:17; Tit 1:2; Heb 4:15; 1Pe 1:19; Num 23:19; cf. Gal 5:9), for “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1Jn 1:5; cf. Rom 3:4; 9:14; Mat 4:16; 17:2; Luk 1:79; Joh 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46; Mic 7:8; Job 12:22). Yes, God is the great “I AM.” He is “the LORD of hosts” (see Psa 24:10; 46:7, 11; 48:8; 84:1, 3, 12; Isa 1:9). Nothing can surprise Him or catch Him off guard, and there is nothing that He doesn’t know, for “nothing is hidden” from God.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, nothing is impossible with God (Mat 19:26; Mar 10:27; 14:36; Luk 1:37; 18:27; Gen 18:14; Num 11:23; Jer 32:27). He “upholds all things by the word of His power” (Heb 1:3), and it is He who created and sustains all life, for without God, there can be no life. “God is love” itself (1Jn 4:8, 16), and He is majesty defined. Amazing!

## GOD IS SPIRIT

Those who mock God and refuse to believe that He exists because “science can’t prove it”<sup>17</sup> fail to understand that “God is Spirit” (Joh 4:24; cf. 2Co 3:17), “who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see” (1Ti 6:16; cf. 1Ti 1:17; Joh 1:18; 5:37; Mat 17:2; Rom 1:20; Col 1:15–16). He is not bound by

<sup>12</sup> Also, YHVH. This is called the tetragrammaton (i.e., four letters), which means “to be.” It indicates and denotes God’s self-existent, eternal nature.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew: יהוה (Hebrew is read from right to left).

<sup>14</sup> The word “Adonai” (ădônây, meaning *Lord* or *Master*) is also used for God, which is rendered as “Lord” (standard capitalization) in English Bibles. So, for example, where you see it written “Lord GOD,” this reads as “Adonai YHWH” (“ădônây yehôvâh”) (Gen 15:2).

<sup>15</sup> An idiom is an expression with a meaning that cannot be understood by the individual words. This expression could be translated as “I will become whatsoever I may become,” again denoting God’s essential self-existent, eternal nature of “being” or “He who becometh.” In effect, the expression “I AM” explains what the name “YHWH” means: God is externally self-existing.

<sup>16</sup> See the upcoming section “The Day of Judgment” for verse references.

<sup>17</sup> See the chapter “Science versus the Bible” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

space and time, as we are in this physical universe. Therefore, we must find God through faith, as it is written:

- “Without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe *that* He is [i.e., that He exists] and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb 11:6; cf. Heb 7:25; 11:27; Joh 1:18; 5:36; 10:25, 30, 32, 38; 12:38–40; 14:7–11, 20; Col 1:15–19; 2:2, 9; Rom 1:19–20; 2:15; Psa 19:1–4; Act 14:16–17; Jas 4:8; Rev 3:20);
- “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev 3:20);
- “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13; cf. Jer 24:7; Deu 4:29; 30:2, 10; Luk 11:9–10; Act 8:37; 17:27; Psa 91:15; 119:2, 10, 145; Isa 55:6–7; Hos 5:15; Amo 5:4; Zep 2:3; Joe 2:12; contrast with Mat 15:8; Psa 14:1; 53:1; 1Co 1:18–24; 2:14); and
- “The LORD is near to all who call upon Him,  
To all who call upon Him in truth” (Psa 145:18).

## THE BIBLE IS GOD’S WORD

The Bible is God’s Holy Word, supernaturally given to us through human writers inspired by the Holy Spirit (2Ti 3:16–17; 2Pe 1:19–21; Heb 4:12; 1Co 2:12–13; 14:37; cf. 2Sa 23:2; Mat 4:4; Joh 14:26; 16:13; 17:17; Act 1:16; 1Th 2:13), and it was written for our benefit (Rom 15:4; cf. Pro 5:23; Psa 19:8; 119:16, 105).<sup>18</sup> Every word is, therefore, inspired and inerrant in the original languages;<sup>19</sup> Scripture is without error, without contradiction, doesn’t change, and is never broken (Psa 119:89, 152, 160; Heb 13:8; Joh 10:35; Mat 5:18; Isa 40:8; 1Pe 1:25). It is written that God doesn’t change His mind and also that “God is not a man, that He should lie” (Num 23:19; cf. Rom 3:4; Tit 1:2; Heb 6:18; 13:8; Jas 1:17), so we can trust God and know that every single syllable and word of Scripture is there for a reason and will come true.<sup>20,21</sup> It is through Scripture that we know and understand God, along with His laws and rules for us, His plans for humanity, and our eternal destiny.

## YOU MUST DENY REASON AND LOGIC TO DENY GOD

Please understand that God is not asking you to “blindly believe” in Him. He has provided much evidence and proof of His existence. In fact, the Bible

<sup>18</sup> The Bible was written over several thousand years as God progressively revealed Himself to us along with His plan for humanity as it unfolded throughout history. See also the chapter “Choosing a Bible.”

<sup>19</sup> Hebrew and Aramaic (OT); Greek (NT).

<sup>20</sup> See the chapter “Reading and Studying the Bible.”

<sup>21</sup> This also includes every promise He has made to us in Scripture!

provides overwhelming evidence for God (through fulfilled prophecies, etc.), and many other disciplines provide supporting evidence that what the Bible says is indeed true—through fields such as archaeology, geology, and history (both literary and world).<sup>22</sup> One comes to faith after a logical, rational, and reasoned evaluation and examination of all the available facts, as well as from hearing the Gospel explained (what this book is doing; [Rom 10:17](#)). In summary, God has revealed Himself to us through:

1. Evidence of creation as seen in nature ([Rom 1:19–20](#); [Act 14:16–17](#); [Psa 8:3–4](#); [19:1–6](#); [Isa 40:26](#); [Job 38:1–42:6](#)),
2. His Holy Word, the Bible ([2Ti 3:16–17](#); [Heb 4:12](#); [Pro 30:5](#)),<sup>23</sup> and
3. Through His Son, Jesus Christ ([Col 1:15](#); [Heb 1:1–4](#)).

Therefore, those who deny God are doing so against an overwhelming mountain of evidence that speaks to and confirms His existence, and they are also doing so against their own inner conscience ([Rom 1:18–20](#); [Act 14:17](#); [Psa 19:1–4](#); cf. [Rom 2:15](#); [Act 17:23–30](#)), which testifies to them that “there is a God” ([Rom 1:20–25](#)).

## GOD’S CREATION

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (i.e., this universe; [Gen 1:1](#); cf. [Gen 1:1–2:25](#); [Exo 20:11](#); [1Ch 16:26](#); [Pro 3:19–20](#); [8:22–30](#); [Psa 8:3–8](#); [33:6](#); [75:3](#); [102:25](#); [104:24](#); [115:15](#); [121:2](#); [124:8](#); [136:5](#); [Isa 45:12, 18](#); [Jer 10:12–13](#); [51:15](#); [Neh 9:6](#); [Joh 1:3, 10](#); [Act 4:24](#); [17:24](#); [Heb 1:2, 10](#); [3:4](#); [Job 38:1–42:6](#); [Rev 4:11](#)). He created everything we see (sun, moon, stars, earth, galaxies, and even light itself) by simply speaking them into existence ([Gen 1:3](#); [Heb 1:2–3](#); [11:3](#); [Col 1:17](#); [Psa 33:6](#)).

Furthermore, this physical universe was made out of spiritual things (spiritual matter, if you will; see [Heb 11:3](#); cf. [Col 1:16](#); [Rom 4:17](#)), which we cannot see and which the science of man cannot measure ([Rom 8:24–25](#); [Heb 11:1](#); cf. [2Co 5:7](#)), and it is actually the spiritual things that are eternal. As we see it written, “For the things which are seen are temporal, but the



<sup>22</sup> See again the chapter “Science versus the Bible” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>23</sup> The Bible contains many fulfilled prophecies, documented miracles, and eyewitness testimonies. Furthermore, Jesus proved beyond a reasonable doubt that He was (and is) God by the miracles He performed, His command over nature, and His resurrection from the dead. See our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

things which are not seen are eternal” (2Co 4:18)—this material world will “pass away” at the end of time (Mat 5:18; 24:35; cf. 1Co 7:31; 1Jn 2:17; Psa 102:25–27; Isa 34:4; 51:6; Heb 1:11–12; 2Pe 3:7–13; Rev 21:1). God also established laws (physical, religious, and moral; see 1Co 14:33; Pro 3:19; 8:22–31; 24:3; Exo 20:3–17; Mat 22:36–40; Joh 14:15) that govern this universe and must be obeyed—for He is God, and we are not (Psa 8:4; 144:3; Isa 40:17; Joh 15:4–5; Gal 6:3; Job 38:1–4).

## WE ARE NOT ALONE

Know that we are not alone in the universe. God also created spiritual beings called “angels” (see Gen 28:12; 32:1; Job 4:18; Psa 91:11; 103:20; Mat 4:11; Jud 8; 1Ti 3:16; Rev 12:7; cf. Eph 6:12). Satan, “the devil” (see Gen 3:1, 14–15; Mat 4:1–11; 16:23; 1Ch 21:1; Job 1:6–12; Rev 12:9; 20:2, 7), was the chief angel (Rev 2:13; 12:7–9; Rom 16:20; 2Co 11:14; 1Ti 5:15), but due to his pride, he rebelled against God, and some of the angels followed him in rebellion (Mat 25:41; Jud 6; Rev 12:7–9). This world is now, therefore, in the midst of a raging spiritual war<sup>24</sup> (Eph 6:10–17; cf. Gen 3:15; 1Pe 5:8; 2Co 10:3–5; Joh 8:44; Dan 10:13; 12:1; 1Th 2:18; Jas 4:7; Rev 12:7–17), for Satan opposes everything good and of God. Since humans were created “in the image of God” (Gen 1:27), Satan also opposes humanity and wants to destroy as many as possible, including you (Gen 3:15; Luk 8:12; 1Pe 5:8; Jas 4:7; Eph 6:11; Rev 2:10; 12:9; 20:10; cf. Job 1:6–2:10; 1Th 2:18).

Make no mistake: Satan is a real spiritual being. He is described as—

- “A liar” (Joh 8:44; cf. Act 13:10),
- A “deceiver” (see Rev 12:9; 13:14; 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10),
- Your “adversary” (1Pe 5:8),
- Your “accuser” (Rev 12:10; cf. Zec 3:1; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6),<sup>25</sup>
- The “tempter” (Mat 4:1–3; 1Th 3:5), and
- Your “enemy” (see Mat 13:39; Luk 10:19; 1Ti 5:14; cf. 1Pe 5:8; Eph 6:11; Jas 4:7; Rev 2:10; 13:6–8; 20:7–9; Job 1:13–22; 2:7–10)

—and he does everything possible to try to “destroy,” “blind” (trick), and “deceive” you out of eternal life (see 2Co 4:4; 11:3; Joh 10:10; cf. Joh 8:44; Eph 6:11; 1Pe 5:8; Jas 4:7; Rev 12:9, 12; 20:10). He does this by getting you to think that God doesn’t exist (2Co 4:4) or by getting you to disobey God in some form or fashion (Gen 3:1–7; Mat 4:1–11). Furthermore, the devil is not some fanciful cartoon character in red tights with a pitchfork; that

<sup>24</sup> See the chapter “The Armor of God” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>25</sup> He is your accuser before God, accusing you of being a sinner (which you are, by the way, as will be explained shortly).



illusion is designed to deceive many by causing them not to take him seriously. Please don't ignore Satan and his “[spiritual forces of darkness and wickedness \[evil\]](#)” (see [Eph 6:12](#)) just because you cannot see them.

## HUMANITY AND SIN

Next, God created all life: Plants and animals on land, in the sea, and in the sky. He also created humans “[in the image of God ... male and female He created them](#)” ([Gen 1:27](#); cf. [Gen 5:2](#); [Mar 10:6](#); [Act 4:24](#); [Psa 8:4–8](#)) from the “[dust from the ground](#)” and “[breathed](#)” life into them ([Gen 2:7](#); cf. [Gen 3:19](#); [18:27](#); [Psa 24:1](#); [89:11](#); [103:14](#); [138:14–15](#); [Isa 29:16](#); [64:8](#); [Eze 37:1–10](#); [Job 4:19](#); [33:6](#); [Ecc 3:20](#); [Rom 9:20](#); [1Co 15:47](#); [2Co 4:7](#); [5:1–4](#)).<sup>26</sup> Humans were created with an eternal soul or spirit that lives on even after the body dies (returns to dust); the only question is where—either heaven or hell (see [Mat 10:28](#); [16:26](#); [25:31–46](#); [Mar 8:36–37](#); [Luk 12:5, 20](#); [16:19–31](#); [Rev 20:12](#); cf. [Heb 9:27](#)).<sup>27</sup>

God placed the first humans, Adam and Eve, in the “[garden of Eden](#)” and gave them a few simple rules to obey ([Gen 2:8, 15](#)).<sup>28</sup> All they had to do was believe, trust, and obey God ([Gen 2:16–17](#)). God also gave man free will to “[choose](#)” ([Jos 24:15](#); cf. [Rev 22:11, 17](#); [Pro 1:29](#); [Joh 6:67–68](#); [Deu 30:19](#)) whom to believe and obey (Him or Satan), for without free will, there can be no love.<sup>29</sup>



Unfortunately, humans disobeyed God (i.e., sinned; see [Gen 3](#); [Rom 5:12, 19](#)), and as a result, we now live in a “[fallen](#)” ([Rev 14:8](#); [18:2](#); cf. [Mat 7:25](#); [Luk 10:18](#); [1Ti 3:6](#); [Psa 5:10](#); [36:12](#); [57:6](#); [Pro 28:18](#); [Isa 3:8](#); [14:12](#); [21:9](#); [Lam 5:16](#))<sup>30</sup> world with sin, suffering, corruption, disease, and death.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Please don't be deceived by the *fake science* theory of evolution; see the chapter “Science versus the Bible” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>27</sup> You may also like another book we publish on this subject called *Beyond the Tomb*.

<sup>28</sup> We don't always fully understand why some rules are given to us by God, but we must realize that they are for our good and our (eternal) protection because God is a good and loving God ([1Jn 4:8](#); [5:3](#)).

<sup>29</sup> A robot preprogrammed to perform a set of commands is not acting in love.

<sup>30</sup> “[Cursed](#)” ([Gen 3:17–19](#); cf. [Gen 4:12](#); [5:29](#); [Rom. 5:12](#); [8:19–22](#)). For something to fall means it no longer occupies a high place it once held, in this case, the initial state of God's creation; it also means to have rebelled against God (i.e., sinned).

<sup>31</sup> You mustn't make the mistake of blaming God for what you see around us today. This fallen world and the reality that we now find ourselves in resulted from Satan's and man's

We are not born in so-called “original sin”;<sup>32</sup> we (each of us) pursue “**evil [sin] from our youth**” (see Gen 8:21). Understand also that we are not being “blamed” for Adam and Eve’s sin (Eph 2:1).<sup>33</sup> While we do inherit their sinful nature<sup>34</sup> (1Jn 2:16; 1Co 15:45–49; cf. Num 11:4, 34; Mat 5:28; Rom 13:14; Gal 5:17, 24; Eph 2:3; Tit 3:3; 1Pe 1:14, 2:11, 4:2–3; Jud 16–18), each of us *chooses* to commit sin of our own free will after we come of age and are able to know better<sup>35</sup> (Gal 6:5; Rom 1:18–32; Heb 10:26; Mat 12:31–32; Joh 9:41; 1Ti 1:13; 2Pe 3:3; Jas 1:13–15; Jud 16, 18; Rev 22:11, 9:20–21, 16:9, 16:11; cf. Lev 4:2, 13; Num 14:29; Isa 7:16). Therefore, our sins are our own (Jas 1:13–15; Eze 18:20) and result from our own choices, behavior, and actions, not from Adam’s or Eve’s, not because “the devil made me do it,”<sup>36</sup> not because “God made me this way,” or any other excuse.

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actions (Rom 5:12, 19; Gen 3:6); this is not how God initially created this world. God’s initial creation “**was very good**” (Gen 1:31)—that is, perfect and without sin, suffering, corruption, disease, or death.

<sup>32</sup> The “original sin” false teaching comes from misinterpreting Psalms 51:5, 58:3, which use symbolic and figurative language.

<sup>33</sup> Note that Ephesians 2:1 says “**your sins**,” not Adam’s or Eve’s sins; see also Jas 1:13–15. Note also that while we are not blamed for Adam’s sin, we do suffer the same penalty for it (physical death).

<sup>34</sup> Fleshly, selfish, lustful, prideful, and so on.

<sup>35</sup> We also do not inherit sin from our parents (Joh 9:1–3)—that is a false teaching of man. Scripture is clear we are responsible for our actions and sins after reaching an age of accountability (Rom 1:20; Num 14:26–29; Deu 1:39; cf. Gen 8:21; Jos 24:15; Isa 7:16, 53:6; Rev 22:11). This age isn’t precisely defined, although the age that God used when leading the ancient Hebrews out of Egypt and through the wilderness to the promised land was twenty years old (Num 14:29). Those over the age of twenty were decreed to die in the wilderness for their unbelief (i.e., they were old enough to have known better); those under that age were spared and continued into the promised land. I’m not dogmatic about this particular age, and from what I can read and study on the matter, no one knows the exact age except God. Suffice it to say, at some point, we all reach an age when we know right from wrong, yes? And after that, we are responsible for our own choices and actions. Also, babies and infants go directly into the presence of the Lord in heaven at death. In fact, it will not surprise me if we find out that the number of babies and infants in heaven who have been aborted or sacrificed is greater than the total number of everyone else there saved. This demonstrates the horrific and barbaric cruelty, brutality, hatred, and selfishness of man versus the kindness, love, compassion, mercy, and grace of God and will further glorify God (see Mat 19:30). See also Wayne Jackson, “Does Psalm 58 Teach ‘Original Sin?’” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/does-psalm-58-teach-original-sin>, and Wayne Jackson, “Are Infants by Nature Children of Wrath?” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/are-infants-by-nature-children-of-wrath>.

<sup>36</sup> While Satan can entice, trick, and deceive you, he doesn’t *make* (force) you to actually *do* anything—you do things because you want to out of lust, pride, greed, envy, and so on (Jas 1:13–15).

## WE ARE ALL SINNERS

Scripture further tells us, **“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE,”** **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** (i.e., we are all sinners before God; Rom 3:9–20, 23; Gal 3:22; Psa 53:1–3)—so please fully realize that you *are* a sinner, whether you want to think so or not, and it is that sin which creates a separation between us and God (Isa 59:2; Eph 2:12; 4:18). Please do not make the mistake of thinking, *Well, it’s just a teeny tiny sin, so that can’t separate me from God and keep me from heaven, right?* What we see as sin is not what God sees as sin; we grossly underestimate the seriousness and severity of even the smallest sin when compared to an unimaginably holy and just God. What *we think* is the severity of sin is not what *God says* is the severity of sin. It is only from what is written in the Word of God that we must come to an understanding of sin. We just cannot fully comprehend the true nature and severity of our sin in this fallen world, but one day, we will see all sin for the true abomination and horror that it really is (Rev 6:15–17). The true weight of sin will then be realized and understood by all, even those who claim they don’t need or believe in God (Rom 14:11; Php 2:9–11). Once again, please realize that it is not shameful to admit that you are a sinner before God; He already knows that—He knows all things! It actually takes strength of character, courage, and humbleness of heart (Mat 5:4) to confess that you’re a sinner and to come before God to ask forgiveness. What is truly shameful is remaining in your sins, which is almost always due to stubbornness and pride.<sup>37</sup>

## THE PENALTY FOR SIN

God further tells us that the penalty for sin is **“death”**<sup>38</sup> (1Co 15:56; cf. Gen 2:17; Mat 18:8; Eph 2:1; Jas 1:15; Rom 6:23; 8:2; Rev 2:11), which is also described as eternal separation from God (2Th 1:9; Mat 7:23; 25:41), for only in God can **“light”** (Joh 1:4–5, 8–9; 3:19–20; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35–36, 46; Act 26:18; 2Co 4:6; 6:14; Eph 5:8; 1Th 5:5; 1Ti 6:16; 1Pe 2:9; 1Jn 1:5; cf. Mic 7:8; Job 12:22) and **“life”** be found (Joh 1:4; 3:16–17; 5:39–40; 6:33, 35, 47–48, 51, 63, 68; 10:10; 11:25–26; 14:6; Rom 4:17; 6:23). Away from Him is only **“darkness”** (Mat 25:30; Act 26:18; Col 1:13; Jud 13; 2Pe 2:4, 17; cf. Mat 6:23; 8:12; 22:13; Luk 11:34; Joh 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46; Rom 2:19; 13:12; 1Co 4:5; 2Co 6:14; Eph 4:18; 5:8, 11; 6:12; 1Pe 2:9; 1Jn 1:6; 2:8; Pro

<sup>37</sup> When you refuse to admit that you’re a sinner, you are **“suppressing the truth in unrighteousness”** (see Rom 1:18–32). Furthermore, you are also thereby suppressing (denying) that (1) there is a God (Gen 1:1), (2) He is your Creator (Gen 2:7; 5:1), and (3) you have been made **“in the image of God”** (Gen 1:27; 9:6).

<sup>38</sup> This includes both physical and spiritual (eternal) death.

4:19) and “death” (Rev 2:11; 20:6, 13–14; 21:8; cf. Luk 1:79; Joh 5:24; 8:51–52; Act 2:24; Rom 5:12–14; 6:9–10; 1Co 15:21–26, 54–56; 2Ti 1:10; Heb 2:14–15; Jas 1:15; Rev 1:18). Note again that what *we think* should be the penalty for our sins is not what *God says* is the penalty for sin (all sin, large or small). What we think about this matter is not relevant; we must go by what God has told us in His Word (the Bible).

## THE DAY OF JUDGMENT (HEAVEN AND HELL)

The Bible tells us that “God is love” (1Jn 4:8–10, 16; cf. Joh 3:16–18; Lam 3:22–23) and that He is “good,” “holy,” “righteous,” “faithful,” “merciful,” “full of grace,” “compassionate,” “patient,” “true,” and “perfect” (Lev 19:2; Psa 119:137; 1Co 1:9; Luk 6:36; Joh 1:14; Exo 34:6; 2Pe 3:9; 1Jn 5:20; Mat 5:48; cf. 2Sa 7:28; Psa 23:5–6; 57:3; 86:15; 2Jn 3; Tit 1:2; Rom 3:4; Lam 3:22–23; Jer 29:11; 1Ch 16:34). But we also read that He is a God of—

- “Justice” (Isa 30:18; Mat 12:18; Luk 7:29; 18:7; cf. Rom 11:22; Heb 12:29),
- “Wisdom” (Pro 2:6; 3:19–20; 23:23; 24:3; Jer 10:12; Luk 7:35; Col 3:16; 2Ti 3:15; Jas 1:5; 3:13–17; Rev 7:12; cf. Psa 136:5; Pro 8:22–29),
- “Law” (Psa 19:7; Luk 2:23–24, 39; Rom 7:25; cf. Heb 8:10; 10:16), and
- “Order” (Isa 28:10–13; 1Co 15:23; Tit 1:5; cf. 1Co 14:33, 40; Act 11:4; 21:24; Jdg 6:26)

—and He will only allow Satan’s and humanity’s rebellion (sin) to continue for a while. “He has fixed a day” (Act 17:31; cf. Jud 14–15) still yet to come called “the day of judgment” (2Pe 2:9; 3:7; Mat 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36; 1Jn 4:17; cf. Mat 25:31–46; 2Th 1:6–10; 2Pe 3:1–13; Rom 2:5–16; 14:10–12; Rev 14:7; 20:11–15; 22:12; Col 3:25; Gal 6:7–8; 1Co 4:5; 2Co 5:10; Psa 1:5; Dan 7:22), “in which He will judge the world [everyone] in righteousness” (Act 17:31; cf. Gen 18:25; Psa 7:11; 96:13; Act 10:42; Rom 2:5, 16; 2Ti 4:8; 1Pe 2:23; Rev 16:7).<sup>39</sup>

This “Day of Judgment” will also be the very same day that “the last trumpet” (1Co 15:52; cf. 1Th 4:16–17) of God sounds<sup>40</sup> and Jesus returns<sup>41</sup> (Mat 24:36; Act 1:11; 2Th 1:7–8; Jud 14; Rev 1:7). On that day, He will appear in skies of “flaming fire” above for all to see and in the absolutely awesome, stunning, and indescribable full “power” and “glory” of God Almighty as He comes with all His holy angels and saints. As it is written, “When the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2Th 1:6–10; cf.

<sup>39</sup> Jesus Christ (who is God) will be your Judge; see the section “Jesus Will Be Your Judge.”

<sup>40</sup> See also the “seventh angel” of Revelation (Rev 11:15).

<sup>41</sup> Visibly and bodily (Act 1:11).

Mat 16:27; 24:36–42; 25:31–46; Luk 9:26; 17:24; Act 1:9–11; 22:6, 11; 26:13; Joh 14:1–3, 23; 1Co 15:52; 2Co 3:18; 1Th 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:1–5; 2Th 2:1, 8; 1Ti 6:16; Tit 2:13; Heb 9:28; 12:29; 2Pe 3:1–10; 1Jn 3:2; Jud 14–15, 24–25; Rev 1:7; 4:8; 11:17; 12:10; 15:8; 19:1; 22:12, 20). It will also be “the last day” (Joh 6:39–40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48; cf. Mat 16:27; 24:36–51; 25:31–46; 1Co 1:7–8; 15:22–25; 50–55; Php 1:10; 1Th 3:13; 4:15; 5:2, 23; 2Th 1:6–10; 2:1; 2Pe 3:7–13; Jud 14; Dan 7:9–11; Rev 1:7; 21:5; 22:20), the climax of human history (Rev 19:9; 20:11; 21:5), the very end of time itself that ushers in eternity (Mat 28:20; 25:46; Rev 22:5), and “the end, when He [Jesus] hands over the kingdom to the God and Father” (1Co 15:22–28; cf. 2Pe 3:1–13).

At that time, God has promised to “make all things new” (see Rev 21:1–5), eradicate all sin and sinful things from His creation (Psa 50:3; 97:3; Heb 10:26–31; 12:29; cf. 1Jn 2:17; Exo 24:17; Mal 3:2), and restore it and all those who chose to obey Him<sup>42</sup> to “glory” (2Ti 2:10; Php 3:20–21; cf. 2Co 4:17). Heaven will be where God and “righteousness dwells” (see Rev 21:3–4; 22:3; 2Pe 3:11–13) and where there is no more corruption, sin, suffering, disease, and death (1Co 15:26, 35–57; Heb 2:14–15; Rev 7:16–17; 20:14; 21:1–22:21; cf. Php 3:20–21; 1Jn 2:25; 3:2; Col 3:4; Jud 21; 2Pe 1:4; Joh 17:24; Rom 8:18, 29; 2Co 4:17; 5:1–8; Rev 1:18; 19:20; 20:10; 2Ti 1:10; Isa 25:8; Hos 13:14).<sup>43</sup>

## WE WILL ALL STAND BEFORE GOD FOR JUDGMENT

On Judgment Day, everyone who has ever lived will be resurrected in immortal (but not all glorified) bodies (Rom 6:5; 8:30; 2Co 3:18; Php 3:20–21; Col 3:4; cf. 1Jn 3:2; Act 24:15; Joh 5:25; 1Th 2:12; 4:16; 1Co 15:40–57; 2Co 5:1–4), and God will separate everyone into two groups: The “saved” and the “lost” (explained shortly; see Mat 25:31–33). “We will all stand before the judgment seat of God” (Rom 14:10; cf. Mat 25:31–32; 2Co 5:10; Jud 14–15) in



the general assembly of humanity before the Supreme Court of the Lord (Rev 20:11–15; Mat

<sup>42</sup> That is, those who “CALLED ON THE NAME OF THE LORD” (see Act 2:21; 22:16; Rom 10:13; 1Co 1:2; cf. Gen 4:26; Isa 12:4; Psa 91:14–15; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17) as instructed to in Scripture and who kept His commandments (Joh 14:15, 21; 15:10; Joh 2:3–4; 5:2–3; Rom 2:13; Jas 1:22; Rev 12:17; 14:12). See also the chapter “Understanding Obedience” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>43</sup> A state of perfection as God originally intended in the Genesis creation (also “Paradise”; Luk 23:43; 2Co 12:4; Rev 2:7). See the chapter “All Things Made New” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

25:34–46; Dan 7:9–10). At that time, “AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD” (Rom 14:11; cf. Rom 15:11; Psa 72:11; Rev 5:14; 19:5); also written thus: “At the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Php 2:10–11). Jesus is the Lord God Himself, and even those who did not believe in God and Jesus or obey the Gospel will bow down and declare that Jesus is Lord.<sup>44</sup>

Then judgment will happen. “Books [will be] opened” (see Rev 20:12; cf. Dan 7:9–10; Php 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27), in which every thought, word, and deed you have ever had, said, and done in your life are recorded, and “each one of us will give an account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12; cf. Mat 12:36–37; Gal 6:5; 1Pe 4:5) and “be recompensed for his deeds in the body [flesh]” (2Co 5:10; cf. Gal 6:7–8; Col 3:24–25; Joh 5:29; Rom 14:10–12; Rev 2:23; 20:12–13; 22:12). At that time, “There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops” (Luk 12:2–3; cf. Luk 8:17; Mar 4:22; Mat 12:36–37; Eph 5:12). Remember, “nothing is hidden” from God (see Mar 4:22; Luk 8:17; cf. Mat 6:8; 10:26–27; Luk 12:2–3; 16:15; Joh 2:24–25; Act 15:8; 1Jn 3:20; 1Co 4:5; Rom 2:16; Heb 4:3, 12–13; Job 28:24; 34:21–23; 5:21; Psa 139; Pro 15:3; Isa 29:15; Jer 16:17; 23:24; Ecc 12:14; 2Ch 16:9; Rev 6:15–16)—not your “thoughts” (see Mat 9:4; 12:25; Mar 8:17; Luk 5:22; Psa 139:2; Isa 66:18; Eze 38:10; Heb 4:12) and not even the deep, dark “secret” things of the human “heart” (see Rom 8:27; Luk 16:15; 24:38; 1Co 4:5; Eph 5:12; 1Ch 28:9; Act 1:24; 5:3; 15:8; Heb 4:12–13; Jer 11:20; 17:9–10; Psa 44:21; Ecc 12:14; Pro 24:12; Rev 2:23; 1Sa 16:7; 1Jn 3:20; cf. Rom 2:16; Luk 8:17; Mar 2:6–8; 4:22; Joh 2:24–25; Psa 139:1–4). He even knows the “motives” behind our actions (1Co 4:5; Pro 16:2; cf. Joh 2:24–25; Pro 21:2; Heb 4:12–13; Job 31:4; 34:21–22; Jer 23:24; Ecc 12:14; Psa 139:1–4).

The “saved”<sup>45</sup> (Mat 10:22; 19:25; Luk 7:50; 13:23; 23:35; Joh 3:16–17; 5:34; 10:9; Act 2:21, 47; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30–31; Rom 5:9–10; 8:24; 9:27; 10:9, 13; 1Co 1:18; Eph 2:8–9; 1Ti 2:4; Tit 3:5; 1Pe 4:18) will be those who can stand before God on that great Day and be declared “righteous” (Mat 13:43, 49; 25:37, 46; Luk 1:6; Rom 5:19; 1Pe 4:18; cf. Rom 5:17; 8:10; 1Co

<sup>44</sup> Jesus, the “good news” of the Gospel, and salvation are all explained shortly.

<sup>45</sup> The “sheep” (Mat 25:32–33; Luk 15:6; Joh 10:11, 26–27; 21:16–17; Psa 100:3), “saints” (Psa 16:3; 34:9; Dan 7:18–27; Mat 27:52; Act 9:32; Rom 1:7; 8:27; 15:26; 2Co 1:1; Rev 18:20, 24; 19:8; 20:9), and “righteous” (see Gen 18:25; Dan 12:3; Mat 13:43, 49; 25:37, 46; 1Pe 4:18; 1Jn 3:7; Rev 19:8) ones.

1:30; Php 3:9), “justified” (Rom 3:24; 5:1, 9; Tit 3:7), and “holy and blameless” (Eph 1:4; 5:27; Col 1:22; cf. 2Pe 3:14; Act 24:16; 1Co 1:8; Php 1:10; 2:15; 1Th 5:23; Jud 24; Rev 14:5)—that is, “without sin” (Heb 4:15), declared “NOT GUILTY” of sin<sup>46</sup> (see Heb 9:28; Jud 24; Rom 6:10; 8:3). The “saved” will be “raised up” (see Joh 6:39–40, 44, 54) to “eternal life” (Mat 19:16, 29; 25:46; Mar 10:29–30; Luk 18:30; Joh 3:14–17, 36; 4:13–14; 5:24; 6:27, 35–40, 47; 10:28; 17:1–3; Act 13:48; Rom 2:7; 5:21; 6:22–23; Gal 6:8; 1Ti 1:16; 6:12; Tit 1:1–2; 1Jn 2:25; 5:11–13, 20; Jud 20–21; cf. Joh 6:58; Rom 1:16; 2Pe 1:11; Rev 21:1–8; 22:1–5, 17) with God in heaven for eternity (see Joh 6:39–40, 44, 54; cf. Joh 3:15–16; Mat 25:21, 23, 34, 46; Rom 8:18; 1Co 15:42–57; 6:14; 2Co 3:18; 4:17; 5:6–8; Php 3:20–21; Col 3:4; 1Pe 5:6; 1Jn 3:2; Heb 9:28; Rev 21:3–4).

The “lost”<sup>47</sup> (Mat 10:6; 18:11; Luk 15:6; 19:10) will be those who *chose* to remain in their sins. They will be declared “unrighteous” (1Co 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21) before God—that is, “GUILTY” of sin (Rev 22:11; 9:20–21; 16:9; 16:11)—because they did not obey God and refused “the free gift of God [which] is eternal life in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:23; cf. Eph 2:8–9; Rom 5:17) through “the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13–14; cf. Jer 31:34; Psa 103:12; Isa 1:18) that God offered (through Jesus Christ). The “lost” will then be banished to hell for eternity (this is “eternal death”; see Mat 13:49; 25:31–46; Mar 9:44–49; Luk 16:26; 2Th 1:9; Rev 14:10–11; 20:15; 21:8; cf. Jud 15; Psa 1:5–6; 37:37–38; 73:17–19) along with “the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41; cf. Rev 20:10) who sinned (rebelled against God). The “lost” do not go into annihilation<sup>48</sup> or nothingness after death (see Mat 10:28; 16:26; 25:46; Mar 8:36–37; Luk 12:20; 16:19–31; Act 24:15; Heb 9:27).<sup>49, 50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> In effect, God will issue a full “pardon” for all your sins (see Mic 7:18–19; Psa 25:11; 103:3; Isa 55:7; cf. Isa 1:18; Eph 1:6–8; Luk 6:37).

<sup>47</sup> The “goats” (Mat 25:32–33), “wicked” (see Gen 6:5; 13:13; 18:23; Mat 13:49; Luk 11:39; Act 3:26; 24:15; Rom 1:29; 1Co 5:13; 2Th 2:12; 2Ti 2:19; Jas 1:21; Psa 1:4–6; 9:5, 16–17; 10:3–4), “ungodly” (Rom 4:5; 5:6; 1Ti 1:9; 2Pe 2:5–6; 3:7; Jud 4, 18), “disobedient” (of God; Luk 1:17; Rom 10:21; 11:30–31; Tit 1:16; 3:3; Heb 3:18; 1Pe 2:8; 3:20; cf. Rom 1:18–32), “immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars” (Rev 21:8), “those who call evil good, and good evil” (Isa 5:20–23), and so on.

<sup>48</sup> That is another false teaching of man.

<sup>49</sup> For those who die in Christ (the “saved”), their body goes down into the grave, and their soul goes directly into the presence of the Lord in heaven still fully conscious (Luk 23:43; 2Co 5:6–8; Php 1:23; cf. Rev 6:9–11). For those who die without Christ (the “lost”), their body also goes into the grave, but their soul goes to “Hades” also fully conscious (Mat 11:23; 16:18; Luk 10:15; 16:23; Act 2:27, 31; Rev 1:18, 6:8; 20:13–14), which is a holding place for unsaved souls until the Day of Judgment. You do not “soul sleep” or go unconscious at death.

<sup>50</sup> In OT Hebrew, *sheol* is used to describe the realm of the dead. In NT Greek, *hades* is the word used. Hades is not the final destination of the lost—their eternal home will be “the

## HELL IS A REAL PLACE OF TORMENT

Make no mistake: Hell is a real, literal place of eternal “**torment**” (see Mat 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 2Pe 2:4; Jud 13; Rev 14:11; 19:20; 20:10–15). It is not a place you want to go to for even an hour, let alone for eternity. Hell is described as:

- A “**place of torment**” (Luk 16:28; cf. Rev 14:11),
- “**Eternal punishment**” (Mat 25:46),
- “**The lake of fire which burns with brimstone**” (Rev 19:20; 21:8),
- “**The eternal fire**” (see Mat 18:8; 25:41; Jud 7),
- “**The outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth**” (Mat 8:12; 22:13; 25:30), and
- “**The second death**” (Rev 21:8).

Please understand that hell wasn’t created or intended for humans. It was “**prepared for the devil and his angels**” (Mat 25:41) who rebelled (disobeyed, sinned) against God (Rev 12:7–8; Jud 6; Eph 6:12)—humans were never supposed to end up there. If you end up in hell, it will have been by your own “**choice**” (see Jos 24:15; cf. Rev 22:11, 17; Pro 1:29; Joh 6:67–68) by not believing in or obeying God. God forces no one to come to Him, but He has “**made known**” in advance (Joh 15:15; Rom 16:26; Eph 1:9; 3:5; cf. Act 17:30–31; 13:38; Luk 24:47; Rom 5:6; 9:17; Gal 4:4; Col 1:23; 1Ti 3:16; Heb 9:26; 1Pe 1:20) what will happen to those who “**chose**” to remain in sin, disobeyed Him, and liked the things “**of this world**”<sup>51</sup> (Eph 2:2; 1Co 3:19; 5:10; 7:31; 2Co 4:4; Joh 8:23; 13:1; 16:11; cf. Mat 6:19–21, 24; 13:22; 16:24–26; 19:16–24; Mar 4:18–19; 8:34; Luk 8:4–8; 9:23; 14:26–27; Joh 12:25, 31; 15:19; 17:14–16; 18:36; Rom 12:2; 1Jn 2:15–16; Col 3:1–2; Php 3:19–20; 1Ti 6:9–10; 2Ti 4:10; Gen 19:26) more than Him.

Please also understand that God sends no one to hell—you send yourself there by refusing “**the free gift of God**” (Rom 6:23; cf. Eph 2:8–9; Rom 3:24; 5:15–17; Joh 4:10; Act 8:20), which is “**redemption**” (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14), “**salvation**” (Act 4:12; 13:26, 47; 16:17; 28:28; Mar 16:20; Luk 1:77; 19:9; Rom 1:16; 10:10), and “**eternal life**” through Christ. God actually “**desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**” (1Ti 2:4), “**not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance**” (2Pe 3:9).

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lake of fire” (i.e., eternal punishment, also hell, Greek *gehenna*; Rev 19:20; 20:10, 14–15). See another book we publish called *Beyond the Tomb* for more information. See also <https://christiancourier.com/articles/the-use-of-hell-in-the-new-testament>.

<sup>51</sup> Which are “**passing away**” (1Co 7:31; 2:6; 1Jn 2:8, 17; cf. Mat 5:18; 24:35; Mar 13:3–13; Luk 16:17; 21:33; 2Pe 3:5–10; Rev 21:1–6).



## THERE ARE NO “SECOND CHANCES” AFTER DEATH

Please further realize your spiritual state is fixed and unchangeable for all eternity when you die (Luk 16:26)—you either die “**righteous**” (without sin, “**holy and blameless**”), or you die “**unrighteous**” (a sinner, wicked, ungodly). There is no further remedy after death (i.e., “second chances”; Heb 9:27; Luk 16:19–31); you must prepare to stand before God in judgment before you die or before Jesus returns, whichever comes first.<sup>52</sup>

## THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

God is described as “**the righteous Judge**” (2Ti 4:8), and unlike in human courts of law, God can’t be swayed or convinced to change His mind by excuses or clever arguments of counsel, nor can He be bribed (Gal 6:7; cf. 1Co 1:20; 3:19; Gal 6:3; Job 38:1–3; Deu 10:17; Act 8:20; 2Ch 19:7; Pro 11:1; Col 3:24–25; Joh 5:29; Rom 14:10–12; Rev 2:23; 20:12–13; 22:12). There will be no discussing, arguing, pleading, wrangling, or negotiating with God on Judgment Day, trying to convince Him that you aren’t a sinner and that you deserve to be in heaven because you were basically a “good person.”<sup>53,54,55</sup> Additionally, race, creed, color, money, wealth, fame, power, political affiliations, birth heritage, prestige, advanced degrees, titles, and fancy initials placed before or after your name have no standing whatsoever before the Lord, who judges all equally, “**righteously**”<sup>56</sup> (see Gen 18:25; Isa 11:3–5; Psa 7:11; 9:8; 35:24; 72:2; 96:13; 98:9; 145:17; Act 17:31; Joh 5:30; 7:24; 8:15–16; 2Ti 4:8; 1Pe 2:23; Rev 16:5; 19:11; cf. Luk 16:15; 1Co 4:5; Gal 3:22; 1Sa 16:7; Jer 11:20), and “**impartially**”<sup>57</sup> (see Gen 18:25; Gal 2:6; 1Pe 1:17; Rom 2:11; 10:12; 11:32; Col 3:25; Job 34:19; Pro 22:2; Eph 6:9; Act 10:34–35; 15:9; 2Co 5:10; Deu 10:17; Isa 11:3–5).

You also cannot buy, earn (through works of merit), or purchase forgiveness of sins (and eternal salvation), for that is by the grace of God only through faith in and obedience to His Son, Jesus Christ. Only those covered by “**the blood of Christ**” (Eph 2:13; Heb 9:14; 1Pe 1:19; 1Co 10:16) will be “**saved**.”<sup>58</sup> Nothing and no one sinful or unclean will be allowed to enter heaven (1Co 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21; Eph 5:3–5; Joh 8:21; Mat 13:41; cf.

<sup>52</sup> Some will still be alive when Jesus returns (1Co 15:51–52).

<sup>53</sup> There also won’t be an endless appeals process, as there is in earthly courts of law.

<sup>54</sup> As explained prior, “the devil made me do it” and “God made me this way” excuses won’t work either.

<sup>55</sup> It doesn’t matter what you think about yourself; what matters is what God has told us, which is “**THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE**” (Rom 3:10) and “**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**” (Rom 3:23).

<sup>56</sup> Correctly and without error.

<sup>57</sup> Without partiality, justly, fairly; that is, equal justice no matter who you are or what you have done. Everyone is equally a sinner before God (Rom 3:10, 23; 11:32; cf. Gal 3:22; 6:7).

<sup>58</sup> It is only the righteousness of Christ that cleanses us of our sins (i.e., covers us).

Heb 12:29; Rev 9:20–21; 20:12–15; 21:1–8, 23–27; 22:15; Luk 12:5). In fact, the entire purpose of the Gospel is to explain how you can stand before God on Judgment Day with your sins forgiven and be granted entrance into heaven (“Paradise”; Luk 23:43; 2Co 12:4; Rev 2:7). We are told that “ignorance” of God’s laws and of how He has enabled each of us to stand before Him without sin will not be an excuse on Judgment Day (see Act 17:30; cf. Hos 4:6; Rom 10:2; 2Co 2:11).<sup>59</sup> Therefore, this book is declaring the Gospel to you accurately and completely so you too can have “eternal life” (as opposed to eternal death)—if you so choose.

## THE WORLD IN AWFUL SLEEP

Scripture warns us explicitly and repeatedly to “be on the alert” (Mat 24:36–25:13; Mar 13:35–37; Act 20:31; 1Co 16:13; Eph 6:18; 1Th 5:2–4; Rev 3:3; 16:15) for Jesus’ return, as “the day of judgment” will arrive suddenly (i.e., “quickly,” rapidly; Rev 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20), “like a thief in the night” (1Th 5:2; cf. 2Pe 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15), and when it is unexpected by nearly everyone (Mat 24:37–44; 25:1–13, 19; Luk 12:40; 17:26–36; 1Th 5:1–3; cf. 1Pe 3:20; Heb 11:7).<sup>60</sup> I do not want you to be uninformed, lest you be deceived by the many false teachings and fake prophecies about end-times Bible prophecy (eschatology) that are absolutely rampant today.<sup>61,62</sup> The list of such seems almost endless and way too long to fully mention here, but it includes the following:

- x Dispensational premillennialism<sup>63</sup>: The belief that Jesus’ return will only be to “rapture the church”<sup>64</sup> before the start of a “seven-year great

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<sup>59</sup> This warning about being ignorant applies in the extreme to those of us living today, for we have easy and ready access to the entire Word of God like never before in history (Luk 12:47–48; Act 17:30; Joh 15:22; Heb 10:29; cf. Mat 25:14–29), and along with greater access to truth (Scripture and the Gospel) comes a greater responsibility to respond to it.

<sup>60</sup> It will catch many off guard—even many professing Christians! Beware!

<sup>61</sup> The Book of Revelation is highly symbolic; many errors and false prophecies result when symbolic and figurative language is interpreted literally.

<sup>62</sup> See the chapter “Beware the Wolves.”

<sup>63</sup> This fake prophecy comes in various permutations and flavors and actually consists of *multiple* false teachings, all jumbled together into a giant web of deception. It is being loudly shilled today from nearly every church, pulpit, seminary, book, movie, publication, broadcast, and media outlet on the planet (even secular ones)! But there is no such thing as a “secret rapture of the church,” with some being “left behind” before a new “thousand-year (millennial) earthly reign of Christ” anywhere in Scripture! As I have explained, when Jesus returns the next time, Judgment Day will have arrived—period, end of story (1Co 15:23–24)!

<sup>64</sup> This false teaching is immensely popular today. However, the only “rapture” that will occur is the one that happens at the end of time on Judgment Day when all the saved are “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air (1Th 4:17). I’ve also noticed that the more popular an end-times teaching/prophecy is, the less likely it is to agree with Scripture!

tribulation” period, the rise of “The Antichrist,”<sup>65</sup> the Battle of Armageddon,<sup>66</sup> and so on—and then after all that—a new thousand-year (millennial) reign here on earth.

- x The “AD 70 Theory”—the false doctrine of Preterism.
- x Waiting for more signs and wonders in the skies (e.g., “blood moons,” etc.) to indicate Jesus’ return is nearing.
- x Waiting for a “Third Temple” to be built.
- x Waiting for the four horsemen of the apocalypse to go forth.<sup>67</sup>
- x Waiting for more “wars and rumors of wars” to indicate the end is near.<sup>68</sup>

The false prophecies have one purpose: To lull you into complacency, causing you to procrastinate and delay in taking all of this “God and Jesus stuff” seriously and put off repenting and turning to the Lord today with a humble and contrite heart. Please understand that all Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled<sup>69</sup> except that of (and subsequent to) Jesus’ return—which is also “the day of judgment” and “the last day” of human history.<sup>70</sup> Jesus’ return can now occur at any instant—all the prophetic preconditions that were to precede His return have already been met!

I realize that statement will come as a complete shock to nearly everyone (even most professing Christians), so for the avoidance of any doubt whatsoever in what I’m saying here, understand that at this moment in history, the very next prophetic event to occur will be “the last trumpet” of God sounding as Jesus returns and He appears in skies of “flaming fire” above for all to see in the absolutely awesome, stunning, and indescribable full “power” and “glory” of God Almighty with all His holy angels and saints. And just like that—suddenly and unexpectedly by nearly everyone—Judgment Day will have arrived! Furthermore, the events of that Day will unfold “quickly” (rapidly, Rev 22:7, 12, 20), and there will be no more time to “prepare to meet your maker,” to “get right with God,” or

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<sup>65</sup> There is no single “The Antichrist” political, economic, or nationalistic person called out in Scripture. Furthermore, the word *antichrist* doesn’t even appear in the Book of Revelation. The word *antichrist* means anyone who is set against or opposed to Christ. If you are still waiting for a fictional “The Antichrist” person to appear, you are being gullible and naïve.

<sup>66</sup> The Battle of Armageddon is spiritual; it is not a literal, physical battle here on earth.  
<sup>67</sup> They have been going forth for two thousand years already!

<sup>68</sup> Matthew 24:6 and Mark 13:7 actually apply to the period preceding AD 70.

<sup>69</sup> Please, however, do not take this even remotely to mean that I support the Preterist interpretation (either full or partial) of the Book of Revelation—that is just another set of false teachings/fake prophecies (i.e., Preterism, Realized Eschatology, the “AD 70 Theory,” etc.); see the chapter “Beware the Wolves.” I concur with a later dating of the Book of Revelation (i.e., that it was written approximately AD 81-96).

<sup>70</sup> For example, the apostasy has already occurred, and the “man of lawlessness [sin]” (2Th 2:1–12) has been revealed (Rome, Papal) when the “restraining” force (Rome, Pagan) was removed.

to change your eternal destiny (either heaven or hell). Yes, Jesus' return can happen at any instant now!

## BE ON THE ALERT!

Again I say: We must **“be on the alert,”** for there will be no more signs and wonders in the skies (or elsewhere) preceding Jesus' return and the arrival of Judgment Day. The only warning you will ever get is the one you are getting right now by reading this book as the Gospel is preached to you (Mat 3:7; 24:36–44; 25:10; Mar 13:32; Luk 12:40; 17:28–30; 2Pe 3:10; 1Th 5:2; Rev 3:3; 16:15; 22:12, 20; 2Co 5:20; Col 1:28; cf. Heb 11:7; 1Pe 3:19–20; 1Co 9:16; Exo 19:21; Isa 21:6–12; 62:6; Jer 6:17; Eze 3:17–21). Repent and turn to Christ right now—not tonight, tomorrow, or next week (Luk 12:16–21; Jas 4:13–16; cf. Jas 1:10–11; Eph 5:15–16; 1Pe 1:24; Psa 39:4–5; 90:9–12; 102:11; 144:4; Pro 27:1; Ecc 3:1–2).

Do not be **“tricked”** (see Luk 20:23; Eph 4:14) or **“deceived”** (see Rom 7:11; 16:18; 2Co 11:3–4, 13–15; Eph 4:14; 5:6; 2Th 2:3; 1Ti 2:14; 2Ti 3:13; Tit 1:10; Jas 1:16; 1Jn 2:26, 3:7; 2Jn 7; Rev 12:9; 13:13–14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3, 8–10; cf. Mat 4:1–11; Mar 13:22; Act 5:3; 8:9–11; 2Co 2:11; 11:14; Gal 6:7; Eph 6:11; Col 2:4, 8; 2Th 2:9–12; 1Ti 4:1; 1Pe 5:8) into thinking you have more time as you wait to see the fake end-times prophecies of man occur before you take this Gospel and Jesus stuff seriously (2Pe 3:3–10). Do not wait until you see some future “Bible prophecy” event occur or until some mythical so-called “The Antichrist” person appears (Mat 24:36–51; 25:13; Mar 13:35; 1Th 5:1–6). Do not fall victim to the false prophecies of man! The only reason Jesus hasn't returned yet and you are still able to read this is because **“the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”** (2Pe 3:9; cf. 2Pe 3:4; 1Pe 3:20; Lam 3:22–23; Jer 29:11), and He is giving time for more people to turn to Him and receive forgiveness of sins (Rom 5:6, 8; 1Pe 1:20; Act 26:18; Joh 3:16–17; 1Th 1:9; 5:9; Tit 3:4; Lam 3:22–23; Jer 29:11).

## OUR HOPE—JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, OUR SAVIOR

So far, we have been in **“the domain of darkness”** under **“bondage”** and held **“captive”**<sup>71</sup> to sin, Satan, and death and headed for judgment (see Col 1:13; Eph 4:8; Joh 8:31–32; Rom 8:2; Gal 4:3). But now we start to turn away from death and toward **“eternal life”** (Mat 19:16, 29; 25:46; Mar 10:29–30; Luk 18:30; Joh 3:14–17, 36; 4:13–14; 5:24; 6:27, 35–40, 47; 10:28; 17:1–3; Act 13:48; Rom 2:7; 5:21; 6:22–23; Gal 6:8; 1Ti 1:16; 6:12; Tit 1:1–2; 1Jn 2:25;

<sup>71</sup> Also, **“slaves to sin”** (Rom 6:6; cf. Gal 4:8; Joh 8:34–36; Rom 6:16–20; 16:18).

5:11–13, 20; Jud 20–21; cf. Joh 6:58; Rom 1:16; 2Pe 1:11; Rev 21:1–8; 22:1–5, 17) as we come to the “good news” (Luk 1:19; 2:10; Act 8:12; 13:32; Rom 10:15; Heb 4:2, 6; Isa 41:27; 52:7; 61:1) of the Gospel and the “hope” that we have in Jesus Christ (Mat 12:21; Act 23:6; 26:6; Rom 5:2; 8:24; 12:12; 15:12–13; Gal 5:5; Eph 1:12, 18; Col 1:5, 23, 27; 1Th 5:8; 2Th 2:16; 1Ti 1:1; 4:10; Tit 1:2; 3:7; Heb 6:18; 11:1; 1Pe 1:3, 21; 3:15; 1Jn 3:3; cf. Job 27:8; Psa 31:24; 33:18, 22; 38:15; 39:7; 62:5; 71:5; 119:166; 139:5; 146:5; Jer 17:13). We are moving “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1Pe 2:9; cf. Mat 4:16; Luk 1:78–79; 2Co 4:6; Joh 1:5; 8:12; 9:5; 14:6; Rev 21:24; Isa 60:1–3).

We read in Scripture that God “desires all men [people] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1Ti 2:4) and that He “is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish [in judgment] but for all to come to repentance” (2Pe 3:9). So God—out of His:

- “Love” (see Joh 3:16–18; 1Jn 4:8–10, 16; Eph 1:4–5; 3:17–19; 5:2; Rom 5:8; 8:35, 39; 2Co 13:14; Gal 5:6; 2Jn 3; Jud 21; cf. Lam 3:22–23),
- “Peace” (Eph 6:15; Mat 5:9; Luk 1:79; 19:38; 24:36; Joh 14:27; 16:33; Rom 16:20; Php 4:7, 9; Col 3:15; 1Th 5:23; 2Th 3:16; Isa 9:6),
- “Patience” (see 2Pe 3:9, 15; Rom 2:4; 9:22; 1Ti 1:16; 2:4; 1Pe 3:20; cf. Exo 34:6; Num 14:18; Psa 78:38; 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Isa 30:18; Neh 9:17; Joe 2:13; Nah 1:3; Jon 4:2; Lam 3:22–23; Rom 3:25; Rev 2:21),
- “Kindness”<sup>72</sup> (Rom 2:4; 11:22; Eph 2:7; Tit 3:4; 1Pe 2:3; cf. Eph 1:5, 9; Gen 39:21; Exo 20:6; Lam 3:22–23; Psa 13:5; 23:6; 31:7; 86:15; 100:5),
- “Compassion” (Mat 9:13, 36; Rom 9:15; Jas 5:11; cf. Exo 34:6; Lam 3:22–23; Psa 103:8),
- “Gentleness” (2Co 10:1; Psa 18:35),
- “Faithfulness” (see 2Ti 2:11–13; Rom 3:3; 1Th 5:24; 2Th 3:3; Isa 25:1; Lam 3:22–23; cf. Num 23:19; Heb 6:18; Mat 24:35; Psa 89),
- “Mercy” (see Mat 5:7; Mar 5:19; Luk 1:50, 54; Rom 9:15; Eph 2:4; 1Pe 1:3; 2:10; Jas 5:11; Jud 21; cf. Psa 86:15; 103:11; Lam 3:22–23), and
- “Grace” (Joh 1:14; Eph 1:7–8; 2:5, 8; Rom 1:7; 3:24; 5:2, 15; Luk 2:40; Act 11:23; 13:43; 20:24; 1Co 1:3–4; cf. Psa 86:15)

—has provided a way for us to “stand before the judgment seat of God” (Rom 14:10) on the Day of Judgment with our sins forgiven (Mat 26:28; Luk 1:77; Act 2:38; 10:43; 13:38; Col 1:14; 1Jn 2:12; Rom 4:7), that is, declared “NOT GUILTY” of sin (Heb 9:28; Jud 24; Rom 6:10; 8:3). He sent us a “Savior” (Luk 2:10–14; Joh 4:42; Tit 1:4; 3:4; 2Pe 1:1, 11; 2:20; Jud 24–25; 1Jn 4:14; Act 5:31; 13:23; 1Ti 2:3–4; 2Ti 1:10; cf. Joh 3:14–17), who is Jesus Christ, to save us from our sins so we can be “reconciled” to God (see Rom 5:10; 2Co 5:18; Eph 2:16;

<sup>72</sup> Also “lovingkindness” (Gen 19:19; Psa 6:4; 13:5; 17:7; 23:6; 25:6–7; Lam 3:22–23).

Col 1:19–23) and have “the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago” (Tit 1:1–2; cf. Tit 3:7; Joh 3:16–17).<sup>73</sup>

## JESUS OF NAZARETH (GOD’S ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON)

Jesus Christ<sup>74</sup> (Mat 1:18; Mar 1:1; Joh 1:17; 17:3; Act 8:12; 9:34; 10:36; 48; 20:21; Rom 1:4, 5–8; 3:22; etc.)—“Jesus of Nazareth” (Mat 26:71; Mar 1:24; Luk 4:34; 18:37; Joh 1:45–46; Act 10:34–43; cf. Mat 2:23; 21:11; Mar 1:9; 10:47; 16:6; Act 3:6; 4:8–12; 22:6–8; 24:5)—is a man who lived approximately two thousand years ago. Jesus was born in Bethlehem<sup>75</sup> (Mat 2:1–6; Luk 2:4, 15; Joh 7:42) and raised in Nazareth (Mat 2:19–23; 4:13; 21:11; Mar 1:9, 24; Luk 2:4; 4:34; Joh 1:46) in the region of Galilee (Mat 2:22; 3:13; 4:12, 18, 23; 19:1; 21:11; Mar 1:28; Luk 4:14; Joh 4:54; 7:52).

Jesus was supernaturally born of a virgin (Mary; see Mat 1:18–25; Luk 1:26–34) by the power of God via “the Holy Spirit” (Mat 1:18–20; Luk 1:34–35). Matthew traces His biological genealogy (Mat 1:1–16) back to Abraham on His mother’s side (Mary), while Luke traces His legal genealogy (Luk 3:23–38) back to Adam on His father’s side (Joseph). Many eyewitnesses documented and confirmed His life, including the twelve disciples/apostles, some of whom also lived and traveled with Him during His three-year ministry on earth. Even skeptics and atheists concede that there is overwhelming historical evidence that the man Jesus of Nazareth did indeed live exactly as told in Scripture.

The Bible also tells us that Jesus was (and is, for He lives!):

- “Sent” by God (Joh 4:34; 5:23, 30; 6:38; 8:42; 16:27–28; 17:8, 25),
- “His [God’s] only begotten Son” (see Joh 3:14–17; cf. Isa 9:6),
- “The Messiah” (see Mat 1:1, 16–17; 2:4; Joh 1:41; 4:25–26; cf. Dan 9:25–26),
- “Lord and Christ,” “The Christ,” “The Christ of God” (see Mat 16:13–16, 20; Mar 8:29; Luk 4:41; 9:20; 23:35; 24:46; Joh 7:42; 11:27; 20:31; Act 2:36; 3:20; 9:22; 17:3; 18:5),

<sup>73</sup> Now, some will surely ask: *What about those who have never heard about Jesus?* My response is: *You* have heard about Him (via this book), so now what will *your* response be? Trust in God to handle the big picture (Gen 18:25).

<sup>74</sup> Jesus (Ἰησοῦς, Iêsous) is the transliteration of the Greek name *Joshua* (Jehoshua, Yeshua) into English; the name means God saves or God is salvation. *Christ* is not Jesus’ last name; it is a title that means “the Messiah” or the “anointed” one of God (also “the Christ of God, His Chosen One”; see Joh 1:41; 4:25; Luk 4:18; 9:20; 23:35; Act 10:38; Heb 1:9; and “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Mat 16:13–16). *Christ* and *anointed* are the same word in Greek and the same as *messiach* or *Messiah* in Hebrew. You can find more information about Jesus of Nazareth in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>75</sup> As was prophesied in Scripture before His birth (Mic 5:2).

- **“The Savior of the World”** (Joh 4:42; 1Jn 4:14; cf. Luk 2:10–14; Joh 3:14–16; Tit 1:4; 3:4; 2Pe 1:1, 11; 2:20; Jud 24–25; Act 5:31; 13:23; 1Ti 2:3–4; 2Ti 1:10),
- **“The Son of God”** (Mat 4:3, 6; 26:63–64; 27:43, 54; Mar 1:1; 3:11; 15:39; Luk 1:35; 4:3, 9, 41; 22:70; Joh 1:34, 49; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 1Jn 5:20; Rom 1:3–4; cf. Mat 16:13–16; Mar 1:11; Luk 3:22, 38; Joh 3:18; Act 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; Gal 4:4),
- **“The Son of Man”** (Mat 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 12:40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27; 26:63–64; Mar 14:62; Joh 5:27; 6:27; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23; Act 7:56),
- God in the **“flesh”** (Joh 1:14; Rom 1:3–4; 8:3; 1Ti 3:16; Heb 2:14–17; 1Jn 4:2–3; 2Jn 7; cf. Mat 1:20–23; Gal 4:4; Php 2:5–8; Col 2:9; Heb 2:7–9; Isa 7:14)—God incarnate, the Great **“I am”** (Exo 3:14)—that is, God Himself (Joh 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; 2Co 4:4; Col 1:15; 2:9; Heb 1:3),
- Fully God and also fully man (Joh 1:1–2; 3:34; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; 16:15; Col 1:15, 19; 2:9; cf. 1Ti 3:16),
- Our **“Rock”** (Mat 7:24–27; 16:18; Luk 6:46–49; 1Co 10:4; cf. 2Sa 22:2–3; Psa 18:2, 46; 31:3; 42:9; 62:2, 6; 71:3; 144:1),
- Our **“Redeemer”** (Job 19:25; Psa 19:14; 78:35; Pro 23:11; Isa 41:14; 43:14; 44:24; 63:16; Jer 50:34; cf. Tit 2:14; Gal 3:13; 4:5; 1Pe 1:18), and
- **“IMMANUEL,”** which translated means, **“GOD WITH US”** (Mat 1:23).

## JESUS WILLINGLY GAVE HIMSELF FOR YOUR SINS

**“While we were still helpless, at the right time”** (Rom 5:6), Jesus was **“born under the [OT Mosaic] law,”** and He completely **“fulfilled”** that Law for us (see Gal 4:4–5; Mat 5:17–20; cf. Rom 8:3; 10:4; Mat 3:15–17; Luk 2:22–24, 27, 39; Joh 15:10; Gal 3:17–24). While He was **“tempted in all things as we are,”** He lived a perfect and sinless life, remaining **“without sin”** (Heb 4:15) as **“a lamb unblemished and spotless”** (1Pe 1:18–19; cf. 1Pe 2:22–24; 3:18; 2Co 5:21; Heb 2:18; 9:14; 1Jn 3:5; Rom 8:3; Eph 5:2; Isa 53:9). He is the only person ever to do so; everyone else who has ever lived has sinned (Rom 3:10, 23).

While Jesus was without sin, He was obedient to the will of God the Father (Mat 26:42; Mar 14:36; Joh 4:34; 5:19–26, 36; 6:38; 8:28; 10:32; 14:31; 15:10; 17:4; 19:30; Rom 5:19; cf. Mat 16:23; Mar 8:33), even **“obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”** (Php 2:8; cf. Heb 12:2; Mat 16:21; 20:18–19; 27:31–50; Act 2:23; 5:30; 10:39; Eph 2:16). He was crucified at Calvary for our sins (yours and mine; see Mat 20:28; 26:28; Joh 1:29; Act 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; Rom 5:6–8; 8:3; Gal 1:4; 3:3; Col 1:13–14; 2:14; 1Pe 2:24; 3:18; Tit 2:14; Heb 9:26–28). For this reason, He was given **“the name which is above every name”** (Php 2:9–11; cf. Heb 1:4, 2:9). It is through Jesus’ death that we can receive **“the forgiveness of our**

sins” (see [Act 2:38](#); [Eph 1:7](#); [Col 1:14](#))—if we so “choose” ([Jos 24:15](#); cf. [Rev 22:11, 17](#); [Pro 1:29](#); [Joh 6:67–68](#); [Deu 30:19](#)).

Please realize Jesus wasn’t forced to go to the cross; He *willingly* “gave Himself up for us” (see [Eph 5:2, 25](#); [Gal 2:20](#); cf. [Joh 10:11–18](#); [15:13](#); [Mat 20:28](#); [26:53](#); [Isa 53:7–8](#)) to pay the penalty for *our* sins ([Eph 1:7](#); [Rom 5:8](#); [6:23](#); [1Co 6:20](#); [1Pe 2:24](#); [2Co 5:21](#); [Rev 5:9](#); [Tit 2:14](#); [1Jn 2:2](#); [Isa 53:5](#)). As it is written, “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. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him” ([Joh 3:16–17](#)). And Jesus did all this so you could be with Him in heaven for eternity. Amen.

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Moreover, Jesus didn’t come to Earth the first time dressed in the fine purple linen attire of kings or the business suit of commerce. He wasn’t born in a lofty palace but in a lowly manger ([Luk 2:7, 12, 16](#)), and He didn’t come to the religious and political rulers or self-professing “elites” of that day ([Mat 9:12–13](#); [Luk 5:31–32](#); [Mar 2:17](#); cf. [Luk 15:7](#); [16:15](#); [Joh 9:40](#)). He came as:

- A “humble” (see [Php 2:5–11](#)) and Suffering Servant ([Gen 3:15](#); [Isa 53:7, 10–12](#); [Mat 20:28](#); [27:22–50](#)),
- A sacrificial “Lamb of God” (see [1Pe 1:19](#); [2:22–24](#); [3:18](#); [Joh 1:29, 36](#); [Act 8:32](#); [Rev 5:6, 8, 12–13](#); [22:1, 3](#)),
- A lowly “Shepherd” (see [Mat 2:6](#); [25:32](#); [26:31](#); [Heb 13:20](#); [1Pe 2:25](#); [5:4](#)), to gather His “lost” and broken “sheep” ([Mat 10:6](#); [18:11](#); [25:32–33](#); [Luk 15:6](#); [19:10](#); [Joh 10:11, 16, 26–27](#); [21:16–17](#); [Psa 100:3](#)), and
- A friend of sinners ([Mat 9:10–11](#); [11:19](#); [Luk 5:30](#); [7:34](#); [15:1–2](#); [19:7](#)), “despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” ([Isa 53:3](#); cf. [Psa 22:6](#)), and “pierced through for our transgressions” ([Isa 53:5](#)).

He came to “rescue” ([Col 1:13](#); [Gal 1:4](#); cf. [1Th 1:10](#); [2Ti 3:11](#); [4:18](#); [2Pe 2:9](#)) and “redeem” us ([Tit 2:14](#); cf. [Gal 3:13](#); [4:5](#); [1Pe 1:18](#); [Job 19:25](#); [Psa 19:14](#); [78:35](#); [Pro 23:11](#); [Isa 41:14](#); [43:14](#); [44:24](#); [63:16](#); [Jer 50:34](#)) from “the domain of darkness” ([Col 1:13](#); cf. [Mat 4:16](#); [Luk 1:78–79](#); [2:32](#); [22:53](#); [Joh 1:5](#); [3:19](#); [8:12](#); [12:35, 46](#); [Act 26:18](#); [Rom 2:19](#); [2Co 4:6](#); [Eph 5:8, 11](#); [6:12](#); [1Th 5:4–5](#); [1Pe 2:9](#); [1Jn 1:5–6](#); [2:8–11](#); [Psa 107:10–14](#); [119:105](#); [Isa 42:6–7](#); [60:1–3](#); [Mic 7:8](#)), for we were under “bondage” and held “captive” (see [Act 8:23](#); [Rom 7:14](#); [Luk 4:18](#); [Gal 4:3](#); [Eph 4:8](#); [2Ti 2:26](#); cf. [Psa 107:10–11](#)) to sin, Satan, and death. He fully and completely defeated Satan and his “spiritual forces of darkness and wickedness [evil]” (paraphrase; see [Eph 6:12](#)) for us at the cross ([Gen 3:15](#); [Luk 10:18](#); [Joh 12:31](#); [16:33](#); [19:30](#); [Rom](#)



8:37; Eph 1:20–22; Col 2:14–15; Heb 2:14; 10:10–13; 1Co 15:24–26; 54–57; 2Ti 1:10; 1Jn 3:8; 4:4; 5:4; Rev 1:17–18; 12:7–13; 15:2; 20:14; 21:4).

## OUR HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE IN HEAVEN

After His death on the cross, Jesus was “raised from the dead” (Act 3:15; 4:10; Joh 2:22; 21:14; Rom 6:4–5, 9–11; 7:4; 1Co 15:20; 1Th 1:10; cf. Mat 27:57–28:10; Mar 16:1–13; Luk 24:1–53; Joh 10:18; 11:24–25; 20:1–21:14; Act 1:22; 2:22–24, 32; 4:2, 33; 10:41; 13:30–34; 17:3, 30–31; 26:23; Rom 1:4–5; 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; 1Co 15:3–8, 12; 2Co 4:14; 5:15; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:19–21; Col 1:18; 2:12; 1Th 4:14; 2Ti 2:8; Heb 13:20; 1Pe 1:3–5, 20–21; 3:21) after “three days” (see Mat 12:40; 26:61; 27:63; Mar 8:31; 10:34; cf. Act 10:40; 1Co 15:3–8), and He “ascended into heaven” (Joh 3:13; Act 2:34; cf. Act 1:9–11; Joh 20:17; Eph 4:8, 10), where He is now “seated at the right hand of God [the Father]” (Col 3:1; cf. Mat 22:44; Mar 12:36; 16:19; Luk 20:42; 22:69; Rom 8:34; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 12:2; 1Pe 3:22; Eph 1:20–21; 4:10; Act 2:34; 7:55–56), ruling and reigning in His kingdom (Mat 22:44; 26:64; Mar 14:62; 16:19; Luk 22:69; Eph 1:20–22; Act 1:9; 7:55; Rom 8:34; Col 3:1; 1Pe 3:21–22; Heb 1:13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; Rev 1:5; 3:21; 19:15; Psa 110:1; cf. Mat 28:18; Col 1:15–16; 2:10, 15; Php 2:9–10; 1Ti 2:5; Heb 7:25), “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come” (Eph 1:20–21; cf. Heb 2:8).



After His resurrection (and before His ascension), Jesus interacted with and was seen by hundreds of people, thereby proving that He was not a mirage, a ghost, or fake<sup>76</sup> (Act 1:3; 2:32; 3:15; 5:30–32; Mat 28:9–17; Mar 16:1–14; Luk 24:36–43; Joh 20:19–20, 24–29; 21:14; 1Co 15:3–8). Christianity is the only religion with a “living God”<sup>77</sup> (see Mat 16:16; Act 14:15; Rom 9:26; 2Co 3:3; 1Ti 3:15; 4:10; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; cf. Mat 22:32; Mar 12:27; Luk 20:38; Joh 8:58; 1Th 1:9; 1Co 15:12–22). His resurrection gives us “our hope” (see 1Co 15:19–20; 2Co 1:9–10; 1Ti 1:1; 4:10; Heb 10:23; 1Pe 1:13), for by it, He proved that He conquered death. Furthermore, He has gone to “prepare a place for you” in heaven (Joh 14:1–3; cf. Joh 6:39–40, 44, 54; 14:18–23, 28; Rom 8:17; Php 1:23; 3:20; 1Th

<sup>76</sup> See the chapter “Was Jesus Really Raised from the Dead?” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>77</sup> All other world religions have a dead god or one that is simply an impersonal “force” or feeling.

4:13–18; 2Th 2:1; Heb 9:28; 1Jn 3:2–3; 1Co 15:50–57; 2Co 5:6–8; Rev 3:21; 21:22–23; 22:3–5) so “*that where I [Jesus] am, there you may be also*” (i.e., in heaven; Joh 14:1–3; cf. Joh 6:39–40, 44, 54; 14:18–23, 28; Rom 8:17; Php 1:23; 3:20; 1Th 4:13–18; 2Th 2:1; Heb 9:28; 1Jn 3:2–3; 1Co 15:50–57; 2Co 5:6–8; Rev 3:21; 21:22–23; 22:3–5).

## JESUS WILL BE YOUR JUDGE (AND MAYBE YOUR ATTORNEY)

As explained in the prior section “The Day of Judgment,” Jesus is coming again to earth one final time, physically and bodily (Act 1:9–11; 1Th 4:16; 2Th 1:7), to get all those who believed in Him and obeyed His Gospel (this will be explained shortly), and the next time He comes it will not be as a tiny baby in a manger but as the Judge of all humanity, as it is written, “*This is the One [Jesus] who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead*” (Act 10:42; cf. Act 17:31), for God has given “*all authority*” to Him (Mat 28:18; cf. Mat 11:27; 16:27; 25:31–33; Luk 10:22; Joh 3:35; 5:22–27; 13:3; 17:2; Act 10:42; 17:31; Rom 2:16; 14:9; 1Co 15:27; 2Co 5:10; Eph 1:20–22; Php 2:9–11; Col 1:16–19; 2Th 1:6–10; 2Ti 4:1, 8; Heb 1:2; 2:8; 10:30; 1Pe 4:5; Rev 20:11–12; also cf. Mat 9:6; Mar 2:10; Luk 5:24; Psa 9:7–8; 50:3–6; 96:13; 98:9). But know this: Jesus can also be your Attorney on the Day of Judgment—if you so “*choose*” (Jos 24:15; cf. Rev 22:11, 17; Pro 1:29; Joh 6:67–68; Deu 30:19). How do you get Jesus as your attorney? You do so by believing in Him (through faith) and becoming obedient to His Gospel. Friend, do you realize what it means to have the Judge also act as your Attorney? It guarantees that you will receive a verdict of “NOT GUILTY” of being a sinner on Judgment Day, even before the trial starts! How amazing is that, and this brings us to the “*good news*” part of the Gospel.

## THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL

Jesus “*did not come*<sup>78</sup> *to judge the world, but to save the world*” (Joh 12:47; cf. Joh 3:17) and to be “*the Light of the world*” (Joh 8:12; cf. Joh 1:4–8; 3:19–21; 9:5; 12:34–36; 1Jn 1:7; 2:9–10; Rev 22:5). He came to “*save*” (see Joh 3:16–17; 5:34; 10:9; Act 2:21, 47; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30–31; Eph 2:8–9; 1Ti 2:4; Rom 5:9–10; 8:24; 9:27; 10:9, 13; 1Co 1:18; Luk 7:50; 13:23; 23:35; 1Pe 4:18; Tit 3:5; Mat 10:22; 19:25) those who are “*sinners*” (1Ti 1:15), just like you and me, not the self-righteous (Mat 9:12–13; Luk 5:31–32; 9:56; Mar 2:17; cf. Luk 15:7, 10; 16:15; Joh 9:40).

The heart of the “*good news*” of the Gospel is that God has told us that He will accept His Son’s death on the cross as full payment (“*atonement*,”

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<sup>78</sup> The first time.

“**atonement sacrifice**,” “**propitiation**”) for *all* of our sins (Mat 26:28; Luk 24:47; Act 2:38; 3:19; Joh 3:16–18; Rom 3:25–26; 5:8–10, 21; 8:1; 1Co 15:3; Eph 1:6–8; Col 1:13–14, 20–22; Heb 2:17; 8:12; 9:26–28; 10:17; 1Pe 2:24; 3:18; 1Jn 1:7; 2:2; 4:10; Rev 1:5; cf. Psa 51:7; 103:12; Isa 1:18; 43:25; 44:22; Jer 31:34; Mic 7:18–19)—if we believe in Him as our Lord and Savior, are obedient to His Gospel, and remain faithful.<sup>79</sup> His shed blood paid the penalty for our sins (Heb 9:14, 22; 1Pe 1:18–19; Rev 1:5; 1Co 6:11; 1Jn 1:7), and it is only by and through His shed blood that we can receive the “**forgiveness of sins**” (Mat 26:28; Luk 1:77; Act 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; Col 1:14; cf. Jer 31:34; Psa 103:12; Isa 1:18). God then allows us to be covered by Jesus’ perfect “**righteousness**” (2Co 5:21; 1Pe 2:24; 1Co 1:30; Php 3:9; cf. Rom 3:21–26; 4:13; 5:19, 21; 10:3–4, 10; Gal 3:11) so we can stand before Him on Judgment Day with our sins forgiven (Heb 2:17; 9:26–28; 10:17; 1Jn 1:7; 2:2; 3:36; 4:10; Rom 3:25; 5:21; Mat 26:28; Col 1:13–14, 20–22; Eph 1:7; Rev 1:5).

In effect, we “**put on**” (Gal 3:27 ESV; Rom 13:14; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10) Jesus’ “**righteousness**” (1Co 1:30) like a “**white garment**” so we will be clothed in it on Judgment Day (see Gal 3:27; Rev 3:4–5, 18; 4:4; 7:13–14; cf. 2Co 11:2; Rev 6:11; 7:9, 13; 19:14; 16:15). The white clothes signify that you have been cleansed from all sin (Psa 103:12; Isa 1:18; 43:25; Jer 31:34; Rev 7:14; 14:4). Christ’s righteousness is actually counted as our own (Rom 5:17; 8:10; 1Co 1:30; 2Co 5:21; Php 1:11; 3:9) because Jesus took our sins on Himself: “**He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him [God] holy and blameless and beyond reproach**” (Col 1:22; cf. 1Th 5:23).

Being covered by Jesus’ righteousness and “**brought near [to God] by the blood of Christ**” (Eph 2:13), being “**reconciled to God**” (Rom 5:10–11; 2Co 5:18–20; cf. Eph 2:16; Col 1:20–22), and no longer being “**an enemy of God**” (Jas 4:4; cf. Act 13:10; Col 1:21; Rom 5:1, 10–11; 8:7; Joh 15:23; Gen 3:15; Jas 4:4) are the only things that will matter on Judgment Day<sup>80</sup>—not whether you think you are a “good person” (Pro 12:15; 14:12; 16:25; 26:12; 30:12; Gal 6:3; cf. Jer 17:9; Rom 3:10, 23; 12:3, 16; Luk 18:11; 1Co 3:18; 1Jn 1:8; Mat 9:13; Mar 2:17), attend church regularly (Mat 15:8; Mar 7:6; 12:33; Pro 15:8; 21:3; Isa 1:11–17; Hos 6:6), or do good works (Eph 2:8–9; Rom 3:27; 4:2–5; Gal 2:16) in a vain attempt to “earn” salvation or gain favor with God. It is only through Jesus that we can be declared “**righteous**” (see Mat 13:43, 49; 25:37, 46; Rom 1:17; 5:19; 1Pe 4:18; Heb

<sup>79</sup> This is explained shortly.

<sup>80</sup> This is not meant to diminish in any way the acts of kindness, service, or charity we may do here in this world; I’m referring specifically to one’s status and salvation before the Lord on the Day of Judgment.

10:38; 12:23; Rev 22:11), “justified” (Rom 3:24; 5:1, 9; 8:30; 1Co 6:11; Tit 3:7), “glorified” (see Rom 6:5; 8:30; 2Co 3:18; Php 3:20–21; Col 3:4; cf. 1Jn 3:2; Act 24:15; Joh 5:25; 1Th 2:12; 4:16; 1Co 15:40–57; 2Co 5:1–4), and “holy and blameless” (see Eph 1:4; 5:27; Col 1:22; cf. 2Pe 3:14; Act 24:16; 1Co 1:8; Php 1:10; 2:15; 1Th 5:23; Jud 24; Rev 14:5) in the sight of God and have the hope of “eternal life” in heaven (Joh 12:46; Mat 11:28–30; 20:28; Act 2:21; 10:35, 43; Rom 1:16; 9:33; Tit 2:11; Rev 22:17).

## THERE WON'T BE ANY “GOOD PEOPLE” IN HEAVEN

Please realize that God does not offer you the hope of salvation (eternal life in heaven) because there is some inherent goodness in you or because you are better than others, for there is “nothing good” (Rom 7:18) in any of us who have lived or will ever live, except Christ—we are all just sinners before God, deserving of (eternal) death (Rom 3:10–18, 22–23; 6:23).<sup>81</sup> The only reason some will be in heaven while others will be in hell is that they chose to accept “the free gift of God [which] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23) by having a humble and contrite heart, repenting of their sins, placing their faith and trust in Jesus (believing in Him), and then becoming obedient to His Gospel. That’s it. There is no other difference.

Heaven is not for the proud and boastful, and there won’t be even one single “good person” in heaven.<sup>82</sup> The only ones there will be those who knew they were a sinner in need of a Savior, who humbled themselves before God, and who were saved by the love, kindness, mercy, and grace of God. That’s right: Heaven will only be full of sinners who are covered by the righteousness of Jesus! And while God didn’t have to save any of us, He thought that you were so valuable that He gave His only Son over to death for you (and me; Joh 3:16–17) so we could be together with Him in heaven for eternity. Amazing! Aren’t you glad and grateful that “the LORD, the LORD God, [is] compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Exo 34:6; cf. Num 14:18; Psa 86:15; 103:8; 145:8)? Amen!

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<sup>81</sup> In the same way, God didn’t choose the Israelites because they were better than others, because there was some inherent good in them, or because they were righteous in some way; in fact, just the opposite is stated in Scripture (Deu 9:4–6; cf. Deu 9:1–29). God continually called them “rebellious” (Deu 9:7, 23–24), “stubborn,” and “stiff-necked” (Exo 32:90; Deu 9:6–7, 23–24; 2Ch 30:8; Neh 9:16; Act 7:51). They were chosen so God has an “inheritance” (Deu 9:26, 29; cf. Col 1:18) among the peoples of the Earth and so they could act as the forerunner to prepare the world for the Christ. When it comes right down to it, they were not any different, in essence, than you and me (Gal 3:22), so we all have the very same hope of eternal life in heaven with God and His Christ Jesus.

<sup>82</sup> There aren’t any “good people” in the church either, for that matter (Rom 7:18); although some church members may act like they are better than others, that is just hypocrisy.

## THE “GOOD NEWS” SUMMARIZED

In summary, “our faith and hope are in God” (see 1Pe 1:21) through Christ, not in man or the things of this world, for the things of this world offer no hope of eternal life. The “good news” of the Gospel includes all of the following:

- ✓ We have forgiveness of sins (all of them!) by the shed blood of Christ on the cross, so we are “set free” and no longer in “bondage,” held “captive,” and “slaves of sin” (see Eph 4:8; Joh 8:31–32; Rom 6:17, 20; 8:2; Gal 4:3);
- ✓ Jesus has “reconciled us to God,” so we are no longer “enemies” of God (see Rom 5:10; 2Co 5:20);
- ✓ Jesus conquered death at the cross for us (1Co 15:53–57; Rom 5:12–21; Heb 2:14–15; Rev 20:13–14);
- ✓ Jesus will return once more, physically and bodily, in the full “might,” “power,” and “glory” of God Almighty to get all those who “CALLED ON THE NAME OF THE LORD” (see Act 2:21; 22:16; Rom 10:13; 1Co 1:2; cf. Gen 4:26; Isa 12:4; Psa 91:14–15; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17) according to the instructions given in Scripture and who were obedient to His Gospel; and
- ✓ He will “raise you up” (see Joh 6:39–40, 44, 54) to “eternal life” on Judgment Day to be with Him in heaven forever (“Paradise,” Luk 23:43; 2Co 12:4; Rev 2:7) as He abolishes death and “wipes away every tear” (Rev 21:4).

## YOU HAVE A CHOICE (DARKNESS INTO LIGHT)

So, friend, you now have some choices to make that will stand for all eternity. God gave you free will to choose whom to believe and obey.<sup>83</sup> We are told, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Pro 1:7; cf. Mat 10:28; Luk 5:26; 23:40; Joh 9:31; Act 9:31; 10:2, 22; 13:16, 26; 2Co 5:11; 7:1; 1Pe 2:17; Rev 14:7; 19:5; Psa 19:9; 111:10; Pro 1:29–30; 2:5; 9:10; 14:27; 19:23; 23:17; 31:30; Job 28:28), and it is only from God’s wisdom that you can obtain eternal life. Moreover, we can only find God’s wisdom in the Bible. Scripture also tells us that “men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” (Joh 3:19; cf. Joh 1:5; Psa 107:10–11). You can continue your sinful behavior (i.e., darkness) if you choose to, but God, through Christ, can “set you free” from being held “captive” and a

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<sup>83</sup> Man having free will does not conflict with the sovereignty of God (as the false dogma of Calvinism claims); it is actually God’s will that *allows* man to have free will.

“slave to sin” (see [Eph 4:8](#); [Rom 6:6](#); [8:2](#)), for as it is written, “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” ([Joh 8:31–32](#)).

You must first decide whether God exists or not ([Heb 11:6](#)), for He is the author of all life. Only in God can “light” and “life” be found; away from Him there is only “darkness” and “death.”<sup>84</sup> Next, you must “choose” ([Jos 24:15](#); cf. [Rev 22:11, 17](#); [Pro 1:29](#); [Joh 6:67–68](#); [Deu 30:19](#)) between God (and life) or sin, Satan, and death ([2Co 4:4](#)). You must actively choose to disown Satan, who is your father while you are in sin ([Joh 8:38, 41, 44, 47](#); [Jos 24:15](#); [1Jn 3:8–10](#); [Act 13:10](#); cf. [Mat 5:6](#); [Rev 22:11](#)), and accept and follow (believe and obey) God and His Christ Jesus.<sup>85</sup> Those who do so “become children of God” (see [Joh 1:12–13](#); [11:52](#); [Act 17:29](#); [Rom 8:14–16, 21](#); [9:8](#); [Php 2:15](#); [1Jn 3:1–2, 10](#); [5:2](#); cf. [Mar 14:36](#); [Gal 3:26](#); [4:6–7](#); [2Co 6:18](#))<sup>86</sup>—you are actually adopted into God’s family instead of remaining in Satan’s ([Rom 8:15–17, 23](#); [Eph 1:5](#); [2:19](#)).

Jesus said, “Follow me” nineteen times,<sup>87, 88</sup> and He said, “Come to me” eight times,<sup>89</sup> most famously as, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” ([Mat 11:28–30](#); cf. [Rom 6:21–23](#); [Joh 8:31–36](#)).<sup>90</sup> Are you willing to turn from “worthless idols” ([Jer 18:15 NKJV](#); [Jon 2:8 NKJV](#)) or wanting to be your own “god” to serve the “living and true God” ([1Th 1:9](#))?

It is largely “pride” (see [1Jn 2:16](#); [Pro 11:2](#); [16:5, 18](#); [29:23](#); [Gal 6:3](#); [Jas 4:6](#)), along with a continued desire to satisfy “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life” ([1Jn 2:16](#)), that causes one to deny God and reject the Gospel. It also causes man to wrongfully (and arrogantly) think that he is his own god ([Psa 14:1](#); [53:1](#); [Pro 14:12](#); [16:18](#); [1Co 1:18–25](#); [2:14](#); [3:19](#)). It is further written that some will think that the Gospel and all this “Jesus stuff” is “foolishness”<sup>91</sup> (see [Rom 1:21](#); [Mat 7:24–27](#); [1Co 1:18–24](#);

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<sup>84</sup> Verse references were given prior in the section “Humanity and Sin.”

<sup>85</sup> If you don’t actively choose, you have actually made your choice, for by default we are all children of Satan.

<sup>86</sup> A child of God; also “sons of God” ([Mat 5:9](#); [Luk 20:36](#); [Rom 8:14, 19](#); [Gal 3:26](#)).

<sup>87</sup> [Mat 4:19](#); [8:22](#); [9:9](#); [16:24](#); [19:21](#); [Mar 1:17](#); [2:14](#); [8:34](#); [10:21](#); [Luk 5:27](#); [9:23, 59](#); [18:22](#); [Joh 1:43](#); [10:27](#); [12:26](#); [13:36](#); [21:19, 22](#).

<sup>88</sup> Note also that the disciples, when called, followed Him without hesitation, leaving everything behind that very instant!

<sup>89</sup> [Mat 11:28](#); [Mar 10:14](#); [Luk 18:16](#); [Joh 5:40](#); [6:37, 44, 65](#); [7:37](#).

<sup>90</sup> The “burden” He is taking from you is all your sin and guilt that you carry from being a sinner all your life—He will take all that on Himself, for you, if you let Him!

<sup>91</sup> Intellectual arrogance, by thinking that one knows more than or is wiser than God.

2:14; 3:18–20; Luk 24:25; 2Co 4:3; 2Th 2:10; Psa 14:1).<sup>92</sup> You must choose to accept and follow either the ways and “[the wisdom of the world](#)”<sup>93</sup> (1Co 1:20; cf. 1Co 3:19; 1:27; Jas 3:14–15; Pro 14:12; 16:25; Rom 3:4; 1Jn 2:15), which lead to eternal death (Pro 14:12; 16:25), or “[the wisdom from above](#)” (“[the wisdom of God](#)”; Jas 3:17; 1Co 1:20–21; cf. Eph 3:10; Act 5:29; Jas 1:5; 3:15; Pro 23:23), which is also “[the wisdom that leads to salvation \[eternal life\]](#)” (2Ti 3:15; cf. Pro 1:7; 3:5–7; Mat 7:24–27). One must discard the wisdom of man to find God and eternal life (Rom 3:4; cf. 2Co 4:4).

So, will you keep thinking yourself “[wise in your own eyes](#)” (see Isa 5:21), or are you ready to admit you’re a sinner in need of a Savior and humble yourself, get down on your knees before God, and acknowledge Him for who He is, repent of your sins, and ask for forgiveness? I fully understand that it’s not easy to humble yourself before God and admit that you’re a sinner, but friend, that’s the truth! You can’t run or hide from that fact (Rom 3:10, 23; Rev 6:15–17; Pro 14:12; 16:2, 25; Jer 17:9)! Unfortunately, by the time most people realize that Jesus is real and that He is God who offered forgiveness for their sins, it will be too late.

## FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS OPEN TO EVERYONE

Salvation (forgiveness of sins and “[eternal life](#)”) is open to “[everyone](#)” (Mat 7:8, 26; Luk 6:47; 12:8; Act 2:21; Rom 1:16; Gal 3:22; cf. Mat 24:14; 25:32; 28:19; Mar 13:10; Luk 2:30–32; 24:47; Joh 6:37; Act 1:8; 10:35; 13:47; 17:30; 20:21; Rom 3:29–30; 11:32; 16:26; Gal 3:8, 22, 28; Tit 2:11–12; Rev 12:5; 22:17; Gen 22:18; Isa 2:2) equally (Gen 18:25; 1Pe 1:17; Rom 2:11; 10:12; 11:32; Col 3:25; Job 34:19; Pro 22:2; Eph 6:9; Act 10:34–35; 15:9; 2Co 5:10; Rev 19:11; Deu 10:17) and “[impartially](#)”<sup>94</sup> (see Gen 18:25; Gal 2:6; 1Pe 1:17; Rom 2:11; 10:12; 11:32; Col 3:25; Job 34:19; Pro 22:2; Eph 6:9; Act 10:34–35; 15:9; 2Co 5:10; Deu 10:17; Isa 11:3–5).

And unlike man, who seldom forgives and never forgets, and who often holds a grudge and seeks revenge for years, decades, and even generations, God offers complete forgiveness for any and all sins (Mat 12:31–32; 26:28; Mar 3:28; Luk 12:10; 24:47; 1Jn 1:7; Eph 1:6–8; cf. Mat 9:6; Mar 2:10; Luk 5:24), no matter what they are or how long you have committed them, for He is a God of amazing “[love](#),” “[peace](#),” “[patience](#),” “[kindness](#),”<sup>95</sup> “[compassion](#),”

<sup>92</sup> See also “[foolish](#)” (see Psa 14:1; 39:8; 53:1; 74:18, 22; 107:17; Pro 1:7, 22, 32; 8:5; 10:8, 14, 21; 12:15; 14:8, 16, 18, 24, 33; 15:5, 7, 14; 17:10, 12; 18:2, 6–7; 19:1, 3; 23:9; 26:1–12; 27:22; 28:26; Isa 32:6; 35:8).

<sup>93</sup> The wisdom of man, committees, and institutions, and the ways of this world.

<sup>94</sup> Without partiality, justly, fairly; that is, equal justice no matter who you are or what you have done. Everyone is equally a sinner before God (Rom 3:10, 23; 11:32; cf. Gal 3:22; 6:7).

<sup>95</sup> Also “[lovingkindness](#)” (Gen 19:19; Psa 6:4; 13:5; 17:7; 23:6; 25:6–7; Lam 3:22–23).

“mercy,” and “grace.” On Judgment Day, He will remember your sins no more as if you had never committed them (Heb 8:12; 10:17; Act 2:38; 3:19; Rom 8:1; Col 1:13–14; Eph 1:6–8; cf. Psa 51:7; 103:12; Isa 1:18; 43:25; 44:22; Jer 31:34; Mic 7:18–19; cf. Mat 5:4<sup>96</sup>), and He will also raise you up to eternal life in heaven with Him as He makes all things new and when sin, corruption, disease, pain, suffering, and death are abolished for all eternity.<sup>97</sup>

But to approach God, you must admit you’re a sinner and come to Him in humility (Jas 4:6; Pro 11:2; 29:23)—right now, today—and receive the wonderful gift of eternal life through Christ, offered out of God’s kindness, compassion, mercy, and grace. “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ... Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you” (Jas 4:8–10; cf. Heb 4:16; 7:19, 25; 10:22; Psa 34:18; 145:18; Lam 3:22–23). He offers this forgiveness through the “good news” of “the gospel of the grace of God” (Act 20:24), which is also “the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mar 1:1), “for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16; cf. Joh 3:16, 18, 36; 6:35, 37–40; 12:46; Mat 11:28–30; 20:28; Act 2:21; 10:43; Rom 9:33; Tit 2:11; Rev 22:17).

## GOD’S MERCY AND FORGIVENESS ARE MASSIVE

Yes, God’s lovingkindness, grace, and mercy are massive! Remember that God can use anyone:

- He used a murderer to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt (Moses, Exo 2:11–12).
- He used a prostitute to help protect the Israelites (Rahab, Ios 2:1–24).
- He used another murderer who became a great apostle (Paul, Act 22:20).<sup>98</sup>

The apostle Paul had persecuted and even helped put to death some of the very first believers in Christ, and yet Jesus forgave him. Then Paul went on to become one of the greatest saints of all time. God can do just the same for you. Don’t let guilt or shame stop you from coming to Jesus; He has already taken all your sins on Himself (Rom 5:8; 8:3; 2Co 5:21; Isa 53:4–6, 9–12; Gal 3:13; Eph 5:2; 1Pe 3:18)—if you let Him. Maybe you have some deep, dark secrets or deeds that no one knows about, but friend, He already knows about them all, for “nothing is hidden” from God—not your “thoughts” and not even the deep, dark, secret things of the human

<sup>96</sup> You are “mourning” over your sin (and the sinful nature of the world in general).

<sup>97</sup> See the chapter “All Things Made New” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>98</sup> Technically, this was conspiracy to commit murder.



heart, and as mentioned previously, He even knows the “**motives**” behind your actions. Let Jesus take all your sin and guilt. Don’t decide for yourself that you can’t be forgiven for what you have done—let Jesus decide! Or maybe you’re trapped in an addiction like I was. It doesn’t matter what kind, for they are all the same at the core: Lack of hope combined with chemical dependency. But Christ can also take all that away from you and give you hope in return. Amazing!<sup>99</sup>

Peter once asked Jesus how many times he should forgive those who sinned (Mat 18:21–22), probably expecting to hear a relatively small number. Peter even suggested the number seven (i.e., a small number of times that we as humans think is reasonable). However, the Lord answered with the number “**seventy times seven**” (i.e., 490). Now, the actual number given here isn’t the important part;<sup>100</sup> what’s important is the magnitude of the number—it’s an ENORMOUS number, far higher than anything that Peter might have even remotely imagined in his own mind! This demonstrates how great God’s love, compassion, forgiveness, mercy, and grace are for us (Eph 3:14–21; cf. Joh 3:16–18)—far greater than what the mind of man thinks is reasonable and far beyond what we would expect from any human.

## TODAY IS THE DAY OF SALVATION

Jesus invites *all* who are “**thirsty**” (Joh 7:37–38; Rev 22:17; Tit 2:11; 1Ti 2:4; cf. Joh 3:16, 18, 36; 6:35, 37–40; 12:46; Mat 11:28–30; 20:28; Act 2:21; 10:43; Rom 1:16; 9:33) to come to Him. “**Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened**” (Mat 7:7–8). God “**desires all [people] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**” (1Ti 2:3–4), “**not wishing for any to perish [in judgment]**” (2Pe 3:9). Do you want to drink from “**the fountain of the water of life**” offered by Christ (Rev 21:6; cf. Mat 11:28–30; Joh 4:10; 7:38; Rev 22:1, 17)? You can make that choice right now, today, as it is written: “**Behold, now is ‘THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,’ behold, now is ‘THE DAY OF SALVATION’**” (2Co 6:2; cf. Heb 3:8–15; 4:7)—if you choose God and life

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<sup>99</sup> You banish and defeat (overcome) addiction by fully and completely turning your life over to Christ. Yes, it will still take determination, courage, strength of character, personal discipline, and self-control on your part to overcome an addiction, but it is by and through the power of Christ living (abiding) in you that you can now do all things (Php 4:13; Joh 15:1–10; Rom 8:13; 2Co 12:9–10; Eph 3:16; 6:10; Isa 40:29–31; Zec 4:6). See the chapters “Living in the Spirit” and “Changing Your Worldly Habits” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information. You may also like our book *Jesus > Addiction*.

<sup>100</sup> We are not to interpret that as a literal 490 times that we are to forgive sins.

over sin and death, *today*. None of us may get tomorrow or even this afternoon (Luk 12:16–21; Jas 4:13–16; cf. Jas 1:10–11; Eph 5:15–16; 1Pe 1:24; Psa 39:4–5; 90:9–12; 102:11; 144:4; Pro 27:1; Ecc 3:1–2).

If you find these words stirring your heart, please don't ignore them and keep putting things off. That is a sign that God is calling out to you right here and right now. Don't harden your heart to that calling (like Pharaoh did). We should greatly heed the warning given in Scripture that there comes a time when God will no longer strive to reach those who have hardened their hearts beyond the point of no return. As the Lord says, "**My Spirit shall not strive with man forever**" (Gen 6:3). It is the Holy Spirit who is trying to "**convict**" (Joh 16:8) you of your sin(s), and it is He who is striving with you to come to repentance and turn to the Lord Jesus as your Savior—right now.<sup>101</sup> If you keep resisting the pleadings and striving of the "**Spirit of truth**" (Joh 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), there remains no other recourse for you to be saved (i.e., led into truth and salvation).<sup>102</sup>

The "**wide gate and broad way**"<sup>103</sup> (paraphrase; see Mat 7:13–14) is to just go on in life as you always have, in sin and lusting after the things "**of this world,**" without regard for God or others. That is also the worldly, popular way: *I'm gonna get what I can get now, by any means possible, for I only care about me and mine. And when I die, so what? It's all over, and I go into nothingness.* But that "**broad way,**" which the vast majority of humanity chooses, leads to eternal death, and as I have explained previously, you will not go into "nothingness" when you die. Death is not an extinction event (our ending); it is the separation of the soul from the body. Your soul lives on forever; the only question is where—in heaven or hell. And here's the amazing part: You get to decide<sup>104</sup> which of those it is

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<sup>101</sup> This is why He is also called "**the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning**" (Isa 4:4) and "**the Spirit of truth**" (Joh 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

<sup>102</sup> There is a sin referred to as "**blaspheming against the Holy Spirit**" (see Mat 12:31; Mar 3:29; Luk 12:10), for which there is no recourse. There is no recourse for it because it is only by and through the Holy Spirit that one can be led into truth—the truth that Jesus is Lord and Savior, the truth of the Gospel, and so on. Therefore, when you reject the Spirit who is "**striving**" with you (see Gen 6:3; Psa 103:9; Joh 14:17; 16:8), you are rejecting any hope of being saved. Wayne Jackson writes, "The sin under consideration was not a mere impulsive exclamation that denigrated the Holy Spirit, i.e., blasphemous words uttered rashly that, once they leave the lips, condemn a person forever—no matter what his disposition is in the future. Instead, the verb 'say,' emphasized above, is an imperfect tense form, which indicates an abiding disposition, a persistent maliciousness. There can be no forgiveness for sustained unbelief" (Wayne Jackson, *A New Testament Commentary* [Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2011], 28).

<sup>103</sup> Broad; easy. Why is the way to destruction called wide and broad? It is because that is the easy way and the one that most people choose (sadly).

<sup>104</sup> "**Choose for yourselves**" (Jos 24:15; cf. Rev 22:11, 17; Pro 1:29; Joh 6:67–68; Deu 30:19).

by either accepting or rejecting Jesus. If you want “eternal life” in heaven, you will have to stop pursuing the things “of this world” (Joh 8:23; 12:31; 13:1; 18:36; 1Co 5:10; 7:31; 2Co 4:4; Eph 2:2; cf. Php 3:19–20), repent of your sins, turn from your own selfish, lustful, sinful desires, and instead pursue the things of God and His Christ.

## IT TAKES COURAGE

Understand that going forward to “eternal life” in Christ will take “courage,” “strength” of character, “boldness” (for the truth and Christ), personal “discipline,” moderation, “self-control,” and “endurance”/“perseverance”; you may even face “persecution,” “trials,” “tribulations,” “suffering,” “hardship,” and other difficulties in choosing to go forward in and with Christ and in standing for the truth of the Gospel in a massively corrupt and wicked world. As it is written, “You will be hated by all nations because of My [Jesus] name” (Mat 24:9; cf. Mat 10:22; Mar 13:13; Luk 21:17).<sup>105, 106</sup> You may even have to leave a life of ease and luxury, depending on the will of God. Others may try to talk you out of it, or they may laugh at and mock you, saying, “Why are you dumb enough to believe all that God and Jesus stuff?” You will almost certainly face ridicule, taunting, insults, and jokes against you, but you must go forward in “courage” if you want eternal life with God and His Christ Jesus in heaven.<sup>107</sup>

And lastly, while it often seems to be “cool” to be one of the “rebels,”<sup>108</sup> in this particular (spiritual) war it is eternally wiser to be one of the “saints” (Mat 27:52; Act 9:13, 32, 41; 26:10; Rom 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25; Eph 1:1; Rev 5:8; 8:3–4; 11:18; 13:7; 20:9; etc.), for God and His Christ (and His saints) will prevail (Gen 3:15); indeed, He has already prevailed! Christ has already won complete, total, and final “victory” (1Co 15:54–57; 1Jn 5:4) for us over sin, Satan, and death at the cross (Luk 10:18; Joh 12:31; 16:33; Rom 8:28–39; Eph 1:20–22; Col 2:14–15; Heb 2:14; 10:10–13; 1Co 15:24–26; 2Ti 1:10; 1Jn 3:8; 4:4; Rev 1:17–18; 11:15; 12:7–13; 15:2; 20:14; 21:4; cf. Gen 3:15; Mat 16:18; Psa 125:1–2; Isa 54:17; Joh 10:27–29; Heb 12:28)—“It is finished” (Joh 19:30; cf. Gen 3:15; Luk 10:18; Joh 12:31; 16:33; Rom 8:37; Eph 1:20–22; Col 2:14–15; Heb 2:14; 10:10–13; 1Co 15:24–27; 54–57; 2Ti

<sup>105</sup> See the chapter “Press On to Maturity” for verse references.

<sup>106</sup> Note that it is precisely when people treat you the worst (via persecution, threats, ridicule, mocking, discrimination, etc.) that you can best demonstrate the patience, forgiveness, mercy, grace, and love of Jesus and perhaps lead them towards Him and eternal life by your behavior.

<sup>107</sup> You may also face spiritual attacks from Satan and “the world forces of this darkness [and] the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:10–17). See the chapter “The Armor of God” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>108</sup> The “resistance,” if you will; at least, it is often portrayed this way in movies.

1:10; 1Jn 3:8; 4:4; 5:4; Rev 1:17–18; 12:7–13; 15:2; 20:14; 21:4)<sup>109</sup>—and there is nothing whatsoever that anyone or anything on, under, or above the earth can do to change that (Rom 8:28–31, 37–39; cf. Rom 14:11; Php 2:10; 2Th 1:6–10; 2Ti 2:13; Rev 19:11–21; 20:10–15; 22:20).

## SOME COMMON OBSTACLES

Listed below are some common stumbling blocks that can hinder one from seeking and following Jesus and becoming obedient to the Gospel:

- Laziness:
  - x Sheer neglect of one’s eternal soul (e.g., Esau)
  - x Indifference (lack of taking time to even bother to consider your eternal destiny)
  - x Being unwilling to spend the time to read, study, and learn what is written in the Bible<sup>110</sup>
- Pride:
  - x Intellectual arrogance (thinking the Bible can’t be true, science has disproved the Bible, you know more than God, God can’t mean this or that when He said so in His Word, etc.)
  - x Thinking you can approach God however you want or however you *think* or *feel* it should be done (instead of abiding by God’s instructions)
  - x Denying the existence of God<sup>111</sup>
  - x Thinking of oneself as a so-called “elite” person or group
  - x Thinking you can argue or negotiate with God on Judgment Day and convince Him that you were a “good person” (or thinking you will get a “second chance” after death)
- Moral Issues:
  - x Considering oneself to be basically a “good person” (e.g., “I didn’t commit any ‘really bad’ sins, such as murder, rape, robbery, etc.”)
  - x Thinking you don’t need a Savior (see prior item) and that everyone goes to heaven (well, the “good people” anyway)
- Social Concerns:
  - x Just following the crowd
  - x Not wanting to look bad in the face of what’s “popular” in society
  - x Trying to conform to societal norms

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<sup>109</sup> “Finished” is the Greek *τελέω* (*teleō*), which denotes all of the following: (1) debt is paid (discharged), (2) as in a business deal is finalized, (3) judgment has been fulfilled, and (4) the battle has been won.

<sup>110</sup> For example, maybe you’re more concerned about this weekend’s upcoming sporting event than you are about ensuring the eternal destiny of your soul.

<sup>111</sup> By suppressing the truth that there is a God and refusing to acknowledge Him (Rom 1:18–23).

- Fear:

- x Following the crowd again
- x Concern of being ridiculed for confessing faith in Jesus
- x Prioritizing ease and security above following Christ
- x Not wanting to be separated or isolated from what's popular
- x Afraid of the hardship that following Jesus might bring

I hope you don't let any of those stumbling blocks prevent you from seeking eternal life in Christ. Nothing whatsoever can be more important to you!

## GOING FORWARD IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

To continue further from this point, you must be fully convinced in your own mind that Jesus is, in fact, who He said He was: God in the “flesh,” “the Christ of God,” “the Son of God,” “the Messiah,” and our “Savior” (Mat 1:1, 16, 20–23; 3:17; 14:33; 17:5; 26:63–64; Mar 1:1, 24; 5:7; 9:7–8; Luk 1:35; 2:11; 3:22; 9:20, 35; Joh 1:1–2, 14, 34, 36, 41; 3:16–17; 4:25, 42; 5:32; 8:58; 10:30; 20:31; Act 2:36; 5:31; 17:3; Rom 1:3–4; 8:3; Gal 2:20; 4:4; Php 2:5–8; Col 1:15; 2:9; 1Th 1:9; 1Ti 3:16; 2Ti 1:10; Tit 3:4; Heb 2:7–9, 14–17; 4:14; 2Pe 3:18; 1Jn 4:2–3, 14; 5:12, 20; 2Jn 7; Jud 25; Rev 1:17; 2:8; 22:13; cf. Isa 7:14).<sup>112</sup> You have free will to “choose” (Jos 24:15; cf. Rev 22:11, 17; Pro 1:29; Joh 6:67–68; Deu 30:19) whether to believe that or not and to accept or reject Jesus. If you don't want to be with Jesus in this life, you don't have to be, but understand that if you don't want Him in this life, you won't be with Him in the next life either—and the next life is eternal.<sup>113</sup>

I hope you are not like the majority of humanity (Mat 7:13) who consider the Gospel message to be “foolishness.” And I pray that you desire to repent of your sinful ways, become obedient to God through the Gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ, “CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD” (see Act 2:21; 22:16; Rom 10:13; 1Co 1:2; cf. Gen 4:26; Isa 12:4; Psa 91:14–15; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17) “in spirit and truth” (Joh 4:23–24; cf. Psa 145:18; Jud 3), “wash away your sins”<sup>114</sup> (Act 22:16; cf. Act 2:38), and then “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4; cf. 2Co 5:17) toward “eternal life” in heaven. If so, I'll see you in the next chapter.

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<sup>112</sup> Additional verse references were given prior.

<sup>113</sup> This was explained in the section “The Day of Judgment.”

<sup>114</sup> Have your sins forgiven by the blood of Christ shed on the cross for you.

## SPECIAL NOTE FOR THOSE BEHIND BARS

I would like to add a note for those who find themselves behind bars and who may have no hope whatsoever left in this world. Understand that Jesus is your “hope”—it is not in man or the things of this world. You can still look forward to “eternal life” with God in heaven! While you may need to face the consequences and penalties for your actions here in this world, and while men don’t or won’t forgive you, Christ will. Do not decide for yourself that what you’ve done cannot be forgiven by God. God even forgave murderers. I’m not in any way dismissing the hurt, harm, or severity of any action(s) that you may have done, but God offers forgiveness to everyone, for His love, kindness, compassion, mercy, and grace are massive. But you must *turn away from* your sinful ways and *turn to* the Lord Jesus in humility, repentance, faith, and obedience, and you, too, can be raised up, justified, and glorified before God on Judgment Day (Rom 6:5; 8:30; 2Co 3:18; Php 3:20–21; Col 3:4; cf. 1Jn 3:2; Act 24:15; Joh 5:25; 1Th 2:12; 4:16; 1Co 15:40–57; 2Co 5:1–4). Do not eternally compound any mistake(s) that you have made here in this life by also rejecting the Gospel and Jesus as your Savior (Luk 12:10)! Turn to Him today, “stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong” (1Co 16:13) as a “new creature [person]” in Christ (2Co 5:17), and then go forward as an “ambassador for Christ” (see 2Co 5:20; cf. Php 1:27; Eph 6:20), helping others see that same hope that you now have (1Pe 3:15; Mar 16:15).<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> If you want a free copy of the book, you can write to the Prison Book Project, PO Box 592, Titusville, FL 32781. See their website: <https://prisonbookproject.org/>. Note: You should probably submit a request through your chaplain, as not every facility allows books to be sent to individuals.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT PLAN OF SALVATION

(The Path to Eternal Life)

*Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” – John 3:3*

The “New Covenant” (see Luk 22:20; 1Co 11:25; 2Co 3:6; Heb 8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24; cf. Jer 31:31–34) is the Law of Grace (Joh 1:17; Rom 5:21; 6:14; Eph 2:8; Act 20:24)<sup>116</sup> and the “good news” (Luk 1:19; 2:10; Act 8:12; 13:32; Rom 10:15; Heb 4:2, 6; Isa 41:27; 52:7; 61:1) of the Gospel—which is “the forgiveness of our trespasses [sins]” (Eph 1:7; cf. Act 2:38; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; Mat 26:28; Luk 24:47; Col 1:13–14) and “the hope of eternal life” (Tit 1:2; 3:7) through the shed blood of Jesus on the cross, “according to the riches of His [God’s] grace” (Eph 1:7; cf. Col 1:14). It was revealed to us “at the right time” (Rom 5:6; cf. Gal 4:4; 1Pe 1:12, 20), “when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared” (Tit 3:3–5; cf. Rom 5:8) through God’s “only begotten Son,” Jesus Christ (Joh 3:16–18), and it completes the revelation of God’s plan for humanity. While the OT Mosaic Law was given to the Jews (Israelites), the NT Law of Grace is given and open to “everyone” equally and “impartially,”<sup>117</sup> no matter what sins you have committed or how long you have committed them. But it is only by accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior through “belief” (“faith”) in Him along with active “obedience” to the Gospel and “perseverance”<sup>118</sup> in faith until death that one can be saved to “eternal life” (Joh 3:16; Mat 25:46; Tit 1:2; 1Jn 5:13, 20; Jud 21).

### ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE

The gate to heaven is called “narrow”<sup>119</sup> (see Mat 7:13–14; Luk 13:23–24) because there is only one “door” (Joh 10:7–9; Luk 13:24) through which you can enter, and that door is Christ. As it is written:

- “All authority” was given to Him by God the Father;<sup>120</sup>
- “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me [Jesus]” (Joh 14:6; cf. Joh 10:1–10);
- “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Act 4:10–12); and

<sup>116</sup> Also the “law of liberty” (Jas 1:25; 2:12), the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:2), and the “law of Christ” (1Co 9:21; Gal 6:2).

<sup>117</sup> See the chapter “The Gospel of the Grace of God” for verse references.

<sup>118</sup> Verse references for these are given later in this chapter.

<sup>119</sup> Small; “strait” (KJV); difficult.

<sup>120</sup> Verse references were given in the prior chapter.

- “There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1Ti 2:5; cf. Heb 7:25).<sup>121</sup>

Scripture emphatically declares there is no other way to heaven, despite the many “myths,” mysticism, superstitions, “traditions,” “decrees,” “commandments” of men, “philosophy and empty deception,” myriads upon myriads of “false teachings,” “false prophecies,” “fake gospels” (paraphrase), fanciful interpretations, opinions, beliefs, and “schemes” of man and the devil that abound in the world.<sup>122</sup> The various man-made religions “of this world”<sup>123</sup> offer no path to eternal life. Furthermore, know also that going to church, thinking oneself to be basically a “good person,” doing “good deeds,”<sup>124</sup> and performing religious rites, rules, rituals, sacraments, catechisms, and ceremonies will not save you to eternal life. Those who reject Christ and the Gospel have no other hope of eternal salvation (Joh 14:6; Act 4:12; cf. Mat 12:31–32; Mar 3:29–29).

## THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

While salvation is “the free gift of God” (Rom 6:23; cf. Eph 2:8–9; Rom 3:24; 5:15–17; Joh 4:10; Act 8:20), He has specified rules (“the obedience of faith,” Rom 16:25–27; cf. Act 6:7; Rom 1:5; 15:18) as to how we must claim that gift. I do not want you to be uninformed about what He requires from those who desire to “CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD” (see Act 2:21; 22:16; Rom 10:13; 1Co 1:2; cf. Gen 4:26; Isa 12:4; Psa 91:14–15; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17), so you do not “die in the wilderness” (Num 26:65; cf. Num 13:1–14:38; Heb 3:7–19; 10:38; 1Co 10:5; Rom 1:17) and so you are not “destroyed [lost] for lack of knowledge” (Hos 4:6; cf. Rom 1:21; 10:1–2; 16:18; Mat 15:14; 23:16–26; Mar 4:9; Joh 1:5; 4:23–24; Act 8:30–31; 17:30; 1Co 1:18–25; 2:14; 3:19; 14:20; 2Co 2:11; 4:3–6; 11:3; Eph 4:18; 5:15–17; Col 2:8; Isa 1:3; 3:12; 5:13; 27:11; 45:20; Jer 4:22; 5:3–4, 21; 8:7–9; Job 4:21; 36:12; Hos 8:14; Pro 1:7, 22, 29–32; 4:5–13; 5:12–13; 9:10; 14:15, 18; 16:16; 19:2; 23:23; Psa 49:20; 111:10; 119:139; Rev 2:7; 3:6).

We must approach God on His terms and as instructed to in Scripture, not however men, committees, conferences, councils, synods, and institutions *think* or *feel* it should be done (Hos 4:6; Rom 10:1–2; cf. Jud

<sup>121</sup> Jesus is the *only* mediator between man and God—not Mary, the Pope, spirits of the dead, the apostles, angels, idols, other men, or man-made religions. Additionally, we are not to pray to Mary; that is a false doctrine and a completely worthless ritual of Roman Catholicism. See the chapter “Beware the Wolves.”

<sup>122</sup> See the chapter “Beware the Wolves” for verse references and more information.

<sup>123</sup> See the chapter “The Gospel of the Grace of God” for “of this world” verse references.

<sup>124</sup> Meritorious works or works of the Mosaic Law. See the chapter “The Role of Works” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.



3).<sup>125</sup> Scripture tells us eternal (final) salvation involves *all* the following (Psa 119:160; cf. 2Ti 3:16–17):

You must ...

- ✓ Be born again:
  - ✓ Hear the Gospel,
  - ✓ Believe in Jesus (faith),
  - ✓ Repent of your sins,
  - ✓ Confess Christ, and
  - ✓ Be baptized (by immersion, as an adult);<sup>126, 127</sup>

*Followed by:*

- ✓ Obedience to the commandments of Christ (and the instructions of His apostles),
- ✓ Bearing fruit for the Lord (the role of works in justification), and
- ✓ Persevering in faith.

The Scriptural basis for the above is as follows:

1. Be “born again” (Joh 3:1–8; 1Pe 1:3–5, 20–23; cf. 1Co 15:45–49; 2Co 5:17; Joh 1:12–13; Tit 3:5; 1Jn 3:9; 5:1, 18; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10; Gal 2:20; Rom 6:3–11; Jas 1:18; Rev 20:6; Psa 23:3) by:<sup>128</sup>
  - 1.1. “Hearing” (see Rom 10:13–17; Eph 1:13; Act 8:30–35; Gal 3:2, 5; cf. Mat 4:4; 11:5; Mar 4:13–20; Luk 8:21; 11:28; 16:29–31; Joh 6:44–45; Act 13:7, 44; 15:7; 17:22–23; Rom 1:16; 1Co 1:18–24; 2Ti 3:16–17;

<sup>125</sup> As you go through the outline, please realize that every item has one (or more) attendant false teachings/fake gospels of man attached to it in an attempt to trick you out of following the true and correct Gospel that was given in Scripture (Jud 3). See the chapter “Beware the Wolves” for more information.

<sup>126</sup> The verb *baptize* is an anglicized version (English transliteration) of the Greek *baptizo*, which means to make fully wet [STRONG], to dip, immerse, or submerge [THAYER], and it is derived from the Greek *bapto*, which means to cover wholly with a fluid [STRONG]. The popular notion that one is baptized by “sprinkling” is contrary to Scripture. Furthermore, we see it written “buried with Him [Jesus]” (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12), not “sprinkled with Him”! Every example in NT Scripture shows the new believer being immersed in water—for example, “They went down into the water ... when they came up out of the water” (Act 8:38–39) and even with Jesus, “Jesus came up immediately from the water” (Mat 3:16 NKJV). In effect, if you think you were baptized by “sprinkling” or as an infant, you have not really been baptized at all!

<sup>127</sup> Infant baptism is also contrary to Scripture. Children have no sin, so how can they “repent, and ... be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (see Act 2:38). Moreover, you get baptized because you want to do so after “hearing” the Gospel preached and “believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (see Rom 10:17; Act 8:37), not because of family expectations, peer pressure, as an infant/baby, and so on.

<sup>128</sup> Contrary to popular opinion, you are neither born again nor saved to eternal life by simply saying a one-time “Sinner’s Prayer” that “invites Jesus into your heart”—a practice and prayer nowhere to be found in the entire Bible! See the chapter “Beware the Wolves.”

Heb 4:2, 12; Psa 119:105; Amo 8:11–12; Isa 2:3; Mic 4:2) the Gospel message (*Gospel* means “good news,” Luk 1:19; 2:10; Act 8:12; 13:32; Rom 10:15; Heb 4:2, 6; Isa 41:27; 52:7; 61:1);

- 1.2. “Believing” in Jesus, putting your faith and trust in Him—“believe” (see Joh 1:12; 3:14–18, 36; 2:11, 23; 3:36; 5:24; 6:29, 47; 8:30; 9:35; 12:44; 14:1; 17:20; 20:29; 1Ti 1:16; Mar 1:15; 16:16; Act 2:44; 4:4; 4:32; 8:37; 9:42; 10:43; 13:39, 48; 19:4; Rom 1:16; 4:5; 9:33; 10:11; 1Pe 2:6; Eph 1:13, etc.), have “faith” (Eph 2:8; Rom 1:17; 3:28; 4:16; 5:1; 2Co 5:7; Gal 2:16, 20; 3:8, 22, 24; 5:5; Act 15:9; 26:18; Heb 11:1–40, etc.; cf. Mat 9:22, 29; Luk 7:50; 8:25; 18:42), and “trust” (2Co 1:9; Pro 3:5; 22:19; Psa 37:3, 5; 62:8; 115:9–11; 125:1; 146:3–5; cf. 2Co 4:13–14; Rom 4:18–22; Luk 23:46; Eph 1:13; Php 1:14; 2:24; 1Ti 1:15; 2Ti 2:11; 1Pe 2:23; 4:19; Psa 31:5; 37:7; 56:3, 11);
- 1.3. “Repenting” of your sins (see Mat 4:17; Mar 1:15; Luk 5:32; 13:3; 15:7; Act 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; 17:30–31; 20:21; 26:20; Rom 2:4–5; 2Co 7:9–11; 2Pe 3:9; cf. Mat 3:2, 8; 11:20–21; 12:41; Act 8:22; 2Co 12:21; 2Ti 2:25; Rev 2:5, 16, 21–22; 3:19; 9:20–21; 16:9, 11; 22:11);<sup>129</sup>
- 1.4. “Confessing” Christ before men (see Mat 10:32–33; Luk 12:8–9; Rom 10:9–10; 1Jn 2:23; cf. Rom 1:16; Joh 12:42–43; 2Co 9:13; Heb 4:14; Php 2:11; 1Jn 4:2–3),<sup>130, 131</sup> and

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<sup>129</sup> Note that this repentance (“godly sorrow,” 2Co 7:10 NKJV) is not just a one-time event (see the chapter “Press On to Maturity”). It is also different than being sorry (or giving lip service) to the fact that you got caught doing something wrong. It is related to being “mournful” for your sins (and the sins of the world in general; Mat 5:4). Furthermore, besides being sorry for your actions (and maybe also apologizing and making atonement; Mat 5:22–24), true repentance also includes a sincere desire to change your ways (Mat 3:8; Rom 6:1–2), and even your thoughts and motives (1Co 9:23), and leads to a changed life that turns away from all forms of sin and toward Christ.

<sup>130</sup> Note that confessing Christ is something that occurs throughout the remainder of your life as you remain faithful.

<sup>131</sup> You are making a statement to the effect that you believe all of the following to be true:

- Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one of God, the Savior;
- He is the Son of God, the Son of Man (God’s only-begotten Son);
- He is God in the flesh (fully man but also fully God);
- He died for your sins on the cross as your Savior—Jesus’ death on the cross was a complete, final, and total atonement (sacrifice, payment, ransom, redemption, propitiation) for your sins;
- Your sins are forgiven only by Jesus’ shed blood on the cross (and not by any works or deeds you do);
- He rose again (literally and bodily) from death to life after three days;
- He is your Lord and King, to whom you are committing your allegiance and obedience;
- You are willing to repent of your sins, to turn your life over to Him in all areas, and to trust in Him for all things at all times; you desire for His will to be done, not yours;

- 1.5. Being “baptized” by immersion as an adult, “for the forgiveness of your sins” (initial salvation; see Act 2:38; 8:12, 36–39; 10:47–48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:4–6; 22:16; Mar 16:16; Joh 3:3–5; Gal 3:27; 1Pe 3:21; Rom 6:3–10; 1Co 6:11; 12:13; Col 2:12; Tit 3:5–7; 1Jn 5:6; Eph 5:26; cf. Isa 1:18; Jer 31:34; Psa 103:12).<sup>132</sup>

*Followed by:*

2. “Obedience”<sup>133</sup> (see Joh 3:36; Act 5:29, 32; 6:7; Rom 1:5; 15:18; 16:26; Heb 5:9; 1Pe 1:2, 22; cf. Mat 7:21–27; 12:50; 28:20; Mar 3:35; Luk 6:46–49; Act 7:39; Joh 8:31, 51; 14:23–24; Rom 2:13; 5:19; 6:16; 2Co 9:13; 10:5–6; 2Th 1:8; Heb 4:11; 11:8; Jas 1:22; 1Pe 1:14; 4:17; 1Jn 2:17; Pro 7:1–2; Jos 24:15)—to the NT “commandments” of Christ and the instructions of His apostles (see Joh 14:15, 21, 13:34–35; 15:9–10, 12, 14; Mat 5:19; 19:17; 22:36–40; 28:20; Mar 10:19; 12:28–31; Luk 1:6; 18:20; 1Co 7:19; 1Th 4:2; 1Jn 2:3–5; 3:22–24; 4:21; 5:2–3; 2Jn 4–6; Rev 12:17; 14:12; cf. 1Jn 2:3–6; 5:2–3; Ecc 12:13). A Christian’s motive for obedience is “love,” not coercion (see Joh 14:15, 21–24; 15:9–14; 1Jn 2:3–6; 4:19; 5:2–3; 2Jn 6; cf. Gal 5:6; Eph 3:16–18; 6:24; 1Pe 1:8). But also note that (a) we recognize God’s authority, (b) you were bought and paid for by Jesus (“rescued” and “redeemed”), and (c) He owns you (gladly). You are, therefore, *willingly* becoming a “bond-servant”<sup>134</sup> of Christ (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Col 1:7; 4:7; 2Ti 2:24; Tit 1:1; Jas 1:1; 2Pe 1:1; Jud 1; Rev 15:3; cf. Act 4:29; 16:17; 2Co 4:5; Php 1:1; Rev 1:1; 2:20; 7:3; 11:18; 19:2, 5; 22:3, 6),<sup>135</sup>

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- He is coming again (literally, physically, visibly, in person) to judge all mankind for their deeds (sins) and to get you (literally and physically) to take you where He is—which is in heaven and where He has made a place for you; and

- He will raise you up to eternal life on Judgment Day.

<sup>132</sup> You are not born again before baptism, nor is baptism a “good work of man,” nor is baptism optional; it is required “for the forgiveness of your sins” and salvation. See the chapter “Beware the Wolves.” See also the chapter “What Happens at Baptism” for more information.

<sup>133</sup> Note that obedience also includes abstaining from sinful actions and behaviors. See the chapter “Understanding Obedience” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information. You may also like our book *The Commandments of Christ*.

<sup>134</sup> Also, “slave” (Mat 25:21; 1Co 7:22).

<sup>135</sup> Note that it is only by “abiding in Him [Jesus] and He in you” (see 1Jn 4:13, 15–16; cf. Joh 15:1–10; 1Jn 3:24) that we can be obedient children of God, “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58; cf. Gal 6:9); that is also how we “stand firm in the faith” (1Co 16:13; cf. Eph 6:10–17; 1Th 3:8). He abides in you by the “Holy Spirit” (Mat 3:11; 28:19; Mar 1:8; Tit 3:5; 2Ti 1:14, etc.), also “the Spirit of God” (Rom 8:9, 14; 1Co 2:11, 14; 3:16; Php 3:3; 1Jn 4:2), “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9; 1Pe 1:11), “the Spirit of Jesus” (Act 16:7), and “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Php 1:19). See the chapter “Living in the Spirit” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

3. “Bearing fruit” for the Lord<sup>136</sup> (see Mat 3:8; 7:19; Mar 4:20; Luk 8:15; Joh 15:2, 4, 16; Rom 7:4)—for “faith without works is dead” (Jas 2:26). This results from being “doers of the word” (Jas 1:22–25; cf. Mat 7:21; 12:50; Mar 3:35; 1Jn 2:17; Joh 8:31, 51; Rom 2:13), that is, doing “good works” that result from faith in and obedience to Christ (Jas 2:14–26; 1:22–25; Mat 3:8, 10; 7:15–23; Mar 4:20; Luk 8:15; Joh 15:2–8; Rom 7:4; 1Co 15:58; Rev 3:2, 15–16; Eph 2:10; 1Ti 6:18; cf. Mat 5:16; 12:50; 16:27; Luk 3:8; Gal 6:9; 1Jn 2:17; 2Co 5:10; Jon 3:10); and
4. “Persevering” in faith (remain faithful)<sup>137</sup>—continue in “perseverance” (Rev 1:9; 2:2–3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12; Rom 2:7; 5:3; 8:25; 15:4; 2Th 1:4; Luk 8:15; cf. 2Ti 4:7–8; 1Co 9:24–27; Heb 4:1; Jas 1:12; Php 2:12–13; 3:12–14; 2Pe 1:10; Rev 2:4; 3:15–16), “be faithful until death” (Rev 2:10), “hold fast” (see 1Co 15:2; Php 2:16; 1Th 5:21; Tit 1:9; Heb 3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23; Rev 2:13, 25; 3:11; cf. Deu 11:22; Jos 22:5; Pro 4:4; Isa 56:4), “stand firm” (see 1Co 16:13; 2Co 1:24; Gal 5:1; Eph 6:11–14; Php 1:27; 4:1; 1Th 3:8; 2Th 2:15; 1Pe 5:12; cf. 1Co 15:58; Eph 4:14; Php 1:6; 4:13; Col 1:11, 23; 1Th 1:3; Heb 6:19; 11:1–40; 12:2; Jud 3; 1Pe 1:7; 2Pe 3:17; Psa 62:2), “suffer hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (see 2Ti 2:1–5), and “endure to the end” (see Mat 10:22; 24:13; Mar 13:13; cf. 1Co 4:11–13; 9:12; 10:13; 13:7; 2Co 6:4; Heb 10:32; 12:1–2, 7; Jas 1:2–4; 5:11; Luk 21:19; Rev 2:3; 12:11; Php 3:8; 2Th 1:4; 2Ti 2:10–12; 3:11; 4:5; 1Pe 2:20), which is final eternal salvation and when you receive your “crown of life” (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10; cf. 2Ti 4:8; 1Pe 5:4; 1Th 2:19; Rev 3:11), which Jesus awards to you on “the day of judgment.”<sup>138, 139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Contrary to popular opinion again, you are not saved by “faith *alone*.” Scripture is clear that works of faith done in obedience to the commandments of Christ (and the instructions of His apostles) contribute to and can affect your justification before God; see the chapter “Beware the Wolves.” See also the chapter “The Role of Works” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>137</sup> Contrary to popular opinion still yet again, a Christian can indeed lose their salvation after being born again. See the chapters “Press On to Maturity” herein and “Persevere in Faith” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>138</sup> See the section “The Day of Judgment” in the chapter “The Gospel of the Grace of God.”

<sup>139</sup> Note also that these crowns are symbolic—they are not literal crowns, and there is only one of them (called by several different names). It is a victor’s crown, which symbolizes your victory over sin (and death) as you persevered with Christ to the end.

## WHAT HAPPENS AT BAPTISM

(For the Forgiveness of Your Sins; You Are Born Again)

*“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 2:38

Before continuing, I’d like to review what happens at baptism in more detail because many wrongly teach that baptism is the following:

- x A “good work” of man;
- x An “outward sign of inner faith” merely performed out of obedience, that is, not “for the forgiveness of your sins” as stated in Scripture (see [Act 2:38](#); [8:36–39](#); [16:15, 33](#); [18:8](#); [19:5](#); [22:16](#); [Mar 16:16](#); [Joh 3:3–5](#); [Gal 3:27](#); [1Pe 3:21](#); [Rom 6:3–10](#); [1Co 6:11, 12:13](#); [Col 2:12](#); [Tit 3:5–7](#); [1Jn 5:6](#); [Eph 5:26](#); cf. [Isa 1:18](#); [Jer 31:34](#); [Psa 103:12](#)); and it is therefore
- x Not required for salvation (i.e., not required to be born again).

However, nothing could be further from the truth, and those who claim that one is born again before baptism need to carefully restudy the matter.<sup>140, 141, 142, 143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> [Acts 22:16](#) reads: “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.” To those who deny that baptism is required for salvation, I ask you in light of that verse: Were your sins washed away before baptism? If they were, why is the inspired apostle telling them to “be baptized, and wash away the sins” when there was no need to do it? Was the inspired apostle mistaken when he gave these instructions? I think not. Please use some common sense regarding this matter.

<sup>141</sup> Regarding [Mark 16:16](#), I’d like to give a non-threatening analogy that parents can relate to. If you tell little Johnny that he can have an ice cream cone after he finishes dinner *and* does his homework, when can little Johnny have the ice cream? Is it after he finishes dinner? Or is it after he finishes dinner *and also* does his homework? Correct: It is only after both finishing dinner and doing his homework. Thus, when Scripture says that “He who has believed *and* has been baptized shall be saved” (emphasis mine), when is a person saved (i.e., born again with their sins forgiven)? Is it before or after baptism? Correct again: It is after (at) baptism! Why such simple logic that even a second grader can understand evades most teachers and preachers of the Word (even those with doctrinal degrees in divinity!) is mind-boggling. The very same language and logic are easily understood when applied to a harmless topic such as little Johnny and ice cream.

<sup>142</sup> Even liberal scholars concede that the “washing of regeneration” in [Titus 3:5–7](#) is a reference to baptism.

<sup>143</sup> David Lipscomb’s commentary on [Titus 3:5–7](#) is helpful: “Here the washing or bath of regeneration refers to baptism. It means the washing or bath connected with regeneration. Here the righteousness that we did that did not bring salvation is placed in contrast with baptism. When Jesus came to John to be baptized of him, ‘John would have hindered him ... but Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now: For thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness’ ([Mat 3:14, 15](#)), making baptism a part of righteousness. There is a righteousness of God, and there is a righteousness that comes through the ways and works of

Let's review what happens at your baptism:

1. It is at baptism that your sins are forgiven, as Scripture clearly states: “Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Act 2:38; “wash away your sins,” Act 22:16; cf. Mar 16:16; Rom 6:3–10; 1Co 6:11; Eph 5:26; Tit 3:5–7; Rev 7:14; Psa 103:12; Isa 1:18). This is initial salvation (forgiveness of sins).<sup>144</sup>
2. It is at baptism that you have been “born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1Pe 1:3; cf. Mar 16:16; Joh 3:3–8; 1Pe 1:23). Note that one cannot be born again unless their sins are forgiven (see point 1). Baptism symbolizes putting to death the old self and putting on the new (see point 3).
3. It is at baptism that you die to your old self (2Co 5:17; Col 3:3–4), having been “crucified with Christ” (see Gal 2:20; 5:24; 6:14; Rom 6:6) and “buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead” (Rom 6:4).
4. It is at baptism that you are “raised up with Him through faith” (Col 2:12; cf. Eph 2:6) to “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4) as “a new creature [person]” (2Co 5:17; cf. Gal 6:15), “dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11–13; cf. Rom 6:2; 1Co 6:20; Col 3:3–5).
5. It is at baptism that you become “blessed and holy” and part of the “first resurrection” (Rev 20:6; cf. Mat 5:9; Psa 23:3), as you are

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man. Baptism is a part of God's way of making man righteous. So is a renewing of the Holy Spirit. The Jews were not saved on account of any righteousness they had done before Christ came to merit it but moved by his own mercy to men he saved them through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. He first sent his Spirit to renew man. The Spirit came to the apostles, through them preached Christ to the world, produced faith, changed the heart, directed the life anew, and the heart renewed, the person was baptized into Christ, put off the old man of sin now dead, was buried with him in Christ, washed away his sins, and arose to a new life in Jesus Christ. The relation of these facts to each other and the connection of each of them to the remission of sins, entrance into the name of Christ, God, and salvation by the same word, settle beyond dispute that they are for the same end or thing. Man must believe into Christ, but his believing carries him through repentance and baptism before he is in Christ. Repentance comes from faith, but it leads through baptism to the remission of sins. Faith that stops short of repentance and baptism does not carry the believer into Christ. These facts settle the office of faith, repentance, and baptism.” (David Lipscomb, *New Testament Commentary: A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles, I, II Thessalonians, I, II Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* [Nashville, TN: GOSPEL ADVOCATE Company, 1986], 283–84).

<sup>144</sup> However, the notion that “Christians never sin” after being born again is not biblical (1Jn 1:8–10; 2:1), for you will still struggle with your carnal, fleshly nature until you receive your glorified body on Judgment Day. The flesh continues “waging war” (Rom 7:14–24) against your new, born-again spirit (1Pe 2:11; 4:1–3; Gal 5:16–17; Rom 7:7–25; 8:1–13; 12:1; Eph 4:1; Mat 26:41; 2Co 4:16). See the chapter “Changing Your Worldly Habits” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

resurrected from death to new life in Christ and have your name recorded in “the book of life” (Php 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; cf. Rev 21:27).<sup>145</sup>

6. It is at baptism that you “put on Christ” (Gal 3:27 ESV; Rom 13:14; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). In effect, you put on Jesus’ righteousness like a “white garment”<sup>146</sup> so you will be clothed in it on Judgment Day (if you persevere in faith and also don’t “disqualify” yourself by continued sinful actions; see 1Co 9:27). Christ’s righteousness is counted as your own (Rom 5:17; 8:10; 1Co 1:30; 2Co 5:21; Php 1:11; 3:9) when you stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment.
7. It is at baptism that you receive “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Act 2:38; 10:45; 15:8; cf. Joh 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7–15; Rom 5:5; 8:15–16, 26–27; 14:17; 15:13). You now “abide in Me [Christ], and I in you” (Joh 15:4), and you are now living “by the Spirit” of God, not by your own might or power.<sup>147</sup>
8. It is at baptism that you are “sealed” (see 2Co 1:22; Eph 1:13–14; 4:30; Rev 7:3–4; 9:4; cf. Psa 23:5) by the Holy Spirit, which “marks” (signifies) that you now belong to God (as opposed to being marked and owned by the devil; see Rev 13:16; 14:9; 20:4).<sup>148, 149</sup> This also serves as a down payment (also “pledge,” “first fruits,” and “seal”; see Eph 1:13–14; 4:30; 2Co 1:22; 5:5; Rom 8:23) of your eternal, glorified

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<sup>145</sup> The “first resurrection” is spiritual (Joh 3:5–9; 1Co 15:47; 2Co 5:17; Tit 3:5), for “we were dead in our transgressions, [but God] made us alive together with Christ” (see Eph 2:1–5; cf. 1Co 15:22; Col 2:13; Psa 23:3); we have “passed out of death into life” (Joh 5:24; cf. 1Jn 3:14; Psa 19:7; 23:3). See our book *The Last Day* for more information.

<sup>146</sup> See the chapter “The Gospel of the Grace of God” for verse references.

<sup>147</sup> See the section “I Can Do All Things Through Him Who Strengthens Me” in the chapter “Press On to Maturity” for verse references. See also the chapter “Living in the Spirit” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>148</sup> This is symbolically described as having a “mark” placed on your “forehead” or “hand” which identifies you as now being a child of God. King David writes about this: “You have anointed my head with oil” (Psa 23:5), and the Book of Revelation says, “Sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads” (Rev 7:3). These verses speak of being marked as belonging to Christ and being sealed by the Holy Spirit, for those who have been born again of the Spirit and who are following Him in mind, body, heart, and spirit. Those who reject Jesus and the Gospel also have a mark on them indicating such (“the mark of the beast,” see Rev 13:16–17; 14:9–11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4), which likewise indicates that they are following Satan and the ways of this sinful world. These are *not* literal marks or physical devices (e.g., tattoo, barcode, chip implant, etc.) placed on or in your forehead or hand as many falsely proclaim—the marks are symbolic. Note: Those things may indeed happen (e.g., barcode, chip implant, etc.), but even if they do, they will have *nothing whatsoever* to do with the actual prophecy given in Scripture; it will just be a scheme of man.

<sup>149</sup> In this same way, Jesus was also marked and sealed (Joh 6:27).

inheritance to come<sup>150</sup> and a guarantee for “the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30)—if you remain faithful (Col 1:23).<sup>151</sup>

9. It is at baptism that you are “reconciled to God” (Rom 5:10–11; 2Co 5:18–20; cf. Mat 27:51; Mar 15:38; Luk 23:45; Col 1:20–22), “having made peace” with God (Col 1:20–22; cf. Mat 5:9; Rom 5:1–2; Eph 2:14–20; 6:15; 2Co 13:11; Psa 119:165). You also become a “friend” (see Joh 15:13–15; Luk 12:4; Jas 2:23) of God, “beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ” (Jud 1), and you are no longer “an enemy of God” (Jas 4:4; cf. Act 13:10; Col 1:20–22; Rom 5:1, 10–11; 8:7; Joh 15:23; Eph 2:16; Gen 3:15).
10. It is at baptism that you willingly become a “bond-servant”<sup>152</sup> of Christ (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Col 1:7; 4:7; 2Ti 2:24; Tit 1:1; Jas 1:1; 2Pe 1:1; Jud 1; Rev 15:3; cf. Act 4:29; 16:17; 2Co 4:5; Php 1:1; Rev 1:1; 2:20; 7:3; 11:18; 19:2, 5; 22:3, 6), for He fully bought and paid for you (“purchased,” “rescued,” and “redeemed”; Act 20:28; Rev 5:9; 14:4; Col 1:13–14; 1Pe 1:18–19; Gal 3:13).
11. It is at baptism that you become a “child of God” (also “sons of God”; see Joh 1:12–13; 11:52; Act 17:29; Rom 8:14–16, 19, 21; 9:8; Php 2:15; 1Jn 3:1–2, 10; 5:2; Mat 5:9; 12:50; Luk 20:36; Gal 3:26; 4:1–7; 1Pe 1:13–16), with God as your heavenly “Father” (Mat 6:9; 23:9; Rom 8:14–17; Gal 1:3; 4:1–7; Php 1:2; Col 1:2; 2Th 2:16; Phm 3). You are adopted into God’s family (Rom 8:15–17, 23; Eph 1:5; 2:19) as you leave the family of Satan (Joh 8:38, 44; Mat 13:38; Act 13:10; 1Jn 3:8–10). You actually become a “brother” or “sister” to Christ (Mat 12:46–50; 25:40; 28:10; Joh 20:17; Rom 8:29; Heb 2:11–12).<sup>153</sup> Please stop and reflect deeply on what that means: The eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent God and Creator of the entire universe—the One who simply spoke all things into existence (Gen 1:3) and the Source of all life itself (Act 3:15; Joh 1:4; 4:10, 14; 10:28; 11:25–26; 14:6; 17:2; Rev 1:17–18; 22:1, 17)—wants to adopt you as His son or daughter so that you can live with Him forever in heaven. And He

<sup>150</sup> See the chapter “All Things Made New” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>151</sup> The notion that a Christian cannot lose their salvation (i.e., “Once Saved Always Saved [OSAS],” “Perseverance of the Saints,” etc.) is not supported by Scripture. See the chapters “Press On to Maturity” and “Beware the Wolves” herein and the chapter “Persevere in Faith” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>152</sup> Also, “slave” (see Mat 25:21; 1Co 7:22; Rom 6:22; 1Pe 2:16; Gal 4:1–7) and “servant” (see Mat 20:26; 23:11; Mar 9:35; Luk 16:13; 2Co 6:4; Col 1:7; 4:7; 1Ti 4:6; Rev 19:10; 22:9; cf. Mat 4:10; 6:24; Luk 1:74; 4:8; Act 7:7; 24:14; 27:23; Rom 1:9; 7:6; Col 3:23–24; 1Th 1:9; Heb 9:14; Rev 7:15; 22:3).

<sup>153</sup> God is your Father, and He is also Jesus’ Father.



wants that so much that He sent His only Son to die for you. Amazing and amen!

12. Even further, it is at baptism that you become a “fellow heir” with Christ (see Rom 8:17; cf. Gal 3:29; 4:7; Eph 3:6; Tit 3:7; Jas 2:5).<sup>154</sup>
13. It is at baptism that you are “sanctified” for Christ<sup>155</sup> (1Co 1:2; 6:11; Heb 2:11; 10:10–14; Joh 17:19; Act 20:32; 26:18; 2Ti 2:21; cf. Rom 6:19, 22; 1Th 4:3–7; 2Th 2:13; Heb 10:29; 12:14), for He “called” you (Rom 8:29–30; 1Co 1:9; Gal 5:13; Eph 4:4; 1Ti 6:12; 1Pe 2:9; Jud 1) “out of the world” (Joh 15:19; cf. Rom 12:2; Joh 17:14–16).<sup>156</sup>
14. It is at baptism that you “become sons of Light” (Joh 12:35–36; cf. Luk 16:8; 1Th 5:5; 1Jn 1:7; 2:8–11; also “children of Light,” Eph 5:8), no longer walking in sin and “the domain of darkness” (Col 1:13; cf. 1Th 5:4–5; 1Pe 2:9; Eph 5:8; 6:12; Rom 2:19; Act 26:18; Joh 1:5; 8:12; Psa 107:10–14; Mat 4:16; Luk 1:78–79; 2:32; Isa 42:6–7; 60:1–3; Mic 7:8) “of this world” (Joh 8:23; 12:31; 13:1; 18:36; 1Co 5:10; 7:31; 2Co 4:4; Eph 2:2; cf. Php 3:19–20), as He “has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1Pe 2:9).
15. It is at baptism that you become part of the worldwide “body” (1Co 12:13; cf. Eph 5:23; Col 1:18) of “believers” (Act 5:14; 10:45; 1Th 1:7; 2:10; 1Ti 4:10; 6:2; 1Pe 1:21) in Christ—which is the “church of Christ” (see Rom 16:16; also “church of God,” Act 20:28; 1Co 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:9; 2Co 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1Ti 3:5; 1Th 2:14; 2Th 1:4). The Church is also referred to as the “bride,” “body,” and “household” of Christ (see Joh 3:29; Rom 12:4–5; 1Co 10:17; 12:12–13, 20; Gal 6:10; Eph 2:19–22; 4:4, 12; Col 3:15; 1Ti 3:15; 1Pe 4:17; Rev 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17).<sup>157</sup>
16. It is at baptism that you enter “the kingdom of God”<sup>158</sup>, <sup>159</sup> (Joh 3:3–5; cf. Col 1:13) and become a “fellow partaker” of (Rev 1:9) and a “fellow worker and fellow soldier” in (see Php 2:25; 4:3; Rom 16:3, 9, 21; 1Co 3:9; 2Co 8:23; Col 4:11; 1Th 3:2; Phm 2, 24; 3Jn 8) the kingdom. Note there is also a future heavenly kingdom which we

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<sup>154</sup> It is a great honor and privilege to be called a child of God—our “inheritance” in heaven is great indeed (1Pe 1:3–9; Eph 1:9–14, 18–21; 5:5; Col 1:12; Heb 9:15; cf. 1Co 15:53–57; Col 3:4; Rev 22:1–21)!

<sup>155</sup> Sanctified means being “set apart” for the Lord (Act 13:2; Rom 1:1).

<sup>156</sup> This is another reason why you don’t go on sinning like you used to. See the chapter “Changing Your Worldly Habits” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>157</sup> See also the chapter “Finding a Church.”

<sup>158</sup> See the chapter “The Kingdom of God” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>159</sup> Note that entering the Church is the same as being admitted into the Kingdom.

enter on the “last day,”<sup>160</sup> and that is when we get our “glorified” “heavenly” bodies and where we will spend eternity.<sup>161</sup>

17. It is at baptism that you become one of “A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY” (1Pe 2:9–10), becoming “priests” (Rev 1:6; 5:10) in His kingdom, and even further, “ambassadors for Christ” (see 2Co 5:20; cf. Php 1:27; Eph 6:20).
18. It is at baptism that you become a “living stone” (see 1Pe 2:4–5; cf. Eph 2:20), having been made “a pillar in the temple of My God” (Rev 3:12), as you “sit down with Me [Jesus] on My throne” (Rev 3:21), “[ruling] all the nations with a rod of iron” (Rev 12:5; cf. Rev 2:26–27; 19:15; 20:4, 6).<sup>162</sup>

### IMPORTANT NOTE ON BAPTISM

I see many who have the right heart for Jesus (“a zeal for God”) but the wrong teaching, for their faith is “not in accordance with knowledge” (Rom 10:2; cf. Hos 4:6; 2Ti 4:3–4) and they are not worshipping the Lord “in spirit and truth” (Joh 4:23–24; cf. Psa 145:18; Jud 3; Col 1:23). Instead, they are worshipping “in spirit and *the false teachings of man*” (that is, they are following “a different gospel ... a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you,” Gal 1:6–9). If you are hearing the correct Gospel and the truth about baptism for the first time by reading this book and you have been baptized previously by man-invented baptismal rites that are not in agreement with Scripture (such as by sprinkling or as an infant), or you were baptized without a correct understanding that it is “for the forgiveness of your sins” (Act 2:38) and when you are born again, I strongly encourage you to consider the following:

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<sup>160</sup> See the section “The Day of Judgment” in the chapter “The Gospel of the Grace of God.”

<sup>161</sup> See the chapter “All Things Made New” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>162</sup> Please realize that we do not rule over others physically, politically, socially, or economically, nor do we rule by force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or violence of any kind—that is the worldly, non-spiritual thinking of the heathen. We rule with Jesus *only* by and through love, service, self-sacrifice, “good deeds” (Tit 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14; Heb 10:24; 1Pe 2:12), and by “preaching the gospel of God” (Mar 1:14; cf. Mar 16:15; 13:10; Mat 28:19; Luk 14:21–23; 24:47–48; Eph 6:19–20; Luk 9:6; 20:1; Act 1:8; 8:25, 40; Rom 1:9; 16:25; Col 1:23; Php 4:15; Rev 14:6), which is “THE GOSPEL OF PEACE” (Eph 6:15; cf. Mat 5:9; Isa 9:6). It is the Word of God that has “the power of God” (Mat 22:29; Luk 22:69; Rom 1:16; 1Co 1:18, 24; 2:5; 2Co 6:7; 13:4; 2Ti 1:8) to rule, not us (Eph 2:6; Rev 12:5; cf. Rev 11:1–12). See the chapter “The Kingdom of God” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

- a. Be baptized into truth (Jud 3; Rev 18:4),<sup>163</sup> and
- b. Start attending the only church that Jesus founded (Eph 4:4–6; 1Co 12:13)—which is also the only one without a single false teaching or fake gospel and which follows the pattern and example set out in NT Scripture and as practiced by the early apostolic church.<sup>164</sup>

I came out of Methodism and Calvinism myself and have already taken the advice I just gave you. I was baptized in a Church of Christ after learning the truth. Remember, your eternal destiny is at stake here, and I don't know about you, but I wanted to be baptized into the truth. I do not want to take any chances whatsoever with my eternal salvation. Wayne Jackson writes:<sup>165</sup>

Baptism is a very serious matter. Every person who truly wants to be well-pleasing to God should carefully consider whether they've been mistaken on this vital issue. The time to make a correction is now.

Please also greatly heed the warning given in Scripture:

**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. – Hos 4:6**

You now have the correct knowledge and understanding about baptism, so I hope you can see that those who proclaim that baptism is (a) not necessary for salvation (or to be born again), (b) can be done as an infant, or (c) by “sprinkling” are doing so against the clear instructions given to us in Scripture. It is my sincere desire, hope, and prayer that everyone reading this will start worshipping the Lord “**in spirit and truth**” if they are not already doing so.

See the articles listed below for further reading:

- Wayne Jackson, “Baptism: Essentials and Nonessentials,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/baptism-essentials-and-nonessentials>
- —, “8 Mistaken Ideas About Baptism,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/8-mistaken-ideas-about-baptism>

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<sup>163</sup> Some may think of this as being re-baptized, but if you were not baptized according to the instructions given in Scripture (as an adult, after hearing the Gospel and believing, and by immersion), then strictly speaking, you were never baptized to begin with, and you are actually being baptized now for the first time into the Gospel.

<sup>164</sup> See the chapter “Finding a Church.”

<sup>165</sup> Wayne Jackson, “8 Mistaken Ideas About Baptism,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/8-mistaken-ideas-about-baptism>.

- —, “Does the Grace in Ephesians 2:8–9 Exclude Baptism?” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/does-the-grace-in-ephesians-2-8-9-exclude-baptism>
- —, “A Dispute About the Purpose of Baptism,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/a-dispute-about-the-purpose-of-baptism>
- —, “Do I Need to Be Re-baptized?” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/do-i-need-to-be-re-baptized>
- —, “What Is the History of Infant Sprinkling?” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/what-is-the-history-of-infant-sprinkling>
- —, “What About the Baptism of Young Children?” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/what-about-the-baptism-of-young-children>
- —, “A History of the Baptism Apostasy” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/a-history-of-the-baptism-apostasy>
- Jason Jackson, “The Truth on Baptism Should Not Be ‘Watered Down,’” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/the-truth-on-baptism-should-not-be-watered-down>

## PRESS ON TO MATURITY

(Christianity Is a Way of Life, Not a One-Time Event)

*Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect ...  
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God  
in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 3:12–14*

**Welcome, new brother or sister in Christ.** When you are “born again,”<sup>166</sup> you are an “infant in Christ” (see 1Co 3:1–2; cf. “little ones,” Mat 10:42; 18:3–10), a new baby Christian, if you will, and immature in the faith. You must continually “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18; cf. Col 1:9–12; Php 3:12–14) and “press on to maturity” (Heb 6:1; cf. Heb 5:11–14; 1Co 14:20; Eph 4:11–16). You mature in faith by reading and studying the Bible each day<sup>167</sup> combined with a solid prayer life.<sup>168</sup> This maturation process should continue throughout your life as a Christian.

Furthermore, the wise Christian will learn what all of the commandments of Christ are (Joh 14:15, 21, 23–24; 15:10; 1Jn 2:3–5; 5:2–3; Mat 7:21; 12:50; Mar 3:35; Rom 2:13)<sup>169</sup> so you are not “ignorant” (2Co 2:11; cf. Act 17:30) of what God expects from those who “CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD” (see Act 2:21; 22:16; Rom 10:13; 1Co 1:2; cf. Gen 4:26; Isa 12:4; Psa 91:14–15; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17). Take heed of what is written: “Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it” (i.e., eternal life, Heb 4:1). While the love, grace, kindness, mercy, and forgiveness of God are absolutely massive, we must still live by the instructions we have been given in Scripture so we don’t forfeit our salvation.<sup>170</sup>

## CHRISTIANITY IS A WAY OF LIFE UNTIL DEATH

You have only just started your “pilgrimage” (see Heb 11:13–16; 1Pe 2:9–11 KJV) as a Christian, and you have not reached your ultimate destination,

<sup>166</sup> Verse references for items without citations were given in the prior chapter(s).

<sup>167</sup> “Daily” (Act 17:11; cf. Mat 4:4; Psa 1:2; 119:11, 105). See the chapter “Reading and Studying the Bible.”

<sup>168</sup> See the chapter “Understanding Prayer” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>169</sup> You may like our book *The Commandments of Christ*.

<sup>170</sup> The notion that a Christian cannot lose their salvation (i.e., “Once Saved Always Saved [OSAS],” “Perseverance of the Saints,” etc.) is a false teaching of man and not in agreement with Scripture. While Jesus “will never leave or forsake you” (paraphrase; Heb 13:5), you can still decide to quit the faith and leave Him. See the chapters “Beware the Wolves” herein and “Persevere in Faith” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

which is eternal life with God and His Christ Jesus in heaven (Rev 21:1–22:5). Please understand that even after you have been “born again,” you can still:

- “Fall away” from the faith (see Mat 13:21; 24:10; 26:31, 33; Mar 4:17; 14:27, 29; Luk 8:13; 1Ti 4:1; Heb 3:12; 6:6; 2Pe 3:17),<sup>171</sup>
- “Drift away *from it* [the faith]” (Heb 2:1),
- “Wither away” (see Mat 13:5–6; Luk 8:6),
- “Shrink back to destruction” (Heb 10:36–39; cf. Luk 9:62),
- Let your faith be “choked out by the worries and riches and pleasures of this life” (paraphrase; Mat 13:7, 22; Mar 4:7, 18–19; Luk 8:7, 14; cf. Mat 6:19–24; 19:16–24; Mar 10:25; Luk 3:14; 9:25; 12:15–21, 33; 16:13; 18:18–25; 22:3–6; 18:24–30; Act 5:1–11; 16:19; 20:35; Php 4:11; 6:6–10; Col 3:1–3; Heb 13:5; 1Ti 3:3; 6:6–10, 17; 2Ti 3:2; 4:10; Tit 1:11; Jas 1:9–11; 5:1–6; Psa 49:5–6; 52:7; 62:10; Pro 11:4, 28; 23:4; 28:6, 11; 2Ki 5:20–27) and the cares “of this world,”
- Become “entangled again” in sin and the world again like “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,” and, ‘a sow [pig], after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire [mud]” (see 2Pe 2:20–22; cf. Pro 26:11; 2Ti 4:10),
- “Disqualify” yourself by continuing to partake in sinful actions and behaviors (see 1Co 9:24–27; cf. 2Pe 3:14; Rev 16:15),
- Become “lukewarm” or “leave your first love” (see Rev 2:4; 3:16), which is Jesus and a desire above all else to be obedient to Him and be with Him in heaven, and
- “Desert Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel” (see Gal 1:6–9)—that is, be lured, seduced, “enticed,” “tricked,” “deceived,” “bewitched,” “led astray,” “misled,” “exploited,” “moved away from [the truth],” “taken captive,” “carried away,” “tossed here and there,” or “turned aside” (either willingly or through sheer ignorance of God’s Word) into following the false teachings and “fake gospels” (paraphrase) of men, committees, and institutions. You must “continue in” and remain true to the “faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Col 1:23; Jud 3) in NT Scripture. You *can* have your “crown of life” (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10; cf. 2Ti 4:8; 1Pe 5:4; Rev 3:11) “taken from you” (i.e., stolen by those who teach and preach wrongly; see Rev 3:11; cf. Hos 4:6; Rom 10:2) due to ignorance of what is actually written in Scripture—if you let the “wolves” lead you into their “fake gospels” and away from the narrow path to eternal life.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Please note that in order to “fall away” from something, one must have first been part of it.

<sup>172</sup> See the chapter “Beware the Wolves” for verse references and further information.

## THE NATURE OF SALVATION

It is important to understand the nature of salvation. Some think that the Gospel, salvation, and eternal life are just about being “born again.” But being “born again” is only the first (but by far the most important) step on the path to “eternal life.” Said differently, being “born again” is necessary but not sufficient for eternal (final) salvation. Salvation doesn’t occur in an instant, nor is it a one-time event or prayer and then it’s all done and over with. It is a continually progressive process called “sanctification”<sup>173</sup> (Rom 6:19, 22; 1Co 1:30; 1Th 4:3–7; 2Th 2:13; Heb 12:14; cf. 1Co 1:2; 6:11; Heb 2:11; 10:10–14, 29; Joh 17:19; Act 20:32; 26:18; 2Ti 2:21) that starts when you are “born again” (initial salvation, “forgiveness of sins”) and continues throughout your life as you walk with the Lord. It is not completed until you receive your “crown of life” (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10; cf. 2Ti 4:8; 1Pe 5:4; 1Th 2:19; Rev 3:11), which is awarded to you by Jesus on “the day of judgment” (final eternal salvation). Salvation, therefore, means all of these:

- 1) You have been saved (born again, sins forgiven),
- 2) You are being saved (living, walking, and abiding in Christ), and
- 3) You will be saved (future, final, heavenly, eternal life).

We don’t (and can’t) reach a state of perfect salvation while still in our earthly, fleshly bodies (Rom 7:18, 23–24; 8:23; Mat 26:41; Mar 14:38; 2Co 5:1–4; 1Co 15:50–55; 1In 3:2; Eph 1:13–14).

## WALKING IN THE WAY OF A CHRISTIAN

So, now having a better understanding of the nature of salvation, we press forward in our faith each day, being mindful that the life of a Christian involves all of the following:

- ✓ Continued faithfulness—persevering in faith (remaining faithful), standing firm in the faith, and enduring to the end,<sup>174</sup>
- ✓ Continued repentance—avoidance of deliberate, willful, and repeated sin,<sup>175</sup>



<sup>173</sup> Sanctified means to be “set apart” (Act 13:2; Rom 1:1) for the Lord and to be made to conform more and more to the image of Christ. God is “at work in you” (Php 2:13) and will be for the rest of your life.

<sup>174</sup> See the chapter “Persevere in Faith” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>175</sup> This is discussed further in the section “Changing Your Worldly Habits.”

- ✓ Continued obedience—consistently obeying the Word of God generally and the commandments of Christ and the instructions of His apostles specifically,<sup>176</sup>
- ✓ Continued humility—in all things at all times (Mat 20:28; 23:12; Mar 10:45; Luk 14:7–14; 18:9–14; Joh 6:38; 13:3–5; Php 2:5–9; Jas 4:10; 1Pe 5:5–6);<sup>177</sup>
- ✓ Continual service—manifested in our good works for the Lord (and others) as we “bear fruit” (Mar 4:20; Joh 15:2; Rom 7:4)<sup>178</sup>
- ✓ Continual maturation in our faith (2Pe 3:18),
- ✓ Continual reading of the Word—daily studying, meditating on, and praying over Scripture to feed our born-again spirit,<sup>179</sup>
- ✓ Continual prayer—constantly, earnestly, and fervently, like Jesus, the apostles, and the early church (Act 1:14; 2:42; 12:5),<sup>180</sup>
- ✓ Continual worship—with a thankful, glad, and contrite heart,<sup>181</sup> and
- ✓ Continual praise, gratitude, and thanksgiving—for all that He has done for us, for His amazing love, mercy, and grace, and for the gift of eternal life.<sup>182</sup>

I encourage you, therefore, to keep “growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (see 2Pe 3:18) so you can better understand the various elements of the Christian faith and life (living in the Spirit, obedience, works [“bear fruit”], perseverance, prayer, the armor of God, the wisdom of God<sup>183</sup>) and how they work together to complete salvation for the Christian by “teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man [you] complete in Christ” (Col 1:28). You will need to utilize all of those tools to “hold fast,” “endure to the end,” and ensure that your name stays written in “the book of life” (Php 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12–15; cf. Psa 69:28).

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. – 2Ti 4:7–8

<sup>176</sup> See the chapter “Understanding Obedience” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>177</sup> Pride can still be a formidable enemy, even for the born-again Christian (Mat 18:4; Luk 9:48; 18:14; Rom 12:3; Jas 4:6–10; 1Pe 5:5–6)! See the chapter “Living in the Spirit” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>178</sup> See the chapter “The Role of Works” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>179</sup> See the chapter “Reading and Studying the Bible.”

<sup>180</sup> See the chapter “Understanding Prayer” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>181</sup> See the chapter “Finding a Church.”

<sup>182</sup> See the chapter “Living in the Spirit” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>183</sup> Those subjects are covered in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.



## IT TAKES COURAGE

Here are some further notes on walking in “the Way”<sup>184</sup> (Act 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22; cf. Joh 14:6) of a Christian:<sup>185</sup>

- ✓ One must run for the kingdom of heaven “WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH” (Mar 12:30; cf. Mat 22:37; Jer 29:13; Luk 10:27; 11:9–10; Act 8:37; and conversely, Mat 6:24; 15:8; Mar 7:6; 2Ti 4:10).<sup>186</sup>
- ✓ Understand that proceeding to eternal life in Christ takes:
  - “**Courage**” (see Mat 9:2, 22; 14:27; Mar 6:50; 10:49; 15:43; Joh 16:33; Php 1:14; Act 21:13; 23:11; 27:25; 28:15; cf. 1Co 16:13; 2Co 4:11; 5:6–8; Jos 1:9),
  - “**Boldness**” (Act 4:29–31; 9:28; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 2Co 3:12; Eph 3:11–12; 6:19–20; Php 1:20; 1Th 2:2; cf. 2Ti 1:7–14; Rom 1:16–17; Mat 5:14–16; Pro 28:1),
  - “**Strength**” of character (Mar 12:30; Luk 21:36; Eph 6:10–11; cf. Eph 3:16; Php 4:13; 2Ti 2:1–5; Rom 15:1; Col 1:11; 1Co 16:13; Jas 5:8),
  - Personal “**discipline**” (see 1Co 9:25–27; 11:32; 1Ti 4:7–8; Heb 12:1–13; Col 2:5; 2Th 3:7–11; 2Ti 1:7),
  - Moderation (2Ti 1:7)<sup>187</sup> and “**self-control**” (see Act 24:25; 1Co 7:5; 9:25; Gal 5:23; Tit 1:8; 2Pe 1:6; cf. 2Ti 3:3),
  - “**Confidence**” (see Act 2:29; 4:13, 29; 1Ti 3:13; Php 1:6; Eph 3:12; Tit 3:8; Heb 3:6; 4:16; 10:19, 35; 13:6; Phm 8; 1Jn 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14; 2Co 1:12; 3:4; cf. Joh 5:23; 8:49; 12:26; Rev 21:25–27),
  - “**Truth**” (Joh 3:21; 4:23–24; Rom 9:1; 2Co 4:2; 6:7; 7:14; 12:6; Eph 4:15, 21–25; 5:9; 6:14; 2Th 2:13; 1Ti 2:7; 2Ti 2:18; 1Pe 1:22; 1Jn 1:6; 3:18; 2Jn 1–4; 3Jn 1–8; cf. Mat 22:16; Joh 1:14; 14:6; Eph 1:13; 2Ti 2:15; 2Pi 2:2),

<sup>184</sup> Also, “the way of the truth” (2Pe 2:2).

<sup>185</sup> Verse references for many of these items have been given previously.

<sup>186</sup> You must want eternal life, God, and His truth more than the things of this world—even more than life itself. If only people ran toward heaven with the same enthusiasm and energy they have for the upcoming weekend barbeque or sports event and with the same passion that they pursue wealth, fame, and fortune here in this world (1Co 9:23–27)! I strongly recommend reading *The Heavenly Footman* by John Bunyan so you can get another author’s perspective on the need to be extremely diligent about ensuring our eternal salvation. We are not to take our eternal salvation lightly or for granted or just casually stroll toward heaven (Heb 4:1; 2Co 13:5; Php 2:12–13; 2Pe 1:10; 3:14; Php 3:12–14; 1Ti 6:12; 2Ti 4:7–8; cf. Mat 19:30); rather, we are to run toward it with all our energy, attention, and seriousness, for our eternal life is at stake. It must be noted that the Lord Jesus even condemned those who had just “lukewarm” faith (Rev 3:14–19).

<sup>187</sup> From the Greek σωφρονησιμός [THAYER] (2Ti 1:7).

- **“Wisdom”** (Act 6:3, 10, Jas 1:5; 3:13–17; 1Co 1:24, 30; 12:8; Eph 1:17; Col 1:9, 28; 3:16; 4:5; cf. Rom 11:33; Mat 10:16; Pro 16:16; 23:23),
  - **“Honor”** (Mat 15:4; Luk 18:20; Rom 2:7, 10; 12:10; 13:7; Eph 6:2; 1Th 4:4; 1Ti 5:3; 2Ti 2:20–21; 1Pe 2:17; 3:7),
  - **“Diligence”** (Rom 12:8, 11; 2Co 8:22; Eph 4:3; 1Th 5:12; 2Ti 2:15; Heb 4:11; 6:11; 2Pe 1:5, 10, 15; 3:14),
  - **“Integrity”** (Psa 7:8; 15:2; 25:21; 26:1, 11; 41:12; Pro 2:7; 10:9; 11:3; 19:1; 20:7; 28:6),
  - **“Preparation”** (Eph 6:10–17; cf. Pro 6:6; 21:31),<sup>188</sup>
  - **“Trust in the Lord”** (Pro 3:5–6; Psa 4:5; 31:5–6; 37:3–7; 40:3; 115:9–11; 125:1; cf. Luk 23:46; Rom 4:18–22; 2Co 1:9; 4:13–14; Eph 1:13; Php 1:6, 14; 2:24; 1Ti 1:15; 2Ti 2:11; Heb 12:2; 1Pe 2:23; 4:19; Psa 31:5; 56:3, 11; 62:8; 91:2; 143:8; 146:3–5; Pro 22:19; Isa 55:9; Jer 17:7–8), and
  - **“Endurance”/“perseverance,”** along with
  - Reading and meditating on God’s Word each day and a solid prayer life.<sup>189</sup>
- ✓ You may also have your faith **“tested”** at times (see Jas 1:2–4, 12; Rom 5:3–5; 8:17–18; 1Pe 1:6–7; 4:12–14; Rev 2:10; 3:10; Heb 11:17–19; cf. Psa 66:10–12; Pro 17:3; Isa 48:10; Jer 9:7; Zec 13:9; Mal 3:3; Heb 2:10) as you face:
- **“Trials”** (Act 20:19; Jas 1:2–3; 1Pe 1:6–7),
  - **“Tribulations”** (Mat 24:9; Joh 16:33; Act 14:22; Rom 5:3; 8:35; 12:12; 14:7–8; Php 1:21; Eph 3:13; Heb 10:33; Rev 1:9; 2:9–10; 7:14),
  - **“Persecution”** (see Mat 13:20–21; 5:11–12; 24:10; 26:31; Mar 4:16–17; 14:27–29; Luk 8:6, 13; cf. Joh 15:18–20; Act 5:41; 9:16; Luk 14:26–33; 1Co 4:11–13; 2Co 6:4–5; 11:24–27; 2Ti 2:1–5, 8–12; 3:10–12; 4:5; Heb 2:10; 3:12–14; 11:32–40; Php 1:29; Rom 8:17–18, 35–36; 1Th 3:4; 1Pe 2:20; 3:14–16; 4:9; 5:10; Rev 2:10),
  - **“Hardship”** (see 2Co 6:4; 11:27; 1Th 2:9; 2Th 3:8; 2Ti 2:3, 9; 4:5),
  - **“Suffering”** (see Act 5:41; 9:16; Rom 8:16–18; 1Co 12:26; 2Co 1:5–7; Gal 3:4; Php 1:29; 3:8–11; 4:12; Col 1:24; 1Th 2:2, 14; 3:4; 2Th 1:5–8; Jas 5:13; 1Pe 2:18–21; 3:14–17; 4:1–2, 12–19; 5:9–10; Rev 2:10; cf. Heb 5:8; 13:12; Isa 53:1–12),<sup>190</sup> and even

<sup>188</sup> We must also **“put on the full armor of God”** (Eph 6:10–17) so we can **“resist the devil”** (Jas 4:7), **“stand firm”** (1Co 16:13; Eph 6:11, 13–14; 1Th 3:8), and **“endure to the end”** (see Mat 24:13; Mar 13:13). See the chapter **“The Armor of God”** in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>189</sup> See the chapters **“Choosing a Bible”** and **“Reading and Understanding the Bible”** herein as well as the chapter **“Understanding Prayer”** in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>190</sup> This refers to suffering for Christ, not for one’s own behavior and bad choices (1Pe 3:17; 4:15).

- “Discipline” by the Lord (see 1Co 11:32; Heb 12:3–13; Rev 3:19; Joh 15:2; Psa 23:4; 118:18; Pro 3:11; 6:23; 12:1; 13:1, 18; 15:32; 19:20, 27).<sup>191</sup>

Remember it is written that “you will be hated by all because of My [Jesus’] name” (see Mat 10:22; 24:9; Mar 13:13; Luk 21:17; cf. Joh 15:18–20; 16:2; 17:14; Luk 6:22; 2Ti 3:12; 1Jn 3:13; Rev 12:7–17; Pro 29:10, 27) and that “if you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you” (Joh 15:19; cf. 1Jn 3:13)—but we must press forward in our faith despite that. It is certainly not easy to stand for (and live by) Christian ideals, morals, and ethics in a fallen and corrupt world!

## THE ROLE OF WORKS

Those who loudly proclaim that you are saved by “faith *alone*” are doing so contrary to Scripture.<sup>192</sup> Scripture teaches that genuine faith that is pleasing to God expresses itself in *active* obedience to Christ and His commandments. It is written that Jesus expects to find you “doing” (see Mat 25:14–30) when He returns (Mat 3:10; 7:13; Luk 3:9); Christianity is as much about action as it is about the profession of faith, for it is written, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them” (my emphasis; Mat 7:24; cf. Rom 2:13; Jas 1:22–25; Mat 7:21; 12:50; Mar 3:35; 1Jn 2:17; Joh 8:31, 51) and “Faith without works is dead” (Jas 2:26).

Wayne Jackson writes that faith is demonstrated to be an action term:<sup>193</sup>

It is important to note that “faith” in the biblical sense has never denoted a mere passive acceptance of certain facts. Rather, it is a term of active obedience. Actually, faith consists of three elements:

1. An acknowledgement of historical facts;
2. A willingness to trust the Lord, and;
3. A wholehearted submission to the divine will.

One cannot but notice how “faith” is demonstrated to be an action term in Hebrews 11. “By faith” Abel offered; Noah prepared; Abraham obeyed; etc. The inspired James made it wonderfully clear that faith, divorced from obedience, is dead (Jas. 2:26).

Please understand that faith and works aren’t mutually exclusive, nor are they in opposition to each other. They are like two sides of the same

<sup>191</sup> Note that discipline isn’t the same as punishment.

<sup>192</sup> See the chapters “The New Testament Plan of Salvation” and “Beware the Wolves.” See also the chapter “The Role of Works” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information on this vital topic.

<sup>193</sup> Wayne Jackson, “God’s Great Plan Consummated,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/gods-great-plan-consummated>.

hand, both working together (Jas 2:22; cf. Jas 1:22–24; 2:24; Rom 2:13), with one important exception: Faith comes first, and it is only by and through your faith in Christ, “abiding in Him” and “He in you,” that you can do any “good works” (see Joh 15:1–10).<sup>194</sup> Such obedience and resulting “good works” do not take anything away from what Christ did on the cross; on the contrary, they bring glory to God and Jesus.

Moreover, it is by your “good works” (Mat 5:16; cf. Eph 2:10; 1Ti 2:10; 6:18; 2Co 9:8; Tit 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14; Heb 10:24; 1Pe 2:12; Rev 3:2) that you “prove” your faith to be genuine (Joh 15:8; Jas 1:22)—both before man and before God. When God says He will do something, He always does. In contrast, what a man says, he seldom does. It is not the hearers and idle professors (pretenders) of the Word who will be saved, for as it is written, “Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (Jas 1:22–25; cf. Mat 7:21; 12:50; Mar 3:35; 1Jn 2:17; Joh 8:31, 51; Rom 2:13). “Hypocrites” (Mat 6:2, 5, 16; 15:7–8; 22:18; 23:13–15, 23–29; 24:51; Mar 7:6; Luk 12:56; 13:15) who idly profess faith in Christ and yet do not do the will of God will be judged accordingly on “the day of judgment.”

Additionally, God does not condone or tolerate idleness; on the contrary, He condemns it. As it is written, “Every tree [person] that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (see Mat 3:10; Luk 3:9). He expects those who are saved to be active and at work in His vineyard (Matt 20:1–16), which is His kingdom. If you do not act on your faith, your faith will neither justify you nor save you to eternal life; it is what the Bible calls a “dead faith” (paraphrase, Jas 2:17, 26). To the false teachers who disavow the role of works, I ask: Do you think a “dead” faith will save you to “eternal life” (Joh 3:16–17; 5:24; Rom 6:23)? Will a “dead” faith please God? So now I ask you straight up: Do you want “dead” faith? Does the Bible state that God accepts “dead” faith? Does the Bible state that God even accepts “lukewarm” faith (Rev 3:16)? The answer is unequivocally no to all those questions! Even further, Scripture makes it clear that the Lord notices what a man does as much as what he says (Jon 1:1–3; 10; Rev 2:2; 3:2; Rom 2:13; Pro 5:21; 15:3).

For those who have succumbed to the saved by “faith *alone*” fake gospel, I hope you will restudy the matter. Truth be told, I also believed that false teaching at one time, but I have now come out of that false gospel and into truth (Rev 18:4; cf. Joh 4:23–24; Psa 145:18; Jud 3). I hope you choose to do likewise.

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<sup>194</sup> See the section “I Can Do All Things Through Him Who Strengthens Me” in the chapter “Press On to Maturity” for verse references. See also the chapter “Living in the Spirit” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

## CHANGING YOUR WORLDLY HABITS

Additionally, realize also that the life of an obedient Christian is also one of continuous repentance (1Jn 1:5–10; 2:1, 28; 1Co 9:27; cf. Jas 5:16; Heb 4:16; 7:25) and avoidance of deliberate, willful, and repeated sin. As Jesus said: “Go, and sin no more” (Joh 8:11 KJV; cf. Gal 2:20). You mustn’t “quench [grieve] the Spirit” (1Th 5:19–22; cf. Eph 4:30; Psa 119:11) by continued worldliness (Jas 4:4; 1Jn 2:15–16; cf. Joh 15:19; 17:14), and you cannot go on partaking of sin and carnal, fleshly lusts like you did as a heathen who does not know God (Mat 5:27–30; 26:41; Mar 7:20–22; Joh 5:14; 8:11; Act 15:20, 29; Rom 1:20–32; 6:1–23; 7:5, 18–25; 8:1–14; 12:1–2; 13:12–14; 1Co 6:9–10, 19–20; 10:13; 2Co 7:1; 12:21; Gal 5:16–24; 6:7–8; Eph 2:1–3; 4:17–32; 5:3–21; Col 3:3–9; 1Th 4:1–7; 5:22; 1Ti 6:10–11; 2Ti 2:19, 22; Tit 2:12; 3:3; Heb 12:1, 4; Jas 1:14–15, 21, 27; 3:2–8; 4:4; 1Pe 1:14–16; 2:11; 4:1–4, 15–16; 2Pe 3:3, 14; 1Jn 2:17; Jud 16–18; Rev 22:11, 14–15; Pro 23:29–35; Isa 5:11; 28:7).<sup>195</sup>

The difference between a “man of God” (1Ti 6:11; 2Ti 3:17) and a man of sin (a man of the flesh) is that the man of God resists urges and temptations, while a man of the flesh simply gives in to whatever lust, urge, desire, or temptation that comes his way, acting for the most part just like a wild animal (Psa 73:22; Eph 2:3; cf. Rom 8:5–8, 12–13; 2Pe 2:12) without any restraint, personal “discipline,” moderation, and “self-control.”<sup>196</sup> As a Christian, you are now living for Christ, and you are an example for others (Mat 5:14–16; Php 2:15–16; 3:17; 1Th 1:7; 2Th 3:7–9; 1Ti 1:16; 4:12; Tit 2:6–8; 1Pe 2:9, 21; 5:3; 1Co 11:1; Joh 13:15). Furthermore, we see it written, “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and ... you are not your own” (1Co 6:19; cf. 1Co 3:16) and “If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are” (1Co 3:17)—you *can* still “disqualify” (see 1Co 9:27) yourself from heaven by continued sinful behavior. Let us also heed the warning given in Gal 6:7–8.

## I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH HIM WHO STRENGTHENS ME

I’d like to offer you some encouragement in closing this weighty chapter. Know that you will be able to “stand firm in the faith” (1Co 16:13) and “be faithful until death” (Rev 2:10) by “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9;

<sup>195</sup> This topic is covered much more extensively in the chapter “Changing Your Worldly Habits” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>196</sup> If you are having lustful thoughts, read and meditate on these verses: 2Co 10:5; Php 4:8; Eph 6:16; Jas 4:7. For the brothers in Christ, I have two simple words of advice: *Don’t look!* Sometimes it’s just as simple as that. Remember, King David got into a whole heap of trouble due to this very thing (2Sa 11:2–3).

1Pe 1:11) who “abides [lives] in you” (see [1Jn 4:12–13](#); cf. [Joh 5:38](#); [6:56](#); [14:16–20](#), [23](#); [15:1–10](#); [17:21](#); [1Jn 2:6](#), [10](#), [14](#), [24](#), [27–28](#); [3:6](#), [9](#), [17](#), [24](#); [4:15–16](#); [2Jn 2](#), [9](#); [Rom 8:9–11](#); [1Co 3:16](#); [Gal 2:20](#); [2Ti 1:14](#))—yes, the very same Spirit of power that raised Jesus from the dead now lives in you ([Rom 8:11](#); [Joh 15:1–10](#); [Gal 2:20](#); [Eph 3:20](#)), and you are now living “by the Spirit” of God ([Act 20:22](#); [Rom 2:29](#); [8:13–14](#); [1Co 2:13](#); [12:3](#); [Gal 3:3](#); [5:16](#), [25](#); [2Th 2:13](#); [1Jn 3:24](#); cf. [Mat 4:1](#); [Luk 4:1](#)), not by your own strength, might, or willpower ([Zec 4:6](#); [Joh 15:1–10](#); [Eph 6:10](#); [Php 4:13](#); [2Co 12:9–10](#); cf. [Joh 14:16](#); [16:7](#); [Rom 8:13](#), [26](#), [31–39](#); [13:14](#); [1Co 10:13](#); [16:13](#); [2Co 6:1–10](#); [Gal 5:16–17](#); [Eph 3:20](#); [6:13](#); [Php 1:6](#); [2Ti 2:13](#); [Heb 12:2](#); [1Jn 4:4](#); [5:4](#); [Isa 40:31](#); [Jud 24](#); [2Ch 16:9](#); [Lam 3:22–23](#); [Psa 34:15](#); [46:10](#); [103:14](#)).<sup>197</sup>

If you “trust” in Him, “abide in Him,” and seek Him diligently each day in faith and obedience, He will hold you in His power through His grace and “lovingkindness” ([Psa 23:1–6](#); [Lam 3:22–23](#)). If *you* want to persevere in faith, *He* will give you His might, His strength, His wisdom, His hope, His guidance, and His power to do just that and to overcome anything you may face, as it is written:

- “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU” ([Heb 13:5](#)),
- “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” ([Mat 28:20](#)),
- “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” ([Psa 23:4](#); cf. [Mat 4:16](#); [Luk 1:78–79](#); [2:32](#); [Psa 44:19](#); [107:10–14](#); [1Co 15:55–57](#)),
- “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” ([Php 1:6](#); cf. [Rom 8:28–39](#); [Heb 12:2](#)),
- “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” ([Php 4:13](#)),
- “Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” ([1Jn 4:4](#)),
- “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy” ([Jud 24](#)),
- “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.” ([Zec 4:6](#)), and
- “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” ([Joh 16:33](#)).

Lastly, know that even if your faith wavers or is momentarily weak, He remains steadfast ([2Ti 2:13](#); [Heb 13:8](#); cf. [2Sa 22:2–3](#), [47](#); [Psa 16:8](#); [18:2](#), [46](#);

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<sup>197</sup> See the chapter “Living in the Spirit” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

19:14; 31:3; 55:22; 62:2, 6; 71:3; 91:1–16; Act 2:25). Yes, “**anchor**” yourself to the Lord Jesus (Heb 6:19; cf. Mat 7:24–27; 21:42; Psa 18:2; 94:22; 118:22; Isa 8:14–15; 28:16; Php 4:13), and you “**WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED**” (Rom 9:33; 10:11). Amen.

## GO AND TELL OTHERS

(The Harvest Is Plentiful, but the Workers Are Few)

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” – Matthew 28:19*

One of the “fruits” (Mat 7:16, 20; 9:37–38) of a Christian is leading others to truth in Christ and winning souls for the Lord. In fact, the greatest honor one can have in this world is to be called an “ambassador for Christ” (see 2Co 5:20; cf. Php 1:27; Eph 6:20) and to go forth sharing “the gospel of the grace of God” (Act 20:24)—which is also “the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13; cf. Mat 28:19; Mar 16:15–16; Luk 24:47–48; 1Co 9:16) and “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16)—with those who are still “lost” (Mat 18:11; Luk 15:6, 9, 24, 32; 19:10) and wandering “through the valley of the shadow of death” in “the domain of darkness” of this fallen world.<sup>198</sup> Only the Gospel message can lead to “peace” and “reconciliation” between God and man (see Rom 5:1, 10–11; 15:33; 1Co 14:33; 2Co 5:18–20; 1Th 5:23; Eph 2:1–10, 11–22; 6:15; Col 1:20–23; Heb 13:20; cf. Mat 5:9; Luk 2:14).

We lead others to Christ by:

- 1) Being a “shining” (see Mat 5:13–16) “example”<sup>199</sup> (see Joh 13:15; 1Co 11:1; 4:16; 1Th 1:7; 1Ti 1:16; 4:12; Tit 2:7; 1Pe 2:21; 5:3; cf. Mat 5:13–16; 10:38; 2Co 5:20; Eph 5:1–2; 6:20; Rom 2:19; Php 1:27; 2:15; 3:17; 1Th 1:6; 2Th 3:9; Heb 6:12; 12:1; 1Jn 2:6) of Jesus here in this fallen world, and by
- 2) Sharing the “good news” of the Gospel (Luk 2:10; Act 8:12; 13:32; Rom 10:15–16; Heb 4:2, 6). We are commanded to “boldly” (see Act 4:29–31; 9:28; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 2Co 3:12; Eph 3:11–12; 6:19–20; Php 1:20; 1Th 2:2; cf. 2Ti 1:7–14; Rom 1:16–17; Mat 5:14–16; Pro 28:1), “confidently” (see Act 4:29; Tit 3:8; Heb 13:6), and “courageously” (see Php 1:14; 2Co 4:11; 5:6–8; Act 23:11; 27:25; 28:15) “go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation [everyone, the lost]” (Mar 16:15; cf. Mat 4:23; 9:35; 28:19–20; Luk 8:1, 39; Act 4:2; 8:5; 16:17; 17:3, 19; 20:27; 21:13; Rom 10:14–17; 1Co 2:1; Eph 6:19–20). For as it is written, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of

<sup>198</sup> See the chapter “The Gospel of the Grace of God” for verse references.

<sup>199</sup> Please realize that your behavior (actions, language, speech, etc.) and how you interact with others in this fallen and corrupt world can have a great impact on leading people toward Christ; if our lives demonstrate abject hypocrisy and disregard for the commandments of Christ, that disgraces the name of God and Jesus (Mat 5:14–16; Act 13:47; Php 2:15; Eph 5:8; 2Pe 2:2–3). Everything we do or say leads someone either towards Christ or away from Him.



**Christ** (Rom 10:17) and **“You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free”** (Joh 8:32).

In a world exceedingly full of darkness and sin, the little light we shine can greatly help the lost find their way (Mat 5:14–16; Luk 2:32; 16:8; Joh 1:4–9; 3:19–21; Act 13:47; 26:23; Rom 2:19; cf. Rom 13:12; 2Co 2:14–15). In fact, you might be the only person to ever have the chance to share the Gospel with someone in their entire lifetime. It will be horrible to stand among the saved on the Day of Judgment and look over and see someone we know who will be lost forever (Mat 25:31–33) and realize that we had a chance to share the Gospel with them but never did. Oh, what a tragedy!

## FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

Here are some notes to encourage you to share the Gospel with others:

1. We are surrounded by a sea of the **“lost”** (Mat 10:6; 18:11; Luk 15:6; 19:10); as it is written, **“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few”** (Mat 9:37–38).
2. It is written, **“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works”** (Mat 5:13–16). We are supposed to be an exact **“example”** of Jesus here on earth to others (see Joh 13:15; 1Th 1:7; 1Ti 1:16; 4:12; Tit 2:7; 1Pe 2:21; 5:3; cf. Mat 5:13–16; 2Co 5:20; Eph 6:20; Rom 2:19; Php 1:27; 2:15; Heb 12:1), **“a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing”** (2Co 2:14–15), **“a guide to the blind”** (Rom 2:19), and **“a city set on a hill”** (Mat 5:14) shining **“light”** in the **“darkness”** of this fallen world, where Satan has **“blinded”** many (Mat 4:16; 2Co 4:4; 1Jn 2:11; cf. Eph 4:18; 5:8).
3. You are an **“ambassador for Christ”** and a member of **“A royal PRIESTHOOD”** (1Pe 2:9; cf. Rev 1:6; 5:10), with Christ as your **“High Priest”** (Heb 3:1; cf. Heb 2:17; 4:14–15; 5:5, 10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11) and **“King”** (Joh 1:49; 12:13; 18:37; 1Ti 1:17; 6:15; Rev 15:3; 17:14; 19:16). So go forth as a **“fisher of men”** (see Mat 4:19; Mar 1:17), helping to build the kingdom of God.<sup>200</sup>
4. We are not to be **“ashamed”** of Jesus or the Gospel (Mat 11:6; Mar 8:38; Luk 9:26; Rom 1:16; 2Ti 1:8, 12, 16; 1Pe 4:16; cf. Mat 10:32–33).

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<sup>200</sup> Brother or sister in Christ, it is *your* job to share the **“good news”** of the Gospel and the **“hope”** that we have in Jesus Christ with those who are lost—it is every Christian’s responsibility (1Pe 2:9; Mat 28:19–20; Mar 16:15), even if you just **“give an account for the hope that is in you”** (1Pe 3:15) and then get them to those who can more completely explain the Gospel message (preachers and teachers of the Word). It is not the job only of some “pastor” (i.e., a so-called church leader) to do this!

You might be ridiculed, mocked, shunned, ignored, laughed at, scorned, discriminated against, and even persecuted for doing so, but don't let that stop you (1Co 4:12). Jesus was treated likewise (Mat 27:29, 31; Mar 15:20; Luk 18:32; 23:36), and we are not better than our Master (Joh 15:20; Mat 10:24; cf. Mat 5:10–12; 10:22; 24:9; Joh 15:18, 21; Jas 4:4; Gal 4:16).

5. From the Parable of the Sower (Mat 13:1–9, 18–23; Luk 8:4–8, 11–15), we learn that Christ is the Sower (along with His evangelists—that is, you) who spreads the “seed,” which is “the word of God”—the Gospel “message of truth.” The type of ground (soil) represents the type of person (you) who has heard it:
  - a. “Roadside”: This refers to “those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved” (Luk 8:12; cf. Mat 13:4, 19; Mar 4:4, 15; Luk 8:5); that is, the Gospel had no impact on the one who heard it and had no interest in it. These are those who think that God, the Gospel, and all this “Jesus stuff” is “foolishness” and go on living just as they always have in sin.<sup>201</sup>
  - b. “Rocky Soil”: This refers to “those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no *firm* root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation [or affliction and persecution] fall away” (Luk 8:13; cf. Mat 13:5, 20; Mar 4:5, 16; Luk 8:6).
  - c. “Thorny Soil”: This refers to “the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth [riches and pleasures of this life] choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mat 13:22; cf. Mat 6:19–24; 13:7; 19:16–24; Mar 4:7, 18–19; 10:25; Luk 3:14; 8:7, 14; 9:25; 12:14–21, 33; 16:13; 18:18–25; 22:3–6; 18:24–30; Act 5:1–11; 16:19; 20:35; Php 4:11; 6:6–10; Heb 6:7–8; 13:5; 1Ti 3:3; 6:6–10, 17; 2Ti 3:2; 4:10; Tit 1:11; Jas 1:9–11; 5:1–6; Psa 49:5–6; 52:7; 62:10; Pro 11:4, 28; 23:4; 28:6, 11; 2Ki 5:20–27).
  - d. “Good Soil”: This refers to “the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty” (Mat 13:23; cf. Mat 13:8; Mar 4:8, 20; Luk 8:8), and who is “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58).

Now, therefore, this book has sown the seed of the Word of God in you, so what type of soil will you be? It is my prayer that you will keep “abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58) and produce a crop

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<sup>201</sup> See the section “You Have a Choice” in the chapter “The Gospel of the Grace of God” for “foolishness” citations.

(“bear fruit”) of “thirty,” “sixty,” or a “hundredfold” for the Lord (Mat 13:8, 23; Mar 4:8, 20). After coming to the truth yourself, you can use this book to lead others through the Gospel so they may also come to a saving knowledge of our “**Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**” (2Pe 1:11; 2:20; 3:18), just as I have done with you (Act 8:35).

Will you be like Isaiah, who, when the Lord inquired, “**Whom shall I send?**” answered, “**Here am I, send me!**” (Isa 6:8), or like Jonah, who, when asked by the Lord to go to Ninevah to share the Word of God with them, ran the other way (Jon 1:1–3)? And if I were to ask you next year how many others you have shared the Gospel with, what would the answer be? One? Two? Ten? Fifty? One hundred? Or will it be zero? Only you can answer that.

## IT IS FINISHED

Brother or sister in Christ, I beseech you to continue along “**the Highway of Holiness**” (Isa 35:8) on the path to eternal life in Christ and to persevere in faith to eternal glory. I affirm to you (1Co 15:31) that I have explained the Gospel accurately and completely, and I hope to stand with you among “**the redeemed of the LORD**” (Psa 107:2; cf. Psa 31:5; 1Pe 1:18–19) who are gathered “**on His [Jesus’] right**” (Mat 25:33–34) on “**the day of judgment**” (1Jn 4:17) and hear, “**Well done, good and faithful servant**” (Mat 25:21–23 ESV), “**ENTER [INTO] MY REST**” (Heb 3:11; 4:3–5). And Jesus said, “**It is finished**” (Joh 19:30). Amen.

**BEWARE THE  
WOLVES**



## BEWARE THE WOLVES

(Be On Guard for Yourselves and for All the Flock)

*“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.” – Matthew 7:15*

Now, you will hear much disagreement among men about the Gospel and Plan of Salvation that I have explained to you in this book, but we must approach God on His terms and as instructed to in Scripture, not however men, committees, conferences, councils, synods, and institutions *think* or *feel* it should be done. We must examine and harmonize “the sum” (Psa 119:160; cf. 2Ti 3:16–17) of what Scripture teaches to arrive at correct doctrine and teaching; we cannot pick and choose some verses while ignoring others (or even entire books), nor can we rewrite Scripture to suit our own personal beliefs, as some have done.<sup>202, 203, 204, 205, 206</sup>

### BE ON THE ALERT! DO NOT BE DECEIVED!

While it is my “duty”<sup>207</sup> to teach and preach the Gospel to you accurately and completely (Num 4:27; cf. Act 20:18–21, 26–31; 2Ti 2:2, 15, 23–26; 3:16–17; 4:1–4, 15; 1Co 9:16; 15:3; Col 1:28; Pro 27:6; Gal 4:16; Eph 4:15; Joh 4:23–24; Rev 18:4–5; 1Ti 1:3–4; 4:1–6, 11, 13; 6:20–21; Eze 33:1–6; Ecc 3:7; Tit 1:9, 13–14; 2:15), it is your responsibility to—

- “Be on the alert” (Act 20:31; 1Co 16:13; Eph 6:18; 1Pe 5:8),
- “Be diligent” about your salvation (2Ti 2:15; Heb 4:11; cf. 2Pe 1:10; 3:14),

<sup>202</sup> This chapter has been excerpted from our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>203</sup> Martin Luther denied the inspiration of the Book of James simply because it didn’t fit his own personal theology! Even further, he rewrote Romans 3:28 by adding the word *alone*, which is not in the original Greek texts. Yes, Luther rewrote (added to) Scripture to make it conform to his own beliefs!

<sup>204</sup> Other groups have used false prophets to introduce newly so-called “inspired” books.

<sup>205</sup> See the chapter “Being a Berean” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>206</sup> I am writing to you very boldly in this chapter (see Rom 15:14–16; 2Co 10:1–2; cf. Act 4:31; 19:8; 20:31; 1Co 4:14; 2Co 7:8–10; Gal 2:11; Eph 4:15; 1Th 5:14; 2Th 3:15; 2Ti 3:16; 4:1–4; Tit 1:13; 2:15; 2In 1:10) so you understand the reality of the situation you face today in finding truth. Please understand that I am doing this out of care and concern for your eternal well-being, and as it is written, “So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (Gal 4:16). I don’t want to see you on Judgment Day and have you say to me that I did not warn you about the false teachings and fake gospels of man that can lead you to destruction (Act 20:20, 26–31; Col 1:28; Eze 33:1–6).

<sup>207</sup> Teachers and preachers of the Word have a responsibility to shepherd their flock and protect them from false teachers, false teachings, and fake gospels that can lead them to destruction (Joh 21:15–17); we are to do this while not arguing needlessly over things that *Scripture tells us* do not affect salvation (e.g., genealogies, foods, feast days, etc.).

- “Be on guard” (Act 20:28; 2Ti 4:15),<sup>208</sup>
- “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!” (2Co 13:5),
- “Continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast” (Col 1:23),
- “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Php 2:12), and
- “Contend earnestly for the faith<sup>209</sup> which was once for all handed down [delivered ESV] to the saints” (Jud 3)

—in order to make sure you have not strayed from the pure truth of the Gospel as given in Scripture lest you get “tricked” or “deceived” out of your “crown of life.”<sup>210</sup>

## IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

Those who wish to “CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD” (see Act 2:21; 22:16; Rom 10:13; 1Co 1:2; cf. Gen 4:26; Isa 12:4; Psa 91:14–15; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17) must do so “in spirit and truth” (Joh 4:23–24; cf. Psa 145:18; Jud 3; Luk 18:8; Col 1:23) and in accordance with the clear instructions we are given in Scripture, not “in spirit and the false teachings of man” (i.e., their whims, opinions, or personal theologies). It is very easy to be confused about which is which, especially for someone new to the faith, for we’ve had centuries now (over two thousand years) of the following:

- “False teachings” (see 2Pe 2:1; Col 2:16, 22; Heb 13:9; cf. Luk 18:8; Php 3:2; Rev 2:9; 3:9),
- “Fake gospels” (paraphrase; see 2Co 11:3–5; Gal 1:8–9; Mat 24:5; cf. Jud 3),
- “Myths” (1Ti 1:4; 2Ti 4:3–4; Tit 1:14),
- “Varied and strange teachings” (Heb 13:9; cf. 2Th 2:1–3),
- “Decrees, teachings, and commandments [precepts] of men” (see Col 2:20–23; Tit 1:13–14; Mat 15:9; Mar 7:7),
- “Self-made religion” (Col 2:23; cf. Mat 23:27–28; 1Ti 4:8),<sup>211</sup>
- “Philosophy and empty deception ... according to the elementary principles of the world” (Col 2:8, 20–23),
- “Traditions of men” (see Mat 15:3, 6; Mar 7:8–13; Col 2:8; cf. Rev 2:9; 3:9),
- “Errors of unprincipled men” (see 2Pe 3:17),
- “Destructive heresies” (2Pe 2:1–3),

<sup>208</sup> These verses were written to those who teach and preach the Gospel, exhorting them to watch over their flock with great care and to teach the Gospel correctly while opposing false teachers, false teachings, and fake gospels. But while it was written to teachers and preachers of the Word, it also says to be on guard for yourself as well—yes, even seminary graduates and those with “Doctoral Degrees in Divinity” can also be “tricked” and “deceived”!

<sup>209</sup> “The faith” is the Gospel as it was given to the apostles by Jesus (this includes Paul).

<sup>210</sup> Verse references follow shortly.

<sup>211</sup> For example, the various man-made religions of the world.

- Mysticism, “magic,” “sorcery,” and superstitions (Act 8:9–24; 13:6–8; 19:19; Gal 5:20; Rev 9:21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15),
- “Worldly and empty chatter” (1Ti 6:20),
- “False and empty words” (see 2Pe 2:3; Eph 5:6),
- “Persuasive arguments” (Col 2:4),<sup>212</sup>
- “Smooth and flattering speech” (Rom 16:18),
- “Distortions” (see Gal 1:7; 2Pe 3:16),
- “Doctrines of demons” (1Ti 4:1),
- “Schemes of Satan” (paraphrase; 2Co 2:11; cf. Mat 4:1–11; 16:23; Mar 8:33; Luk 4:1–13; Joh 8:44; 13:27; Act 5:3; 1Co 7:5; 2Co 11:3, 14–15; Eph 4:27; 6:11–12; 1Pe 5:8–9; Jas 4:7; 2Th 2:8–9; 1Ti 5:15; Rev 12:9–11; 20:8–8; Gen 3:1),<sup>213</sup>
- “Deceptions of wickedness” (see 2Th 2:9–12),
- Opinions, personal beliefs, personal theologies, and fanciful interpretations (Col 2:16–18; 1Ti 4:3, 8; cf. Pro 14:12; 16:25),<sup>214</sup>
- “Visions” and “worship of angels” (Col 2:18),
- Rites, rules, rituals, sacraments, ordinances (human), catechisms, creeds, and ceremonies (1Ti 4:1–3; Rev 13:1–18; 17:1–18:24),
- “Great signs and [false] wonders” (i.e., fake miracles, delusions; Mat 24:24; Mar 13:22; 2Th 2:9–12; cf. Rev 13:11–13; 16:14; 19:20),
- “False prophecies” (paraphrase; see Mat 7:15; 24:11, 24; Mar 13:22; Act 13:6; 2Pe 2:1; 1Jn 4:1; Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10; cf. 2Pe 1:20–21), and
- “Trickery of man” (Eph 4:14; cf. Luk 20:23; 2Co 11:13–15; 1Ti 4:1–3; Php 3:2; 2Pe 2:1–3; 3:16–18; contrast with Joh 4:23–24; Act 17:11; Jud 3; 2Co 13:5; Rev 3:11; 18:4–5).

And on top of all that, there are hundreds of sectarian and denominational divisions<sup>215</sup> and dozens upon dozens of theological systems and frameworks<sup>216</sup> made up by men, committees, councils, synods, and

<sup>212</sup> Again, according to the traditions and wisdom of man instead of God (Pro 14:12; 16:25).

<sup>213</sup> These schemes are often facilitated by wicked and evil people in this world who do the bidding of Satan (Mat 16:23; Joh 8:44; 13:2; Act 13:10; 2Ti 2:26; 1Jn 3:8–10; Rev 2:9; 3:9; 17:12–13; cf. Isa 5:20–23), whether they realize it or not.

<sup>214</sup> Yes, even more fake gospels (e.g., ecumenism—all religions are basically the same and lead to heaven; universalism—everyone goes to heaven, well, at least all the “good people” anyway; etc.)

<sup>215</sup> There is one God, one faith, one Gospel, one Spirit, one baptism, one bread, and one body (church)—not seemingly infinite flavors of man-made denominations like Häagen-Dazs ice cream (Eph 2:18; 4:3–6; Joh 17:20–23; 1Co 10:16–17; 12:12–13, 20, 25, 27; Php 1:27; Col 3:15). See the chapter “Finding a Church.”

<sup>216</sup> Gnosticism, Montanism, Manichaeism, Monasticism, Docetism, Arianism, Sabellianism, Paganism, Mysticism, Nestorianism, Pelagianism, Rationalism, Apollinarianism, Monophysitism, Eutychianism, Adoptionism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Reformed Protestantism, Arminianism, Calvinism, Adventism, Modernism, and so on ad nauseam-ism . . .

institutions all piled up on top of one another and masquerading as so-called “Christianity,”<sup>217</sup> obfuscating the pure truth of the Gospel given in Scripture (Luk 18:8; Joh 4:23–24; Act 17:11; Jud 3; 2Co 11:3–4, 13–15; 13:5; Eph 4:14; 5:6; 1Ti 4:1–3; Php 3:2; 2Pe 2:1–3; 3:16–18; Heb 13:9; Rev 3:11; 18:4–5). Astounding! Shocking! Tragic! What an absolute travesty and mess man has made of the pure and simple Gospel truth given in Scripture!

Still further compounding the situation is the staggering amount of noise generated by the secular world with its God-denying media and institutions trying to drown out the Gospel message and the name of Jesus altogether by creating even more false teachings that masquerade as science, but which are in reality fake science. Yes, we are being fed today fake news, fake science (e.g., the so-called *theory* of evolution), fake entertainment (e.g., lip-synced performances, so-called reality but scripted TV), fake food (e.g., margarine, fake meat), fake body parts (e.g., vanity cosmetic surgery), fake economics (e.g., Keynesian economics, debt as an asset), fake money (e.g., fiat currencies), and fake secular religions.<sup>218</sup>

The false teachings and fake gospels are shouted 24/7/365.25 (i.e., nonstop, every day, all day long) in blaring volume from both secular media sources as well as so-called “Christian” pulpits, broadcasts, books, movies, publications, and even seminary schools. And we are gradually conditioned by repeated, frequent, and persistent marketing propaganda (for that is exactly what it is) to accept the fakes (the false teachings) as the real thing and even to begin to believe them in place of the real. The same thing has happened to Christianity over the last two thousand years: We have been gradually trained and conditioned to accept and even believe that the fakes are the real thing, and in many cases, we cannot even tell the difference anymore!

This is a very sad state of affairs, as few today can even recognize true Christianity as defined in Scripture, and people are more confused today than ever before by all the false teachings as well as by seeing an almost endless stream of hypocritical pretenders proclaiming to be “Christians” parading before and all around them.<sup>219</sup> Many today aren’t even sure who is a true Christian, what a true Christian church even looks like, or how to

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<sup>217</sup> When I use “Christian” or “Christianity” in quotes, it’s because many things are called Christian (churches, sects, groups, books, movies, etc.) but which are not the Christianity defined in Scripture, for they are “neglecting the commandment of God” and instead “teaching as doctrines the precepts [commandments NKJV] of men” (Mar 7:7–8)—they are not teaching the Gospel of the NT but instead the doctrines of their own theology and opinions, for they have either added to, taken away from, or distorted the faith that was delivered in Scripture (Jud 3). Some of these “Christian” groups are well-meaning but simply misguided, while others intentionally intend to deceive.

<sup>218</sup> You can soon add to this list A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) fakes—fake people, fake commercials, fake movies, fake photos, etc.

<sup>219</sup> Yes, hypocrisy runs rampant in modern American Christendom!



truly be saved according to the instructions given in Scripture! Some new to the faith think that if they simply find and attend a church that says the name of Jesus often and loudly enough that they are good to go—but that just isn't the case!<sup>220</sup> Even worse, many who are lost or new to Christ give up when confronted with so many differing and conflicting teachings, all claiming to be the true Christianity of the Bible but are not.

We must not let false teachings turn us out of the straight and “narrow” path to eternal life (Mat 7:14). If you will, “**I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS**” of modern, liberal, corrupt, apostate, “lukewarm,” dead, pretend, fake, so-called “Christianity”: “**MAKE STRAIGHT**” the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (see Mat 3:3; Mar 1:3; Luk 3:4–5; Joh 1:23; cf. Act 13:10; Rev 3:16; Isa 40:3), and I have declared to you the true, correct, and complete Gospel (Act 20:20, 26–27, 31) in this book exactly as it “was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jud 3 ESV) in NT Scripture.

## YOU ARE SURROUNDED BY WOLVES

As Jesus warned, “beware the wolves” (paraphrase; see Mat 7:15), for you are surrounded on all sides and as far as the eye can see<sup>221</sup> by—

- “Wolves” (“ravenous wolves”; Mat 7:15; 10:16; Luk 10:3; Act 20:28–31),<sup>222</sup>
- “Vipers” (Mat 3:7; 12:34; 23:33; Luk 3:7),
- “False Christs” (see Mat 24:4–5, 23–26; Mar 13:5–6, 21–22; Luk 21:8),<sup>223</sup>
- “False teachers” (2Pe 2:1; cf. 2Ti 4:3–4; Col 2:21–22),<sup>224</sup>
- Modern-day “Pharisees” (Mat 5:20; 15:1–9; 16:6, 11–12; 23:1–36; Mar 8:15; Luk 12:1; 18:11; Joh 12:42; cf. Mat 3:7; 12:34–35; 26:59; Joh 8:44; Luk 6:39; 11:39–44; 22:2; Rom 10:1–4; 16:18; Php 3:2; Rev 2:9; 3:9; Ecc 1:9; Psa 140:5),
- “Deceitful spirits” (also “spirit of error”; see 1Ti 4:1; 1Jn 4:6),
- “Liars in hypocrisy” (see 1Ti 4:2),
- “Deceivers” (Tit 1:10; 2Jn 7),

<sup>220</sup> Great discernment must be used in finding a church; see the chapter “Finding a Church.”

<sup>221</sup> You may think that this is an exaggeration, but I assure you it is not. In examining census data for a certain locale with deterministic demographics and church attendance, I calculated that approximately 99% of professing Christians attend churches that are not teaching the Gospel as it was given in Scripture (Jud 3). That shows just how many false teachers and fake gospels have gone out into the world.

<sup>222</sup> Note that “wolves” come in both male and female forms (wolvettes).

<sup>223</sup> While these verses apply specifically to the period leading up to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans, we must still today beware of false Christs (self-proclaimed messiahs). We are not to look for another Messiah still to come—Jesus of Nazareth was it, for He was “the Son of God,” “the Christ of God,” and “the Holy One of God” (Mat 16:16; 26:63–64; Mar 1:1, 24; 3:11; Luk 1:35; 4:34, 41; 9:35; 22:70; Joh 1:49; 11:27; 20:31; Act 8:37; 10:38; Rom 1:4; 2Co 1:19; Heb 4:14; 1Jn 4:15; 5:20)!

<sup>224</sup> Some may be preaching with wrong motives (Php 1:15–18), but if they are teaching the Gospel correctly, we are not to oppose them (cf. Mar 9:38–40; Luk 9:49–50).

- “False prophets” (Mat 7:15; 24:11, 24–25; Mar 13:22; 2Pe 2:1–2; 1Jn 4:1; cf. Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10),<sup>225, 226</sup>
- “Smooth talkers” (paraphrase; see Rom 16:18),
- “Rebellious men, empty talkers” (Tit 1:10),
- “Lawless” men and institutions (2Th 2:8; cf. Rev 13:1–18; 17:1–18:24),
- “Unprincipled men” (2Pe 3:17; cf. Eph 4:14; 2Pe 2:1–3, 7; Tit 1:10–11),
- “Natural men” (also the “untaught”; 1Co 2:14; 2Pe 3:16; cf. 1Jn 4:5; 1Co 1:18; 2Co 4:3–4; Jud 19; Joh 8:43; 14:17; Mat 13:11; Gal 1:7; Pro 14:12) who seem to want to tell you what the Bible means all the way from creation in Genesis to prophecy in Revelation,<sup>227</sup>
- “False brethren” (2Co 11:26; Gal 2:4),
- “Antichrists” (plural; 1Jn 2:18, 21–22; 4:3; 2Jn 7), and
- Preachers for “greed” and “sordid gain”<sup>228</sup> (Tit 1:11; 1Pe 5:2; 2Pe 2:2–3; cf. 1Ti 3:8; 6:9–10; Eze 33:31; Mat 6:24; 19:22; Luk 12:15–21)<sup>229</sup>

—who are preaching, proclaiming, publishing, and promoting<sup>230</sup> false teachings and “fake gospels” (paraphrase), that is, “a different gospel ... a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you” (Gal 1:6–9; cf. 2Co 11:3–4; Act 4:12; Jud 3).<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Today, a “prophet” is anyone who teaches or preaches the Word of God, not one who reveals the future. A false prophet is therefore the same as a false teacher. Furthermore, no new prophecy is expected today as the canon of Scripture has been closed up, completed, and finalized (1Co 13:10), so anyone claiming to have new inspiration or “special or private revelations” from God or new so-called “inspired” books of Scripture is also a “false prophet.” H. Leo Boles writes, “A ‘prophet’ in the true sense means one who speaks for God; a ‘false prophet’ is a false speaker or teacher; one who claims to speak for God, but God has not put his words into the heart or mouth of the speaker. It may include the Pharisees and religious leaders of that time, but it certainly includes all false teachers. (Mat 24:11, 24.) Hence, a false prophet is not merely an erroneous teacher, but a lying teacher, one pretending to be inspired, but who does not have the spirit of God; ‘false prophets’ may include any teacher who deliberately deceives others.” (H. Leo Boles, *New Testament Commentary, A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* [Nashville, TN: GOSPEL ADVOCATE Company, 1987], 179).

<sup>226</sup> See also false shepherds in the OT, for false teachers and false prophets are nothing new or unique to today—they have been around since the beginning (see Eze 13:4–9; 34:1–31; Deu 18:20; Jer 5:30–31; 14:14; 23:1–2, 11, 13–14, 16, 25–27; 28:15–17; Zec 10:2; cf. Ecc 1:9). Furthermore, while Matthew 24:4–11, 23–25 again applied specifically to the period leading up to the events of AD 70, the same principle applies now, and this text still serves as a caution for us not to be misled today, for there is “nothing new under the sun” (Ecc 1:9).

<sup>227</sup> I am continually amazed to see professing Christians believe almost anything they hear and who also get their theology (understanding of God), Christian doctrine, and Bible prophecy (e.g., end-times eschatology in particular) from those who do not even believe in or know Christ (i.e., secular sources).

<sup>228</sup> “Filthy lucre” (KJV).

<sup>229</sup> Preaching for sordid gain isn’t unique to the NT (see Isa 56:11; Jer 6:13; 22:17; Ecc 5:10).

<sup>230</sup> Yes, promoting and marketing, just like in a business.

<sup>231</sup> Additional reading: 2Co 2:17; Rom 16:17–20; Tit 1:7–10; Php 3:2; Mat 15:1–9; 23:1–3; 24:4–11, 23–25; Heb 2:1; 13:9; Eph 6:11–17; Joh 8:44; 2Th 2:11–12; Col 2:20–23; Rev 3:9; 19:20.

These “ravenous wolves” will try to “trick,” “mislead,” and “deceive”<sup>232</sup> you into following their false teachings and fake gospels. The “naïve” (Pro 1:1–7, 22; 7:7; 9:4; 14:15, 18), those “lacking sense” (i.e., gullible; Pro 6:32; 7:7; 24:30), those “wanting to have their ears tickled”<sup>233</sup> (2Ti 4:3–4), and those seeking a feel-good, easy form of Christianity will seek out and follow these schemes, doctrines, myths, and deceptions of man and Satan.<sup>234</sup> Yes, there is a “spirit of error” (1Jn 4:6) in the world, and there are also “deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” (1Ti 4:1).<sup>235</sup> Always remember that you are in the middle of a spiritual war, and even though you cannot see them, the “world forces of this darkness [and] the spiritual forces of wickedness [evil] in the heavenly places” are very real (paraphrase; see Eph 6:12), and they are firmly set against you in spiritual warfare. They will lead you to eternal death if you let them!

## THE WOLVES IN SHEEP’S CLOTHING

Some of the false teachings come from secular sources (obviously), but sadly (and shockingly), others come from what *appear* to be “Christians” and so-called “Christian” churches. That is why Jesus called them “ravenous wolves in sheep’s clothing” (see Mat 7:15; cf. Act 20:28–30; 2Ti 4:3–4; 2Co 11:14–15). It is also written, “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (2Co 11:14–15).<sup>236</sup> It is these servants of Satan<sup>237</sup> who pretend to serve Christ, appearing (dressed up) as “Christian” ministers and pastors (or other men of God), but they are actually “of their father the devil” (Joh 8:44). These “wolves,” “vipers,” “false prophets,” “false teachers,” modern-day “Pharisees,” and “unprincipled men” appear in churches that seem to be Christian, and they may even use Jesus Christ in their names—but they are not of Christ.

Understand also that these “savage wolves” come in many shapes and sizes, from someone standing on the street corner to friendly, innocent-

<sup>232</sup> Again, verse references follow shortly.

<sup>233</sup> “Itching ears” (KJV).

<sup>234</sup> Note that these wolves, false teachers, and false prophets can lead you astray in other ways besides just teaching fake gospels, such as by wrongly teaching that “a Christian never sins” (see 1Jn 1:9; 2:1) or that immoral behaviors can be tolerated or allowed (e.g., see the warnings given in the Book of Revelation regarding the “Nicolaitans” and “Jezebel” [Rev 2:14–16, 20–24] and also the “ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness [immorality]” [Jud 4]).

<sup>235</sup> See the chapter “The New Testament Plan of Salvation” about being “destroyed [lost] for lack of knowledge.”

<sup>236</sup> Giving what appears to be biblical truth but isn’t.

<sup>237</sup> Again, whether they realize that they are a servant of Satan or not doesn’t change the fact that they are! See the prior footnote earlier in this chapter.

looking old ladies, to the casual hipster preacher, or even the powerful pastor, elder, or author of apparent authority behind the pulpit at a large and famous church, all dressed up in an expensive suit with lots of initials, abbreviations, and titles placed before and after their name—even having doctoral degrees in divinity! Some of the “wolves” are teaching wrongly out of “ignorance” (see Act 3:17; 1Ti 1:13; 2Ti 2:23; cf. Act 18:24–28), some are intentionally intending to “deceive” (see Rom 16:18; Eph 5:6; 2Ti 3:13; 1Jn 2:26; 2Th 2:3; Tit 1:10), and others are doing so “for the sake of sordid gain [filthy lucre KJV]” (Tit 1:10–14; cf. Rom 16:18; 1Ti 3:3; 3:8; 6:5; Tit 1:7; 1Pe 5:2; 2Pe 2:2–3, 14–15; Jud 11; Isa 56:11; Jer 6:13; 8:10; Mic 3:11). They use deception to deceive the unsaved masses into following worthless man-made religious rites, rules, rituals, false doctrines, traditions, and feel-good rubbish and nonsense that lead to eternal death instead of eternal life. I hope you are taking this warning seriously!

### WE ARE TO BE SHREWD (WISE)

Not only must one be born again according to the instructions given in NT Scripture, but even further, a newly born-again Christian <sup>238</sup> is still vulnerable to being preyed on by the “wolves.”<sup>239</sup> The Bible describes their false teachings as—

- “Snares” (see Rom 11:9; 1Ti 3:7; 6:9; 2Ti 2:26; cf. Psa 69:22; 91:3; 106:36; 119:110; 140:5; Pro 12:13; 14:27; 29:6; 18:7; Jer 18:22; Hos 5:1),
- “Traps” (see Mat 22:15; Mar 12:13; Luk 21:34; Rom 11:9; Jos 23:13; Job 18:10; Psa 69:22; 140:5; 141:9; 142:3; Jer 5:26),
- “Pitfalls [pits]” (see Psa 35:7; 119:85; Jer 18:22; Mat 15:14; Luk 6:39), and
- “Schemes” of man and the devil (2Co 2:11; Eph 6:11; cf. Rom 10:2; 16:18; Eph 5:6; 2Ti 3:13; Tit 1:10; Heb 2:1; 1Jn 2:26; 3:7; Jud 3; Rev 3:11; 12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:8; Hos 4:6)

—and they are set up to try to stop you (or turn you back, away from, or out of the faith) at each step of the way along the path to eternal life. They don’t stop even after you are born again. Jesus told the apostles to “be shrewd<sup>240</sup> as serpents and innocent as doves” (Mat 10:16; cf. Luk 10:3) as He sent them out to preach the Gospel, knowing they were going to face a veritable gauntlet of persecution, mistreatment, and even “false Christs.”

<sup>238</sup> See the chapter “Press On to Maturity.”

<sup>239</sup> Yes, even after being born again, you can still be “taken captive,” “bewitched,” and “hindered” (Col 2:8; Gal 3:1; 5:7).

<sup>240</sup> “Wise” (KJV). We are not to be shrewd in a crafty, cunning, and deceitful way but as in exercising sound judgment and wisdom, standing for the truth, and acting in purity and peace (1Co 14:20).

I believe an analogous situation applies to us today: We face a bewildering array of false teachings and fake gospels that are laid out in front of and all around us like a giant maze or minefield that we have to navigate if we want to find our way to eternal life.<sup>241</sup> We must, therefore, be wise in discerning what the true Gospel is that was given in Scripture. We must also not be “foolish” but rather be “mature in our thinking” and “filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” as we stand for the pure truth of Scripture (see Luk 16:8; 1Co 14:20; 2Co 11:3, 14; Eph 5:17; Col 1:9; 2Ti 2:15), so we are not—

- “Tricked” (see Luk 20:23; Eph 4:14),
- “Deceived” (see Mar 13:22; Rom 16:18; 2Co 11:3–4, 13–15; Gal 6:7; Eph 4:14; Col 2:4, 8; 2Th 2:3, 9–12; 1Ti 2:14; 4:1; 2Ti 3:13; Tit 1:10; Jas 1:16; 1Jn 2:26; 3:7; 2Jn 7; Rev 12:9; 13:13–14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3, 8–10; cf. Act 8:9–11),
- “Misled” (see Mat 24:4–5, 11, 24; Mar 13:5–6; Luk 21:8),
- “Led astray” (see Mar 13:22; 1Co 12:2; 1Ti 6:21; 2Ti 2:18; 2Pe 2:15; Rev 2:20; cf. Pro 12:26),
- “Enticed” (lured, seduced; see 2Pe 2:14, 18; cf. Jas 1:14),
- “Bewitched” (Gal 3:1; cf. Gal 1:6–9),
- “Deluded” (see Col 2:4; Jas 1:22),
- “Drawn away” (see Act 20:29–31),
- “Drift away” (see Heb 2:1),
- “Exploited” (see 2Pe 2:3),
- “Moved away” (Col 1:23),
- “Taken captive” (see Col 2:8),
- “Carried away” (Heb 13:9; 2Pe 3:17),
- “Tossed here and there” (Eph 4:14),
- “Turned away” (see 2Ti 4:3–4), or
- “Turned aside” (Rom 3:12; 1Ti 1:6; 5:15; 2Ti 4:3–4; cf. Act 1:25).

—from the pure Gospel truth into the false teachings and fake gospels of man!

Please understand that you *can*, in fact, have your “crown of life” (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10; cf. 2Ti 4:8; 1Pe 5:4; 1Th 2:19; Rev 3:11) “taken from you” (i.e., stolen by those who teach and preach wrongly; see Rev 3:11; cf. Hos 4:6; Rom 10:2).<sup>242</sup> We are told that “ignorance” of what God expects from

<sup>241</sup> *The Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan discusses the various trials, snares, traps, pitfalls, false teachings, wolves, and spiritual forces of evil that Christians face on their pilgrimage. It is well worth reading.

<sup>242</sup> How do you lose your crown? You do so by following the opinions, personal theology, fake gospels, schemes, and commandments of men so that you are no longer in obedience

those who **“CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD”** (see Act 2:21; 22:16; Rom 10:13; 1Co 1:2; cf. Gen 4:26; Isa 12:4; Psa 91:14–15; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17) will not be an excuse on Judgment Day (see 2Co 2:11; cf. Hos 4:6; Pro 1:22, 32; 14:15, 18; Rom 1:21; 16:18; Mat 15:14; Joh 4:23–24; 2Co 11:3; Col 2:8; Eph 5:15–17; 1Co 14:20; Jer 5:21; Mar 4:9; Rev 2:7; 3:6). I hope by now that you have noticed how we have had to fight off the false teachings of man from literally the very first verse of the first Book of the Bible (Genesis) to very nearly the last verse of the last Book of the Bible (Revelation). Amazing (Dan 7:15, 28; 8:27; Rev 10:10)!

## SOME POPULAR FALSE TEACHINGS

Some of the false teachings you will likely encounter (or have already encountered) because they are immensely popular today are:<sup>243</sup>

- X The “Sinner’s Prayer”:** Contrary to popular belief, you are neither born again nor saved to eternal life by saying a one-time “Sinner’s Prayer” that “invites Jesus into your heart”—a practice and prayer that is nowhere to be found in the entire Bible!<sup>244</sup> The “sinner’s prayer” is an example of a fake gospel (“[a different gospel . . . a gospel contrary to what you received](#)”), such as Paul warned about (see Gal 1:6–9).

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to the Gospel as given in Scripture (2Ti 4:3–4; Mat 15:9; 24:24; 1Ti 4:1–3; 2Co 11:3–5, 13–15; Gal 3:1–3; 4:9; 5:7–8; Eph 4:14; 2Th 2:9–12; 2Pe 2:18; Act 8:9–11; Rev 2:20; 13:13–14; 18:3–4; etc.). Sadly, most professing Christians refuse to believe that this could happen to *them* (that is, be deceived), and tragically, they will not realize that has occurred until Judgment Day. But that is what I am explaining to you in this chapter: It *can* happen if you are “**ignorant**” of what is written in Scripture by not spending enough time seriously reading, studying, and meditating (thinking on, contemplating deeply) the Word of God. Moreover, the “**ravenous wolves**” go out of their way to prevent you from reading the Word of God by hiding it from you so that you will be gullible, naïve, and easily deceived. Yes, you *can* be led to eternal destruction by these “**wolves**” and “**vipers**,” so “**be on guard**” (Act 20:28; 2Ti 4:15) and “**beware**” (Mat 7:15; 16:6; Php 3:2)! See the chapter “The New Testament Plan of Salvation” about being “**destroyed [lost] for lack of knowledge.**”

<sup>243</sup> You will also notice that false teachings often travel as a pack, like the “**wolves**” who teach them—where you find one false teaching, you will almost always find others along with it from the same church, sect, group, or denomination.

<sup>244</sup> The basis for the “Sinner’s Prayer” false teaching seems to come from misinterpreting Romans 10:9–10, 13. The “**wolves**” take that verse in *isolation* while completely ignoring other instructions given in Scripture regarding how we are saved, and they also take it to literally just mean speaking the name of Jesus (i.e., saying a prayer to be saved). However, “**CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD**” actually entails much more than that. It means to obey *all of* God’s instructions and commandments on how we are to be born again (hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized by immersion) and also on how we are to live our lives subsequently (obedience, works, perseverance), for “**the sum**” (Psa 119:160) of Scripture is truth—as I have been explaining to you throughout this book.

- x You Are Saved by “Faith Alone”:** This false teaching denies that works play any part whatsoever in the plan of salvation. This fake gospel is rampant today—being taught, preached, and shilled from nearly every so-called “Reformed” Protestant church, pulpit, seminary school, book, and movie—but it is not in agreement with the Word of God. Scripture makes it clear that works of faith done in obedience to the commandments of Christ (and the instructions of His apostles) contribute to and can affect your justification before God (Jas 2:14–26; cf. Mat 7:21; Joh 14:15; Jon 3:10).<sup>245</sup>
- x Baptism-Related False Teachings (there are several):**
- x** Some claim that baptism is a “good work of man” merely performed out of “obedience as an outward sign of inner faith”—not “**for the forgiveness of your sins**” as stated in Scripture (see Act 2:38; 8:36–39; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16; Mar 16:16; Joh 3:3–5; Gal 3:27; 1Pe 3:21; Rom 6:3–10; 1Co 6:11; 12:13; Col 2:12; Tit 3:5–7; 1Jn 5:6; Eph 5:26; cf. Isa 1:18; Jer 31:34; Psa 103:12). Therefore, these false teachers almost always also wrongly claim that baptism is not required for salvation.<sup>246</sup>
- x** Waiting days, weeks, months, or longer to be baptized, as is common in the “faith *alone*” churches (instead, see Act 8:36; 10:47; 16:33; 22:16).<sup>247</sup>
- x** Being baptized by man-invented baptismal rites that are not in agreement with Scripture (such as by sprinkling or as an infant) instead of by immersion as instructed in Scripture. There is only “**one faith, [and] one baptism**” (Eph 4:4–5; cf. 1Co 10:16–17)—not many different types and ways to be baptized conjured up by man.
- x** Thinking one is born again before being baptized; this false teaching usually accompanies the “sinner’s prayer” and “saved by faith *alone*” false teachings. However, Scripture is clear that you are not born again until you are properly baptized, at which time you also “**receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**” (see Act 2:38; 10:45; 15:8).<sup>248</sup>
- x “Once Saved, Always Saved” (OSAS):** This false teaching (also known as “Perseverance of the Saints”) claims that one cannot lose

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<sup>245</sup> See the chapter “The Role of Works” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>246</sup> See the “Important Note On Baptism” in the chapter “What Happens at Baptism.”

<sup>247</sup> Please note that every example in Scripture shows the new believer being baptized *immediately* after hearing the Gospel message and professing faith in Christ (Act 8:36; 10:47; 16:33; 22:16)—not days, weeks, months, or even years later as is common today in many “lukewarm” (Rev 3:16), apostate churches.

<sup>248</sup> See the chapter “What Happens at Baptism” for more information.

one's salvation after being born again, regardless of how one lives or acts subsequently. This false teaching usually accompanies all of the above false teachings.<sup>249</sup>

- X Dogmas of Men:** You follow the doctrines of men, committees, councils, synods, and institutions (e.g., Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, Calvinism, Adventism, Methodism, Lutheranism, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.), instead of the Gospel of God as given in Scripture (Jud 3).<sup>250</sup>
- X Returning to Legalism:** You return to seeking to be justified by observance of the Mosaic Law (e.g., Sabbath keeping, Adventism, etc.), thereby "**severing yourself from Christ**" (paraphrase, Gal 5:4; cf. Gal 1:6–9; 3:1–3; 5:3; Jas 2:10; Rom 10:4; Col 2:14).
- X Dispensational Premillennialism:** This false teaching<sup>251</sup> views most end-times Bible prophecy (eschatology), especially from the Book of Revelation, from a futurist perspective, meaning that fulfillment is still in our future.<sup>252</sup> It also views the Book of Revelation literally. Proponents of this false teaching claim that Christ will come to rule and reign on the earth with a rebuilt "Third Temple" (with resumed sacrifices) for a literal "thousand years" (i.e., a millennial) reign. They

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<sup>249</sup> See the chapters "Press On to Maturity" herein and "Persevere in Faith" in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

<sup>250</sup> The dogma of Calvinism is not in agreement with Scripture, and in fact, every one of the so-called "five pillars" of Calvinism is contrary to what is stated in Scripture! According to Calvinism, we are all mindless robots with no choice in the matter of our salvation whatsoever, as God has already "predestined" some people to be saved and the rest to be lost—even before the world began. That is not what Scripture teaches (e.g., Jos 24:15; cf. Rev 22:11, 17; Pro 1:29; Joh 6:67–68). If Calvinism were true, the Calvinist churches could simply play reruns of *Gilligan's Island* (or anything really) at their church services because nothing they say or do can affect anyone's salvation anyway. They could also stop soliciting donations because God has already predetermined everything before the world began, so there really is no need for them to raise money to do anything. Even further, Calvinist proponents seem to be completely unaware that their predestination doctrine actually nullifies what Christ did on the cross. Think about it: If God had already predetermined everyone's fate before the world began, then why would Christ have needed to die on the cross? Just say no to the *robot religion* of Calvinism! Simply put, if you follow Calvin, you are a Calvinist; if you follow Christ, you are a Christian.

<sup>251</sup> Dispensational premillennialism is actually a whole bunch of false teachings and fake prophecies all jumbled together into a giant web of deception.

<sup>252</sup> By the way, it is self-centered and narcissistic to think all Bible prophecy in the Book of Revelation only applies to us today and our future. It shows a complete lack of understanding of what the early Church had to endure, suffering terrible persecution at the hands of Rome Pagan as well as Rome Papal for nearly one thousand five hundred years! Reading books on early Church history is strongly recommended. See the chapter "Helpful Resources."



further claim that the Church age will have ended (the Church will have been “raptured” off the earth—the “Secret Rapture” false teaching). They still further claim this millennial reign will start after some specific nationalistic, economic, and political “The Antichrist”<sup>253</sup> person rises to worldwide power and control and torments the world in a “seven-year great tribulation period,” followed by a literal “Battle of Armageddon” on earth (yes, those are still yet five more false teachings—astounding!).<sup>254, 255</sup>

## EVEN MORE FALSE TEACHINGS

Some additional false teachings you will likely encounter are listed below:<sup>256, 257</sup>

- The theory of evolution (secular)
- Satan (the devil) is just a myth
- Annihilation after death
- “Soul sleeping”
- Hell isn’t real
- The doctrine of “original sin”
- Abstaining from certain foods
- Predestination (God chose only some to be saved before the world began)
- So-called “Reformed” Protestantism
- Dispensational postmillennialism
- Distortions of Matthew 24 (thinking verses 4–35 apply to the future)
- Nearly all modern (popular) eschatology (end-times prophecy)
- Bizarre interpretations of “the mark of the beast” (related to 666)
- You get a second chance after death
- The “KJV only” Bible movement
- Demonic possession today
- Touching vipers (snakes)
- Speaking in tongues today
- Miracle healers today
- The Prosperity Gospel
- A “second filling” of the Holy Spirit
- Feet washing
- Denominationalism
- Jesus already returned in AD 70 (Radical Preterism, the “AD 70 Theory”)
- There will be mystical signs and wonders in the skies before and predicting Christ’s return (e.g., blood moons, etc.)

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<sup>253</sup> There is no single “The Antichrist” political, economic, or nationalistic person called out in Scripture. Furthermore, the word *antichrist* doesn’t even appear in the Book of Revelation. There are actually many antichrists, and the word *antichrist* means just what it says: Anyone set against or opposed to Christ.

<sup>254</sup> See also Wayne Jackson, *Premillennialism: A System of Infidelity* (Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 1989) and Wayne Jackson, “Examining Premillennialism,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/examining-premillennialism>.

<sup>255</sup> You might wonder why I’m calling out this false teaching since it doesn’t seem related to salvation, but false prophecies like these pose a risk to your salvation as they can create complacency and procrastination. They can also affect others around you who do not yet know Christ by causing them to put off taking the Gospel seriously and with urgency because they may wait to see these false prophecies unfold. See the section “The World in Awful Sleep” in the chapter “The Gospel of the Grace of God.”

<sup>256</sup> False teachings seem to get resurrected from time to time and given a new name and a shiny coat of paint to deceive the naïve and unsuspecting (Ecc 1:9).

<sup>257</sup> See our book *The Message of Truth* and our Gospel website (<https://eachday.org>) for more information on these (and other) false teachings.

- The two witnesses of Revelation
- Thinking that all Bible prophecy must be literally fulfilled
- The “one true end-times church”
- Universalism
- Ecumenism
- Twelve-step recovery programs (they deny God and are not Christian)
- A Christian never sins
- The “Nicene Creed” (specifically, the eternal Sonship dogma)
- Wrongly interpreting symbolic or figurative Bible language literally
- Aliens and the Nephilim
- Churches that deny Christ’s deity
- Setting dates for Jesus’ return
- Lucifer as the devil
- Adventism masquerading as Christianity
- Mormonism masquerading as Christianity
- Calvinism masquerading as Christianity
- Roman Catholicism masquerading as Christianity

I encountered many of these false teachings (both secular and “Christian”) as I began my own journey, and sadly, the above is just a partial list!

### TEST YOURSELVES TO SEE IF YOU ARE IN THE FAITH; EXAMINE YOURSELVES!

Please don’t just take my word for it; you must do your own homework through serious and rigorous Bible study to confirm that what I’m writing to you in this book is true. It took me nearly three years of serious study to sort through all of these false teachings myself; perhaps you will do it much faster than I did, but that gives you some indication of the amount of time and effort that will be involved if you truly want to find truth and break free from all of them (if you have already succumbed to many of them, as I had). You will have to decide for yourself how much you desire truth and how much time and effort you are willing to put in to find it so you can truly worship the Lord “[in spirit and truth](#)” ([Joh 4:23–24](#); cf. [Psa 145:18](#); [Jud 3](#)).<sup>258</sup> You must really, *really*, **REALLY** want to know and understand God’s truth (not man’s truth; see [Rom 3:4](#)) as if your eternal soul depends on it—which it does ([Mat 7:7–8](#); [Jas 1:5–6](#); cf. [1Co 2:14](#))!

As mentioned, it is not easy to find and then “[continue in](#)” (remain in, stay in; [Col 1:23](#)) the truth. You must “[press on to maturity](#)” ([Heb 6:1](#); cf. [Heb 5:11–14](#); [1Co 14:20](#); [Eph 4:11–16](#))<sup>259</sup> in faith while also continually “[growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ](#)”

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<sup>258</sup> One reason it takes so long to see through all the false teachings is due to the fact that they are often interwoven, interconnected, interrelated, tangled up, and jumbled into a giant knot, ball, and web of deception. One false teaching is used to justify the next, and on and on it goes until you are so far away from the actual truth of Scripture that you can no longer even recognize it! It really can take a *lot* of study and effort to untangle them all, and you must really want the truth—God’s truth—with all your heart, soul, and mind!

<sup>259</sup> See the chapters “Press On to Maturity” and “Reading and Studying the Bible.”

(2Pe 3:18). You need to do that so you are not “tricked,” “deceived,” or “led astray” by the false teachings of man by being “naïve,” gullible, or “ignorant,” either of “the snare [wiles] of the devil” (2Ti 2:26; cf. 2Co 2:11; Eph 6:11; Mat 10:16) or of what is actually written in Scripture. You must know Scripture better than the “wolves” who are trying to mislead you!

To those who profess faith in Christ, if you have any doubt that you are obedient to the true and correct Gospel as it was given in Scripture (Jud 3) or that you have been properly born again according to the instructions given in NT Scripture, it would be eternally wise to recheck your understanding of what Scripture actually teaches (which this book has correctly explained to you) to ensure your eternal salvation (2Co 13:5; Jud 3; Gal 1:6–9; 2Ti 4:3–4). I hope you take the warnings I have given you in this chapter seriously. I’ve done all I can possibly do to warn and prepare you about false teachings and fake gospels (Act 20:26–31).

*Father in heaven, hallowed be Your great name. Thank You for the gift of Jesus on the cross and for Your amazing love, mercy, grace, kindness, compassion, and patience with me while I was a rebel and also while I was trying to find the truth—Your truth, not man’s opinions. Father, I pray that those who are reading this book, and this chapter in particular, will reexamine any beliefs they hold that are not in accord with the simple and clear instructions You have given us in Scripture as to what we must do to be saved and to worship You in spirit and truth. I pray that You will give them wisdom, guidance, and understanding so they can hear and see the pure and simple truth of the Gospel as it was delivered to the saints. I pray that anyone who has been deceived by the false teachings and fake gospels of man may awaken from their slumber, as You have warned us in advance that ravenous wolves and false prophets have gone out into the world and that we must be on the alert. It is only by Your amazing grace and the blood of Christ that I approach Your throne and make this petition. May this prayer find favor in Your sight. Amen.*

## AN EXAMPLE OF FALSE TEACHINGS

(Fake Gospels Can Be Hard to Spot)

*I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him  
who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;  
which is really not another ... – Galatians 1:6–9*

I would like to give you an example of how false teachings and fake gospels can show up in the real world. They are cleverly disguised and not easy to spot; you must know the Gospel extremely well yourself so you are not “tricked” or “deceived.”<sup>260</sup> Jason Jackson writes about receiving a “Christian” tract being handed out. Upon examining it, he writes:<sup>261</sup>

Two ladies walked up the driveway. They handed me a small, tri-folded brochure that contained the service times of their church group. It advertised the religious group as being “independent of any denomination, Bible-based in every part of ministry, soul-winning and missions minded, and distinctively Christian.” The tract claimed that the religious body is “an old fashioned, independent, Baptist Church that believes, preaches, and practices the Bible.”

Their claims to being Bible-based, however, are negated in that section of the tract titled, “How to have a home in Heaven.” Four points are designed that, supposedly, guide one to salvation. Unfortunately, the teaching is hardly “independent of any denomination ... and distinctively Christian.”

Some may object to this review, saying that it is neither friendly nor loving. But Paul asked on one occasion, “So then am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16 [RV]).

The loving thing to do is to tell the truth. We must not judge people superficially or hypocritically (Mt. 7:1), but we are required by God to evaluate what we hear, “handling aright the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15 [ASV]). The truth will set us free; error will cause us to be lost (Jn. 8:32; 2 Tim. 2:18).

So what does the tract say about “How to have a home in Heaven”? Here are the points and scriptures that are discussed—just as they appear in the tract.

1. All have sinned. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23 [KJV]).

2. The penalty for sin is death and hell. “For the wages of sin is death ...” [Rom. 6:23 ASV] “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Rev. 20:14 [KJV]).

<sup>260</sup> See the chapter “Beware the Wolves” for verse references.

<sup>261</sup> Jason Jackson, “How to Go to Heaven—Sincere, but Wrong,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/how-to-go-to-heaven-sincere-but-wrong>.

3. Jesus died to pay for our sins. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8 [KJV]).

4. Trust Jesus as your Savior and your only hope for Heaven. “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9 [KJV]). “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

After making these four points, the following conclusion was given:

“Pray a simple prayer to God, from your heart, such as the following: ‘Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. If I were to die today, I would deserve to go to hell to pay for my sins. I believe that you came to earth, lived a perfect life, and died on a cross to pay for my sins. I believe that you arose from the grave, and I ask you to forgive my sins. I am trusting only You to take me to heaven. Thank you for saving me, Jesus. Amen.’”<sup>262</sup>

### **A Kindly Response**

Like the Bereans of Acts 17:11, let us examine the Scriptures to see whether these things are so.

1. While allegedly pointing people to heaven, there is nothing said about repentance. But Jesus said, “Except you repent you shall all likewise perish” ([see] Lk. 13:3 [KJV]). And Paul declared that God commands men everywhere to repent. (Acts 17:30). If God commands it, can we ignore it, and still be faithful teachers of his Word?

2. There is no mention of baptism in this section. But Paul was urged to arise, be baptized, and wash away his sins, “calling on his name” ([see] Acts 22:16). Peter preached, “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto [to obtain] the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:38 [ASV]). The apostles taught that baptism is essential for salvation because Jesus had said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk. 16:16 [NKJV]). Can we teach less than what Jesus taught?

3. There is not a single example in the New Testament where the non-Christian was instructed to pray for salvation. There are many examples, however, when believers were baptized for the forgiveness of sins.

Error is often mixed with truth. The devil himself quoted the Scriptures (cf. Mt. 4:6). There are a number of truths within this tract. Every verse is true, because they are quotations from the Bible. But one must consider all that the Bible says about salvation if he is going to obtain a home in heaven.

“The sum of thy word is truth; And every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth for ever” (Psa. 119:160 [ASV]).

<sup>262</sup> This is an example of a “sinner’s prayer,” which I have been warning you about throughout this book.

As you can see, the tract was full of false teachings despite being from a well-meaning, “independent of any denomination, Bible-based in every part of ministry, soul-winning and missions minded, and distinctively Christian” church (their very own words). Unfortunately, false teachings won’t be clearly labeled as such for you when you encounter them in the real world. They are cleverly disguised by mixing some Bible verses in with what appears to be very biblically sounding language.<sup>263</sup> It can be very hard to spot false teachings, especially for the new Christian.<sup>264</sup> Indeed, the tract appears to be very biblical on the surface, but in fact, it is not in agreement with what is taught in Scripture, as you should now know after reading this book.

And finally, in my experience, and as mentioned in the prior chapter, false teachings, like the “wolves” who teach them, tend to travel in packs. Whenever you see one false teaching, you will almost always find additional false teachings from that same group or church. For instance, where you find the (1) “sinner’s prayer” false teaching (as this tract contained), you will almost always find additional false teachings as well, such as: (2) you are saved by “faith alone”; (3) baptism is a good work of man; and (4) “once saved, always saved.” This goes for Bible prophecy as well. Whenever a group or church teaches the Gospel incorrectly, they will almost always have false Bible prophecy (particularly end-times prophecy). The converse is also true: Wherever a group or church teaches false end-times Bible prophecy, they will almost never teach the true and correct Gospel.

I hope you have seen the daunting task you will face in seeking scriptural truth instead of man-made opinions, “traditions,” schemes, false teachings, and fake gospels. I had to sort through nearly fifty false teachings myself (many of which I have identified for you in this book) in order to find the true and correct Gospel, “which was once for all handed down to the saints” in Scripture (Jud 3). Yes, the “wolves” had also deceived me for many years.<sup>265</sup> So please don’t just blindly believe whatever you hear being taught or preached as actual biblical truth (by me or anyone else) without fully checking it against Scripture for yourself (Act 17:11).<sup>266</sup> Amen.

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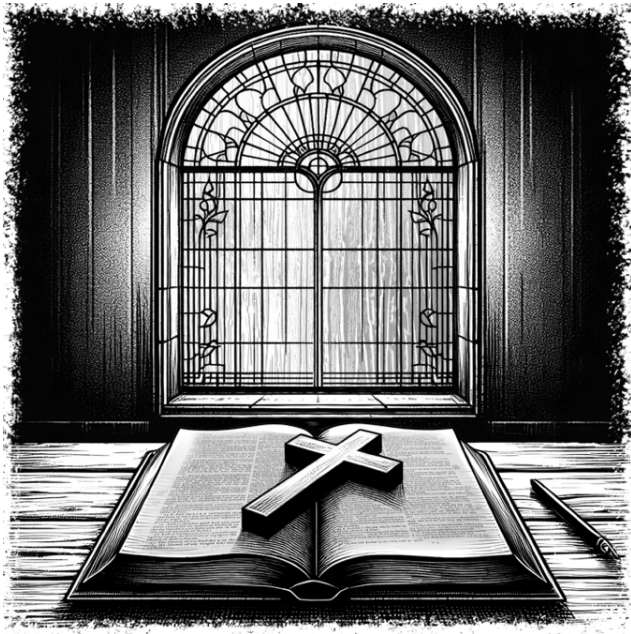
<sup>263</sup> Also, don’t be tricked by the fancy theological-sounding words that the “wolves” like to use either. For example, they shout that they rely on *sola scriptura*, indicating that they mean the Bible is complete, true, and the final authority on all matters. While that in and of itself is correct, good, and noble, saying such does nothing whatsoever to prevent them from misinterpreting Scripture! I’ve actually found that it is the “wolves” themselves who shout “*sola scriptura*” the loudest!

<sup>264</sup> See the chapter “Press On to Maturity.”

<sup>265</sup> See the chapter “Beware the Wolves.”

<sup>266</sup> See the chapter “Being a Berean” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God* for more information.

# CLOSING ITEMS



## CHOOSING A BIBLE

(The Word of God)

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

There are many wonderful English-language Bible translations available today. However, one must choose a Bible with the utmost care, as some translations water down Christ's deity or make other liberal concessions to the truth of God's Word.

### BIBLE TYPES

There are several types of Bibles to choose from:

1. Compact (easy-to-carry) Bibles
2. Regular (for lack of a better word) Bibles
3. Reference Bibles
4. Study Bibles
5. Life Application Study Bibles
6. Journaling Bibles
7. Specialty Bibles (e.g., women's, men's, teen, prophecy, recovery, etc.)

I've found that starting with a study Bible is best. As you mature in your faith, a reference Bible may then be preferred. I've also found that specialty Bibles have more chances for publishers and editors to introduce their own theologies, doctrines, opinions, and false teachings, so extreme caution is warranted with them.

### ORIGINAL LANGUAGES

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic, and the New Testament was written in Greek. It was typically written on animal skin or parchment scrolls. Scribes then meticulously preserved the writings over centuries, and the accuracy across all of the earliest-known versions of the Bible is stunning. The Bible is inerrant in these original language manuscripts as written by the inspired writers (2Ti 3:16–17; 2Pe 1:20–21; cf. Rom 15:4; Luk 1:70; 1Pe 1:11–12).

### TRANSLATION TYPES

Understand that no translation of man is perfect (i.e., inerrant), as every translation by a person or committee involves choices in wording and phraseology about how best to render the original words in the new language; sometimes, there is no exact, one-to-one correspondence in the



new language. There are three primary methods used when doing language translations:

1. **Literal (Formal Equivalence):** The translator tries to perform a word-for-word translation (e.g., KJV, ASV, ESV, NKJV, NASB). The majority opinion, which I agree with, is that literal translations produce the most accurate results.
2. **Dynamic Equivalence:** Uses a thought-for-thought method of translation (e.g., NIV, TEV/GNB).
3. **Paraphrase:** The translator rewrites/rewords the original manuscript (e.g., NLT, MSG, TLB). In these translations, you are not reading the original Scripture—you are reading what the interpreters *thought* the verses were saying. Therefore, this translation method is open to abuse (even unintentionally) and allows the translator, editor, or publisher to insert their own opinions and theology. Danger! Be very wary of these types of Bibles.

## LIST OF TRANSLATIONS

The translations that I think stay closest to the original manuscripts are as follows:

1. New American Standard Bible (NASB)<sup>267</sup>
2. New King James Version (NKJV)
3. English Standard Version (ESV)
4. American Standard Version (ASV)
5. King James Version (KJV)<sup>268</sup>

Additional translations I've found to be helpful at times when comparing multiple translations side by side are as follows:<sup>269</sup>

6. Geneva Bible (GNV)
7. Green's Literal Translation (LITV)
8. Young's Literal Translation (YLT)
9. English Revised Version (ERV or RV)

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<sup>267</sup> I use the NASB 1995 as my primary Bible.

<sup>268</sup> You will hear "KJV only" zealots irrationally claim the 1611 KJV translation is the only correct English Bible ever published (KJV Onlyism). This false teaching is shouted in ferocious volume to scare you, even being so bold to claim you will go to hell if you use any other translation. That assertion is complete rubbish and nonsense. Even the 1611 KJV translation has well-documented cases in which the translators made unfortunate word choices. While the 1611 KJV is certainly a good and regal translation (one of the better ones), it is just one of several that you should be comparing. See also the chapter "Beware the Wolves."

<sup>269</sup> Bible apps for phones now allow you to carry multiple translations with you at all times and facilitate study through quick and easy word or verse lookups and cross-referencing.

10. Revised Standard Version (RSV)
11. Amplified Bible (AMP or AMPC)

Translations I use sparingly and with caution:<sup>270</sup>

12. New International Version (NIV)
13. New Living Translation (NLT)
14. New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
15. International Standard Version (ISV)
16. Contemporary English Version (CEV)

I recommend comparing several translations side by side whenever you read and study Scripture. Doing so helps weed out any idiosyncrasies or poor wording choices in any one translation; furthermore, doing this can also sometimes help you see the original intent of the verse(s) more clearly. You can also check if the divinity of God, Jesus, or “[the blood of Christ](#)” ([Eph 2:13](#), [1Pe 1:19](#); [1Co 10:16](#)) has been diminished in any translation, which is the greatest concern.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources are also helpful to the serious Bible student:

- Commentaries: It is prudent to learn from the saints who have come before us ([Pro 11:14](#); [27:17](#); [Ecc 4:9](#)). In particular, I’ve found the commentaries by Matthew Henry, Christian Courier (Wayne and Jason Jackson), J. W. McGarvey, Gospel Advocate (multiple authors), and Adam Clarke to be helpful.
- Dictionaries: English language and Bible dictionaries can help with understanding unfamiliar words and biblical terms.
- Concordance: A cross-reference index of words and verses.
- Biblical maps: These can help you understand the geography and land of Jesus’ time and the apostles’ missionary journeys.

### A NOTE OF CAUTION

When reading any Bible or commentary, be wary of any words that have been added by man. While such notes can be helpful at times, they are neither inspired nor inerrant and must be examined carefully. These include section/chapter headings, study notes, and words added inline to verses (e.g., AMP). These words only represent the opinions (and doctrine) of the men/publishers who have added them. This warning also applies to added pictures or illustrations, for they convey an artist’s

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<sup>270</sup> There are many other English Bible translations available today that I have not listed, with new ones being added seemingly every year; however, I would place most of them in the “use with caution” category.

interpretation and can be misleading. Even verse numbers, while helpful, were added by man—the original language manuscripts did not contain them. This warning strongly applies to any notes, commentaries, and chapter headlines dealing with Bible prophecy and eschatology (end-times matters) published after the late 1800s, for they are badly corrupted today, being nearly all infected with the dispensational premillennialism false teaching.

And lastly, the canon of Scripture was closed up, complete, and final (“[when the perfect comes](#),” [1Co 13:9–10](#)) for all time, sealed with the Book of Revelation. Said differently, “[the perfect](#)” means God’s complete will and plan for humanity has now been fully revealed to us in the sixty-six books of the Bible. Therefore, we are not to expect any further inspiration or prophecies from God, and any person, group, church, sect, denomination, or organization claiming to have so-called “newly inspired” books or “special or private revelations” from God is contrary to Scripture.

## READING AND STUDYING THE BIBLE

(The Sword of the Spirit)

*“It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’” – Matthew 4:4*

We are told, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you” (Col 3:16). We do so by reading, studying, “meditating”<sup>271</sup> on (Psa 1:2), and “examining the Scriptures daily” (Act 17:11; cf. Mat 4:4; Psa 1:2; 119:11, 33–35, 105, 160; Joh 5:39–40; Rom 15:4; 1Co 3:2; Col 3:16; 1Ti 4:6; 2Ti 2:15; 3:16–17; Heb 4:12–13; 5:11–14; 6:1–2; 1Pe 2:2; 2Pe 3:18).<sup>272</sup> It is through “the word of God” (Act 4:31; 6:7; 8:14; 11:1; etc.), which is “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph 6:17; cf. Luk 2:35; Heb 4:12; Rev 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21), that God has revealed Himself,<sup>273</sup> “His will” (Joh 7:17; 9:31; Eph 1:9; Col 1:9; Heb 13:21; 1Jn 5:14; cf. Luk 22:42), and His plan for humanity to us, and unless one is well-versed in the Word of God and knows how to properly interpret it, trusting in and obeying the Lord will be more difficult.

You must know Scripture better than Satan and the “wolves,” “vipers,” “false prophets,” “false teachers,” and modern-day “Pharisees,” lest you be “tricked” or “deceived” out of your “crown of life” by following “a different gospel ... a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you”—that is, the false teachings and “fake gospels” (paraphrase) of man.<sup>274</sup> How is one not deceived? It is by being diligent to continually “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18; cf. Col 1:9–12; Heb 6:1; Php 3:12–14), “make your calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10 KJV), “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Php 2:12), “test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves” (2Co 13:5), and “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” in NT Scripture (Jud 3; cf. Col 1:23). And that requires hard work and determination on your part.

I’ve found that if I am not spending enough time in the Word of God (i.e., each day), anxiety, worries, doubts, and fears can begin to arise. You should also be memorizing Scripture (storing it in you) during the good (easy) times so you have it available to you at the ready when hard times come, when you need to teach the Gospel to others, and when you need to fend off the “fiery darts” (Eph 6:16 KJV; also “flaming arrows,” NASB) of

<sup>271</sup> Think on, contemplate deeply, and pray over.

<sup>272</sup> Additional verses to consider: Deu 6:6–9; Ezr 7:10; Isa 28:9–10, 13; Job 23:12; Psa 19:8; 24:4–5; 27:11; 43:3; 86:11; 143:8, 10; Pro 6:23.

<sup>273</sup> Also, through His Son, Jesus Christ (Heb 1:2), and we have Jesus’ words recorded in Scripture.

<sup>274</sup> See the chapter “Beware the Wolves” for verse references.

the devil. Your “**sword of the Spirit**” should be a “**sharp two-edged sword**” (Rev 1:16; 2:12; cf. Heb 4:12), not a dull kitchen butter knife.

Here are some notes to guide you:

1. Don't ignore the Old Testament (OT); it is not “obsolete,” as some claim. It helps explain why we are where we are today, the need for Jesus, the nature of God, and so on, for “**Jesus Christ [God] is the same yesterday and today and forever**” (Heb 13:8; cf. Jas 1:17). The OT also gives context and understanding to the NT; you cannot ignore either one. We see Jesus using OT Scripture to explain “**the things concerning Himself**” (see Luk 24:27; Joh 5:39, 46; cf. Joh 7:52). Moreover, the NT quotes from the OT approximately nine hundred times, underscoring the need for modern-day saints to read and understand what is written in it (Act 8:32–35; Mar 12:10; cf. Rom 15:4).<sup>275</sup>
2. If you fail to eat the Word of God “**daily**” (read, study, meditate on; see Act 17:11; Mat 4:4; Psa 1:2), it may seem like God has drifted far away from you, but in fact, it is you who have started to drift away from Him (Jas 4:8; Heb 4:16; 7:19, 25; 10:22; Psa 145:18). This is because your new “**born again**” (Joh 3:3–8; 1Pe 1:3, 23) spirit actually feeds on “**the word of God**” (Eph 6:17; Php 1:14; Col 1:25; cf. Joh 4:32); as “**it is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD’**” (Mat 4:4). Just as your fleshly body needs food to live, so too your new spirit needs to be fed “**the word of God.**”
3. Furthermore, if you do not consistently read, study, and meditate on the Word, you will likely “**fall away**” from the faith, back toward sin and the world. This risk is very real—it happened to me once. Do not be deceived by the “once saved, always saved” false teaching of man; you can indeed “**fall away**” from the faith even after being born again (see Mat 13:21; 24:10; 26:31, 33; Mar 4:17; 14:27, 29; Luk 8:13; 1Ti 4:1; Heb 3:12; 6:6; 2Pe 3:17).<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Most books have a built-in reading plan, and the Bible is no different. In fact, one of the best (and simplest) “reading plans” for the Bible is this: Start in Genesis 1 and continue until Revelation 22. You could also add reading one chapter from the Books of Psalms and Proverbs each day if you want. There, I've just saved you countless hours trying to find (and remember) the perfect reading plan. Moreover, you wouldn't buy a romance novel or thriller and then pick it up and start reading it randomly in the middle, would you? I didn't think so. Yet some think this is okay to do with the Bible and that God will lead them to open it randomly on the exact right page. While I have seen that happen occasionally, it's not generally how Bible study works.

<sup>276</sup> See the chapters “Press On to Maturity” herein and “Persevere in Faith” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

4. When studying particular verses:
  - a. Look up the cited verse(s) and then first expand outward to identify and understand the context. Failure to do this leads to false teachings.
  - b. Determine the type of language that is being used: Literal, figurative or symbolic (e.g., similes, metaphors, parables), poetic, or even a combination. A major source of error comes from forcing literal interpretations of symbolic passages.
  - c. As mentioned prior, it is wise to compare several translations side-by-side to weed out any particular translation idiosyncrasies.
  - d. Use a Bible dictionary and thesaurus to understand unfamiliar words.
  - e. Use cross-references and concordances to read and study related verses.
  - f. Read what other learned saints (and martyrs) who have come before us have written (i.e., commentaries; [Pro 11:14](#); [27:17](#)).
  - g. Pray and humbly “ask of God” for His “wisdom” and understanding ([Jas 1:5](#); cf. [Eph 6:18](#))<sup>277</sup> and then “meditate” on (contemplate, pray over) the verses (see [Psa 1:2](#)).<sup>278</sup>
5. It is often said, “The Bible is hard to understand.” While I agree that Scripture can be “hard to understand” in places ([2Pe 3:16](#)), realize that it was meant to be that way, for you must desire and want to dig into and understand it “WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH” ([Mar 12:30](#); cf. [Mat 22:37](#); [Jer 29:13](#); [Luk 10:27](#); [11:9–10](#); [Act 8:37](#)).<sup>279, 280</sup>
6. Correct doctrine can only be attained by harmonizing all of what Scripture says on any particular topic (“the sum,” [Psa 119:160](#); cf. [2Ti 3:16–17](#)). You build biblical truth by having interpretations that are in agreement with all of Scripture, not just some specific verses you’ve chosen and happen to favor while ignoring other verses (or entire books) that you don’t understand or just don’t like. Many false teachings arise when some verses are picked and interpretations made of those specific

<sup>277</sup> See the chapter “The Wisdom of God” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>278</sup> See the chapter “Understanding Prayer” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>279</sup> One must want truth and godly wisdom more than “silver” or “fine gold” (see [Pro 3:13–18](#); [4:1–27](#); [Psa 119:127](#); cf. [Mat 4:4](#); [Psa 1:2](#)).

<sup>280</sup> I’d like to add an observation here: We’ve all seen many thousands (and hundreds of thousands) of people standing or sitting out in the freezing cold, rain, snow, and blizzards on hard metal benches for hours on end to watch their favorite sports team; for example, the Ice Bowl (played on December 31, 1967, at Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin) had a temperature of  $-13^{\circ}\text{F}$  with a wind chill of  $-48^{\circ}\text{F}$ . Yet I wonder, how many would endure the same conditions to hear the Word of God preached for three hours? Now, I must admit that I’d be hard-pressed to do so in those conditions, but you get the point I’m trying to make. See also [Act 20:7–10](#); [1Ki 10:1–10](#).

verses in isolation while others are conveniently ignored because they don't fit with one's preferred theology. One of the most basic principles of Bible study is that if your interpretation and understanding of a verse cause a conflict or disagreement with other simple, clear, literal, and well-understood verses, then your understanding and interpretation are wrong—for Scripture never contradicts itself. Said another way, if your belief, theology, doctrine, or dogma causes Scripture to contradict itself, it is not Scripture that is wrong; it is your own belief, theology, doctrine, or dogma that is wrong.<sup>281</sup>

7. You almost certainly will *not* understand all of what is written in Scripture, especially at first, but if you continue to diligently and consistently seek, study, and meditate on His Word, you will see that God will lead you into truth (Joh 15:26; 16:7, 13; cf. 1Co 2:14),<sup>282</sup> perhaps quickly or perhaps slowly over time, all according to His timing. I've found that God often reveals His Word to me gradually and progressively. Ask Him to open your eyes, ears, and heart to hear His truth and grant you His wisdom (Jas 1:5; Col 1:9; Eph 6:18) and then press forward in “full assurance” (see Heb 3:14; 6:11; 10:22; 11:1; cf. Rom 4:16–21) of His promises, as we remember that “**God is not a man, that He should lie**” (Num 23:19; cf. Rom 3:4; Tit 1:2; Heb 6:18; Jas 1:17) and that every single syllable and word of Scripture is there for a reason and will come true (Isa 40:8; 45:23; 55:11; Num 23:19; Psa 89:34; 119:89–91; Mat 5:18; 24:35; Joh 10:35; Pro 30:5; 1Pe 1:23–25; Hab 2:3; Luk 16:17; 21:33; Lam 2:17; 1Th 2:13; Rom 11:29; cf. 2Pe 1:20–21; 2Ti 3:16–17; Heb 4:13). God's Word will never return void (Isa 55:11; 45:23; cf. 2Ti 3:16–17; Heb 4:12)! It will always accomplish what it set out to do, even if it may appear idle or that it won't, even if it takes a long time (Hab 2:2–3).
8. If at first you do not receive wisdom, pray again with persistence—keep asking reverently of God. This lesson is given to us in the parable of the unjust judge (Luk 18:1–8). We are to be persistent in our prayer

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<sup>281</sup> One must also be a careful reader of Scripture, not reading into it things (or words) that are not there.

<sup>282</sup> This verse was spoken to the disciples, so it must not be construed to mean we will receive special or private revelations (or prophecy) today from God or the Holy Spirit. Before the canon of Scripture was finalized (see the chapter “Choosing a Bible”), the Spirit helped the apostles recall and write the words that were spoken to them by Jesus and gave them prophecy and Scripture (Act 11:12, 28; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 20:22; 1Ti 4:1; the Book of Revelation, etc.). Today, we rely on the same Spirit to be led into truth (“**the Spirit of truth,**” Joh 14:17; 15:26), for by the Spirit we are able to understand (and obey) the Word of God. Without His help, we cannot understand the (spiritual) things of God (1Co 2:14; cf. Pro 3:5–7; Isa 55:8–9).

requests, not in a rude or demanding manner but by presenting them before God with persistence. If you're like me, you may read a portion of Scripture and not really get much out of it, but then at a later time, it's as if your eyes and ears have been opened, and it comes alive to you in understanding and meaning. As you unlock (correctly understand) some truth in one area, you often gain the ability to understand and unlock more truth in another area.

In closing, I'd like to ask: Is your time of Bible study (and prayer) a chore that you must force yourself to do each day, or is it something you relish and look forward to with joy as you spend time with the Lord? People tend to find (make) the time to do what they think is important. Are you finding time to read the Word, or does other stuff always push it off? Reflection on these matters can reveal much about your priorities, heart, and desire to seek and serve Christ daily.



## FINDING A CHURCH

(The Body of Christ)

*All the churches of Christ greet you. – Romans 16:16*

**The Church that Christ founded.** This chapter’s title isn’t technically correct, but I’m using it because that is the terminology most people are familiar with. A more accurate title would be “Finding a Local Congregation.” As Bruce Eubank says,<sup>283</sup> “We don’t go to church, for we are the Church. We assemble together for worship, Bible study, and to hear the Word of God preached.” The word *church* (Greek *ekklesia*) means congregation, assembly, or called-out ones; that is, “the people of God” (Heb 11:25; 1Pe 2:10).<sup>284</sup> The building where the local congregation gathers is just that: A building (or room) where it’s convenient to meet; it has no significance in and of itself before God, as “the Most High [God] does not dwell in houses made by human hands” (Act 7:48–50; cf. Act 17:24–25; Isa 66:1–2; Psa 92:8; 123:1; 2Ch 6:18).<sup>285</sup>

Consider the following:

1. “One body and one Spirit ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God” (Eph 4:3–6; cf. 1Co 1:10–13; 12:13; Eph 2:18; Php 1:27): There is “one body” of worldwide believers in Christ (Rom 12:4–5; 1Co 10:17; 12:12–13, 20; Eph 2:16; 4:4; Col 3:15) comprised of those who have been baptized into Christ, who are “worshiping in spirit and truth” (see Joh 4:23–24; cf. Psa 145:18; Jud 3), who are obedient in faith, and who have “continued in the faith” (see Col 1:23). This “one body” is identified in Scripture as the “church[es] of Christ” (see Rom 16:16) or the “church[es] of God” (see Act 20:28; 1Co 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:9; 2Co 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1Ti 3:5; 1Th 2:14; 2Th 1:4).<sup>286, 287</sup> Furthermore, this single

<sup>283</sup> Bruce Eubank, preacher, South Valley Church of Christ, Las Vegas.

<sup>284</sup> The Church is also referred to as the “bride” of Christ (Joh 3:29; Rev 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17), the “body” of Christ (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18, 24), “the household [house NKJV] of God” (1Ti 3:15; 1Pe 4:17), and “the household of the faith” (Gal 6:10).

<sup>285</sup> Note that the early apostolic Church didn’t require elaborate and ornate cathedrals or palatial buildings to meet in. In fact, they often met in their own homes (Act 2:2, 46; 5:42; 16:32; Rom 16:5; 1Co 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 2); that is still the case in some places today due to persecution or where resources are limited.

<sup>286</sup> See the article by Jason Jackson, “What Is the Church of Christ?” *Christian Courier*, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/what-is-the-church-of-christ>.

<sup>287</sup> The churches were also identified simply as:

- “the church in {city name}” (Act 8:1; Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14),
- “the church of God which is at {city name, e.g., Corinth}” (1Co 1:2),
- “the church of the {people of city name, e.g., Thessalonians}” (1Th 1:1; 2Th 1:1),

Church was established by Jesus (Act 20:28; Eph 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col 1:18), not by men, committees, councils, synods, or institutions. Wayne Jackson writes:<sup>288</sup>

Why would men set aside that name, and designate themselves by human heroes (e.g., Lutheran)? Or name themselves after some form of organization, (e.g., Presbyterian)? Or adopt titles according to some individual point of doctrine they espouse, (e.g., Baptist)? There is no scriptural basis for this common practice. Tell me please, why are those who profess allegiance to Jesus Christ dissatisfied with simply wearing the name “Christian”? Why are they not known as just “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16) or “church[es] of God” (1 Cor. 1:2)—either appellation being entirely scriptural. There is no solitary, exclusive name for the Church. But whatever you call it, you need to call it what it is, and not what it is not. The Church is not a Pentecostal church just because it was established on the day of Pentecost. The Church is not a Baptist church just because it advocates baptism. The Church is not a Congregational church just because it is organized congregationally. The Church is the Church of God (1 Cor. 1:2), because God planned it.

2. As with most things, man has completely distorted, twisted, hidden, and even annihilated the simple and pure truth of Scripture. The hundreds (thousands?) of denominational divisions and sects that we see today are not biblical (Eph 4:5; 1Co 1:10).<sup>289</sup> In fact, Jesus prayed expressly for unity among believers (Joh 17:11, 19–21), yet despite that, the “schemes”<sup>290</sup> and false teachings of man and the devil have continued unabated for over two thousand years and have led to

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- “the church which is at {city name, e.g., Cenchrea}” (Rom 16:1),
  - “the churches of {region name, e.g., Galatia}” (1Co 16:1, 19; 2Co 8:1; Gal 1:2, 22),
  - “the church of the living God” (1Ti 3:15),
  - “the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in {region name, e.g., Judea}” (1Th 2:14), or
  - “the churches of the saints” (1Co 14:33).

Furthermore, since there was unity among the very early Church (as called for by Jesus), it was often referred to as just “the church” (Act 8:3; 9:31; 11:26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; Rom 16:5; 1Co 5:12; etc.), as that would have been without ambiguity.

<sup>288</sup> See “Does a Name Matter?” Wayne Jackson, “Identifying the Church of the New Testament,” *Christian Courier*, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/identifying-the-church-of-the-new-testament>.

<sup>289</sup> See Wayne Jackson, “Denominationalism: Permissible or Reprehensible?” *Christian Courier*, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/denominationalism-permissible-or-reprehensible>.

<sup>290</sup> For example, the various man-made religions of the world. See the chapter “Beware the Wolves” for verse references and further information.

countless divisions.<sup>291</sup> Wayne Jackson further writes:<sup>292</sup>

The unity of the body of Christ is paramount (cf. Psa. 133:1). It is that which the Holy Spirit desires and instructs to be maintained, and issues in the “bond” that ties Christians together in peace (vv. 2–3).

3. The Church began on the day of Pentecost (Act 2:1–4) when the Spirit was “poured out” (Act 10:45; Rom 5:5) on the apostles and early believers.
4. The “church of Christ” has local gatherings in each city, town, or locale as appropriate and warranted (see 1Co 1:2; 2Co 1:1; 1Th 1:1; 2Th 1:1; Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).
5. A true “church of Christ” will have all of the following characteristics:
  - a. They will simply go by the name(s) given in Scripture, which is the “church of God” or the “church of Christ” (see Rom 16:16), usually prefixed with the town or locale name (indicating its location).<sup>293</sup>
  - b. They will teach the Gospel correctly, free from the false teachings and fake gospels of men, committees, and institutions (Joh 4:23–24; Jud 3).<sup>294</sup>
  - c. They will meet on the “Lord’s day” (Rev 1:10), which is “the first day of the week” (i.e., Sunday; see Act 20:7; Mat 28:1; Mar 16:2; 16:9; Luk 24:1)—beware the modern-day “Pharisees” and Sabbath Keeper “wolves.”<sup>295, 296, 297</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Side note: The phrase “where two or three have gathered together” in Matthew 18:20 is often falsely taught to mean that where two or three are gathered, there Christ is also among them. However, that verse refers to church discipline where “two or three” elders come together and agree on a course of action (discipline) to be taken and the Lord will support them. The Spirit of God is with each of us (“abides in,” Joh 15:1–10), both individually and as a body of believers, at all times and in all places (Mat 1:23; 28:20; Act 18:10; 2Th 3:18; 2Ti 4:22; 2In 2; cf. Jos 1:9; Psa 23:4).

<sup>292</sup> Wayne Jackson, *A New Testament Commentary* (Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2019), 399–400.

<sup>293</sup> But beware that even the name “Church of God” has been co-opted today and is no longer the same as the true Church of Christ.

<sup>294</sup> The Church of Christ is the only Christian church I have found that doesn’t have a single false teaching! Amazing! Now, one might think I’m making this statement because I’m now a member of the Church of Christ, but truth be told, most of the source content for this book was written before I even knew the Church of Christ existed—in fact, I didn’t even attend church for several years because I couldn’t find one without (many) false teachings. I was as surprised as you may be to find out that it had zero false teachings! This chapter was, therefore, one of the very last to be added to the book.

<sup>295</sup> See Wayne Jackson, “The Lord’s Day,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/the-lords-day>.

<sup>296</sup> See Wayne Jackson, “The Weekly Observance of the Lord’s Supper,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/the-weekly-observance-of-the-lords-supper>.

<sup>297</sup> See again the chapter “Beware the Wolves.”

- d. They will hold services in an orderly, organized, and respectful manner (1Co 14:40), with only *a cappella* singing by members. They will not consider worship as entertainment or an “experience,” nor include musical instruments, singing groups, solos performed for an audience, rock bands, yelling, shouting, dancing around hysterically, chanting, babbling, speaking in gibberish, emotional audio-visual stimulations, and so on.<sup>298, 299, 300</sup>
- e. They will have “**overseers**” (see Php 1:1; 1Ti 3:1–2; Tit 1:7; also “**elders**,” Act 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22–23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 22:5; 23:14; 24:1; 25:15; 1Ti 5:17; Tit 1:5; Jas 5:14; 1Pe 5:1, 5; cf. Rev 4:4, 10), who are chosen in accordance with scriptural qualifications (1Ti 3:1–7).<sup>301</sup>
- f. Its “**overseers/elders**” (see above), “**preachers**” (see Rom 10:14; 1Ti 2:7; 2Ti 1:11; cf. 2Pe 2:5), and “**teachers**” (Act 13:1; 1Co 12:28–29; Eph 4:11; Heb 5:12; Jas 3:1) will sincerely love God. You can usually tell whether this is so by watching their behavior, their demeanor, their language, and so on. The “**fruit of the Spirit**,” which is “**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control**,” should be evident (Gal 5:22–23; cf. 1Pe 1:6).<sup>302</sup>
- g. They will teach, preach, and read (openly, publicly) the Word of God in an expositional manner at every service (e.g., 1Th 5:27; Col 4:16; 2Ti 4:1–2) and not just use Jesus and the Bible as a prop behind them on stage while they tell jokes and cutesy stories of how good your life will be and how rich and successful Jesus will make you (and them).<sup>303</sup>
- h. They will be active in faith and service for the Lord (Mat 5:13–16; 20:28; Mar 10:45; Rom 12:7; 1Co 15:58; 1Th 1:3; Joh 5:17; Jas 2:22).
- i. They will conduct baptisms by immersion for adults (Mat 3:16; Mar 1:10; Act 8:39) who “**believe**” (Mar 16:16; Act 8:37). This baptism is

<sup>298</sup> See Wayne Jackson, “The Divine Pattern of Acceptable Worship—Part 1,” *Christian Courier*, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/the-divine-pattern-of-acceptable-worship-part-1>.

<sup>299</sup> See Wayne Jackson, “The Divine Pattern of Acceptable Worship—Part 2,” *Christian Courier*, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/the-divine-pattern-of-acceptable-worship-part-2>.

<sup>300</sup> See Wayne Jackson, “The Authorized Elements of Church Music,” *Christian Courier*, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/the-authorized-elements-of-church-music>.

<sup>301</sup> I’m seeing some Church of Christ congregations that don’t have elders, as they cannot find qualified men. This, I think, reflects on the state of modern American Christendom.

<sup>302</sup> See the chapter “Living in the Spirit” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

<sup>303</sup> In other words, the “prosperity gospel” type of preaching (see 1Ti 3:3; 6:10; Heb 13:5; cf. Mat 6:19–21, 24; 13:22; Mar 4:19; Luk 3:14; 8:14; 9:25; Php 4:11; 2Ti 4:10; Jas 5:1–6; 1Ti 6:8; 2Pe 2:15; Pro 11:4, 28; 23:4).

“for the forgiveness of your sins” (see Act 2:38; 8:36–39; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16; Mar 16:16; Joh 3:3–5; Gal 3:27; 1Pe 3:21; Rom 6:3–10; 1Co 6:11; 12:13; Col 2:12; Tit 3:5–7; 1Jn 5:6; Eph 5:26; cf. Isa 1:18; Jer 31:34; Psa 103:12) as specified in Scripture, and it is done *on the very same day* someone comes to faith in Christ (Act 16:33; 8:36; 22:16)—that is, immediately, not weeks, months, or even years later, as is common in today’s apostate churches.<sup>304, 305</sup>

- j. They will train up their members to be constantly “grow[ing] in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:17–18) and maturing in faith (Heb 5:12; 6:1; 1Co 14:20; Eph 4:13)<sup>306</sup> so they aren’t “tricked” or “deceived”<sup>307</sup> into following “a different gospel ... a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you” (i.e., fake gospels; Gal 1:6–9; cf. 2Co 11:3–4; 2Ti 4:3–4).<sup>308</sup>
- k. They will exercise discipline with members and will also lovingly “admonish” (see Act 20:31; Rom 15:14; 1Co 4:14; Col 3:16; 1Th 5:14; 2Th 3:15; cf. Col 1:28), “teach” (1Co 4:17; Heb 5:12; 1Ti 3:2; 4:11; 6:2; 2Ti 2:2, 24; cf. Rom 12:7; 1Co 12:28–29; 14:26; Gal 6:6; Eph 4:11; Col 1:28; 3:16; 1Ti 2:12; 4:13; 5:17; 2Ti 3:16; Tit 2:3; Heb 6:1), “correct” (see 2Ti 2:25; 3:16), “rebuke” (1Ti 5:1; 5:20; 2Ti 4:2), and “restore” (Gal 6:1; Jas 5:15) members who are going “astray” (Rev 2:20; 2Co 11:3; 1Ti 6:21; 2Ti 2:18; 2Pe 2:15).
- l. They will show no favoritism due to appearances, wealth, status in the community, business and political affiliations or connections, and so on (Jas 2:1–9; Php 2:3–7; Rom 12:16; cf. Gal 3:28).
- m. They will be focused exclusively on building “the kingdom of God” (Col 4:11; Act 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:31; 1Co 4:20; Rom 14:17; 2Th 1:5), not on the political, economic, and nationalistic activities and agendas of man and this fallen world (Php 3:20; Mat 16:23; Mar 8:33; Col 3:2; Joh 15:19; 1Pe 2:9; 2Ti 2:1–5). Such activities drain much-needed energy that could be used instead to grow God’s kingdom and lead more people to salvation (Mat 9:37; 2Ti 2:4–5). We must always be mindful that “our citizenship is in heaven” (Php 3:20), where Christ is (our Lord and King), not here in this fallen world.<sup>309</sup>

<sup>304</sup> See the “Important Note on Baptism” in the chapter “The New Testament Plan of Salvation.”

<sup>305</sup> If your church hasn’t had any new baptisms in months (or even years), that might be a sign that the congregation has become “lukewarm” (Rev 3:16) in sharing the “good news” of the Gospel with those who are still lost—heed the warning given in Scripture!

<sup>306</sup> See the chapter “Press On to Maturity.”

<sup>307</sup> See the chapter “Beware the Wolves” for “tricked” and “deceived” verse references.

<sup>308</sup> See again the chapter “Beware the Wolves.”

<sup>309</sup> See the chapter “The Kingdom of God” in our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*.

We should also, therefore, have our priority set on “seeking the things above, where Christ is” (see [Col 3:1](#); cf. [Jas 4:4](#)) and not on the material things “of this world,” which is “passing away.”<sup>310</sup>

- n. They will take a free-will offering from members according to the heart and ability of the believer ([1Co 16:1–2](#)). A Christian should contribute financially as you are led to out of a “cheerful” heart ([2Co 9:7–15](#); cf. [Mal 3:10](#)),<sup>311</sup> being grateful to the Lord for any material blessings He has given you ([1Co 10:26](#); [Jas 1:17](#); [Eph 3:20](#); [2Pe 1:11](#); cf. [Luk 12:15–21](#)) and as you can manage responsibly ([1Ti 5:8](#)).<sup>312</sup>
- o. They will observe communion—“breaking of bread” (see [Act 2:42, 46](#); cf. [1Co 10:16–17](#)), “the Lord’s Supper” ([1Co 11:20](#); cf. [1Co 11:23–30](#); [Mat 26:26–29](#); [Mar 14:22–25](#); [Luk 22:17–20](#))—each “Lord’s day” (Sunday; [Rev 1:10](#)) “in remembrance of Me [Christ]” ([Luk 22:14–20](#)).<sup>313, 314</sup>
- p. They will have a heart for the lost and be a “light” to the community ([Mat 5:14–16](#); [Rom 2:19–20](#); [1Th 5:5](#); cf. [Joh 12:36](#); [2Co 6:14](#); [Eph 5:8–14](#); [Php 2:15](#); [Rev 1:20](#); [2:1](#)).
- q. They will be “fervent” in prayer ([Act 12:5](#)) for themselves, other

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<sup>310</sup> See the chapter “The Good News of the Gospel” for “of this world” and “passing away” verse references.

<sup>311</sup> A cheerful giver is also one who gladly gives to the Lord from “the first fruits of your labors” (emphasis mine, [Exo 23:16, 19](#); [Deu 18:4](#); [2Ch 31:5](#); [Neh 10:35](#); [Heb 7:4](#); cf. [1Co 15:20–23](#); [Jas 1:18](#); [Rev 14:4](#)) and the best of the flock, not from the last fruits, meager scraps left over, or damaged goods ([Mal 1:6–14](#); [3:6–10](#)). I fully realize this is one of the hardest things to do, and I need to do a better job in this area myself. After struggling mightily to earn a paycheck and then seeing the majority of it taken away before we even get it (via taxation, fees, licenses, etc.), we often seem to have little left over for ourselves and our families. But we are to give our best to the Lord. Do we give to the Lord like the stingy rich people or the “poor widow” who put in nearly all she had (see [Mar 12:41–44](#))? Further, it is written: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” ([Mat 6:19–21](#); cf. [Luk 12:15–21](#)). I find that the matter of giving reveals how well you actually do, in fact, “trust in the Lord”—do you really believe the promises He has made in Scripture regarding looking after your welfare and your needs (e.g., [Mat 6:25–34](#))? When you hold back, you are implying that you do not trust God or think He is a good provider, and even further, that He doesn’t know your needs (and wants). Lastly, how people handle their money usually reveals where their true passions and priorities lie.

<sup>312</sup> Side note: Constant church begging for funds and donations is not scriptural. It is up to each Christian to contribute as they feel led to and purpose in their own heart ([2Co 9:7](#)).

<sup>313</sup> See Wayne Jackson, “The Weekly Observance of the Lord’s Supper,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/the-weekly-observance-of-the-lords-supper>.

<sup>314</sup> See Wayne Jackson, “The Lord’s Day,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/the-lords-day>.

Christians, the community, leaders, and the lost (to come to know Christ).

- r. They will welcome and love all who come, no matter what sins those people are (or have been) involved in (Eph 2:1–3; 1Ti 1:13; Joh 12:46; Act 10:43; 13:39; Rom 1:16; Mar 3:11). This is not an excuse, however, to tolerate continued, willful sin by members after they have come to faith in Christ.<sup>315</sup>
- s. They won't establish man-made positions and titles, nor will they elevate men in a leadership hierarchy<sup>316, 317</sup>—doing such is not in agreement with Scripture, for we are all equal in Christ (Mat 20:20–28; 23:8–12; Mar 9:35; 10:42–45; Luk 6:40; 22:26–27; Joh 13:14–17; Rom 12:4–5; 2Co 1:24; 4:5; 1Co 12:12–13; 1Pe 5:1–3, 5–6; Eph 4:2–6) with differing gifts. As it is written, “Some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ,” according to the grace and pleasure of the Lord (Eph 4:7, 11–12; 1Co 12:18). Only Christ is the head of the Church (Col 1:18; 2:19; Eph 1:22–23; 5:23–24; Act 20:28)—not other men, nor so-called “pastors” elevated into leaders, nor committees, institutions, parishes, cardinals, or the Pope. Additionally, the practice of having one person act as the sole church “leader” with the title of “pastor” or “senior pastor” isn't biblical.<sup>318</sup> We should always remember that we are each and only sinners saved by the grace of God (Gal 3:22).
- t. They will not have women in positions of leadership, teaching, prayer, or authority over men, but in all other aspects, women are fully equal with men (1Ti 2:11–14).<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> See the prior note regarding church discipline and admonishing members.

<sup>316</sup> For example, “priests, cardinals, bishops, pope,” “reverend,” “father,” “junior pastor, pastor, senior pastor,” and so on.

<sup>317</sup> The “leaders” referenced in Hebrews 13:17 are the church “elders” and “overseers.”

<sup>318</sup> Jason Jackson, “What Is a Pastor?” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/what-is-a-pastor>.

<sup>319</sup> See the following articles for more information:

Wayne Jackson, “A Review of Recent Arguments for Women Preachers,” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/a-review-of-recent-arguments-for-women-preachers>

—, “May a Woman Ever Teach a Man?” *Christian Courier*,

<https://christiancourier.com/articles/may-a-woman-ever-teach-a-man>

—, “The Role of Woman,” *Christian Courier*,

<https://christiancourier.com/articles/the-role-of-woman>

6. Note that the instructions (praise and admonition) to the churches in Revelation (see Rev 2:1–3:22) were written to real, literal churches when John lived.<sup>320</sup> Those verses contain a wealth of information for the born-again Christian on what Christ expects from churches (and also from individual believers) who “**CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD**” (see Act 2:21; 22:16; Rom 10:13; 1Co 1:2; cf. Gen 4:26; Isa 12:4; Psalms 91:14–15; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17). Those instructions apply equally to churches (and believers) of every age, including today. We can learn much from what Christ says to each of the churches and take great heed, for there is a little (or a lot) of each church in each of us individually. If Christ’s warnings to the churches apply to your congregation or yourself, pay close attention and strive to correct that.

To “**worship [God] in spirit and truth**” (Joh 4:23–24; cf. Psalms 145:18; Jud 3), you will need to “**come out of**” (Rev 18:4) the so-called “Christian” churches, sects, and denominations that are teaching “**a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you**” (Gal 1:8–9). This includes the so-called “Reformed,” Calvinistic, modern, denominational, and liberal “Christian” churches of today, for they are, in fact, offspring of “**Babylon**” (Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2; 18:10, 21; cf. Rev 17:1, 15; 19:2)—that is, they are baby harlots (“**images of the beast**,” see Rev 13:11–18). Additionally, groups that place man’s (or woman’s) writings on equal footing with Scripture or rely on “**false prophets**” (Mat 7:15) who claim to have received new “private revelations from God” or introduce new so-called “inspired” books of Scripture are to be avoided.<sup>321</sup> Churches that describe their service as an “experience” are also best avoided.<sup>322</sup>

If you are new to an area, you can search for the name of your town or city along with the words “Church of Christ” to locate one nearby (e.g., “Medford Church of Christ”). But be sure to do proper diligence on any

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—, “Woman’s Role in the Church,” *Christian Courier*,

<https://christiancourier.com/articles/womans-role-in-the-church>

—, “May Christian Women Teach Christian Boys?” *Christian Courier*,

<https://christiancourier.com/articles/may-christian-women-teach-christian-boys>

<sup>320</sup> The letters to the churches are not prophecies mapped to historical periods of Church history, as many falsely teach. It is also good, wise, and profitable to read books on early Church history so that you are not ignorant of what the early saints (and martyrs) endured for their faith. Suggested reading: *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs; The Church History; The Christian Church: Its Rise and Progress; and The Pilgrim Church*. See the chapter “Helpful Resources.”

<sup>321</sup> The canon of Scripture was completed and finalized with the Book of Revelation (1Co 13:9–10). See the chapter “Choosing a Bible.”

<sup>322</sup> Wayne Jackson, “Is Your Worship Becoming Disney Church?” *Christian Courier*, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/is-your-worship-becoming-disney-church>.



church, whether it has those words in the title or not.<sup>323, 324</sup> Be aware that many so-called “Christian” churches, which may even use the name of Jesus or Christ in their names, are not teaching the true Gospel as it was “handed down” in Scripture (Jud 3; Joh 4:23–24). You can use the information in this chapter to check that you are, in fact, in a true “church of Christ.”

Lastly, if there isn’t a “church of Christ” in your area (or prison, for example), start one! The idea that you must be ordained, part of the clergy, or a seminary graduate to start a church is not biblical. All Christians are “priests” (Rev 1:6; 5:10; cf. 1Pe 2:9) of the Gospel in “the kingdom of God” and “ambassadors for Christ” (see 2Co 5:20; cf. Php 1:27; Eph 6:20). Amen.

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<sup>323</sup> The website <https://www.church-of-christ.org> or the maps app on your phone can help you find a nearby Church of Christ. Please note that the church you are looking for will simply be called the “Church of Christ” (not the “United Church of Christ” or other variations). I hope you are seeing just how careful one must be!

<sup>324</sup> For those behind bars, it would be the facility name followed by Church of Christ (for example, “Fulton County Jail Church of Christ”).

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

(Iron Sharpens Iron)

*Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another. – Proverbs 27:17*

*In abundance of counselors there is victory. – Proverbs 11:14*

We are blessed to have available to us today the writings of many wonderful men of God who have come before us, true saints of the faith, some of whom also gave their lives as martyrs. More than ever in history, we have a wealth of information available to read and learn from and the freedom to openly read these materials.<sup>325</sup> The resources listed below are helpful and predominantly free of false teachings. However, great discernment must be used when reading, recommending, and using any non-inspired materials written by man.<sup>326</sup>

Some of the books are out of print and may be difficult to find, but I recommend that you try to find and read editions that were printed as close to the original author's first date of publication as possible, as newer revisions offer an opportunity once again for editors and publishers to twist, distort, or even rewrite the original author's content and introduce their own false doctrines and teachings. And lastly, before purchasing any book, look to see what other books that same author (or publisher) has published; doing so will help you understand if their books can be trusted to be in agreement with Scripture.

### BOOKS

Broadbent, E. H. *The Pilgrim Church: An Account of Continuance Through Centuries of Christian Churches Practising Biblical Principles Taught in the New Testament*. Adansonia Publishing, 2018.

Bunyan, John. *The Heavenly Footman*. London, 1698.

———. *Pilgrim's Progress*. London, 1678. Republished by Holy Spirit Prints, 2018.

Clarke, Adam. *The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, with a Commentary and Critical Notes*. New York: 1831.<sup>327</sup>

Cottrell, Jack. *Baptism: A Biblical Study*. Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing, 1989.

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<sup>325</sup> In most places of the world.

<sup>326</sup> See also the warnings given in the chapter "Choosing a Bible."

<sup>327</sup> I include Dr. Clarke's commentary for his general knowledge of biblical manuscripts, the Hebrew language, and Jewish customs but not for Methodist doctrine or theology of any kind. He also held some strange beliefs in some areas (e.g., see Genesis commentary regarding the moon).

- . *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today*. Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing, 2002.
- . *Faith's Fundamentals*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1995.
- Elliott, David Vaughn. *Nobody Left Behind*. Methuen, MA: David Vaughn Elliott, 2004.
- Eusebius of Caesarea. *The Church History*.
- Ferguson, Everett. *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.
- Foxe, John. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs (The Actes and Monuments)*, 1563 (English version).
- Grasham, William W. et al., *Truth for Today Commentary*. Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2001-present.
- Grier, W. J. *The Momentous Event*. Belfast, Northern Ireland: Evangelical Book Shop, 1945.
- Ham, Ken, et al. *The New Answers Books (1–4)*. Petersburg, KY: Answers in Genesis, 1982.
- Henry, Matthew. *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*. London: James Nisbet & Co., 1706–1710/1721. [Note: This commentary was completed in 1721 after his death by others who wanted to finish his work. There are also many revisions titled *Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary*, either complete or concise/abridged. The later versions are marked as “carefully revised and corrected” or “new modern edition”; however, I recommend you find and use his original exposition version (up to the date 1721).]
- Jackson, Wayne. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2005.
- . *The Bible and Science*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2000.
- . *The Bible on Trial*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2009.
- . *Bible Words and Theological Terms Made Easy*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2002.
- . *Biblical Figures of Speech*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2005.
- . *The Book of Job*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 1983.
- . *Creation, Evolution, and the Age of the Earth*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 1989.
- . *The Human Body: Accident or Design*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2000.

- . *Jesus Christ: The Master Teacher*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2013.
- . *A New Testament Commentary*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2011.
- . *The Parables in Profile*. Stockton, CA: Wayne Jackson, 1978.
- . *Premillennialism: A System of Infidelity*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications.
- . *The Prophets: An Old Testament Commentary*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2015.
- . *Revelation*. Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications, 2004.
- . *Why Did My Savior Have to Die?* Jackson, TN: Christian Courier Publications.
- Johnson, B. W. *The People's New Testament* [Commentary]. St. Louis, MO: Christian Publishing Company, 1891. Reprinted: (Delight, AK: Gospel Light Publishing Company, undated).
- Josephus, Titus Flavius. *Antiquities of the Jews*.  
 ———. *The Jewish War*.
- Lipscomb, David, H. Leo Boles, Guy N. Woods, C. E. W. Dorris, John T. Hinds. *New Testament Commentary*. Nashville, TN: GOSPEL ADVOCATE, 1969–1987.
- Riggle, H. M. *Beyond the Tomb*. Anderson, IN: The Gospel Trumpet Company, 1929. Republished by Holy Spirit Prints, 2018.
- . *The Christian Church: Its Rise and Progress*. Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1912.
- . *Christ's Second Coming and What Will Follow*. Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1872.
- . *Christ's Triumphant Reign*. Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1930.
- . *Jesus Is Coming Again*. Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1943.
- . *The Kingdom of God*. Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1903.
- . *The Sabbath and the Lord's Day*. Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1918.
- Stoner, Peter W., and Robert C. Newman. *Science Speaks*. Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1969/1976.

## OUR WEBSITES

- Each Day (Gospel website), <https://eachday.org>
- Gospel IQ Quiz, <https://eachday.org/gospeliq>
- Iron Sharpens Iron (Bible study website), <https://isi.bible>

- Holy Spirit Prints (Publisher site), <https://holyspiritprints.com>

## OTHER WEBSITES

- Bible Study Tools, <https://www.biblestudytools.com>
- Bible Gateway, <https://www.biblegateway.com>
- Bible Hub, <https://www.biblehub.com>
- Christian Courier, <https://www.christiancourier.com>
- Gospel Advocate, <https://www.gospeladvocate.com/>
- Gospel Light, <https://www.gospellightpublishing.com/>
- Resource Publications, <https://resourcepublications.net/>
- GBN, <https://gbntv.org/>
- Open Bible, <https://openbible.info>
- E-Sword, <https://www.e-sword.net>
- Christian Book, <https://www.christianbook.com>
- Truth Publications, <https://truthbooks.com>
- Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org>
- World Video Bible School, <https://wvbs.org>
- Online Academy of Biblical Studies, <https://www.oabs.org/>
- Insight into Bible Truth, <https://insightintobibletruth.net/>
- The Paperless Hymnal, <https://paperlesshymnal.com>

## SCIENCE RELATED WEBSITES

The following websites are recommended for their scientific articles:

- Answers in Genesis, <https://answersingenesis.org>
- Institute for Christian Research, <https://icr.org>

## LOCAL CHURCHES (AZ)<sup>328</sup>

- Cottonwood Church of Christ, <https://cottonwoodazcoc.com/>
- Sedona Church of Christ, <http://www.churchofchristsedona.com/>
- Verde Valley Church of Christ, <http://verdevalleychurchofchrist.org/>
- North Valley Church of Christ (Cave Creek), <https://nvcoc.net/>
- Camelback Church of Christ,  
<https://www.camelbackchurchofchrist.org/>
- Prescott Church of Christ, <https://prescottchurchofchrist.com/>

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<sup>328</sup> Some of these churches offer live streaming of their services for those who are remote.

## BOOKS BY HOLY SPIRIT PRINTS

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- ***The Christian Faith***: A condensed Gospel tract version of our book *The Gospel of the Grace of God*. También disponible en español—***La Fe Cristiana***.
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- ***Beyond the Tomb***: Explains what happens to your soul after death.
- ***The Pilgrim's Progress***: A reprint of John Bunyan's famous work, which describes the pilgrimage of "Christian" from the city of destruction (this fallen, sinful world) to the heavenly city of new Jerusalem (eternal life).
- ***Jesus > Anxiety***: Explains how the born-again Christian overcomes and defeats anxiety by the power of Christ. También disponible en español—***Jesús > Ansiedad***.
- ***Jesus > Addiction***: Explains how a born-again Christian overcomes and defeats addiction by the power of Christ. También disponible en español—***Jesús > Adicción***.
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- ***The Peace of God (La Paz de Dios)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards created to share the message of the peace of God that can be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Contains inspirational notes related to prayer and the peace of God.
- ***Faith Cards (Tarjetas de Fe)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards created to provide reminders of the core of the Christian faith. Contains inspirational study notes.
- ***His Perfect Strength (Su Fuerza Perfecta)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards created to provide reminders of staying strong in your Christian faith. Contains inspirational study notes.
- ***Kingdom Cards (Tarjetas del Reino)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards to provide reminders to seek first the kingdom of God and His Christ.
- ***Sweet Psalms (Dulces Salmos)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards with Bible psalms and inspirational photography.
- ***Sweet Psalms Arizona (Dulces Salmos de Arizona)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards with Bible psalms and inspirational photography from around Arizona.
- ***Sweet Psalms Sedona (Dulces Salmos de Sedona)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards with Bible psalms and inspirational photography from Sedona, Arizona.
- ***Psalms by the Beach (Salmos en la Playa)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards with Bible psalms and tropical beachside photography.
- ***Powerful Proverbs (Proverbios Poderosos)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards with Bible proverbs and inspirational photography.
- ***Prayer Power (El Poder de la Oración)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards about Christian prayer with inspirational photography.
- ***Favorite Verses (Versículos Favoritos)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards with selected Bible verses and inspirational photography.
- ***More Favorite Verses (Más Versículos Favoritos)***: Booklet of sixty verse/photo cards with selected Bible verses and inspirational photography.
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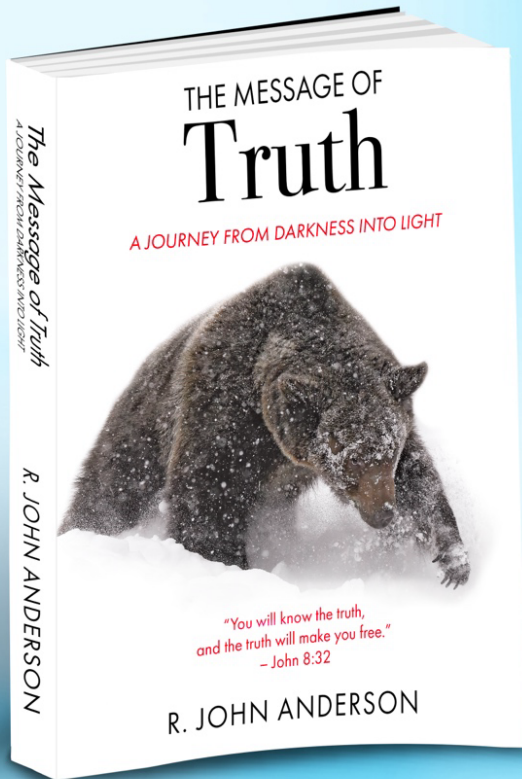
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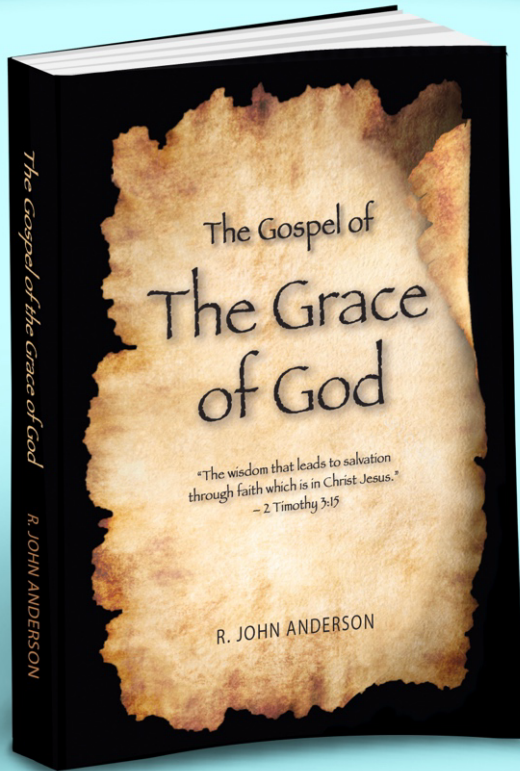
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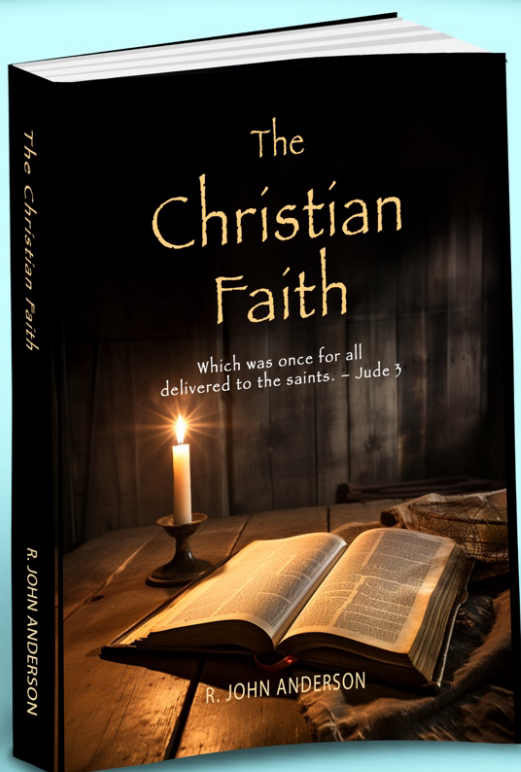
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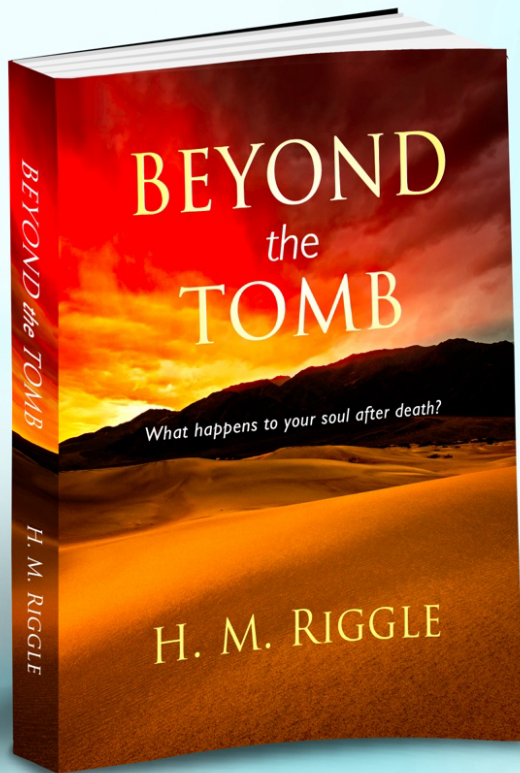
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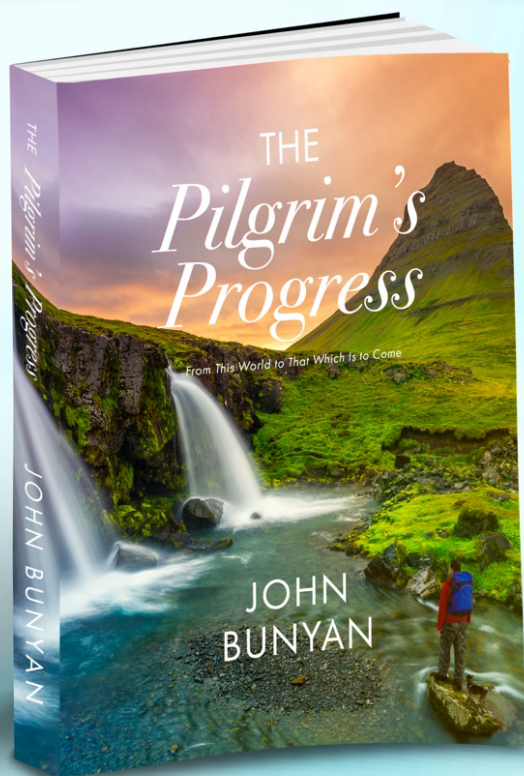
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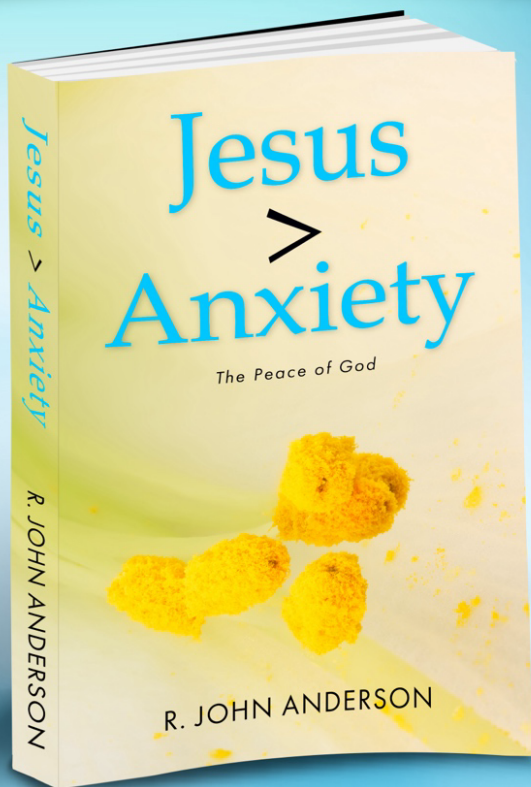
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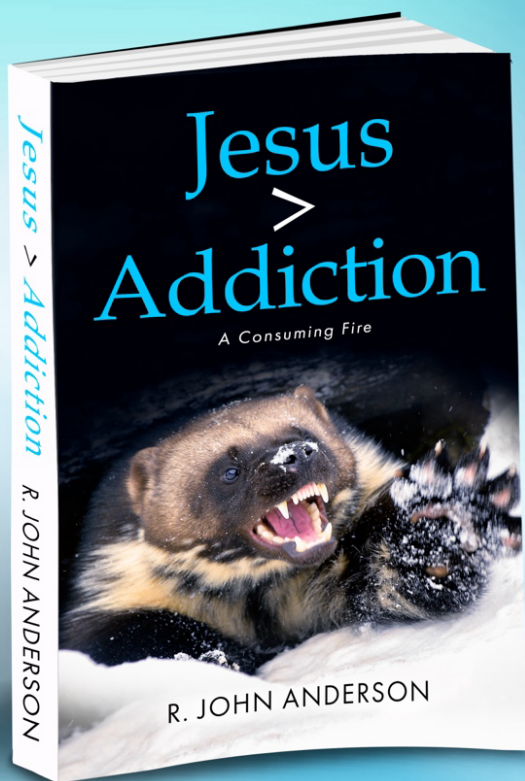
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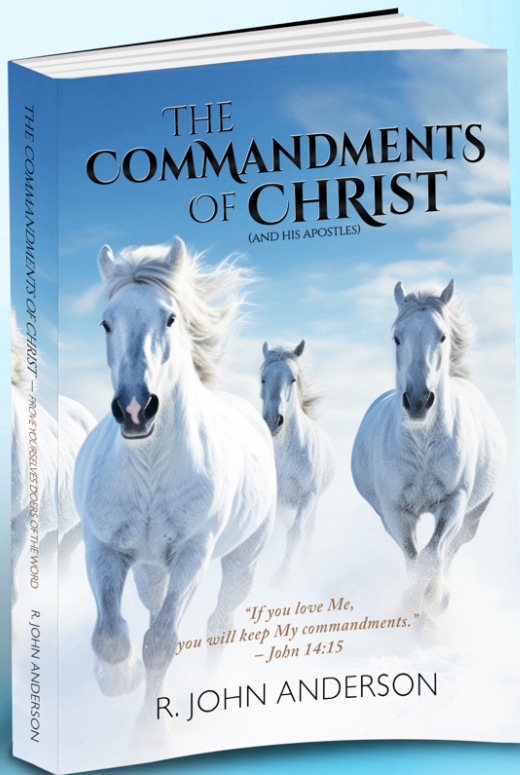


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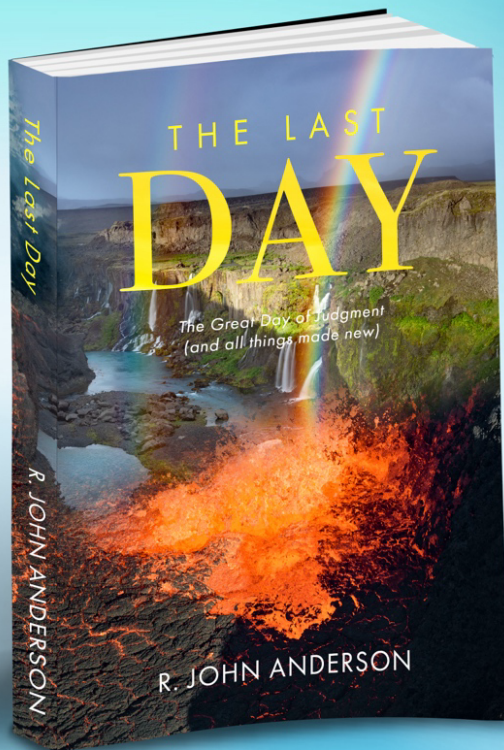
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*The Commandments of Christ* reviews and summarizes the New Testament commandments of Jesus and the instructions of His apostles. Scripture tells us that we must be doers of the Word and not just hearers, and if we love Christ, we will keep His commandments. But if we don't know His commandments, how can we keep them?

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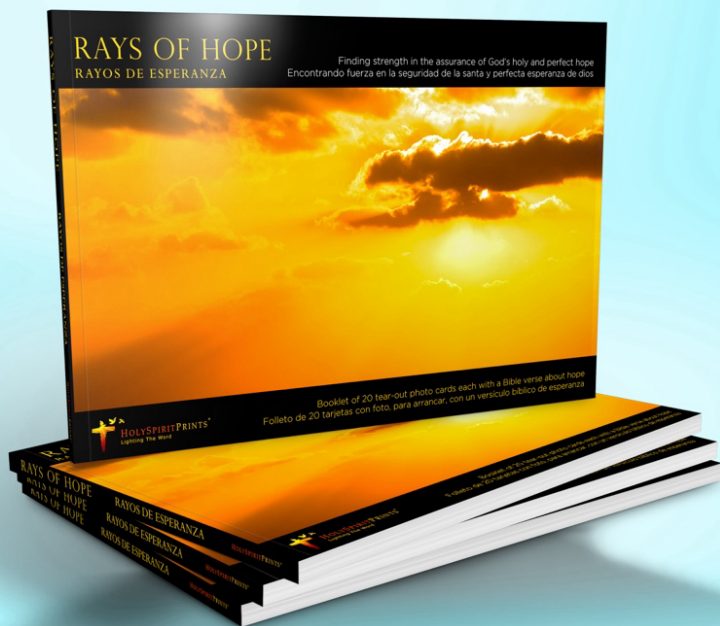
*The Skies Above In*  
**FLAMING FIRE**



*The Last Day* presents what the Bible tells us about Jesus' return and the Great Day of Judgment—the culmination and “last day” of human history. Let those who have an ear to hear, hear the true Word of God, and be not deceived by false teachings and false prophecies that abound today about Jesus' return!

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# RAYS OF HOPE



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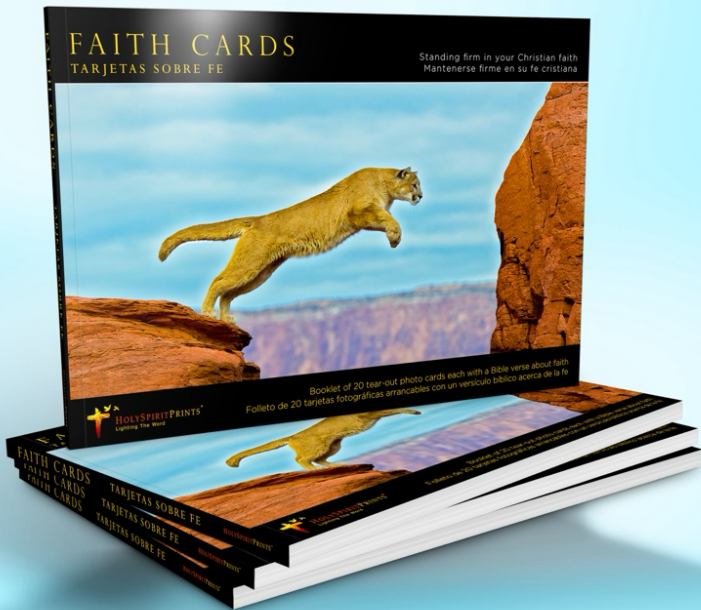
# THE PEACE OF GOD



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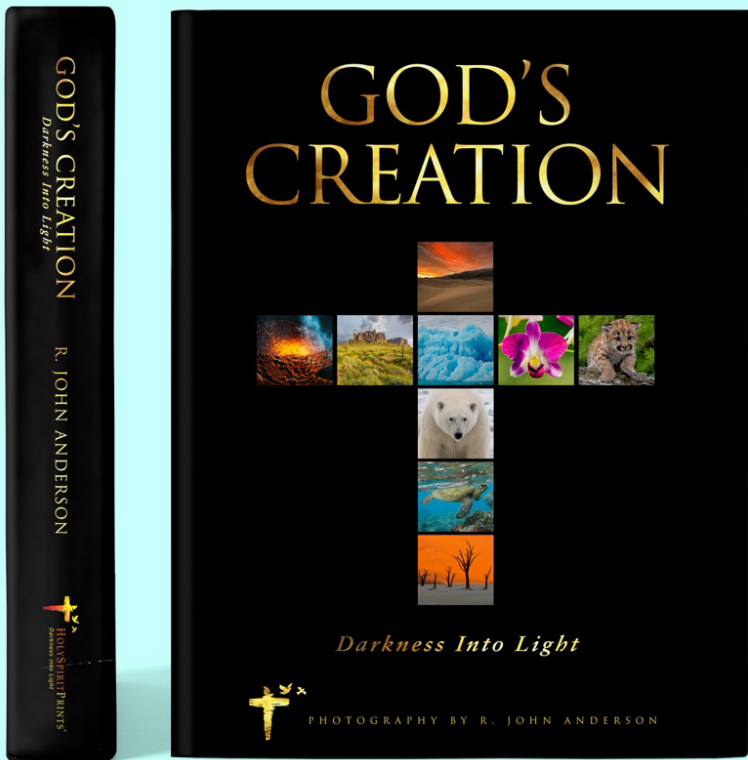
# FAITH CARDS



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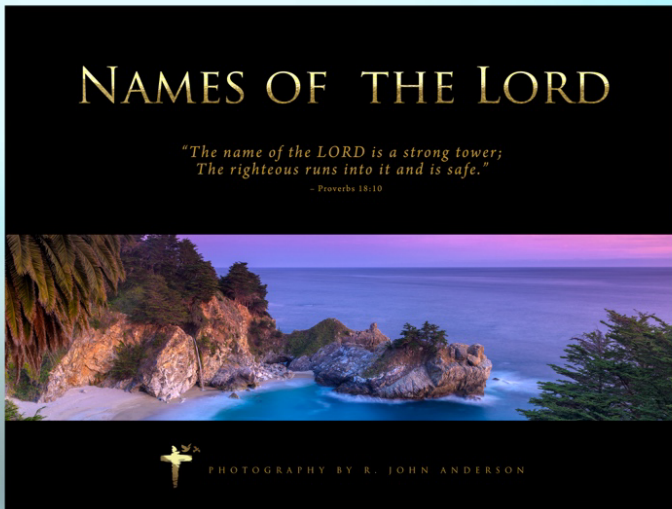
# The Heavens DECLARE...



This large-format coffee-table book features the nature photography of R. John Anderson and showcases the stunning beauty of nature set against the story of creation (and redemption) as told in the Bible. It makes a great visual display piece for any Christian home, office, lobby, or church.

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# Names Of The LORD...



The many names of the Lord accompanied by stunning photography showcasing the natural beauty of God's creation. Together they glorify the names of Father, Son, and Spirit: "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY" is the Lord!

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# THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES

*The Christian Faith* presents the pure and simple truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it was “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) in New Testament Scripture. Hundreds of Bible verse references are provided so you can study Scripture as you go along. This booklet can serve as an introduction for those new to the faith, and it also allows the professing Christian to double-check their understanding of the Gospel, as many false teachers, false teachings, and false gospels have gone out into the world. Let us be mindful that it is written:

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. – 2 Cor. 11:3

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. – 2 Tim. 4:3–4

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? – 2 Cor. 13:5

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. – Acts 20:28–31



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