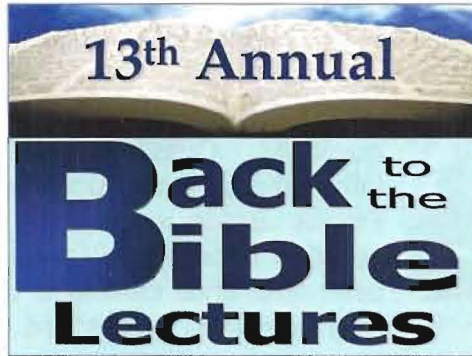


Theme:

**Thought Provoking
Questions from the
New Testament
Part 1**

September 24-26, 2010

**WEST JEFFERSON
CHURCH OF CHRIST**



Theme:

Thought Provoking Questions from
the New Testament ~ Part 1

September 24-26, 2010

Hosted By:

West Jefferson Church of Christ

221 Barnett Street; West Jefferson, NC 28694

www.wjchurchofchrist.org

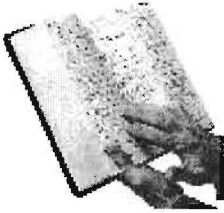
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FORWARD



Our lives are surrounded with questions. Questions are for obtaining information, knowledge and wisdom. Francis Bacon once said, "A prudent question is one-half wisdom." We have been told since childhood that the best way to learn is to ask questions. Questions certainly are valuable in the learning process. The only accurate answers to life's most important questions are the ones provided by our Creator in His Word. One source estimated that there are 3294 questions in the Bible; and each one of great importance to us as we seek salvation and strive to serve God.

Questions are not only for the purpose of gaining information and knowledge, but they can also be for the purpose of making an emphatic point; a figure of speech known as an interrogative. For example, in Genesis 3:9, after man had sinned, God asked Adam, "Where art thou?" God knew where Adam was, but He used a question to get Adam to think. The Bible often uses this figure of speech.

This year, we begin a two part series examining some of the thought provoking questions of the New Testament. Although there are numerous questions in the Old Testament that would be beneficial, we have limited our study to the New Testament. It is our sincere desire that the questions we have selected for this year will certainly be thought provoking to the one pondering becoming a child of God or for the Christian who is striving for greater maturity in the faith.

Tim Canup
July 29, 2010

Dedication

In November of 1964, by a written invitation from the late brother Alvin Barry, Tom and Della began meeting with the newly established congregation in West Jefferson. From the very first Sunday (November 15th), both Tom and Della were very dedicated to the service of God and building up this new work. Having worked as a construction foreman, Tom did all he could to help the work of the church in West Jefferson, from help with funding, to help with construction of a new building and many other areas of evangelism.



Tom supported the preaching of the truth any way he could and faithfully defended it. He deeply understood the value of a soul and later as a driver for the Ashe County Transportation Authorities, he took every occasion to talk to others about the Lord's church and salvation and invite them to services. Tom truly loved the Lord, as well as his wife, Della, of 56 years. On January 23, 2010, Tom departed this world for an eternal home; he will be greatly missed by all as we anxiously await that great reunion. Therefore, this year's lectureship book is lovingly dedicated to our beloved brother, Tom Jones.

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Tentative Future Lectures:

2011 ~ Thought Provoking Questions... Part 2

2012 ~ Jesus Christ: What He Called Himself

2013 ~ Jesus Christ: What Other Called Him

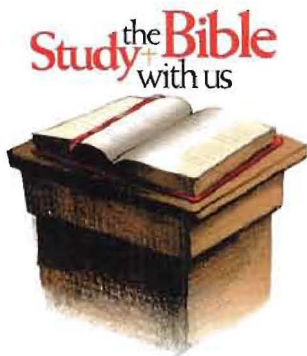
2014 ~ What Must I Do To Be Saved?

2015 ~ What It Means To Be A Christian

2016 ~ The Eternal Kingdom of God

2017 ~ A Study of Worship

Please make plans now to join us the last week-end in September for a study of these great topics. Books, audio & video material will be available.



Chapter 1

Will You Also Go Away?

R. D. McDaniel

R. D. McDaniel is a mathematics instructor at Rowan Cabarrus Community College in Salisbury, NC and preaches for the Corinth church of Christ in Needmore, NC. After graduating from Freed-Hardeman College (1970) and Harding College (1972) with a BA in Mathematics and minor in Bible, he received his MS in Mathematics from Arkansas State University (1976). Since college days, he has taught mathematics in Christian schools, state universities, and community colleges. R. D. has participated in several gospel campaigns in door knocking and conducting Bible studies statewide and in Canada. R. D. is married to the former D'Lea Smith. They have two daughters, Kyla Hall and Jenny Cline, and one granddaughter Addison Kate Cline.

Chapter six of John concerns true commitment to God and His Son. Jesus feeds the 5000 for He is the provider. He walks on water for He has power over His creation. Then, Jesus speaks some strong things concerning Him, as the bread of life, and how His followers are to partake of that "bread" in their daily living and walk with Him. In this account many of His followers grumble and complain; thus, they turn away from Him saying, "...This is a hard [difficult] saying: who can understand it?" which is recorded in John 6:60 (All quotes from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted). To which, Jesus said in verse 67 to the twelve (apostles) "Do you also want to go away?"

Maybe, these followers in John 6 are more interested in physical food than spiritual; note the words of Jesus in verses 26-27: "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

McGarvey says, "They did not seek Jesus because they saw in him a divine Friend who could satisfy the deep needs of the soul, but as a wonder-worker who could fill their bodies with food when occasion required" (McGarvey, 383). Many today and even in the church appear to be just like this. It is just human nature, but that is no excuse for the true follower of the Son of God! The crux of the matter, I believe, backs up to John 1:1-13. Jesus is the word that was with God in the beginning. He is God! All things were made through Him. Now that is a tough one for them and would also have been for us. He is the light shining in the darkness [that is the world]. It is neither comprehended nor can it be overcome by any of humanity. This Jesus understood. So in our text He is seeking a deeper faith, which of course leads to a more determined antagonism (Pulpit Commentary Vol. 17, 271). It is not only what Jesus is expressing here concerning His flesh and our daily life of partaking of it, but all of this about Jesus and what He taught combined. Everything put together is, you might say, overwhelming to them. Think about it and imagine you being there. Would you not agree?

The Greek word for "hard" (σκληρό) here in verse 60 is used in a much wider sense than in Matthew 25:24 by the unprofitable servant relative to his master. It would lean more toward a translation "*grating* to the mind, *repulsive*, *offensive*" (Perschbacher, 372).

It does not mean "hard to be understood," but difficult to accept or be content with. Luthardt here reiterates his conviction that there is no reference in it to the death of Christ, and that the disciples were simply unwilling to accept the idea of his supreme claims and his constant return to the eating and drinking of his flesh and blood and identification of this eternal life with participation in his corporality. (Pulpit Commentary Vol. 17, 271).

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We see in John 12:34 that the people did not have a clear understanding of whom this "Son of man" was nor what His being lifted up meant. Of course the disciples, also had a lack of full understanding of these things that Jesus showed them of His upcoming passion as found in Matthew 16:21 and several other passages. The first three verses of John chapter 21 always amuse me a bit. After Jesus has appeared to the 12 again with Thomas present and offered no doubt to His bodily resurrection, Peter says, "I am going fishing," and six of the other apostles who were with Peter said to him, "We are going with you also." Of course they did not fully understand all these things that had happened in the recent past to their friend and Lord. I'm sure that it must have seemed like a whirlwind to them as their thoughts swirled about in their minds. Yes, they were there to comfort and encourage one another, and that they did!

Consider with me the comments of Paul concerning the terrible offense which made the cross a stumbling block to the Jews, who always sought for a "sign" and the Greeks, who searched for "wisdom". Paul preached "Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness," as stated in I Corinthians 1:23. You see, Paul knew what he preached and preached what he knew! To the Galatians he boldly states in Galatians 5:11, "And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased."

So, the Jews, Greeks, Apostles and disciples all sought understanding to these things that were occurring with Jesus. This definitely would include His words as recorded in our text of John 6. I like Guy N. Woods' comments on verses 61 and 62:

...Though the Lord often referred to his return to his Father only here do we have a record of specific mention *from him* amounting to a prophecy of that event. It should be kept in mind that these disciples were imbued with the concept of an earthly kingdom

with Jesus as a temporal ruler and there was thus no place in their scheme for a return to heaven and the spiritual reign he was to exercise. (Woods, 137)

Wow, where would the Lord's church be without that coming promised Holy Spirit (John 14:26, John 15:26 and John 16:13) by Jesus to the Apostles? God the father, Jesus, the Son and the Holy Spirit left no room for the Apostles' theme to be incomplete concerning His church! I really like that plan, don't you?

So in John 6:51, Jesus states, "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." This statement is the first of eight "I Am" statements by Jesus we have recorded in John's account of the gospel of Jesus. The others are in John 8:12, 8:58, 10:9, 10:14, 11:25, 14:6, and 15:5. "These statements give us a key to his person and mission in the world ... Jesus is the bread, the light, the pre-existent one, the door, the good shepherd; he is the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, the life and the vine" (Cox, 56).

In particular, this "I am the living bread" passage, along with the necessity for eating His flesh, stirs some strong sentiments in the Jewish sacrificial thinking.

Christian faith, in other words, is faith in Christ crucified. True nourishment, which brings eternal life, is possible only for those who accept His sacrifice, who are incorporated by faith into His body, who are crucified with Him that they may live with Him, and who abide in Him because He abides in them—truths which are sacramentally set forth every time Christians partake of broken bread and outpoured wine at the Lord's supper. (Tasker, 95)

Chapter 1: Will You Also Go Away?

You see the partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine on the first day of the week has no magic of salvation for any of us. It is a memorial of our Lord's death! It is the fellowship common to all obedient believers! His death was necessary for His resurrection and ascension to Heaven to sit as our HIGH PRIEST daily making intercession (Hebrews 7:25-27) for us Christians—His family, His church that He loved to the sacrificial point of death (Acts 20:28).

Jesus' question to the 12 apostles "Do you also want to go away?" (John 6:67), implies that first of all that they had the power or free will to depart. It was a matter of their choice, even as it is our choice today to remain faithful to God, His Son, and His church. Joshua grandly expressed this choice in Joshua 24:15. What a classic statement! What a spiritually minded choice that Joshua made as the leader of his family and for his family. We must boldly make the same choice today.

His statement to the twelve also indicates Jesus' concern at the departure of so many. He (the Godhead) grieves departure from His truth as in Hosea 11:8 where the prophet commenting for God and His continual love for Israel, states: "...My heart churns (turns over) within Me; My sympathy is stirred." Yes, God and His family grieve and hurt at the departure of any from His truth! May I encourage each of us here today to remain strong and faithful to the Lord and His family—the church! We must abide in Jesus as He stresses in John 15:1-8. We must remain faithful and true to Him, recall these two scriptures Revelation 2:10 and Hebrews 3.

In John 6:68-69, Peter answers Jesus with a classic question and an eternal statement, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." We certainly cannot go to Moses (Acts 3:22), or back into the pollutions of the world, sin (2 Peter 2:20-22). Shall we run to science? It may comfort, but certainly is not able to heal or save! The skeptics and pagan

philosophy are negative, totally hopeless, helpless and without substance. The true power is in Jesus Christ and His bloodstained body. Paul clearly portrays this message to the saints at Corinth as recorded in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.

In the parable of the sower the seed represents the word of God (Luke 8:11), which is the "germ of life". Thus, Peter's answer is on target and reveals legitimate reason to remain with Jesus and His word. His word is the bread of life (Matthew 4:4), a "light to my path" (Psalms 119:105), the healing balm of life (Psalms 107:20) and so much more.

Frank L. Cox very well sums this by saying, "It is easy to find difficulties. It is easy to leave the Christ, but it is not so easy to answer the question, 'To whom shall we go?' It is the height of folly to leave the Christ unless we know where we can better ourselves" (Cox, 58).

My question to you, today, is to whom do you belong? Is it to the Christ and His church, or is it to the worldliness of sin and rebellion? God knows! If you have not obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ in belief (John 12:46), repentance (Luke 13:3), confession (Acts 8:37), and baptism (Mark 16:16) then, why not obey now. There is no better time than NOW. It is your choice. Neither I nor anyone else can make this choice for you. You make your own salvation decisions, but we do strongly plead with you to come to Jesus and submit to His will in baptism today. And if you as a Christian have gone astray, why not come back home, for there is none other to follow!

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Chapter 2

Unto What Then Were Ye Baptized?

David Pharr

David R. Pharr has been preaching for over fifty years and has been in full-time work with churches in Point Pleasant, WV; Gallipolis, OH; Rock Hill, SC; and Clinton, TN. He was the Director of E. Tennessee School of Preaching from 1988 to 1995. In 1998 he returned to the Charlotte Avenue Church of Christ in Rock Hill, SC, for a second tenure. In 2009 he retired from that work after a total of almost thirty-six years.

David is married to Peggy. They have three sons and a daughter, ten grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Two sons and one grandson are preachers.

David attended Freed-Hardeman College, Rio Grande College and Southern Christian University. He is the editor of The Carolina Messenger and writes for The Spiritual Sword, Voice of Truth International, and other publications. Published works are: *Five-Minute Radio Sermons*, *Modern Messages from the Minor Prophets*, *The Beginning of Our Confidence*, *A Happy Coincidence on a Desert Highway*, *The Simplicity System*, *Thy Kingdom Come*, *Voices of Calvary*, and three Bible correspondence courses.

David grew up in Wilkesboro, NC, where in his early years he was in one of the mainline denominations. While he was in his teen years, the family learned of pure New Testament Christianity and he was baptized into the church of Christ. His only brother, Claude, is also a gospel preacher.

The text assigned to me is of significance because it helps to answer a question which is very important to people who are seeking to do what is right in the sight of the Lord. That question is whether a person who has once been baptized might need to be baptized again. Almost every group in Christendom practices some rite which they call baptism. People who enter into most any kind of church have experienced some kind of baptism. It would not be possible to name all of the variations, but one of the differences is in the way it is performed. Some are immersed (which is consistent with the Greek word for

Chapter 2: Unto What Then Were Ye Baptized?

"baptized") and others simply have some water sprinkled upon them.

There are also differences as to the age of the candidate for baptism. Many mainline denominations call it a christening, which is connected with naming the infant child as a member of the Christian faith. Parents of this tradition believe that this identifies the child as a member of their faith. Of course they expect the child to accept this as he or she reaches an age of understanding and then to make their own profession. On the other hand, there are many of us who are convinced that baptism is supposed to be only for those who are mature enough to make their own decisions, that as an act of obedience one must be old enough to understand the reality of sin and the basic facts of the gospel.

Another major difference is in regard to place of baptism in the plan of salvation. This has to do with whether or not it is essential "for the remission of sins," as indicated in Acts 2:38. Sincere people have been persuaded that justification is by "faith only," and that while baptism is an important ritual, it is not required that one be baptized in order to have his sins forgiven. The argument against the necessity of baptism typically cites various passages which mention believing, but which do not mention baptism. Of course, we all agree as to the foundation necessity of believing. No informed person in the world would deny that if one does not believe in Jesus, he will die in his sins (John 8:24). Romans 10:10 says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

It must be observed, however, that passages regarding faith and salvation which don't mention baptism are also passages that don't mention repentance. The point is that truth on any question is not to be determined by a single text. We read where one fellow thought himself to be wise enough to declare: "John 3:16 is all the Bible anyone needs." It makes you wonder, if that be the case, why God

wrote the rest of the Bible! Friends, we need to consider everything the Bible says about what God requires for salvation. There is nothing wrong with citing a certain verse to prove a particular point—provided we are making a point that is in harmony with everything else that the Bible says on the matter. So, I will give you John 3:16 to emphasize the love of God, His gift of the Savior, and even to show that believing is essential. But if I want to emphasize the requirement of repentance, for example, let me give you Acts 17:30, which tells that God commands repentance. Likewise, we can go to Mark 16:16 to see that baptism is joined with believing for one to be saved.

Paul at Ephesus

Now, let's get back to the text assigned: Acts 19:3, where Paul asked some people, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" He asked this because it had become apparent to him that there was something that was not right in their understanding. They had been baptized, but what they said to him indicated that there was something important about baptism that they had not understood. As I said, this New Testament example helps to answer a question that is very important to many sincere people. The question is, "Can a person be taught wrong, yet baptized right?" And, in application, when is it necessary for a person who has been baptized to be baptized again? Some might refer to this as the "re-baptism" question. It's a wonderful thing that God in his providence has given us examples of conversion in the New Testament, like the one in the text, to help us understand proper obedience to his requirements.

We are introduced to the situation by Paul's arrival in Ephesus, where he became acquainted with a small group of disciples. Verse 7 tells us that the number of men was about twelve. We might be curious to know more about these folk, where they came from, who had taught them, etc., but the text passes over such incidentals to bring us directly to the critical issue that concerned the apostle.

Chapter 2: Unto What Then Were Ye Baptized?

Miraculous Gifts

To get before us how the question arose, we need to understand that one of the special responsibilities and powers delegated to the apostles was the giving of miraculous gifts by the laying on of their hands. Earlier in Acts we learn that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given by the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:17ff). When the apostle came to a place and found believers he would lay hands on certain ones and impart these gifts. You might notice in Romans 1:11 that one of the reasons he wanted to visit the church at Rome was that he might "impart to you some spiritual gift, to the end that ye may be established."

So, at Ephesus Paul wanted to know if they had received such gifts. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (Acts 19:2). He was simply wanting to know if they had been in contact with any other apostle who might have laid hands on them to give them miraculous gifts of the Spirit. We know this was his concern because we are told later that "when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). But when he asked this, their answer was unexpected. Instead of saying whether they had been given such gifts or not they said, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" (Acts 19:2).

This immediately alerted Paul to the fact that something was wrong and that there was something that did not fit. He saw that their not knowing about the Holy Spirit implied that something was not right about their baptism. He asked, "Unto what then were ye baptized?"

It's easy to understand why this concerned Paul. They said they had not heard about the Holy Spirit. But the first time baptism was ever named under the gospel commission, the first time baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" was ever preached, there was the assurance: "[A]nd ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

John's Baptism

Therefore, Paul asked them, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" This means in whose name, or by what authority had they been baptized. They said, "Unto John's baptism." That is, they had been baptized according to the teaching that had been done by John the Baptist. John was commissioned by God and sent to the Jews to prepare their hearts and lives for the coming ministry of our Lord. He was called "the Baptist," or "the Immerser," because he preached "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). He died as a martyr under the order of Herod, thus closing his illustrious career and bringing to an end the special preparatory work to which he had been appointed. No one was appointed to carry on his commission. No other person was brought forward to also be a "Baptist." (Incidentally, no one was ever designated as "a Baptist," only "the Baptist," which was John.) His commission and his baptism were not intended to be carried over into the gospel dispensation. The gospel dispensation began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It was right for people to be baptized "unto John's baptism" before Pentecost, but after Pentecost, under the Great Commission, John's baptism no longer applied. Occasionally some well-meaning person today may claim John's baptism, but the case before us in Acts 19 shows that it is no longer valid. The believers at Ephesus had been baptized "unto John's baptism," but Paul's explanation caused them to be baptized again.

Though the action of baptism in any case is simply immersion, there are significant things that distinguish between John's baptism and the baptism required under the Great Commission. Obviously the validity of any baptism depends upon the authority behind it and the purpose for which it is being done. It is important, therefore, that the scriptural differences be understood.

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Not in the Name

First, and of vital importance, is the fact that John did not baptize "in the name of Jesus Christ." Calling on the name of the Lord in baptism did not begin until Pentecost (Acts 2:21, 38). This is more than just a point of history. Jesus had said that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached **in his name** among all nations beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47 emphasis--DRP). It does not take away from the value of John's ministry because he practiced what he was told to practice. And he was never instructed to baptize in the name of Jesus.

Only to Jews

Second, there is no evidence that John ever baptized any but Jews. His commission was not to all the world, only to the people of Israel. The baptism he taught was not intended for Gentiles. Whereas, the scope of the gospel is for "all nations," "all the world," and "every creature" (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47). John's ministry was to the Jews, the gospel is for "the Jew first, also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16)—all of whom needed to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

No Promise of Spirit

A third difference was that John's baptism did not involve the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit. When baptism in the name of Christ was first announced, on the day of Pentecost, Peter said, "[A]nd ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). It cannot be doubted that this was consistently included in all apostolic preaching, but it was never mentioned in connection with John's baptism. We realize, of course, that this was something which Paul considered important in the case of the people in our text.

Not into the Church

In the fourth place, John's baptism never brought anyone into the church of Christ. It was after John's death

that Jesus promised, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). John was not himself a member of the New Testament church. Some have imagined that because of the "Baptist" designation that John was involved with a "Baptist Church," but no such thing existed. He was dead and his ministry was finished before Christ's church was established, which was on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

Under the gospel system penitent believers were added to the church when they were baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38, 41, 47). This is the point of I Corinthians 12:13. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The "one body" is the church (Ephesians 1:22f). The one baptism into the one body, which is by the instructions of the Spirit, is water baptism in the name of Christ (Acts 8:16; 47-48).

Paul was not finding fault with John. Instead he wanted them to understand that when John's baptism applied it was looking forward to what Christ would do. Now, however, Christ had already done it. Listen to verse 4. "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him **which should come after him**, that is, on Christ Jesus" (emphasis—DRP). John understood this. This is why he said about Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). John's baptism anticipated Christ being the Savior. Baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" acknowledges what Christ has already done. That's what Paul told these people there in verse 4.

New Dispensation

We need to pay attention to the change in dispensations, that is, in the new order when the Christian system began on the day of Pentecost. There were things that applied before Pentecost that no longer applied, things authorized before Pentecost that were no longer authorized,

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commands that needed to be obeyed before Pentecost that no longer were required, and, of course, commands that became of force from Pentecost until now.

Now, that's not complicated. You know it, whether you have analyzed it or not. For example, before Pentecost there was a prohibition against eating pork. You had some bacon, didn't you! It's not wrong to eat bacon now, but it was before Pentecost. The same distinction applies to baptism. Before Pentecost people were not told to be baptized in the name of Christ. Yes, John told them to be baptized, but he never said it was in the name of Christ. According to Luke 24:47 the name of Christ was not applied until Pentecost and thereafter.

Here's another illustration of the point. People like to bring up the penitent thief on the cross. They say he was not baptized. I don't know whether he ever was or not. He may or may not have been previously baptized by John—I don't know. I do know, though, that he was not baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ," because before Pentecost nobody was. But now anyone who wants to be saved is commanded to "repent and baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). This is why over here at Ephesus Paul's teaching caused them to be "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5).

I hope we are making this easy to understand. It's just simple Bible teaching. But let me give you another point about the difference in the case of the penitent thief. Under the New Testament system no one can be saved without believing that Jesus was raised from the dead. This is an essential fact of the gospel that we are required to believe. Here is how the Bible says it in Romans 10:9. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that **God hath raised him from the dead**, thou shalt be saved" (emphasis—DRP). There's not a sincere Bible student in the world that can miss that. To be saved one must—not maybe, but must—believe in the resurrection of Jesus as an actual fact of history. It took

place, the third day after his death, on that Sunday morning our crucified Lord came out of the grave! I believe that, don't you? But here is the point. The thief did not believe it while he talked with Jesus on the cross, for the simple reason that it had not yet happened. The point to be made is that it is required of us to believe in Christ's resurrection, but it was not the same for him.

Baptized Again

Do you realize that in the cases of conversion in the book of Acts mention is always made about their baptism? And here in this case, they were baptized a second time. Further, there can be no doubt that this was the right thing for them to do because immediately afterwards miraculous gifts were given by the laying on of the apostle's hands. That showed divine approval.

Now, let's be very frank about why this is pertinent for us today. There are a great many folk who have received baptism in the past without really knowing Bible teaching. When they learn more, when they realize they had not understood what the Bible teaches, their consciences begin to ask, "Should I be baptized again?" Friends, it is not my place to answer that for any person. O, yes, I will be glad to discuss it, but only the Bible has the answer. And God has given us an answer in Scripture, right here in Acts 19. There are two things easily seen here that can't be missed.

First, the text shows that one cannot be taught wrong and baptized right. The people at Ephesus had been taught wrong about baptism. That is, they had not been taught about baptism in the name of Christ. So they were baptized again.

Second, the text shows that one's baptism need not be totally wrong to be essentially wrong. Or, to put it another way, it may seem in some respects that one's baptism was according to the Scriptures, but in fact there are essential elements that have been missed. Here are some important things about these people who were baptized a second

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time. Their first baptism had been right in some respects, but wrong in others.

Not into Christ's Death

This brings us to an obvious point about what was lacking in John's baptism. By having not been baptized in the name of Christ, they had not been baptized into Christ's death. This is the point Paul made in verse 4. "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." It would be after the ministry of John that Jesus would die for man's sins. Paul's point was that John's baptism looked forward to what Christ would do, but now we look back at what He did. It is at baptism in the name of Christ that a penitent believer is saved by His death, His blood. This is why the Bible says we are baptized into His death. John's baptism was not into Christ's death, of course, because at that time Christ had not died. Whereas baptism in the name of Christ is in view of his death and into his death.

Here is how this is explained in Romans 6:3. "Know ye not [here's something everyone should know—DRP], that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" We can only be saved by the blood of Christ, but where is His blood? How do we find it? The Bible says it is when we are baptized into Christ. We sing, "What Can Wash Away my Sins . . ." But when and where does that happen? To be baptized into His death is to be baptized into Christ's blood.

But maybe someone will ask: "Does that mean one isn't saved until baptized?" Well, what do you think? Paul says we are baptized into His death. Now, look again. That was verse 3. In the next verse he explains it like this: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). When does the newness of life come

in? It says that it is when we have been "buried with Christ in baptism."

This is a point about which many have been taught wrong. Many have been right in their baptism as to it being immersion, but taught wrong as to its place in the plan of salvation. They have been taught that they were saved before and without baptism. Let me describe a scenario that often happens. A sincere person comes under conviction and wants to be saved. He or she is told to just ask God for pardon. Often they are given what is called "The Sinner's Prayer." You will find that in many little pamphlets, but you won't find it in the Bible. The Bible never tells an unsaved person to just pray. The Bible says, "Repent and be baptized." But instead of giving the scripture, the person is told to pray and then after prayer he or she is assured that salvation has come. But what about baptism? Well, the preacher will say they can be baptized into his denomination. Notice, though, that before baptizing the person he will ask them to make a confession like this: "I believe that God for Christ's sake has pardoned my sins." But that implies something that is not true. Your sins have not been washed in the blood of Jesus until you have been baptized into His death.

"In the Name of the Lord Jesus"

When Peter quoted Joel's great prophecy of Pentecost he was pointing to a new dispensation. It was in view of that prophecy that Jesus had said: "Thus it is written . . . and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). The main thing in Joel's prophecy, therefore, was what we find Peter quoting in Acts 2:21. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Notice: "It shall come to pass." Now, it had come to pass, a new order, in which "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." So, Peter told them about the Lord—his life, death,

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burial, and resurrection. The people were convinced, "pricked in their hearts." They wanted to "call on the name of the Lord." They asked how to do it. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). What did Peter tell them? How were they supposed to call on the name of the Lord? The answer is right there in verse 38. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be **baptized** every one of you **in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (emphasis-DRP).

One calls on the name of the Lord by being baptized in His name. Beginning with Pentecost in Acts 2, we find it stated over and over that they were baptized in the name of Christ. Here's some examples: "They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16). "He commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48). "Be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he reminded them that they had not been baptized in the name of Paul, but in the name of Christ (I Corinthians 1:13). Again, in I Corinthians 6:11 he reminds them that they had been "washed" in the name of the Lord Jesus." So, here we have it in our text for tonight, They were "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Friends, I think you know that most every preacher that does any kind of baptizing is going to say it is in the name of Christ. The priest who wipes so-called "holy water" on a baby is going to say it's in Jesus' name. The pastor who thinks immersion is unnecessary, maybe too much trouble, when he does his sprinkling, will say, "in the name of Jesus Christ." Of course you know that's what you will find in every denomination. But no matter what kind of formula is spoken, it can't be in His name if it is not according to His teaching. Jesus said, "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Again, Jesus reminds us: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

The question we need to ask is not whether some preacher said the right words, but whether we had been taught the truth and were obeying the command that the Lord authorized.

Application for Today

The men at Ephesus wanted to do what was right. They had not been taught the complete plan of salvation. The necessity of being baptized in the name of Christ had been left out. Paul had to explain this to them. They had been baptized, but that baptism was not valid. It was only after they were taught right that they could be baptized in the name of Christ. So today some have been taught sprinkling, or infant baptism, or that baptism is not necessary for remission of sins, or that they were baptized to join a denomination. It is clear from the Bible example before us that in all such cases, when one learns the truth about baptism, he or she needs to be baptized scripturally.

Chapter 3

Are There Few That Be Saved??

Tim Canup

Tim Canup was born in Galax, VA and is the youngest of five children of Jimmy and Mary Canup. His father, two brothers and one brother-in-law are also ministers of the Gospel. He began preaching part-time in 1998 and in 2001 graduated from a school of preaching and has been preaching full-time since. He has done local work with churches in Elizabethton, TN, Statesville and West Jefferson, NC, where he is currently nearing the end of his fifth year of labor. He is the speaker on the weekly, *Back To The Bible* Radio Program and writes a bi-weekly newspaper article. He has directed the 6th, 7th, 8th & 12th Annual *Back To The Bible* Lectureship.

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INTRODUCTION

Luke recorded that Jesus "went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' And He said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able'" (Luke 13:22-24 – All Scripture from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted). The one thing that every person needs is the salvation from sin! Sin is the greatest problem for mankind. It can and will utterly destroy a person (especially eternally). Man has an enemy who is masterful in deceiving us into ignoring the sin problem.

Man, in and of himself, has NO HOPE of being saved from his sins; our only hope is Jesus the Christ! If it were up to mankind to decide, I imagine that the majority of the race would be saved. However, the Bible teaches us that this simply is not the case. The unnamed individual in our text came to Jesus with a great question. We can greatly

benefit from a study of his question and the masterful answer Jesus gives to it.

ASKING OF THE QUESTION:

First, notice the context in which the question is found. It is of great importance to establish the proper context in order to properly understand what is being said or taught. In John 10:22-39, Jesus had been in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication and was approached by religious leaders asking for Him to plainly state that He was the Christ. Although He had not explicitly said the words, He had clearly and frequently provided them with the evidence they needed. Jesus again claimed to be the Messiah and in verse 31, they took up stones again to stone Him.

In John 10:40-42, Jesus departed across the Jordan to the area of Perea where He continued to teach of the coming Kingdom. In His teaching, Luke records that Jesus "went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem" (Luke 13:22). The phrase at the end of the verse, "...and journeying toward Jerusalem" is interesting because we do not read of Jesus returning to Jerusalem until beginning of last week of His life (He did return near there, but not into the city). His journey of life was bringing Him near to the time when in Jerusalem He would be tried and crucified. G. Campbell Morgan noted: "This statement takes us back to the fifty-first verse of chapter nine, 'And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem;' [quoted from ASV – TAC] which introduces the story of the last six months, during which our Lord was all the time moving to Jerusalem" (166).

Although His time was drawing near, He was not fretting about this upcoming event, but was traveling about and teaching the people. As He did so, an unknown man approached him and asked the question that serves as the title of our lesson.

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Before we address the specifics of this question, let us first consider what could have prompted him to ask this question? We are not told explicitly, but consider J. W. McGarvey's observations that just prior to this, Jesus had received sharp opposition for healing woman on Sabbath (Luke 13:10-21). In response to this, Jesus gave them two parables concerning the coming kingdom, of which they had the misconception that it would be a physical one (also compare Edersheim, 681). Jesus said in Luke 13:18-21:

Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

On an earlier occasion in His ministry, Jesus had given these same two parables (Matthew 13:31, 33). Both of these parables, on both occasions, were given to teach the small begin of church and how it would grow to something very large.

ANALOGY OF THE QUESTION

What did this man mean by his question? McGarvey also suggested:

It is likely that this question was asked by a Jew, and that the two parables illustrating the smallness of the kingdom's beginning suggested it to him. The Jews extended their exclusive spirit even to their ideals of a world to come, so that they believed none but the chosen race would behold its glories. The circumstances attending the conversion of Cornelius,

recorded in the Book of Acts, show how this exclusiveness survived even among Jewish Christians. The questioner wished Jesus to commit himself to this narrow Jewish spirit, or else to take a position which would subject him to the charge of being unpatriotic." (488)

You see, the Jews thought they (and they alone) would be allowed into the Messiah's coming kingdom, which they equated with being the recipients of salvation. This fits the context perfectly. This man was asking, "You are teaching that this coming kingdom would start small and grow into something large, but is it not the case that only a few are going to be saved?" The fact is, the Jews did not believe anyone else was worthy for salvation; such as Gentiles, and especially the Samaritans!

We have no way of knowing the motivation of this man in asking this question. He could have, as religious leaders often did, asked trying to tempt Jesus or to trap Him in His words. Or, having the typical Jewish idea of coming kingdom (that it would be a physical kingdom which only Jews allowed into) and then having heard Jesus' parables was confused and simply wanted Jesus to clarify. Nonetheless, he asked and Jesus gave such a beautiful response to it (the perfect response).

ANSWER TO THE QUESTION:

Diligence to Enter:

Jesus began His answer to this man's question by saying, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate..." A similar thought is express in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:13-14, but is not a parallel.

Definition of "Strive":

The word "strive is from a Greek word (αγωνιζομαι) which could literally be translated as "to agonize." One man even suggested it is an "agonizing like the wrestler in a

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struggle" (Shepard, 406). Rogers & Rogers suggests: "To engage in an athletic contest...to strive to do something with great intensity and effort, to make every effort to {do something}" (144). Literally it is "Keep on straining every nerve to enter in through the narrow door (of salvation)" (Shepard, 406). You see, it is not a one time thing!

Description of "Strive":

This word demands such focus; it demands that we put every ounce and every fiber of our being into obtaining the prize or goal. Consider a couple of examples. Perhaps we have heard of the soldier at war and in the heat of a battle, bulletins flying all around his head and his adrenaline is pumping. In the course of this battle is shot (a non-life threatening wound) and because he is so focused on the fight at hand, he does not even realize he has been shot until after the battle has ended. Or consider the athlete, who is so focused on a target, or goal, blocks out all things around him, even pain, and obtains that prize at all cost. That is the same intensity and focus a Christian is to do war against Satan and sin and go for the prize of eternal salvation! We MUST block out any and all distractions that are put before us by Satan (cf. I Corinthians 7:35).

Destination of Salvation:

Jesus said we must enter the narrow gate. You see, there is a certain way to salvation; it is not the case that we are free to choose a way to be saved that fits our life. Jesus described it as a small (or narrow) gate. Access through this gate is something that restricts; not just any and every thing and idea and teaching can go through. Now, how about all those who call those who truly follow the teachings of Jesus narrow-minded? Jesus said for us to keep on striving to enter into this gate; it is not something that just comes automatically.

Desire of Many:

Jesus went on to say, "for many...will seek to enter..." It is the case that everyone wants to go to heaven. Perhaps it is as the late Andrew Connally suggested one time, that it would be better to say that everybody wants to **be** in heaven; going requires hard work and effort.

Difficulty of Entering:

So what is the difficulty of entering into this gate? Jesus said, "many...will seek." Is it the case that God made the access too hard for us to find? Certainly not! Is it the case that the requirements are too great for us to keep in order to enter? The requirements are high, but not so high we cannot meet them. "...His commandments are not burdensome" (I John 5:3b). Is it the case then that God has only chosen a select few to enter into this gate (e.g., the 144,000 or certain individuals chosen even before their birth)? Paul said in Titus 2:11 that "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Salvation has been provided to every person. God is no respecter of person (cf. Acts 10:34-35).

Jesus said, that man "will not be able." This literally means that man "will not be strong (enough)" (Shepard, 406, footnote #3). You see, in and of our own means, we simply are not able to do it. The difficulty, therefore, comes on part of man.

APPLICATION OF THE QUESTION:

Consider the following illustration. Jesus described the entrance of this gate to salvation as narrow, that is, something so small that it requires effort to enter. If it were physical gate, perhaps it would be about 3 feet high and about a foot and a half wide. It would not be impossible to enter, but a person would have to kneel down and conform their body in order to enter. We can enter the gate of salvation if we are willing to humbly ourselves and conform to the Will of God. BUT...

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Man comes along, and even though he is wanting salvation and perhaps is even willing to bend down to enter (that is, he may be religious), but too often we have things in our lives that are contrary to Will of God, which could be compared carry a large baggage on our back. You see, we can fit into that gate, but our baggage will not. Too often mankind is simply unwilling to let go of baggage! So many may sit at that gate, wanting salvation, but will NOT let go of that bag and Satan is all too happy to suggest another that that is plenty wide enough for us to carry that bag though and convinces us that we do not have to let it go. He deceives us into thinking that we can have salvation and keep our baggage and enter into the gate that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13).

Specifically, the baggage we carry represents such things as the religious teachings and practices that are contrary to Word of God. For example, the teaching that salvation comes at the very moment of faith without any further acts of obedience. Yet the Word of God teaches: "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17) and "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). The Hebrews' writer noted the order of faith and salvation when he wrote: "Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that **after** you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35-36). He gave the illustration of the children of Israel at Jericho: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down **after** they were encircled for seven days" (Hebrews 11:30). According to the teaching of the New Testament, salvation CANNOT precede obedience to Jesus' commands to repent (Luke 13:3), to confess Him before others (Matthew 10:32-33) and His command to be baptized into water (Mark 16:16) where we contact the blood that will wash away every stain of sin (Romans 6:3-4, Revelation 1:5b). Faith is the element that motivates one to obey. It is absolutely important, but it alone cannot save.

Another baggage we often carry is seen in man's teaching that once a person is saved, there is no sin they can commit, from murder to idolatry, that would condemn their soul. However, one man has suggested that there are over 2500 passages in the New Testament that teach contrary. The entire book of Hebrews' was written to encourage Jews who had become Christians not to depart from the Christ, their only hope of salvation. In Hebrews 3:12, the thematic verse of the book, the writer warned, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in **departing from the living God.**" Paul plainly said in Galatians 5:4 "You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; **you have fallen from grace** [literally, fallen out of grace]." When doctrines men teach so plainly contradict the Word of God, we should go with the Word of God.

Another baggage that will not fit through this gate is the concept of denominationalism. Men today encourage us to "join the church of your choice." However, it should be as one bumper sticker I used to have, which read, "Join the Church of Christ's Choice." Churches which wear men's names and teach doctrines from man-written creeds were started by men and not by God. In the New Testament, one will not read anywhere of any of these denominations. The Bible teaches that there is "one body" (Ephesians 4:5) and the body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23); therefore, the logical conclusion is that there is only one church. It wears the name of Christ (the church of, or belonging to, Christ) (Romans 16:16) and it is the one which follows only the teachings of Jesus found in the New Testament.

Another religious baggage carried by men is the use of mechanical instrumental music in worship. God gave the specific command in Ephesians 5:19 to sing. The word "sing" does not allow for the playing of an instrument. This passage names the instrument to be used: "the heart." Of the ten passages in the New Testament that mentions music

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in the Christian worship, none speak of the instrument; they all indicate the specific word, "sing."

Now, consider how that sometimes our baggage may be represented by ungodly lifestyles and practices; practices that are contrary to or forbidden by the Word of God. There are some who are living in adulterous marriages; marriages that are not authorized and men refuse to let this baggage go, even though Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 are crystal clear. Some refuse to let go of the baggage of lying, cheating, stealing, and the use of fowl language and the taking of God's name in vain (even in the form of euphemisms). The baggage of immodest dress, social drinking, and the use of tobacco is a hindrance to many in entering the narrow gate. Satan has hardened the heart of many to the point they simply will not give up the sin that is keeping them from the gate of salvation. Paul said, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age**" (Titus 2:11-12).

Jesus went on to teach in versus 25-30 that just being religious is not enough. Jesus said:

When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed

there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.

We should well note that just claiming to know Jesus; that is, just claiming to be His followers, is not acceptable with Him. Jesus demands complete and total obedience. Remember Paul said, "The Lord knows those who are His" (II Timothy 2:19). Cunningham Geikie summarized Jesus' teachings as such:

If once you be shut out from the kingdom of the Messiah, you will in vain plead your present external connection with me. When the great banquet of heaven begins, the Messiah will cause the door of the banqueting hall to be shut. If you, then, come to it and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' He will answer from within, 'I know you not, whence you are.' If you urge that HE has forgotten you, and that, if He will bethink Him, He will recollect that you ate and drank in His presence, as companions at the same table, and that He had taught in your streets, He will only answer, 'I tell you I know you not, whence ye are. Depart from me, all ye workers of unrighteousness.' (342)

CONCLUSION:

Salvation has been provided by God (at a very high cost to heaven). Every person, because of sin, is in need of this salvation (cf. Romans 3:23) and **every person**, by the grace of God, has access to it (Titus 2:11). So then we too ask the question: "Lord, are there few who will be saved?" The sad reality is that not everyone is willing to accept the terms God has given, thus rejecting the salvation God has provided; and will therefore be lost!

Jesus said, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able." Do not let this be said of any one of us; that we were

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unable, because it means we were too stubborn to accept God's grace and salvation.

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Chapter 4

Who Shall Be Able To Stand?

Jonnie Hutchison

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It is a joy and a highlight each year to have the opportunity to participate in the Back to the Bible Lectures. My assigned subject is "Who Shall Be Able to Stand?" based upon the text found in Revelation 6:17, "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" Yes, what a thought provoking question!

The highly figurative book of Revelation is filled with information relevant for our present time. However, its relevancy is not to be found in the false doctrine believed by the Premillennialists - that the book is a play by play of the so-called "end times" including the rise of an individual world leader known as the Anti-Christ, a period of seven years of tribulation upon the earth, a rapture of the saints, and the return of Christ to establish an earthly kingdom following the supposed battle of Armageddon. Let me hasten to emphasize that none of these doctrines are found in the pages of the book of Revelation, or for that matter, in any other book of the Bible. They are of human, not divine origin. The relevancy of the book of Revelation is in giving comfort and hope to persecuted Christians revealing their ultimate victory through Jesus Christ. Christ has "overcome" (Revelation 5:5) and those who faithfully follow Him will also

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overcome (Revelation 2:7, 11; 3:5, 12, 21). In addition, the relevancy of the book of Revelation is seen in that it reveals the ultimate end of those who reject God. Indeed, verses 12-17 of chapter six speak of the wrath of God being poured out upon those who would cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" (Revelation 6:16). Yes, when the great day of His wrath has come . . . who is able to stand?" It would do well for each one to consider carefully the import of this question as it relates to his or her present spiritual condition.

THE CONTEXT

It is not my purpose to study in detail the background of the book of Revelation or the meaning of every symbol or figurative expression which leads up to the text before us. However, looking at the context will be beneficial in coming to a clearer understanding of the meaning of the passage.

The book of Revelation was written by the apostle John to show God's servants "things which must shortly take place." (Revelation 1:1, 4, 9). It is originally addressed to seven congregations of the Lord's church located in the Roman province of Asia (Revelation 1:4, 11). Chapters two and three contain letters written to each of these seven churches. The letters contain both praise and condemnation based upon whether or not the members of those churches were faithful or unfaithful in the discharge of their obligations to God. In other words, whether the Christians in those churches would stand or not stand. The last church addressed is the church at Laodicea, the "lukewarm" church (Revelation 3:14-21). This church was warned, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent." And then, in verse 21, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." With this encouraging thought Revelation chapter four begins by picturing the throne of God.

"Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne" (Revelation 4:2). The one who sat on this throne is identified as the "Lord God Almighty" (Revelation 4:8). Those who sat around the throne in John's vision – the seven Spirits of God, the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures - were all praising and giving glory to God. As chapter five begins John sees a scroll in the right hand of the One who sat on the throne which was sealed with seven seals (Revelation 5:1). John wept because there was no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth that was able to open the scroll (verses 3-4). One of the elders ended John's sorrow by saying, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open and read the scroll and to loose its seven seals" (Revelation 5:5). Then John looked and saw in the midst of the throne a Lamb which appeared to have been slain. This Lamb took the scroll out of the right hand of the One who sat on the throne. This resulted in those surrounding the throne to break out in a "new song" of praise for the Lamb (verse 10). They were joined by thousands and thousands of angels and every creature in heaven and earth worshipping the Lamb (verses 11-13). That brings us to chapter six of the book of Revelation in which the Lamb begins to open the seals of the scroll one by one.

To properly understand the scene of chapter six it is necessary to identify the Lamb. Throughout the book of Revelation, the Lamb is a reference to Jesus Christ who was sacrificed for the sins of the world. Jesus is referred to by the term "Lamb" in a number of passages in the New Testament. Jesus is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29, 36). Jesus is the silent Lamb in the face of suffering whose life was taken from the earth as prophesied by Isaiah and quoted by Philip to the Eunuch as he preached Jesus to him (Isaiah 53; Acts 8:33). It is by the blood of Christ "as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" that men and women may be cleansed of

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their sins (1 Peter 1:19). Yes, Jesus is the Lamb of God and as both the Lamb of God and the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5) He alone had the spiritual qualifications and the divine authority to loose the seven seals of the scroll and reveal its symbolic content.

What is represented by the scroll? Several different ideas have been advanced. J. T. Hinds writes that "the book contained symbolic visions of what was to come to pass; hence, revealed the destiny of the church and its enemies from that time till the end of the world" (John T. Hinds. *Commentary on Revelation*, Gospel Advocate Company: 1974). W. S. Willis writes, "In this book was written God's eternal plan for the church to be established on the earth, and for the redemption of fallen man" (W.S. Willis, *The Book of Revelation Revealed in The Great Drama*, The Manney Company, Forth Worth, TX: 1960). Another writes, "It is God's redemptive plan for the denouncement of human history, the overthrow of evil, and the gathering of a redeemed people" (George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1972). Wallace has perhaps the simplest and most accurate explanation of the scroll. He writes, "This book which was *written within and on the backside* contained the events which were depicted" (Foy E. Wallace, Jr. *The Book of Revelation*, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. Publications, Forth Worth, Texas: 1966).

The scroll was sealed with seven seals. Coffman writes, "Especially important documents were sealed with multiple seals; and the appearance of seven seals here indicates the inviolate nature of the document. (Burton Coffman, *Coffman's Bible Commentary*, Copyright © 1971-1993 by ACU Press, Abilene Christian University. All rights reserved). As each of the seven seals are opened or loosed by the Lamb a series of prophetic visions are observed and documented by John. The first four seals reveal what has been called "the four horsemen of the Apocalypse." The opening of the first seal reveals a rider on a white horse

who had a bow and was given a crown as he "came forth conquering, and to conquer" (Revelation 6:1). Many believe the rider of the white horse is a symbolic reference to Jesus Christ who engages in a righteous war against evil in the commissioning of His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel of salvation (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). As precious souls respond to the message of the gospel in obedience to what is commanded for salvation sin is conquered through the blood of Jesus Christ. This interpretation is much more consistent than others which have been set forth. Some among the premillennialists have interpreted the rider on the white horse as a reference to the so-called Anti-Christ. We must ask, "Why would the Anti-Christ, who is supposedly an evil world dictator and an arch enemy of Jesus Christ, be represented as riding on a **white** horse?" Every fan of westerns knows that the good guys ride white horses. Howard Winters writes, "Since it is totally unfitting for that which is white to be associated with evil, I conclude that this represents the church militant" (Howard Winters, *Commentary on Revelation*, ©1989 by Carolina Christian, pg. 87). The color of the horse is significant because white is symbolic of purity and holiness. It is also significant that in the entire book of Revelation white is never used of anything which is evil or impure. Consider these examples: The Lord's hair is pictured as being white suggesting purity (Revelation 1:14). Jesus Christ is pictured as sitting on a "white cloud" (Revelation 14:14). White robes or garments are used several times in the book to represent the purity of those who wear them (Revelation 3:18; 4:4; 7:9; 19:14). Finally, Revelation 20:11 describes the "great white throne" on which sat Him "from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." The one who rode the white horse in John's vision has absolutely no connection to the Premillennial Anti-Christ.

The commission given by Jesus to His apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel is still the mission of the church of Christ today. The church is the "pillar and

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ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). The church is to make known the "manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10). When a person responds to the commands of the gospel of Christ to hear (John 6:45), believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24; Mark 16:16), repent of sin (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), confess his or her faith in Christ (Romans 10:9-10) and is immersed into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and thus cleansed by the blood of Jesus (Acts 22:16) that person has experienced a tremendous spiritual victory. Satan has been defeated. The inspired Paul put it this way: "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37). Until the end of time the mission of the church is to go forth with the gospel conquering and to conquer under the marching orders of our Commander and Chief, Jesus Christ.

When the Lamb in John's vision opened the second seal another horse which was fiery red went out. The mission of this rider was to "take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword" (Revelation 6:4). Most all commentators agree that the picture of the rider on the red horse represents bloodshed, warfare or persecution. Wallace writes that the "great sword given to the rider of the red horse was not the sword of government, but the sword of persecution" (Foy E. Wallace, Jr. *The Book of Revelation*, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. Publications, Forth Worth, Texas: 1966, 145). Whether this refers to a specific time period or not, it is obvious that wars have been fought between nations in the past, they afflict people in the present and they will continue until the end of time. War is both devastating and tragic. Loss of human life, injury, starvation and destruction of property all result when war is waged. The book of Acts indicates that persecution by both Jews and the Romans afflicted the first century church beginning shortly after its establishment. Stephen became the first casualty of this spiritual war as he was stoned to death by Jews (Acts 7).

Followers of Jesus Christ had to flee their homes because of persecution. The Bible tells us "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:3-4). Persecution of one form or another continues even today against those who follow Jesus. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

When the third seal is opened a rider on a black horse with scales in his hands appears (Revelation 6:5-6). "The black horse and his rider represent gloom, sorrow, desolation, famine, poverty, and hunger (c.f. Jer. 14:2-5; Lam. 4:8-9; 5:10), as the remainder of this part of the vision clearly indicates" (Howard Winters, *Commentary on Revelation*, ©1989 by Carolina Christian, 89). With severe persecution, as pictured in the opening of the previous seal, the persecuted would certainly be subjected to the loss of their employment and the distress of being in want. The Apostle Paul described the results of the persecution he endured in the words "in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Corinthians 11:27).

As the Lamb opens the fourth seal a pale horse appears and the one who sat upon the pale horse was named Death and Hades followed him (Revelation 6:7-8). The pale horse and his rider clearly symbolize death. Hades is the destination between death and the Judgment of all who pass from this life. The symbol of the pale horse and its rider reminds us of the ways in which persecuted Christians were killed by their persecutors. Many were killed violently by the sword including James (Acts 12:1-3). Others were destroyed by wild beasts at the Colosseum in Rome among who was Ignatius who is said to have been a student of the Apostle John. Jesus predicted such persecution when He chose His twelve apostles.

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Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles . . . And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another... (Matthew 10:16-23).

Only God knows the number of precious souls down through the years of the existence of the Lord's church who gave their lives for their faithfulness to their Master.

As the fifth seal is opened by the Lamb John observes "the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held" (Revelation 6:9). These souls were crying to the Lord for justice to be meted out against the enemies of the Lord. However, they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer. God was in control and judgment against the enemies of the Lord was certain to be fulfilled in His time.

This picture of the souls under the altar reveals that the doctrine that man has no soul as taught by Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists and others is patently false. Man is a dual being with a physical outer man and a spiritual inward man (Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). Man has a soul or spirit which lives on after death, is conscious and will exist in eternity (Ecclesiastes 12:7; James 2:26; Luke 16:19-31; Hebrews 10:39). The picture of souls under the altar consciously pleading to the Lord for justice would be meaningless if man is nothing more than a physical body with no soul that lives on after death.

THE GREAT QUESTION

With the opening of the sixth seal the focus turns from the persecuted to the persecutors. The fulfillment of the justice for which the souls under the altar pleaded is described in frightening symbols. Some believe the figurative language in these verses describe the fall of the Roman Empire and others the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Premillennialists would apply these symbols to seven years of tribulation which according to their doctrine takes place before the final coming of Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom. The symbols of a great earthquake; the sun becoming black, the moon turning to blood, the stars of heaven falling, the sky receding as a scroll and every mountain and island being moved from its place are symbols of "catastrophic phenomenon like that used by Isaiah to predict the fall of Babylon and those allied against God's people" (Dan Winkler, *The Church at Home with God, A Study of Revelation*, Winkler Publications, Inc, Tuscaloosa, AL, 2006, 40). Those experiencing these fearful events, regardless of their standing in life, would attempt to hide in caves and their utter terror is seen in the statement, "and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:16). Whatever application may be made to the events described it is certain that one of the greatest questions which faces all of mankind is found in the words of verse seventeen: "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

THE DAY OF HIS WRATH

The exact phrase "the day of His wrath" is used two other times in the Bible. The book of Job contains words spoken by Zophar as he describes the result of one's choosing to live as a wicked man. "The increase of his house will depart, And his goods will flow away in the day of His wrath. This is the portion from God for a wicked man, The heritage appointed to him by God" (Job 20:28-29). The

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phrase is also found in the book of Psalms. "The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath" (Psalm 110:5). When is the day of His wrath? Both of these passages speak of the final judgment of sinners at the second coming of Christ.

The phrase "the day of wrath" is used four times in the Bible. "For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; They shall be brought out on the day of wrath" (Job 21:30). "Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, But righteousness delivers from death" (Proverbs 11:4). "That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness," (Zephaniah 1:15). "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds" (Romans 2:5-6). These passages all have a similar theme. The wrath of God is coming. The revelation of the righteous judgment of God cannot be stopped. The great question is who shall be able to stand in the face of God's wrath?

THOSE WHO SHALL NOT STAND-THE IMMORAL

When the day of wrath comes the immoral shall not stand. Immorality is a great plague of our present society which has reached epidemic proportions. The media glorify immoral actions at every opportunity. Our young people are constantly being bombarded with the view that those who teach what the Bible says about immodesty, dancing, drunkenness, cursing, and sex before marriage are old fashioned and out of touch with reality. In our modern society homosexuality is no longer viewed by many as a sin but only "an alternate lifestyle." Homosexual marriage is being more generally accepted. Divorce for any cause is widely accepted as is the remarriage of those divorced in violation of Matthew 19:9. Living together without being married is no longer fornication and sinful in the view of

many but is rather an accepted way of testing compatibility before marriage. The unmarried young person is told to go ahead and have sex but be sure you use protection. Pornography is a multi-billion dollar business which has destroyed marriages, ruined relationships and polluted the minds of even the very young. Sadly, even children with non-attentive parents have ready access to pornography on cable channels and over the internet. Yet, such filth is termed "adult entertainment" and is protected as freedom of speech.

The fact is that these views do not change the truth that the immoral shall not stand in the day of His wrath. Those who practice the works of the flesh shall not stand:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Those who live according to the flesh shall not stand: "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13). Those who sow to the flesh shall not stand: "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit shall reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:8). Those who practice and approve of homosexuality shall not stand:

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in

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their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. . . . who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. (Romans 1:26, 27, 32).

Those who divorce and remarry for a cause other than fornication shall not stand: "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). When the day of wrath comes, the immoral shall not stand!

THOSE WHO SHALL NOT STAND – FALSE RELIGIONS

When the day of wrath comes those who have embraced false religions shall not stand. One of the greatest spiritual tragedies of this present age is the multiplicity of man-made religions which have captivated the hearts and minds of so many sincere people. The belief that "one church is as good as another" and "we are all going to the same place just in different directions" is contradictory to the teaching of the Word of God. There is only one way to salvation. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus is not one of the ways to salvation He is the only way! Jesus built one church which is His spiritual kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19). The Lord adds the saved to His one church (Acts 2:47). The church is His spiritual body (Ephesians 1:22-23). There is one body (Ephesians 4:4). Thus, there is only one church which is acceptable to the Lord and which consists of every saved person this side of the cross. There are not many "faiths" equally acceptable to God for the Bible teaches that there is only "one faith" (Ephesians 4:5).

The question of "must one be a member of the church of Christ to be saved?" is answered in clear and certain

terms in the New Testament. The answer is a resounding yes! The Lord does not add the saved to any denominational church or other human religious organization. One must "join" such organizations by meeting the criteria their particular denomination or organization requires which often differs from other such denominations and organizations. The religious creeds, church manuals and confessions of faith of denominationalism fall into the category of "the doctrines and commandments of men" which are clearly condemned by Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 15:8-9). The plea of faithful churches of Christ to forsake the doctrines and commandments of men and return to the teaching of the New Testament as the final authority in all religious matters is as valid today as at any other time in the history of the world.

Does the church that Jesus built exist in the world today? Where ever the original uncontaminated seed of the gospel of Christ is planted in good and honest hearts, germinates and produces obedience to the requirements of Christ for salvation members of the church that Jesus built are the resulting harvest (Luke 8:11-15; Acts 2:37-41). The church that follows the divine pattern of the New Testament in the plan of salvation, organization, worship and mission of the church is the New Testament church just as surely as those whose record is found in the pages of the New Testament. Yes, there is only one true religion. Sadly, those who embrace a false religion will not stand in face of the wrath of Almighty God.

THOSE WHO SHALL NOT STAND – THE DISOBEDIENT

It was Jesus who spoke the words, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). The Hebrew writer declares that Jesus ". . . became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9). The inspired apostle Paul wrote that "those

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who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness" will experience "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil" (Romans 2:8-9). The church in Thessalonica was told that Jesus would come "with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8). With such statements before us it is obvious that we should not take the matter of obedience lightly. Yet, among many religious people, obedience to the commands of God is equated with an effort to earn ones salvation or be justified by one's own works. Thus, it is claimed, a command like baptism which requires one to physically be immersed in water, cannot be necessary to salvation for that would be depending upon one's own works and we are not saved by works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). Many mainline denominations have long held to the view that men are saved by "faith only" without any additional acts of obedience to God.

What is obedience? Obedience is simply submission to or compliance with a command. One who obeys God complies with what God has commanded. What has God commanded in order to receive the remission of sins? He has commanded faith in Christ (Acts 16:31; Mark 16:16). Is it the will of God that one believe? May one be saved without obeying the command to believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Let Jesus answer – "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). He has commanded repentance from sin (Acts 17:30). Is it the will of God that sinners repent? May one be saved without obeying the command to repent? Again, let Jesus answer – "I tell you no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish (Luke 13:3). He has commanded confession of one's faith in Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10). Is it the Father's will that one verbally confess his faith in Christ? May one be saved who refuses to obey the command to confess his faith

in Christ? Jesus answers, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33). He has also commanded baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 10:48). Is it the will of God that one be baptized? May one be saved who refuses to obey the command of the Lord to be baptized? Allow the Bible to answer – "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). To reach the cleansing blood of Jesus one must reach His death. One reaches the death of Jesus (and thus His blood) in obeying the command of baptism (Romans 6:3-5). God has commanded faithfulness of the saved (Revelation 2:10). Is it the Father's will that one live faithful? May one be saved who refuses to live faithful to God in his life (Hebrews 4:11; 2 Peter 1:5-10)? Let me remind our readers of the Lord's statement: "Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does the will of My Father in heaven**" (Matthew 7:21, emphasis added – JH). When the great day of His wrath has come, will those who refuse to obey what God has commanded for salvation and those who have failed to live faithfully as Christians be able to stand? We must answer in the negative!

THOSE WHO WILL BE ABLE TO STAND

Following the opening of the sixth seal in John's vision, he observes a numberless multitude dressed in white robes. One of the elders asks John who they were and from where they had come. John didn't have the answer but the elder did. The answer given was:

...These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are

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before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Revelation 7:9-17).

Depicted in this account are the saved from among all nations, kindreds, peoples and tongues gathered before the throne of God. The great truth illustrated by these words is that salvation is not limited to one nationality or those who speak the same language. God's grace has been extended to all who are willing to accept it (Titus 3:10-11). To have ones' robe washed white (symbolic of salvation and victory) requires contact with the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 1:5; Acts 22:16; Romans 5:8-9; 1 Peter 1:19). Those cleansed of their sins by the blood of Jesus will enjoy an eternal home in heaven praising God before His throne. All the trials and tribulations of this life, all the causes of sorrow, anxiety and pain, will have ended and only joy, peace and rest remain. Note also that these are the ones who "come out of the great tribulation" implying their faithful endurance. They come out in victory with their robes still white.

Consider again the thought provoking question: "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" The confident answer is "the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Dear reader, will you examine yourself by asking, "When the great day of His wrath has come, will I BE ABLE TO STAND?"

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Chapter 5

Propitiation & Atonement

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INTRODUCTION

There are many questions presented in the Word of God that provoke the thought processes. Such questions should cause us to pause and to give proper analysis and consideration to the question asked as well as to the answer that would be given. The question under consideration in this lesson was asked by the apostle Paul to the church at Corinth. "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:13; All Scripture quotations from the King James Version of the Bible.). The church at Corinth was established by Paul on his second missionary journey as recorded in Acts 18. Unfortunately the Lord's church at Corinth had become infected with the evils which surrounded it in a licentious city. It is apparent that Apollos, an eloquent Christian, had come to Corinth and had captured the imaginations of the Christians there. This fact led to the drawing of comparisons between him, with his oratory skills, and other religious leaders. This was especially to the discredit of the apostle Paul, whose bodily appearance, as well as his oratory skills, seem not to have been impressive. We find recorded in the second epistle to the Corinthian congregation concerning Paul, "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech

contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10). Simply stated, it appears that the Christians at Corinth were guilty of the sin of "preacheritis." This prompted Paul to ask this all important question, rhetorical in nature, to provoke their thinking. It is obvious to them what the appropriate answer to such a series of questions would be. No, Christ is not divided. No, Paul was not crucified for them. Their baptism, if correct, would have been in the name of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It was the desire of Paul to purify the church from partyism and immorality, which was one of the primary purposes of his writing this epistle. Bert Thompson noted:

The epistle makes clear that there are serious problems in the Corinthian church. The church is, in fact, in a most distressing situation, being divided into factions, disturbed by party cries, with some being openly immoral while others dragged themselves and their Christian neighbors before heathen courts...Paul wrote this epistle with the intent of awakening these brethren to the seriousness of their problem, and of effecting their repentance. (Thompson, "An Introduction" *Studies In 1 Corinthians*, 21)

TEXT AND CONTEXT

As in all cases concerning the Word of God, the text must stay within the context, or it becomes a pretext. To fully understand and make proper application of the point that Paul was striving to drive home with his series of rhetorical questions asked in verse thirteen, we must begin at verse 10 where we read:

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and

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in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chlo'e, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:10-12)

In his epistle, Paul immediately addresses the most important and crucial issue facing the church at Corinth at the time. Note that Paul's plea is in "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" indicating the authority by which he writes. Recall that sometime later, Paul would write to the Christians that were at Colossae, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Colossians 3:17). Then, as well as today, all that we do as God's people, we do only by the authority given to us through His Word and established by His Son Jesus Christ. Anything else, or by any other authority, is to go beyond the parameters Christ has set for us.

It is by Paul's exhortation and through "Christ's authority" that these Christians "speak the same thing." How confusing it must be to hear something being taught from the Holy Scriptures by one individual, and yet to hear something conflicting or contradictory taught by another. We would certainly conclude that such individuals are not on the same page, much less "speaking the same thing." Unity among individuals comes through a sameness of mind, purpose, goal, and plan. Such unity was displayed between Jesus Christ and His Heavenly Father. Noted in more detail later in this lesson, Jesus and His Father embodied this very idea. Observe the very words of Christ, "I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John 5:30). Jesus later states, "I speak that which I have seen with My Father" (John 8:38). "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). Also John 12:49-

50, "For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." Thus we can repeatedly discern the idea that Christ sought in every way to do and to accomplish the will of His Father in heaven.

This is what Paul was urging when he commanded for them to "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." When a skilled woodworker uses joinery, such as dovetailing, to join together two pieces of wood seamlessly, it is very beautiful to behold. When united correctly, such well built joints are not just stunning, but also extremely strong. The same could be said of the unity between Christ and His Father, and the unity that can exist between Christians. It is, as we sometimes sing the song, "the tie that binds." The Gospel of Christ is what gives us the unity of mind and judgment and also strengthens us in our faith.

We then note that it was reported to Paul by the household of Chloe that there were "contentions among" them. We have no further information of who Chloe was, as she is not mentioned prior to this event, nor after. Yet we can logically conclude that she was a devoted Christian who had enough love and concern for her fellow Christians to write to Paul about the contentions that arose at Corinth. Contentions in the text is from the Greek word *eris* which conveys the idea of "uncertain affinity; a quarrel, that is, (by implication) *wrangling*: - contention, debate, strife, variance" (Strong's, 2054; *Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, 32). Imagine, the Christians of Corinth were wrangling, debating and quarreling with one another over who they would follow; accordingly, they were divided! Brother Hugo McCord noted, "When God's people are guilty of strife (*eris*, contention, wrangling) they are not contending for the faith, but for an argument. It is one thing

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to stand up for Jesus, and to support His cause to a martyr's death, but it is quite another matter to argue to a split for one's private interpretation of a verse of scripture" (McCord, "Unity Among Brethren," *Studies In 1 Corinthians*, 29). Therefore, it became necessary for Paul to write and rebuke them for their dissensions. We should note carefully that Paul indicts all of the members of that congregation when he wrote, "that every one of you saith." This disunity was not constrained to just one or two members; the deadly virus of division had spread and infected the entire congregation. Such a virus, if left unchecked, would inevitably destroy the body of Christ.

The degree to which the division had spread is demonstrated by the fact that some were following after Paul, some after Apollos, some after Cephas, or Peter, and some after Christ. Obviously, Paul's intention is to lead these brethren to see the destructive nature of such division. Even within this epistle Paul would later write, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul did not want them to follow him as a man, but was in essence saying, "Do not follow after me because of who I am, but follow me in the same way that I am following Christ." They were to follow after Christ and not after a man or the teachings of a man! Prior to this Paul made this point, "Even as I please all men in all things, **not seeking mine own profit**, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:33; emphasis added-SRC). Paul was in no way seeking his own self-exaltation, but to bring many to salvation through Jesus Christ. Paul is to be commended for encouraging the brethren to follow after Christ and Christ only. Many modern day denominational preachers could learn a valuable lesson from Paul's example, as repeatedly members of a congregation will follow after a man and his teachings and not after Christ. All too often the preachers of such congregations, perhaps without realization, promote such behavior.

This brings us to the main text of the lesson, where Paul asked the poignant, rhetorical question, "Is Christ divided?" Brother Michael Shepherd states it thus:

This query was first raised by the apostle Paul and directed to a divided congregation – the Corinthian church. What Paul addresses with the brethren at Corinth should have put this question to rest. This is really a rhetorical question in that it contains a built-in answer. (Shepherd, "Is Christ Divided?" *Bellview Lectures*, 350)

When considered in light of the question Paul presents, the only obvious conclusion for the brethren at Corinth is that Christ is certainly not divided. Paul's thrust in asking this question is to stimulate their thinking and to bring them to the realization that they were not to follow after anyone else but Christ. Again Brother Shepherd noted:

This question is especially appropriate and even challenging today in view of the existence of thousands of religious sects, cults, doctrines, and denominations that are in the world today. It is interesting that all of these religious persuasions claim to be various ways of getting to heaven, yet they are so different: different names; different ways of worship; different in organization; different days of worship; different men started them. (Shepherd, 349)

WHAT CHRIST AND THE BIBLE TEACH CONCERNING UNITY

What is unfortunate in the religious world today is that many fail to see the truth of the Bible's teaching on division.

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The apostle Paul would write to a large extent concerning the "one body" which is in Christ. In his letter to the Christians at Rome, Paul in speaking of the spiritual gifts imparted to them reminds them of that fact that there is only one body. Note: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:4-5). Paul makes this same point in 1 Corinthians 12, writing about the spiritual gifts given and the resulting unity that should exist. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). What follows is a comparison of the proper unity of the human body to the unity that should exist within the spiritual body, the church. "But now are they many members, yet but one body" (1 Corinthians 12:20). He furthers the thought by saying, "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another...Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Corinthians 12:25, 27). Brother Hugo McCord observed, "Paul used various terms that Christians at Corinth might understand their relationship with one another. As regards their being part one of another he described them as being members of a body. But the description used more than any other was that they were members of the same family, and thus were brothers" (McCord, 23).

It is clear from the teaching of the Bible that the unity of God's people, the church, is to be upheld and that division is condemned. After identifying the church as being the body in Ephesians 1:22-23, Paul wrote, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:4-5). This

should be abundantly clear that there is only one church that has God's approval. Therefore every "church" or religious institution, which has been brought into existence by the ideas, plans and thinking of men is in opposition with that one church. No man has the authority to start a church of his own. Jesus clearly stated, "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13).

God's Word clearly condemns division, contentions, strife, even sectarianism. Within his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul rebukes them for their divisiveness:

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. (1 Corinthians 3:3-6)

Earlier in writing to the Christians at Galatia, Paul listed among the "works of the flesh...factions, divisions, parties (heresies)" (Galatians 5:20). As such, Paul commanded the first century Christians to avoid those who would cause divisions. He warned, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). Those who would cause divisions, "contrary to the doctrine" were to be marked and shunned. James informs us of the consequence of division, "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16).

What is often referred to as the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9ff) is actually the "model prayer" by which Jesus was

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teaching His disciples how to pray. In John chapter seventeen we find what is in actuality the Lord's Prayer. Within this prayer we can truly and accurately observe the unity that existed between our Savior and His Heavenly Father. Note Jesus states, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him" (John 17:2). Brother Marvin Weir noted, "The first person of the Godhead gives 'authority over all flesh' to the second person of the Godhead. The authority belonging exclusively to Christ should forever settle any argument over compliance with the conditions of salvation" (Weir, *The Prayer of Jesus, Studies In John*, 272-273). This correlates with the statement Jesus would make after His death and just before His ascension to heaven, "All power (authority) is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Therefore, Jesus has all authority in all matters of religion. Who are we to question Christ's authority? Yet those who would follow after man-made creeds, disciplines, and other divisive inventions of mankind have disregarded His authority and are promoting division and will be condemned. We must follow after Christ and no other in matters of religion. As Peter stated "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Only those who fully comply with the conditions of salvation as set forth by Christ will receive eternal life. All others will be condemned.

Let us note the unity that Christ prays for among believers:

That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast send Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that

Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me. (John 17:21-23)

Brother Guy N. Woods noted:

The object of this prayer was that all of His disciples should be one; and the unity He desired for them finds its model in that close and indissoluble union obtaining between Himself and His Father. This unity for which He so earnestly prayed in the shadow of the cross was not for unity of opinion or of organization alone, though these are certainly included; but for unity of faith, of practice, of aim, of purpose and of love. Such unity can be realized only when men of good will come to recognize Jesus as the only sovereign of His realm, the head of the church and the executor of His will on earth. (Woods, *A Commentary on The Gospel According to John*, 363-364)

The unity for which Jesus prayed would come only through the conversion of the world by the Gospel. The largest obstacle to the conversion of all mankind is disunity which exists in the religious world. Many persist in perpetuating division by maintaining and following after a man-made organization under the mistaken guise of following after Christ. Agreeing to disagree over matters of doctrine is not unity. Yet many fail to see, or understand, the division such thinking causes. Brother Weir noted:

One could not rebel against the Lord's prayer for unity more than when he chooses to support and encourage denominationalism. Denominations disagree on matters of faith and doctrine, which is the very reason they exist! Folks would rather do it "their way" than the "Lord's way," and denominations accommodate this rebellious spirit.

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The Lord prayed for unity so "the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." The tragic reality today is that religious division is the greatest stumbling-block to the proclamation of the Gospel and man's salvation. The "attend the church of your choice" slogan does not come from the mind of God but from the mind of man. (Weir, 281)

CONCLUSION

It is clear that unity is not only desirable but is absolutely necessary if we are to be pleasing to God. Paul besought the brethren at Corinth that they should all "speak the same thing" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Jesus prayed to the Father that He would keep His disciples "in Thy Name" in order "that they may be one" even as He and the Father are one (John 17:11-21). Paul clearly taught that although there are many members individually, there is only one body, and as such unity must exist in that one body. In John 8:32, Jesus stated, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." All who learn and obey the truth will be truly united in the same mind and in the same judgment.

The apostle Peter wrote, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in **obeying the truth through the Spirit** unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:22-23; emphasis added-SRC). As Paul taught concerning oneness or unity, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Furthermore, he reminds us in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Thus by learning and obeying the truth as it has been clearly put forth in God's Word, one can be certain that they are a member of the church for which Christ died.

The Bible makes it obvious that men can learn and live according to the truth, as the early disciples were able to do so. They were all obedient to the same doctrine, the Gospel of Christ, the faith.

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Chapter 6: What Shall A Man Give In Exchange?

Chapter 6

What Shall A Man Give In Exchange for His Soul?

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INTRODUCTION

Most agree that the second chapter of Acts is the "hub of the Bible." If one were to choose the "hub of Matthew," it would most certainly be the sixteenth chapter. In this single chapter of the Bible is found the greatest question, "...Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" (Matthew 16:13). Then following this question Jesus asks, "...But who do you say that I am?" (16:15). The greatest confession is found in this pinnacle passage, "...You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:16). The great blessing is received, "...Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (16:17). The greatest assurance is given, "...I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (16:18). The great promise is made, "And I will

give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (16:19) (Connally, 456-57). The greatest tragedy is foretold as Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer (16:21). The chapter then draws to a conclusion with the greatest challenge ever given: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (16:24). Jesus challenges His followers to deny themselves and follow Him. He does not, however, leave them without good reason for accepting this challenge. In fact, He assures them that accepting and accomplishing this challenge will save their souls! This challenge then is both logical and rewarding (16:27).

Encapsulated in this challenge and promise of reward is perhaps the greatest reminder for mankind: "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (16:26). The greatness of the question is not in its difficulty to answer. In fact little children can answer it. What good does it do a man to gain the whole world, but lose his soul in the end? Nothing! What will a man give in exchange for his soul? Again, any reasonable person can answer the question *verbally*. The greatness in the question is found in the reminder it gives to every human being who strives to live a godly life. It shows the vast difference between "the things of God" and the "things of men" of which Jesus spoke to Peter (16:23). The questions Jesus asked beg the answer: Always mind the things of God! In order to get the full impact of this great reminder, it is imperative to understand the two polar opposites, the things of men and the things of God. After understanding the differences, one should be able to answer Jesus' questions, not only intellectually, but also spiritually.

THE THINGS OF GOD

From this pivotal passage through the remainder of the book Jesus begins preparing His disciples for the cross and everything associated with it. "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He **must** go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day" (Matthew 16:21, *emph. added MER*). Peter did not like this kind of talk in the slightest: "Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to you! But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of **the things of God, but the things of men**'" (Matthew 16:22-23, *emph. added MER*).

It is essential to see the "must" in the things of God, i.e. Jesus **must** go to Jerusalem. The "must" in the things of God is further implied in the remainder of the verse: He **must** suffer many things, He **must** be killed, and He **must** be raised the third day (Morgan, 217). Peter rejected this kind of talk because in his mind if Jesus only eliminated the first statement concerning going to Jerusalem then the rest could also be avoided. To Peter, Jerusalem should be the last place his Master should go, because that is where the hatred of Jesus was the strongest. To Jesus, however, it was where His whole purpose in coming would culminate.

Although this may have been the first time the disciples of Jesus heard His plans of going to Jerusalem; it was not the first time Jesus had contemplated it, and this is where "the things of God" are beautifully seen. When Jesus made the statement that He must go Jerusalem and suffer all these things, He was not simply talking of being dedicated to an ideal in a strictly human way. "He spoke with the force of His ageless life; the Divine and eternal counsels of God were operating in Him and through Him, and driving Him along that pathway" (Campbell, 218). In other words, God does not view a problem in the same way men do. He is able to see the beginning, middle, and ending of the

problem and solution. Before God even made man, He already had a plan to save their souls:

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, **which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God** who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, **according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Ephesians 3:8-11, emph. added MER).

While it is the case that Peter did not understand this concept fully when he rebuked Jesus; he would later understand and preach it to the Jews at Pentecost:

Him, being delivered by the **determined purpose and foreknowledge of God**, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it (Acts 2:23-24, emph. added, MER).

The "things of God" are never decided on a whim. Decisions are never made without every single fact being considered, whether past, present or future. When Jesus said, "I must go to Jerusalem;" He said it knowing what the outcome would be. He would go to Jerusalem. He would suffer many things. He would be killed. And He would be raised the third day! Not because He had no choice in the matter, for indeed He did: "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53). But the

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"things of God" had already been determined, prophesied, and He must carry them out: "How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it **must** happen thus" (Matthew 26:54, emph. added MER). God's greatest desire was to do what was best, not for Himself, but for His creation. And He made this decision before He even created man. These are the things of God.

THE THINGS OF MEN

While the words of Jesus in Matthew 16 beautifully describe "the things of God," Peter unintentionally gives an adequate example of "the things of men." After Jesus began to tell His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer, Peter offered a rebuttal: "Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!'" (Matthew 16:22). Jesus said, "I must!" Peter said, "You must not!" Something had to give.

Peter did not see the ultimate purpose of Christ, even after having just confessed Him as the Son of God. He lived only in the immediate moment, which is the way of men without God. Peter was thinking only of avoiding the punishment of Christ without giving thought to all the Scriptures that pointed to this point. He was not remembering the promise God made that the Seed's heel would be bruised (Genesis 3:15). He did not contemplate what Isaiah said of the Suffering Servant: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our people was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Peter did not recall any of this when he rebuked the Savior; he only saw the "here and now." Morgan succinctly shows the folly of this:

No man can live this hour unless he feels behind him the infinite movement of the ages gone, and before him the infinite pull of the ages unborn. If we live in

the power of the things unseen we march to certain victory. Peter, in his letter, subsequently referred to those who see only the things which are near, having forgotten the cleansing. Near-sightedness! Peter was suffering from it at this point. He did not hear the music of the past; did not see the light of the future; his was the limited outlook and therefore the present was misunderstood. And this was the attitude of all the disciples. They feared the present and that because of the enthronement of self. They were living for self, they were considering self (Morgan, 218).

Satan thrives on trying to get the followers of Christ off their main goal and purpose. In fact, this is his greatest and most dastardly trick! Think of the times when you, dear reader, have stumbled and fallen. Was it not because you took your eyes off the goal? When man forgets what brought him to Christ; that longing for something greater; the desire to have his sins washed away; the opportunity to start all over in his relationship to Almighty God. When man forgets where he has been there is trouble. When men forget where they are going; when they forget that for which they are reaching; when they take their minds off of heaven they are surely ready to fall. Peter forgot his place in relationship to Christ, and for this he was rebuked.

While Jesus' rebuke to Peter was sharp and pointed, "Get behind Me, Satan!" there was also kindness and compassion shown by our Lord. He did not say, "Get thee hence," as He had previously said to Satan (Matthew 4:10). Peter was instructed to get back behind Jesus where he belonged; in other words, he was commanded to forsake his role as instructor and resume that of a follower (Coffman, 257). Peter stepped in front of Christ, and for a moment took the lead implying that Christ should follow him. Jesus reminded him that He (Jesus) is God, and Peter was His creation. This was not the only time Peter needed to be

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reminded of this. Peter took the lead when he told Christ that He would never wash his feet! Jesus tenderly told him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me (John 13:8). Peter took the lead when he stepped in front of Christ and cut off the ear of Malchus (Matthew 26:51; John 18:10). Jesus tenderly reminded Peter that He did not need His help on this occasion and healed Malchus. Peter often thought he had a better plan than the plan of God. Peter's plan seemingly was for Jesus to avoid Jerusalem, avoid the cross, and stay on the earth forever. Peter's plan may have been better for the immediate situation, but it would have cost him his soul in the end if Jesus did not die for him.

Truth be told, all have been guilty of Peter's transgression. All have stepped out of their God-given role and assumed the lead. Whether they consciously thought this or not; this is exactly what men do when they stop following God. Men say to God, "My ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts!" "God, I believe my plan for happiness and fulfillment for my life is better than your plan." This is being mindful of the things of men, and just like Peter, it will cost a man his soul unless he gets back in his rightful place behind Christ.

THE WAY OF SALVATION

Deny Self

After Jesus' rebuke of Peter, He turns His attention to the other disciples gathered there, and told them: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Herein lies the *secret* of learning how to leave "the things of men" behind. A man must learn to deny self. Even in the church there are many that do not understand the meaning of self-denial. Many believe that they must always have a furrow in their brow, and harshness to nearly everything pleasurable. This goes all the way back to the ideal of the Ascetics of the Middle Ages who thought that living the life

of a hermit, and punishing oneself would bring them closer to God. They deprived themselves of the joy of fellowship, families, recreation and more in the hopes that this would make them more spiritual. God does not desire that this life be miserable for His people. On the contrary, Jesus came so that we could live an abundant life (John 10:10). When one denies self in the way that Jesus commands him, he really loses nothing at all that is good for him. He denies things that only bring temporary satisfaction, but end in ruin. Denying self will make a Christian a better spouse, parent, church member, and much more. And all of these things make this earthly life worth living.

Follow Me

The only way a Christian can know he is minding the things of God is to follow Christ. This is the Christian's purpose; this is his all! The Christian must cooperate with the purpose of Almighty God. Whatever it takes! Does this mean he must sometimes suffer? Does it mean that the way may be hard at times? Perhaps so, but the only way to follow Christ is to fully surrender to Him. Not just by word, but also by deed. A complete surrender to His will.

Jesus had to rebuke Peter at times, but Peter learned the lessons that Jesus taught. Peter cooperated in the purpose of God, and gave himself wholly to His purpose. This is beautifully portrayed in an occasion just before Jesus' ascension into heaven. Jesus asked Peter of his love for Him three times (the same number of times Peter denied him), and listened as Peter proclaimed his love for Jesus: "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You" (John 21:17). After this Jesus told Peter:

Most assuredly I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish (John 21:18).

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Then the very next verse tells the reader what it is all about: "This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, **'Follow Me'**" (John 21:19, emph. added MER). Oh how Peter heeded those words and took them to his heart! Peter dedicated the remainder of his life wholly giving himself to "the things of God" and if secular history is right (and we have no reason to doubt it), Peter was crucified upside down because he would not deny his Lord (Eusebius, 129). Whatever it takes!

Most Christians will never have to face what Peter faced for following Christ, but must still be willing to "fight the fight, finish the race, and keep the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Wherever the words of Jesus, revealed in the Bible, lead us, we must be willing to follow in regards to salvation, the church, doctrine, discipline, everything...no matter what!

The Value of the Soul

The close of the chapter shows the importance of everything discussed when Jesus tells the reader what is at stake:

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or, what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works (Matthew 16:26-27).

This question concludes all the previous statements of Jesus regarding the things of God. Why should a man focus his attention always on the things of God? The answer is given in the question Jesus asks: "Why shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The obvious answer is nothing! Even if he could somehow gain all the riches in the entire world, it would still not be worth losing his soul! What is

seventy-five years (the average lifespan) compared to eternity? The soul continues to live after this life is over.

Further, our soul was made in the image of Almighty God (Genesis 1:26-27). God does not have a physical body like ours, so it must be the soul that is made in His image. We get our physical body from the genetics of our parents, and much of who we are depends on the DNA dealt to us although we can change it a little by diet, exercise, and maybe even surgery (Copeland). The soul, however, is unique because we have a special ability to shape it when we mind the things of God.

Still further, the soul is priceless because of the cost required to redeem it. Before a person answers Jesus' question, it would be good to answer this one: What did Jesus give in exchange for **my** soul? "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Jesus literally gave Himself! If my soul was important enough for Jesus to leave the glory of heaven, take on flesh and be subject to the things of this earth, then my soul must be of the greatest importance.

Unfortunately, many exchange their soul everyday for things that bring only fleeting fun. Just think of some of the reasons people leave the church. Some leave for "greener grasses" of false religion. They marry someone who attends a denomination and give up the Lord to keep "peace" in the home. Rather than standing for the truth, or not marrying a non-Christian in the first place, they tuck their tails and consent. Others leave the Lord for the pleasures of sin. Even if they attend every service of the church, they still live a worldly life and never fully commit to the Lord. As the slogan goes, "To be almost saved is to be totally lost." To be partially faithful is to be totally unfaithful. Still others exchange their souls through simple laziness (Copeland). They deem the gospel too difficult to follow and view the

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law of Christ as a burden rather than a help. They forget that the law is there to protect us and to give us a happy life. Whatever the exchange rate, one never comes out ahead when he gives up on his soul.

CONCLUSION

Jesus closes this chapter with the motivation His followers need to "keep on keeping on": "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works (Matthew 16:27). Why should a man forsake the "things of men" and be mindful of the "things of God?" Why should a man deny himself and follow Christ? Because Jesus will come in the glory of His Father and will reward each according to his works! For those who overcome the world they will exchange earth's trash for heaven's treasure. Jesus promises it, and He cannot lie!

Self-examination is a wonderful thing. It can help catch early diseases in the flesh, but even more, it can help catch spiritual disease. After studying this great chapter of the Bible it would do each person well to ask himself the question: "Am I minding the things of God?" If the answer is no, think of what is holding you back and ask yourself one last question: "Is it worth exchanging my soul for it?"

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Chapter 7

Who Then Can Be Saved

John Daniels

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Our lesson text is an interesting and instructive account of the Lord's conversation with the rich young ruler. The young man asked Christ about how he might obtain eternal life, and was given an immediate and clear reply. The conditions named by the Lord involved more than the young man wanted to do, and he, accordingly, turned away in sorrow.

This is a timely question and may, apart from its immediate context, furnish the basis for some needed instruction regarding salvation and those entitled to enjoy its blessings.

We are all on a spiritual journey. Regarding earthly destinations there are many ways open to man. There are many different modes of travel and many different routes. Some routes are better than others (i.e., Interstate Highway System vs. auxiliary routes).

Some means of travel are more satisfactory, such as, airplanes, buses, or automobiles. Yet while traveling different routes and using diverse means, even unsatisfactory ones, we all will eventually arrive at our destination.

However, even in earth bound travel there are some modes and routes that will not achieve our desired end. I suppose a man could set out from here for the West Coast on a burro, but even he couldn't get there by going east!

As to the destination of our spiritual journey the Bible declares that man has only two routes from which to choose, or to follow. One is strait or the narrow way which leads to life or eternal salvation. The other is the wide or the broad way which leads to death or eternal damnation.

Concerning the strait or the narrow way leading to life, Jesus gives a command with reasons for doing so, and then makes a startling, and to some, an almost unbelievable, statement: "Few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). This implies that many will not find it. This is difficult for many to accept and few truly do believe it.

Hypothetically, according to the "Parable of the Sower," only one out of four will receive the Word of God into good ground. In this parable the ground is the mind of man and it must be cultivated properly before it can successfully receive seed, which is the Word (Luke 8:11). Also, in the parable of "The Ten Virgins," hypothetically only half of the church will be prepared for the coming of the bridegroom. Time after time in Scripture, we see that not all will be saved regardless of what our "Universalist" friends think.

In our text, Matthew 19:25, after explaining to the apostles of the difficulty a rich man will have in entering the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:24), Jesus is saying that not everyone will be saved, i.e., "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Evidently, the apostles had some difficulty understanding the fact that not all Israel would be saved for Scripture says, "...they were exceedingly amazed..." when they heard these words from the mouth of the one who "...came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Let us consider some reasons why not everyone will be saved:

NOT ALL WILL BE SAVED BUT IT IS NOT BECAUSE MOST HAVE BEEN PREDESTINATED TO ETERNAL DESTRUCTION

I like referring to this as Hyper-Calvinism. "That independent of the foreseen merits of the one, or the foreseen sin of the other but solely in fulfillment of his sovereign purpose or decree he elected some to salvation and predestinated others to destruction" (John Calvin).

Note the system of Calvinism:

- (1) T – Total depravity
- (2) U - Unconditional election
- (3) L – Limited atonement
- (4) I – Irresistible grace
- (5) P – Perseverance and preservation of the saints

Have you ever heard anyone say "He literally whipped me into line. I was literally black and blue all over before the Lord finished with me." This has given rise to the following summation: If you don't have "it," you can't get "it". If you get "it," you can't lose "it." If you lose "it," you never had "it."

Here we need to exercise a little caution. Not all professed Calvinists are hyper-Calvinists; there are "shades" and "degrees" of Calvinism, but they all have one thing in common – one thing that is peculiar to Calvinism: the doctrine of the imputation of Jesus Christ's personal righteousness to the believer. They may disagree among themselves over the T-U-L-I-P doctrine, with some holding to all of it and others only a part of it.

The following logical consequence of the Calvinistic TULIP doctrine will show how false and damnable such a doctrine is. If that doctrine be true: a.) It casts a reflection on the mercy and goodness of God and makes God wholly responsible for the many not finding the way, hence responsible for their damnation. The Calvinists deny this, but doctrine teaches it. But what does the doctrine of Christ teach? "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God

our Savior, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Timothy 2:3-6). Also, Peter penned these words: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). b.) It makes the Lord's exhortation "enter ye in at the strait gate" pointless. (1) For the "non-elect" couldn't enter if they wanted to, and (2) the "elect" are already in the narrow way, or will be when the Lord gets ready for them, with no possible way they can resist His call. c.) It makes the gospel and the preaching of it useless as far as saving men either here or hereafter. Does not the following Scripture give us the proper understanding: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you which also ye have received and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21).

The theory of Calvinism makes godly living unnecessary to one's salvation, for once saved, you can't be lost. In other words, sins do not condemn the saved. Even Paul was concerned about become a castaway in 1 Corinthians 9:27. This theory logically places Christ's work in opposition to God' decree in Luke 19:10. It also logically declares that man is in no way responsible for his final destiny (Acts 2:40; Philippians 2:12; Revelation 22:14, 18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:10, 20; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

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Why preach the gospel at all if hyper-Calvinism be true? Fortunately it is not true. Christ died for all (Hebrews 2:9). The gospel is for all, not just for the few (John 3:16; Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:46-47). He invites all to come and be saved (Matthew 11:28-30; Revelation 22:17). We can reject or accept His invitation (John 5:39-40).

ALL WILL NOT BE SAVED BUT IT IS NOT BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT KNOW HOW TO ENTER:

Can you imagine the Lord saying "enter," and then making it so complicated man cannot know how to enter? Such would be a reflection on God's character, His power or His intelligence, or all three. There is no way God, who is all-powerful, all-wise, and full of mercy, would require entrance by a certain way, as He had done, and then make the way of entrance so complicated and mysterious that an accountable person could not know how to enter it, or how to follow it after entering it.

There is not one thing that directs man into that way that he cannot understand, if he will try. Neither is there one thing that directs man how to live in that way that he cannot understand if he will try. This is proof that "any man" can know and do God's will is given in scripture: "...Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). Also consider, John 7:17; 8:32; 13:17; Ephesians 5:17; 3:3-9; Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; Romans 6:16-18.

NOT ALL WILL BE SAVED BECAUSE WE FAIL TO SHOW THEM THE WAY:

Some seem to think that only preachers, elders, deacons and Bible class teachers are obligated to teach others. The Bible obligates all who have the ability and the opportunity to do it. The gospel was to be carried to the world by the chosen apostles of Christ (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Romans 1:14-15; 1 Corinthians 9:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20;

cf. Colossians 1:23). They were special messengers. They had a special mission. They enjoyed special providence.

While we are not special messengers on a special mission, and though we are not ambassadors of Christ, as were the apostles, we are obligated to teach the Word to all, whenever and wherever we have the opportunity (2 Timothy 2:1-2; cf. Hebrews 5:10-14; 1 Timothy 4:16; Acts 21:28; 8:4, 11-19; 18:24-28; Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:24; Jude 3; 1 Peter 3:15). What a power it would be if the whole church became involved in teaching the Word of God every time an opportunity presented itself! Let us not use our text as an excuse for our own indifference! The one who needs to be taught the gospel has as much obligation to search for it, learn it, believe it, and obey it as we do to take it to them. God will hold them accountable for their unbelief, but He will charge their blood against us (Ezekiel 33:6; Jeremiah 6:17-19; Hebrews 13:17).

**NOT ALL WILL BE SAVED BECAUSE SOME FAIL TO
ENTER DUE TO PREJUDICE:**

Many have heard the gospel, but their prejudice prevents their accepting and obeying it. What is prejudice? It is "pre-judgment without due examination." (Webster). It may be either in favor of or opposed to. "In religion prejudice amounts to an opinion usually unfavorable formed before a careful examination." It is a serious evil which causes disrespect, anger and mockery (Acts 7:57; 17:32; 22:22). It will close one's eyes against the truth (Matthew 13:15). It makes men dishonest (Matthew 28:11-15). It is what crucified Christ (Matthew 27:19-25).

Notice some present day examples of prejudice: a.) "What's good enough for my parents is good enough for me." It should be, "What the Lord authorizes in His Word is all I want." b.) "If my parents didn't go to heaven then I don't want to go." If your parents are lost, they must feel as did "the rich man" in Luke 16:27-31. You have a very low opinion of your parents if you think they want you to be in

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torment with them. Why would you think that being lost in hell with your parents testifies of your love or honors their parentage? c.) "It makes no difference." People who know and believe the Bible would never say this. Would you say this about the automobile you would buy? How about the doctor you use to operate on your spouse or child. d.) "Water salvation, water dogs, tadpoles, mosquito, water is not the savior, there is no power in the water." The Baptist preacher who said to Curtis Porter: "Only two things are born of water – tadpoles and mosquitoes." Porter said, "Since you can't be a Baptist without being born of water, which one are you: tadpole or mosquito?" e.) "Anyone who says you must be baptized to be saved is a liar, or is preaching a lie." To make such a statement one assumes the burden of proof to demonstrate the lie.

NOT ALL WILL BE SAVED BECAUSE THEY FOLLOW A PREACHER, THEIR PARENTS OR THE MAJORITY:

There are many false prophets gone out into the world disguised as gospel preachers (2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 2:17; 4:1-4; 2 Peter 2:1-2). We are to "try the spirits" (1 John 4:1). We dare not love parents more than the Lord (Matthew 10:37). The Bereans in Acts 17:11-12, were commended for investigating. If we fail to investigate, we are no different than the blind leading the blind and both falling into the ditch (Matthew 15:14).

If you follow the majority you are seeking the most popular way, not the Lord's. In this case you are following the broad way to destruction. If you followed the majority in times past you would have perished in the flood. You would have been destroyed in the calamity of Sodom. Your body would have perished in the wilderness. The truth is that few will be saved (Luke 13:23-27).

**NOT ALL WILL BE SAVED BECAUSE SOME TRY TO
ENTER WITH THE WORLD ON THEIR BACKS:**

These individuals have a divided interest; they try to love the world and the Lord at the same time.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the list of the eyes, and the pride of life, in not of the father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the list thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (1 John 2:15-17)

My friends, the gate is too narrow to enter carrying the world, or any part thereof. All of it must be left outside. This was the tragedy of the "rich young ruler" (Matthew 19:22).

You will notice that in our text Jesus did not say a rich man could not be saved, "...but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). What is difficult is for one to escape the corruption that generally goes along with riches. We must escape the corruption of the world in order to enter the eternal kingdom. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

Who then can be saved? One who is willing to obey the Christ (Hebrews 5:8-9), by doing the will of God (Matthew 7:21). Provisions have been made for the salvation of everyone, and every effort that divine ingenuity can devise is being made to bring men to that salvation (See Hebrews 2:9; Titus 2:11; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 10:34-35; John 3:36).

It frequently happens that someone claims that he has difficulty in understanding certain things which are found in the Bible, and that is used as an excuse for not accepting the Lord's plan of salvation. It is true that there are things in the Bible which are hard to understand, but as a rule they

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are not involved in man's duty to God. If the people who are using those difficult passages as an excuse for not obeying the Lord's will look into their own hearts, and be fair with themselves and the Lord, the probability is that they will find that the real reason for their attitude toward accepting the truth is not the difficulties of which they speak, but the fact that there is something in their lives which does not please the Lord, and which they do not want to give up.

Obedience, in the final analysis of the term, is that which brings God and man together. Man's separation from God was brought about by disobedience (cf. Isaiah 59:1-2), and the only way that that condition can be nullified is by the obedience which God requires, in and through Christ. This is what the "rich young ruler" was not willing to do.

The essence of obedience, let it be emphasized again, is willing submission to God's authority. We can see a reason for many things which God commanded us to do, and we must do them if we are loyal to Him, but these do not necessarily test our faith. If our loyalty to God is to be tested, there must be no apparent connection between the thing commanded and the result promised, and there should be no outside circumstance impelling us. The only moving cause should be our reverence for God and our devotion to Him.

It is possible for people to be loyal to that which actually displeases God. For the "rich young ruler" it was his riches. One of the basic faults of many of us is our willingness to rely on conclusions which are not supported by available facts. The wisest and best thing that people who are on the fence can do is to start digging out whatever information there is which bears on their problems. However, it is easier for some to say, "Let your conscience be your guide." That is all right, provided they will let the evidence guide their conscience.

Wise decisions and choices demand a willingness to modify conclusions in keeping with available evidence. Anyone who is not willing to search for available evidence

does not have the right attitude toward the truth. Too many of us are like the justice who was hearing a case at law. The attorney for the plaintiff had almost finished his argument when the justice interrupted, "Counsel, it will not be necessary for you to proceed further. You have convinced me and I have made up my mind." "The defense attorney, of course, protested vigorously, saying, "Certainly, your Honor, you are going to hear the defendant's side of the story?" "No," replied the justice, "I've made up my mind, and if I listen to you it might confuse me."

So, we ask the question once again, "Who Then Can Be Saved?" Only the one who is willing to be submissive to God's plan of salvation!

- (1) Believe (John 8:24)
- (2) Repent (Acts 11:18)
- (3) Confess (Romans 10:9-10)
- (4) Be baptized (Acts 2:38)

Chapter 8 **Whom Say Ye That I Am?** Dennis Curd

Dennis L. Curd was born in Union, South Carolina. He has been married to Sandra Jean for thirty three years, and they have two children. Their daughter, Jennifer, is married to Shawn Sprouse, and they live in Roanoke, VA where she is a housewife and mother. Jennifer and Shawn are the parents of two boys, Nathan and Andrew, with third child on the way. Their son, Justin is married to Katie (Blevins), and they work and go to school in Blacksburg, VA. Dennis has a B.S. degree in Biological Sciences from Auburn University (1977). He is also a 1988 graduate of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. He has done local preaching in Phenix City, Alabama, and in Christiansburg, Virginia where he has lived and worked for the last thirteen years. He has done mission work in Ukraine, having made eight trips to that country. Prior to his full-time preaching he worked as a truck driver and served in the Army working in a medical research facility. He enjoys woodworking, gardening and hiking.

Luke records on one occasion that Jesus "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). This came at the time when it says that "the time was come that he should be received up" (Luke 9:51a). It appears that this moment was a moment of transition. What had happened beforehand led to this and what was to come would differ substantively. Just prior to this point in time is the account of the transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36). This unique event ended with a heavenly declaration that this Jesus is God's beloved Son (verse 35). God had announced that fact at the beginning of Jesus' ministry at His baptism (Matthew 3:17), and punctuates that ministry with the added words, "Hear ye him" (Luke 9:35). God was identifying Jesus clearly for all to know. It is obvious that God's desire is that the human race should come to know Jesus for who He is.

In each of the Synoptic gospels Jesus queries His disciples immediately before the events described above with the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" (Matthew

16:15; Mark 8:29); Luke 9:20). It seems that this discussion was necessary in their development and for the progression of Jesus work, for when this matter was explored Jesus redirects His attention to the matters ahead. His suffering and death on the cross would become the preoccupation of His efforts.

Just how important then was that question, not only for the apostles to whom it was addressed, but for all men who must make a decision in answering it. Let's examine the context of the question according to Matthew. In the early days of Jesus' ministry vast crowds of people followed Him. He healed them, fed them, and cast out demons from their midst. He was popular. Jesus also preached to them declaring the nature of His work and the nature of His own identity. While many listened freely and hung on His words, others grew more and more hostile to Him. Jesus warned of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, not only in their rejection of Him but in the rejection of the truth of Scripture (cf. Matthew 16:12). When Jesus begins to question the apostles on what they believe He is drawing off of some misunderstandings that had arisen.

His first question was, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matthew 16:13). It was a general question allowing the apostles to comment from what they had heard people say. They answered, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets" (Matthew 16:14). These answers typically represent a positive view of Jesus, ascribing to Him the clear position of being a prophet. Jesus was a prophet, in fact the final and ultimate prophet, but He was much more. One needs to note that Jesus' initial question referred to Him as the "Son of man" (verse 13). As a man, they were being asked, who do the people think this Jesus is? When the question is restated focusing on the apostles' perception of His identity, the real quality of Jesus is going to be declared. Jesus asked them, "Whom say ye that I am?" (Matthew 16:15), and Peter boldly stated, "Thou art the Christ, the

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Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Notice, Peter clearly recognizes Jesus as more than just the Son of man, but fully the Son of God.

Jesus as the incarnation of God, becoming flesh and dwelling with man while His full essence was eternal and equal with God (cf. John 1:1,14; Philippians 2:6), took on the form of man to "declare the Father" (John 1:18). As Jesus preached and did miracles His purpose was to compel men to make a decision about who and what He was. His words had drawn much excitement for they were spoken with authority (cf. Matthew 7:29), and were as those of no other man (cf. John 8:46). His miraculous works made people clearly realize that His origin had to be from God, for as Nicodemus said, "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). In everything He did and said men were forced to make a decision about Him.

Returning to Matthew's account, Jesus responds to Peter's statement. Jesus tells him, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). Peter's answer was obviously correct for Jesus sanctioned it with a blessing. He also attributes Peter's answer as having been derived from heavenly sources rather than earthly ones. While it is tempting for some to believe that this knowledge was given uniquely to Peter by God directly, if such was the case then Jesus' work thus far would have been pointless. If God was going to directly enlighten Peter then why was Jesus doing what He did to declare His identity? Yet, Jesus attributes it to the Father's revealing work. That was the work of Jesus; what He came to do. As noted above, Jesus came to "declare the Father" (John 1:18). Jesus later told Philip when asked to have the Father shown to him, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Jesus came to do His Father's will (John 6:38), and the Father's will was for the world to recognize Jesus as His

beloved Son and to hear Him (cf. Matthew 3:17; 17:5). When the reality of Jesus' identity and work was understood, as Peter had so accurately stated, it was attributable to the revelation of the Father. The key point is that flesh and blood, describing purely human sources, was not and could not be the source of one's ability to know Jesus. In other words, it was not man's creative energy that gave Jesus His identity.

Peter's confession of who Jesus was did not represent all who had heard Him. For many reasons people heard and saw what Jesus had said and done but were unwilling to admit the implications of the evidence. Interestingly, prior to Peter's statement, the boldest statement of anyone of the true nature of Jesus came from a most unlikely source. On numerous occasions demons asserted clearly the reality of Jesus' deity. Luke records one such demon declaring, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Luke 4:34). These demons from the world beyond knew precisely who Jesus was and were very clear in their statements. But Jesus silenced them on every occasion (cf. Mark 1:25). Some have wondered why, thinking that the testimony of such a powerful although wicked source would add to His claims. Jesus rather than needing their testimony rebuked them and cast them out. Such testimony was not what Jesus had in mind to convince the world of who He was.

As noted above, shortly after the confession of Peter that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus set His focus towards Jerusalem. This shift in focus is clearly portrayed. From that time on Jesus did far fewer miracles. He chastised His followers for staying with Him only in order to be fed and cared for (cf. John 6:26). While the people in that setting had at one point wanted to make Him their King (John 6:15), Jesus' sermon in that context had the effect of driving them away (verse 66). Jesus' preaching would take on a much more caustic tone as he began more and more to be a prophet heralding the end of the era of the physical kingdom of Israel. The kingdom of heaven was drawing

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nearer and Israel's days were numbered. This preaching caused His popularity to severely decline and would lead Him to the cross. But the reality of who He was had already been presented and declared and would be ultimately confirmed at the resurrection. It was towards the goal of the cross that Jesus was then advancing.

Coming to terms with Jesus' claim to be the Son of God continues to be a pressing issue. All matters of faith hinge on one's answer to the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Prior to any person's conversion the answer to that question must be given. The Ethiopian boldly said prior to his baptism, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). This good confession, made before God and men (cf. 2 Timothy 6:12, 13), acknowledges one's knowledge of and confidence in the evidences that assert this reality about Jesus. Without such there can be no real conversion. When Jesus preached many chief rulers believed in Him but were unwilling to confess the full nature of Him for fear of what it would do to their place in the world (cf. John 12:42). Many who came face to face with Jesus throughout the Scriptural record believed in Him to a degree but were unwilling to go beyond that and align themselves fully with Him. This failure is a critical matter and worthy of examination.

John the Baptist himself was one such person. There is no doubt in the early days when Jesus came to John to be baptized that John knew who Jesus was (cf. John 1:29ff). He boldly declared Jesus to be the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (verse 29). This affirmation came as a result of seeing the Holy Spirit as a dove descending upon Jesus and hearing the voice of God declare Him to be the beloved Son (cf. John 1:32, 33; Matthew 3:13-17). From this early meeting of John and Jesus until the time of John's imprisonment we know little of John's activities. While he had stated that his work would decrease and Jesus' work would increase, he never stopped working. His stand for righteousness against the wicked Herod was

the cause of his imprisonment and subsequent death (cf. Matthew 14:3ff). It was in prison that some concerns about who Jesus was arose. John sent two of his disciples to Jesus with a question: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matthew 11:3). Such a question seems an impossible query from such a man. Why did he all of a sudden have doubts? Did these doubts arise even earlier, or did they come as John realized his predicament at the hand of Herod? While it is impossible to know for sure when and why the doubts arose, they obviously did. John's doubts, however, didn't drive him away from Jesus, but rather compelled him to seek confirmation.

John is a great example of one who allowed his natural incredulity to be his impetus to find answers. Jesus recognized this and rather than rebuking this lack of faith provided the evidence necessary to stabilize it. When one examines how Jesus reacted to John's question he not only learns what Jesus said but also that this was the very way Jesus wants everyone to be convinced. Jesus apparently allowed these disciples to see Him at work, hearing Him preach and seeing Him work His miracles. When they saw and heard these things Jesus told them to go back to John and "show John again those things which ye do hear and see" (Matthew 11:4). The proofs necessary to know who Jesus really was came from the power He displayed and from the message of the gospel that He preached. It is interesting to note that Jesus told them to show John "again" these things. He knew John knew the evidences but wanted him to have them demonstrated yet again.

In John's case, and in everyone else's case, Jesus only offers these same proofs to convince them. He didn't provide some mystical revelation from heaven or from even demonic sources. His evidences were of Himself. The response of John when he heard back from His disciples is not recorded, but the implication is clear that John died in prison fully convinced of the reality of the true identity of Jesus.

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Other examples of skepticism are also recorded. Philip meets Jesus and becomes his follower and quickly proceeds to invite his friend Nathanael to see Him as well (cf. John 1:43-45). Philip tells Nathanael, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write" (verse 45). The implication of that statement was the same as Andrew had more fully stated a little earlier, that this One was the Messiah (cf. John 1:41). These men had seen the works and heard the words of Jesus and were convinced. Notice, however, Nathanael's reaction: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Nathanael's first reaction is typical of how many people respond to news about Jesus. The identification of this "Messiah" as being Jesus of "Nazareth" prejudiced Nathanael right away. Whatever else he gathered from Philip's enthusiastic entreaty was tempered by the fact that Jesus came from Nazareth. This Jesus did not fit the preconceived mold that Nathanael had in mind about the Messiah.

Jesus met such honest doubts with precisely what was needed to convince. Jesus compliments Nathanael as a man "in whom is not guile" (John 1:47). Nathanael is skeptical of this compliment and asks Jesus how He could know anything about him? Then Jesus tells him where he had been when Philip had come to him. Nathanael's response is most amazing. At this simple statement by Jesus, Nathanael boldly proclaims, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel" (John 1:49). While some might think Nathanael to be too easily convinced or very naïve, he actually was quite astute. He readily recognized that only God could have known where he was when Philip told him about Jesus. There could be no other explanation. Jesus, while not truly surprised because He knew the mind of this guileless man, He nevertheless glowingly admires the ability Nathanael demonstrated in believing so quickly and so fully. He promises Nathanael that he will see even greater things than these (John 1:50).

Both of these examples, John and Nathanael, are of men with pure hearts searching for truth. Others, however, didn't bring such honesty to their appraisal of Jesus. As Jesus preached and worked His miracles many believed on Him. Some of them would declare, "Of a truth this is the Prophet", or, "This is the Christ" (John 7:40, 41), but others would ask, "Shall Christ come of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" (John 1:41b, 42). The authorities, in this same context, had sent officers to take Jesus (verse 32), but when these men returned without Him they were questioned as to why they had come back empty-handed. The officer's offered their only defense by saying, "Never man spake like this man" (verse 46). It is unknown whether these men were then or would be followers of Jesus, but their words indicated the power of Jesus' preaching to convince. Nicodemus, likewise in this setting, moderately defends Jesus stating that the law requires a man be heard and properly examined before he is judged (John 7:51). He is rebuked by his fellows with the statement, "Search and look for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:52). Evidence was not going to be allowed in their decision about Jesus.

Like Nathanael, their perception of Jesus coming from Nazareth in Galilee blinded these men from the more important nature of what Jesus said and did. The difference, however, between these men and Nathanael was that these men didn't want to believe and were looking for any reason to discredit Jesus. To such men it would seem there could be nothing that Jesus could do that would counter their skepticism.

One of the most complete developments of faith is seen in the life of the man born blind (John 9). In the course of that account, this blind man resigned by life's circumstances to beg for his living, progresses quickly to be a bold and outspoken defender of the identity of Jesus. Jesus healed him when he was oblivious to who Jesus was. When asked

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how his sight had been restored he answered, "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, go and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight" (John 9:11). All the man knew was that "a man" called Jesus had enabled his sight. As the scrutiny progressed the man heard the opposition and began to more clearly formulate in his mind the reality of how and what happened. When asked again about this Jesus, the man more boldly said, "He is a prophet" (verse 17).

The intensity of this interaction progresses even further. The hotter the opposition to Jesus the more bold this formerly blind man becomes. He readily saw the unwillingness of these critics to admit the obvious miraculous ability of Jesus. When they accused Jesus of being a sinner, the man who had been healed declared, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (verse 25). He proceeds to lecture these religious leaders on how to adequately interpret evidences. His conclusion is firm: "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (verse 33).

It is shortly after this that Jesus comes back to the man and the development of his faith comes to its final conclusion. Jesus had certainly seen the development taking place in the man, from knowing nothing about Him to being willing to defend Him as being from God. Jesus wants him to know fully and asks him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" (verse 35). The man answers, perhaps already really knowing the answer, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" (verse 36). Jesus then identifies Himself emphatically as being the Son of God and the man readily confesses, "Lord, I believe" (cf. verses 37, 38). It had taken only the reality of Jesus' power to cause the blind to see to convince this man of Jesus' deity. He had accurately concluded that only a one from God could do that!

This account compares clearly the two options that can be chosen when presented with the evidences of who Jesus

is. Some readily were willing to declare that Jesus is the Christ. Others were unwilling to do so, seeking anything to cling to in order to keep from admitting the obvious. Some were even willing to attribute Jesus' work to the work of Satan to avoid the fact that He truly represented God (cf. Matthew 9:34; John 8:48). Jesus chastised these blasphemers with great ferocity. He told them once, "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:46, 47). There is no doubt Jesus claimed to speak God's truth, a truth many rejected in His day. He rebuked their unbelief and readily displays their unwillingness to recognize what was so evidently set forth before them. John would later comment on these very people: "But though he had done many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him" (John 12:37)

The question still remains before the world: "Whom say ye that I am?" Each and every person has to answer that question for themselves. Jesus is no longer preaching and doing miracles in the flesh, but His testimony continues to speak. John wrote, "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30, 31). The record of Jesus is set forth in the inspired words of the New Testament authors. These words are fully adequate to make the case for the identity of the Christ (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:3, 4).

What will you do with Jesus? Who is He to you? Will you allow the words of truth to convince you of His power, or will you close your mind to the evidences, choosing rather to seek refuge in the preconceptions of the world and the lies of Satan? What will your answer be?

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Chapter 9

How Shall We Escape if We Neglect So Great Salvation?

Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan was born in Texas. He finished high school in Memphis, TN in 1973. He attended Memphis School of Preaching from 1973-1975, Freed-Hardeman College from 1975-1976. Other educational background includes Magnolia Bible College in Mississippi, Itawamba Community College, Northeast Mississippi Junior College, Northwest Mississippi Junior College, and Southern Christian University where he received his B.A. in 1997. He has just received his M.A. Degree in February from the International College of The Bible.

He began full-time preaching in 1992 and has preached in Mississippi, Tennessee and North Carolina. He is currently laboring with the congregation in Marion, VA. He is on the Arise To Truth Radio Broadcast on Tuesdays in Bristol. He also is the Dean of Media and an Instructor at the Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development. He will be with the school fulltime beginning in August.

He married Jewel (formerly Attebury) in 1977. They adopted 2 children in 1994. Deborah and William. Deborah is married and lives in Mississippi. He has one granddaughter. He has conducted Gospel Meetings and Lectureships in MS, VA., NC & SC.

Before I get into the lesson assigned to me, I would like to thank everyone who has had a part in this ongoing series of lectureships. It has been a yearly series that has greatly helped me and I am sure the brotherhood as well. I am glad I am included in this year's lectures. I hope the things I have to say will be beneficial. It saddens my heart again this year not to see friends that I have loved over the years. We all miss them and by the grace of God hope to be reunited with them once again. Again, I am glad to be here. Now to the subject at hand: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"

The book of Hebrews, chapter two verse three, is what we want to discuss with you today. But to get the real

meaning of the verse we have to look at the context. Read with me Hebrews 2:1-4 (New King James Version):

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

We want to discuss with you today verse 3: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*."

In order to understand what the Hebrews writer is wanting us to understand in chapter two, we must go to chapter one. Here we are introduced to faith, how God speaks to us today and to whom we are to listen. Notice Hebrews 1:1-4 (NKJV):

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

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Notice what the Hebrews writer tells us. God has spoken in various ways: (1) God spoke to the heads of the families during the Patriarchal period. (2) Then in the Mosaic Age, God spoke to the people by way of the High Priest; then later by the prophets. (3) Now in the last days God speaks to us by His Son. Remember the Mount of Transfiguration, found in Matthew 17? When Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ on the mount, Peter told the Lord it was good for them to be there and there needed to be three tabernacles built. God intervened. God had to remind them that He had already on one occasion before told the world and disciples that this was His beloved Son, at His baptism, recorded in Matthew 3. God is emphatic; He reminds Peter, James and John that this is Christ and we must hear Him. This is what the Hebrews writer is telling or maybe reminding the readers. There were scores of people who had listened to God through different mediators, but now it is through Jesus Christ.

Now as we move on toward chapter two we can see that Christ is elevated above angels. God says there are people who will teach, but Jesus is the one to whom we need to listen. Notice what is going to transpire as we enter chapter two, which begins with "Therefore..." What the writer is about to show is that everything in the first few verses hinges on what has been established in chapter one. Here is the conclusion that will be drawn, "how shall we escape?" Chapter one says I must, I have no other choice than to listen to Christ if I want to be saved. Therefore, I must give the more earnest heed to the things that have been spoken. Not by the heads of the family, not by the High Priest, not by Moses, not by Elijah, but by Christ. Here the writer is going to argue since this is an indisputable fact, that God has spoken to us by His Son who is the heir of all things, the Creator of all things and the upholder of all things; that since He Himself has died, risen and is sitting on the right hand of God, there is a requirement that you and I must do and that is to listen to Christ.

In verse three He is going to urge us to be concerned about our personal salvation to the point of response. You and I are going to respond either in a positive or negative way to what Jesus Christ said. Jesus talked about salvation, remember in Mark 16:16. How shall we escape what Jesus said here? People say this, that and the other, but it is what Jesus said that counts. Remember in Luke 24:46-47 what Jesus said that if He did not suffer, die and rise from the dead, what hope would we have of any salvation? My friends, I declare to you there would be no salvation. We could not expect salvation if it were not for the love of Jesus by giving His life. We are talking about one of the two ways the term salvation is used in the New Testament. The one we are referring to is the one Jesus used all the time.

Jesus also talked about eternal salvation. Because Peter was taught by Christ he talked about it in 1 Peter 1:5, eternal salvation. All of this revolves around Hebrews 2. Did you catch that? We are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed at the last day. Wait a minute. I thought we were saved when we were baptized. We are but that is not a permanent salvation. Go back to Hebrews 2:3, "How shall we escape if we neglect..." You see I can be saved but I'm not always saved. I don't know where the doctrine "I can't fall from the grace of God" comes from, but it does not come from God's word. We are talking about the spiritual salvation we will have when we are dealt the words "Well done thou good and faithful servant." This salvation is for eternity. Listen to what Paul said in Philippians 2:12... This verse has often been taken out of context. What I work out here will determine my eternal salvation. It has nothing to do with my salvation now on earth. I'm still working on my salvation. Sometimes I stumble, I fall. I don't do the things I'm supposed to do. I don't do what Jesus commanded me to do. When I do that I can lose my salvation here on earth. When I strive to do those things God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has commanded me to do through His word, then I'm telling the

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Father, Son and Holy Spirit I want to go to heaven. I'm going to do everything I can that God tells me to do so I can have that eternal salvation. So what I do in this life is working out my salvation with fear and trembling, fear and trembling? Yes, remember it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It is even going to be a fearful trembling thing to stand before God in judgment thinking that I have done what I was supposed to do and for Him to look at me and say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." Why? My faith was not focused on my salvation for eternity that I should look forward to.

Often we base it just here on earth. Folks, it's more than that. Go back to verse three of Hebrews 2... Often we neglect salvation from our sins. We show a lack of concern about our eternal destiny because we think we already have it right now. What does that word "neglect" really mean? It means a lack of sufficient attention. You have a sore on your body. If you neglect that sore it could kill you. When I neglect something it isn't rebellion but indifference. I know, "you can believe your way I can believe my way." Folks that's not rebellion, that's indifference. What I believe and what I teach can determine whether I have eternal life with the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and all of the faithful or whether I spend eternity in hell with the devil and all his angels. That's what working out your salvation with fear and trembling is all about.

When I think about how we shall escape if we neglect, let's break it down now. Salvation has been spoken. Look at verse three, "How shall...." Peter said in John 6:68 that Jesus had the words of life. Remember Peter also asked, "Lord to whom shall we go..." Number one, I must listen to the Lord if I want salvation. In John 6, Jesus said, "No one can....." Are we listening to God or self or someone else? He said, "Therefore, everyone who hath...." Why? If you look at the Old Testament, even back to Genesis 1 all the way to Malachi, it talks about a Redeemer coming; it talks about a Savior coming; it talks about the Prince of Peace. Have we

really looked for that person? The Lord said He would come. He has already come. He has ascended back to heaven. Are we listening to what He said? How can we neglect this salvation? You see, the Lord spoke about this salvation. John 8:32... Free of what? All your past sins. And oh, by the way, it will take care of the present sins too. How do you know this? 1 John 1:4I have never and I don't think you have ever seen someone joyful in sin. This is what John is saying. He just quoted what Jesus said. Jesus said you would know the truth and the truth will set you free. John said we're writing these things that your joy may be full. Now the question is, "Who are we listening to, to get our joy?" Are we listening to Jesus or the person who says don't worry about it Jesus loves everybody. Paul talked about this in 1 Timothy 2:4, "Who desires all men to be saved." This is what God wants. He wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Why do you think when you have been summoned to appear in court to testify on someone's behalf you are asked if you will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? If you said no, you would probably be told you are excused. Why is it the world today does not want to hear truth about how they are living; how they should live and how they can change? "Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life." Not death, but life! "Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of life." Good song. This is what Jesus is saying. I'll tell you about the words of life. You've got to listen to Me. You've got to believe Me. James said in 1:21 I must receive God's word. What's that? Not just hear it or believe it but I have to receive it. He said I must put away all filthiness. Some translations say superfluity, overflow of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save my soul and yours. That's why the beatitudes are so important. Before you can rise up and be what God wants you to be you've got to start at the bottom. If I don't start at the bottom, I'm not receiving the word as I ought to.

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Now Hebrews 2:4. Here we see the message of salvation that was spoken by the Lord has been confirmed. God also bearing witness. The Lord Himself, Jesus Christ, confirmed the message. We've already looked at Mark 16:15-16. Now verse 20, you see God's word had not been written yet. There had to be a confirmation that this word is true. He picked his 11 men. Judas is gone. Matthias is going to take Judas' place. Paul comes on the scene. They are going to do these signs and miracles to confirm the word. The Lord told them this would be done. How do we confirm the word today? Found in Matthew 28:18-20. I realize Jesus was talking to the disciples and that's the first argument that's going to be presented. But if you hold your finger there and go over to Acts 2, they that obeyed the gospel of Christ continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, prayers and breaking of bread, everything that Jesus had taught them. He said go into all the world making disciples of men in Matthew 28, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, watch it, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, it's not what you want to do, it's what I've commanded you, and as long as you do this, there is the inference, as long as you do this, I will be with you until the end of the age, even to the point of being faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. Isn't that wonderful?! These are the wonderful words of life that have been left for you and me and this is why we're supposed to live, breathe and teach. Then we ask the question, how shall we escape if we neglect so great, so GREAT a salvation. You can't help but say I want to be a part of this. I do not want to neglect this.

You and I need to be aware of some of the dangers of neglect. Let's go back to verse 3, our foundation in this lesson. The first danger that we need to be aware of is the hardening of the heart by sin. Hebrews 3:12-13, "Beware brethren....." That almost sounds like Hebrews 10:24. There is an obligation we have to each other, to exhort each other daily. Make a phone call, send a card or e-mail. Why?

Because we can fall into the trap of deceit and lose sight of our eternal salvation. Once our hearts are hardened, we are deceived, we believe anything and we've lost our eternal salvation. That is how hard the devil works on you and me and the whole world. My heart can be so hardened I will not see or feel the need to repent. In Hebrews 6:4 these people had heard the word, believed, obeyed and lived it. They weren't exhorted daily. Look what happens: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Hebrews 6:4). It is impossible to renew them back when they are caught up in the affairs of the world. Not the affairs of the Lord. Their hearts will be so hardened they will say they don't need to repent. Paul dealt with this with the Gentiles in Ephesus (Ephesians 4:19). This is a danger. I get caught up in self, in the world and forget about my salvation here on earth and I'm blinded to the salvation God wants to give me in the hereafter. Not only can my heart become hard but my conscience can be seared with a hot iron. We're not talking about the iron to press clothes. We're talking about a branding iron. We're talking about branding the heart to the point we don't want to return. Someone said it's like branding cattle. You know who is yours and you know who isn't. By which brand are we branded? Are we branded by the Lord? "This is mine. Well done thou good and faithful servant." The sheep. Or is the ones the devil brands that says these are mine, you can't have them? And we live our lives like there is no tomorrow. There is no eternity. Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:2 there would be people speaking lies and hypocrisy and having their own conscience seared with a hot iron. Much like what Paul said to the church in Thessalonica that the Lord would send them a delusion to believe a lie. Their hearts were seared by what they wanted to believe. Are we that way? Is our heart hardened? Do we not feel the need to repent? Have our hearts been seared with something that is not true? I hope not because even in this passage it talks

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about the day of the Lord, about judgment. In chapter 9:27, maybe you can quote it, "For it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment."

I'm reminded of when Paul was before Felix, recorded in Acts 24. Verse 25, Why was Felix afraid? He was afraid to commit. That is why he told Paul he would call for him when it was convenient. Some are that way today. "Preach that later." Judgment may come before that is preached. Where will we spend eternity? We need to take judgment seriously. God has appointed a time He will judge the world. Acts 17 applies to us today. "God winked at their ignorance, but now commands all men to repent, for He has appointed a day...." If there isn't going to be a judgment, why did God raise Christ from the dead? There was a purpose and this is one of the many purposes. Paul understood this because in 2 Corinthians 5:10 he wrote, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." We need to be in anticipation of the judgment day. How shall we escape the judgment, how shall we escape hell if we do not listen to Jesus Christ? Men are going to be given one of two destinies, one or the other, heaven or hell (Matthew 25). I believe that just as sure as I'm standing here. I hope you believe that, too. This is what the Hebrews writer wants us to see. If we don't listen to Christ, we are going to miss heaven. If we neglect Him, hell is our eternal destination. Another danger is the wrath of God. That goes against everything we have heard! God is a loving God! He wouldn't send anyone to hell! He doesn't want to but He will. Look at Hebrews 10:26-31, How much more punishment will I receive trampling the Son of God underfoot? That sounds like the wrath of God to me. In Romans 2:1-11, Paul wrote of God's goodness, longsuffering, forbearance and His wrath. God is loving. He is giving us time to get right with Him. If I continue to neglect these wonderful words of life I will see the wrath of God.

Why do men neglect salvation? Hebrews 3:12, the pleasures of this life blind us. There is pleasure in sin. In

Hebrews 11:25, we are told Moses chose affliction rather than the pleasure of sin. In Hebrews 10:26-31 we find pleasure is short lived and the consequences are tragic. Sometimes we have the illusion we have all the time in the world. James 4 tells me I need to think differently, my life is a vapor. Think about the past and how time has clicked by like a clock. Time passes. How much closer are we to eternity? We need to think seriously about that. When we don't think seriously we look for a convenient time for us. Right now is the convenient time. Don't be like Felix and say, "When I feel like doing something I will." This may be the last sermon you ever hear. This may be the last service you ever attend. You don't know when the Lord is going to come. You don't know when you are going to die. You don't know when judgment is coming. Some people think God is going to make an exception in their case. In Romans 2:11, there is no partiality with God. There are no exceptions.

"Well Michael, I can't work righteousness." Yes you can. You can hear the word, believe it, repent of your sins, confess Jesus and be baptized for the remission of your sins. You can desire the sincere milk of the word. You can grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Live for Him, Oh my brother, His disciple ever be." That is the one the Lord will accept. He never has and never will accept the one who, "Well I was baptized 30 years ago, I'm fine and I'm going to heaven." That's not the person He will accept. How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? My friends, neglect is sin, James 4:7. Beware, he'll come back. What do you do? Submit to God. Resist the devil. He will flee from you. Remember when Jesus was tempted? The devil left and came back. He left and came back. Finally he couldn't debate with the Son of God and he left Him. The angels came and ministered to Him. When you resist the devil and he flees from you, those who are faithful in Christ will come and minister to you. We will encourage you. The old song says, "Why Not Come To Him Now?" Why, because there is danger and death in

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delay. Today is the day of salvation. Yesterday is gone forever. Tomorrow is at most a possibility that you will rise to see another day. Today is the time. Will you not do what is right? Quit neglecting so great a salvation. Do that which the Lord would be pleased with, would be happy with you. He's giving you one more opportunity. Don't neglect it.

Chapter 10

Why Call Ye Me Lord?

Clint Harper

Clint has been married to his wife, Kimberly, for 22 years. Their son, Derek, is a Marine stationed at Camp Pendleton, CA. He graduated Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies in Pensacola in November of 1994. Moved to Galax, VA the same month to work with the church and have been here ever since.

He also works part-time as a Paramedic for Surry County in Mount Airy, NC and teach EMT and Paramedic classes at Surry Community College.

Jesus asked the simple question, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" The question is not hard to be understood. It is not a confusing question. But it is one which confounded many then and one which baffles many today. Because the truth is so mystifying to so many, Jesus explains this question with a parable.

Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great. (Luke 6:47-49 AV)

The idea is that if we are obedient to God's commands, we build for ourselves a foundation which will allow us to stand strong against the forces that threaten us. However, if we

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choose not to be obedient, our foundation will not support us.

The entire question and explanation is surrounded by the idea of respect. Since the beginning of time, God has always explained to His people what He expects of them. Abel's offering was accepted of God because he followed the commands set forth (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:4). God has never left it up to mankind to decide what is pleasing to Him in worship. Never, has there been a time when less than the best was expected of God's servants.

Love and respect for God is shown in our following His commands for us. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" and "...If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:15, 23). But many have failed to show this love and respect.

Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law. Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him. They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off. Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency? For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up. (Hosea 8:1-7 AV)

The parable of the ten virgins teaches the same lesson (Matthew 25:1-12).

We are forced to ask a question: Why is it that some fail to do what the Lord says? Some are convinced that they ARE doing God's will. Jesus warns us, "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me" (John 16:1-3 AV). Paul admitted, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9 AV). Our desire for these should be the same as that of Paul, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:1-3 AV).

Others who do not do what Jesus said simply do not think it's important. They may think that faith is all that is necessary and that anything more would be earning salvation. They will quote scripture such as, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9 AV). Again to quote the apostle, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16 AV). To their hurt, they fail to see that there are many kinds of "works" spoken of in Scripture: Works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), Works of darkness (Romans 13:12), Dead works (Hebrews 6:1; 9:14), Works of the law (Romans 9:32), The

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first works (Revelation 2:5), Works of repentance (Acts 26:20) and Good works (Acts 9:36).

Our works show either respect or disrespect for God. It is written, "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:15-16 AV). "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10 AV). In John's description of the judgment, he states that we will be judged by our works. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works" (Revelation 20:12-13 AV). Yes. It is important to be obedient to God's instructions.

Some people do not have any incentive to do God's will for they think that once they are saved, they cannot be lost. One passage often quoted is, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39 AV). These words are mistaken to mean that there can be no separation between the saved and God. Apparently some in the first century thought in similar fashion which prompted the apostle Paul to ask, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Romans 6:1-2 NKJV). The Bible does teach that a person can lose salvation (Revelation 20:15; Exodus 32:33).

Some people have been convinced of the Calvinistic doctrine of Unconditional Election. It teaches that before the foundation of the world, God chose certain individuals to be objects of His undeserved favor, and only these can be saved. If a person believes that he IS NOT of that number and has no hope, then he has no incentive to do anything good for he cannot change his destiny. If a person believes he IS of that number, there is no incentive to do anything good for he cannot be lost, no matter what he does. This idea is very appealing to many people because they can do whatever they desire and their conscience is free. The Bible does not teach this doctrine. Jesus invites all who will be saved (Matthew 11:28-30). The Father desires everyone to be saved (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4). Jesus paid the price of salvation for every person of all time (John 3:16). All who are obedient are received. "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35 AV).

Some are not obedient because they have drawn a false conclusion from the fact that God is love (1 John 4:8). They may reason, "A God of love surely could not allow anyone to be lost in the end." The idea is one of "Universal Salvation" and seems very logical to many. But the Bible paints a different picture. Paul wrote, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 AV). There is no hint of the God who cannot lie telling a lie about punishment in the end. In his description of the Judgment, Jesus stated:

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When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats ... Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (Matthew 25:31-32,41,46 AV)

Another reason for disobedience is that some people simply want to straddle the fence. They neither desire to leave the Lord completely, nor do they desire to be completely on His side. They covet the blessings of the world and the Lord at the same time. Many have been here before. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue" (John 12:42 AV). The Lord says, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16 AV).

We are very accustomed to being able to "fool" people about certain things. But God is not a person who can be fooled. "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:10 AV). The wise man wrote, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 AV).

Reasons don't matter if we are disobedient to God. We shall receive the fruits of our labors. Obedience to God's will is not optional.

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