

A Lawyer Examines the Evidence

BERNARD KOERSELMAN, J.D.

**WHAT THE
BIBLE SAYS
ABOUT A
SAVING
FAITH**

Forewords by

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What the Bible Says About a Saving Faith

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Preface

"That's Lordship theology," the man said scornfully. I'd made some remark about my understanding of Scripture. I didn't even know the meaning of Lordship theology, but I understood the disdain in his voice.

At that time I understood Scripture mostly from personal study. I'd been a Christian for about two years. The prior year I'd spent the first hour of most days in personal Bible study. I'd read through the entire Bible several times and the New Testament many more times. As a lawyer, I did a lot of reading and studying.

I've continued to study Scripture on an accelerated basis, but not in seminaries or denominational settings. When I left my law practice to serve the Lord full-time I expected to go to seminary, but the Lord seemed to say, "Study Scripture on your own"; I didn't go. To study Scripture better, I thought I should accumulate commentaries to help explain it, just as I had a good law library as an attorney. Again, the Lord seemed to say "No!" I would study only the Bible. I knew then, and now, that commentaries can be valuable and are often by dedicated men of God. It surprised me that I wasn't to use them in my study.

Recognizing I could fall into error by studying purely on my own without commentaries, I wrote my understandings of Scripture passages and sent my writings to godly men I knew throughout the United States. To my joy these men understood Scripture as I did, even though we'd never talked about the issues I wrote about. I began to realize that because the Holy Spirit is their teacher, people who devote themselves to God's Word will likely see spiritual issues similarly.

From the time of my earliest studies, the Lord has put in my heart a desire to know the correct teachings about salvation. Peripheral issues – those on which well-meaning men may differ – seem less important. If a teaching jeopardizes the hearer's opportunity for salvation, however, I have heightened interest.

This book is about salvation and is intended to include solely the teachings of God's Word. It's about what I've learned and what I've observed as deficient or wrongly taught in the twentieth century American church.

Is this important reading? I regard the subjects of the utmost importance, exceeding anything else. If we're misled on them, we can forfeit eternal life. In this book, I'll try simply and logically to prove from Scripture those issues that are essential for salvation.

This kind of writing doesn't offer the gripping story of a good novel, nor is it filled with personal anecdotes that make for interesting reading. It's not a one-or-two-day quick study that can be skimmed, not if real value is to be gained from it.

Is this hard reading? No, because the basis for this book is the Bible. Computer programs tested several translations to see at what grade level they were written. All were written at the same grade level, the *sixth* grade.

That shouldn't be surprising. God wants everyone to read his Word and be saved. Because he had the Bible written at that level, most of us qualify. He made his Word so easy to understand that a child can grasp it.

Yet with today's information explosion, people get most of their information from television, then newspaper and magazines. Recently I heard a statistic that the average American spends over 2,000 hours a year watching television and just over five hours a year reading. If that is true, such people have little interest in studying their Bibles. For those of us who do read Scripture, it is usually through a filter of teachings from our churches. This book gives you an opportunity to examine the issues of salvation in a different way, not with a different filter, but, it is hoped, without a filter. That's because what I present here I didn't learn through the filter of any church's doctrines. I do not suggest that I have a corner on the truth. I do suggest that this may be an opportunity to view these issues in a fresh way, from one who has no "background" to color the writing.

This book will prove its points by using the legal rule to interpret writings: *Let the writing speak for itself*. Whenever a document speaks clearly on a given subject, no outside evidence or testimony with a contrary interpretation is allowed. Scripture speaks profusely on the subjects in this book. I contend that no opinions or interpretations of men, including mine, are needed to arrive at the truth.

From time to time I'll emphasize words within a verse of scripture by putting them in *italics* to help make plain the use of the passage. Rather than add "emphasis added" each time, please remember that neither the original

manuscripts nor the various translations of Scripture have emphasis added in the text.

Scripture is the basis and foundation for this book. But therein lies another problem for both reader and author. As a lawyer I tend to overwhelm with evidence, to make sure I make the point. That can be tedious to a reader who, like my wife Darlene, wishes I'd make the point simply and quickly. I want to make sure the most diligent readers find all the proofs they need to understand, believe, and apply the truths they find here, but don't want to wear down those willing to accept quickly the simple truths of God's word.

Accordingly, the book has basic text for easiest reading. For those who wish more information, footnotes expand on the basic text, provide more proofs, and show Scripture citations.

Feel free to read only the basic text unless you're not 100 percent convinced about a given subject, or, if you're like me, you want to know everything you can. In that case, study the footnotes as well.

Bernie Koerselman

Introduction

There are two issues this book will discuss; the meanings of *believes* and *him* in John 3:16:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever *believes* in *him* shall not perish but have eternal life.

What does it mean to *believe*? And to whom does *him* refer?

Salvation is ours when we *believe* in *him* as God tells us in his Word. This book is dedicated to proving what Scripture says that is.

As you read the above paragraphs, you may think those issues are foolishly simple, that everyone knows what it means to believe and knows that "him" refers to Jesus. Though "him" does refer to Jesus, Scripture is much more exacting. The American church often seems to depict a Jesus who is much less than the person God presented to us in his Word. It is my observation that much of the church doesn't understand what God means when he says we are to believe. Somehow we've lost the true meaning of a saving faith as we've culturized Christianity in twentieth-century America. Worst of all, the person who accepts the wrong definition of either word – *believe* or *him* – may not have salvation.

In a recent Focus On The Family program, Dr. Dobson related statistics which showed that over 50 percent of Americans believe the Bible is the infallible Word of God; an even higher percentage call themselves Christians. He and his guests wondered why the behavior of those people is so little influenced by their beliefs. This book will explain why.

In twentieth-century America, Christians are often indistinguishable from unbelievers. Many seem to follow the god of materialism. The entertainment on television and in movies is violent, sexual, and often perverted. Homosexuality is recognized openly as an alternate lifestyle. Some states compel only evolution to be taught in the schools and forbid the teaching of creation. Over twenty million babies have been aborted. Legislative and administrative branches of government have become less and less tolerant of Christianity. The judicial branch has become openly hostile, while giving constitutional protection to homosexuals, Satanists, and God-haters.

How could this country unravel spiritually so far so fast? This book will show why Christianity in America has become impotent, having lost the power it had when it motivated our first settlers.

This book may be especially important for moms and dads. As parents, we watch as our society becomes more secular and increasingly attractive to our youngsters. Peer pressure seems more powerful than anything we have to offer.

I suspect the reason those problems exist is that most children are able to discern integrity. They know when they're not told the full truth. I contend that if a child is taught what you will learn in this book – what the Bible teaches about Jesus and a saving faith – that child is far less likely to stray. Instead, his devotion and steadfastness may put his parents to shame. Our children need to know the truth about who they are to believe in and what a saving faith really is. There's integrity to that. And they respond.

Prologue

I remember the morning I walked downstairs and believed. For the first time in over twenty years, I believed that the Bible is true and that Jesus died on the cross for my sins.

For over twenty years I was an agnostic, denied all religions and the existence of a personal God. I'd grown up in a Christian home. As a child, I talked to Jesus as I walked to school. But doubts about the truth of Christianity began to plague me as a teen, and grew stronger as I grew older. In my second year at a Christian college, I met weekly with a group of students and discussed religion over coffee. At the end of that semester we all discarded our faiths.

Afterward, I felt desperate. I had planned to be a pastor or missionary. When I gave up my belief in God I felt as if I were standing on the edge of a great, bottomless chasm. Everything ahead was black. But I needed to go with the truth and I'd come to believe that Christianity was untrue, that it was a fabrication, a device to reassure weak people, and used by governments to maintain morality and social control.

I looked for something to believe in. I tried the isms. I liked the idea of pantheism. From that I could understand the idea of nirvana, the Hindus' idea of heaven.

I enlisted in the Air Force and decided to be a chaplain's assistant for the sole purpose of giving Christianity one last chance – to see if it would prove true or false. It didn't hold up. There were some top-notch chaplains – outstanding men; others were envious, hateful, greedy, and unforgiving. These men were like men without Christianity. Some were good; others were bad.

The next twenty years were tough. I married and divorced three times. I worked in and started several businesses, finally owning a regional stock brokerage. My attorney malpracticed and cost me the company. I sold my interest for almost nothing so the company could continue, but it failed later.

At thirty-seven I decided to go to law school. I borrowed, used the last of my G.I. Bill, all my savings, and graduated *summa cum laude* three years later.

I couldn't get a job. Though I graduated with the highest grades in the history of the law school, no one would hire me, so I started my own law

firm. I was busy immediately; the practice prospered.

Then I met Darlene. I first saw her when she came to visit another lawyer. She was newly divorced by her lawyer husband. When we dated I knew this lady was different. I called her my "quality lady." I remember telling her that there were two things wrong with her – she didn't dance and her religion. She was a Christian.

My practice was located in affluent Newport Beach, California, a city of beaches, gorgeous harbors, thousands of pleasure boats and innumerable expensive homes. I traveled in the Newport Beach party crowd. At our parties frequently no one was married. The couples often lived with each other. When I first took Dar to a party, she just sat. Afterward my friends asked, "Doesn't she talk?" Later she told me, "I didn't have anything to talk about with those people." I started spending more and more time with her.

In retrospect, Dar says she married me out of rebellion against God. She knew she shouldn't marry an unbeliever, but her prior Christian marriage hadn't worked. She soon learned ours was a mistake. In the first week she learned about my temper. Incompatibilities began to surface. We tried, goodness knows, but had a difficult time. I regretted having married again. Apparently I couldn't have a successful marriage. How many times did I have to learn the obvious? Dar determined she would not be a doormat, the way she thought she'd been in her first marriage.

Dar often went to church, even though it was over twenty miles away. When we moved the law office, we moved to a home much closer to it. Sometimes I'd go with her. Enraged, I'd give Dar a one-hour lecture about the stupidity of the twenty-minute sermon. Yet I was drawn to her Christian friends. They were warm and loving to me, even though they knew I was an unbeliever.

Dar and I went on an Alaskan cruise with a group of lawyers. I bought some books for light reading about after-life. They recounted the experiences of people who had clinically died but were later resuscitated. They fascinated me because they were consistent and the evidence made me believe that they were true.

In a typical scenario, a man in a hospital bed suddenly had a sharp pain in the chest. When it stopped he felt himself leave the body. He found himself near the ceiling of his room. He saw the door open and a nurse look in, heard

her call for help and saw the resuscitation team rush in. From his vantage point, he saw all the people there, watched them put plates on the chest and the body convulse. Suddenly he felt himself being drawn back into his body and again felt the sharp chest pain.

All this convinced me because the patient later could identify the people who were in the room, even those who said nothing. He described the kinds and colors of their clothes. All the while his body seemed lifeless with eyes closed.

Many experiences I read about were more advanced. One patient felt himself traveling through a tunnel until he came to a figure of light. It exuded warmth and love. The patient usually wanted to stay in this new environment, but reluctantly returned to his body.

Surprisingly, the same type of experience occurred whether the person had religious beliefs or none at all. The books convinced me I'd been wrong about there being no conscious existence after the death of the body, but delighted me when I found that everyone had a good experience.

A book about an after-life experience was waiting for me at home after the cruise. My sister Linda had sent it though she knew nothing of my reading on the cruise. When I saw the subject, I quickly read it. My delight changed to apprehension, however, as I read about a man's experience in hell.

Then someone gave me still another book by a cardiovascular specialist, one who resuscitates those clinically dead. He started listening to his patients after one came back to life screaming, "Doctor, doctor, bring me back from hell!" He discovered that many resuscitated patients had terrible after-life experiences, but within twenty-four to forty-eight hours seemed to lose all memory of it. I remembered that the books I read on the cruise were researched months following the subjects' after-life experiences.

A doctor friend I'd met at Dar's church gave me a book about after-life experiences. Unlike the other books, this author explained that the figure of light could be Satan; Scripture said he could appear as a figure of light.

The after-life experiences in hell reminded me of the biblical descriptions of hell. I began to read the Bible again. This time it seemed different; I had no problem understanding it. Then, months later, I walked downstairs one morning and believed; I believed that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and that I needed him as my Savior.

Dar's friends – now my friends – regarded me as a new believer. So did Dar.

Did our marriage improve dramatically? No, it didn't. It actually became worse. I learned scriptures I used against Dar. I reminded her frequently that Scripture commanded her to submit to her husband. She told me that Scripture commanded me to love her as Christ loved the church.

Months sped by. Before I'd been reading the Bible to discern whether Christianity is true. I no longer read the Bible. I just carried it to church like most of my friends. I began to wonder if this was all there was to Christianity. I enjoyed new friends; I abandoned my Newport Beach party crowd. I gave up profanity. But somehow Christianity began to bore me.

I started reading Scripture again. This time, seemingly everywhere I read, the words "Lord," and "obey" seemed to jump out at me. I started asking my friends at brunch after church about the need to obey. Most assured me it was impossible to obey. They said we all sinned hundreds of times every day and that we had only to confess our sins to God and he'd forgive us. I asked them about being holy. They assured me that was impossible.

Something didn't ring true. By that time I knew that the Apostle John said that if we continue in sin we don't know God and have never known him. I also remembered that Scripture said that without holiness no one will see the Lord. I continued studying Scripture.

One day I had a talk with the Lord. I said, "Lord, it seems to me your Word says you are to be my Lord and I'm to obey you. I've never heard a sermon on that and my friends disagree. But you've educated me well and I believe your Word says you're to be my Lord and I'm to obey your commands. Please be my Lord. If obedience is what you want, obedience is what you've got. Lord, I'll try my best to obey you the rest of my life."

My life changed! I began to experience love as I'd never guessed it existed. Though my practice was overloaded with work, I had a sense of peace that I'd never experienced before. As a baby believer, I didn't know that I was experiencing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And our marriage changed, all for the better.

Four years after my life really changed, believing the Lord led me to do so, I terminated my law practice to serve the Lord fulltime, though I had no idea what lay ahead. I tried studying the Bible at home, but my law clients

found me. The next year I continued helping them but then without benefit of secretaries and office staff.

In order to divorce myself from the practice, Dar and I bought a motorhome, sold our house, and drove away. For three-and-a-half years we lived in the motorhome. The first year I only studied the Bible. The second year I studied and began to write. Dar caught up on her reading.

In the ensuing years I've not forgotten that when I became a "Christian" the way others told me to, my life had only surface, cosmetic changes. But when I pledged to obey Jesus as my Lord, there seemed to be a new me – a person who experienced love, joy, and peace in great measure.

The Lord has kept in the forefront of my mind the wondrous change that transformed my life when I finally came to know him and pledged to obey him. The subject of a saving faith continues to be a consuming one. That's what I want to share with you now.

Part I

Believe in Whom?

Chapter 1

BELIEVE IN HIM

You talked with the appointment secretary. She assured you that you didn't need an appointment, that Jim Abbott would be in on Wednesday afternoon. She said, "Just come in and ask for Jim."

Wednesday afternoon you arrived at the office, introduced yourself to the receptionist, and asked to see Jim. The receptionist calls, a secretary comes out and takes you to see Jim – Jim Jamison.

What happened? You did as the appointment secretary told you to do, you asked for Jim, but you saw the wrong "*Jim*."

That's what is happening in many of our churches. People come to find the Jesus in whom they can believe to have salvation. Instead, the church tells them about another Jesus.

That's what happened to me. The church people didn't deliberately mislead me; they didn't intentionally take me to the wrong Jesus. They just didn't lead me to the Jesus of Scripture. Only through personal Bible study did I discover and receive the Jesus revealed in Scripture. Then the Holy Spirit flooded me with the fruit of the Spirit.

Believe I Am the One I Claim to Be

You may ask, "Is it possible to believe in a 'wrong' Jesus?" Yes, indeed! Jesus warned about such a danger when he said,

"I told you that you would die in your sins; *if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be*, you will indeed die in your sins."^[1]

To respond to Jesus' warning, we must do two things. The first is to make sure we know *who* Jesus claimed to be. I'll show you that in this section of the book. The second is to *believe* that he is who he claimed to be. That part is up to you.^[2]

In this section of the book, we're looking at the phrase, "believe in *him*," with the emphasis on learning who the "him" of the phrase really is. The phrase, *believe in him*, is often connected with salvation.^[3] Those who correctly *believe in him* are the ones who have salvation. But we can't believe correctly if we believe in the wrong *him*.

A Heresy Which Teaches the Wrong Him

Please answer each of the following two statements with *true* or *false*. The first: If you believe in Jesus as your Savior, you will have eternal life. The second: If you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins, you will have eternal life.

What was your answer? When I pose those statements to people, most believe they are true. Both are false. As to the first one, as we will see, there is no statement in all of Scripture that comes close to saying there is salvation for anyone by believing in Jesus *as Savior*.^[4] The second is also false, but is even further from the truth because it refers to believing in something he did, not in him.

Titles Claimed by Jesus

Jesus claimed to be *Lord*, the *Christ*, the Son of Man, Teacher, King, Master, and the *Son of God*. The titles *Lord*,^[5] *Christ*,^[6] and *Son of God*^[7] satisfy the definition of "him" in the phrase "whoever *believes in him* shall not perish but have everlasting life." Each of these three titles is important and different and yet *all incorporate strikingly similar descriptions of Jesus* – the characteristics of Jesus that God wants us to know and trust as we have faith in *him* for our salvation.

This Heresy Is Within the Evangelical Protestant Church

Perhaps the greatest surprise to me is that the heresy^[8] exists within much of the traditional and evangelical Protestant Church today. The danger is great because it seems to have gone unnoticed by most; only a few seem aware of the difference in the teaching about Jesus that has permeated the church. Even fewer seem willing to come forward to expose this heresy.

Reasons for the Heresy

Why does this heresy remain hidden? There are perhaps many reasons but four come quickly to mind.

Ecumenism

The first is the great wave of ecumenism.^[9] Christian unity is something to be sought so long as the Gospel remains pure, but it is to be condemned in the strongest terms^[10] if unity results in perversion of the Gospel. The ecumenism movement seems to say that no matter what you believe, we can be one; it's more important that we be one than to expose false teaching. What a dangerous statement!^[11]

Relativism

The second reason is the great movement toward relativism. The common phrase is, "Everything is relative." I recently heard that, according to a poll, over 60% of "Christians" agree that everything is relative. That's an oxymoron.^[12] Christians have unchanging values; they believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.^[13] The relativism mindset seems to say that you can believe in Jesus your way and I can believe in Jesus my way and each is fine, whatever way that is. After all, everything is relative; all religions lead to God.^[14] How contrary to Jesus' claim: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."^[15]

Satisfies Needs to Feel Good

The third is that the heresy satisfies the stated need of many who attend our churches today – to find personal fulfillment. The heresy makes them feel good;^[16] it's easy.

The goal of biblical Christianity is not to satisfy self. On the contrary, Scripture says that those who desire to *believe in him* and be saved must die to self.^[17]

Seems Seeker-Friendly

The fourth is the desire to make the church seeker-friendly. There is a great effort not to turn off the unbeliever who is seeking to know something about God.

Some are embarrassed about the strength of the gospel as presented in Scripture. Many water the gospel down, believing that makes it more attractive. To those who believe Scripture is too harsh for the unbeliever, to those who water it down, Jesus said, "If anyone is ashamed *of me and my words* in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."^[18] When the gospel was shared fully,^[19] not watered down, the church spread in the face of persecution and was known for its power, not its words.^[20]

It Sounds Right

One of the greatest dangers of the heresy is that it sounds right to many people who are not well-read in Scripture. You may often hear the statement in your church or from a televangelist, "If you accept Jesus as your personal

Savior, you will have eternal life." To many people that sounds right. Yes, it sounds right, but it is false! Nowhere in Scripture can that statement, or anything like it, be found.

The danger is compounded because we hear this heresy coming from highly regarded preachers and teachers in the Christian community. I believe they wouldn't deliberately mislead us. But preachers sometimes seem to place more trust in what they learn in their seminaries than they do in the clear and obvious teachings of Scripture. Some seminaries have been teaching this heresy as truth for generations. Another likely possibility is that some preachers and teachers have simply become careless in their language. I suspect their carelessness causes great joy in the powers and principalities of darkness and much sorrow in the Kingdom of God.

Peter Prophesied About This Heresy

This book will unmask a heresy that seeks to have us believe in the wrong Jesus. Such heresies are not new. Even in the days of the apostles, efforts were made to pervert the Gospel by teaching a different Jesus.^[21]

But we're concerned about a present-day heresy. Peter prophesied about a *future time* when there will be false teachers who will *secretly introduce destructive heresies* which even deny the *sovereign Lord* who bought them.^[22] Peter warned that many will follow their shameful ways and bring the truth into disrepute.^[23]

Peter's prophecy is fulfilled in our time. The Mormons are one of the fastest growing sects in the world. The Jehovah's Witnesses are growing rapidly. The Roman Catholic Church continues to gain ground. All present Jesus, but a *different* Jesus than is presented in Scripture.^[24] All fulfill Peter's prophecy of false teachers denying the Sovereign Lord who bought them. And now an even more dangerous heresy is in traditional and evangelical Protestantism.

The Heresy Is Destructive

The most destructive fact about the heresy is that it gives a false assurance of salvation to millions. Consider the multitudes who believe that they have salvation because they "believe in Jesus as their Savior" or because they "believe that Jesus died for their sins on the cross."^[25]

The destruction of the church, as a body, is also severe. When I hear of a notable Christian falling in a way that brings disrepute to the body of Christ, I suspect he really doesn't know or believe in the true Jesus of Scripture. On a less well-known level are the millions of those who claim to be Christians but live like the world.

Also, within the church body, are additional destructive heresies which are added because of the first false belief. It is the process of building on a lie; subsequent doctrines are necessarily false when the initial premise is false. The second part of this book, "A Saving Faith," will expose some of those heresies.

The Heresy Denies the Lord

Peter's prophecy said such false teachers will deny the *Lord*. The first section of this book will show how they are denying the *Lord*, how different it is from what the Bible teaches, and how it perfectly fulfills Peter's prophecy. Chapters 2 and 5 will fully explain the important differences between the titles *Lord* and *Savior*.

Many Will Follow the Heresy

Peter prophesied that many will follow the heresy. It is probable that the majority of churches teach this false doctrine today. Peter said the false teachers will bring the truth into disrepute. Haven't they done so? Professing Christians are often indistinguishable from non-believers. One of the first objections from nonbelievers about Christianity is that the church is full of hypocrites.

Does God's Repetition Have Meaning?

Mom's exasperation is apparent as she glares at her son, "If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times. If you're ever going to amount to anything you've got to study!"

From her comment, it is obvious that mom has given her son the same message on innumerable occasions. From her language, she deems it important to get the message across to her son, even if she sounds like a nag.

Think of the use of repetition. If you tell someone something over and over (as that mom did to her son) you're probably trying to make an important point. On the other hand, if you mention something only once or twice, likely the subject isn't nearly as important to you.

The same principle applies in Scripture. You and I may repeat something out of habit or anger or impatience. God isn't subject to our frailties. When God repeats something, do you think he has a special purpose in mind? Do you suppose he especially wants us to understand what he repeats? God gives us multiple opportunities so that we truly will be without excuse if we fail to obey.

Why not jot down the three titles of Jesus you think God used when he told us how to be saved. He used only three.

God's Repetition

Let's look at God's use of repetition with reference to the principal titles God gave Jesus.^[26] See page 288 for a breakdown book by book of several titles of Jesus in the New Testament.

The titles God gave Jesus in the Bible show the roles in which God wants us to know Jesus. There are eleven principal titles: Lord, Christ, Son of Man, Teacher, Son of God, King, Lamb, Savior, Prophet, Master, and High Priest.

As we look at the frequency with which they are used, let's ask ourselves whether God's repetition is intentional. The following shows the number of times each title is used of Jesus in the New Testament:

Lord^[27] 618

Christ^[28] 543

Son of Man^[29] 84

Teacher^[30] 42

Son of God^[31] 37

King 35

Lamb 32

Savior^[32] 15

Prophet^[33] 15

Master^[34] 11

High Priest^[35] 7

Do those numbers surprise you? They did me. What an enormous difference in the times of usage of the various titles! Does God intend special truths from his repetition?

As we come to understand those truths, the falsity of the heresy will become obvious. As you look at the frequency of the titles used to describe

Jesus, is there any question in your mind that two of the titles assume an almost overwhelming importance? We'll see why in chapters 2 and 3.

Two-Thirds of New Testament Books Don't Mention "Savior"

Even more convincing to me are the number of books in the New Testament that have no mention of Jesus as Savior. Eighteen books (two-thirds) in the New Testament don't use the title *Savior* for Jesus. Two of the four gospels don't, neither does Romans or Colossians (the theological books of the New Testament), 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, nor 1 Timothy. Galatians does not, neither does Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude nor Revelation.

Is it conceivable that if salvation could be found by accepting (or believing or receiving or having faith in) Jesus as Savior in order to have salvation, that God would have omitted that title of Jesus from most of the New Testament? Or that God would have used the title *Lord* thirty-eight times as often, or *Christ* more than thirty-three times as often as the title *Savior*? Or that God would use other titles, such as *Son of Man*, *Teacher*, *Son of God*, *King*, and *Lamb*, each more than twice as often as *Savior* if our salvation is supposed to be in Jesus as *Savior*? The resounding answer must be: No! It isn't conceivable.

I believe that every word used in Scripture was purposefully intended to be exactly that way by God. If you agree, then, even without additional evidence, the minimal use of the title *Savior* should cause us to skeptically examine claims that salvation is obtained by believing in Jesus *as Savior*.

Not a Semantic Difference

Today's heresy claims we are to believe in Jesus as Savior – a different role than Scripture requires – in order to have salvation. Because Jesus is presented, many find it hard to quarrel with the false teaching. Others say the difference is purely semantic, a mere difference in the choice of words. But that is false. The difference is enormous as the next chapters will reveal.

A Different Jesus; a Wrong Response

Because Jesus is presented in a narrower role than God intends, those that accept the heresy often respond in a different manner than God intends. They rightly respond to Jesus as Savior with *gratitude* but fail to also respond to Jesus as Lord with the *obedience* that comes from faith.^[36] Could

that wrong response deny them salvation? Chapters 6 and 7 will show Scripture's answer to that question.

Chapter 2

JESUS IS LORD

It was a rough day. The crowd seized and attacked them. The magistrates ordered them stripped. Bleeding from a severe flogging, they were thrown into prison. The jailer, warned to guard them carefully, put them in an inner cell and fastened their feet in stocks.

These men should have been scared and depressed. Instead, Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns of praise to God.

Then the earthquake struck. It shook the foundations of the prison, the doors flew open and the chains binding the prisoners came loose.

The jailer knew his life was over when he saw the prison doors open. A breach of duty meant death. The only alternative, to save his family the embarrassment and horror of his trial and execution, was to take his own life.

"Don't harm yourself!" Paul shouted, "We are all here!"

The jailer found lights and rushed to Paul and Silas. He brought them out of the prison and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

"Believe in the *Lord* Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household," they replied. Then they spoke the word of the *Lord*^[37] to him and to all the others in his house.^[38]

SALVATION IS FOUND IN THE LORD

The heresy would have us falsely believe that salvation is obtained by believing in Jesus as Savior. Scripture teaches that *salvation is obtained by believing in Jesus as Lord*.^[39]

Paul and Silas responded directly to the jailer's question. "Believe in the *Lord* Jesus and you will be saved." They made it simple and clear.

When writing to the Roman church, Paul made the way of salvation equally clear:

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is <i>Lord</i> ," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ^[40]

To "confess with our mouth" does *not* mean we are only to *say* Jesus is *Lord*. Rather, we're to speak out freely to all who will listen as a result of the deep conviction within us.^[41]

We are to confess with our mouth that Jesus **is** *Lord*. Note the tense of the verb. It is present tense. He is now, today, my *Lord*.

Likewise, our personal confession isn't sufficient if we confess that Jesus once *was* our *Lord*. The requirement is that Jesus **is** our *Lord*.

We live in the present. The verb tense remains in the present. If we would be saved, Jesus must become, be, and continue to be, our personal *Lord*.

Receive Salvation through Our Lord

Paul made clear that salvation is in Jesus as *Lord*. He said, "God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive *salvation* through our *Lord* Jesus Christ.^[42] The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus our *Lord*."^[43]

Paul said, "We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as *Lord*."^[44] Peter exhorted: "In your hearts set apart Christ as *Lord*."^[45] Paul taught the purpose for Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection: "For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the *Lord* of both the dead and the living."^[46]

Receive Christ Jesus As Lord

No Scripture speaks of "receiving" Jesus as Savior, but Paul acknowledged that the Colossian church "received" Christ Jesus as *Lord*.^[47] Notice carefully. The brothers^[48] didn't receive Jesus as the Christ. No, they received Christ Jesus as *Lord*!^[49]

The distinction is important. The Christ, who embodies the fulfillment of all prophecy, must be received as *Lord* – the supreme ruler, the head of all. There is but one *Lord* – Jesus Christ.^[50] There is no power or authority higher than the *Lord* of lords, the *King* of kings. Jesus Christ is *Lord* of all."^[51]

God exalted Christ Jesus to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.^[52] Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the glory of God the Father.^[53]

Scripture teaches that salvation is in the *Son of God*, in the *Lord* Jesus, and in the *Christ*. Is there a contradiction? Of course not. The *Son of God* is Jesus *Christ* our *Lord*.^[54] See how perfectly the Scripture fits together.

Christ Jesus must be received as *Lord* by all who would be saved. Let's state that more personally. You and I must receive Christ Jesus as our

personal *Lord* in order to have eternal life!

Call on the Name of the Lord and Be Saved

The disciples had met together in Jerusalem since the ascension. Their fear following the crucifixion had been replaced with joy after Jesus' resurrection when they were reunited with him. Before he ascended into heaven, he instructed them: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."^[55]

Then it happened. First they heard the sound of a violent wind. The first thought was of an unexpected storm, but the sound was inside the room. They saw tongues of fire enter the room, separate and come to rest on each of them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages.

Outside, the sound was heard in much of Jerusalem. People came running to see the cause. They found the believers speaking in foreign tongues.

Many Jews from other countries were in the city. To their amazement they heard the disciples speaking in their native languages. Some thought they were drunk, but Peter explained this was not so, but the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, in which God said, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people."^[56]

Then Peter, in the words of the prophet, explained to the assembled people, "Everyone who calls on the name of the *Lord* will be saved."^[57] Peter explained to the crowd about Jesus, his ministry, the miracles, his death, and his resurrection. He concluded: "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both *Lord* and Christ."

The crowd heard and understood. They were cut to the heart that they had killed their Messiah – the Christ. They understood the power and authority given by God to his Son, the *Lord* Jesus. About three thousand became believers and were baptized that day.

Paul used the same words to instruct the Romans: "Everyone who calls on the *name* of the *Lord* will be saved."^[58]

WHO IS THE LORD?

Up to the time that Jesus displayed his power and authority, the Greek term *Kurios* (translated *Lord*) was used in the New Testament as a title of courtesy and authority, even as applied to Jesus. That was understandable as the people who spoke to him often didn't know to whom they were speaking.

That changed, following some of his amazing miracles, as people recognized he had extraordinary power and authority. After Christ's resurrection, the title *Kurios* was used (with two exceptions)^[59] by New Testament writers to refer only to God and the *Lord* Jesus.

Some teach that the term *Lord* refers to God the Father and not to Jesus, or, if to Jesus, to Jesus as God. Not so! Paul carefully dispelled either possibility:

Even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but *one God, the Father*, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but *one Lord, Jesus Christ*, through whom all things came and through whom we live.^[60]

In Paul's writings, *God* means God the Father; *Lord* means only Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Paul debunked another part of the heresy in those verses. Its proponents sometimes claim the term *Lord* was a mere title of courtesy, that many with power and authority were called *Lord*. Paul stated there are many "lords." There are many people who have power and authority, but there is only one *Lord* – one who has all authority in heaven and on earth.^[61]

Jesus Claimed to Be Lord

The early Christians were well aware of the teachings about Jesus. They knew he had told his disciples, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for *that is what I am*."^[62] They knew that when Jesus was about to ascend into heaven, he told his disciples: "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*."^[63]

By that declaration, Jesus gave the early Christian church (and us) the ultimate definition of *Lord*. That description applied uniquely to him. Only one person can have all authority.^[64]

Jesus told the Apostle John, "I am the Alpha and the Omega,^[65] who is, and who was, and who is to come, the *Almighty*."^[66]

There Is Only One Lord – Jesus Christ

In the days of the early church, Caesar decreed that everyone in the Roman empire would greet each other with the salutation, "Caesar is Lord."

In a story handed down about a first century family of Christians, some Roman soldiers met the father and demanded he greet them with, "Caesar is Lord."

He refused, saying, "Jesus is Lord."

When the father continued to refuse, he and his family were taken to the lions' arena in Rome and told that unless he proclaimed, "Caesar is Lord," one by one his family would be thrown to the lions.

He was horrified, but shook his head and repeated softly, "Jesus is Lord."

The officials angrily ordered his youngest child, a son, to be thrown to the lions. As the family watched, the boy was torn apart by the lions. Again the father was commanded to proclaim that Caesar is Lord.

Choking back tears, he responded as before, "Jesus is Lord."

Another child and still another were thrown to the lions. The officials themselves were appalled. They had expected the father to compromise his beliefs and say that Caesar was Lord. They sympathetically told the father that the words weren't important, that even though he didn't believe them, all he had to do was say them and he and the rest of his family would be saved.

With pain and anguish on his face, the man repeated, "I cannot. Jesus is Lord."

The entire family perished that day.

Their death underscores who the early church knew to be "Lord," namely the *Lord* Jesus Christ. *Lord* was not an honorary title. To the early church, the fact that *Jesus is Lord* was worth dying for. Doubtless they knew that Jesus said he would acknowledge before the angels of God those who acknowledge him, but he would disown before the angels of God those who disown him before men.^[67]

The first-century church was taught by Peter, Paul, and the other apostles. The father who refused to call Caesar "Lord" may have heard Paul teach, "*There is but one Lord, Jesus Christ.*"^[68]

In Paul's day we know there were many "lords,"^[69] including Caesar. The early Christians believed there was but one *Lord* – Jesus Christ.^[70]

God Made Jesus Lord

How did Jesus become *Lord*? God made him *Lord*!

When the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles after Jesus ascended, Peter told the crowd, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: *God* has made this *Jesus*, whom you crucified, both *Lord* and Christ."^[71]

It was *God* who exalted Jesus to the highest place; *God* gave him the name that is above every name.^[72] *God* will receive glory as every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is *Lord*.^[73]

God seated Jesus at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. *God* placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.^[74]

Jesus Is Lord

The setting is both splendid and terrifying. Thrones are set up. Billions of resurrected souls gather before the judgment seat of Christ.

Jesus appears. Angels and men alike fall on their faces before his glory. His face shines like the sun.^[75]

Terror strikes those prostrate people. Many remember the hundreds and thousands of times they said, "Jesus" or "Christ" or "Jesus Christ," not honoring or recognizing Jesus, but using his name in profanity.

An angel commands that each prostrate soul confess that Jesus Christ **is** *Lord*.^[76] As each confesses that truth, in each heart is the certain knowledge that the confession also seals his doom. Each knows he didn't acknowledge Jesus as his *Lord* when he could have. Now he must confess that Jesus is *Lord*, but to no avail. Time has run out. The opportunity for salvation has passed.

God's Word Teaches That Jesus Is Lord

God's Word repeatedly teaches that Jesus **is** *Lord*. The first announcement by the angels of the birth of Jesus told us: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he **is** Christ the *Lord*."^[77]

When Peter was sent to Cornelius and his family and friends, he told them that Jesus Christ **is** *Lord of all*.^[78] Our confession of faith must be "*Jesus is Lord*."^[79]

In the end times, men will make war against the *Lord* Jesus – the Lamb – but he will overcome them because he *is Lord of lords and King of kings.*^[80]

Jesus Is Lord and God

Ten of the disciples were together. Tension was high. The shutters were closed, the lock on the door checked to be certain it was secure. They all shared the unspoken question, "Having successfully crucified Jesus, would the Jewish rulers also arrest his disciples?"

Suddenly there were eleven in the room. Slowly everyone turned to see Jesus standing among them. Some glanced at the door, but the lock was still secure. Jesus said, "Peace be with you."

When he saw consternation mixed with joy on their faces, he said: "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." He showed them his pierced hands and the spear hole in his side. He asked for a piece of fish and ate it before them. He talked with them and explained the Scriptures to them. Suddenly he was gone.

Thomas wasn't with the disciples when Jesus had come. When they saw Thomas they said, "We have seen the *Lord!*" They told him about the holes in his hands and his side.

Thomas mocked them, thinking they had a delusion. He said, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

Exactly a week after the first appearance, Jesus appeared to the eleven. As before, he came into the locked room and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you!"

It was as though there were only two people in the room, the *Lord* Jesus and Thomas. Thomas stared at the *Lord*. Jesus said to him, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas fell to his knees before the *Lord*. He exclaimed, "My *Lord* and my *God!*"

Jesus did not deny that he was God. Instead he said, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."^[81]

SCRIPTURE DEFINES LORD

Proponents of the heresy (that seeks to have us believe in the wrong Jesus) claim that the Greek word *Kurios*^[82] (translated *Lord*) simply means Sir or Master or master or owner. The title *Kurios* is used in each of those ways in the New Testament, but 618 times it refers to *Lord* – a person of power and authority.^[83]

In law, one of the most basic rules is to let the document define the meaning of a word. Scripture defines *Lord* (*Kurios*) as the title applies to Jesus.

It doesn't surprise that the Greek word *Kurios*^[84] isn't adequate to describe the authority, glory, and power of the *Lord* Jesus. There's never been another person on the face of the earth who had the power and authority God gave the *Lord* Jesus. Why would the Greeks have a word for something they'd never known?

God used the Greek word that was closest to his meaning; through Scripture he defined how *Lord* (*Kurios*) is to be understood when applied to Jesus.

God Gave Jesus the Name Above Every Name

Through the writers of the New Testament, God described to the early church and to subsequent generations the sovereign power, authority, and majesty of Jesus as *Lord*. He redefined the title "Lord" to make it a name above every other name.

Paul declared:

God exalted Jesus to the *highest* place and *gave him the name that is above every name*, that at the name of Jesus every knee should *bow*, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue *confess* that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the glory of God the Father.^[85]

Paul testified that Jesus is the *image* of the invisible God, the *firstborn* over all creation.^[86] Paul credited creation itself to the Lord Jesus: "By Jesus all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; *all things were created by him and for him.*"^[87]

"Jesus is *before* all things, and in him all things hold together. Jesus is the *head* of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from

among the dead, so that in *everything* he might have the *supremacy*."^[88] Paul testified that *God seated Jesus at his right hand* in the heavenly realms, *far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given*, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet.^[89] The *Lord* Jesus is the *head* over every power and authority.^[90] Jesus is at God's right hand, with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.^[91]

It is essential to our faith to know who Jesus is – that he is the *sovereign head of all*. Though in the Greek language the title *Kurios* is closest to describing who Jesus is, he is far above that. He is far *above every title* that can be given.^[92] There is no higher or equal authority in heaven or on earth except the Father himself.^[93]

God's Final Description of the Lord Jesus

John had the most awesome experience ever given a living man. In heaven, he was guided by an angel and shown the things that would occur in the future. Some things he was forbidden to write about, but what he could write he wrote in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.^[94] He described one of the last scenes he saw:

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. 'He will rule them with an iron scepter.' He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**^[95]

Even in heaven, Jesus is known as King and *Lord*.

JESUS AS LORD

Do you remember how Jesus was presented to you when you first heard of him? You may be one who first heard of him on your mother's knee as she read children's Bible stories to you. That was true for me.

Or, you may be one who had little knowledge of Jesus until you were an adult, but then heard of him through a friend, a church, or a television

program. Can you remember how Jesus was described to you?

Preached As Lord

In the early church, Jesus was preached *as Lord*.^[96] That may not be how you and I first heard about him. Many hear of him primarily as Savior, with great emphasis on the fact that he died on the cross so that our sins may be forgiven.

In the early church the emphasis was on Jesus as *Lord*, on the power and authority that are his as *Lord*, on how the *Lord* Jesus Christ works all things out for good for those who love him,^[97] and on how he is able to help those who are being tempted.^[98]

Trust Him As Lord

The early church learned that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, could separate them from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus their *Lord*.^[99] Spiritually, they had great assurance. They knew they were secure in the power of their Lord and that no force or power in heaven or on earth could pry them out of the hand of God.

But we're to trust Jesus in the most practical daily aspects of life. He knows that making a living, feeding and clothing a family, renting or buying a house are important parts of our daily lives. He observed that most people tend to be anxious about such things. He admonished us:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and *all these things will be given to you as well*."^[100]

Jesus gave us a conditional promise. The condition is that we are to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness first. If we do that, Jesus promised, our food, clothing, and shelter will be given to us as well as God's kingdom and

his righteousness. Not everyone can expect the promise to come true for them. Only those who are willing to place God's kingdom and his righteousness first in their lives are the beneficiaries of the Lord's promise.

Likewise, Jesus promised, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and *I will give you rest.*"^[101] Does Jesus give everyone rest? No, he gives rest to those who come to him.

Can we really trust Jesus to provide such practical things as our daily needs – food, shelter, and clothing? Can he give us rest in our hectic world?

We can trust the Lord Jesus implicitly because he has *all power and all authority* in heaven and on earth.^[102] Because he is *Lord* of all^[103] we can trust him to fulfill all his promises to us, knowing that he is fully capable and that there is nothing too difficult for him.

Christians are unique in the world in that they have a *Lord* who alone has all power and authority. Only they have a *Lord* who commands that we cast our anxiety on him because he cares for us.^[104] He commands us to be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, to present our requests to God.^[105]

Receive Him As Lord

Today's heresy often is stated as an invitation and a promise: "Receive Jesus as your personal Savior and you will have eternal life." That's not what the early church taught and there is no such statement in all of Scripture.

What does Scripture say? While there are no scriptures which tell us to "accept" Jesus in any capacity, there are two scriptures which speak of receiving him, but only one which tells how to receive him. Have you guessed it? Of course you have. We must receive him *as Lord!*^[106]

Live in Jesus As Lord

My concept of Jesus will greatly affect how I live. If he is my *Lord* and Master, I'll live each day to reflect that. Scripture says that is exactly how we are to live:

Just as you *received* Christ Jesus *as Lord*, *continue* to *live in him* (*as Lord*), rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.^[107]

What happens when we *continue to live in him*? We become rooted and built up in him. We are strengthened in the faith. We overflow with

thankfulness.

Focus on Jesus As Lord

You may have heard invitations to receive Jesus into your heart. Scripture teaches only one way: *In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.*^[108]

Consider what that means. I believe it means that when we think about Jesus, we should think about him as our *Lord*. We should pray to him as our *Lord*. Throughout each day, as we face the normal everyday decisions of life, we should weigh our decisions based on obedience to the teachings and commands of Jesus Christ as our *Lord*. As *Lord*, he is to be the center, the focus, the sovereign ruler of our lives.

Present Jesus As Lord

You and I are to present Jesus *as Lord*. We are always to be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have.^[109] We have this hope within us if we believe in the *Lord* Jesus Christ, if in our hearts we have set apart Christ as *Lord*. That is the answer we are to share with others.

THE APOSTLES KNEW JESUS IS LORD

The Apostles saw Jesus exercise supernatural power and authority. He turned water into wine, healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons, calmed storms, walked on water, and fed thousands from a couple of loaves and a few fish. He did these wonders in the Apostles' presence while they watched. They saw with their eyes that Jesus had authority over everything. Peter verbalized how all-encompassing the power and authority of Jesus is: "Jesus Christ is *Lord of all*."^[110]

Apostles Preached Jesus As Lord

The ship docked at Miletus and a messenger was sent to fetch the elders of the church of Ephesus.

It was a sad time. These grown men wept with Paul, knowing he was going to Jerusalem, perhaps to die, perhaps to be imprisoned. Paul said he would never see any of them again. They knelt and prayed together. They kissed him and wept with him.

Paul reminded them, "I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our *Lord* Jesus."^[111]

Previously, Paul told the Corinthian church, "We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ *as Lord*, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."^[112]

Let's see that again. What did the early church leaders teach? They preached Jesus Christ *as Lord*,^[113] that all must have faith in our *Lord* Jesus. They spoke the word of the *Lord*.^[114]

Results of Preaching Jesus As Lord

I've studied churches wherever I've been, trying to see what was different about one church versus another, why some grew rapidly and others languished. Could it have anything to do with how Jesus is presented?

What was the result of preaching Jesus as *Lord* in the early New Testament church? It grew rapidly even in the face of extreme persecution. Paul said, "We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as *Lord*."^[115] What happened as a result of that preaching? Many people *believed in the Lord*.^[116] Repeatedly the book of Acts recounts that more and more men and women *believed in the Lord* and were added to their number.^[117] Again it recounts, the *Lord's* hand was with them, and a great number of people *believed and turned to the Lord*.^[118]

The believers *received Jesus as their Lord*.^[119] When Lydia and the members of her household were baptized, she invited the apostles to her home. Trying to convince them she said, "If you consider me a *believer in the Lord*, come and stay at my house."^[120]

It is said of Crispus, the synagogue ruler, "His entire household *believed in the Lord*."^[121]

Always, the emphasis is on believing in Jesus as *Lord*, confessing him as *Lord* or receiving him as *Lord*! Never are we told in Scripture to believe in Jesus as Savior, to confess him as Savior or to receive him as Savior.

Early Church Believed in the Lord Jesus Christ

At Caesarea there was a Gentile, Cornelius, who was a centurion in the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing. He gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.

One day he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked.

"Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God, the angel answered. "Send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner."

As Peter was praying on the rooftop of Simon the Tanner in Joppa, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven open and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It held all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air.

"Get up, Peter. Kill and eat," a voice told him.

"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

The voice spoke a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

This happened three times. Then the sheet was taken back to heaven.

At that very moment, Cornelius' servants arrived. The Holy Spirit told Peter to go with them.

Peter went with the servants and entered Cornelius' house, an act forbidden by Jewish regulations. Peter remembered the vision and knew that what God had made clean he should not call impure.

Many people were gathered in Cornelius' house. Cornelius urged Peter to tell them everything the *Lord* had commanded him to tell them.

Peter began by saying, "You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is *Lord* of all."^[122] He then told them about Jesus, his ministry, the miracles, his crucifixion, and his resurrection and about the witnesses who saw him.

Peter told them, "Jesus commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."^[123]

The Holy Spirit came on those gathered in the house. They began speaking in tongues and praising God.

Peter ordered that they be baptized.^[124]

When news of this reached Jerusalem, Peter was called before the elders and Apostles to explain why he went to the Gentiles, entered their home, and ate with them in violation of Jewish custom.

Peter explained in detail everything that had happened, and said: "If God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the *Lord* Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?"^[125]

The story gives us important information. The church in Jerusalem said of themselves that they believed in the *Lord*. Peter also disclosed that the *Lord* Jesus commanded the apostles to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge.

WE SAY "LORD," BUT DO WE MEAN IT?

Let's examine again our personal experiences, yours and mine. If we attend church, we often hear people talk about the *Lord*. The pastor often refers to Jesus as *Lord*. But in many churches, it seems apparent that the people who say "Lord" don't know the *Lord* or what the title *Lord* really means as it applies to Jesus, or what our response must be if Jesus is our *Lord*. These failures may be the results of carelessness or from teaching the wrong Jesus – the heresy.

Jesus seemed to anticipate our present situation. He taught as if he were speaking directly to us:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'

"Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"^[126]

Jesus was obviously talking to people who claimed to be Christians and who *called* him *Lord*. We can imagine this being fulfilled by people who say, "Lord, Lord" as they pray, or as they talk to others in a religious setting.

Jesus' teaching becomes chilling, however, when he begins to talk about those who many would regard as superreligious. They will address Jesus at the judgment and remind him that they prophesied in his name, drove out demons, and performed many miracles in his name.

When we hear or read of those who exorcise demons and perform miracles and prophesy, don't we tend to think of them as spiritually gifted people who must be very close to God?

Jesus won't judge us on which gifts of the Spirit we exercised in his name. Rather, if I claim to believe in him as *Lord*, he expects me to obey his

teachings and commands. He expects me to do the will of God. If I don't seek to obey him, at the judgment he'll say to me, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoer!"^[127] It won't matter how many times I called him *Lord*. He sees my heart. He knows that I didn't receive him as my *Lord*.^[128]

If the prior paragraph is correct and my response to Jesus as my *Lord* is to be one of obedience, and if salvation is related to obedience to Jesus as my *Lord*, shouldn't there be a scripture that states that? There is. Hebrews 5:9 states that *Jesus is the source of salvation for all who obey him*.^[129]

They Deny Our Sovereign and Lord

It is hoped that after experiencing in these pages how God has presented his Son as the supreme head, the *King* of kings and *Lord* of lords, truly the Sovereign ruler, you are convinced that Jesus not only is *Lord*, but that he must be my *Lord* and your *Lord* in order for us to have salvation.

Notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence that Jesus is *Lord*, the proponents of the heresy (which this book refutes) refuse to recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They argue forcefully that salvation is possible without Jesus being *Lord* of our lives.^[130] They say it isn't necessary that Jesus be our *Lord*.

God knew about this heresy and others before it, and warned us about it in Scripture:

For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and *deny* Jesus Christ *our only Sovereign and Lord*.^[131]

You may say, "I don't know of anyone in our churches who denies Jesus!"

Most don't deny Jesus as a person. In fact, such people emphasize that Jesus is our Savior and claim that we are saved by believing in him as Savior. They *deny* that Jesus is our Master, our only Sovereign and *Lord* and that we must bow the knee to him and receive him as our *Lord*. They falsely proclaim that the title *Lord* is only a title of courtesy, whereas we saw how God defined the title *Lord* (*Kurios*) when it refers to his Son, showing him to have glory, power, majesty and supremacy over all.

Heresy from Within the Church

Does it surprise you that such heresy will come from within the church? Jesus warned: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."[\[132\]](#)

True believers are referred to in Scripture as sheep. Jesus is our shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd; we are the sheep of his pasture. If the wolf came to us as a wolf, we'd run to our shepherd for protection. But when the wolf comes dressed as a sheep, in sheep's clothing (who looks and acts like one of us – attends our churches, preaches our sermons, and teaches our Sunday School classes), we may not recognize the heresy he proclaims unless we are firmly grounded in Scripture.

What does Scripture teach about those who spread heresy? If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our *Lord* Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is *conceited* and *understands nothing*.[\[133\]](#)

Believe in the Lord Jesus

The *Lord* Jesus has been revealed in this chapter.[\[134\]](#) Scripture painstakingly described him and the power, authority, majesty and glory that's been given to him by the Father. If we fail to recognize Jesus for who he claimed to be[\[135\]](#) – the *Lord*, with all power and authority in heaven and on earth – it's our fault.[\[136\]](#) If we choose not to believe in the *Lord* Jesus who Scripture has revealed to us, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Is it now more meaningful to you to hear the commands, "Confess with your mouth that Jesus is *Lord*,"[\[137\]](#) or, "Believe in the *Lord* Jesus Christ and you will be saved,"[\[138\]](#) or, "Everyone who calls on the name of the *Lord* will be saved"?[\[139\]](#)

Another Man's View

I received the quarterly devotional, Days of Praise, recently. It opened directly to May 6, entitled, "Another Jesus." It's on point to our discussion:

ANOTHER JESUS

"Jesus" is quite popular among worldly people today, but not the *true* Jesus. The popular Jesus may be the baby Jesus in the manger at Christmastime, or the buddy Jesus of Nashville "gospel" music, or the success-counseling Jesus of the positive thinkers. He may be the romantic Jesus of the Christian crooners, the rhythmic Jesus of Christian rock, or the reforming Jesus of the liberals, but none of these are the Jesus preached by the Apostle Paul, and therefore not the *real* Jesus who saves men and women from their sins.

Jesus, in reality, is the Lord Jesus Christ, the offended Creator of the universe,^[140] who had to die as man on the cross to redeem us through His shed blood,^[141] and who then rose from the dead to be set "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named."^[142] Finally, it is *this* Jesus "who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom."^[143]

The Lord Jesus, as He really is, is not the popular Jesus of T-shirts and bumper stickers, politicians and entertainers. He was "despised and rejected of men,"^[144] so they "crucified the Lord of glory."^[145]

He is the mighty God, the perfect Man, the only Savior, the eternal King, and Lord of Lords. God-called teachers will not preach an imaginary Jesus who appeals to the flesh, but rather, the true Christ of creation and salvation.

HENRY M. MORRIS^[146]

Chapter 3

JESUS IS THE CHRIST

The Jews were both confused and excited, with a sense of anticipation. No one had heard of this carpenter from Nazareth. Suddenly he was teaching in one place and then another, always doing good. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, made lepers clean, even raised the dead. Never had such signs been seen in Judah. When he taught, it was with authority, not like the teachers of the law.

After Jesus had been with his disciples for some time, he asked them what others said about who he was.

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the *Christ*, the Son of the living God."^[147]

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."^[148] Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the *Christ*.^[149]

Jesus' response to Peter affirmed that Jesus is indeed the *Christ*.^[150]

SALVATION IS IN THE CHRIST

Do words and titles have important special meanings? When salvation is discussed, often people say, "That's just semantics. We're all talking about the same thing."

It is not semantics. Scripture teaches that we must believe correctly in who Jesus is. Let's look again at Jesus' warning:

"I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe *that I am the one I claim to be*, you will indeed die in your sins."^[151]

Jesus claimed to be the *Christ*. Therefore we must believe he is who he claimed to be – the *Christ* – in order to have salvation.

Peter gave a similar warning. After he and John healed the man crippled from birth at the temple gate, the miracle astonished the people and drew the

attention of religious leaders. They arrested the two and interrogated them the next day. "By what power or *what name* did you do this?"^[152] they asked.

Peter answered: "It is by the name of Jesus *Christ* of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed."^[153]

What Peter said thereafter was squarely on point: "Salvation is found in no one else, for *there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*"^[154]

What is that name? Peter had already told them. It is the name of Jesus *Christ*.

Believe That Jesus Is the Christ

In the very first sermon after the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles and disciples, Peter preached: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and *Christ.*"^[155]

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus *Christ* for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."^[156]

In his Gospel, John enumerated many of the most extraordinary miracles of Jesus. Then he summarized their purpose: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the *Christ*, the Son of God, and that *by believing you may have life in his name.*"^[157]

In his high priestly prayer, in which Jesus interceded for us before the Father, note how he addressed himself and how we may have salvation: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus *Christ*, whom you have sent."^[158]

Paul taught that God's promises are given through faith in Jesus *Christ*. He said the law was put in charge to lead us to *Christ* that we might be justified by faith. Paul said we are all sons of God through faith in *Christ* Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into *Christ* have clothed yourselves with *Christ*. We are all one in *Christ* Jesus.^[159]

That's quite an emphasis on Jesus as *Christ*, isn't it?

Believe in Him As Lord and Christ

Paul made clear that salvation was in Jesus who is *Lord* and *Christ*. He said, "God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive *salvation* through our *Lord Jesus Christ*."^[160] Paul taught that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is *eternal life* in *Christ Jesus our Lord*.^[161] Paul said, "We do not preach ourselves, but *Jesus Christ as Lord*."^[162]

Then Paul made a statement to show the purpose of the different titles of Jesus: "For this very reason, *Christ* died and returned to life so that he might be the *Lord* of both the dead and the living."^[163] It is the *Christ* who is in all respects the fulfillment of prophecy. It is the *Lord Jesus* who is the supreme head of both the living and the dead in whom we are to believe for salvation.^[164]

The ultimate joining of Jesus as *Lord* with Jesus as the *Christ* was also given by Paul: "There is but one *Lord*, *Jesus Christ*, through whom all things came and through whom we live."^[165] That one *Lord* is the *Christ*!^[166]

THE "CHRIST" IS UNIQUE IN ETERNITY

Why is the name "*Christ*" special? What does it signify that is so important we must believe that Jesus is the *Christ*?

Peter's confession that Jesus is the *Christ* spoke volumes to those who heard. For centuries the Jews had yearned for the coming of their *Christ*. As a Jew, Peter knew the many prophecies about the coming of the *Christ*. Throughout the Psalms and prophets, God told about the *Christ* who was to come. See Appendix I for prophecies of the *Christ* and how they were fulfilled in *Christ Jesus*.

In eternity past, the present, and in the eternal future, there is only one *Christ*. He is clearly identified in Scripture. He is totally unique. The prophecies about him refer to one and only one person; they were fulfilled in the person of *Jesus Christ*.

Christ – the Coming King and Lord

The Jews believed the *Christ* was to be their King who would come and reign forever.^[167] Scripture called this King the *Anointed One*^[168] meaning *Messiah*^[169] or *Christ*^[170]. The Jews knew that God would install the *Christ* as King on Zion.^[171] God made plain that this King was his Son^[172] who would rule the world with an iron scepter.^[173] God said of the *Christ*: "The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of

your enemies."^[174] The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath. He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.^[175]

The Jews knew of Daniel's prophecy that the *Christ* will be given authority, glory and sovereign power; that all peoples, nations and men of every language will worship him. His dominion will be everlasting and will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.^[176]

Those prophecies disclosed the *Christ* who would be *Lord*. His power and authority were above all others.

The Jews Emphasized That Their Christ Would Be King

The coming of the *Christ* was of overriding importance to the Jews, perhaps because of their history of being taken captive and dispersed throughout the nations. When the *Christ* came, the Jews were subjugated under the rule of Rome. They and their religious leaders erroneously believed that when the *Christ* came he would become their King, set them free from Rome, and make them the prominent nation in the world. They also erred in their belief^[177] that when the *Christ* came, he would remain forever.^[178]

The Suffering Christ

Inexplicably, the Jews missed the point that the *Christ* must first come to suffer and die. Inexplicable because the prophecies are remarkably explicit. Isaiah prophesied that the *Christ* came to be a guilt offering,^[179] to bear our sins,^[180] to have laid on him the iniquity of us all.^[181] The *Christ* would be despised and rejected by men,^[182] pierced for our transgression, and crushed for our iniquities.^[183] He would be killed^[184] and buried even though he was innocent.^[185] Nevertheless, his body would not be allowed to decay; he would be resurrected from the dead.^[186]

David began Psalm 22 with words *Christ* Jesus would utter from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"^[187] The Psalm describes the *Christ* on the cross and the agony he suffered there. The *Christ* (the speaker in the psalm) says he is scorned by men and despised by the people. Those who see him mock him; they hurl insults, shake their heads and say, "He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."^[188]

The *Christ* prophetically describes the physical agony on the cross. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death."^[189]

He describes the specifics of the crucifixion, surrounded by dogs,^[190] encircled by a band of evil men who pierce his hands and his feet,^[191] and people that stare and gloat over him.^[192] The prophecy states that his killers divide his garments among them and cast lots for his clothing.^[193]

Jesus himself prophesied his role as the suffering *Christ*. He explained to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.^[194] Jesus said he would be mocked, insulted, spit upon, flogged, and killed. He said on the third day he would rise again.^[195]

All the prophecies of the suffering *Christ* were fulfilled in Jesus *Christ*. See Appendix I for a list of prophecies and their fulfillment by Jesus *Christ*.

HERESY ABOUT THE CHRIST

Today's Heresy Is Similar to That of the Jews

The Jews missed the picture of the suffering *Christ* because of their preoccupation with the *Christ* as King and Ruler. They didn't want to hear about a *Christ* who would come to suffer and die.

How similar to today's heresy. Much of the church doesn't want to hear about the *Son of God*, the *Lord of lords*, the *Christ* who is the *Master* of all true believers, and the *Sovereign Ruler* with all authority in heaven and on earth. They want only to hear about a Savior. They want to believe they are saved because they accept Jesus as their Savior. In them the prophecy is fulfilled:

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.^[196]

The Jews perished who insisted that when the *Christ* came he would be their King and reign forever. Those in the church today who insist Jesus need only be their Savior will also perish eternally.^[197]

Liars and the Anti-Christ Deny the Christ

Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the *Christ*. Such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son.^[198] So said the Apostle John.

Why would John say that denying Jesus is the *Christ* denies both the Father and the Son? It is because the title *Christ* includes all the prophecies God (the Father) caused to be written about the *Christ*, all the miracles God the Father used to authenticate his Son as the *Christ*, and all the promises God made which were fulfilled through the *Christ*. It was God the Father who promised the *Christ*, who sent the *Christ*, who resurrected the *Christ*. To reject Jesus as the *Christ* is to reject God the Father.

Consider then the warning and the encouragement John gives us: "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of *Christ* does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son."^[199] Because the prophecies about the *Christ* emphatically proclaim him as *Lord* and the Son of God, who will rule and to whom obedience is owed, anyone who proclaims instead that salvation is in Jesus as Savior is running ahead and not continuing in the teaching of Christ.

Heresies Deny the Christ

One of the heresies in the days of the early church was Gnosticism. A principal teaching of that heresy denied Christ's true humanity.^[200] Pertaining to that heresy, John warned: "Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus *Christ* as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist."^[201] Notice that the very first heresy denied Jesus as the *Christ* who came in the flesh.

I believe Jude warned about the present-day heresy.^[202] Jude prophesied:

Certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus *Christ* our only Sovereign and Lord.^[203]

The heresy of today also denies Jesus as the *Christ*. The present-day heresy is more difficult to distinguish because the adherents of the heresy often call Jesus both "Lord" and "Christ," yet they deny Jesus *Christ* as our only Sovereign and Lord, claiming that salvation is through Jesus as Savior.

AUTHENTICATION OF JESUS AS THE CHRIST

In a trial, non-oral evidence must be authenticated before it can be used for proof. That means proving it really is what it is represented to be.

When Jesus *Christ* came to earth in human form as a baby, then grew into manhood and began his ministry, God had to authenticate Jesus as the *Christ*.

Why would God have to authenticate the *Christ*? Was it so all the Jews to whom Jesus preached would believe in him as the *Christ*? Not at all;^[204] only a few were permitted to know who he was.^[205] If most of the Jews had believed Jesus to be the *Christ*, they wouldn't have permitted him to be crucified and God's redemptive purpose would have been frustrated.^[206]

God authenticated Jesus as the *Christ* for all who would hear and know about him after the resurrection and Jesus' ascension into heaven.

Fulfillment of Prophecy

God authenticated Jesus as the *Christ* two ways. The first was by fulfilling in Jesus the prophecies about the *Christ* given to the Jews by psalmists and prophets.

The process of authentication by prophecy involved hundreds of years. In order for it to be the best evidence, God caused the prophecies to be given over a long period of time by many different prophets and psalmists. The prophecies had to be so specific that their fulfillment could be recognized.^[207] The Jews knew they referred to the *Christ*.^[208] When the *Christ* came, the prophecies were meticulously fulfilled in Jesus.

See Appendix I, "Prophecies about the Christ fulfilled by Jesus."

The Christ Came Exactly When Prophecy Said He Would

Perhaps the most specific thing God could prophesy about his *Christ* would be the time of his coming. So God did that. God so specifically specified the time of his coming that anyone who knows the prophecy and still denies Jesus is the Christ is in deliberate rebellion against God.

Through an angel, God told Daniel the time of the coming of the *Christ*. The angel said, "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the *Anointed One* [*Christ*], the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.'"^[209]

Daniel's prophecy continued: "After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the *Anointed One* [*Christ*] will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary."^[210]

What happened? The *Christ* did come and was cut off; he was killed by crucifixion. Thereafter he was resurrected and ascended to heaven. His earthly ministry was terminated – cut off.

Researchers have calculated the times represented by the prophecy (each number represents a 360 day year). The interval between the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of the Christ as King would be 173,880 days.

The decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was given by Artaxerxes Longimanus on March 14, 445 B.C.

Though the NIV translation says the prophecy refers to the Anointed One, the ruler, the words are *Mechiach Nagid*, meaning Messiah (Christ) the King. *Nagid* was first used of King Saul.

During Christ's ministry, on several occasions the people tried to make him king, but Jesus denied them, saying, "My time has not yet come."

On the day we know as Palm Sunday, Jesus meticulously arranged for his presentation as *king* in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah which stated, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your *king* comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."^[211]

Jesus entered Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey.^[212] The crowds went wild; the people praised God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen. They cried out, "Blessed is the *king* who comes in the name of the Lord."

The Pharisees in the crowd told Jesus to rebuke the people because of what they were saying.

Jesus said, "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."^[213]

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known *on this day* what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes."^[214]

Why would the stones cry out? What should they have known "on this day"? It was 173,880 days from the day the decree had been given to rebuild Jerusalem by Artaxerxes Longimanus. Exactly as prophesied, to the very day, *Christ the King* had come!

The rest of Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled when the Romans came in 70 A.D. and destroyed both Jerusalem and the sanctuary.

Prophecies of Suffering and Death Had to Be Fulfilled

As two of Jesus' disciples walked to Emmaus, they talked about the horrible events of the past days. Jesus, who they had believed was the *Christ*, had been arrested by the Jewish leaders and crucified by the Roman soldiers. Their hopes were dashed.

Jesus came and walked with them, but they were kept from recognizing him.^[215] He asked them what they were talking about.

They explained about Jesus, who they believed and hoped he was, and the arrest and crucifixion. Finally, they told him that some of their women saw that Jesus' body was missing from the tomb. The women claimed they saw angels. Others went to the tomb and found it as the women said.^[216]

Jesus said, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the *Christ* have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"^[217] And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.^[218]

Later Jesus appeared to his disciples in a locked room. He showed them the nail marks in his hands and feet. He ate some fish to show that he was

real. He said, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."[\[219\]](#)

He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He reminded them, "This is what is written: The *Christ* will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."[\[220\]](#)

Note *who* had to suffer these things. God didn't use the title *Son of God* or *Lord* or *Savior*. It was the *Christ*! Why? Because it was prophesied that the *Christ* would fulfill these prophecies. Did you see in whose name repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be preached to all nations? It is to be preached in the name of the *Christ*!

Finally the Apostles Understood

When Jesus opened their minds, the Apostles finally understood that Jesus had fulfilled the prophecies about the suffering *Christ*. Instead of the crucifixion being a disaster, as the Apostles first thought, everything that happened fulfilled the prophecies about the *Christ*.

The Apostles' teaching thereafter showed their understanding. After Peter healed the lame man at the temple gate, he told the onlookers what they had done to the *Christ*, how they had caused him to suffer and die. Then he encouraged them, "But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his *Christ* would suffer."[\[221\]](#)

Paul's testimony was the same. He reasoned with the Jews from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the *Christ* had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the *Christ*," he said.[\[222\]](#)

Later, after his arrest in Jerusalem, Paul appeared before King Agrippa in his own defense. The King was familiar with Old Testament Scriptures. Paul summarized his testimony about Jesus, showing that the prophecies about the *Christ* had come to pass: "I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen – that the *Christ* would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."[\[223\]](#)

Miracles Proved That Jesus Is the Christ

God also authenticated Jesus as the *Christ* through miracles. Looking only at the Gospel of John,^[224] the first miracle recorded by John was changing water to wine.^[225] John told how Jesus healed the official's son at Capernaum,^[226] healed the sick man at the pool of Bethesda,^[227] walked on the water,^[228] fed five thousand men (plus women and children) from a couple loaves and a few fish,^[229] gave sight to a man born blind,^[230] raised Lazarus from the dead after four days in the tomb,^[231] and miraculously provided a catch of fish.^[232]

Why do I say God authenticated Jesus as the Christ when it sounds as though Jesus authenticated himself? I say that because Jesus said, "I do exactly what my Father has commanded me."^[233] It was God the Father who told his Son what to do; Jesus did it. It was by their combined work – the commands of the Father and the obedience of the Son – that Jesus was authenticated through miracles as the *Christ*.

The Apostle John understood the purpose of the miracles and told why he recorded them:

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the *Christ*, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."^[234]

The greatest miracle of all was done by God – the resurrection of Jesus *Christ*. The authentication of the resurrection is the most important^[235] of all. How did God prove the resurrection? Paul tells us: "*Christ* was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born."^[236]

The authentication of Jesus as the *Christ* was for the time *after* the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.^[237] It was then that God's redemptive plan had been fulfilled in *Christ* Jesus. Finally, after the crucifixion and resurrection, both Jews and Gentiles could be told openly that Jesus is the *Christ*, the one authenticated by God through the miracles, the one who fulfilled the prophecies about the suffering *Christ*.

Apostles Taught That Jesus Is the Christ

Jesus said the Apostles were witnesses of these things – the miracles and the fulfillment of prophecy. Did the Apostles act as witnesses and testify that Jesus is the *Christ*? Indeed they did.

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, *the Apostles never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.*^[238] When Philip left Jerusalem to go to a city in Samaria, he proclaimed the *Christ* there.^[239]

The *Lord* Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and appointed him to represent him as his Apostle to the Gentiles. Once Saul (now Paul) recovered from the blindness and weakness of that experience, he went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus^[240] and began to preach. He baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the *Christ.*^[241]

Later in his ministry, when Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, *testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.*^[242]

Proved the Christ from the Scriptures

When Paul entered a new city, he invariably went first to the Synagogue to bring the Gospel to the Jews. He often encountered resistance from the Jews, for he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, *proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.*^[243]

Unlike the other Apostles who had spent over three years with Jesus, Paul hadn't known him during his ministry. He explained the source of his knowledge of the *Christ*: "I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus *Christ.*"^[244] "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that *Christ* died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*, that *he* was buried, that *he* was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures.*"^[245] What does Paul emphasize as of first importance? That Jesus is the *Christ*, the one in whom all the prophecies of the *Christ's* death, burial and resurrection were fulfilled, *according to the Scriptures*. This passage is often misused. Some interpret it as saying that of first importance is that Jesus died on the cross, was buried, and resurrected. Though that is important, it is not the thrust of the passage.

What is of first importance is that *Christ* – the one prophesied to come, to die, be buried and resurrected – did come, did die, was buried and resurrected exactly *according to the Scriptures*.

That Jesus is the *Christ* was the focal point of the Apostles' teaching. They proved from the Scriptures that Jesus is the *Christ*. They preached Jesus *Christ* as *Lord*.^[246]

JESUS HID HIS IDENTITY AS THE CHRIST

Earlier we saw that Jesus hid from the people that he was the *Christ* because they would not have let him to be crucified if they had known. Only selectively did Jesus reveal that he was the *Christ*; to most he concealed his identity.

He Wouldn't Allow Demons to Speak

When Jesus cast out demons, they came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the *Christ*.^[247]

Jesus Forbade His Disciples to Reveal Who He Was

Also consider the incident that began this chapter. Jesus asked his disciples who they said he was and Simon Peter answered, "You are the *Christ*, the Son of the living God."^[248] He warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the *Christ*.^[249]

He was often followed by crowds. He healed all their sick, but warned them not to tell who he was.^[250]

Jesus Taught in Parables

For that reason Jesus spoke in parables, so the people would not understand. The secrets of the kingdom of heaven were given to some disciples and the Apostles, but not the general populace.^[251]

Jesus Admitted to the Samaritan Woman That He Is the Christ

The Samaritans and Jews hated each other. Jews would not speak to Samaritans, let alone a Samaritan woman. But Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well. At one point she said, "I know that Messiah" (called *Christ*) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."^[252]

She was astonished, both at his statement and at his ability to tell her everything about her life. Leaving her water jar, she went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the *Christ*?"^[253]

Why would Jesus admit to the Samaritans he is the *Christ* and not to the Jews? Because the Jews would not accept anything the Samaritans would say. He could reveal himself to the Samaritans without fear that the Jews would learn his true identity.

Misunderstood Prophecies

As we noted earlier, the Jews had fixated on the passages which said the Christ would remain forever. They overlooked those which spoke of his suffering and death. This was evident when one in the crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"^[254]

Jesus refused to answer. Soon he left and hid himself from them.

Others in the crowds said, "He is the Christ." Still others asked, "How can the Christ come from Galilee?"^[255]

Just like the people in our churches who have fostered the heresy exposed in this book, those Jews didn't know their Scripture. They knew only what they'd been told.

The People Wondered

Just as do our church-goers today, the people tended to believe their religious leaders who said Jesus was not the Christ and threatened to put out of the synagogue anyone who said he was.^[256]

When the command was given to arrest Jesus, but he continued to teach in the temple, the people were confused. Some asked, "Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ?"^[257]

Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, "When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?"^[258]

Few Knew Who He Was

The tetrarch Herod heard about all that was going on. He was perplexed; some said that John had been raised from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, still others that one of the prophets of long ago had

come back to life.^[259] None of his advisers suggested that Jesus was the Christ.

When Jesus asked, "Who do the crowds say I am?"

His disciples replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."^[260]

His Reason for Concealing His Identity

For centuries the Jews had looked forward to their Christ. Under no circumstances would they have crucified him. They wanted to follow their Christ who they believed would bring them honor and glory as a nation.

It was God's plan that Jesus die as a sacrificial lamb to atone for our sins. Jesus explained,

"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."^[261]

His identity had to remain a secret among most of the people or he wouldn't have been killed.

Ordered Not to Tell He Was the Christ

Jesus was asked to heal the daughter of Jairus. Before he could get there, the child died. At the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's parents. All the people were wailing and mourning for her.

"Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."

Knowing that she was dead, they laughed at him, but he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!"

Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astonished, but *he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.*^[262]

Repeatedly, when Jesus healed the people, he ordered them not to tell what he had done.

Some Knew Jesus As the Christ

Even though Jesus hid from most of the people the fact that he was the Christ, some were permitted to know. One day, when Jesus was passing nearby, Andrew heard John the Baptist say, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the *Messiah*" (i.e., the *Christ*).^[263]

Jesus allowed his close friends to know who he was. For example, Mary and Martha sent word to him to come to heal their brother Lazarus who was very sick. Jesus delayed for days, waiting until Lazarus died. He finally came to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead. Mary and Martha were understandably upset. They had seen Jesus heal many who had been as sick as Lazarus who, when Jesus arrived, had been in the tomb four days.

"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."^[264]

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"^[265]

"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the *Christ*, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."^[266]

Martha's confession showed that she believed Jesus fulfilled the prophecies about the *Christ*.

Jesus Finally Admitted His Identity

Only when the general populace could not learn until too late did Jesus admit he was the *Christ*.

At his trial by the Jewish leaders after his arrest, the high priest asked him question after question. Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the *Christ*, the Son of God."^[267]

No longer could Jesus remain silent. He was charged by the high priest to answer under oath. To confirm he was the *Christ* would mean almost certain death. What did he answer?

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.

With that admission as an excuse, the Jews beat him, sent him to Pilate, and demanded his crucifixion. Though three separate times Jesus was found

not guilty of any crime for which he could be executed,^[268] the Jews demanded he be killed, saying, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"^[269]

The Christ was executed by crucifixion in fulfillment of prophecy. And his blood was on the Jews and on their children.

Chapter 4

JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD

Jesus Claimed to Be the Son of God

It was a dramatic confrontation. Jesus had been arrested by the Jews. They questioned him, trying to find evidence in order to condemn him to death. But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the *Son of God*."[\[270\]](#)

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."[\[271\]](#)

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy."[\[272\]](#)

Why did Jesus' admission create such a response? Because the high priest knew the prophecy of Daniel:

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, *coming with the clouds of heaven*. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."[\[273\]](#)

Jesus said he fulfilled that prophecy of Daniel. And he did. Jesus told his disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."[\[274\]](#)

The Lord Jesus Christ Is the Son of God

Does Daniel's description of Jesus sound familiar? I refer to Jesus being given all authority, glory, and sovereign power, and that he is the supreme ruler who is worshiped by all peoples, nations and men of every language. That was a description of Jesus as *Lord*, as we saw in Chapter 2.

Paul declared: "By his resurrection from the dead, the *Lord Jesus Christ* was declared with power to be the *Son of God*."[\[275\]](#)

The Titles Are Equal

The same power, glory, and authority given to Jesus as the *Son of God* have been given to Jesus as *Lord*. That fact doesn't seem surprising because

the *Son of God* and the *Lord Jesus* are one and the same person.^[276] The point to note is that the titles are equal as they pertain to the power, glory, and authority given to the *Son of God* and to Jesus as *Lord*.

The Christ Is the Son of God

For centuries the Jews had been expecting their *Christ*. Their hope rested on the coming *Christ*; they knew from Psalm 2 that the *Christ* would be King and that he is the *Son of God*.^[277] The high priest showed his knowledge of the prophecy when he commanded, "Tell us if you are the *Christ*, the *Son of God*."^[278]

Martha, sister of Lazarus and Mary, showed her knowledge of prophecy when she gave this confession of faith: "Yes, Lord," she told Jesus, "I believe that you are the *Christ*, the *Son of God*, who was to come into the world."^[279]

The Son of God Is God

The Jews, his enemies, recognized that when Jesus called God his own Father, he was making himself equal with God.^[280] Jesus said, "I and the Father are one."^[281]

Thomas confessed it when first coming face to face with the resurrected Christ. He exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!"^[282]

The Apostles understood that the *Son of God* is God. Peter began his second letter to the believers by speaking of *our God and Savior Jesus Christ*.^[283]

The Apostle John told the church, "We know also that the *Son of God* has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true – even in his *Son Jesus Christ*. *He is the true God* and eternal life."^[284]

Jesus, the Son of God

It was the Lord's Day. The Apostle John had found a deserted spot on the Isle of Patmos to worship. He heard a voice. John turned to see who was speaking to him. What he saw caused him to fall to the ground as though dead.

John saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like

bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.^[285]

Who was this awesome person? He identified himself as the *Son of God*, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.^[286] It was Jesus!

PROOFS THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD

Proofs from His Enemies

In a courtroom, the most believable favorable testimony is that which comes from the opponent. If we apply that principle to prove that Jesus is the *Son of God*, who would be the best witness to ask? It would be Satan, Christ's greatest enemy. Surprisingly, Satan showed that he knew Jesus is the *Son of God* by the way he tried to tempt Jesus in the wilderness. Twice he began his temptation of Jesus by saying, "If you are the *Son of God*,"^[287] as he tried to provoke Jesus into exercising his power.

The next best witnesses would be Satan's demons. They gave excellent testimony when Jesus cast them out. "What do you want with us, *Son of God*?" the demons shouted.^[288] Mark recorded that whenever the evil spirits saw Jesus, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the *Son of God*."^[289] Luke wrote that demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the *Son of God*!"^[290]

Testimony from His Friends

The winds raged and the waves crashed over the bow of the boat, threatening to swamp it. Though they were experienced fishermen, the storm was of such ferocity the men feared for their lives.

Then they remembered Jesus asleep in the stern of the boat. Not really knowing why, they hurriedly awakened him saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!"

Jesus rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided and all was calm.

The disciples asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."^[291]

Another time, the disciples, rowing across the lake, were buffeted by headwinds. Hour after hour they rowed but with no progress. Suddenly they saw Jesus walking on the water. They were fearful, but Jesus invited Peter to come to him on the water.

When Jesus and Peter got in the boat, the disciples worshiped Jesus, saying, "Truly you are the *Son of God*."^[292]

When they saw Jesus could do all things, even calm a deadly storm and defy natural laws by walking on the water, there was no longer doubt. They knew Jesus is the *Son of God* with all power and authority, even over nature and natural laws.

Supernatural Testimony

The angel appeared to Mary to tell her she was selected to be the mother of the Christ. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the *Son of God*."^[293]

The Apostle's Testimony

Paul was converted when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. After Paul's sight returned, he was baptized. He began to eat and regained his strength. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the *Son of God*.^[294]

Later in his ministry, Paul gave this testimony: "The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the *Son of God*, who loved me and gave himself for me."^[295]

SALVATION IS IN THE SON

More than any other New Testament writer, the Apostle John spoke of Jesus as the Son of God. He said, "The reason the *Son of God* appeared was to destroy the devil's work."^[296]

John's testimony about Jesus often related directly to salvation. He said, "He who has the *Son* has life; he who does not have the *Son of God* does not have life."^[297] Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the *Son of God*.^[298] If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the *Son of God*, God lives in him and he in God."^[299]

Believe in the Son

God^[300] tells us to believe in his *Son*^[301] who is the supreme ruler, the King whose kingdom will never be destroyed, whose dominion is everlasting and will never pass away, who has been given glory and sovereign power and all authority in heaven and on earth, who will be worshiped by all peoples, nations and men of every language.^[302]

This describes the *Son of God* in whom we are to believe in order to have eternal life. If we believe in God's *Son*, God promises us eternal life. But if we reject his *Son*, we will not see life, for God's wrath will remain on us.^[303]

Believe in the Name of the Son of God

John tells us: "This is God's command: to believe in the *name* of his *Son*, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us."^[304]

What does it mean to believe in the *name* of the *Son of God*? It means to believe in all his name implies, his authority, character, rank, majesty, power, excellence, etc., of everything that his name includes.^[305]

God's command isn't to simply believe that Jesus is the *Son of God*, but to believe in all that he is as the *Son of God*.^[306]

Salvation Is in the Son of God and in Jesus As Lord

Because the titles are equal,^[307] the descriptions of how to be saved using the title *Son of God* or the title *Lord*, are all true. We can say, "Confess with your mouth that Jesus is *Lord* and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, and you will be saved,"^[308] and "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."^[309]

Both are true. We proclaim, "Believe in the *Lord* Jesus Christ and you will be saved"^[310] and "He who has the *Son* has life; he who does not have the *Son of God* does not have life."^[311] They are equivalent.

Chapter 5

JESUS AS THE SON OF MAN

Emphasis Is on Power and Authority

The heresy which teaches that salvation may be had by believing in Jesus as Savior emphasizes the redemptive act of Jesus – his death on the cross – by which he atoned for the sins of all who have faith in him. The emphasis is on a past act.

There is no question of the importance of Christ's death; we could not have salvation without reconciliation with God and justification by God that are possible only because of Christ's gracious act of obedience. We are to remember that. We are commanded to commemorate the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Jesus' battered body and shed blood. But that's not the emphasis of Scripture.

To correctly discern that emphasis, let's look again at the usage of titles of Jesus. The most obvious title, which conveys his sovereign power and authority, is *Lord*. We proved from Scripture that the *Christ* is *Lord*, and that many of the prophecies about the *Christ* proclaim his power and authority, as does the entire book of the Revelation of Jesus *Christ*. Likewise, the title *Son of God* declares not only his power and authority, but his divinity. Together, these three titles are used 1,198 times in the New Testament. That is 75 times as often as the title *Savior* is used of Jesus.

Though to me that numerical disparity seems overwhelming, there is more. Jesus is referred to as *King* thirty-five times, and as *Son of Man* eighty-four. These titles also imply great power and authority. Including the times of their usage, the titles showing the power and authority of Jesus occur more than eighty-two times as often as the title *Savior*.

The biblical presentation of Jesus as supreme head over all, the Lord of lords, is even stronger. Of the sixteen times the title *Savior* refers to Jesus, fourteen times it is combined with a power title. For example, on five occasions, the Savior is named: He is *Christ* the *Lord*,^[312] the *Lord* Jesus *Christ*,^[313] and *Christ* Jesus.^[314] Other times the titles are simply combined: *God* and *Savior*,^[315] *Son* and *Savior*,^[316] *Christ* and *Savior*,^[317] and *Lord* and *Savior*.^[318] There are only two times the title *Savior* is used of Jesus without

power titles associated with it in the same verse. Power titles are used over 664 times as often as the singular title *Savior*.[\[319\]](#)

Is God trying to make a point? I surely believe so. How better could he have written Scripture to make the point that it is in the living *Lord Jesus Christ* that we have salvation. God's presentation of Jesus as the *Lord* of all was no accident. His role as Supreme Sovereign is critical to the promises given to believers and to our role as his followers.

Let's briefly review one more power title of our *Lord*.

SON OF MAN

Chapter 4 began with the dramatic confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish leaders just after he was arrested. The high priest commanded, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."[\[320\]](#)

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the *Son of Man* sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."[\[321\]](#)

When he said that, the high priest demanded he be condemned to death.

What was special about the title, *Son of Man*? Jesus used the title repeatedly during his teaching ministry.[\[322\]](#) No one objected before when he referred to himself as the *Son of Man*. For the first time, Jesus coupled the title, *Son of Man*, with a prophecy about the Christ. The Jewish leaders previously hadn't understood the connection.

The prophecy was given to Daniel:

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a *son of man*, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."[\[323\]](#)

After the fact, after Jesus revealed himself to the Jewish leaders as the *Christ*, the *Son of Man* prophesied by Daniel, we can look back and see that many statements Jesus made about the *Son of Man* were of the *Christ*.[\[324\]](#)

Jesus Called Himself the Son of Man Instead of the Christ

When Jesus repeatedly referred to himself as the *Son of Man*, the people may have thought he was simply trying to identify with them. After all, he was a man, and the son of a woman, just as they were.

I believe Jesus used a substitute for Christ which would be obvious to generations following, but was hidden from his own generation. Had he called himself the *Christ*, the people would not have let him be crucified. Instead they may have tried forcefully to make him king. Jesus had the difficult task of proving to us, all succeeding generations, that he is the

Christ, that he came and fulfilled all prophecies about the suffering *Christ*, while hiding that fact from his own generation.

Evidence Proves That the Son of Man Is the Christ

To prove that he was the *Christ*, Jesus had to show that what would happen to him would fulfill prophecy. To do that, he told his disciples in advance that the *Son of Man* would be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law,^[325] be betrayed,^[326] suffer at the hands of the Jewish leaders,^[327] be condemned to death and handed over to the Gentiles.^[328] He told them he would be killed^[329] (crucified),^[330] buried for three days and three nights,^[331] raised from the dead^[332] on the third day,^[333] that he would leave,^[334] where he would go,^[335] and that he would come again^[336] when he is not expected.^[337] He described the appearance of his coming.^[338] Jesus said that everything written about the *Son of Man* would be fulfilled.^[339]

Everything that Jesus prophesied about the *Son of Man* that was to happen did happen.

Son of Man Has Power and Authority

Just as with the title *Christ*, there are two main facets to the prophecies. The first is that the *Son of Man* would suffer those things prophesied, the second that the *Son of Man* will have great power and authority. Daniel prophesied that the Son of Man "was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."^[340]

Even while in his ministry, Jesus pointed out his authority to his disciples. When confronted with breaking the technical rules about the Sabbath, he replied, "The *Son of Man* is Lord of the Sabbath."^[341]

My favorite example occurred after Jesus developed a reputation for healing all manner of sickness and disease; the lame walked, the blind were able to see, the sick were cured.

Friends of a paralytic determined to take him to Jesus. They put him on a mat and carried him to where Jesus was. But, as expected, there was a huge crowd around the house. Most were there for the same reason; they wanted to be healed. Nobody would give up his place or let the paralytic through to see Jesus.

At first the friends were stymied. Then one saw the stairs leading to the roof, and hatching a plan, they carried the paralytic there. Determining where Jesus was in the house, they carefully began to take apart the roof in that room.

Imagine the scene when pieces fell from the ceiling into the group below. First a hole appeared, then the light showed the faces of men who were taking the roof apart. The people in the room scattered, but stared at the ever-widening hole. Suddenly a mat was lowered through it into the room. On the mat lay the paralytic.

Jesus watched all this with interest and said to the paralytic, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

Pharisees^[342] and teachers of the law were present who knew God alone can forgive sins. They thought to themselves, "Who is this fellow who blasphemes?"

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the *Son of Man* has authority on earth to forgive sins," he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

Immediately the paralytic stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on, and went home praising God.

Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."^[343]

They had seen remarkable things and had heard even more astounding claims, but hadn't understood. Jesus knew that only God could forgive sins.

<p>By claiming to forgive sins, he was not blaspheming but instead revealing to them that he was God incarnate – God having come to earth as the <i>Son of Man</i>. As the God-man, he had authority to forgive sins.</p>

Chapter 6

JESUS IS SAVIOR

Suppose you're enjoying one of our beautiful San Diego beaches. You wander into the water on a hot August day, delighting in its coolness. The waves are fun and soon you're paddling on, and in, and through them. You even try body surfing. A wave catches you wrong and scrapes you in the sand; you decide that's not for you.

You paddle beyond the breakers where it's much smoother. You love the feeling of lift from the waves. You lie on your back, floating and enjoying.

You didn't notice that you drifted south along the beach into an area which has a strong undertow. It's getting cool and you want to sunbathe so you try swimming to shore, only to find a current so strong that you make no headway. Soon you're worried. As you tire, you panic. You yell for help, but see none. You shout again, but take in water as you try to attract attention. You choke and can hardly breathe; you can't yell, and you lose strength. When you're about to give up, a strong arm grabs you from behind. Your face is lifted out of the water. You can feel the strength of the tow. Then everything becomes a blur.

The next thing you know you're on the beach, being held up by the waist as someone drains the water out of you. You manage to cough and breathe on your own. You look around to see people standing in a circle staring at you, and see the smile on the face of the young man bending over you who asks, "Feeling better? Seems as though you were in trouble out there. Hope I wasn't too rough with you."

Later you learn from bystanders that the young man had been swimming further offshore than you were. When he heard your cries for help he immediately started toward you.

That young man was your savior. What do you feel for him? Surely you feel gratitude. What else do you feel? Do you love him? Probably not, though for a moment you may. Will you invite him to dinner, then to your home, and develop an intimate friendship with him for the rest of your life? Probably not.

Would you have any continuing relationship with the young man because he saved your life? Likely not, though you might send him Christmas cards

for many years thereafter. After your first overwhelming feelings of gratitude, thoughts of him may fade. After a few weeks or months or years you may hardly remember his name, though you will never forget the incident or what he did.

Response to Jesus As Savior

What if salvation could be had by accepting Jesus as our Savior? What would be our principal response to him? It would be gratitude, would it not? We do feel gratitude toward Jesus as our Savior, don't we? I surely do. But if that were the message of the New Testament, we could use a scissors and cut away most of the New Testament because most of it deals with Jesus *Christ* as *Lord*.

Is Jesus our *Savior*? Yes! Is it correct to state that if we accept or receive Jesus as our *Savior* we will have eternal life? No!

Does Scripture say that believing in Jesus as *Savior*, or having faith in him as *Savior*, or accepting him as *Savior*, or receiving him as *Savior* is sufficient for salvation? Not in my Bibles. Nowhere does Scripture state any such idea.

All heresies seek to have us believe in someone other than the *Lord Jesus Christ*, the *Son of God*. When a heresy is radically different than biblical Christianity it's easy to recognize. Mormonism, for example, is easy to spot as heresy, as is Jehovah's Witnesses. The heresy we're talking about is so subtle that it has captured a large part of American Christendom. The reason is that it uses all the right words. It speaks of Jesus as *Lord*, as the *Christ*, and as the *Son of God*. But it claims we can be saved by believing in Jesus as our *Savior* and fails to honor Jesus as *Lord*, as the *Christ*, or as the *Son of God*.

Response to Jesus As Lord

Consider the difference in your response when you realize you are the servant of the *Lord Jesus Christ*, the *Sovereign Ruler* of the universe, one whose titles include *King of kings* and *Lord of lords*, and who is *Lord* of all. As you begin to understand that this supreme *Lord*, who is head over all, wants a personal relationship with you, how do you respond? Remember the parts of Scripture that you cut away with your scissors? That's the part that tells us what God wants our response to be to himself, to his Son, and to each

other based on *Christ Jesus* as our *Lord*.^[344] We'll discuss that in Section II: What Is a Saving Faith?

SALVATION IS IN WHOM?

In whom are we to believe so we may have eternal life? In prior chapters we've learned that anyone who believes in the *Lord Jesus Christ* will be saved.^[345] Scripture associates salvation with the titles *Lord*, and *Christ*, and *Son of God*, but not with the title *Savior*.

Many scriptures answer the question, "Salvation is in whom?" Paul wrote one to the Thessalonian believers who were worried they had missed the second coming of Christ. Paul reassured them: "God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive *salvation* through our *Lord Jesus Christ*."^[346] He summarized the gospel for the Romans: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in *Christ Jesus* our *Lord*."^[347]

Salvation is in the *Lord Jesus Christ* – *Christ Jesus* our *Lord*.

The Name of the Savior

Let's use another tack to come to the same conclusion. What is the *Savior* called? Or, asked differently, what is the name of the *Savior*?

Angels announced the birth of the Christ-child to shepherds in a field watching their sheep. The angels said to them, "Today in the town of David a <i>Savior</i> has been born to you; he is <i>Christ</i> the <i>Lord</i> ." ^[348]

Another time Paul wrote to the Philippian church. After he exhorted them to live the Christian life and not as enemies of the cross, he said, "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a *Savior* from there, the *Lord Jesus Christ*."^[349]

What is the name of the *Savior*? The angels called him *Christ* the *Lord*. Paul said he is the *Lord Jesus Christ*. The *Savior* is *Christ* (the one who has fulfilled the prophecies about the *Christ*) the *Lord* (who has all power and authority in heaven and on earth).

WHAT CHRIST'S DEATH ACCOMPLISHED

A parallel heresy is sometimes stated: "If you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins, you will have eternal life." There is no statement in

Scripture that comes close to agreeing with that.

Christ's death on the cross didn't save us, but we couldn't be saved without it. It is because of his death that Scripture states we are saved by grace, that our salvation is a gift of God.^[350] Before anyone knew that it was necessary, he died so that all who believe in him may live.

No person on earth asked Jesus to die for him. God asked him to die so we could be saved; Jesus agreed and was crucified for us. The gift of God is already given. It's nothing we can earn, nothing we deserve; it is truly unmerited favor.

That's not the end of the story. Everyone isn't saved. By itself Christ's death didn't save anyone, but his death made it possible for everyone to be saved.^[351]

What did Christ's death accomplish? How did his death make it possible for you and me to be saved? Scripture speaks of what he did several different ways. Jesus reconciled us to God; he saved his people from their sins; he atoned for our sins, he was a ransom for us; he redeemed us.

Looking at what he did, we quickly get the sense that we're in deep trouble. There's an obvious sense that we're being held for ransom, that we're captives that need to be redeemed, that we're under sentence and need atonement, that we're alienated and need reconciliation, that we're condemned for our sins and need to be saved.

He Saved His People from Their Sins

An angel told Joseph that Jesus would save his people from their sins.^[352] That's what he did.^[353] Notice that it is "his people" he will save from their sins. Paul said the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age.^[354]

Was Christ's death on the cross necessary? Yes, because the wages of sin is death,^[355] but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.^[356]

Because of our sinful nature, all of us were alienated from God and were his enemies in our minds because of our evil behavior (our sins).^[357]

God Reconciled Us to Himself through Christ

God reconciled us to himself^[358] by *Christ's* physical body through death to present us holy^[359] in his sight, blameless and free from accusation.

[360] Notice who reconciled us? Repeatedly Scripture emphasizes that God reconciled us to himself through Christ.[361]

We are reconciled to God if we continue in our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord.[362]

Everyone Is Prospectively Reconciled

Is everyone reconciled to God because of Christ's death? No, but everyone can be.[363]

Paul told the Colossians they were reconciled by Christ's physical body through death;^[364] to the Romans he wrote that they were reconciled to God through the death of his Son.^[365] These letters were to the believers^[366] who had been reconciled to God by the death of the Christ.

If we're reconciled, are we saved? Paul taught: "How much more, having been reconciled, shall we be *saved* through his *life*. Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our *Lord Jesus Christ*,^[367] through whom we have now received reconciliation."^[368]

We are reconciled to God through his death. We are *saved* through his life,^[369] by a saving faith in the living *Lord Jesus Christ*.^[370]

Be Reconciled to God

Paul explained. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us that message."^[371]

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."^[372]

He Redeemed Us

What does it mean to be redeemed? (a) To buy back, such as to buy back mankind from slavery to sin.^[373] (b) To free from captivity by means of a ransom; mankind has been held captive to sin; the ransom is the blood of Christ Jesus. (c) To release from blame or debt. We were subject to the judgment of God because of our sin; Christ Jesus paid our debt with his blood; he redeemed us.

When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of

sons.^[374] He rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.^[375] He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.^[376] For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.^[377]

He redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."^[378] He gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.^[379]

It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that we are redeemed, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.^[380] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.^[381] He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.^[382]

He Atoned for Our Sins

To atone means to supply the satisfaction for a debt or a penalty. God presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.^[383] Jesus supplied the satisfaction for the penalty required because of our sin.

What is that penalty? It is spiritual death – the second death – the lake of fire, for all eternity!^[384] When Jesus died on the cross and shed his blood, he once for all^[385] paid the price – his life and shed blood, a penalty we could not pay.^[386] His atonement was truly an act of grace.^[387]

He Became a Ransom for Us

To ransom means to free from captivity. Mankind was taken captive by sin,^[388] but the Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for many.^[389]

There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.^[390] He is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance – now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.^[391]

Christians Are Justified by Christ's Blood

What else did *Christ's* death on the cross accomplish? Christians are justified by *Christ's* blood that was shed on the cross for us.^[392]

What does it mean to be justified? We are no longer alienated from God or his enemies because of our sin; the penalty for our sin has been paid. It was paid by the blood of Jesus; his shed blood satisfied the just requirement of God's law.^[393] Webster has a simple definition: To release from sin and accept as righteous.

Is Everyone Justified Before God?

Everyone isn't justified before God just as everyone isn't reconciled to him. But everyone who meets God's conditions can be justified.^[394] Scripture says we can be justified freely.^[395] God doesn't seek to withhold justification; he wants it for everyone.^[396]

How Can We Be Justified?

The only one way each of us can be justified before God is by faith.^[397] For centuries the Roman Catholic Church has taught that justification is by works, but Scripture teaches the opposite. Paul sternly told the Galatians: "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from *Christ*; you have fallen away from grace."^[398]

Judaizers had come to the Galatians and tried to convince them that they had to follow the Jewish law in addition to their belief in *Christ*. Paul forcefully said that was not true. That was a different gospel – a heresy.^[399] Paul warned: "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"^[400]

What did Paul tell the Galatians was the correct understanding about justification? "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man isn't justified by observing the law, but by *faith in Jesus Christ*. So we, too, have put our *faith in Christ Jesus* that we may be justified by *faith in Christ* and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified."^[401]

The question must have been talked about at length in the early church. Paul addressed it again when he wrote to the Corinthians. After reminding them that many of them were morally debased before coming to Christ he said: "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the *name*^[402] of the *Lord Jesus Christ* and by the Spirit of our God."^[403]

Justification is by faith – faith in Jesus *Christ* our *Lord*.

CONFESS AND BELIEVE

To understand what God requires of us, let's look more carefully at a familiar passage:

If you confess with your mouth, "*Jesus is Lord*," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are *justified*, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

As the Scripture says, "Anyone who *trusts in him* will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – *the same Lord is Lord of all* and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the *Lord* will be saved."^[404]

What is the emphasis in these verses? Isn't it that Jesus is *Lord* and that salvation is in Jesus as *Lord*? They say we are to confess that *Jesus is Lord*, that the same *Lord* is *Lord* of all, and that all who call on the name of the *Lord* will be saved.

Looking again at the first paragraph of the verses, note two things we must do to be saved. We must confess that Jesus is *Lord*, and believe that God raised him from the dead.

Our Lord Is Alive and Risen!

Why believe that God raised him from the dead? Because we serve a *risen* Lord, a real, live, personal *Lord*. The *Lord Jesus Christ* can only be one with all authority in heaven and on earth if he is alive. He can be the head of his church and *Lord* of all, only if he is alive. He is alive; God raised him from the dead. Believing that is essential to our salvation.^[405]

Why confess that Jesus is *Lord*? Doubtless because God requires us to make public the fact that Jesus is *our Lord*.^[406] To confess Jesus is *Lord* is not simply to repeat those words. It is a personal confession, not only that Jesus truly is *Lord* and that he is *Lord* of all, but that he is my personal *Lord*.

Did you notice the tense of the verb? Jesus is *Lord*! That is present tense. He must be and *continue* to be our *Lord*. That's exactly what Paul told the Colossians: we are reconciled to God if we *continue* in the faith.^[407]

Crossing the Chasm

Imagine a huge chasm before us. There is a beautiful country on the other side, but the chasm seems to have no bottom and the other side is far away

with no way to bridge it. The other side is visible enough to see it's infinitely better than our side, but there's no way to get there.^[408]

The ruler of that beautiful country sent his Son, Jesus, who placed a narrow road across the chasm to permit those on our side to cross to the other side. At the entrance to the road on our side Jesus placed a gate and over it a sign, "JESUS IS LORD."

Inexplicably, most don't choose to take Jesus' route to the other side. Admittedly his route and the gate are so narrow that nothing can be taken along. His route must compete with a big, wide, beautiful road with signs that say it goes to that beautiful country on the other side. But it doesn't.

That's the story Jesus told: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and *broad is the road that leads to destruction*, and *many enter through it*. But *small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life*, and *only a few find it*."^[409]

The heresy we discuss in this section fulfills Jesus' story. Millions follow the easy, attractive way of believing in Jesus as *Savior* in order to cross the chasm. Unfortunately, their wide road doesn't get to the other side; it leads to destruction.

Salvation Is in Him

What about the gate? Jesus said it was narrow. He also said, "*I am the gate*; whoever enters through *me* will be saved."^[410]

The thrust of the salvation passages is that our salvation is found in a *person* – the *Lord Jesus Christ*. By now you're aware of that. Knowing that, other passages will come alive in a wholly new way.

Consider Jesus' statement, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."^[411] He is the *life*. Now it seems so clear why we must believe that God raised him from the dead.^[412] We must confess him as *Lord* because he – the *Lord Jesus Christ* – is the way, the only way to the Father.

Heresy Followers Cannot Enter

Suppose you believed that all you had to do was accept Jesus as your Savior and you'd have eternal life.^[413] Then you die and go to the final judgment. You're called before the great white throne. As you look around and watch the proceedings, you see that everyone there is being condemned.

Then it's your turn. You present your defense: "I'm entitled to enter heaven because I accepted Jesus as my *Savior*."

The *Lord* Jesus responds, "I don't know you."

You're astonished. How can this be? Does he have you confused with someone else? You remind him, "I know the exact day I walked down the aisle in church and accepted you as my *Savior*. I attended church regularly. I took communion. I taught Sunday School."

The *Lord* Jesus replies, "I don't know you or where you come from."

A similar scenario is recited in Scripture by Jesus:

"Many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'

"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

"Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

"But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'"^[414]

How could anything be more horrible? Facing an eternity of hell because you weren't taught, or wouldn't accept, the plain teaching of God's Word, that we are to have faith in the *Lord Jesus Christ* and that he must be our *Lord*.

Let's look at a slightly different situation. Suppose you were raised in the church. You often refer to Jesus as *Lord* and even call him *Lord* when you pray. But you didn't receive him as your *Lord*; you didn't obey him as your *Lord*. You were active in church. You even did miracles in Jesus' name. When you die you appear before the great white throne for judgment. Your name is called. You confidently respond, "I'm entitled to enter heaven because I accepted the *Lord* Jesus as my *Savior*."

The *Lord* Jesus responds, "I never knew you."

Horror fills you. Are you to be condemned as the others around you have been? You make another appeal: "*Lord*, I did miracles in your name! I was a pillar of my church. I gave regularly. You must remember."

The *Lord* replies, "Away from me, you evildoer! I never knew you."

That scenario was also taught by Jesus. Jesus spoke about what will happen at the last judgment to those who didn't receive him as *Lord*:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'

"Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"
[415]

Then the angel will command the condemned ones assembled before the great white throne: "At the name of Jesus you shall bow the knee. Now confess aloud that *Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father."[\[416\]](#)

No Scripture Shows Salvation in Jesus As Savior

Could any rational mind accept that God would cause his Scripture to show us how to have salvation by believing in the *Son of God* and the *Lord Jesus* and *Jesus Christ*, and then omit showing us that we can have salvation by believing in Jesus as *Savior* if salvation is possible by believing in Jesus as *Savior*? I think not.

JESUS DIDN'T CLAIM TO BE SAVIOR

In prior chapters we saw this warning by Jesus: "*If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.*"[\[417\]](#)

Who did Jesus claim to be? He claimed to be *Lord*, the *Christ*, the *Son of God*, the *Son of Man*, and *Teacher*. The purpose for which he came to earth was to save his people from their sins.[\[418\]](#) That purpose will be frustrated for those who don't believe Jesus is the one he claims to be.

Jesus never called himself Savior, nor did anyone ever address him as Savior in the gospels.[\[419\]](#) Two gospels, Matthew and Mark, don't use the title Savior even once. In both Luke and John, the title Savior is used only one time in each book in referring to Jesus.[\[420\]](#)

Jesus saves us[\[421\]](#) from our sins *if* we believe he is who he claimed to be. If we believe only in him as Savior, something he didn't claim, we will die in our sins. There is no salvation for anyone who dies in their sins. If there could be, Jesus would have died in vain.[\[422\]](#) We must understand the urgency of correctly believing who Jesus is. It isn't a casual matter or simply a matter of semantics. It is fulfilling or denying the clear warning of Jesus; we will either have our sins forgiven or die in them.

The Heresy Has No Basis in Scripture

By now you have seen evidence piled upon evidence that the heresy that salvation may be had by accepting[\[423\]](#) Jesus as Savior is a concoction of

man. It has no basis whatsoever in Scripture; it is an invention of man designed to tickle men's ears so they may be told what they want to hear.^[424]

The Heresy Promotes the Wrong Response to Jesus

We mentioned before that the heresy promotes a feeling of gratitude toward Jesus because he is our Savior. That is not the response that God requires of us. What he requires will be shown in Section II: A Saving Faith.

GOD IS OUR SAVIOR

Did you know that *God the Father* is also described in Scripture as our *Savior*? More than that, *God* is spoken of as the primary person responsible for our salvation. If you said, "No, I didn't know," you echo my answer before I studied this issue. No wonder this heresy has convoluted everything. It also tries to cause us to lose sight of *God's* great part in our salvation.

God As the First Cause of Our Salvation

The most familiar verse in Scripture shows *God's* part in our salvation:

"For *God so loved*^[425] 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 his Son into the world to condemn the world, but *to save the world* through him."^[426]

Notice that *God so loved*, and *God gave*,^[427] and *God sent* in order *to save* the world. What else did God do? *God has reconciled you* by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight.^[428] *God* sent his own Son to be a sin offering.^[429] It is *God who justifies*^[430] those who have faith in Jesus.^[431] *God presented* the Christ as a sacrifice of atonement.^[432] *God* did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive *salvation* through our Lord Jesus Christ.^[433] *God* has given us *new birth* into a living hope.^[434] The *gift of God* is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.^[435] According to the will of our *God and Father*, Jesus gave himself for our sins.^[436]

God's roles are primary to our salvation. *God* loved, *God* gave, *God* sent, *God* reconciled, *God* justifies, *God* appointed us to receive salvation, *God* has given us new birth into a living hope, *God* gave the gift of eternal life, and according to *God's* will, Jesus gave himself for our sins.

God As Savior and Jesus As Savior Work Together

Immediately prior are seven scriptures which show *God's* role in our salvation. Note that most of the verses also refer to the *Son*, Jesus *Christ* our

Lord, and his part in our salvation.^[437]

The following scripture states, more powerfully than any other, *God's* role as Savior who saved us. Twice it emphasizes that *God saved us*:

But when the kindness and love of *God our Savior*^[438] appeared, *he saved us*, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. *He saved us* through the washing of rebirth and renewal *by the Holy Spirit*, whom he poured out on us generously *through Jesus Christ our Savior*.^[439]

The above scripture uniquely describes the participation in our salvation of *God the Father*, the *Holy Spirit*, and *Jesus Christ*.

God's Participation Is Fundamental to Our Salvation

It isn't even possible for you and me to come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ without *God the Father's* help. Jesus said this most surprising statement: "No one can come to me unless the *Father* who sent me draws him."^[440]

Heresy which claims salvation consists of believing in Jesus as *Savior* seems to deny *God's* role as our *Savior*. It's not unusual to hear it said that we have only one Savior and that Savior is Jesus. We know from the prior scriptures that isn't true.

Jesus Taught That God, His Father, Planned Our Salvation

To deny God as our Savior is contrary to the teachings of Jesus. Jesus made God pre-eminent in everything. He even said, "My Father is greater than all."^[441] The Father is greater than I."^[442]

Consider some of the ways in which Jesus emphasized the role of God in our salvation:

Jesus Said God the Father Sent Him

Over and over Jesus told the people that God, his Father, sent him.^[443] Sometimes he just referred to God as "him who sent me."^[444] Jesus said he was from God;^[445] he came from God;^[446] he did not come on his own.^[447] He was sent into the world.^[448]

Jesus said it was important that the people believe that God sent him.^[449] He cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me."^[450]

Jesus Taught and Did Only What the Father Told Him

The good news of the gospel was not something Jesus made up. It came from the Father. Jesus said, "He who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.^[451] For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.^[452] I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."^[453] "These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."^[454]

He continued, "The world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me."^[455]

Jesus Said We Must Do His Father's Will

Because everything Jesus said came from God, what Jesus taught and commanded is God's will. Jesus said that only those who *do* the will of his Father will enter the kingdom of heaven.^[456]

Jesus' Brothers Are Those Who Do the Father's Will

Jesus emphasizes that *doing* the Father's will is all-important. Jesus illustrated his relationship with those who *do* the Father's will by saying, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever *does* the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."^[457]

Jesus Said We Must Believe "Him Who Sent Me"

Whatever Jesus said is what the Father told him to say. Knowing that, we know that to believe what Jesus said is to believe what the Father told Jesus to say. Then we can understand Jesus' statement, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and *believes him who sent me* has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."^[458]

Jesus Said the Father Lives in Him

The Father is intimately involved in our salvation, even to the point of being in Jesus. Jesus said "Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.^[459] Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.^[460] Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.^[461]

Jesus showed us our part in that relationship: "I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."[\[462\]](#)

Eternal Life Is from the Father and the Son

Jesus said, "My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life."[\[463\]](#) Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.[\[464\]](#)

Jesus Did God's Will

Jesus said his food is to do the will of God and to finish his work.[\[465\]](#) Though Jesus prayed that the crucifixion be taken from him, he added, "Yet not as I will, but as you will."[\[466\]](#) It is apparent that it was God's will that Jesus sacrifice himself for our sins.

The Holy Spirit Comes from the Father

Jesus said he will ask the Father and he will give another Counselor (the Holy Spirit) to be with believers forever.[\[467\]](#) The Father will send the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name.[\[468\]](#) Jesus also said, "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me."[\[469\]](#)

God Gave Jesus Authority

God, the Father, gave Jesus authority over all people that Jesus might give eternal life to all the Father gave him.[\[470\]](#) He gave him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.[\[471\]](#) The Father gave his Son authority to lay his life down and authority to take it up again.[\[472\]](#) Finally, God made Jesus Lord of all, granting him all authority in heaven and on earth.[\[473\]](#)

Unfair Denial of God's Role in Our Salvation

Jesus sought to bring his disciples to *God, his Father*.[\[474\]](#) In a wonderful reciprocity, it is *God the Father* who draws people to *Jesus*,[\[475\]](#) and provides that everything associated with our salvation must be in, by, or through the *Lord Jesus Christ*.[\[476\]](#)

Part II

What Is a Saving Faith?

Chapter 7

A SAVING FAITH

Faith That Doesn't Save

The Apostle James talked of people who claimed to have faith but whose faith was dead. James asked, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?"^[477]

James gave an example. "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?"^[478] He concluded: "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."^[479]

What comprises a saving faith was argued even in apostolic days. Some tried to separate faith and deeds: "You have faith; I have deeds."^[480]

James retorted, "Show me your faith without deeds."^[481] He knew it is impossible to "show" faith except by what we do – by our actions. "I will show you my faith by what I do."^[482]

Faith is visible only through behavior. James mocked those who claimed they could have an invisible faith with an analogy: "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder."^[483] His readers knew that the demons were condemned. Though the demons believe there is one God, they have no saving faith. Simply believing something about God that is true does not constitute a saving faith.

James also asked, "You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he *did* when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his *actions* were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he *did*. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend."^[484]

He used another example: "In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she *did* when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?"^[485] Even today we can know Rahab's faith because of what she *did*.

James concluded: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."^[486] To have a saving faith, that faith must be visible through actions – through behavior.^[487] Just as in Abraham's and Rahab's cases, an observer should be able to deduce what our faith is by observing our actions.

Our Actions Show What We Believe

James' argument is simple. People act according to their beliefs. This isn't an absolute statement as people can act intentionally to deceive others. Other times – sometimes within the church – people act as they think others expect them to (for example, when in church). When they are by themselves the mask drops and they behave according to their beliefs.

James warned about two kinds of people. The first claim to have faith but their actions display no faith. Of those, James said their claimed faith was *useless*. The second group may be those who once had faith – whose actions once showed their faith, but no longer do. James said their faith was *dead*.

The Apostle John knew that many people would "talk" the faith; they would "say" they loved one another. John exhorted us not to love with words or tongue but with *actions*.^[488]

FAITH THAT SAVES

All of us want the faith Scripture describes that will enable us to have eternal life. That is what this chapter is about.

Faith That Saves

We learned from James that saving faith is *visible*, a faith observable in the *actions* of the person who has a saving faith.

Abraham believed God – had faith in God – and it was credited to him as righteousness.^[489] Those with a saving faith are called children of Abraham.^[490] Because of this, let's look more carefully at Abraham's faith.

Abraham's Actions Showed His Faith

When Abraham (then Abram) lived in Haran with his wife, Sarai, God told him to leave there and go to a place God would show him.^[491] Leaving was not easy. He was told to leave the familiar – family, friends, his living – and go to an unknown place that God would show him. What did Abram's

actions show about his faith? The account continues: "So Abram left, as the Lord had told him."[\[492\]](#)

When he arrived in Canaan, God told him that he would give the land to his offspring. What was Abram's response? He built an altar there to the Lord.[\[493\]](#)

But when famine came, Abram didn't trust God to provide for him, but instead went to Egypt where there was food. There he didn't trust God to protect him. He told the Egyptians that Sarai was his sister and not his wife. Because of his lie, he was expelled from Egypt and returned to Canaan where he built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord.

The Lord appeared to Abram again and promised that the land to the east and west and north and south, as far as he could see, was given to him and to his offspring. The Lord told him to walk through it. Abram's response? He walked throughout the land; he built an altar to the Lord.[\[494\]](#)

After a great victory in which Abram rescued his nephew Lot and his family, Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, brought out bread and wine and blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." What was Abram's response? He gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything.[\[495\]](#)

God came to Abram and promised him a son when both Abram and Sarai, his wife, were old.[\[496\]](#) Much time passed without Sarai conceiving. They decided God didn't mean Sarai to be the mother of the promised child. Sarai gave her maidservant Hagar to Abram as a wife to have the child God had promised.[\[497\]](#)

Thirteen years after her son Ishmael was born, God again appeared to Abram whom he renamed Abraham. He told him that the covenant with him was everlasting and would be with Isaac, a son he would have with Sarai (thereafter Sarah). The sign of the covenant would be circumcision. What was Abraham's response? On that very day Abraham circumcised all the males as the Lord had instructed him.[\[498\]](#)

The Lord appeared to Abraham with two angels. As they were leaving the Lord told Abraham about his plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. What was Abraham's response? He pleaded with God not to destroy Sodom because his nephew Lot[\[499\]](#) lived there.

Abraham traveled to another country in which he again feared for his life because of his wife's beauty. Did Abraham trust God for his protection? No. As he did before in Egypt, he misrepresented Sarah as his sister.

When Sarah demanded Hagar be sent away, God assured Abraham that his descendants would be reckoned through Isaac and that he should do as Sarah wanted. What was his response? Though he loved Ishmael, Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away.^[500]

Abraham's Greatest Test

Abraham's greatest test occurred some time later. God called to him and said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."^[501] Isaac was the son born of God's promise, the apple of Abraham's eye, his delight and his heir. God had said it was through Isaac that Abraham's offspring would be reckoned. Now God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering.

Did Abraham deny that God asked him to do that? Did he contend that if God wanted Isaac sacrificed, he would surely tell him again so there was no mistake? Did he reason that if God wished him to do such a thing, the sacrifice of Isaac could surely be delayed a long time, even years, so he could enjoy more years with his son? Did he complain to God that to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering was too awful?

Early the next morning Abraham saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.^[502] On the third day Abraham looked up and saw it in the distance.

Abraham knew that God had promised him, with an everlasting covenant, that Isaac would be the source of offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky. Consider what Abraham said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then *we will come back* to you."^[503] How could the boy come back if Abraham had killed him? What did Abraham's speech show about his faith in God?

Abraham took the wood and placed it on his son Isaac, and himself carried the fire and the knife. As they went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?"

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered: "*God himself will provide the lamb* for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.^[504]

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. He bound Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.^[505] The moment of truth arrived. What would Abraham do now? He had told the servants that they would both return. God had commanded that he kill his son.

Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, *because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.*"^[506]

How did Abraham respond to that great news? Abraham looked up and in a thicket saw a ram caught by its horns. He took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.^[507]

What was God's response to Abraham's faithfulness? The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time,

"I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that *because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.*"^[508]

Abraham's Faith Was Visible

Abraham's faith was visible when *he left Haran* in obedience to God's command and again when God promised Abram the land of Canaan and Abram *built an altar* to worship God. A lack of faith in God was equally visible when Abram *went to Egypt* during the famine; also when out of fear Abram *misrepresented* Sarai as his sister to the Egyptians and again to Abimelech.

Abraham's faith was visible when he *tithed* to Melchizedek as the priest of the Most High God. But when God promised a son, Abram and Sarai both lacked faith; Sarai *gave Hagar* to be the mother of the promised child.

When God established a covenant with Abraham and commanded that he and all the males of his household be circumcised, Abraham's faith was visible when *all were circumcised* that very day.

In his greatest test, when commanded to sacrifice Isaac, his visible faith must have been most pleasing to God. Abraham left *the next morning*. It was three days travel to the mountain but he *didn't delay* going up the mountain. He told his servants the impossible, that he *and Isaac* would return, a response which showed faith in God's promise that Isaac would be the line through which Abraham's descendants would be reckoned. Abraham *raised the knife* to kill his son. His visible faith showed that he had faith God would resurrect Isaac from the dead if he sacrificed him.

No Talk; Just Actions

In the entire section of Scripture that describes his life, not once does it record Abraham *saying* that he believed God or *saying* that he trusted God. It was his *actions* that showed when he trusted God and when he didn't.

Looking back, thousands of years later, we know that he believed God *because of his actions*. James and Paul both saw the same faith from Abraham's actions. James said, "The scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend."[\[509\]](#)

The Apostle John made the same point about action to show faith. He said,

"We know that we have come to know him if we *obey* his commands. The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not *do* what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone *obeys* his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must *walk* as Jesus did."[\[510\]](#)

Note that John writes entirely about *actions*; the man who talks but does not *do* is a liar.

Actions from Faith

Abraham's example showed us that righteousness in God's eyes is not achieved by only *saying* we trust God, or *saying* that we confess Jesus as our Lord. The true confession of *faith* is shown by our *actions* which result *from* our faith.[\[511\]](#)

Suppose we got this backwards, that we begin to think we must secure God's salvation *by our actions*, by being good, by living up to a standard God set for us. Paul reminded us that when a man works his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.[\[512\]](#) If we could work for our salvation, God would be obligated to give it to us if we did the work. But there is no required work. Salvation is a gift, something we cannot earn by works.[\[513\]](#) It is available to us through faith. Paul reminds us, "To the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his *faith* is credited as righteousness."[\[514\]](#)

Paul uses Abraham as our example to further illustrate this point: "Therefore, the promise (of eternal life) comes by *faith*, so that it may be by grace[\[515\]](#) and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all."[\[516\]](#)

If Abraham is our father in the faith, then should our faith be as his was – shown through *actions that come from faith*?

A Saving Faith Can Be Seen

Abraham's example is the example for all believers. We cannot claim to have a faith recognized by God *unless* our life demonstrates it. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac was based on his firm faith that through Isaac God would give him offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky. Abraham didn't know how it would happen, but was willing to obey God's command, believing that he is trustworthy and that his promises will come true.

If we believe with a saving faith, we will live our lives in a way that the world can see that we believe our God is faithful, that he will provide for us and protect us.

Will true believers always display their faith in God? Sadly, no. Even Abraham failed on important occasions, choosing to rely on conventional wisdom rather than on the wisdom and power of God. But Abraham rapidly moved away from those areas of worldliness and back into a trusting relationship with God. So must we.

It's always easy to move our mouth and say we have faith in God. But when the rubber meets the road, when we are asked to leave our Haran or to slay our Isaac, are we doers or are we talkers?

Was it necessary for Abraham to make his faith visible before God? It seems it was, in order for the promise to be given. The angel said, "*Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you.*"^[517] Then the promise of the Messiah was given. Surely God could have looked within the mind and heart of Abraham to know if his faith was sincere without putting him to the test.

God thought it necessary to test Abraham so that his faith would be visible to himself, to God, and to us. The same must be true for each of us. God wants your faith and mine to be visible to you, to him, and to others. With James we must say, "I will show you my faith *by what I do.*"^[518]

Faith As Visible As Light

Jesus taught that our faith is to be as visible as light. He told us: "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, *let your light shine before men*, that they may *see your good deeds* and praise your Father in heaven."^[519] The darker the surroundings, the more visible the light of a saving faith will be.

A saving faith is not a secret faith. Jesus said we must let our faith be seen by men. He didn't say others would know because we *claim* to have faith. He said they would *see* our good deeds. What are the good deeds of which Jesus spoke?

Faith Seen through Action

How are we to be as visible as light? Since we don't actually radiate light that all can see, we are to be seen through our actions. The two principal forms of actions are what we do and what we say.

I notice how parents treat little children. Though I cannot hear what they say, parents broadcast their relationships with their children. Some are so loving I smile when watching them. The children respond confidently, without fear. Other parents seem full of pent-up anger. They yank on their children and sometimes swat at them. The children cringe at sudden movements of the parent's hand, as though expecting a blow.

Our speech is also a foremost indicator of what we are. When people with similar haircuts stand together and are dressed alike, we can deduce little about them. As soon as they speak, we often can detect the region of the country from which they came, their education, their breeding, and their faith.

Jesus expressed it this way: "For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him."[\[520\]](#) If we have a saving faith, it will be *visible* from our speech. If our speech does not *show* our faith, do we have a dead or useless faith?

Actions More Important Than Words

When Jesus told the story of a father and two sons, he taught us that actions far outweigh words. "The father went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'

"'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

"Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go."[\[521\]](#)

Then Jesus asked the elders of the Jews, "Which of the two did what his father wanted?"

"The first," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you."[\[522\]](#)

Jesus was not trying to teach a lesson about working in a vineyard. What was he saying? Let's find out by relating it to what we've seen Scripture

teach, that a saving faith must be visible and must be shown by action. Let's restate the situation in that setting.

Someone comes to me and says, "Have faith in Jesus Christ and receive him as your Lord."

I say, "No thanks. I'm doing well by myself. Who needs Jesus? I'm not giving up control over my life." But after I think about it, I realize I'm wrong; I confess my sin and ask Jesus to be the Lord of my life. Then I begin to do what God's word says. I obey the Lord Jesus.

The other scenario begins the same way. Someone comes to me and says, "Have faith in Jesus Christ and receive him as your Lord."

I say, "Of course! That's a good idea. I need Jesus as my Lord." Then I promptly go my own way, not submitting to the lordship of Jesus.

Which alternative is God looking for? It's obvious, isn't it? It doesn't matter how much we move our mouths, it's what we do that counts.

Remember, we're not *doing* God's will because we will earn salvation from it; we're *doing* it because we are following Jesus as our Lord.[\[523\]](#)

Faith Puts into Practice Jesus' Teachings

Jesus taught that everyone who loves him *will* obey his teachings and commands.[\[524\]](#) He illustrated the importance of putting into practice what he said by a story:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and *puts them into practice* is like *a wise man* who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does *not* put them into practice is like *a foolish man* who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and *it fell* with a great crash."[\[525\]](#)

Some teach that the parable refers to a life blessed by God when Christ's teachings are put into practice versus a life which has great difficulties if his teachings are not followed. They contend that the person has salvation nevertheless. Is that an interpretation which simply tickles men's ears, telling them what they want to hear?

Isn't it more likely that Jesus is talking about having or losing salvation? Isn't it the wise man who receives him as his Lord whereas the foolish man rejects him? Those who puts his teachings into practice are obedient to him

as their Lord. If we don't follow his teachings and commands, have we received him as our Lord?

No Continuing Sin in the Life of One with a Saving Faith

It's not fashionable to talk about sin. Many churches tolerate sin among their members and wouldn't consider rebuking anyone because of a sinful life-style. But is that scriptural? The Apostle John spoke at length about the issue of sin in the life of a believer.

John said, "No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him."^[526] I believe each of those statements refers to a different situation. The first is the situation of a believer. No believer continues to – keeps on – sinning. The second refers to a new "believer." If the new believer continues in a pattern of sin, his conversion is not real. He has neither seen the Lord or known him.

John then used contrasting examples to make his point again. He said, "Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."^[527]

Then John reviewed his former tests for believers and converts. As to believers he said, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God."^[528]

As to new "converts," John said, "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."^[529]

All of us should apply these tests to ourselves. If we continue in a pattern of sin, if we don't do what is right, if we don't love our brothers, we don't have a saving faith. We've not been born again.

What does it mean to "continue in sin"? Are we saying that a true believer never sins? Of course not. John also spoke to that: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."^[530] If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives."^[531]

Knowing that we will sin, John encouraged us: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."[\[532\]](#)

John did not attempt to gloss over sin as seems to be the custom in much of the church today. Instead, he said: "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."[\[533\]](#)

The surest test for new believers to determine if they truly have a saving faith is whether the Holy Spirit has convicted them to give up existing patterns of sin. True believers will not continue in sin.

A Saving Faith Is Obedient

John contrasted the obedient versus the disobedient: "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him."[\[534\]](#) We must know Jesus Christ as our Lord if we would be saved.

John gave us a positive test for a saving faith:

If anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. [535]

A Saving Faith Is Loving

Jesus' primary command to his disciples is that we must love one another as he loved us.[\[536\]](#) John said that obedience to that command is another test for a saving faith: "Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble."[\[537\]](#) If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."[\[538\]](#)

The converse test is also true. John told us: "Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness."[\[539\]](#) If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth."[\[540\]](#)

A Saving Faith Perseveres to the End

We Must Remain in Christ to Be Saved

The second major characteristic of a saving faith has to do with "remaining." We *must remain* in Christ.^[541] Note the terrible result for those who don't remain. They are like branches that *wither*, that are *thrown away, picked up, thrown into the fire, and burned.*^[542] Does that sound like the reward of heaven for believers? It sounds more like the punishment of hell for unbelievers., doesn't it?

Many preachers and teachers today distort such clear teachings of Scripture by saying that Jesus isn't saying our "remaining" will affect our salvation, but instead that our earthly existence will be less pleasant. They say we will miss some of the joy and peace we would otherwise have. They sometimes say we will only miss the abundant life God intends for us here. Is such teaching false?

Must we be a complete and obvious apostate to fail to remain in Jesus? If we begin to love the world, Scripture says the love of God is not in us.^[543] If we continuously disobey God and the teachings and commands of Jesus, we no longer remain in Jesus. I am not suggesting that occasional disobedience will destroy our relationship with God and the Lord Jesus any more than the disobedience of our child will cause us to disinherit our child. We know the patience of God is greater than our patience.

If we continue in disobedience, we are following our own ways and have set ourselves up as lord and god of our lives. Will God tolerate that? The first of the ten commandments is "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

The frightening thing is that we may continue to think we are Christians and to *appear* Christian, regularly attend church, prayer meetings, and fellowships within our church, but all the while no longer remaining in Jesus. Though we can *appear* to live the Christian life, there will no longer be the bona fide fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We will know this because joy will no longer be present in our lives. Our peace will be gone. We will once again experience the frustrations and anxieties of the world.

I believe millions of people continue to believe they are Christians because they wrongly believe that all they have to do is believe Jesus died for their sins on the cross or that he is their personal Savior in order to have salvation. If they correctly understood that their relationship with Jesus must be with him as their Lord,^[544] they would know that their rebellion against his

teachings and commands severs them from the vine. They are in danger of being picked up, thrown into the fire, and burned.

Can We Really Persevere?

Can we not? We couldn't if something came up which was too much for us. I don't mean just an excuse for failure, but really something which was too much for us to handle. Isn't that possible?

No, I believe it's not possible for those with a firm attachment to the *Lord* Jesus. First of all, it's not possible because he is *Lord*, ruler of all, having all power and all authority in heaven and on earth. What can come against us that such a Lord cannot overcome? If we don't believe that our Lord Jesus is above all, then we don't confess Jesus as *Lord*.^[545]

Is it possible that we can be tempted in a way that we cannot resist? After all, we have a sinful human nature and are not free from sin.

We need not succumb to temptation. Scripture promises that God is faithful; he will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. But when we are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that we can stand up under it.^[546]

The powers of darkness are powerful. Satan was created as the most powerful and beautiful of the angels. His power is awesome. How can we resist?

Satan is but an angel, and a fallen one at that. Though we shouldn't underestimate his power, at the same time we should all the more appreciate the supreme power of our Lord. What can Satan do?

Paul asked: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?"^[547]

Paul answered his own questions:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our <i>Lord</i> . ^[548]

We who are believers, who have a saving faith that clings to our Lord Jesus Christ, are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.^[549]

Finally, there is a precious promise that I repeated hundreds of times until it became part of the fiber of my belief. It especially indicates to me the power of my Lord, as it shows his power to alter circumstances. He promises in all things to work for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.^[550]

God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ promise to prevent any temptation that is more than we can bear from coming against us, to shield us by God's power, and to work everything for our good.

Yes, we can persevere. Believers are given all needed power and protection to be able to persevere.

A Saving Faith Gives Up Everything for Christ

I recently heard a speaker say, "Sometimes the hardest thing for the non-Christian to understand about Christianity is that salvation is absolutely free; it costs you nothing." That may sound good and may be attractive to some unbelievers. But is it true?

Consider a teaching of Jesus.^[551] "Suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he's not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace."^[552]

Why would the king ask for terms of peace? Because he knows that he almost surely will not prevail and risks his life and that of his army. Knowing that, what terms of peace would he offer? Could it be that the king would say, "Take everything we have, but let us live"?

After telling the parable to the people, Jesus gave the application: "In the same way, any of you who does not *give up everything he has* cannot be my disciple."^[553]

Does our salvation cost us nothing? Is it absolutely free? It's costly to qualify for God's gift of salvation. It costs us everything.^[554]

Jesus Emphasized the Cost of His Kingdom

Over and over, Jesus tried to make sure his listeners understood that his kingdom is different. To enter it is costly.

He told another story: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and

sold all he had and bought that field."[\[555\]](#) There was no doubt about the subject matter of the parable. Jesus said we must recognize the great value of his kingdom. When we do, in great joy we will give up everything we have in order to gain it.

Another parable had the same teaching: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and *sold everything he had* and bought it."[\[556\]](#) This parable differs only in that the person who found the pearl of great value was a knowledgeable, discriminating merchant who recognized at once the value of the pearl.

Taken together, the parables include all of us. Some of us stumble upon the claims of Christ and gladly give up all we have once we understand the inestimable, eternal value of the kingdom of God. Others have searched for meaning to life and have studied in an effort to discern spiritual truths. When they come to understand the claims of Christ and that eternal life is possible by reconciliation to God through the sacrifice of Jesus, they gladly submit all they have to the lordship of Jesus Christ.[\[557\]](#)

Some misunderstand Jesus' statement that we must give up everything we have to become his disciple. Some believe the statement is only symbolic. Others believe he's referring only to our material possessions.

Cost in Family Relationships

Jesus' demands are far more than our material goods. Jesus said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple."[\[558\]](#)

We know that Jesus did not teach us to hate our loved ones.[\[559\]](#) He used that language to contrast for us the supreme love we must have for him compared with the love we feel for those closest to us.

He showed us that our relationships may have to be reviewed and that our new relationships in the kingdom of God are to supersede even those of family. This happened when Jesus was told his mother and brothers were outside waiting to see him. His response was surprising: "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."[\[560\]](#)

Lest we think his response was intended differently, later a woman called out from the crowd, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you."

Jesus replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."[\[561\]](#)

Jesus showed us that those who are his brothers and sisters – those who hear God's word and put it into practice – supersede those who are brothers, sisters and even his mother by blood.

Jesus said to another man, "Follow me."

The man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family."

Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."[\[562\]](#)

Doubtless the first man's father hadn't yet died, but perhaps was old. The man was saying that when his other responsibilities ceased, he'd be happy to follow Jesus. That didn't satisfy Jesus at all. In the next instance, the man said he wanted to say goodbye to his family. Likely he also wanted their blessing for his new activity, leaving other responsibilities to follow Jesus. That also didn't satisfy Jesus. His reply was almost caustic. Our decision to follow him is not a family decision; it is an individual one. We are not to engage in service for him and then think about what we could have done or would rather have done. We are to go for the Kingdom with whole-hearted devotion, not looking back, not regretting, but focused solely on him.[\[563\]](#)

Costs Our Very Self

Jesus said more. He said we must hate even our own lives. Unless we do and love Jesus more than all who are close to us, even our very selves, we cannot be his disciples.

Jesus used an ugly example:

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." [564]

The Jews knew about crosses. The Romans had devised the cross as a means of torture and execution. Likely most Jews cringed at the sight of a cross. Incredibly, Jesus said they must take up their crosses daily and follow him.

Recently I heard the song, "The Pearl," by Tom Reed. Let me quote the lyrics for you, because it perfectly illustrates the cost of the kingdom, of following Jesus.

THE PEARL

There once was a man who lived out his plan
And spent his life seeking fine pearls.
His heart did abound for when he had found
The greatest pearl in the world.
He could hardly resist, could such a pearl exist?
He had found the goal of his life.
He said with a stir, "Tell me, kind sir,
Does that pearl have its price?"
The Merchant replied, "That pearl is my pride.
I won't sell for dollars alone.
But the price, m'lord, every man could afford,
Is simply all that you own."
The weight of the fare simply cannot compare
To the value of something so rare.
How can I say "no" for I already know
It's worth it if only I dare.
"I'll take it!" he said with no doubt in his head.
He laid down his pouch full of gold.
But the Merchant said, "Nay, there's still more to pay
If the pearl is to be yours to hold.
I said all you own. Might you have a home
To include in the price I demand?
The price is such that it may be too much
If you really value your land."
"I'll do it!" he cried as he reached in his side
And pulled out the deed to his home.
But the Merchant said, "Nay, there's still more to pay
If the pearl is to be yours alone.
For if in your life you've married a wife
And raised up a family
They're in the price, it's a great sacrifice,
Do you value the pearl more than these?"
"I'll do it." he lamented, "and now I've consented
To give you all I possess!"
But the Merchant said, "Nay, there's still more to pay
And this is the ultimate test.

You've still got yourself, there's nothing else.
It's all you've got left in this world.
I want control, surrender your soul,
And then I will grant you the pearl."
He cried, "It's agreed!" As he fell to his knees,
"I pledge my troth to thee!"
The Merchant said, "Aye!" to his honest heart's cry
"You're willing and worthy, I see.
You've paid the full price, surrendered your life,
For the priceless pearl in your hand.
"And now as my slave, from now 'till the grave
You're to follow all my commands.
Take this pouch full of gold and from now 'till you're old
As a steward, you're to use it for good.
And take this home I grant you on loan
Let it represent me as it should.
"Now, you are the one who has raised up a son
With the woman you've given to me.
So I charge you this day and I charge you to stay
For the sake of the family.
For you've considered the sum and yet have freely come
To take me as your Lord.
So now you've become as one of my sons
And all that I have is yours."
He said to the Merchant,
"I am your servant
But you're too good to be of this world."
The Merchant said, "Peace be with you,
For there's only a few
Who will pay the price for the pearl."
The kingdom of heaven is like that man
Who spent his life seeking fine pearls.

His heart did abound for he had found

The greatest pearl in the world.

His heart did abound for he had found
The greatest pearl in the world. [\[565\]](#)

Tom Reed, Troubadour of the Lord

We Must Die to Self

What could it mean to take up a cross and follow Jesus? Only one thing. Crosses were to die on. One didn't carry a cross for decoration or to appear religious. Did Jesus mean his followers were to kill themselves? Not exactly.

He did mean they were to kill the *self* in themselves.^[566] That is what you and I are called to do.^[567]

Much of the confirmation for that understanding is found in the writings of the Apostles. Paul said to the Roman believers,

"For we know that *our old self* was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with.^[568]

Our old self is sometimes referred to as our sinful nature. Paul said, "If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you *put to death* the misdeeds of the body, you will live."^[569] Paul said we must count ourselves *dead to sin* but alive to God in Christ Jesus.^[570]

Peter understood the same message from Jesus. He told his readers, "Jesus bore our sins in his body on the tree, *so that we might die to sins* and live for righteousness."^[571]

The cost is everything we have, even our very self!^[572]

Jesus Urged Us to Consider the Cost Before We Begin

Knowing that many are unwilling to pay the price to enter his kingdom, Jesus urged all who would come to him to consider the cost before they do.

You may remember the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. He got a straight message: "Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."^[573] Note that the message was for that man. Jesus didn't tell everyone he met to sell everything they had and give it to the poor.

Why do you suppose Jesus told this rich young man to sell everything? Luke tells us the man's response: When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.^[574]

Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."^[575]

The disciples were shocked at these comments. Likely they believed, as many do today, that riches are desirable. Paul warned that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.^[576]

Jesus didn't sugarcoat the costs of entering his Kingdom. He insisted that we consider carefully whether we are willing to pay the price before we

begin the journey. To illustrate his point, he told this parable:

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'"[577]

Many begin the Christian walk because they are told it's easy or perhaps they respond to an emotional appeal. When they find out what it really costs to follow Jesus, they become discouraged and drop out.[578]

A Saving Faith in a New Vessel

Unlike any other religions or relationships, a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is not to be something added to everything else in your life. It is to be your new life.

Paul said, "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to *put off your old self*, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to *be made new* in the attitude of your minds; and to *put on the new self*, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." [579]

Jesus used two homely examples to illustrate that point. Both were easily understood by the people of that day but less so by us because of our cultural differences. He said, "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse." [580] And, "Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." [581]

What has Jesus said? If we try to sew Christianity onto our old lifestyle, it will never work. The two are incompatible. The new life must be put into a new self. Likewise, to put new wine into an old wineskin is like putting the new life of Christ into the old sinful nature. A new self must be the vessel for the new life in Christ. The old self is already stretched; it's not capable of accepting the new life which will expand and change us.

Born Again

Having a new self is what is called being born again.[582] Jesus explained it to Nicodemus:[583] "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.[584] No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." [585]

When we believe in Jesus Christ as Lord, God places within us the Holy Spirit.^[586] God then becomes our Father;^[587] then we have been born of the Spirit.^[588] That's why Jesus said to the believers, "Do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven."^[589] The new relationship with God is to supersede our earthly relationships, even those with family. Our earthly father is no longer to be as important as our heavenly Father.

Those who are born again of God by his Spirit live differently.^[590] Paul emphasized the difference between the old life and the new: "If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you *put to death* the misdeeds of the body, you will live,^[591] because those who are led by the Spirit of God are *sons of God*.^[592] Yes, as incredible as it may seem, when we have been born of the Spirit, God is our Father and we become sons and daughters of God.^[593] Even our citizenship changes; we become strangers and aliens here; heaven is our new home.^[594]

New Creation

When Nicodemus was told by Jesus he must be born again, he asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"^[595]

Sometimes Nicodemus is ridiculed for his response, but I think he asked a legitimate question. He didn't expect to have to enter his mother's womb again, but he wanted to know what Jesus meant. How can a man be born again?

Just as being born again would be starting over, that is also the Christian experience. If anyone is in Christ, he is a *new creation*; the old has gone, the new has come!^[596] As Christians we live a new life.^[597]

Our New Life Becomes Everything

When we're born again, it is like a seed being planted. Hardly anything has happened. Jesus illustrated it this way, "It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches."^[598] Though the seed is tiny, it grows into the dominating plant in the garden. So must be our faith; it must begin with our new birth and grow into the dominating force in our life.

Jesus gave us still another example. He said the kingdom of God is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."[\[599\]](#) Yeast permeates all the dough. So it is to be with our life in Christ. It is to encompass every area of life. The yeast does not remain encapsulated in one small area of our life – our religious life. If we have been born again, if we are new creations in Christ Jesus, that new life permeates everything about us. That includes our life from the moment we awake until we close our eyes in sleep. It actually affects our dreams as we sleep.

If I claim to be born again and a new creation in Christ, but continue to live and act as I did before, am I just a new seed that's not yet sprouted or has the seed really been planted? Or did the new growth quickly die when it came up?[\[600\]](#) If so, pray that Christ Jesus will plant his seed again in your heart, that you will till the soil and fertilize it with the Word of God so that it may grow strong and engulf your entire life.[\[601\]](#)

Clothed with Christ

When we are born again and become a new creation, what are we to be like? Paul said, "The life I live in the body, I live by faith *in the Son of God*. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but *Christ lives in me*."[\[602\]](#)

How do we live as new creations in Christ? John told us, "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."[\[603\]](#) God intends that all his children be conformed to the likeness of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.[\[604\]](#) All who are baptized into Christ have clothed themselves with Christ.[\[605\]](#)

All those scriptures say we're to be like Jesus. He's our model, our master[\[606\]](#) and our teacher.[\[607\]](#) Jesus said, "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be *like his teacher*, and the servant *like his master*."[\[608\]](#) A student who is fully trained *will be like his teacher*.[\[609\]](#) As his students, we're to be like him. As his servants, we're to be like him.

Jesus Said Our Faith Saves Us

Jesus often said to those he healed, "*Your faith has healed you*."[\[610\]](#) When two blind men came to him, he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

"Yes, Lord," they replied.

Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you."[\[611\]](#)

On one special occasion a woman with a sordid history of sexual immorality came to him, kissed his feet, washed his feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, and poured perfume on them. Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Jesus explained to those who heard why she had been forgiven: "I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much."[\[612\]](#)

Then he spoke again to the woman, "*Your faith has saved you; go in peace.*"[\[613\]](#)

Our Faith Can Have Great Power

Jesus saw a fig tree. When he found it had no fruit he cursed it. Immediately it withered. His disciples were amazed. They asked, "How did it wither so quickly?"

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done."[\[614\]](#)

That story contains a qualification. We must not doubt. James warned that those who ask of God must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.[\[615\]](#)

Our Lack of Faith Inhibits God's Power

It is a mystery how our faith is tied to God's exercise of his power. Nevertheless, we know that his power is exercised through our faith and inhibited by our lack of faith.

In Nazareth, Jesus' home town, the people there knew him as a carpenter. They knew him so well they couldn't believe in him as the Christ, the Son of God. They surely couldn't accept him as their Lord. Scripture records that Jesus did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.[\[616\]](#)

A parallel seems true in America. Jesus is so familiar to us that he is treated almost with contempt. Oh, yes, he is our Savior (we say) and we're

saved (we believe). But no longer do we receive him as our Lord. As a result, there is little of God's power shown in this country. A great work of the Spirit is manifesting itself in third-world nations just coming to know Jesus. Pity the nation, our nation, which treats the Lord Jesus Christ with contempt.

Saving Faith Acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus talked about the speech of those that have a saving faith: "Whoever *acknowledges me before men*, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven."[\[617\]](#) Then he spoke about those who had a useless faith or a dead faith: "But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."[\[618\]](#)

A useless faith[\[619\]](#) or a dead faith[\[620\]](#) is one which isn't visible – a professed faith without evidence of its existence. James asked, "Can such faith save?"[\[621\]](#) We know the answer is no.

A saving faith is rooted and grounded in the *Lord Jesus Christ*. If Jesus is truly in us, then we will confess him before men. If he's not, we won't. We'll act as we believe.

Chapter 8

OBEDIENCE: EVIDENCE OF A SAVING FAITH

Evidence of a Saving Faith

At the outset we must understand what we are saying and what we are not saying. This is because there are recurrent attempts in many denominations and sects of the Christian religion to create a "works" theology in which we must do certain things to be saved. Usually those "Christian" groups will agree that Jesus' death reconciled us to God, but they will usually say there is something more we must do to be saved.

The extreme opposite claim is that believers don't have to do anything, that salvation is all by the grace of God, and that if anything were required of a believer it would create a salvation by "works" and thus deny the grace of God.

I experienced that extreme position in a Friday morning Bible study I attend. The leader's first statement was, "People just don't realize how simple the gospel is, that all anyone has to do is to accept Jesus as their Savior in order to have eternal life."

I thought to myself, "This is starting badly." You know from this book's earlier chapters that there is no basis whatever in Scripture for his statement. But it got worse.

The leader then said, "The next problem people have is in believing that salvation is a free gift, that there is absolutely nothing for us to do."

Another fellow chimed in. "Yes, once you accepted Jesus as your Savior you're just along for the ride."

Contrary to those statements, in order to be a believer we do have to do something. That something is to have a saving faith.^[622] But what we do isn't to earn salvation; it is to qualify for it. All are not saved; only those with a saving faith have eternal life.

Let's look at an example to see what it means to qualify for salvation through faith.

Consider the following hypothetical situation. Suppose I owned a vacant lot. A church wanted to buy the lot from me, but I refused to sell. Instead, I offered the church the lot free, as a gift. I included in my offer, as a condition

of the gift, that the church could have the lot only so long as they continued to use it as a place of worship. To satisfy the condition, three criteria were established by the gift deed. The church was required to construct a building, hold regular weekly worship services in it, and continue to maintain the building in a presentable fashion for worship purposes.

My gift to the church was absolutely free. The church did not pay me for the lot nor could they earn it. The church happily accepted my terms, built a sanctuary, and held regular weekly services for years. The church grew and finally outgrew the sanctuary on my lot. The church leaders decided to build a new larger sanctuary elsewhere as my lot was too small to accommodate it.

The church built the new facility and began to hold their worship services in their new facility. The sanctuary on my lot was no longer used; however, the church wanted to continue to have the lot available to them. They invited me to special meetings and gave me special favors. Women from the church brought pies to me from time to time, and boys from the congregation came by and mowed my lawn.

The lot, however, reverted to me. The condition of the gift deed had been that the church continue to use the property as a place of worship. One of the criteria to satisfy that condition was being violated: the church no longer held regular weekly worship services there; therefore, the church was no longer obedient to the condition.

Just as I gave the church the lot (which the church was unable to buy) on which to build, so God gives us the free gift of salvation, which we cannot buy or earn by our efforts or good works.

Just as I established one condition for the gift of my lot to the church, God established one condition – a saving faith – for his free gift of salvation. No amount of church attendance, church membership, generous gifts, Sunday School teaching, church pastoring, or missionary work will qualify us for salvation.

As we've seen, believers are not just along for the ride. A saving faith *will* be expressed in visible ways.

James said that our faith – if it is a saving faith – must be visible. I see three visible signs of a saving faith – obedience, fruit, and good works – three different perspectives^[623] by which anyone can tell there is something

different and special about us because of our faith.[\[624\]](#) Let's look at them in what I perceive to be the order of their emphasis in God's Word.

Obedience That Comes from Faith

After Paul told the Romans about the call on his life, he explained that the Lord Jesus Christ appointed him an apostle to call people from among all the Gentiles *to the obedience that comes from faith*.[\[625\]](#) What kind of obedience? The obedience that *comes from faith*.

Paul closed the book of Romans with a similar thought. In a doxology of praise to God, he said that Jesus Christ was revealed so that all nations might *believe and obey him*.[\[626\]](#) Paul didn't say just "believe" or just "obey." First we must believe. From our belief comes our obedience – the *obedience that comes from faith*.

"That comes from" are key words. *From* a saving faith come the signs that make the faith visible. When it's the other way around, people strive to have the signs and sometimes never have the faith.[\[627\]](#)

The signs come *naturally* from a true saving faith. A striving Christianity isn't true Christianity. Jesus said his yoke is easy, his burden is light.[\[628\]](#) We know Jesus doesn't lie. If I find being yoked to Jesus isn't easy, if my burden isn't light, it's time for me to find out what I'm missing in my faith, or what's wrong with my faith.[\[629\]](#)

What Are We to Obey?

After his resurrection, Jesus gave instructions to his disciples; future generations have called them the great commission. He said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*."[\[630\]](#)

How is what Jesus commanded related to the will of God? Jesus told us, "For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."[\[631\]](#)

Jesus, the perfectly obedient son who is our model, did and said only what God, his Father, told him to do and say. Thus, all the teachings and commands of Christ are also the express will of God the Father.

Is It Hard to Obey?

I get many different responses from people whom I confront with the idea of obeying the teachings and commands of Jesus. It has always surprised me that most responses are highly defensive: "No one can perfectly obey" or, "It's not possible to obey." Others object. "That's legalism." Are their responses true?

Jesus said, "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.*"^[632]

It is Jesus who said we're to obey.^[633] He doesn't think it an impossible task. Just the opposite. Jesus said it's easy, a light burden. He said we'll find rest for our souls!

The Apostle John understood this when he said:

"This is love for God: to obey his commands. *His commands are not burdensome.*"^[634]

Perhaps it's hard to obey if our spirit isn't right. On the other hand, if we seek to obey the Lord Jesus because we believe in him as our Lord and because we trust him and love him, it's not hard. Under those circumstances, to disobey is unnatural; to obey is natural. Once we have become a new creature in Christ, our nature is truly changed.^[635] We no longer wish to follow the old sinful nature. We now wish to follow the way of the Spirit.^[636]

Paul concurred. When he talked about obedience, he often contrasted the old nature – the sinful nature – with the new nature of the Spirit. He said, "The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit *is life and peace.*"^[637] A life of obedience is characterized by life and peace.

I think we can agree that the Spirit of God will not tell us that it is difficult, hard, or impossible to obey the teachings and commands of Christ. Which spirit(s) would say such a thing?

Whom Do We Obey?

Many would say they obey no one but themselves. The New Age movement teaches that we're all gods. Naturally as gods we'll obey only what we determine is right and good for ourselves.

Scripture says otherwise. Paul gives only two alternatives. He says we all obey. In fact, he says we're all slaves to the one we obey. We're either

slaves to sin^[638] or to obedience (to God),^[639] which leads to righteousness.^[640]

Paul contrasts our choices still another way. He states that the nonbeliever offers the parts of his body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness. He states the believer must offer the parts of his body in slavery to righteousness^[641] leading to holiness.^[642] Peter said that we actually purify ourselves by *obeying* the truth.^[643]

Perhaps Paul chose the term *slave* because the paramount characteristic of a slave is obedience.^[644] The Master of true believers is the Lord Jesus. He asked, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"^[645] Jesus regards it as hypocrisy to call him "Lord" but not to obey him. Perhaps the ultimate oxymoron is to call Jesus "Lord" but claim there's no need to obey him.

Christians Will Obey

How can I be sure that Christians *will* obey? Jesus said, "If you love me, *you will obey what I command.*"^[646] If God is our Father,^[647] we will love the Lord Jesus.^[648] If someone truly loves Jesus, he *will* obey him.

Your logical response may be, "I know lots of people who claim to be Christians but don't obey Christ's commands." Jesus responded to that. "He who does *not* love me will *not* obey my teaching."^[649]

Suppose you say, "I'm a Christian but I don't obey Christ's commands." In that case, Jesus said you don't love him.^[650] Do you really think you can be a Christian and not love Jesus?

CHRIST'S COMMAND: LOVE ONE ANOTHER

There were many teachings and commands that Jesus gave his disciples and one great command summarizes all of them. Jesus said,

"A new command I give you: *Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*"^[651]

Do you remember that our obedience comes from our faith and that faith is to be visible? See what Jesus said after he gave this command: "*By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*"^[652]

Our faith is visible through our love for one another in obedience to the Lord's command.^[653] Jesus said it will be.

God's and Christ's Example

God requires that our faith be visible, that we have an obedience that comes from faith, and that we be obedient to the command to love one another. That means that the love we have, one for the other, must be shown through our actions.

God gave us an example to follow. It was how he showed his love for us. He sent his one and only Son *into the world* that we might live through him.^[654] His coming was not a secret matter. No, God publicly became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, an historical figure who was seen and touched.^[655] God showed us that this is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.^[656]

Did Jesus publicly show his love for us? Indeed he did! All of his miracles demonstrated his love. He healed the sick, he fed the hungry, he raised the dead. He gave us the ultimate example of what love is and how to show our love: He laid down his life for us in a public spectacle on a cross. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.^[657]

Each time we see a cross, it should remind us of God's love for us in giving his Son, of Christ's love for us, and his example of how we are to love each other.

Definition of Love

The meaning of love as used in Scripture to define the love relationship between God and man, man and God, and us to others is very special. It comes from the Greek word *agape*. It expresses that *highest and noblest form of love which sees something infinitely precious in its object*.^[658]

That definition isn't hard to understand when we think of our love toward God. If we know God, he is infinitely precious to us. Isn't it wonderful to think that God thinks of us as infinitely precious in his sight?

Perhaps the most life-changing love is when we are able to love others by seeing them as infinitely precious to us. How differently we treat people when we think of them in this way. How different their response is to us when we speak and act that way.

This is the love to which we are called by Jesus.

The Law of Christ

There is a new law since the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul called it *Christ's law*^[659] and he described how to fulfill it: "Carry each other's

burdens, and in this way you will *fulfill* the *law of Christ*.^[660] He who loves his fellowman has *fulfilled* the law.^[661] Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the *fulfillment* of the law."^[662]

Paul said of Christ's law, "The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."^[663]

James agreed. He said that if you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.^[664]

John said that was the theme of Christ's teaching: "This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another."^[665]

Christ's Law Is God's Command.

John said that God commanded two principal things of us: (1) To believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and (2) to love one another as Jesus commanded us.^[666]

Are We Known for Our Love?

Jesus said we are to be known – visible – because of the love we have for one another. Am I known for my love? Are you? What if we are not? Shouldn't that be reason to take stock of ourselves? Paul exhorted us:

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; *test yourselves*. **DO** you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test?^[667]

One of the tests is how we fulfill the law of Christ – to love one another – by helping our brothers.^[668] Such a test was stated in parable form by Jesus. The setting was the final judgment when Jesus (the King) will separate the people before him as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. The group on the King's right fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, invited in strangers, clothed those who needed clothing, and visited the sick and those in prison. The group on his left didn't. The King rewarded with eternal life those who helped their brothers. He condemned the others to eternal punishment.^[669]

At this point we must be very clear. Did Jesus grant eternal life to those on his right for their works? Absolutely not. Their reward was for *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ which was shown to be real – made *visible* – by their love for their brothers. Their faith was visible because of their *obedience* to Christ's command to love one another. Obedience and love were made visible *by actions*.

Let's go back and look at the example James used. "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?"^[670] James concluded: "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by *action*, is dead."^[671]

The parable of the sheep and the goats describes James' teaching. When those on the King's right found a brother or sister without clothes and daily food they gave that person clothes and food. The ones on the left didn't. They may have said, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed." Those with faith *accompanied by action* had a living, saving faith. Those who had no action had a *dead faith* and were condemned by the King.

We are talking about faith, not works. We must have a visible faith – one made evident by our actions and speech in our daily life.

SALVATION IS FOR THE DOERS OF GOD'S WILL

Jesus emphasized that everything he taught was the will of God. He said that everything he did and everything he said was only what God told him to do and to say.^[672]

Christ's command that we are to love one another is the command of God.^[673] Jesus taught us what God the Father told him to say. Consider then this warning from Jesus:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who *does* the will of my Father who is in heaven."^[674]

Christ's law, given by God the Father, is that we are to love one another as Jesus loves us. That is God's express will for all true believers. According to the above scripture, only those who *do* that will enter heaven.

Those who don't *do* God's will – love one another – are like those in the parable of the sheep and the goats who didn't show their love toward their brothers by their actions and who were condemned by the King. Read what Jesus said will happen to those who don't do God's will. Again the setting is the final judgment where Jesus is judging:

"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'

"Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"^[675]

Did we read that right? Those people addressed Jesus as Lord! They prophesied in Christ's name, drove out demons and performed many miracles. And yet they were condemned!?! How can that be?

The answer is simple. The law of Christ is to love one another. No matter what we do, even if it appears to advance the kingdom of God, if it isn't done in love, God doesn't count it. Does that sound familiar? The Apostle Paul said the same thing:

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.^[676]

That's exactly what Jesus said. Though the people appearing before Jesus in the judgment prophesied in his name, drove out demons and performed miracles, Jesus said he never knew them. They didn't obey his primary command to love one another.^[677] And they were condemned.

Can Everyone Do God's Will?

Without question, there is no one incapable of doing God's will in the manner God intends.^[678] Paul said, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."^[679] He expressed what is available to all of us. When he speaks of doing *everything*, he's not talking about flying to the moon without a rocket. He is talking about doing anything and everything God wants him to do. God never asks us to do anything for which he does not provide sufficient power and strength. He may ask everything we have as well, but we can know that he will supply all that we lack.

The Process of Obedience

All of us have bad habits. New Year's resolutions often express the desire to correct them. So it is with sin and disobedience. We have bad habits from our sin nature. Even though we've submitted willingly to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we've got those terrible old habits in our lives.

Paul recognized that when he urged the Romans, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."^[680] As we are transformed, as our mind is renewed, we will see more and more clearly God's will for our lives. Paul

said we are *to be transformed* (a process) into the likeness of our Lord Jesus.^[681]

When we try to get rid of bad habits, it's a training process and sometimes a difficult one. So also for the Christian. The mature Christian is one who has trained himself to distinguish good from evil.^[682]

Getting rid of bad habits can be discouraging. A habit occurs naturally, without our thinking about it. We must gain awareness of it in order to be able to defeat it. Witness the countless people who've tried to overcome smoking or substance abuse. Ingrained sin^[683] can be as difficult to overcome. Perhaps that's why Scripture speaks so much of the need for encouragement and that one of the gifts of the Spirit is encouragement.^[684] Instead of judging one another, let's do the loving thing; let's encourage one another and build each other up.^[685] Together we can live to please God.^[686]

Salvation for Those Who Obey

We saw in the prior section examples of the parables of the sheep and the goats and of the people rejected at the judgment who didn't *do* the will of God. Both showed that those who refused to obey Christ's commands were condemned, but that those who showed their love for their fellow man *by their actions* were granted eternal life. It is those whose faith was *visible* – shown through their *obedience* – who were saved. They were the ones who *did* God's will. *By their actions* they showed their love for one another.

The theme is recurrent in Scripture. Those who believe in the Son (who have the visible *obedience* that comes from faith) have eternal life; but those who do not *obey* the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them.^[687] The world and its desires pass away, but the man who *does* the will of God lives forever.^[688] The Lord Jesus Christ became the source of salvation for all who *obey* him.^[689]

We'll Be Judged by What We've Done

We're not talking about salvation by works. Please remember that Scripture is clear that we are *saved by faith*. Nevertheless, it repeatedly tells us that our faith must be seen through our *actions*. Our actions show and prove our faith.

In the parables of the sheep and the goats^[690] and the account of the judgment of those who had prophesied and done miracles,^[691] the people who

were condemned seemed surprised. They seemed to think that their idea of what was acceptable to God was sufficient for salvation. They seemed to think they could *say* they had faith and that was supposed to satisfy God.

They were warned. Paul taught that God "will give to each person *according to what he has done*."^[692] What Paul said wasn't new; he quoted the Psalmist who had written the same hundreds of years before.^[693]

When the Apostle John saw the vision of the Great White Throne judgment, he saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged *according to what they had done* as recorded in the books.^[694] The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged *according to what he had done*.^[695]

Jesus told the Apostle John, "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone *according to what he has done*."^[696]

Action Means Doing

Paul explained that to those who by persistence in *doing good* seek glory, honor and immortality, God will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.^[697]

What is "doing good"? It is living in love, showing our love for one another by our actions. That's why Paul exhorted us to not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we don't give up. He said, "As we have opportunity, let us *do good* to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."^[698]

The opposite are those who are self-seeking, who have self-love. They reject the truth – Christ and his commands.^[699] They serve themselves and follow evil; God's wrath remains on them.^[700]

It isn't those who sit in the pews every Sunday hearing God's word who are necessarily righteous in God's sight. It is those who *obey* Christ's law to love one another who will be declared righteous.^[701] They will be considered righteous for their obedience; it is the obedience that comes from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which *expressed* itself in love for one another in obedience to his command.

Apparently speaking of those who were professing to be Christians, the Apostle John warned that we should not let anyone lead us astray. He gave us a test: "He who *does* what is right is righteous, just as God is righteous;^[702] you know that everyone who *does* what is right has been born of him."^[703]

THE DISOBEDIENT DON'T DO GOOD

The Apostle John also defined those who don't satisfy God's requirements. He knew some people's belief is all talk.^[704] Of them he said that the man who says, "I know him," but does *not do* what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.^[705] Of those who claim to love, but don't show it in their actions, he said, "Whoever *does not love* does not know God, because God is love."^[706]

John knew about the churchgoers who claim to be Christians yet live worldly lives, who live in spiritual darkness. Of them he said, "If we claim to have fellowship with God yet *walk in the darkness*, we lie and *do not* live by the truth."^[707]

The opposite of doing good is doing what is bad, doing what is sinful. John said: "He who *does what is sinful* is of the devil."^[708]

What about those who don't do what they know is right? For example, those who know that Christians are to love one another, yet don't show love in their actions? John was blunt: Anyone who *does not do* what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who *does not love* his brother.^[709]

The Disobedient Hate Their Brothers

If true Christians love their brothers, what about those who are disobedient? John had much to say about them. He said, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet *hates his brother*, he is a liar. For anyone who *does not love his brother*, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.^[710] Anyone who claims to be in the light but *hates his brother* is still in the darkness^[711] and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.^[712] Anyone who *hates his brother* is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him."^[713]

The Disobedient Love the World

An alternative to loving one another is loving the world. Where fun and riches abound, it seems easy to love the world. But that is the opposite of loving one another. John warned us not to love the world or anything in the world. He said that if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.^[714] For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world.^[715] Everything in the world is *self*-centered, the opposite of the person who is known for the love he has for his brother.

The Disobedient Continue in Sin

The Apostle John revealed standards that are uncomfortable for the American culture. For example, do you think the Apostle John would approve of the sexual sin in America? Many so-called Christians do. Attending church and claiming to be Christians, couples live together outside of marriage. Others wallow in pornography, lust after the opposite sex (or even the same sex), some are adulterers, yet hold themselves out as Christians. Are they? Do they have a saving relationship with God? Are they merely backsliders? Read what John said.

No one who lives in Christ *keeps on sinning*. No one who *continues to sin* has either seen him or known him.^[716] No one who is born of God will *continue to sin*, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.^[717]

A fair reading says that those people who continue in sin have no salvation.

Lest you misunderstand, John didn't say that true Christians would never sin. Just the opposite. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.^[718] We will sin. We are not perfect. Yet for the Christian, John expects the pattern of sin to be broken, that sinning will be an infrequent event, not a continuous course of action as it may have been prior to following Jesus as Lord.

BLESSINGS FROM OBEDIENCE

Those who obey Jesus with the obedience that comes from faith have wondrous special blessings. The blessings include not only intimate relationships with Jesus but extend to salvation itself. Let's look at some.

Friendship with Jesus Is for the Obedient

Can everyone say they are friends of Jesus? I suppose they can. But Jesus defined his friends this way, "You are my friends *if you do what I command*."^[719] What did Jesus command? Jesus commanded that we are to love one another as he loves us.^[720]

Being Set Free Is for Those Who Obey

Many Christians like to talk about how they are free in Christ. Often they quote, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."^[721]

Few seem to know the condition attached to that blessing. Jesus said, "*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples*."^[722] *Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*"^[723]

What is the summation of his teaching? Through his actions, his example, and his words, Jesus taught that we are to love one another.

Ask Whatever You Wish if You Obey

Many Christians also like Christ's promise, "ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."^[724] They often forget the condition preceding the promise, "*If you remain in me and my words remain in you*."^[725] What are Jesus' words? They are the teachings and commands he taught his disciples as recorded primarily in the Gospels.

The same teaching came from the Apostle John: If our hearts don't condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, *because we obey his commands and do what pleases him*.^[726]

Perhaps John's teaching shows what it means to remain in Jesus and have his words remain in us. There are three qualifications to the promise: (1) we must not be in sin (or our hearts will condemn us), (2) we must obey the commands of God, and (3) we must do what pleases him.^[727]

There are two commands of God listed by John: (1) to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and (2) to *love one another as Jesus commanded us*.^[728]

Special Love Is Given by God to the Obedient

God loved the world – everyone – before mankind even knew him.^[729] But there is a special love that God has for the true believer, the one who is obedient to him.^[730] Jesus told us about that love and how it relates to obedience:

"Whoever *has* my commands and *obeys* them, he is the one who *loves* me. He who *loves* me will be *loved by my Father*, and *I too will love him* and show myself to him."^[731]

Jesus emphasized that truth by stating it again:

"If anyone *loves me*, he will *obey my teaching*. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."^[732]

God the Father and Jesus our Lord love specially those who obey the commands of Jesus. They come to us and make their home with us through the Holy Spirit.

The Obedient Remain in Christ's Love

We all want the assurance of being loved by one another, of being loved by God, of having salvation. We know that we are happiest when we feel loved and secure.

How can we have the assurance that we will be loved by God and will have eternal life?

Jesus promised, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. *If you obey my commands*, you will remain in my love,^[733] just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."^[734]

The Apostle John understood. He wrote, "We know that we have come to know him (Jesus) *if we obey his commands*. The man who says, 'I know

him,' but *does not do what he commands* is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone *obeys* his word, God's love is truly made complete in him."[\[735\]](#)

Our only requirement to remain in his love is to *obey* what Jesus has taught us. Then we can experience his love, have security in our relationship with him, and our joy will be complete.

The Holy Spirit Is Given to Those Who Obey

To whom is the Holy Spirit given? I've always heard that when a person is converted, God gives the Holy Spirit to dwell in him. That is true. I've also heard that all "Christians" have the Holy Spirit within them. That is also true, but it isn't true for the large number who call themselves Christians but have never received Jesus Christ as their Lord. I often wondered, before I undertook a study of this, why many people who claimed to be Christians had no evidence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Let me show you what I found.

I was studying John 14 when I got the first obvious key. First Jesus explained to his disciples that he was going to leave them and what would happen after he was gone. Then he said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."[\[736\]](#) Unmistakably, Jesus was telling the disciples how they would receive the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said *if* we love him we *will* obey him and he *will* do something for us. He *will* ask the Father and the Father *will* give us the Holy Spirit. That's a promise, but a conditional one. We *will* receive the Holy Spirit from the Father *if* we love and obey Jesus.

I wondered if that relationship really was true, if I understood that correctly. Then I came across the account of Peter defending the disciples before the Sanhedrin. Speaking about the Holy Spirit, Peter said, "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given *to those who obey him*."[\[737\]](#)

That was exciting. It stated that those who *obey* God receive the Holy Spirit; it fully corroborated the passage in John 14.

Further proof was found in John's letters. "If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him

and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."^[738] The condition, "if we love one another," is obedience to the law of Christ. Jesus said he would ask the Father to give us the Holy Spirit *if we obey his commands*. To love one another is Jesus' primary command to his followers.

Jesus restated his promise of the Holy Spirit another way. "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and *we will come to him and make our home with him*."^[739] Jesus and the Father live within us through the Holy Spirit.

At least five times, Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit is given to those who *obey* the teachings and commands of the Lord Jesus Christ.^[740]

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

Have we missed something? If you're a student of Scripture, you may be uneasy, thinking that all we've said so far is true, but something is missing.

You are right. Something was missing, but now you'll see how wonderful Scripture is, how God ties everything together perfectly.

So far we've really concentrated on man's relationship to man – Christ's command to love one another. What about our relationship to God? Isn't that the most important? Of course it is. When asked what the most important commandment is, Jesus replied:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. *This is the first and greatest commandment.*

"And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"^[741]

You may properly remind me that I've shown that there is a new law, the law of Christ, and we've seen that it is summarized by the command to love one another as Christ loves us, or, as sometimes stated, to love your neighbor as yourself. You may be asking, "Where in Christ's law is the command to love God?" But before I answer that question let's first consider what it means to love God.

What Is Love for God?

You and I think differently than God about what constitutes love. Our culture has taught us that it may be equated with passion. Sometimes it is defined as strong affection or caring deeply for another, usually in family or personal relationships. Puppy love is infatuation.

Christians have sometimes attached their cultural definitions to their ideas of what constitutes love for God. That is wrong indeed. The only definition of love for God that we must use is God's definition. That's different than our cultural views.

To paraphrase Jesus' most important command, "We're to love the Lord our God with part of our heart, with part of our soul, and with part of our mind." Does that sound right? That paraphrase seems wrong, doesn't it? Have we ever considered that the paraphrase may represent how we actually love God, rather than as Christ commanded?

The command is to love God with *all* our heart and with *all* our soul and with *all* our mind. How much is left over to love ourselves? Nothing! Scripture doesn't tell us to love ourselves.^[742] Instead, as an act of worship and love for God, we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to him.^[743]

Obedience Is a Natural Expression of Love for God

The Apostle John, who wrote about love more than did all the other apostles, defined what love for God is: This is love for God: *to obey his commands*.^[744]

Obedience is love for God? Yes, in the same way that our faith must be visible to be acceptable to God. Obedience to his commands makes our love for him visible and proves it is real.

Though in Greek there are three words used for love, only one word is ever used to express man's love for God. Doubtless you've guessed it is *agape*. In the classical Greek, *agape* expresses that *highest and noblest form of love which sees something infinitely precious in its object*.^[745]

If God is seen by us as infinitely precious in our sight, isn't it perfectly natural that we will obey him if he asks us to? He has asked. He has commanded us to obey him, and to obey the teachings and commands of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, it's natural that the Apostle John can say that obeying the commands of God is love for God. It's consistent with all we've seen before – our love for God is made visible by our obedience to his commands.

Just as faith without action is dead, so love for God without obedience is dead. John warned that if anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother –

disobeys God's commands – he is a liar.^[746]

Related to Love for Others

It is obedience to Christ's law – his command to love one another – that constitutes love for God.^[747] John emphasized that whoever loves God must also love his brother.^[748] Anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.^[749]

God Rewards Those Who Love Him

God has special feeling – *agape* love^[750] – and blessings for those who love him. Paul expressed his understanding this way, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."^[751] No matter how much you've tried to imagine the blessings and wonder of heaven, they are more than that.

The most practical day-to-day application of my faith is the promise told by Paul to the Romans: "In all things God works for the good of those who *love* him, who have been called according to his purpose."^[752] Could anything be more reassuring? No matter how grim the circumstances, I know that the Almighty God and my Lord Jesus will work that situation for my good and for his glory.^[753]

Obedience to the Second Satisfies the First

God's word is incredible, isn't it? By now you see that when we satisfy Christ's law, summarized by his command that we love one another as he loved us, we show our obedience to the first and greatest commandment, to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind.

Proved by Salvation

Remember the parable of the sheep and the goats? Jesus, as King, was judging the people. He didn't separate them by who *said* they loved God and who did not. They were separated based on those who had shown acts of love toward their brothers and those who hadn't. Salvation – eternal life – was granted to those who *showed* their love; eternal damnation was for those who did not.^[754]

Likewise, Jesus taught that those who appear before his throne at the final judgment who have not *done* the will of God – not loved their fellow man – will never enter heaven.^[755] Their judgment will not be based on

whether they *professed* to have a saving faith but on what they did, on their *obedience* or lack of obedience to Christ's law to love one another.

Over and over Scripture states that our faith and our love is demonstrated through our *actions*.

While I have summarized Jesus' commands as loving one another, he gave us many commands and teachings – Christ's law, all of which are to be obeyed. He commanded us to teach *all* that he commanded.^[756] A free Bible study, which includes all Jesus' teachings and commands, is found on the internet at www.bereanpublishers.com under Bible studies. I have taught this study for years and testify that it changes lives.

End-Time Prophecy Fulfilled

Referring to the time at the end of the age, Jesus said, "Because of the increase of wickedness, *the love of most will grow cold*, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."^[757]

To what could Jesus have been referring? Do you remember what characterizes love for God? Yes, it's obedience. You remember that Jesus said, "If you love me, *you will obey me*."^[758] Whoever has my commands and *obeys* them, he is the one who loves me."^[759]

Isn't it true that we observe less and less obedience to the commands of Christ among professing Christians? Isn't it also true that many churches no longer teach the need to be obedient to Christ, instead claiming that all one has to do to have eternal life is to believe in Jesus as one's personal Savior? Indeed, the love of most is growing cold.

Serious heresies within the church have led untold millions into a false faith, what James would call a dead or useless faith. The heresies have caused people to have the wrong object of their faith, claiming that by simply accepting Jesus as their Savior they may gain salvation. They've further emasculated a saving faith by claiming that salvation is all from God, by grace, and there is nothing for us to do.

We've seen innumerable examples from Scripture that show that it is the visible faith that is a saving faith – faith that is visible from our actions. In addition, we've learned that obedience to Christ's law is the way we show our love for God. Just as a saving faith must be visible, so our love for God must be visible.

Chapter 9

FRUIT: EVIDENCE OF A SAVING FAITH

It is likely Christ's teachings about bearing fruit were obscure to the Jews. What did this prophet (as they saw him) mean when he told them they should bear fruit? Or that they should remain in him?

Fruit – An Essential Evidence of a Saving Faith

Jesus taught that fruit is a *necessity* in the believer's life:

"I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.^[760] No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.^[761] This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."^[762]

This passage of Scripture is one of the tough ones that many seek to interpret in a fashion which is reassuring – to tickle our ears.^[763] But such interpretations are not true to Scripture. Consider the relationships and consequences:

- We are branches;
- Jesus is the vine;
- We (as branches) cannot bear fruit by ourselves;
- We (as branches) can only bear fruit as we remain in Jesus (the vine);
- We (as branches) must remain in the vine (Jesus);
- We (as branches) can do nothing apart from Jesus;
- We (as branches) are to bear much fruit for the glory of God, showing ourselves to be disciples of Jesus; and
- We (as branches) will bear much fruit if we remain in Jesus (the vine) and he in us.

What happens if we don't remain in the vine (Jesus) and don't produce fruit? There are several results:

- God, the Father, is the gardener, who *cuts off* every branch in Jesus that bears no fruit;
- If we (the branches) don't remain in Christ (the vine), we are like branches that are *thrown away and wither*; and
- If we (the branches) don't remain in Christ (the vine), we are like branches which are picked up, *thrown into the fire and burned*.

There are critical lessons to be learned from this passage.

"In Christ" Without Fruit = No Salvation

Note the observation above, "he (God) cuts off every branch *in me* that bears no fruit." Did you understand the full import of that? These are branches that were *in Jesus* that are cut off because they don't bear fruit.

To whom could that teaching refer? How about the millions upon millions of persons who warm our church pews with an easy-believism form of Christianity? They were taught that all they have to do is believe Jesus died for their sins and they will be saved. From the first chapters of this book, you know that's *not* the message of Scripture, but that is a widespread message in the twentieth century church in America. Such professing Christians often have *no fruit* of the Spirit of God in their lives. They've been taught their passive belief is adequate for salvation. They neither obey Jesus nor pledge to obey him as their Lord; thus they don't have the Spirit;^[764] without the Spirit they can't have the fruit of the Spirit;^[765] without the fruit of the Spirit they will be cut off from Jesus;^[766] without the Spirit they don't belong to Christ;^[767] unless they belong to Christ they have no salvation.^[768]

Fruit of the Spirit As a Test

Paul gave us a list of the fruit of the Spirit: "The fruit *of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."^[769] Because the fruit is of the Holy Spirit, we won't have it unless we have the Holy Spirit in our lives. It is a test for the presence of the Spirit. We will have the fruit if we have the Spirit.^[770]

Without it in our lives, it should be a grave warning sign to us. What is different about our life? Have we ceased to be obedient?^[771] Are we still trusting God in all things? Has some other activity taken our time and attention away from Jesus? As soon as we discover the difference, we can take immediate steps to repent of our sin and restore our relationship with our Father and our Lord Jesus.

The fruit we bear is a test for the spirit we have within us, not only for the presence of the Holy Spirit, but also as a test for false spirits. Jesus said:

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. *By their fruit you will recognize them.* Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
^[772] *Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*"^[773]

There is both good fruit and bad fruit. The fruit identifies the person; good fruit (of the Spirit) identifies the person who is filled with the Spirit; bad fruit identifies those who are not of the Spirit and not of the kingdom of God. What is bad fruit? Paul described that:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.^[774]

When I looked at the list of bad fruit, it surprised me how many were of the kind that may be kept in the closet. The professing Christian may be guilty of them. How about hatred, jealousy, unforgiveness, selfish ambition, factions and envy? Aren't all those ones that can be hidden from others and secretly harbored? *If* we would belong to Jesus, *if* we would have salvation, *if* we would have the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit, we must rid ourselves of such bad fruit.

But we can't just get rid of it, because it comes from a bad tree. What then must we do? That tree (our old sin nature) must die. We can be born again as a new creation when we commit to receive and obey Jesus as our Lord. Then God himself will become our Father and we will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As a new creation we will be new trees with good fruit.

Three Judges of Our Fruit

There are three judges of the fruit in our lives. One is God who sees the heart. Nothing can be hidden from God. He sees our motives as well as our actions.

We also judge the fruit in ourselves. If we harbor secret sins, we can keep these from most people, but we're aware of them. We know how we really feel. If we have secret sins, we feel like a hypocrite when faced with a compelling sermon or the convicting word of God.

The third judges are those who know us best, who see our private lives. Our children are those who judge us by our fruit. How many children have rejected the Lord because a parent is a hypocrite? How many spouses refuse the Lord because of the bad fruit in their spouse's life? Consider many who refuse any association with the church because of the hypocrites who attend. Hypocrite equals bad fruit!

This isn't a casual matter, not something to be shrugged off with the thought, "Nobody's perfect." It's not a case of having a happy or not happy life; it is a case of having or not having *salvation*. Paul warns that those who bear bad fruit will not inherit the kingdom of God.^[775]

Never Had Fruit of the Spirit?

What if you've never experienced the fruit of the Spirit? I can think of two reasons. The first may be that you are a new Christian who does not fully understand the need to be obedient to Jesus as your Lord. This can be quickly corrected as you study God's word and commit yourself fully to *obey Jesus as your Lord*. In turn, God will give you the Holy Spirit and your life will begin to manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

The second may be that you're a gospel-hardened professing Christian. You may have sat in churches all your life, having grown up in the church. You may have heard the gospel so often it long ago failed to make an impression on you. It isn't something you hungrily seek nor do you allow it to interfere with your lifestyle. Nevertheless, you may attend church regularly, be a member of the church body, hold office, sing in the choir, even be a pastor. You don't put into practice God's word or obey Jesus.

Such a person simply doesn't have the Holy Spirit. That's why he or she fails to have the fruit of the Spirit. If that be your case, *pray* to God that he will soften your hardened heart, that he will draw you to the Lord Jesus, that he will reveal and open his Scripture to you, that he will lead you into a life of *obedience to Jesus as your Lord*, that he will fill you with his Spirit and let the fruit of the Spirit flow in your life.

What Are the Purposes of Fruit in a Believer's Life?

Jesus said it is to the glory of God that we bear much fruit and therefore show ourselves to be his disciples.^[776] Jesus disclosed two purposes for bearing fruit. The first is to bring glory to God. The second is that we are identified with Jesus, showing ourselves to be his disciples.

As to the first purpose for bearing fruit – giving glory to God, Jesus also said, "let your light shine before men, that they may *see* your good deeds and *praise* your Father in heaven."^[777] Our light shines before men from the fruit we bear. When men praise God because of good deeds, that brings glory to God.

As to the second – showing we are disciples of Jesus, he said, "All men will know that you are my disciples if you *love one another*."^[778] Since one of the purposes for having us bear fruit is so we will be known as Christ's disciples, expressing love for one another is one such fruit.^[779]

I believe we can add another purpose. When we have the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, we truly have the abundant life. Mankind craves nothing more than love, peace, and joy. With those, he is fulfilled. He no longer needs to strive for money, fame, status, bigger houses, or better jobs. True love, peace that passes understanding, and inexpressible joy are found only when the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ indwells those who receive and obey Jesus as Lord.

Bear Much Fruit

Let's look again at John 15:8: "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear *much* fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." God will be glorified if we produce *much* fruit. We will show ourselves to be Christ's disciples if we bear *much* fruit.

How are we to bear much fruit? Jesus told us: "If a man *remains* in me, and I in him, he *will* bear much fruit."^[780] If we remain in Jesus as our Lord and he remains in us, we *will* bear *much* fruit. That's a promise!

It is the fulfillment of two conditions. The first is our duty to remain in Jesus. How do we remain? Jesus told us: "*If you obey* my commands, you *will remain* in my love."^[781] The second condition is that Jesus remain in us. How can we cause him to remain in us? By loving and obeying him. Then he promises that both he and the Father will live within us through the Holy Spirit.^[782] Through our firm attachment to the vine we will naturally produce much fruit.

It's not that hard, is it? We can produce much fruit by remaining in Jesus. We remain by obeying him.^[783] We obey him by learning his commands and teachings, obeying them, and teaching them to others.^[784] Jesus remains in us when we love and obey him. We obey because of the obedience that comes from a saving faith.^[785] Our faith is in Christ the Lord who we confess as our personal Lord.^[786]

Bear Fruit That Will Last

Jesus said further: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and *appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last*. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."^[787]

Before we find out what fruit will last, note that a promise has been attached. If we bear fruit that will last, God will give us whatever we ask in Jesus' name.

What fruit will last? Love never fails.^[788] Paul taught us that in the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13. After telling about all else that would pass away, Paul concluded: "These three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."^[789]

Limited Time to Bear Fruit

If you claim to be a professing Christian, but do not now or have never experienced the fruit of the Spirit, pay close attention to this teaching of Jesus:

"A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"^[790]

Who are the parties to this parable? God, the Father, owns the vineyard. We, professing Christians, are fig trees. Jesus takes care of the vineyard. When you and I go on and on without bearing fruit, God is about to cut us down (as fig trees) or cut us off the vine.^[791] Jesus intercedes for us,^[792] but, according to the parable, even he agrees that a time must come when those who don't bear fruit will be cut down.

Anyone who professes to be a Christian but does not have the fruit of the Spirit in his life has the clock running on him. According to the parable, a time will come, or has already, when God will seek to sever such a person who does not produce fruit. Jesus will, or already has, interceded for you as your high priest.

Now is the time to recognize God's requirement to bear fruit and to fulfill it. Pledge to be a doer of the word and not a hearer only. Receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and pledge with all your heart to obey his teachings and commands. Live out your pledge as best you can. God is

faithful. He will provide the power to obey and the fruit to prove that the Holy Spirit dwells in you.

Will Only a Few Be Saved?

As Jesus was teaching, someone asked, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"

He said, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'

"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

"Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

"But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'

"There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out."[\[793\]](#)

Sobering, isn't it? Salvation is not all-inclusive. Not everyone who claims they're a Christian will be saved. Again we see that those who have not come to Jesus in the way he said are called evildoers. Anyone who does not receive Jesus as their Lord is not justified before God, their sins are not forgiven, they are alienated from God and will die in their sins as evildoers.

Example from the Jews

Will God really cut off the branches (us) in the vine (Jesus) who don't produce fruit? Will he cut down the fig trees (us) that don't produce fruit? Or is this just rhetoric?

Consider the Jews. Before Jesus was revealed to them, but in the same generation, John the Baptist warned the Pharisees and Sadducees: "The axe is already at the root of the trees, and *every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire*"[\[794\]](#) In response to his warning, some Jews repented and were baptized. Many hardened their hearts and refused. What happened?

As a nation, the Jews rejected their Messiah. Indeed, the axe was at the root of the trees. Most of the Jews didn't produce fruit for the kingdom of

God; instead they denied the kingdom and killed the King. In 70 A.D. Rome marched against Jerusalem and destroyed it and the temple, killing tens of thousands of Jews and sending the others into slavery. The trees that didn't produce good fruit were cut down and thrown into the fire.

Shortly before they crucified Jesus, as he was ending his earthly ministry, Jesus told the chief priests, Pharisees and elders of the people: "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people *who will produce its fruit*."^[795]

We are living in the age of the Gentiles. The Gentile Christians and converted Jews who are indwelt with the Holy Spirit are producing fruit for the kingdom of God.

If Cut Off, Can We Be Restored?

Is there hope for any tree that has been cut down or any branch that has been cut off – those who haven't produced fruit for the kingdom of God? Yes, there is hope. Paul understood the problem and gave an example using trees and branches. In it, the branches are the Jews, the wild olive shoots the Gentiles, and the olive root the Lord Jesus Christ. In Paul's day, many Jews had rejected the Lord Jesus, their King. Paul explained:

"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.

You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in."

Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God didn't spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.^[796]

Does the last sentence applies to you? Perhaps you once believed, but later gave up your belief, or simply failed to grow and produce fruit, or you've fallen into a pattern of continuing rebellion and disobedience. Paul warned that you may be broken off, as Christ said the Father would do with those who didn't produce fruit.^[797] Paul continues the warning:

Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. *Otherwise, you also will be cut off.* And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for *God is able to graft them in again.*^[798]

Apparently some of the Gentile Christians were becoming arrogant and boastful that they had obtained salvation in Christ while most of the Jews had not. Paul took pains to correct their attitude.

The thrust of the passage is that those of us who are Gentile believers were grafted in even though most Jews were cut off from Christ. Paul says they were cut off because of unbelief. We are grafted in because of faith. But, if those same Jews don't persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for *God is able to graft them in again*.

Let me apply that to myself. God once cut me off because of unbelief. I once believed with all my heart, but lapsed into complete unbelief, totally rejecting Christianity and all it stood for. Nevertheless, our gracious God grafted me in again when I no longer persisted in unbelief and came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord.

For those who claim to be Christians, take heed. God was faithful to his Word as spoken by Jesus,^[799] John the Baptist,^[800] and Paul,^[801] with warnings to the Jewish nation.^[802] Will he be less faithful to his Word when his teachings refer to us? We must consider carefully the warnings of Scripture. We must bear much fruit for the kingdom of God or we too will be cut off.

Do we earn our way to heaven by producing much fruit that will last? No! A thousand times no!! If we don't produce fruit – much fruit, fruit that will last – and continue in his kindness, we will be cut off. Will we be cut off for lack of fruit? No, because fruit *comes from* a saving faith.^[803] We will be cut off because of unbelief,^[804] the lack of a saving faith, evidenced by lack of fruit.

Fruit produced in the lives of those with a saving faith is almost involuntary, exactly as is the fruit which appears on the branch of the vine. The branch does not decide to produce fruit. It produces fruit because of its attachment to the vine – Christ. It is from our *firm attachment* to him as our Lord that we *naturally* produce much fruit that lasts for the kingdom of God. The fruit is evidence in our lives and identifies us with our Lord Jesus. The "firm attachment" is a saving faith.^[805]

Summary

The same may be true of any of my readers who may have been cut off because of unbelief. God is able to graft you in again! But you must not persist in unbelief. If you haven't received Jesus Christ as your Lord, you are persisting in unbelief. Bow the knee and pledge obedience to him, repent of your unbelief, submit to his Lordship, and he will lift you up; the Father will give you his Spirit and adopt you as his son or daughter, and you will bear fruit. Obey Christ's commands and you will bear much fruit for the glory of God, and remain in Christ's love.

Chapter 10

GOOD WORKS: EVIDENCE OF A SAVING FAITH

I've known intimately two men who believed their works would save them. Volker was my real estate partner, and Joe is my son-in-law. Both said, "I believe that all I have to do to go to heaven is to be a good person."

Volker and I invested together for several years. We talked about spiritual matters many times. He was interested, willing to talk, and seemed to make progress in understanding the biblical message of salvation. When we went to Kansas City to look at property, we visited with my cousin, a pastor there. While talking of spiritual matters over dinner, Volker repeated his belief that he only had to be a good person in order to go to heaven. I was aghast when my pastor cousin said, "Yes, that's what I believe too."

It took quite a while to overcome that remark, but God's power far exceeds that of the false teacher. Through the efforts and prayers of many Christians, Volker and his wife Regina are firmly committed to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

My son-in-law Joe didn't have a saving faith in Jesus. He thought he would see many of his friends in heaven because they were good people, though his friends didn't know Jesus. Joe stated that God only requires that we do the best we can. Joe believed he did that.

This story also has a good ending. Joe committed himself to the Lord shortly before Christmas, 1984. What a great Christmas that was! Joe has remained committed, is growing in the Lord, and now has children (my grandchildren) who know Jesus intimately.

For millions, however, there's not a good ending. They continue to believe that being good is adequate to enter heaven at death. Where could such an idea have come from? Is it biblical?

Salvation Is Not by Works

Probably the idea of being saved by good works came from Christendom itself. By the time of Martin Luther and centuries before, the Roman Catholic Church taught salvation by works. What had been true of Israel in the days of Paul had become true of the Roman Catholic Church by the time of Luther. Paul said of Israel:

"What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a *law* of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were *by works*."[\[806\]](#)

Through study of Scripture, Luther found that the Roman Catholic doctrine was not the Biblical message of salvation at all.

The Biblical Standard

What is the Biblical standard? Are we to perform good works in order to enter heaven? Again, the Bible provides the answer:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – *not by works*, so that no one can boast.[\[807\]](#)

Those two verses make four points: Salvation is by God's grace; it is through faith; it is a gift from God; and *it is not by works*.[\[808\]](#)

If works could gain salvation, it wouldn't be a gift. Paul spoke exactly to that: "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation."[\[809\]](#) He also stated, "Salvation does not depend on man's desire *or effort*, but on God's mercy."[\[810\]](#)

As a result of Paul's teaching, some teach that works are not something the Christian should do. They say that to do works means that we detract from the sacrifice of Jesus which alone saves us.[\[811\]](#)

Is it a biblical teaching that we are not to do works? Just the opposite. Paul emphasized: "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *to do good works*, which God prepared in advance for us to do."[\[812\]](#)

I attend a Bible study with a group of guys that really love each other. One thing I've noticed, though, is the emphasis – almost a preoccupation – that salvation isn't by works, to the point of deemphasising the works God calls us to do. As we've seen from Paul's teaching to the Ephesians, *we are created to do good works*.[\[813\]](#)

What should be our emphasis? The writer of Hebrews said, "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and *good deeds*."[\[814\]](#) Instead of telling each other that good deeds are not to be part of a Christian's life because it shows we are trying to earn salvation, Scripture teaches that we are to spur one another on toward good deeds.[\[815\]](#)

Are the scriptures inconsistent? As we have seen, Ephesians 2:9 states we are not saved by works; the very next verse that we are created to do

good works. The two verses are not inconsistent, but present an important distinction. Anyone who does good works *to be saved* isn't saved.^[816] The way of salvation is exclusive. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."^[817] He didn't say, "I am the way plus good works you must do."

Paul taught the same: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."^[818] Paul didn't insert, "and do good works." No, it is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that salvation is obtained; we are saved through his life.^[819]

Salvation is through the Lord Jesus only! Our trust for salvation must only be in him. To add anything is not to trust wholly in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Purpose of Good Works

What about the good works mentioned in Ephesians 2:10? If good works are not to obtain salvation, what is their purpose?

Works to Give Glory to God

When a believer is fully submitted to God, he is under the constant direction of the Holy Spirit. God then causes people and circumstances to come into such a believer's life to be influenced by the believer in whatever way God wishes. The believer becomes an extension of God's power, the way God works in the world, just as Jesus was the perfectly submitted Son and did and said only what God, his Father, told him to do and say.

Because of God's omniscience, he is able to plan what he will do in the future, knowing events in the future. That's why Paul was able to say, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."^[820]

It is our responsibility, as we do God's works to extend his kingdom, to make sure the source of the works is always made known. We're not to seek praise or honor for what we've done. Jesus said, "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."^[821]

God initiates the works we are to do, he prepares them in advance for us, and we're to show that whatever we do is through him.

Works As a Test

Good works may be a test. If they are not a part of our Christian life, we should question whether we have a saving faith. While such works are not done in order to be saved, they result naturally from a saving faith.^[822]

Remember the story in which Jesus will separate the sheep from the goats?^[823] As you remember, the only criteria Jesus used in that parable was what the people had done – *their works!* Those Jesus will praise as righteous go to eternal life; the others to eternal punishment. No mention at all of faith is made – only actions. James said something similar:

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. ^[824]

Looking after orphans and widows is a form of works. James said doing them are acceptable to God.

Works As Obedience

Are we to conclude that works are a means to salvation? No, but *good works show obedience* to the teachings and commands of Christ. Note the kinds of actions mentioned by Jesus and James. The righteous fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, invited in the stranger, clothed the needy, looked after the sick, visited those in prison, and looked after orphans and widows.

Is there something all of those actions have in common? Isn't it love? The primary command of Jesus is to love. To obey that command means to *do* those good works which are an expression of the love of Jesus within us. If we don't display Christ's love in similar ways, is it because we don't have the love of Jesus in us?

Works to Prove Repentance

The first recorded commandment by Jesus, as he began his ministry was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."^[825] We know that repentance is to turn from sin and to turn to God. This is a matter of commitment and the heart. Is there any way we are to show or prove our repentance to God? Paul thought so. When he summed up his ministry to King Agrippa, he said: "First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and *prove their repentance by their deeds.*"^[826]

God wants more than words. God isn't satisfied for us only to say we have faith; he's not satisfied when someone simply says they repent. He wants proof through their actions.

Works of Service

Paul taught the Ephesians about the various jobs we have as Christians. "He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, *to prepare God's people for works of service*, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."[\[827\]](#)

Instead of saying the Christian is not to do works, Paul said the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are to prepare God's people *for works of service*. The purpose is fourfold: (1) To build up the body, (2) to reach unity in the faith and (3) in the knowledge of Jesus, and (4) to become mature.

That doesn't describe the Christian church today, does it? We haven't reached unity in the faith or in the knowledge of Jesus. Often professing Christians seem noted for lack of knowledge of Scripture and lack of maturity in Christ. No wonder Christ's body – his church – has not been built up. We've not prepared the children of God *for works of service!*[\[828\]](#)

Works As a Witness

Lifestyle evangelism draws others to the Lord Jesus because one's lifestyle is attractive and inviting. To accomplish that, our good deeds must be positive and beneficial so that people are drawn to Christ and God is praised.

Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men, that they may *see your good deeds* and praise your Father in heaven."[\[829\]](#) "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that *what he has done* has been done through God."[\[830\]](#)

Good deeds were emphasized by the New Testament writers. Peter said, "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may *see your good deeds* and glorify God on the day he visits us."[\[831\]](#) James said, "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him

show it *by his good life, by deeds done* in the humility that comes from wisdom."[\[832\]](#)

Works for Lasting Reward

Scripture has much to say about wealth and those who are rich. Rarely is it good. The problem of the wealthy is that it's too easy to put their faith in wealth and not in God.

Paul wrote Timothy about the wealthy. He told him: "Command the wealthy to *do good*, to be rich in *good deeds*, and to be *generous* and *willing to share*."[\[833\]](#)

Again the emphasis is on doing good deeds.

Works As Evidence of Faith

When Paul instructed Timothy about caring for widows who were in need, he limited the care to those who met certain criteria. One of them was that the widow be "well known for her *good deeds*."[\[834\]](#) Apparently Paul intended to limit the resources of the church to those who were truly of the faith and not those who simply professed the faith to secure benefits of the fellowship.

When Paul described desirable characteristics for women in the church, he said they should be seen, not for their dress, but *for good deeds* appropriate for women who profess to worship God.[\[835\]](#)

Martin Luther disliked the teachings of James because the Roman Catholic Church emphasized works, and Luther recognized such teachings as error. Because James insisted that works are an essential evidence of a saving faith, Luther found the teaching offensive. Perhaps what Luther didn't clearly understand was that it was not works that James said would save, but only that works were a *necessary visible part* of a saving faith. James explained:

"Dear brothers, what's the use of saying that you have faith and are Christians if you aren't proving it by helping others? Will that kind of faith save anyone? If you have a friend who is in need of food and clothing, and you say to him, 'Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat hearty,' and then don't give him clothes or food, what good does that do?"

"So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. *You must also do good to prove that you have it. Faith that doesn't show itself by good works is no faith at all – it is dead and useless.*

"But someone may well argue, 'You say the way to God is by faith alone, plus nothing; well, I say that *good works* are important too, for without *good works* you can't prove whether you have faith or not; but anyone can see that I have faith by the way I act.'[\[836\]](#)

"Are there still some among you who hold that 'only believing' is enough? Believing in one God? Well, remember that the demons believe this too – so strongly that they tremble in terror! Fool! *When will you ever learn that 'believing' is useless without doing what God wants you to? Faith that does not result in good deeds is not real faith.*"[\[837\]](#)

Remember Abraham? He *did* what God asked. Even he had to show God his faith by his works. So must we.

What Works Would Impress God?

Can we impress God with our good works? If we could, what kind of good works would they be? One kind would probably involve our wealth and possessions. If we gave away a lot of our money and possessions, perhaps that would impress God and he would grant us salvation. Or perhaps our works should create physical hardship. If we suffer physically in order to gain salvation, perhaps that would influence God favorably. Paul described both those scenarios: "If I give *all I possess* to the poor and *surrender my body to the flames*, but have not love, I gain nothing."[\[838\]](#)

Paul used the extreme of good works, giving all to the poor and suffering unto death. Even though the person gave all his possessions and his life as well, the person would gain nothing, if he didn't have love. Love is the primary commandment of Jesus. If we love our brother as Jesus loves us, if we love our neighbor as ourselves, if we love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, then we are obedient to the teachings and commands of Jesus.

If we don't love, but do the extreme of good works, such as giving all of our wealth to the poor, suffering unto death, we have gained nothing. If we don't love, we are disobedient to the teachings and commands of Jesus and in rebellion against God.

We can only conclude that there are *no* works that will cause God to grant gain salvation to the doer. Only a saving faith, displayed through obedience and love, fruit and works, justifies us before Almighty God.

A person committed to good works may not have a saving faith.[\[839\]](#) There are many dedicated, caring, generous people. But Scripture unequivocally states that salvation is only through a saving faith and made

possible only by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. It is Christ's sacrifice alone which makes us holy, blameless, and free from accusation in the presence of God, not our works.[\[840\]](#)

FULFILLMENT OF END-TIME PROPHECY?

Referring to his second coming, Jesus asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"[\[841\]](#)

What did he mean? For a long time I wondered about his question. I think I understand now. Our present time in history is close to the negative fulfillment of Christ's question.

Church Misses the Mark

Much of the church misses the mark of a saving faith two ways. They miss the object of their faith – the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead they preach Jesus as Savior. They miss the second part by preaching a do-nothing, all-by-grace faith. As has been proved, a saving faith is visible through love, obedience, fruit and good works.

What Must the Church Do?

I believe the church must take a serious reappraisal of itself. It must repent of following false doctrines instead of the clear teachings of God's Word. It must preach that salvation is found in the Lord Jesus Christ and is available only to those who believe in (confess) Jesus Christ as their personal Lord. The church must faithfully proclaim that a saving faith is not hidden and is not invisible. Just the opposite, a saving faith can be seen by all. It is like light, evidencing the love of God through the fruit of his Spirit. The church must teach that the true believer's life is characterized by obedience to the teachings and commands of Jesus Christ his Lord, that a mature believer will bear much fruit that will last, and that the true believer's life will be known for good works.[\[842\]](#)

Chapter 11

PUNISHMENT FOR THOSE WITHOUT

A SAVING FAITH

Throughout this book we've looked at two ways we can miss salvation by not having a saving faith. One is to follow the wrong Jesus, the other to misunderstand God's meaning of "believe." We've learned that salvation is for those who confess Jesus as their Lord and whose faith in him is visible through obedience, fruit, and good works. We've learned that obedience, fruit, and good works are not options for the believer; they're necessary and they come *from* a saving faith. Though saving faith alone is necessary for salvation, true faith will be visible through obedience, fruit, and good works.

What of the millions who refuse Jesus as their Lord, who insist they have salvation by simply accepting Jesus as their Savior, or by believing that Jesus died on the cross for their sins? Or those who are convinced that obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ is not necessary, that salvation is all by grace, that anything we think we must do – including obey – adds to the finished work of Christ?

Consistent with the rest of this book, let's not speculate about these questions or regale each other with our own prejudices. Instead, let's see what Scripture says. Let that be our sole guide and let it decide the questions for us.

Fear the Just God Who Will Punish the Unbelieving

Some teach that God is so loving, so gracious, so kindly and so tender-hearted that he would never send anyone to eternal punishment in hell. That's not what Jesus said. He warned, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be *afraid* of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell."^[843]

Understanding that, Paul warned that we must continue to work out our salvation with *fear* and trembling.^[844] Don't listen to ear-tickling teachers who give false solace today only to join their followers in hell.

What Is Hell?

People have varying opinions about hell. Some teach there really isn't a hell at all, others that it is merely separation from God. A few weeks ago I heard a TV broadcast in which a preacher taught that hell is a temporary (not

eternal) punishment; he said that should be reassuring for those who had unsaved friends and relatives.

Jesus Called It Gehenna

Our purpose is to discover only what God revealed about hell. Jesus spoke of it often. He used a word which was very easy for the Jews of his day to understand. Hell, as Jesus said it, is the equivalent of the Greek word *Gehenna*. It comes from the name of the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where children were sacrificed by fire in pagan rites. *Gehenna* (hell) is depicted as a place of unquenchable^[845] and *eternal* fire.^[846] It is the place of *eternal* punishment, the opposite of heaven which is the dwelling place for those who have eternal life.^[847]

Old Testament Example

The Old Testament also gives an example of what will happen to unbelievers – the disobedient and the ungodly. Peter said, "God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of will happen to the ungodly."^[848] Jude wrote:

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of *eternal* fire.^[849]

For those who don't remember, Genesis states, "the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah – from the Lord out of the heavens."^[850]

Hell – a Place of Suffering

Some say that hell is not a place of actual punishment, that God would not be so cruel. But what does Scripture say? We've seen many scriptures where Jesus described hell as the place "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."^[851]

In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Jesus said the rich man died and was buried. That must be the end of it. But no! Jesus described suffering: "In hell, where he was *in torment* . . . he called to Abraham saying, '*I am in agony in this fire.*'"^[852]

Hell is the Second Death – the Lake of Fire

New Testament writers often referred to death, but with two distinct meanings. One referred to normal physical death; the second to a spiritual

death – judgment into eternal punishment. Jesus referred to spiritual death as the second death;^[853] the lake of fire is the second death.^[854] On his last occasion to do so, Jesus described it as a fiery lake of burning sulfur. Again he called hell the second death.^[855]

Once again, Scripture corroborates itself. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with burning sulfur. Jesus said hell is a fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Jesus Was Serious About Hell

For those who take lightly the idea of going to hell, Jesus' teachings should make them reconsider:

"If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where `their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' Everyone will be salted with fire."^[856]

Jesus may have talked about the sins of lust or covetousness when speaking of the eye causing us to sin. He expanded the point to other parts of our bodies:

"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell."^[857]

In our Western culture, it seems inconceivable that anyone would pluck out his own eye or cut off his hand or foot for any reason. It's too gruesome. Yet Jesus said it would be better to do that than for our whole body to be thrown into hell. Hell must be ever so much more gruesome and painful than the self-inflicted loss of an eye or hand or foot.

What Standard Will Be Used to Determine Who is Punished?

How will God decide who is to receive eternal life and who will be punished for eternity in hell? That question has sparked debate for centuries. We've seen the answer in this book. All those who are faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ – who continue to confess him and believe in him as their Lord – are assured of eternal life. Their lifestyles will evidence their saving faith through obedience to his teachings and commands, through the fruit they bear, and through the good works they do.^[858]

Just as we saw that a saving faith is visible, so is rebellion against God. God looks first at our hearts,^[859] then our actions, and rewards or punishes

accordingly,^[860] because he sees from our actions what we truly believe. If we really believe something, won't our actions be consistent with that belief?

If we are really followers of Jesus Christ as our Lord, won't we be recognizable as such? God predestined that those who love him will be conformed to the image of his Son.^[861] In a different analogy, Jesus declared:

"No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."^[862]

The message is consistent, isn't it? Over and over, Scripture tells us that we show what we are by our actions and our speech. Jesus said we will be *recognized* by our fruit and *judged* according to what we have done.

Who Will Suffer Eternal Punishment in Hell's Fire?

Jesus told us the persons for whom hell is reserved: the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, idolaters, and all liars.^[863]

Paul told us, "No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."^[864]

Paul listed acts of the sinful nature which will cause persons to be cast into hell: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like.^[865] He said, "I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."^[866]

Paul knew that people discounted hell as punishment for sin. He warned, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient."^[867]

Persons Bound for Hell Because of Life-Style

Let's look at several categories of persons who will be cast into hell because of their lifestyle or mindset.

Cowardly

Did you notice that the cowardly are the first category included by Jesus as those who would be cast in the lake of fire?^[868] Why will they be condemned? They disobeyed Jesus' teaching to stand firm:

"You will be betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will save yourselves."^[869]

Jesus taught that to be saved we must persevere, standing firm to the end.^[870] The cowardly do not stand firm. Jesus predicted such falling away in the parable of the sower: "Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away."^[871] These are the cowardly.

Unbelieving

Jesus made it clear: "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but *whoever does not believe stands condemned* already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."^[872] "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but *whoever rejects the Son will not see life*, for God's wrath remains on him."^[873]

Who are those God will judge as unbelieving? I recognize five principal groups. First, those who have rejected Christ. Second, those who've rejected Jesus as their Lord, believing instead that they only had to accept him as Savior. Third, related to the second, those who accepted the teaching that nothing is required, that the believer need not be obedient or bear fruit or do good works. Fourth, those who have simply failed to persevere, who no longer remain in Jesus (the vine). Fifth, those in other religions.

Scripture plainly states no one comes to God the Father except through Jesus. All other religions are unbelieving, because they claim to come to God without Jesus. Two major sects, Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses, both profess Jesus, but not the Jesus of Scripture. Theirs is an altered portrait. They paint a false Jesus, not the only begotten Son of God who is both God and man, the one and only atoning sacrifice for sin, the source and hope of salvation for all who believe in him as Lord of all with all power and authority in heaven and on earth.

A more subtle unbelieving is the subject of this book. The Christian world is full of those who claim to believe but really are unbelieving according to Scripture. Repeatedly we've noted that much of twentieth-century American Christendom now claims that salvation may be had by accepting Jesus as Savior. Those who rely on that are unbelievers. They have rejected God's command to confess Jesus Christ as their Lord.

Still others are those who have drifted away. They are described in the third category of the parable of the sower. Jesus taught about the seed that fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants.^[874] Then he explained: "The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature."^[875] Does that portray much of twentieth century American Christendom?

Paul described the unbelieving: "To those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. *They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.* They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good."^[876] Rebellion against God is also visible. Paul said, "by their actions they deny him." Did you notice that these are people who claim to know God?

Many of the Jews of Christ's days were unbelievers. They stubbornly refused to believe in him as the Christ. Yet many were very religious. The leaders meticulously observed the law. Jesus told this parable about them:

"I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."^[877]

God forbid that we be among the highly religious who stubbornly refuse to accept God's plan, instead meticulously observing and defending denominational distinctives and Church doctrines.

Disobedient

Preceding chapters proved that believing in Jesus with a saving faith requires obedience to his teachings and commands.^[878] Those who consistently disobey don't have a saving faith. They are unbelievers who will be cast into the lake of fire.

All those condemned to hell are people who are disobedient to one or more of Jesus' teachings and commands. Thus it is no surprise that Scripture separately confirms that the disobedient will not enter God's kingdom but will suffer eternal punishment. The writer of Hebrews stated, "And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed?"^[879]

Jesus told a parable to illustrate the same point. It concerned a king who invited guests to a wedding banquet for his son. It was prepared and the guests were notified but refused to come. The king then commanded his servants to invite anyone they could find. They gathered people in, both good and bad, and the hall was filled. Then Jesus said:

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless.

"Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

"For many are invited, but few are chosen."[\[880\]](#)

What can be said about the guest's actions? He was disobedient to the invitation and to the custom of wearing wedding clothes to a wedding banquet (if not to a direct command to appear in them). Likely the King provided clothes for the people to wear,[\[881\]](#) just as God has provided believers with the way to attend the wedding supper of the Lamb.[\[882\]](#)

Note the guest's response. He was speechless. What will be the response of professing Christians before the judgment seat of God, accused of wickedness for their disobedience to Christ's teachings and commands? Will they be able to argue, "But Lord, we never knew!?" No.

Bibles are plentiful in North America. Each of us will be responsible for obeying Jesus as Lord and Master. Will it be sufficient to explain to God that you followed a particular Bible teacher or preacher? Or that you were taught that Jesus need only be your Savior? Or that you were taught obedience wasn't necessary because it would add to the finished work of Christ? Never! God didn't ask you to follow men or to believe the teachings of men. He commanded you to believe and obey his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Unforgiving

What commands and teachings of Jesus are we to obey? Everything Jesus taught. When he last spoke to his disciples before he ascended into heaven, Jesus commanded them to go into all the world and make disciples and to teach them to obey *everything he commanded them*.[\[883\]](#) Certain commands, if disobeyed, will result in condemnation. One such is the command to forgive.

Will those who do not forgive be thrown into hell? That is what Scripture teaches. Many Bible teachers soft-pedal this. They say that salvation is not at stake from refusing to forgive; only peace of mind is affected. Of course peace of mind may be impacted, but Jesus didn't speak to that. He taught about salvation and punishment, and forgiveness of sins by God versus eternal punishment by God at the hands of tormenters.^[884]

As a short summary, Matthew 6:14-15 shows the teaching of Jesus:

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Our sins must be forgiven before we can enter the kingdom of God.^[885] Christ was an atoning sacrifice so our sins could be forgiven. Until our sins are forgiven, we are by nature objects of wrath,^[886] subject to God's judgment.

In the dramatic parable of an unforgiving servant, Jesus showed that the unforgiving will be thrown into hell when he said of the one who refused to forgive, "You wicked servant" and turned him over to the torturers.^[887] Jesus said the same will be true of each of us unless we forgive our brothers from our heart.^[888]

Unfaithful Church Leaders

God will hold accountable church leaders who abuse their positions of leadership. James warned that those who teach will be judged more strictly.^[889] Jesus told this parable about those who are in charge of others:

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

"But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."^[890]

Many leaders in liberal churches have long since given up a saving faith in Christ. They may no longer believe in him as Lord. They may support abortion as women's right of choice and advocate that homosexuals be allowed in the ministry of their denomination. To them religion may be just a business. If such men do not repent, they will reap terrible punishment at the

hands of God. Note the extra punishment recited: "He will cut him to pieces." This punishment is not recited in any other parable. Indeed, the unfaithful church leader and teacher will be judged more strictly and punished more severely.

The Unfruitful

Those who do not bear fruit are disobedient to the teachings of Jesus. We saw in prior chapters that those who do not bear fruit will be subject to the judgment of God and hell fire.

Some teachers believe that Jesus' teaching about the vine and the branches does not refer to condemnation by God. Let's look at two verses again. Jesus said,

"He (God the Father) cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.^[891] If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."^[892]

What comes to your mind when you think of a branch (you or me) which is picked up, thrown into the fire and burned? It sounds remarkably like the parables which state the wicked person is thrown into the lake of fire, doesn't it? It means the same and is proved by the following parable.

Jesus told of a man who went on a journey, entrusting all his property to his servants. To one he gave five talents, another two, and another one, each according to his ability. On his return he found that the servant given five earned five more, the servant with two earned two more, but the servant given one earned nothing. He dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. The master commended the servants who used the talents to earn more and rewarded them. Then he spoke to the one who buried the money:

"You wicked, lazy servant!"^[893] "Throw that worth-less servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."^[894]

From the repetition in prior parables, we know that when someone is called wicked he is condemned. The description, "into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," tells us the punishment is hell's fire.

In this parable there is no evidence of sin in the sense of immoral or wrongful conduct. The parable describes a servant entrusted with something of value, with responsibility to use it wisely, to multiply it, to let it earn

interest. Instead, he hid it in the ground. Though he received no direct command, he disobeyed what he knew his master wanted him to do.

The servant was given the means and had the ability (according to the parable), yet bore no fruit. For this he was condemned to hell, to eternal punishment. The master called him "wicked" and "lazy." It was not sufficient to say, "But I believe in you, master!" To show the master he was a loyal servant, he had to obey. He chose to disobey.

The Lord Jesus entrusts the kingdom of God to his followers. To each he gives certain responsibilities. Paul talked about that:

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each man, just as he determines.^[895]

Those spiritual gifts may correspond to the talents in the parable Jesus taught. Dare we hide in the ground the gifts we've been given? Not according to the parable. If we do we betray the trust given us and the Kingdom of God is deprived of whatever God asked us to do.^[896] Those who hide their gifts are guilty of disobedience to God and will suffer the due penalty.

Those Who Fail to Do Good Works.

If a person doesn't do good works, will he go to hell? What does Scripture say?

When we profess faith in Christ, "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."^[897] What if we choose not to do the good works God has prepared for us? What if, instead, we go about our business, doing those things important to us?

The following parable answers those questions. We referred to it before, but this time let's read it in full. Jesus said:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the

world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."[\[898\]](#)

The parable does not talk about whether we believe, or have faith, or are continuing in sin, or do what Jesus wants, or follow his teachings and commands. It talks only about good works. The only question was whether the people being judged did those good works which God prepared in advance for them to do. It contradicts teaching that claims there is nothing the Christian must do.

In this parable Jesus taught that we should feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, act as host to strangers in need, clothe those needing clothing, care for the sick, and visit those in prison.[\[899\]](#)

The parable should terrify the casual churchgoer, for it signals that merely attending church is not sufficient. God's requirements are much greater for those he will grant salvation.

Everything Jesus taught in the above parable is condensed in his command to love our brothers as he loves us. Our standard for loving our brothers is the way he loved us. How did he love us? He was crucified for us. He asks us to care for one another. Dare we disobey?

Punishment Between Death and the Last Judgment

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man gives a rare glimpse into the punishment of those who have died but have not yet appeared before the judgment throne of God at the end of the age. Jesus said,

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'"[\[900\]](#)

The parable tells what will happen before resurrection and judgment. This is before unbelievers are condemned at God's final judgment[\[901\]](#) and thrown into the lake of fire. The rich man described Hades as a place of torment where he is in agony in fire.

Peter verified that punishment continues for the disobedient from their death to the day of judgment. He said, "The Lord knows how to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment."[\[902\]](#)

Perhaps these Scriptures formed the basis for the Roman Catholic purgatory doctrine. Such a doctrine is without foundation, however. No scripture shows that the actions or intercession of any persons (including priests) can affect the salvation of others after their death. This doctrine is created by man and is not in God's word.

Judgment at the End of the Age

Jesus told us specifically about what would happen at the end of the age. He answered the questions in the minds of believers who ask, "Why does God permit the wicked to exist? Why doesn't he remove them, so they can't continue their wicked ways on earth?" Jesus answered with a parable:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

"'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

"'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the

harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned, then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn"^[903]

When they asked, Jesus explained to his disciples the meaning of the parable.

"The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."^[904]

Jesus tells us why the wicked are not uprooted early, but makes it clear that their destination is the fiery furnace. Notice the great contrast between the fate of the wicked and the destiny of the righteous.

As he often did, Jesus repeated the teaching with a different parable:

"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."^[905]

Jesus reaffirms that the wicked will be separated from the righteous and thrown into the fiery furnace. What a sad and horrible day that will be for those who continue in disobedience toward God!

All Punishment Because of Disobedience

The punishment recited for the wicked is always for disobedience! There is one mention of "unbelieving," but even that is disobedience to Christ's commands.

Jesus demonstrated in the parables and his teachings that hell – the second death, the lake of fire – is the punishment for those who disobey. Hell is not only for those who engage in sin (obvious disobedience), but also those who disobey by failing to do what they are told, by not forgiving and by failing to persevere. It is for those who disobey by hiding their spiritual gift and not letting it bear fruit. Hell is also for those who are given good works to do, but disobey by refusing to do them.

Such people may well profess belief in Jesus. Nevertheless, in God's eyes they are condemned unless they repent. They must receive Jesus as their Lord and obey his teachings and commands. They must come to him with a saving faith.

All such overt acts of disobedience, or failures to act, show God that we care about ourselves more than we do about him. We violate the first and most important commandment, that we love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. If we love him as he commands, we'll obey him.

It's Not Too Late!

If you haven't yet made a commitment to follow Jesus as Lord and to obey him in everything, it's not too late. God wants you in the kingdom of heaven. As Peter told us, "The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."[\[906\]](#)

But there is a time when it is too late. Jesus told this parable:

"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'

"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

"Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'

"But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, you evildoers!'

"There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out."[\[907\]](#)

Once the opportunity to enter has passed, the door will not be reopened though millions will clamor for entrance. Did you read the cries of those trying to get in? They said, "We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets." In the twentieth century, this applies to those who attend church, Sunday School, rallies, retreats, and revivals, but have not committed their lives to Jesus as their Lord.

What about those who deliberately delay their commitment to Jesus? Will they die from heart attacks or car accidents, or will their hearts be irreversibly hardened so they cannot respond? Or will the Lord suddenly return for his own and the door be shut?

When I first wrote this, my heart was sad. Within the hour I had learned of the death of a friend. He and his wife were driving to see friends. A speeding driver crossed the centerline. My friend couldn't avoid him; his

wife was seriously injured. Fortunately, he was strong in Christ, steadfast in his faith.

If you were in his place, would you be escorted by angels into the kingdom of heaven? Or would you be assigned to Hades to begin a punishment that will culminate at the judgment when God condemns you to hell – the second death, the lake of fire, for all eternity?

The writer of Hebrews said: "See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."^[908]

If you are not committed to Jesus as your Lord, TODAY is the day. There may not be a tomorrow for you, or the door may be closed.

What about those of us who believe and are committed to Jesus as our Lord? The writer to the Hebrews has a word for us as well: "We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, *so that we do not drift away*. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?"^[909]

Jesus warned about *drifting away* in the parable of the sower: "Seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants."^[910] Jesus explained: "The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but *as they go on their way* they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature."^[911] These are people who little by little have succumbed to the trials and pleasures of the world. Likely they believe they are Christians, but they are not recognized by God.^[912]

If you haven't yet done so, right now, today, is the time to make peace with God, to give up self, to bow the knee to Jesus as your Lord, and to declare your desire to persevere in obedience to him all the days of your life. When you do, watch how your new Father and the Lord Jesus Christ work in your life through the power and might of the Holy Spirit.

May God richly bless your obedient walk with his Son, our Lord Jesus, the Christ!

Part III

Appendix

Appendix

PROPHECIES ABOUT THE CHRIST FULFILLED BY JESUS

Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to *fulfill* them."[\[913\]](#)

And fulfill them he did. The prophecies were made by numerous prophets over hundreds of years.

Probability Studies Affirm Truth

Probability studies have shown it virtually impossible for any person to fulfill the prophecies about the Christ by accident. Perhaps the best known study to show how unlikely it is that the prophecies could have been fulfilled accidentally is by Josh McDowell in *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*.[\[914\]](#)

According to Josh McDowell, the science of probabilities shows that coincidence is ruled out. Josh related a study done by Peter Stoner published in *Science Speaks*. Mr. Stoner considered only eight of the many prophecies about the Christ, namely that he would be born in Bethlehem, that he would be preceded by a messenger, that he would enter Jerusalem on a donkey, that he would be betrayed by a friend, that he would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, that the money would be thrown in God's house and then used to buy a Potter's field, that he would remain silent before his accusers, that he would have his hands and feet pierced and that he would be crucified. According to the science of probabilities, the chance that any man could fulfill just those eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{17} . That is 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000.

To understand how large that number is, Mr. Stoner illustrates it by supposing we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the state of Texas. There are so many they will cover the state of Texas two feet deep. Then mark one of the dollars and mix it into the mass. Blindfold a man and tell him he can travel anywhere in Texas in order to choose one, and only one, silver dollar. What chance would he have of selecting the marked one? That is approximately the same chance anyone would coincidentally fulfill those eight prophecies. Jesus not only fulfilled those eight prophecies, but all the other prophecies about the Christ except those yet to be fulfilled at his

second coming. Mr. Stoner considered the probabilities from Jesus having fulfilled 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10^{157} , a number too vast, and a probability too infinitesimal for the mind to grasp.

Because Christ's fulfillment of the many prophecies was so convincing, that is what the early apostles taught. As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and *reasoned with them from the Scriptures*.^[915] He said, "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that *Christ* died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*, that *he* was buried, that *he* was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures*."^[916]

The Bereans were commended because they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.^[917]

Apollos was another early preacher. It was said he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, *proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ*.^[918]

We also should concentrate on showing unbelievers that we do not talk about a blind faith, but rather that God has revealed his Son, Christ the Lord, to mankind in the Scriptures over thousands of years. When Jesus came he meticulously fulfilled the prophecies, proving to all who will read that he is the Anointed One of Scripture, the Christ, who came to bring salvation to mankind. We are truly without excuse if we fail to come to him and receive him as our Lord.

The Christ Predates His Birth on Earth

Prophecy: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, *whose origins are from of old, from ancient times*."^[919]

Fulfillment: *In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.^[920]

Confirmed: "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "*before Abraham was born, I am!*"^[921]

Christ Will Be the Seed of a Woman

Prophecy: And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."^[922]

Fulfillment: When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law.^[923]

Moses Referred to Jesus As the Prophet to Come

Prophecy: *The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.*^[924]

Fulfilled: The crowds answered, "This is *Jesus, the prophet* from Nazareth in Galilee."^[925]

Confirmed: Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter referred to the prophecy by Moses (above) and confirmed that Jesus had fulfilled the prophecy.^[926]

The Christ Is a Descendant of Abraham

Prophecy: I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and *through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed*, because you have obeyed me."^[927]

Fulfillment: A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham.^[928]

Confirmed: The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and *to your seed*," meaning *one person, who is Christ.*^[929]

The Christ Is a Descendant of Isaac

Prophecy: Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him."^[930]

Fulfillment: Part of the genealogy of the Christ: the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor.^[931]

The Christ Is a Descendant of Jacob

Prophecy: "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of Sheth."^[932]

Fulfillment: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.^[933]

The Christ Is from the Tribe of Judah

Prophecy: The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.^[934]

Fulfillment: Part of the genealogy of the Christ: the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah.^[935]

The Christ Is Heir to the Throne of David

Prophecy: Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.^[936]

Fulfillment: He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."^[937]

The Christ Is Anointed and Eternal

Prophecy: Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.^[938]

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.^[939]

Fulfillment: But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." He also says, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."^[940]

Time of Christ's Presentation As King

Prophecy: "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.'" [\[941\]](#)

Fulfillment: There are many views of the interpretation of the prophecies which date the coming of the *Christ*. Almost all of them fall within the lifetime of Jesus *Christ*.

The traditional view places the beginning point of the prophecy as the first decree by Artaxerxes in 458 B.C. which places the appearing of the Messiah at 26 A.D. That view argues that the fulfillment of his coming is coincident with the time of the baptism of Jesus which occurred on the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Tiberius Caesar began his rule in 11 A.D)]. In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) [\[942\]](#)

The better view, according to Sir Robert Anderson, is that the exact date of the authorization of the rebuilding of Jerusalem (in the 20th year of Artaxerxes Longimanus the king [\[943\]](#)) was March 14, 445 B.C. Precisely 483 years (of 360 day years) later to the day (using Jewish and Babylonian calendars), Jesus' triumphal entry as king occurred when he rode the donkey's foal into Jerusalem and was hailed along the route by crowds who cried, "Blessed is the *king* who comes in the name of the Lord!" [\[944\]](#)

If the later view is correct, it would make understandable Jesus' reply to the Jewish religious leaders who were trying to stop the crowd from praising Jesus, "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." [\[945\]](#) Why would the stones cry out? It was because the exact time of fulfillment of the prophecy of the coming of God's *Christ* as *King* had occurred. Jesus may have said that the coming of the *Christ* as king in fulfillment of prophecy had to be acknowledged by shouts of praise or the stones themselves would cry out.

The later view would also support the prophecy of the time of Christ's death (following), the same as the year of his coming as king. The *Christ* was killed a few days after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law. [\[946\]](#)

Time of Christ's Death

Prophecy: After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.^[947]

Fulfillment: Note that the time at which the Christ is cut off is the same as the time of his coming. Both are *after* the sixty-two sevens. The prophecy is fulfilled two ways: (1) the death of the Christ cut off his life. (2) His ascension into heaven cut off his ministry.

Born of a Virgin

Prophecy: Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: *The virgin will be with child* and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.^[948]

Fulfillment: This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, *she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.*^[949]

Confirmed: All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "*The virgin will be with child* and will give birth to a son."^[950]

The Christ Would Be Born in Bethlehem

Prophecy: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, *out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel*, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."^[951]

Fulfillment: Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea.^[952]

Virgin Gave Birth to a Son

Prophecy: Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and *will give birth to a son*, and will call him Immanuel.^[953]

Fulfillment: But he had no union with her until *she gave birth to a son*. And he gave him the name Jesus.^[954]

Confirmed: All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son.*"^[955]

Christ Was in Egypt

Prophecy: Out of Egypt I called my son.^[956]

Fulfillment: So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod.^[957]

Confirmed: And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."[\[958\]](#)

Children Were Killed in Bethlehem

Prophecy: This is what the LORD says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more."[\[959\]](#)

Fulfillment: When Herod realized he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and *he gave orders to kill in Bethlehem and its vicinity all the boys who were two years old and under*, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.[\[960\]](#)

Confirmed: Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled.[\[961\]](#)

John the Baptist Prepared the Way for the Christ

Prophecy: "See, *I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me.*"[\[962\]](#)

Fulfillment: In those days *John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea.*[\[963\]](#) This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, '*Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.*'"[\[964\]](#)

Confirmed: Jesus said of John the Baptist: "*This is the one about whom it is written: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'*"[\[965\]](#)

Jesus Anointed by God

Jesus was very conscious of the fulfillment of prophecy. When John was reluctant to baptize him, Jesus said, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."[\[966\]](#)

Prophecy: The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against *his Anointed One.*[\[967\]](#)

Fulfilled: As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw *the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.* And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."[\[968\]](#)

Confirmed: Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, *whom you anointed.*^[969]

The Christ Was Anointed to Preach the Good News

Prophecy: The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor and the day of vengeance of our God.^[970]

Fulfillment: The Gospels can all be read in fulfillment of the prophecy. All the things recited in the prophecy were done by Jesus during his earthly ministry.

Confirmation: Jesus began by saying to them, "*Today this scripture [the prophecy] is fulfilled in your hearing.*"^[971]

Christ Declared to Be the Son of God

Prophecy: I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."^[972]

Fulfillment: And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."^[973]

Confirmed: "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: `You are my Son; today I have become your Father.'"^[974]

Jesus Lived in the Area of Zebulun and Naphtali

Prophecy: In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.^[975]

Fulfillment: Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali – to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah.^[976]

The Christ Spoke What God Commanded Him to Speak

Prophecy: I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; *I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.*^[977]

Fulfilled: Jesus said, "*These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*^[978] I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.^[979] *The Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.*"^[980]

Jesus Spoke in Parables

Prophecy: *I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old.*^[981]

Fulfillment: Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.^[982]

Confirmed: So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."^[983]

Spirit of God Was on Him

Prophecy: The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me.^[984]

Fulfilled: As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw *the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.*^[985]

Confirmed: After reading them the prophecy, Jesus said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."^[986]

Jesus Healed the Sick

Prophecy: Surely *he took up our infirmities* and carried our sorrows.^[987]

Fulfillment: When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and *he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.*^[988]

Confirmed: This was to *fulfill* what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."^[989]

He Opened the Eyes of the Blind

Prophecy: In that day out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.^[990]

Fulfillment: As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."^[991] Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.^[992]

Confirmed: When John the Baptist sought evidence that Jesus really was the Christ, Jesus told his followers: "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor."^[993]

He Made the Deaf Hear

Prophecy: Then will the ears of the deaf be unstopped.^[994]

Fulfilled: There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man. After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!"). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.^[995]

Confirmed: People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."^[996]

He Healed the Lame

Prophecy: Then will the lame leap like a deer.^[997]

Fulfillment: Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them.^[998]

Confirmed: Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that

you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.[\[999\]](#)

Christ Had Zeal for God's House

Prophecy: Zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.[\[1000\]](#)

Fulfillment: In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"[\[1001\]](#)

Confirmed: His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."[\[1002\]](#)

Christ Received Praise from Children

Prophecy: From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.[\[1003\]](#)

Fulfillment: But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant.

"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him.

"Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?"[\[1004\]](#)

The Jews Would Not Believe the Christ

Prophecy: Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?[\[1005\]](#)

Fulfillment: Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.[\[1006\]](#)

Confirmed: This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"[\[1007\]](#)

The People Did Not Hear or Understand

Prophecy: He said, "Go and tell this people: `Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'"[\[1008\]](#)

Fulfillment: This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand."[\[1009\]](#)

Confirmed: In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."[\[1010\]](#)

The Jews Rejected Their Christ

Prophecy: He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.[\[1011\]](#)

Fulfillment: He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.[\[1012\]](#) At his trial before Pilate, with one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!"[\[1013\]](#)

They Hated Christ Jesus Without Reason

Prophecy: Let not those gloat over me who are my enemies without cause; let not *those who hate me without reason* maliciously wink the eye.[\[1014\]](#) *Those who hate me without reason* outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me.[\[1015\]](#)

Fulfillment: They have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.[\[1016\]](#)

Confirmed: "But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'"[\[1017\]](#)

PROPHECIES FULFILLED AT JERUSALEM

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again."[\[1018\]](#) What is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."[\[1019\]](#)

Jesus Rode the Foal of a Donkey into Jerusalem

Prophecy: Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.[\[1020\]](#)

Fulfillment: They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them.[\[1021\]](#)

Confirmed: This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"[\[1022\]](#)

Judas Betrayed Jesus for Thirty Pieces of Silver

Prophecy: I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So *they paid me thirty pieces of silver.*[\[1023\]](#)

Fulfillment: Then one of the Twelve – the one called Judas Iscariot – went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So *they counted out for him thirty silver coins.*[\[1024\]](#)

Judas (the Friend) Betrayed the Christ

Prophecy: Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.[\[1025\]](#)

Fulfillment: While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"[\[1026\]](#)

Judas (the Betrayer) Shared His Bread with Christ

Prophecy: Even my close friend, whom I trusted, *he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.*[\[1027\]](#)

Fulfillment: "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'"[\[1028\]](#)

The disciples asked who would betray him. Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.[\[1029\]](#)

When Jesus Was Arrested, the Disciples Fled

Prophecy: "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered."[\[1030\]](#)

Prophecy Repeated by Jesus: "You will all fall away, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'"[\[1031\]](#)

Fulfillment: All the disciples deserted him and fled.[\[1032\]](#)

Confirmed: Jesus said, "But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled."[\[1033\]](#)

The Blood Money Was Used to Buy a Potter's Field

Prophecy: And the LORD said to me, "*Throw it to the potter*" – the handsome price at which they priced me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and *threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.*[\[1034\]](#)

Fulfillment: When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and *returned the thirty silver coins* to the chief priests and the elders.[\[1035\]](#)

Judas threw the money into the temple and left. The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since *it is blood money.*" So they decided to *use the money to buy the potter's field* as a burial place for foreigners.[\[1036\]](#)

Confirmed: Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "*They took the thirty silver coins*, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and *they used them to buy the potter's field*, as the Lord commanded me."[\[1037\]](#)

The Christ Was Accused by False Witnesses

Prophecy: Ruthless witnesses come forward; they question me on things I know nothing about.[\[1038\]](#)

Fulfillment: Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'"[\[1039\]](#)

The Christ Was Silent When Accused

Prophecy: He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.[\[1040\]](#)

Fulfillment: Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent.[\[1041\]](#)

When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are

bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge – to the great amazement of the governor.[\[1042\]](#)

The Christ Was Judged and Oppressed

Prophecy: By oppression and judgment he was taken away.[\[1043\]](#)

Fulfillment: The high priest asked, "What do you think?"

"He is worthy of death," they answered.[\[1044\]](#)

The Christ Was Mocked and Insulted

Prophecy: All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."[\[1045\]](#)

Fulfillment: Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"[\[1046\]](#)

They Flogged the Christ

Prophecy: I offered my back to those who beat me.[\[1047\]](#)

Fulfillment: Pontius Pilate had Jesus flogged.[\[1048\]](#) This was to be whipped thirty-nine times with cat-o'-nine-tails, which usually resulted in one's back being a bloody pulp.

They Spit on the Christ and Beat Him

Prophecy: I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.[\[1049\]](#)

Fulfillment: Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.[\[1050\]](#)

The Romans soldiers spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.[\[1051\]](#)

The Christ Was Numbered with the Transgressors

Prophecy: Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and *was numbered with the transgressors*. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.[\[1052\]](#)

Fulfillment: *Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.*[\[1053\]](#)

Confirmed: "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."[\[1054\]](#)

Evil Enemies Surrounded the Christ

Prophecy: Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.[\[1055\]](#)

Fulfillment: Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.[\[1056\]](#)

They Pierced the Hands and Feet of the Christ

Prophecy: "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. *They will look on me, the one they have pierced*, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."[\[1057\]](#)

Fulfillment: Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."[\[1058\]](#)

The Christ Interceded for Those Who Killed Him

Prophecy: He bore the sin of many, and *made intercession for the transgressors*.[\[1059\]](#)

Fulfillment: Jesus said, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*"[\[1060\]](#)

They Divided Up Christ's Clothing by Casting Lots

Prophecy: They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.[\[1061\]](#)

Fulfillment: When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.[\[1062\]](#)

They Pierced the Side of the Christ

Prophecy: "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. *They will look on me, the one they have pierced,* and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."[\[1063\]](#)

Fulfillment: One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.[\[1064\]](#) As another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."[\[1065\]](#)

The Christ's Bones Were Not Broken

Prophecy: He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.[\[1066\]](#)

Fulfillment: The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.[\[1067\]](#) These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken,"[\[1068\]](#)

The Suffering of the Crucifixion

Prophecy: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death."[\[1069\]](#)

Fulfillment: Doctors have described the condition of the human body during the suffering of crucifixion. It is horrible; there is extreme dehydration – my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth – the body is hanging from nails through the hands, pulling the bones out of joint.

The Christ Was Forsaken by God

Prophecy: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?[1070]

Fulfillment: About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" – which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"[1071]

God's Will That the Christ Suffer As a Guilt Offering

Prophecy: Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.[1072]

Fulfillment: This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.[1073]

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.[1074]

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man *to be a sin offering*. [1075]

The Christ Was Cut Off – Killed

Prophecy: And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.[1076]

Fulfillment: And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.[1077]

The Christ Was Buried in a Rich Man's Grave

Prophecy: He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. [1078]

Fulfillment: Joseph (of Arimathea) took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. [1079]

The Christ's Death and Suffering Was for Us

Prophecy: But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.[\[1080\]](#)

Fulfillment: You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.[\[1081\]](#) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.[\[1082\]](#)

The Christ Would Live Again

Prophecy: After the suffering of his soul, *he will see the light of life and be satisfied*; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.[\[1083\]](#)

Fulfillment: The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; *he has risen*, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: '*He has risen from the dead* and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."[\[1084\]](#)

God Resurrected the Christ from the Grave

Prophecy: Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.[\[1085\]](#)

Fulfillment: The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; *he has risen*, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: '*He has risen from the dead* and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."[\[1086\]](#)

Confirmed: "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.[\[1087\]](#)

God Made Christ a Priest After Melchizedek

Prophecy: The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."[\[1088\]](#)

Fulfillment: So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."[\[1089\]](#)

Christ Ascended to God's Right Hand

Prophecy: *When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men, even from the rebellious – that you, O LORD God, might dwell there.*[\[1090\]](#)

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.[\[1091\]](#)

Fulfillment: After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.[\[1092\]](#)

John saw Christ Jesus in his vision: "I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."[\[1093\]](#)

Christ – the Son of Man – Was Led into God's Presence

Prophecy: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language

worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.^[1094]

Fulfillment: From now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."^[1095]

Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."^[1096]

Christ Is Seated at the Right Hand of God

Prophecy: You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures *at your right hand* (Psalm 16:11).

Fulfillment: That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and *seated him at his right hand* in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 1:19-20).

THE PROPHECIES WERE FULFILLED IN THE CHRIST

Jesus said to the Apostles, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures: "This is what is written: The *Christ* will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."^[1097]

THE EARLIEST GENEALOGY SHOWS THE CHRIST

One of the greatest delights of Scripture, truly a hidden treasure, is the meaning found in the first genealogy of Scripture. What sounds like simply a listing of the first generations of mankind has prophetic meaning.

The meanings begin with the son of Adam, Seth, whose name means *appointed*. His son's name, Enosh, means *mortal*. His son's name, Kenan, means *sorrow*. His son's name, Mahalalel, means *the blessed God*. His son's name, Jared, means *shall come down*. His son's name, Enoch, means *teaching*. His son's name, Methuselah, means *his death shall bring*. His son's name, Lamech, means *the despairing*. His son's name, Noah, means *grace or comfort*.

By putting those meanings together in a single sentence, the prophetic meaning of the genealogy can be seen: *It is appointed to mortal man to have sorrow, but the blessed God shall come down teaching that his death shall bring the despairing comfort.*

As we know, Jesus – the Son of God and God incarnate – came to earth and taught that his death would save those who were lost. This remarkable prophecy is found in Genesis 5:1-29.[\[1098\]](#)

THE ZODIAC PROPHECIES THE CHRIST

No, I'm not talking about the Zodiac as distorted by modern astrology, but rather the original meaning as known by many civilizations throughout the world. Historical records show that early man knew a great deal about the stars.

Have you ever wondered about the passage in which Paul talks about mankind being without excuse?[\[1099\]](#) How could he say that with man scattered all over the globe, most never hearing about the coming of Jesus as the Christ? Paul wrote:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since *what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*[\[1100\]](#)

Dr. D. James Kennedy[\[1101\]](#) studied the zodiac as it was known in many cultures and civilizations of the world, before its corruption by present astrologers. He found that the twelve signs represented the same twelve things and were placed in the same order in nearly all these nations. They had a common understanding of the zodiac, even though far apart from one another.

Dr. Kennedy pointed to Genesis 1:14 where Scripture states the purpose for the lights in the firmament of heaven – for *signs*[\[1102\]](#) and seasons and for days and years. What signs? God presented the message of the gospel in the firmament of the heavens.

The scope of Dr. Kennedy's study is far beyond this summary and is best studied in his book. In short, the meaning of the zodiac shows the birth of the Christ and the conflict between him and Satan until, ultimately, Satan is

crushed by the Christ. Six times the serpent (Satan) is shown in the zodiac. In all six, there is a conflict between Satan and Christ. In each case, Christ is the conqueror.

How could the heavens declare the message of the gospel of Christ since they were created before man, before his fall, before his sin required a redeemer to reconcile him to God? The answer is in God's foreknowledge. God chose us in him *before the creation of the world*.^[1103] Thus, when he created the heavens he put a message in the stars to announce that he would send the Christ to redeem the man he would create.

Part IV

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Mark 14 7 14 12 3 6 0 0 1 0

Luke 77 12 25 14 5 5 0 1 5 7

John 37 19 13 6 5 13 2 1 5 0

Acts 99 24 1 0 1 1 0 2 2 0

Romans 37 65 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0

1 Corinthians 75 61 0 0 0 0 1 0 0 0

2 Corinthians 29 47 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0

Galatians 6 38 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0

Ephesians 22 57 0 0 1 0 0 1 0 1

Philippians 15 38 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0

Colossians 11 27 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1

1 Thessalonians 24 10 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

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1 Timothy 6 15 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

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James 14 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

1 Peter 7 22 0 0 0 0 1 0 0 0

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[1] John 8:24.

[2] What if we die in our sins? Jesus came to provide a means by which we can be cleansed from sin through his blood. Our sin alienates us from God. To be saved, before our death we must have forgiveness of our sins through his death on the cross.

[3] John 3:14-15: Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who *believes in him* may have eternal life.

John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever *believes in him* shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:18: Whoever *believes in him* is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

John 3:36: Whoever *believes in the Son* has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

John 6:40: "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and *believes in him* shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Jesus' statement is restated by John in his first letter: And this is his command: to *believe in the name of his Son*, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us (1 John 3:23).

John 11:25-26: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who *believes in me* will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and *believes in me* will never die. Do you believe this?"

Other changes occur to those who *believe in him*. They will never be thirsty (John 6:35), streams of living water will flow from within them (John 7:38), they are in the light (John 12:46), and their sins are forgiven (Acts 10:43).

[4] It is important to make a distinction here, early in this writing. While the statement is false that one can "accept" Jesus as Savior and have salvation, that does not mean that all those people who use that phrase, or one similar, are not saved. On the contrary, many of my friends misuse that phrase, yet have lives that demonstrate that Jesus is their Lord. They are dedicated to him and have the evidence of the Spirit in their lives. Nevertheless, I believe there are millions that don't understand correctly, think they have salvation, but do not because they don't have a correct object of their faith.

[5] John 13:13, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am."

[6] Matthew 26:64. The High Priest asked Jesus to say whether he is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus responded, "Yes, it is as you say."

[7] Matthew 26:64.

[8] Heresy is the adherence to a religious opinion contrary to church dogma or an opinion or doctrine contrary to the truth or to generally accepted beliefs.

I am using the definition, "An opinion or doctrine contrary to the truth" – as revealed in Scripture. As the false doctrine is so widespread, if one uses the alternative meaning, "contrary to generally accepted beliefs," the truth of Scripture might be considered the heresy.

[9] A movement toward or the promotion of worldwide Christian unity.

[10] Galatians 1:6-9.

[11] Paul found the Galatians accepting a false gospel. What did he tell them? "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:9).

[12] A statement in which two incompatible terms are used, making the meaning impossible or ludicrous.

[13] Hebrews 13:8. See also Malachi 3:6: "I the LORD do not change."

[14] All religions except Christianity lead to false gods. The Old Testament pointed to Jesus, but the Jews rejected their Messiah. As Jesus told the Pharisees, "You belong to your father, the devil" (John 8:44). Jews who deny their Christ, the Lord Jesus, follow their father the devil.

[15] John 14:6.

[16] 2 Timothy 4:3-4: For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

[17] Luke 9:23-24: Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."

Romans 6:6: For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

Ephesians 4:22-24: You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

[18] Mark 8:38. See also Luke 9:26. As if responding to Jesus' statement, Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because *it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes*: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).

[19] Paul stated, "I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God" (Acts 20:27).

[20] Paul said, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power" (1 Corinthians 4:20).

[21] The Gnostics portrayed a *different* Jesus. They denied Christ's true humanity, some claiming that Jesus only appeared to have a body, others that the divine Christ joined the human Jesus at baptism and left him before he died. The Apostle John denounced the heresy of Gnosticism (1 John 2:22, 4:2-3) and offered proof of its falsity (1 John 1:1).

[22] 2 Peter 2:1

[23] 2 Peter 2:2.

[24] For example, see Kenneth Boa. *Cults, World Religions and You*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1977, page 70 re Mormonism, page 77 re Jehovah's Witnesses.

[25] We must see that these statements are not false in themselves. Jesus is our Savior. He did die as a sacrifice on the cross so our sins may be forgiven. The important distinction is that salvation is *not* obtained by believing as those statements say. The next three chapters will reveal the proper object of our faith.

[26] *Jesus* is not a title; it is a given name. Many Jews had it prior to Jesus' life on earth. After his death and resurrection the name was little used. For Jews who didn't believe, it was a reproach, reminding them of the Jesus who was crucified, who claimed to be the Messiah. For Christians, the name was too holy to be used.

"Jesus" means "God saves." Some have said the name Jesus is equivalent to Jesus is Savior. To Jews, God (of "God saves") means *God the Father*. This was Paul's interpretation in 1 Corinthians 8:6 where he states, "For us there is *but one God, the Father*, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is *but one Lord, Jesus Christ*, through whom all things came and through whom we live."

[27] There are many more occurrences of the Greek word *Kurios* from which the title Lord is translated. In context, the other uses mean "Sir," or "Master." The New International Version of the Bible differentiates between the meanings of *Kurios*. It lists 618 occurrences where the meaning is intended to be Lord.

[28] The second most frequent title, *Christ*, is found 543 times in the New Testament. It is from the Greek word Messiah and means The Anointed One. In a later chapter, we'll see that it may mean any of three different subtitles.

[29] *Son of Man* is the title Jesus used to describe himself. Only once is it used by another of Jesus; Stephen used it as he was being stoned. It has extraordinary importance as it is used in fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 7:13.

[30] *Teacher* is a title that occurs only in the gospels.

[31] *Son of God* is the fifth most frequent. It occurs 37 times in only 12 of the 27 books of the New Testament.

[32] *Savior* is the seventh, occurring only 15 times in the New Testament when applied to Jesus, appearing in only nine of the twenty-seven books. Nine times it refers to God the Father as Savior.

[33] *Prophet* occurs only in the gospels and the book of Acts.

[34] *Master* is used 39 times by Jesus in his teaching and parables in which he, arguably, is the master.

[35] All seven occurrences are in the book of Hebrews.

[36] Romans 1:5. This is not to suggest that the person responding to Jesus as Lord does not feel gratitude to Jesus. On the contrary, because such a person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, he likely feels far more real gratitude than the other person, having an even greater grasp of the grace of God expressed through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus.

[37] What did they tell him? Likely it is summarized in Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our *Lord*.

[38] Acts 16:16-34.

[39] Scriptures to prove that statement will be cited throughout this chapter.

[40] Romans 10:9. The next verse tells what happens when a person commits to Jesus as *Lord*: For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved (Romans 10:10). The very next verse also assures salvation for those who trust in the *Lord*: As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him (the *Lord* Jesus) will never be put to shame" (Romans 10:11).

[41] Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Macdonald) states that *confess*, as in Romans 10:9, means to declare openly by way of speaking out freely, such confession the effect of deep conviction of facts. The *Hebrew Greek Key Study Bible* (AMG Publishers, 1984) suggests that "confess" may also mean to assent or to covenant i.e., that I covenant with God that Jesus is my *Lord*. Or it may be to assent – to agree – that Jesus is my *Lord*.

[42] 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

[43] Romans 6:23. Paul also said, "Just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring *eternal life* through Jesus *Christ* our *Lord*" (Romans 5:21).

[44] 2 Corinthians 4:5.

[45] 1 Peter 3:15.

[46] Romans 14:9.

[47] Colossians 2:6. A friend objected when I said Scripture did not say we could receive Jesus as Savior and be saved. He pointed to John 1:12: "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." Do you see his error? Salvation is to all who receive *him*, for those who believe in *his name*. What did the angel say his name is? *Christ* the *Lord*! Who is he? He is the Lord Jesus Christ. How must we receive him? Just as Paul said the early church did. We must receive *Christ* Jesus as *Lord*.

[48] "Brothers" is not unfairly limiting those who received Jesus as Lord, but refers to those to whom the letter was addressed: To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father (Colossians 1:2).

[49] Emphasis on the *Christ* being *Lord* is extraordinary. New Testament writers combined the names of *Christ* and *Lord* many times in a variety of ways: *Lord Christ*, 2 times; *Lord Jesus Christ*, 60; *Our Lord Christ*, 1; *Our Lord Jesus Christ*, 35; *Christ Jesus Our Lord*, 7; *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 5; and *Christ the Lord*, 1. (Some listings are inclusive of others.)

[50] 1 Corinthians 8:6.

[51] Acts 10:36.

[52] Philippians 2:9. This is the definition of *Lord* as shown in Scripture, one who is over all, without peer, supreme Sovereign.

[53] Philippians 2:10-11.

[54] Romans 1:4: ". . . who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the *Son of God* by his resurrection from the dead: *Jesus Christ our Lord*."

[55] Acts 1:4-5.

[56] Joel 2:28 (Acts 2:17).

[57] Joel 2:32 (Acts 2:21).

[58] Romans 10:13. Paul quoted Joel 2:32: "And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." Peter quoted those same words at Acts 2:21. Remember (from last chapter) that to call on the *name* of the *Lord* means to call on all that the title implies, his authority, character, rank, majesty, power, excellence.

What is the *name* of the *Lord*? Peter answered in Acts 2:38: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, *in the name of Jesus Christ* for the forgiveness of your sins." The next chapter will show that the *Christ* is the *Lord*.

[59] Acts 10:4 and Revelation 7:14. The exceptions were when Cornelius and John were confronted with angels and addressed them as Lord.

[60] 1 Corinthians 8:5-6. Paul emphasized the same truth to the Ephesians: There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:4-6).

[61] Matthew 28:18. Jesus disclosed his absolute authority to his disciples just before his ascension.

[62] John 13:13. By affirming that he is *Lord*, Jesus told his disciples who he is and who he claimed to be: "If you do not believe that I am *the one I claim to be*, you will indeed die in your sins" (John 8:24).

[63] Matthew 28:18.

[64] 1 Corinthians 15:27.

[65] Alpha and Omega means the first and the last.

[66] Revelation 1:8.

[67] Luke 12:8-9.

[68] 1 Corinthians 8:5-6.

[69] 1 Corinthians 8:5.

[70] Paul taught the Ephesians, "There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – *one Lord*, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

[71] Acts 2:36.

[72] Philippians 2:9.

[73] Philippians 2:11.

[74] Ephesians 1:20-22.

[75] Revelation 1:16.

[76] Philippians 2:11.

[77] Luke 2:11.

[78] Acts 10:36. Paul said the same at Romans 10:12: The same Lord is *Lord of all*.

[79] Romans 10:9. Paul said that no one can truly confess, "Jesus is *Lord*," except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). See also Romans 10:12: For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord *is Lord of all* and richly blesses all who call on him.

[80] Revelation 17:14.

[81] The story is found in John 20:19-29; in Luke 24:36-43.

[82] *Kurios* signifies a person with power or authority.

[83] That number is taken from the New International Version of the Bible. In it, the other meanings of *Kurios* are correct in context. (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, page 698.)

[84] One with power and authority.

- [85] Philippians 2:9-11.
- [86] Colossians 1:15.
- [87] Colossians 1:16.
- [88] Colossians 1:17-18.
- [89] Ephesians 1:20-22.
- [90] Colossians 2:10.
- [91] 1 Peter 3:22.
- [92] Ephesians 1:21.
- [93] 1 Corinthians 15:27.
- [94] The last book of the Bible commonly known as Revelation.
- [95] Revelation 19:11-16.
- [96] 2 Corinthians 4:5.
- [97] Romans 8:28.
- [98] Hebrews 2:18.
- [99] Romans 8:38-39.
- [100] Matthew 6:25-34.
- [101] Matthew 11:28.
- [102] Matthew 28:18.
- [103] Romans 10:12.
- [104] 1 Peter 5:7.
- [105] Philippians 4:6.
- [106] Colossians 2:6. The other scripture that speaks of receiving him is John 1:12: "Yet to all who *received* him, to those who *believed in his name*, he gave the right to become children of God." That scripture does not define "him." But we know that the only other scripture that speaks of receiving him, says it must be as *Lord*. The other part of the verse is for those who believe in his name. What is his name? It is the *Lord Jesus Christ – Christ the Lord*.
- [107] Colossians 2:6-7.
- [108] 1 Peter 3:15.
- [109] 1 Peter 3:15. What is this hope we have? I believe it is that we will one day be resurrected to live forever with God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We can rest in faith on that hope because our faith is in the only one who has all power and all authority, the *Lord Jesus*. See 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.
- [110] Acts 10:36.
- [111] Acts 20:21.
- [112] 2 Corinthians 4:5.
- [113] Acts 28:31: Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the *Lord Jesus Christ*.
- [114] Acts 16:32. See also Acts 13:12: The proconsul believed because he was amazed at the teaching *about the Lord*. See Acts 13:44: In Antioch, almost the whole city gathered to hear the *word of the Lord*. Acts 13:48: The Gentiles were glad and honored the *word of the Lord*. Acts 13:49: The *word of the Lord* spread through the whole region.
- [115] 2 Corinthians 4:5.
- [116] Acts 9:42. See also Acts 5:14, 9:42, 11:21, 16:15, 18:8.
- [117] Acts 5:14.
- [118] Acts 11:21.
- [119] Colossians 2:6.
- [120] Acts 16:15.
- [121] Acts 18:8.
- [122] Acts 10:36.

[123] Acts 10:42-43.

[124] The entire story is found at Acts 10.

[125] Acts 11:17. Paul testified that Jesus Christ is *Lord* of all believers: "To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our *Lord* Jesus Christ – their *Lord* and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:2). Paul included three groups of people who recognized Jesus as their *Lord*. The first was the church to which he was writing in Corinth. The second are all those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy – all Christians living at that time, and the third all future Christians, all those everywhere who call on the name of our *Lord* Jesus Christ.

[126] Matthew 7:21-23.

[127] An important distinction must be made here. The *Lord* Jesus looks at our hearts. He knows when we commit to obey him, even though we fail from time to time. It is the pledge to obey, the honest, heart commitment to obey that he wants. He knows we are imperfect, but he requires a willing heart.

[128] It is a necessary corollary to receiving Jesus as our *Lord* that we submit to him as *Lord* and seek to obey him as our *Lord* as best we can.

[129] That is the obedience that comes from faith (Romans 1:5). Be clear that we are not saved by obedience. Salvation is by faith. Obedience is evidence of a saving faith.

[130] Some say there are different levels of the Christian faith, that we have salvation when we believe in Jesus as Savior and believe he died for our sins. Later, those who desire a deeper Christian walk believe in Jesus as their Lord. There is no support for that position in Scripture.

[131] Jude 4.

[132] Matthew 7:15.

[133] 1 Timothy 6:3.

[134] There are hundreds of additional references. The Lordship of Jesus is the dominant theme of New Testament writers; Jesus is mentioned as *Lord* more than by any other title.

[135] John 8:24.

[136] And we will die in our sins (John 8:24).

[137] Romans 10:9.

[138] Acts 16:31.

[139] Romans 10:13.

[140] Colossians 1:16.

[141] Colossians 1:14,20.

[142] Ephesians 1:21.

[143] 2 Timothy 4:1.

[144] Isaiah 53:3.

[145] 1 Corinthians 2:8.

[146] Copied with permission. Dr. Henry Morris is the editor of "Days of Praise," published by Institute for Creation Research, Santee, California 92071, of which he is president.

[147] Matthew 16:16; see also Mark 8:29-30, and Luke 9:20.

[148] Matthew 16:15-17.

[149] Matthew 16:20.

[150] Matthew 26:63-64 also states clearly that Jesus is the Christ: The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.

[151] John 8:24.

[152] Acts 4:7.

[153] Acts 4:10.

[154] Acts 4:12.

[155] Acts 2:36.

[156] Acts 2:36-38.

[157] John 20:31. Jesus said the same: "The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me (John 10:25) Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father" (John 10:37-38).

[158] John 17:3.

[159] Galatians 3:22-28.

[160] 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

[161] Romans 6:23. Paul also said, "Just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring *eternal life* through Jesus *Christ our Lord*" (Romans 5:21). Peter reminded Cornelius: "You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus *Christ*, who is *Lord of all*" (Acts 10:36).

[162] 2 Corinthians 4:5. In the New Testament, there are seventy-six (76) times the name *Christ* appears with the title *Lord*. Jesus is referred to as the *Lord Jesus Christ* (60), *Lord Christ* (2), and *Christ the Lord* (1). In a more personal way, he is spoken of as our *Lord Jesus Christ* (35), *Christ Jesus our Lord* (7) and *Jesus Christ our Lord* (5).

[163] Romans 14:9.

[164] Likewise, the announcement of the birth of Jesus by the angel: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is *Christ the Lord*" (Luke 2:11). The angel was saying that this baby who is the *Christ*, in fulfillment of all the prophecies about the coming of the Christ, is also the *Lord*, the supreme ruler in heaven and on earth.

[165] 1 Corinthians 8:6.

[166] Romans 1:4, 16:18, 1 Corinthians 1:2,9, Ephesians 3:10,11, Philippians 2:11, 3:20, Colossians 3:24, 1 Timothy 1:2,12,14.

[167] Daniel 7:14.

[168] Psalm 2:2.

[169] From the Hebrew word *Mesiah* meaning Anointed One.

[170] From the Greek word *Christos* meaning Anointed One.

[171] Psalm 2:6.

[172] Psalm 2:7.

[173] Psalm 2:9.

[174] Psalm 110:2.

[175] Psalm 110:5-6.

[176] Daniel 7:14.

[177] See John 12:34: The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

[178] The Jews belief came From Daniel 7:14: He [the Messiah] was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is *an everlasting dominion* that will not pass away, and his *kingdom is one that will never be destroyed*.

[179] Isaiah 53:10.

[180] Isaiah 53:12.

[181] Isaiah 53:6.

[182] Isaiah 53:3.

[183] Isaiah 53:5.

[184] Isaiah 53:8.

[185] Isaiah 53:9.

[186] Psalm 16:10.

[187] Psalm 22:1.

[188] Psalm 22:6-8. See the fulfillment of the prophecy in Matthew 27:39,41,43-44; Mark 15:29,31-32; and Luke 23:36,39.

[189] Psalm 22:14-15.

[190] Gentiles – the Roman soldiers – were known to the Jews as dogs.

[191] They have pierced my hands and my feet (Psalm 22:16).

[192] Psalm 22:17.

⁵⁷ Fulfillment is recorded in Matthew 27:35, Mark 15:24, Luke 23:34, and John 19:24.

[194] Matthew 16:20-21.

[195] An example is in Luke 18:31-33: Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again." See also Matthew 20:17-19, Mark 10:32-34, and Luke 17:25.

[196] 2 Timothy 4:3.

[197] Please don't misunderstand this important point. There are those who carelessly refer to accepting Jesus as Savior in order to have salvation, yet live with Jesus as their Lord. These people assuredly have salvation; they really believe in and confess Jesus as their Lord, but doubtless grieve the heart of God as they orally represent his Son to the world as Savior when God commanded that we proclaim Jesus as Lord.

[198] 1 John 2:22.

[199] 2 John 1:9.

[200] Gnosticism denied Christ's true humanity two ways: (1) Some said that Christ only seemed to have a body, a view called Docetism, from the Greek *dokeo* ("to seem"), and (2) others said that the divine Christ joined the man Jesus at baptism and left him before he died, a view called Cerinthianism.

[201] 2 John 1:7.

[202] Is it significant that Jude's warning is in the next to last book of the Bible? If so, it occurred to me that the prophecy could be fulfilled close to the end of time, just before the great tribulation.

[203] Jude 1:4.

[204] Jesus warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the *Christ* (Matthew 16:20). Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, warning them not to tell who he was (Matthew 12:16).

[205] Though Jesus hid the fact that he is the *Christ* from most of the people, some were permitted to know who he was. One day, when he passed nearby, Andrew heard John the Baptist say, "Look, the Lamb of God!" The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the *Messiah*" (that is, the *Christ*) (John 1:41).

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were some of Jesus' closest friends. After Lazarus died and Jesus came, Martha confessed her faith: "Yes, Lord," she told Jesus, "I believe that you are the *Christ*, the Son of God, who was to come into the world" (John 11:27).

[206] See Matthew 13:10-15.

⁶¹ An example was the place of the birth of the *Christ*. Confronted with the wise men, Herod asked the Jewish leaders where the *Christ* was to be born. They didn't hesitate. "In Bethlehem in Judea, for this is what the prophet has written: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel'" (Matthew 2:5-6).

[208] See prior footnote. When the Jewish leaders were asked, they knew the prophecy referred to the birthplace of the *Christ*.

[209] Daniel 9:25. Each "seven" is a week of years. Each year is 360 days. The prophecy refers to 62+7=69 weeks of years or 483 Biblical years which equals 483 X 360 = 173,880 days.

[210] Daniel 9:26.

[211] Zechariah 9:9.

[212] This is another example of the remarkable specificity of the prophecies of the coming *Christ*. Matthew recites the prophecy that was fulfilled: "See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Matthew 21:5).

[213] Luke 19:37-39.

[214] Luke 19:41-42.

[215] Luke 24:16.

[216] Luke 24:19-24.

[217] Psalm 16:11.

[218] Luke 24:25-27.

[219] Luke 24:36-44.

[220] Luke 24:45-48.

[221] Acts 3:18.

[222] Acts 17:2-3.

[223] Acts 26:22-23.

[224] Many other miracles are in Matthew, Mark and Luke. John is selected because John chose miracles he believed were most important to prove that Jesus is the *Christ*.

[225] John 2:1-11.

[226] John 4:46-54,

[227] John 5:1-9.

[228] John 6:19-21.

[229] John 6:5-13.

[230] John 9:1-34.

[231] John 11:1-44.

[232] John 21:1-11.

[233] John 14:31. Jesus also said, "For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say" (John 12:49-50). See also John 14:10, 14:24, 7:16, 6:38, 5:19, 3:32, and 3:34.

[234] John 20:31.

[235] Paul recognized the essential importance of the resurrection: If *Christ* has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith (1 Corinthians 15:14).

[236] 1 Corinthians 15:4-8.

[237] During his ministry, Jesus attempted to hide the fact that he was the *Christ* from the masses following him. If they had been convinced that he was the *Christ*, the leaders would not have dared to kill him.

[238] Acts 5:42.

[239] Acts 8:5.

[240] Galatians 1:17.

[241] Acts 9:22.

[242] Acts 18:5.

[243] Acts 18:28.

[244] Galatians 1:12. Also Ephesians 3:1-6, in which Paul spoke more about the revelation given him that the Gentiles and Israel are sharers in the promise in *Christ* Jesus.

[245] 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

[246] 2 Corinthians 4:5.

[247] Luke 4:41.

[248] Matthew 16:16; see also Mark 8:29-30, and Luke 9:20.

[249] Matthew 16:20.

[250] Matthew 12:15-16.

[251] This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them'" (Matthew 13:13-15).

[252] John 4:25-26.

[253] John 4:28-29.

[254] John 12:34.

[255] John 7:41.

[256] John 9:22.

[257] John 7:26.

[258] John 7:31.

[259] Luke 9:7-8.

[260] Luke 9:18-19.

[261] Luke 9:22.

[262] Luke 8:51-56.

[263] John 1:41.

[264] John 11:21-24.

[265] John 11:25-26.

[266] John 11:27.

[267] Matthew 26:63.

[268] First Pilate (Luke 23:4), then Herod found him not guilty (Luke 23:15), and Pilate a second time (Luke 23:16).

[269] Matthew 27:25.

[270] Matthew 26:63.

[271] Matthew 26:64. On an earlier occasion Jesus had specifically stated he was the Son of God (John 10:36).

[272] Matthew 26:65.

[273] Daniel 7:13-14.

[274] Matthew 28:18.

[275] Romans 1:4. See also 1 Corinthians 1:9: God, who has called you into fellowship with his *Son* Jesus Christ our *Lord* is faithful.

[276] Paul said that the *Son of God, Jesus Christ* was preached among the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 1:19). Paul explained to the Romans that through the Spirit of holiness Jesus was declared with power to be the *Son of God* by his resurrection from the dead: *Jesus Christ our Lord* (Romans 1:4).

[277] Psalm 2:2,6-7: The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. . . . "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." . . . I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: He said to me, "You are my *Son*; today I have become your Father."

[278] Matthew 26:63. Another example occurred when Nathaniel was brought to Jesus he declared, "Rabbi, you are the *Son of God*; you are the King of Israel" (John 1:49).

[279] John 11:27.

[280] John 5:18.

[281] John 10:30.

[282] John 20:28.

[283] 2 Peter 1:1.

[284] 1 John 5:20. Even God testified that his Son is God when he said of his Son, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom" (Hebrews 1:8).

[285] Revelation 1:12-16.

[286] Revelation 2:18.

[287] Matthew 4:3,6. Though the conditional phrase, "If you are the Son of God," does not positively state that Jesus is the Son of God, up to that time Jesus had not claimed to be the Son of God. Instead, God, his Father, had spoken from heaven saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Satan was doubtless speaking from the knowledge that God himself affirmed that Jesus was his Son.

[288] Matthew 8:29.

[289] Mark 3:11.

[290] Luke 4:41. Another excellent witness would be someone who killed him. The centurion in charge of the crucifixion of Jesus saw the earthquake, the hours of darkness, and all that had happened during those hours and exclaimed, "Surely he was the *Son of God*" (Matthew 27:54).

[291] Luke 8:24-25.

[292] Matthew 14:22-33.

[293] Luke 1:35.

[294] Acts 9:20.

[295] Galatians 2:20.

[296] 1 John 3:8.

[297] 1 John 5:12.

[298] 1 John 5:5.

[299] 1 John 4:15. See also John 3:14-15,18, 6:40, and 11:25-26.

[300] 1 John 5:10 Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.

[301] See also John 3:14-15,18, 6:40, 11:25-26 and 1 John 3:23.

[302] That is what God has testified about his Son. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son (1 John 5:10).

[303] John 3:36.

[304] 1 John 3:23. See also 1 John 5:13: I write these things to you who *believe in the name of the Son of God* so that you may know that you have eternal life.

[305] *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, page 782.

[306] What does it mean to believe in all that he is as the Son of God? It means to believe in everything about him. For example, we know that the Son of God is both the *Christ* and *Lord* (Romans 1:4). See Hebrews 1:3: The *Son* is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

[307] The only way in which the titles are not equal (not pertinent to salvation) is that *Son of God* shows a Father-Son relationship with God the Father. That relationship shows that the *Son of God* is also God; the definition of *Lord* is one that describes one who is God – one with all power and authority in heaven and on earth.

[308] Romans 10:9-10.

[309] John 3:36.

[310] Acts 16:31.

[311] 1 John 5:12.

[312] Luke 2:11: Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

[313] Philippians 3:20: But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[314] 2 Timothy 1:10, Titus 1:4, 3:6: . . . whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.

[315] 2 Peter 1:1.

[316] 1 John 4:14.

[317] Ephesians 5:23.

[318] 2 Peter 1:1, 2:20, 3:2, and 3:18.

[319] Calculated as follows: Lord (618) + Christ (543) + Son of Man (84) + Son of God (37) + King (35) + Master (11) = 1328 divided by 2 (times Jesus is called only Savior (without a power title) = 664.

[320] Matthew 26:63.

[321] Matthew 26:64.

[322] The title is used eighty-one times in the gospels, once in Acts, and twice in Revelation.

[323] Daniel 7:13-14.

[324] Daniel's prophecy showed the power and authority given to the Son of Man, that he would be Lord. I suspect the people knew Daniel's prophecy. If so, it would account for the conversation Jesus had with the man born blind he had healed (John 9:35-38). Jesus asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

"Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

Why would the man believe and worship Jesus? If he knew Daniel's prophecy, he knew the Son of Man would be the Christ and would be Lord. Knowing that, he addressed Jesus as Lord.

[325] Luke 9:22.

[326] Matthew 17:22. Also Mark 9:31, 10:33, 14:41, Luke 9:44.

[327] Matthew 17:12. Also Mark 9:12, Luke 9:22.

[328] Mark 10:33. Also Luke 24:7.

[329] Mark 9:31. Also Luke 9:22.

[330] Luke 24:7. Also John 3:14.

[331] Matthew 12:40.

[332] Matthew 17:9. Also Mark 9:9,31, Luke 9:22, 24:7.

[333] Luke 9:22, 24:7.

[334] Luke 17:22.

[335] Luke 22:69.

[336] Luke 12:40.

[337] Luke 12:40, 17:26.

[338] Luke 17:24, 21:27.

[339] Luke 18:31.

[340] Daniel 7:13-14.

[341] Luke 6:5.

[342] Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jewish religion.

[343] Luke 5:17-26.

[344] The section "What Is A Saving Faith?" presents the response God seeks from us when Jesus is our *Lord*.

[345] Acts 16:31, John 3:36, and John 17:3. As the title *Son of God* is equivalent to *Lord*, but used far less often, the text will refer to Jesus as *Lord* but include Jesus as the *Son of God* whenever appropriate.

[346] 1 Thessalonians 5:9. This is the third time this scripture is used to prove the point of the person in whom salvation is found.

[347] Romans 6:23. Other scriptures were written by Paul to his spiritual son, Timothy, who was young and needed Paul's fatherly advice. Using himself as an example, Paul said, "I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the *salvation* that is in *Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 2:10). Paul acknowledged that Timothy had known the Scriptures from infancy, which, he told Timothy, "are able to make you wise for *salvation* through faith in *Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 3:15).

[348] Luke 2:11. The angels didn't use the name Jesus because he hadn't yet been named by his parents. Note the angels said "a" Savior.

[349] Philippians 3:20-21. Note that Paul said, "a" Savior.

[350] Ephesians 2:8-9.

[351] Hebrews 2:9; 7:27, 9:26, and 1 Peter 3:18.

[352] Matthew 1:21.

[353] Hebrews 9:26 says Christ appeared once for all to do away with sin by sacrificing himself. Hebrews 9:15 states that Christ died as a ransom to set us free from our sins.

[354] Galatians 1:4-5.

[355] Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned (Romans 5:12).

[356] Romans 6:23.

[357] Colossians 1:21.

[358] See also 2 Corinthians 5:18: All this is from God, who *reconciled us to himself* through Christ. See Paul's similar statement to the Romans: "When we were God's enemies, we were *reconciled to him* through the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10). God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him *to reconcile to himself* all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Colossians 1:19-20).

[359] "To present us holy" may be more easily understood "in order to present us holy" as it has a qualification. See also Hebrews 10:10: And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

[360] Colossians 1:22. Those verses should never be quoted without the verse completing the thought: if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant (Colossians 1:23).

[361] We saw earlier that God also is our Savior, that he is the one who loved and gave and sent and reconciled. Paul said we rejoice in God *through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom* we have now received reconciliation (Romans 5:11).

[362] Colossians 1:23.

[363] Hebrews 7:27.

[364] Colossians 1:22.

[365] Note that the titles *Christ* and the *Son of God* are often equivalent.

[366] Paul began his letter to the Colossians: To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father (Colossians 1:2). To the Romans he wrote: To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints (Romans 1:7).

[367] Note the introduction of a third title, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul freely interchanged the titles *Son of God*, *Christ*, and *Lord Jesus Christ*, but not *Savior*. Though the passages speak of the very act by which the Christ is said to have saved us, he is not referred to as *Savior* in those verses.

[368] Romans 5:9-11: Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be *saved from God's wrath through him!* For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him

through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be *saved through his life!*

[369] Romans 5:9-10. The Apostle John said that he who has the *Son* has life; he who does not have the *Son of God* does not have life (1 John 5:12).

[370] Romans 10:9-10,13.

[371] 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

[372] 2 Corinthians 5:20.

[373] Romans 7:14: I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

[374] Galatians 4:4-5.

[375] Colossians 1:13-14.

[376] Galatians 3:14.

[377] Romans 3:23-24.

[378] Galatians 3:13.

[379] Titus 2:14.

[380] 1 Peter 1:18-19.

[381] Ephesians 1:7.

[382] Hebrews 9:12.

[383] Romans 3:25.

[384] Revelation 20:15.

[385] Hebrews 7:27, 9:26, 10:10, and 1 Peter 3:18. It is because Christ's sacrifice was *once for all* that the Catholic Eucharist is such serious error. In it, the priest claims to sacrifice Jesus again each and every time.

[386] God required a perfect sacrifice, an unblemished lamb. We could not qualify; we've all been tainted by sin. Only Jesus could qualify as the perfect lamb (John 1:29); *he was without sin* (Hebrews 4:15). See also 2 Corinthians 5:21: God made him *who had no sin* to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[387] Grace means unmerited favor, nowhere more perfectly shown than in Christ's death on the cross. We could not have merited his sacrifice. It occurred before we were aware of our need for it.

[388] Romans 6:16: You are slaves to the one whom you obey – whether you are *slaves to sin*, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness.

[389] Mark 10:45. Also Matthew 20:28.

[390] 1 Timothy 2:5-6.

[391] Hebrews 9:15.

[392] Romans 5:9.

[393] Hebrews 9:22: Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin.

[394] Are these conditions difficult? Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). Even in Old Testament times, under the prior covenant, God's conditions were not too difficult to fulfil. Moses said of the Mosaic Law: "Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach" (Deuteronomy 30:11).

[395] Romans 3:24.

[396] 2 Peter 3:9: The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. See also Matthew 18:14: In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

[397] Romans 3:28.

[398] Galatians 5:4.

[399] Galatians 1:6.

[400] Galatians 1:9.

[401] Galatians 2:15-16. Why would Paul say that some were Jews by birth and not "Gentile sinners?" He pointed out that the Jews, in the past obligated to obey the Judaic law, knew they were not justified before God by observing it. Paul stated three times that the object of faith must be *Christ*.

[402] Remember that to believe in or have faith in the *name* of someone meant to have faith in all that he is. This is particularly significant when considering the name *Lord Jesus Christ*. It incorporates everything about Jesus, his divinity as the Son of God, his fulfillment of all prophecy, his great power and authority over all in heaven and on earth, even his blood. That is why Paul could say, "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through *faith in his blood*" (Romans 3:25).

[403] 1 Corinthians 6:11.

[404] Romans 10:9-13.

[405] I must have been in hundreds of Roman Catholic cathedrals in Europe and elsewhere. Christ is usually presented as hanging on a cross or dead in the arms of Mary, or in some other scene preceding his death, such as the twelve steps of the cross.

[406] Fifty-seven times the words "our *Lord*" appear in the New Testament, emphasizing the personal possessive nature of our relationship with our *Lord Jesus Christ*.

[407] Colossians 1:23. The need to continue is stated many times elsewhere, e.g.: Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, *provided that you continue* in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off (Romans 11:22). We have come to share in Christ *if we hold firmly till the end* the confidence we had at first (Hebrews 3:14).

[408] We were alienated from God and were enemies in our minds because of our evil behavior (Colossians 1:21).

[409] Matthew 7:13-14.

[410] John 10:9-10.

[411] John 14:6.

[412] Romans 10:10.

[413] This refers to people who have not confessed Jesus Christ as their Lord. We must make that distinction as there are many who profess that one need only accept Jesus as Savior to have eternal life, but who naturally also confess him as their Lord.

[414] Luke 13:24-27.

[415] Matthew 7:21-23.

[416] Philippians 2:10-11.

[417] John 8:24. Note the important use of the pronoun "I." Jesus did not include what others said about him. He said we must believe what he said about who he is. Others said he is Savior. Jesus said he is *Lord*, the *Christ*, the *Son of God*. As we've seen in prior chapters, all salvation passages of the Bible have one or more of these three titles.

[418] The angels prophecy about Jesus to Joseph: "Mary will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because *he will save his people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21).

[419] This is not to suggest that Jesus didn't know he was a Savior. In non-explicit ways, Jesus told that he would save. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture" (John 10:9). But he never claimed that he was a Savior by using the title.

[420] The two scriptures in the gospels which mention Jesus as Savior are: "Today in the town of David a *Savior* has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11) and "They said to the woman, 'We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the *Savior* of the world'" (John 4:42).

[421] "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (John 3:17).

[422] Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

[423] Or believing or receiving or having faith in Jesus as Savior.

[424] Paul prophesied to Timothy: "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

[425] See also Romans 5:8. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[426] John 3:16-17. See also 1 John 4:14: *The Father has sent his Son* to be the Savior of the world.

[427] Because Jesus is spoken of as God's "only begotten Son," we know that God refers to God the Father.

[428] Colossians 1:22. Paul taught the same message to the Corinthians: All this is *from God, who reconciled us* to himself through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18).

[429] Romans 8:3.

[430] Romans 8:33.

[431] Romans 3:26.

[432] Romans 3:25.

[433] 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

[434] 1 Peter 1:3.

[435] Romans 6:23.

[436] Galatians 1:4.

[437] Though *God's* primary role is evident, it is with the participation of *Christ Jesus our Lord*. Consider this: For *God* did not send his *Son* into the world to condemn the world, but to *save the world* through *him* (John 3:17). It is *God* who sent *Jesus* to save the world. Our salvation is accomplished through *God's Son*.

Peter spoke of the cooperative roles of the Father and the Son in our salvation: "Through Jesus you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God" (1 Peter 1:21).

[438] In addition to the specific mention of God as *Savior* in this passage, *God* is referred to as *Savior* seven additional times in the New Testament: Luke 1:47, 1 Timothy 1:1, 2:3, 4:10, Titus 1:3, 2:10, and Jude 1:25.

[439] Titus 3:4-6. Paul wrote similarly to Timothy: ". . . *God, who has saved us* and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of *our Savior, Christ Jesus*, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:8-10).

[440] John 6:44. Repeating that, John 6:65: No one can come to Jesus unless the Father has enabled him. As an example of the Father's involvement in our salvation, consider Peter's confession of faith; Jesus said *the Father revealed it* to Peter (Matthew 16:17).

[441] John 10:29.

[442] John 14:28. This is consistent with Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 15: Then the end will come, when he [Jesus] hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet (24-25). When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all (28).

[443] John 5:23,36,37, 6:44, 8:16,18,42, 17:3.
[444] John 4:34, 5:24,30, 6:39, 7:16, 8:26, 12:44.
[445] John 7:29.
[446] John 8:42, 17:8.
[447] John 8:42.
[448] John 10:36.
[449] John 11:42, 17:8,21,23,25.
[450] John 12:44, 13:20. We've learned that we are to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and we will be saved. When we believe in Jesus as our Lord, we are also believing in God who sent him.
[451] John 8:26.
[452] John 12:49.
[453] John 12:50.
[454] John 14:24. See also John 14:10.
[455] John 14:31.
[456] Matthew 7:21.
[457] Matthew 12:49.
[458] John 5:24.
[459] John 10:37-38.
[460] John 14:10.
[461] John 14:11.
[462] John 14:20.
[463] John 6:40.
[464] John 17:3.
[465] John 4:34.
[466] Matthew 26:39,42.
[467] John 14:16.
[468] John 14:26.
[469] John 15:26.
[470] John 17:2.
[471] John 5:27.
[472] John 10:18.
[473] Matthew 28:18.
[474] Jesus began the prayer he taught his disciples, "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven." (Matthew 6:9).
[475] John 6:44: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." John 6:65: No one can come to Jesus unless the Father has enabled him.
[476] Two examples of in Christ: Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life *in Christ Jesus our Lord*. God justifies those who have *faith in Jesus* (Romans 3:26). An example of by Christ is Colossians 1:22: But now he has reconciled you *by Christ's physical body* through death to present you holy in his sight. Two examples of through Christ: John 3:17: For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world *through him*. Romans 5:1: Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ*.
[477] James 2:14.
[478] James 2:15-16.
[479] James 2:17.
[480] James 2:18.
[481] James 2:18.

[482] James 2:18.
[483] James 2:19.
[484] James 2:20-23.
[485] James 2:25
[486] James 2:26.
[487] James 2:24: You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.
[488] 1 John 3:18.
[489] Galatians 3:6.
[490] Galatians 3:7. See also Galatians 3:29: If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
[491] Genesis 12:1.
[492] Genesis 12:4.
[493] Genesis 12:7.
[494] Genesis 13:14-18.
[495] Genesis 14:18-20.
[496] Genesis 15:4,18:10.
[497] Genesis 16:1-4.
[498] Genesis 17.
[499] Genesis 18:16-33.
[500] Genesis 21:11-14.
[501] Genesis 22:2.
[502] Genesis 22:3.
[503] Genesis 22:4-5.
[504] Genesis 22:6-8. Unwittingly, Abraham had prophesied that Jesus would be the Lamb provided by God as the sacrifice for our sins.
[505] Genesis 22:9.
[506] Genesis 22:10-12.
[507] Genesis 22:13.
[508] Genesis 22:15-18. The promise of the Messiah was given to Abraham by the angel after Abraham had obeyed God. It was through the Messiah that all the nations of the earth would be blessed.
[509] James 2:23, quoting Genesis 15:6. Paul quoted the same passage twice at Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6.
[510] 1 John 2:3-6.
[511] Paul first explained to the Romans, "We received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the *obedience that comes from faith*" (Romans 1:5). Later, in very strong terms, Paul told the Galatians, "The only thing that counts is *faith expressing itself through love*" (Galatians 5:6).
[512] Romans 4:4.
[513] Ephesians 2:8-9.
[514] Romans 4:5. Similarly, Paul told us that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified (Galatians 2:16). Quoting the Old Testament prophet, Paul said, "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Galatians 3:11).
[515] Salvation is by grace – unmerited favor. If salvation could be had by works, then it would be merited, an obligation, rather than a gift of God. Paul said, "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" (Galatians 2:21).
[516] Romans 4:16.
[517] Genesis 22:16-17.

[518] James 2:18.

[519] Matthew 5:14-16.

[520] Matthew 12:34-35.

[521] Matthew 21:28-30.

[522] Matthew 21:31. Jesus continued, "For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him" (Matthew 21:32).

What had John taught that these elders rejected? John said, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is near" (Matthew 3:2). The prostitutes and tax collectors confessed their sins and were baptized. But the Pharisees and Sadducees refused. John said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" (John 3:7). See also Luke 7:30: The Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.

[523] In that instance, we have the obedience that comes from faith. See Romans 1:5.

[524] John 14:15,21,23.

[525] Matthew 7:24-27.

[526] 1 John 3:6.

[527] 1 John 3:7-8.

[528] 1 John 3:9. Also John 5:18: We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin.

[529] 1 John 3:10.

[530] 1 John 1:8.

[531] 1 John 1:10.

[532] 1 John 1:9.

[533] 1 John 2:1-2.

[534] 1 John 2:3-4.

[535] 1 John 2:5-6.

[536] John 13:34.

[537] 1 John 2:10.

[538] 1 John 1:7.

[539] 1 John 2:9. See also 1 John 2:11: But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

[540] 1 John 1:6.

[541] John 15:4-5.

[542] John 15:6.

[543] 1 John 2:15. See also James 4:4: You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

[544] Among the dozens of examples showing how we are to remain in the *Lord*, Paul told the Ephesians how to resist the devil, "Be strong in the *Lord* and in his mighty power" (Ephesians 6:10). Paul's admonition emphasizes the power and authority of Jesus as *Lord*. When people accept Jesus as their Savior, they are looking back at the cross. When people receive Jesus as their *Lord*, they are living in the present in the mighty power of the *Lord* Jesus Christ. That is what we're called to do.

When Peter warned about the devil, he said, "Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Peter 5:9). We must have a present faith in the *Lord* Jesus, in his great power and might in order to have the confidence to stand firm.

It is that continuing confidence in the power of our *Lord* that Paul taught: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of

God that is in Christ Jesus our *Lord*" (Romans 8:38-39). We can only believe in those verses and rejoice in them because the *Lord* Jesus has all power and all authority in heaven and on earth.

[545] A necessary condition for salvation is that we confess that Jesus is Lord. See Romans 10:9-10.

[546] 1 Corinthians 10:13.

[547] Romans 8:35.

[548] Romans 8:37-39.

[549] 1 Peter 1:5.

[550] Romans 8:28.

[551] To understand this parable, we must remember the kind of wars that took place in Jesus' time and that were described in the Old Testament. It is often related that the army of Israel would kill everyone in an opposing army. The wars then were not a Desert Storm operation that stopped as soon as the main military objective was obtained. The winning army often continued the slaughter until no opposing force remained.

[552] Luke 14:31-32.

[553] Luke 14:33.

[554] In one sense, the gift of salvation is absolutely free. We cannot work and obtain salvation, we cannot be good enough to receive it, and we do not deserve it. Further, God (through the sacrifice of Jesus) provided the way before we even knew we had the disease of sin. "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the *free gift* of the water of life" (Revelation 22:17).

[555] Matthew 13:44.

[556] Matthew 13:45-46.

[557] Paul gave us his personal testimony regarding exactly that. In a passage I find exceptionally beautiful, he said: "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

[558] Luke 14:26.

[559] All Jesus' teachings were to love one another; we are to be known by that love.

[560] Luke 8:21.

[561] Luke 11:27-28. Mary, Jesus' mother, is never elevated in Scripture. Consider how different Jesus' teaching is compared to the increasing elevation of Mary in the Roman Catholic church. Jesus would say, "No, not blessed Mary, but blessed are those who hear and do the will of my Father who is in heaven."

[562] Luke 9:57-62.

[563] See Hebrews 3:1, 12:2: Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[564] Luke 9:23. See also Matthew 10:38: "Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" and Luke 14:27: "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

[565] Quoted with permission. I find Tom Reed's music excellent; he performs in concert; his lyrics are original and closely follow Scripture. He is a speaker, teacher, and singer, wherever called. His address is: Tom Reed, 23139 Sunset Ridge, Auburn, CA 95603; (916) 268-3067.

[566] Galatians 6:14: May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has *been crucified to me*, and *I [have been crucified]* to the world.

[567] Galatians 5:24: Those who belong to Christ Jesus have *crucified the sinful nature* with its passions and desires.

[568] Romans 6:6.

[569] Romans 8:13.

[570] Romans 6:11.

[571] 1 Peter 2:24.

[572] My pastor, Mike MacIntosh (Horizon Christian Fellowship, San Diego, California) pointed out the differences in God's character and Satan's character by comparing how God and Satan used the words "I will." Satan (then called Lucifer) said, "*I will* ascend to heaven; *I will* raise my throne above the stars of God; *I will* sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. *I will* ascend above the tops of the clouds; *I will* make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14). All Satan's statements glorified his *self*, elevating himself, drawing attention to himself. These are exactly the characteristics of the human *self*. From this we get the words selfish, self-centered, self-absorbed, self-aggrandizement, self-assertion, etc.

God's character is displayed by his promise to Abraham, "*I will* make you into a great nation and *I will* bless you; *I will* make your name great, and you will be a blessing. *I will* bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you *I will* curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:2-3). All of God's "I wills" are to bless and protect those who are his through faith; none are to elevate or exalt God's self.

When we die to self (Satan's character) and live according to God's Spirit, we begin to have the traits of God's character within us. Instead of thinking primarily of self, we begin to think primarily of others, and plan how to benefit and bless others. All we do begins to be motivated by love which is the essence of God's character; God is love (1 John 4:16).

[573] Luke 18:22.

[574] Luke 18:23.

[575] Luke 18:24-25.

[576] 1 Timothy 6:10. The verse continues, "Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

[577] Luke 14:28-30.

[578] That is the message of the parable of the sower: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown" (Luke 8:5-8).

Then Jesus explained it: "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop" (Luke 8:11-15).

Notice how many dropped out. The first three categories in the parable did not mature into a saving faith that persevered to the end. Some barely hear and the message is taken away; others enthusiastically begin but fall away in times of testing; but likely most are choked by life – its worries, riches, and pleasures.

[579] Ephesians 4:22-24.

[580] Matthew 9:16, see also Mark 2:21 and Luke 5:36.

[581] Matthew 9:17, see also Mark 2:22 and Luke 5:37-38.

[582] Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us *new birth* into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade (1 Peter 1:3-4).

[583] Nicodemus was a Pharisee who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.

[584] John 3:3.

[585] John 3:5-6.

[586] Jesus told his disciples, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). This is because we have received Jesus as our *Lord*. He continued, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for *he lives with you and will be in you*" (John 14:16-17). On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and *you are in me*, and *I am in you* (John 14:20). If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and *we will come to him and make our home with him*" (John 14:23). Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is *born of God* (1 John 5:1). The Christ is the Lord; those who believe have the obedience that comes from faith (Romans 1:5).

[587] John 1:12-13: Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become *children of God* – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but *born of God*.

[588] 1 Peter 1:23: For you have been *born again*, not of perishable seed, but of *imperishable (seed)*, through the living and enduring word of God.

[589] Matthew 23:9. Just as God is a jealous God and will allow us to have no other gods, he wants no other "father" in our life and alone wants to be called our Father. We are not to disregard our physical father and mother, but we are no longer to call our physical father, "father." I suspect that is why other familiar names, such as dad, or papa, were developed for our human fathers.

[590] Paul reminded his readers of God's promise, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:18). Then he told us why we must live differently: "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

[591] Paul told us: "Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:16). The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life" (Galatians 6:8).

[592] Romans 8:13-14. The Apostle John told of behavior and beliefs which are true of those who are truly born again:

If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been *born of him* (1 John 2:29).

No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been *born of God* (1 John 3:9). We know that anyone *born of God* does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him (1 John 5:18).

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been *born of God* and knows God (1 John 4:7).

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is *born of God*, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well (1 John 5:1).

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone *born of God* overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith (1 John 5:3-4).

[593] You are all *sons* of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26). Because you are *sons*, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). God predestined us to be adopted as his *sons* through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:5). Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as *sons* (Hebrews 12:7).

[594] Peter emphasized our change of citizenship. Beginning his first letters, he called believers *strangers in the world* (1 Peter 1:1). Because we are *strangers and aliens in the world*, we are to live as *strangers* here in reverent fear (1 Peter 1:17) abstaining from those activities associated with our prior citizenship (1 Peter 2:11). The writer to the Hebrews wrote about many who displayed great faith. Of them he said, "They admitted that they were *aliens and strangers* on earth" (Hebrews 11:13). Believers do not have an enduring home here on earth, but are looking for one that is to come (Hebrews 13:14).

Abraham, our father in the faith, was said to be an alien and stranger, looking forward to a different home: By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a *stranger in a foreign country*; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:8-10).

Citizenship is automatic when born in a country. If parents are Americans but the child born in Germany, he has dual citizenship; by birth of Germany and by parentage of the United States. When a citizen of one country wishes to become a citizen of another, he must usually renounce his former citizenship.

Many professing Christians try to maintain dual citizenship, of this world and also of God's kingdom. God doesn't permit this. He requires them to renounce their former citizenship. Just as he prohibits us from calling any person on earth *father*, once he has become our Father, so he insists we be citizens only of his kingdom. Jesus taught, "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly

valued among men is detestable in God's sight" (Luke 16:13,15). Paul contrasted the two kingdoms by saying we all are slaves, either to sin (the world system) or to God (Romans 6:16-22).

John said we can't be dual citizens: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

James agreed, but stated it more strongly: "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (James 4:4). James called the people adulterous because they were unfaithful to God and his kingdom, seeking the world as well.

James commanded: "Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:8). James said the double-minded man is unstable in all he does, he should not think he will receive anything from the Lord (James 1:7-8).

[595] John 3:4.

[596] 2 Corinthians 5:17. Paul said, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; *what counts is a new creation*" (Galatians 6:15).

[597] Paul said exactly that: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too *may live a new life*" (Romans 6:4).

[598] Luke 13:19. See also Mark 4:30-31 and Matthew 13:31-32.

[599] Luke 13:20-21. See also Mark 4:32 and Matthew 13:33.

[600] Luke 8:13.

[601] You may be asking, how did we change from talking about a saving faith to the kingdom of God? To understand that, we must know about the kingdom. Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because *the kingdom of God is within you*" (Luke 17:20-21).

The kingdom is within each of us through the Holy Spirit through whom we are born again, made a new creation, and through whom we are conformed to the image of Jesus. It is through a persevering saving faith that we become conformed to Jesus and have the mind of Christ.

[602] Galatians 2:20. We see the recurrent theme that we no longer live (in our old sin nature), that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

[603] 1 John 2:6.

[604] Romans 8:29.

[605] Galatians 3:27.

[606] Matthew 23:8.

[607] Matthew 23:10.

[608] Matthew 10:24-25.

[609] Luke 6:40.

[610] Matthew 9:22. See also Mark 5:34, 10:52, Luke 7:50, 8:48, 17:19, and 18:42.

[611] Matthew 9:28-29.

[612] Luke 7:47.

[613] Luke 7:50. Paul told we are saved through faith: For it is by grace you have been saved, *through faith* – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9)

[614] Matthew 21:20-21.

[615] James 1:6-8.

[616] Matthew 13:58.

[617] Matthew 10:32.

[618] Matthew 10:33.

[619] James 2:20.

[620] James 2:17.

[621] James 2:14.

[622] The Jews asked Jesus: "What must we do to do the *works* God requires?" The Jews were used to having to do many things, e.g. make sacrifices, tithe, etc. Jesus *didn't say*, "Nothing at all. It's all been done for you." No, he answered them directly: "The *work* of God is this: *to believe* in the one he has sent" (John 6:28-29). Some could claim that Jesus said that is something God is to do, it is the "work of God." That is nonsense. God does not have to believe in the one he has sent. We do. That point is proved a few verses later when Jesus said, "My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). Our *work* (singular) is this: to believe – to have a saving faith.

[623] Obedience, fruit and good works are different but can be related. They should not be thought of as rigid different categories, but rather as different perspectives by which the evidence of our faith can be seen. Obedience can be thought of as both a fruit of faith and as a good work resulting from faith. Nevertheless, it is treated separately in Scripture and is discussed separately here.

[624] Life-style evangelism is the witness for the Lord Jesus Christ resulting from a life which displays visible evidence of a saving faith. Under extreme persecution, the early church may have spread mostly from life-style evangelism because to openly speak of one's faith invited death. Even now, there is nothing more attractive to the unbeliever than the lives of those submitted to Jesus as their Lord. Everyone wants love and joy and peace; unbelievers want to know how they can have them when they see them in the life of a believer.

[625] Romans 1:5.

[626] Romans 16:26.

[627] This result comes from Roman Catholic teachings. It has a series of requirements for its followers. When they do the signs, the Church claims they have will have eternal life. No longer is faith important; the signs are all-important. It becomes salvation by works.

I'm reminded of the fire in a fireplace. What results? If we stand close we feel radiant heat. There is the flicker of the flame. If wood is burning, there's the crackle and smell. But we can get simulated fires. It can look real, but closer it lacks the reality of a real fire, no heat or crackle or smell.

Works of a professing Christian who has no saving faith, who has not been born again, who is not a new creation in Christ Jesus, is like the simulated fireplace. At a distance he may look okay, but the closer we look, the more we notice reality is lacking. It may be the true love (the heat) is lacking. It may be his fire is inconsistent, seeming to be on one minute and absent the next.

[628] Matthew 11:30.

[629] The Apostle John assured us that Christ's commands are *not* burdensome (1 John 5:3).

[630] Matthew 28:19-20. We can read the Gospels and find out what Jesus said. The subsequent writings of the Apostles only expanded upon what Jesus said. All the New Testament is our guide.

[631] John 12:49-50. See also John 14:10: "Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? *The words I say to you are not just my own.* Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work." Jesus said it again, "He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. *These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me*" (John 14:24).

[632] Matthew 11:29-30.

[633] Two examples: John 14:15, "If you love me *you will obey my commands.*" Matthew 28:19-20, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*"

[634] 1 John 5:3.

[635] Romans 8:9, 13-14.

[636] Romans 8:5.

[637] Romans 8:6.

[638] Jesus taught the same: "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34).

[639] At Romans 6:22, Paul makes clear any ambiguity, stating that believers have become slaves to God.

[640] Romans 6:16.

[641] This is not imputed righteousness (Colossians 1:21-23), but rather John's definition: He who *does* what is right is *righteous*, just as he is righteous. He who *does* what is *sinful* is of the devil (1 John 3:7-8). These are the same contrasts Paul uses in the text.

[642] Romans 6:19.

[643] 1 Peter 1:22.

[644] It's not attractive to think of being slaves to sin (or Satan). Yet, we're slaves either to sin or to God. More than that, Jesus said either God or Satan is our father. The setting was a dispute with the religious leaders. Jesus didn't pull his punches: "*If God were your Father, you would love me*, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. . . . *You belong to your father, the devil*, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. . . . He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God" (John 8:42,44,47).

[645] Luke 6:46. When God spoke from the cloud when Jesus was transfigured, he told the disciples, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; *listen to him*" (Luke 9:35). The command of God is to hear and obey his Son.

[646] John 14:15.

[647] If God is our Father, then we have been born again and are new creatures in Christ.

[648] Jesus said to them, "*If God were your Father, you would love me*" (John 8:42).

[649] John 14:24.

[650] The inevitable result of John 14:15: "If you love me, you *will* obey my commands."

[651] John 13:34.

[652] John 13:35.

[653] Jesus gave this command again, adding his own example: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13).

[654] 1 John 4:9.

[655] One of the ways in which the Apostle John validated his testimony about Jesus. "That which was from the beginning, which *we have heard*, which *we have seen* with our eyes, which *we have looked at* and *our hands have touched* – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; *we have seen it* and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and *has appeared to us*. We proclaim to you *what we have seen and heard*, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1-3).

[656] 1 John 4:10.

[657] 1 John 3:16.

[658] The New Bible Dictionary (1979), Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

[659] 1 Corinthians 9:21.

[660] Galatians 6:2.

[661] Romans 13:8.

[662] Romans 13:10.

[663] Galatians 5:14.

[664] James 2:8.

[665] 1 John 3:11.

[666] 1 John 3:23.

[667] 2 Corinthians 13:5.

[668] Galatians 6:2.

[669] Matthew 25:31-46. The parable is slightly different in its wording than many detect. Did you notice that Jesus did not use the term *neighbor*, but used the term *brother*. Further, he said "for one of the least of these brothers *of mine*." Who are the brothers of Jesus? Jesus answered that question by pointing to his disciples and saying, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:49-50). Paul taught the same: Let us do good to all people, *especially to those who belong to the family of believers* (Galatians 6:10).

[670] James 2:15-16.

[671] James 2:17.

[672] John 7:16, 12:49-50, 14:24,31.

[673] 1 John 3:23.

[674] Matthew 7:21.

[675] Matthew 7:22-23.

[676] 1 Corinthians 13:2-3.

[677] From that we know that such people did not love Jesus, God was not their Father, they were not born again, and they were not new creations in Christ Jesus.

[678] This is not to say that we are to achieve perfection, that God expects us never to sin and always to be perfect in every aspect of our speech and actions. Quite the contrary. Our gracious God sent his Son to be in a human body, to be tempted as we are, though he was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus and God, our Father, understands our human condition. We can approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). Jesus is our role model. We are to try to be like him. It is by sincerely trying that we will please our Heavenly Father. Most important is that everything we do and say be done in love. When all is done in love, we are doing everything within God's character; God is love.

[679] Philippians 4:13.

[680] Romans 12:2.

[681] 2 Corinthians 3:18.

[682] Hebrews 5:14.

[683] Examples may be anger, jealousy, gossip, negativism, unforgiveness, lust, and sexual immorality.

[684] Romans 12:8.

[685] 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

[686] 1 Thessalonians 4:1.

[687] John 3:36.

[688] 1 John 2:17.

[689] Hebrews 5:9. John heard the angel describe the saints as those who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus (Revelation 14:12). John also described the true believers as those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 12:17).

[690] Matthew 25:31-46.

[691] Matthew 7:21-23.

[692] Romans 2:6.

[693] Psalm 62:12. At the conclusion of Ecclesiastes, in which Solomon considered the value of everything which he determined was meaningless, he summarized his understanding: "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For *God will bring every deed into judgment*, including every hidden thing, whether it is

good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). This is precisely the same message taught over and over in the New Testament. We will be judged *according to what we have done*.

[694] Revelation 20:12. That is what Jesus told the Church of Thyatira he would do: "I will repay each of you according to your deeds" (Revelation 2:23).

[695] Revelation 20:13.

[696] Revelation 22:12.

[697] Romans 2:7-8.

[698] Galatians 6:9-10. Here is another example of expressing our love toward our brother in Christ – the family of believers.

[699] John 14:6.

[700] John 3:36 Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

[701] Romans 2:13.

[702] 1 John 3:7.

[703] 1 John 2:29.

[704] 1 John 3:18: Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but *with actions and in truth*.

[705] 1 John 2:4.

[706] 1 John 4:8.

[707] 1 John 1:6.

[708] 1 John 3:8.

[709] 1 John 3:10.

[710] 1 John 4:20.

[711] 1 John 2:9.

[712] 1 John 2:11. Darkness is often referred to as Satan's realm whereas God is light; to be in the light means to be a child of God; to be in darkness means to be a child of the devil.

[713] 1 John 3:15.

[714] 1 John 2:15.

[715] 1 John 2:16.

[716] 1 John 3:6.

[717] 1 John 3:9.

[718] 1 John 1:8.

[719] John 15:14.

[720] John 15:12.

[721] John 8:32.

[722] John 8:31.

[723] John 8:32.

[724] John 15:7.

[725] John 15:7.

[726] 1 John 3:21-22.

[727] See the section, "Bear Fruit."

[728] 1 John 3:23.

[729] John 3:16.

[730] The Lord declared, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66:2).

[731] John 14:21.

[732] John 14:23.

[733] This is the special love we spoke of in the prior section, "Special Love Is Given By God To The Obedient." See John 14:21, and 23.

[734] John 15:9-11. This passage should be quoted by everyone who wants assurance of salvation. Jesus just gave the requirement and how to keep it. He wants all to have the joy which accompanies that assurance.

[735] 1 John 2:3-5.

[736] John 14:15-17.

[737] Acts 5:32.

[738] 1 John 4:12-13.

[739] John 14:23.

[740] In what appears to be an exception to the rule of receiving the Holy Spirit upon committing to obey Jesus as Lord, Peter taught, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, 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). But is it an exception? Let's look closer. Baptism for believers is a command of Jesus (Matthew 28:19). Being baptized is thus obedience to a command of Christ. Peter said to be baptized in the *name* of Jesus *Christ*. We've learned that the *Christ* is *Lord*. We've also learned that to believe in the *name* of someone is to believe in all their attributes. Thus, to believe in Jesus as the *Christ* is to believe in him as *Lord*. To believe in Jesus as *Lord* carries with it the commitment to obey him as *Lord*. Any person who does not commit to obey Jesus as Lord has not received him as his Lord (Colossians 2:6) nor has he confessed him as his Lord (Romans 10:9).

[741] Matthew 22:37-39, Mark 12:30-31, and Luke 10:27.

[742] Scripture does acknowledge that we love ourselves, "In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives *as their own bodies*. He who loves his wife *loves himself* (Ephesians 5:28). However, each one of you also must love his wife *as he loves himself*, and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

Don't those verses show that it is natural that we love ourselves? I don't think so. The key to understanding is found in the different relationship God established in a marriage, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and *the two will become one flesh*" (Ephesians 5:31).

The husband must love his wife as his own body because *they are one*. He must love his wife as he loves himself because *they are one*. To not love his wife as he loves himself would be like loving your arm and not loving your leg. Both are part of one body, yet one is rejected and another is loved.

[743] Romans 12:1.

[744] 1 John 5:3.

[745] The New Bible Dictionary (1979), Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

[746] 1 John 4:20.

[747] 1 John 5:3.

[748] 1 John 4:21.

[749] 1 John 4:20.

[750] John 14:21: Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be *loved by my Father*, and *I too will love him* and show myself to him."

[751] 1 Corinthians 2:9.

[752] Romans 8:28.

[753] I add the last four words as I want everything in life to be for the glory of God, as do you.

[754] Matthew 25:31-46.

[755] Matthew 7:21.

[756] Matthew 28:20.

[757] Matthew 24:12-13.

[758] John 14:15.

[759] John 14:21.

[760] John 15:1-2.
[761] John 15:4-6.
[762] John 15:8.
[763] 2 Timothy 4:3.
[764] John 14:15, Acts 5:32, 1 John 3:24.
[765] Galatians 5:22.
[766] John 15:2.
[767] Romans 8:9.
[768] 1 John 5:12.
[769] Galatians 5:22.
[770] Is this to which the Apostle John referred in 1 John 3:24? "Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us."
[771] Paul said we are slaves to sin or to obedience, leading to righteousness (Romans 6:16). And there is a fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:11). When it is missing in our lives, we may lack the fruit of righteousness when not obedient to the teachings and commands of our Lord Jesus.
[772] Note again in this passage that the tree with bad fruit was cut down and thrown into the fire.
[773] Matthew 7:15-20.
[774] Galatians 6:19-21. Lest there be any doubt in your mind about what it means to be cut off as a branch or cut down as a tree and thrown into the fire, this passage makes it crystal clear: those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is not just lacking the abundant life or blessings here on earth; it is not making it to heaven, not having salvation.
[775] See also Romans 7:4-5: So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, *in order that we might bear fruit to God*. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that *we bore fruit for death*.
[776] John 15:8.
[777] Matthew 5:26.
[778] John 13:35.
[779] John 13:35 states, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." This is the same result as bearing fruit so that we will be known as Christ's disciples. We know from Galatians 5:22 that love is a fruit of the Spirit.
[780] John 15:5.
[781] John 15:10.
[782] John 14:23: "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. See also John 14:17 where Jesus was the Holy Spirit will live with us and in us if we love and obey him.
[783] John 15:10.
[784] Matthew 28:20, John 14:21.
[785] Romans 1:4.
[786] Romans 10:9,13.
[787] John 15:16.
[788] 1 Corinthians 13:8.
[789] 1 Corinthians 13:13.
[790] Luke 13:6-9. This parable could also refer to the nation of Israel, but the context in which Jesus uses it is to the individuals he's talking to, exhorting them to repent or they too will perish. They were the Jews who had known the law, had the revelation of God, and thought themselves God's chosen people, but Jesus warned them they would perish if they didn't repent.

[791] As branches in John 15:2.

[792] See Hebrews 7:25.

[793] Luke 13:22-28.

[794] Matthew 3:10.

[795] Matthew 21:43.

[796] Romans 11:17-21.

[797] John 15:2. In the one case (Romans 11:17-21), the branches were broken off because of unbelief, in John 15:2, they were broken off for lack of fruit. Is that inconsistent? We've learned that fruit *comes from* a saving faith. If there is no fruit, there is no faith. Instead there is unbelief. Thus, no fruit may equal unbelief.

[798] Romans 11:22-23. Inexplicably, some interpret that passage as saying that Israel may be grafted in again, but don't apply it to the Gentiles. The passage speaks of "some of the branches." It speaks of individuals who were broken off because of unbelief and in Romans 11:22-23, of individuals who can be grafted in again. Are Jews treated differently than Gentiles? No. All are alike before God. See Romans 3:22-23, 29-30.

[799] John 15:2: "He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit."

[800] John warned, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. . . . The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10).

[801] Romans 11:17-24.

[802] The Old Testament is a history of a nation who repeatedly broke the commands of God and were punished for doing so. Israel was finally dispersed throughout the nations for its wickedness.

When John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostles warned the Jews of their apostate condition, they (as a nation) refused to listen. In 70 A.D. the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, killing hundreds of thousands of Jews and dispersing the survivors, selling them as slaves on the world market until there was such a glut that no one would buy them.

[803] See Romans 1:5: Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles *to the obedience that comes from faith*.

[804] They were broken off because of unbelief (Romans 11:20).

[805] The saving faith holds tightly to Jesus. To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). Notice the fruit that resulted from holding to Christ's teaching, knowing the truth. The further result of the fruit is being set free, all because we hold tightly to Jesus and his teaching.

[806] Romans 9:30-32.

[807] Ephesians 2:8-9.

[808] Some may think of good works to obtain salvation, but in the brilliant light of God's holiness and righteousness, all are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

This is not to say that when we do those good works which God created us to do (Ephesians 2:10) that he is not pleased with us and our works.

[809] Romans 4:4.

[810] Romans 9:16.

[811] The first section says that we are not saved through Christ's death, but through his life! (Romans 5:10).

[812] Ephesians 2:10. As a practical example of those *works* which God prepared in advance for us, Paul spoke of Epaphroditus who almost died for the *work* of Christ (Philippians 2:30).

[813] Remember that true believers are new creations in Christ.

[814] Hebrews 10:24.

[815] Paul did exactly that with Archippus. He told him, "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord" (Colossians 4:17).

[816] Such a person tries to add to faith which is the exclusive means of securing eternal life. In effect, such a person exercises unbelief, showing his belief that faith in Jesus Christ as Lord is not sufficient, that salvation requires more.

That was the situation with the Galatian church. They had received Christ as Lord, exactly as Paul instructed. The power of the Spirit was present. But Judaizers who came from Jerusalem told the Galatian church that to be saved they also had to follow rules and regulations of Judaism.

Then Paul used his strongest language. "Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:7-8).

[817] John 14:6.

[818] Romans 10:9.

[819] Romans 5:10.

[820] Ephesians 2:10.

[821] John 3:21.

[822] Works are the same as obedience, for example, the obedience that comes from faith. Likewise, the good works that come from faith.

[823] Matthew 25:31-46.

[824] James 1:27.

[825] Matthew 4:17.

[826] Acts 26:20.

[827] Ephesians 4:11-13.

[828] Each Christian is described as a part of the body of Christ of which Jesus is the head (see 1 Cor. 12:12-26). Paul relates that to our work for the body of Christ, "From him [Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, *grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work*" (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Has each part done its work? Has the body grown and built itself up in love? I wonder what the Lord will say.

[829] Matthew 5:16.

[830] John 3:21.

[831] 1 Peter 2:12.

[832] James 3:13.

[833] 1 Timothy 6:17-18.

[834] 1 Timothy 5:10.

[835] 1 Timothy 2:10.

[836] Is it important that our faith be seen, whether we can prove we have it? Jesus said it was important: "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). Our good deeds are one way in which we give light to a dark world. Likewise, Paul said it was important to prove repentance by our deeds (Acts 26:20).

[837] James 2:14-20 [TLB].

[838] 1 Corinthians 13:3.

[839] Mother Theresa has been in the news. A Christian radio station accepted calls about her. One caller said that if she didn't have faith in Jesus Christ, she had no salvation, no matter how many good works she did.

I was astonished at the derision heaped on that brother. The callers were indignant that anyone could say that this "saint" would not have salvation. However, he did not say she did not have salvation, only that her good works would not save her.

As we've seen in this discussion, works will not save. Even if she has love as the motive for her good works, but doesn't have faith in Jesus Christ as her Lord, she does not have salvation. If she doesn't have a saving faith, the love she displays could be a form of works to gain salvation, instead of the love resulting from the obedience which comes from faith (Romans 1:4). In fact, *if* that were the case, she would be a prime tool in Satan's hand to try to convince people that salvation is possible through good works.

I do *not* say that Mother Teresa is not a fellow-servant of the Lord Jesus Christ or that Jesus Christ is not her Lord. I don't know. I pray Jesus is her Lord.

[\[840\]](#) Colossians 1:22.

[\[841\]](#) Luke 18:8.

[\[842\]](#) Ephesians 2:10. An interesting application of good works as an evidence of a sincere saving faith was used by Paul when giving instructions for the care of widows in the early church. He instructed: "No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and *is well known for her good deeds*, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and *devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds*" (1 Timothy 5:9-10).

[\[843\]](#) Matthew 10:28. Also Luke 12:5.

[\[844\]](#) Philippians 2:12.

[\[845\]](#) Mark 9:43.

[\[846\]](#) Matthew 18:8.

[\[847\]](#) Matthew 25:46.

[\[848\]](#) 2 Peter 2:6.

[\[849\]](#) Jude 7.

[\[850\]](#) Genesis 19:24.

[\[851\]](#) Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30, and Luke 13:28.

[\[852\]](#) Luke 16:23-24.

[\[853\]](#) Revelation 2:11.

[\[854\]](#) Revelation 20:14.

[\[855\]](#) Revelation 21:8.

[\[856\]](#) Mark 9:47-49 quoting Isaiah 66:24. Also Matthew 18:9.

[\[857\]](#) Mark 9:44-45. Also Matthew 18:8.

[\[858\]](#) Mention of obedience, fruit, and good works may bring cries of a "works" salvation, where (it is claimed) anyone who mentions such things says we must do them to earn salvation. Repeatedly we have said this is not so. Our salvation is through faith and faith alone. But a saving faith must be evidenced through obedience, fruit, and good works. Yet, God is not to be put in a box. He permits exceptions. Anyone who makes a sincere deathbed confession of faith and then promptly dies may never be able to display obedience, fruit, or good works (that we can see), but is no less saved. (Consider the thief on the cross. In the little time he had, he made a public confession of his faith and by his speech honored Jesus as Lord.) It is as we are given opportunity to show obedience, display fruit, and do good works that we are to do so. If we refuse, we're not faithful servants of the Lord Jesus, but are in rebellion against him.

[\[859\]](#) Luke 16:15.

[\[860\]](#) We must distinguish between God looking at our actions and our view of others' actions. We can fool others. At times the hypocrite can look very much like the committed Christian, but may have a heart that is far from God. In such a case, he lacks the faith, though he appears to have the actions.

Remember, it is through faith that we are saved. Our actions must emanate naturally from that faith. No amount of apparent obedience, simulated fruit, or good works will save us if there is not first a saving faith.

[861] Romans 8:28-29.

[862] Luke 6:43-45.

[863] Revelation 21:8.

[864] Ephesians 5:5.

[865] Ephesians 5:3-7 and Galatians 5:20-21. Paul's list is not intended to be exhaustive of all sins which will deny a person the kingdom of God, but rather a list of the types of continuing behavior which will earn a person eternal punishment in hell.

[866] Galatians 5:21.

[867] Ephesians 5:6.

[868] Revelation 21:8.

[869] Luke 21:16-19.

[870] See Matthew 10:22, 24:13, and Mark 13:13.

[871] Luke 8:13.

[872] John 3:18.

[873] John 3:36.

[874] Luke 8:7.

[875] Luke 8:14.

[876] Titus 1:15-16.

[877] Matthew 8:11-12.

[878] Obedience comes from faith (Romans 1:5). See also John 3:36.

[879] Hebrews 3:18.

[880] Matthew 22:1-14.

[881] The people had been taken off the streets and byways to come to the wedding supper.

[882] In heaven the believers were all given white robes (Revelation 6:11). After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands (Revelation 7:9). They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14). For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. *Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.*" (Fine linen stands for the *righteous acts* of the saints.) (Revelation 19:7-8).

Righteousness and righteous acts *come from a saving faith* (Hebrews 11:7).

Just as we surmised that the King in the parable gave the people wedding garments to wear, God will give his saints the fine linen to wear for the wedding feast of the Lamb.

[883] Matthew 28:19-20.

[884] Matthew 18:21-35.

[885] See Colossians 1:21-23. Also Matthew 26:28: This is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

[886] Ephesians 2:3. See also John 3:36.

[887] Matthew 18:23-35.

[888] Matthew 18:35.

[889] James 3:1.

[890] Matthew 24:45-51.

[891] John 15:2.

[892] John 15:6.

[893] Matthew 25:26.

[894] Matthew 25:30.
[895] 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.
[896] Ephesians 2:10: For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
[897] Ephesians 2:10.
[898] Matthew 25:31-46.
[899] All of those actions show mercy. Isn't that what God has always said? The Lord Almighty says: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another" (Zechariah 7:9). What does he require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8). Not much changes, does it? The same requirements given by God in the Old Testament are shown in this New Testament parable. Truly God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).
[900] Luke 16:19-27.
[901] Called the White Throne Judgment.
[902] 2 Peter 2:9.
[903] Matthew 13:24-30.
[904] Matthew 13:37-43.
[905] Matthew 13:47-50.
[906] 2 Peter 3:9. See also Matthew 18:14.
[907] Luke 13:22-28.
[908] Hebrews 3:12-13, 15. See also 3:7, 4:7.
[909] Hebrews 2:1-3.
[910] Luke 8:7.
[911] Luke 8:14.
[912] These people may be like those Jesus spoke to in the Church in Ephesus. There he said, "You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first" (Revelation 2:4-5).
[913] Matthew 5:17.
[914] McDowell, Josh. Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Vol. I., pp 166-167. San Bernadino: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1991.
[915] Acts 17:2.
[916] 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.
[917] Acts 17:11.
[918] Acts 18:28.
[919] Micah 5:2.
[920] John 1:1.
[921] John 8:58.
[922] Genesis 3:15.
[923] Galatians 4:4.
[924] Deuteronomy 18:15.
[925] Matthew 21:11.
[926] Acts 3:19-26.
[927] Genesis 22:17-18.
[928] Matthew 1:1.
[929] Galatians 3:16.
[930] Genesis 17:19.
[931] Luke 3:34.
[932] Numbers 24:17.
[933] Matthew 1:2.

[\[934\]](#) Genesis 49:10.
[\[935\]](#) Luke 3:33.
[\[936\]](#) Isaiah 9:7.
[\[937\]](#) Luke 1:32-33.
[\[938\]](#) Psalm 45:6-7.
[\[939\]](#) Psalm 102:25-27.
[\[940\]](#) Hebrews 1:8-12.
[\[941\]](#) Daniel 9:25.
[\[942\]](#) Luke 2:1-2.
[\[943\]](#) Nehemiah 2:1.
[\[944\]](#) Luke 19:38.
[\[945\]](#) Luke 19:40.
[\[946\]](#) Galatians 4:4.
[\[947\]](#) Daniel 9:26.
[\[948\]](#) Isaiah 7:14.
[\[949\]](#) Matthew 1:18. See also Matthew 1:20: What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
[\[950\]](#) Matthew 1:22-23.
[\[951\]](#) Micah 5:2.
[\[952\]](#) Matthew 2:1.
[\[953\]](#) Isaiah 7:14.
[\[954\]](#) Matthew 1:25.
[\[955\]](#) Matthew 1:22-23.
[\[956\]](#) Hosea 11:1.
[\[957\]](#) Matthew 2:14-15.
[\[958\]](#) Matthew 2:15.
[\[959\]](#) Jeremiah 31:15.
[\[960\]](#) Matthew 2:16.
[\[961\]](#) Matthew 2:17.
[\[962\]](#) Malachi 3:1.
[\[963\]](#) Matthew 3:1.
[\[964\]](#) Matthew 3:3.
[\[965\]](#) Matthew 11:10.
[\[966\]](#) Matthew 3:15.
[\[967\]](#) Psalm 2:2.
[\[968\]](#) Matthew 3:16-17.
[\[969\]](#) Acts 4:27.
[\[970\]](#) Isaiah 61:1-2.
[\[971\]](#) Luke 4:21.
[\[972\]](#) Psalm 2:7.
[\[973\]](#) Matthew 3:17.
[\[974\]](#) Acts 13:32-33.
[\[975\]](#) Isaiah 9:1-2.
[\[976\]](#) Matthew 4:13-14.
[\[977\]](#) Deuteronomy 18:18.
[\[978\]](#) John 14:24.
[\[979\]](#) John 14:30.
[\[980\]](#) John 12:49-50.
[\[981\]](#) Psalm 78:2.

[982] Matthew 13:34.
[983] Matthew 13:35.
[984] Isaiah 61:1.
[985] Matthew 3:16-17.
[986] Luke 4:21.
[987] Isaiah 53:4.
[988] Matthew 8:16.
[989] Matthew 8:17.
[990] Isaiah 29:18. See also Isaiah 35:5.
[991] John 9:1-3.
[992] John 9:6-7. Jesus healed many blind people; see Matthew 15:30, 21:14, and Luke 7:21. Other miracles healing the blind are found at Matthew 9:27-31, 12:22, 20:29-34, and Mark 8:22-26. The miracle recounted in the text may have been specially arranged to fulfill the prophecy of the Christ. Jesus said to his disciples, "This happened *so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.*" It was more unusual than any other miracle giving sight to the blind. The man born blind testified, "Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind" (John 9:32). It is curious that my NIV Study Bible (1985), lists the miracles of Jesus on page 1596, but fails to list this important one.
[993] Luke 7:22.
[994] Isaiah 35:5; see also 29:18.
[995] Mark 7:32-35.
[996] Mark 7:37.
[997] Isaiah 35:6.
[998] Matthew 15:30.
[999] John 20:30-31.
[1000] Psalm 69:9.
[1001] John 2:14-16.
[1002] John 2:17.
[1003] Psalm 8:2.
[1004] Matthew 21:15-16.
[1005] Isaiah 53:1.
[1006] John 12:37.
[1007] John 12:38.
[1008] Isaiah 6:9.
[1009] Matthew 13:13.
[1010] Matthew 13:14.
[1011] Isaiah 53:3.
[1012] John 1:11.
[1013] Luke 23:18.
[1014] Psalm 35:19.
[1015] Psalm 69:4.
[1016] John 15:24.
[1017] John 15:25.
[1018] Luke 18:31-33.
[1019] Luke 22:37.
[1020] Zechariah 9:9.
[1021] Matthew 21:7.
[1022] Matthew 21:4-5.
[1023] Zechariah 11:12.

[1024] Matthew 26:14-15.
[1025] Psalm 41:9.
[1026] Luke 22:47-48.
[1027] Psalm 41:9.
[1028] John 13:18.
[1029] John 13:26.
[1030] Zechariah 13:7.
[1031] Mark 14:27.
[1032] Matthew 26:56; see Mark 14:50.
[1033] Matthew 26:56.
[1034] Zechariah 11:13.
[1035] Matthew 27:3.
[1036] Matthew 27:5-7.
[1037] Matthew 27:9-10.
[1038] Psalm 35:11.
[1039] Mark 14:56-58.
[1040] Isaiah 53:7.
[1041] Matthew 26:62-63.
[1042] Matthew 27:12-14.
[1043] Isaiah 53:8.
[1044] Matthew 26:66.
[1045] Psalm 22:7-8.
[1046] Matthew 27:39-43.
[1047] Isaiah 50:6.
[1048] Matthew 27:26.
[1049] Isaiah 50:6.
[1050] Mark 14:65.
[1051] Matthew 27:30.
[1052] Isaiah 53:12.
[1053] Luke 23:32.
[1054] Luke 22:37.
[1055] Psalm 22:16.
[1056] Matthew 27:27-31.
[1057] Zechariah 12:10.
[1058] John 20:27.
[1059] Isaiah 53:12.
[1060] Luke 23:34.
[1061] Psalm 22:18.
[1062] Matthew 27:35.
[1063] Zechariah 12:10.
[1064] John 19:34.
[1065] John 19:37.
[1066] Psalm 34:20.
[1067] John 19:32-33.
[1068] John 19:36.
[1069] Psalm 22:14-15.
[1070] Psalm 22:1.
[1071] Matthew 27:46.

- [1072] Isaiah 53:10.
- [1073] Acts 2:23-24.
- [1074] Romans 3:25.
- [1075] Romans 8:3.
- [1076] Isaiah 53:8.
- [1077] Matthew 27:50.
- [1078] Isaiah 53:9.
- [1079] Matthew 27:59-60.
- [1080] Isaiah 53:5-6.
- [1081] Romans 5:6.
- [1082] Romans 5:8.
- [1083] Isaiah 53:11.
- [1084] Matthew 28:5-7.
- [1085] Psalm 16:9-10.
- [1086] Matthew 28:5-7.
- [1087] Acts 2:29-32.
- [1088] Psalm 110:4.
- [1089] Hebrews 5:5-6.
- [1090] Psalm 68:18.
- [1091] Psalm 16:11.
- [1092] Mark 16:19.
- [1093] Revelation 1:12-18.
- [1094] Daniel 7:13-14.
- [1095] Luke 22:69.
- [1096] Matthew 28:18.
- [1097] Luke 24:44-48.
- [1098] I first heard this genealogy explained by Ray Stedman on the cassette, *Hidden Treasure*, distributed by FireFighters for Christ, 8866 Barcelona Plaza, Westminster, CA 92683, and later by my pastor, Mike MacIntosh at Horizon Christian Fellowship, San Diego, CA 92117.
- [1099] Romans 1:20.
- [1100] Romans 1:18-20.
- [1101] Dr. Kennedy did a number of sermons on the true meaning of the zodiac. These were encapsulated in a book, *The Real Meaning of the Zodiac*, published by Coral Ridge Ministries, P. O. Box 40, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33302.
- [1102] To see that correctly presented, use the King James or New King James translation.
- [1103] Ephesians 1:4.