

Why We Believe  
What We Believe  
Volume 1

by  
J.C. Choate

Published by  
**J.C. Choate Publications**  
Winona, MS

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First Printing in India, 2,000 copies  
Second Printing in Indonesia, 2,000 copies  
Third Printing in USA, 10,000 copies  
Fourth Printing in USA, 5,000 copies  
Fifth Printing in USA, 3,000 copies

Cover Design, Betty Burton Choate  
Typesetting, Eulene Ramsey  
Layout and Design, Barbara Ann Oliver

This Printing, 3,000 copies, 2012

Order From:

**J.C. Choate Publications**

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## *Dedication*

**To Roddie and Mary K. Draper,  
fourth generation Christians of Mason, Texas,  
for their many years of love and service to the Lord,  
and for the encouragement and support they have given  
to Betty and me in our efforts to spread  
the cause of Christ.**

## **Introduction**

One of the blessings that has been mine through the last 20 years has been that of being one of the speakers on our radio programs directed to the masses of India. Another blessing has been that our son, Steve, has served as my announcer on all of these broadcasts. This particular series of sermons was recorded in New Delhi and sent to the printer in that city in 1986. Later they were translated into the Indonesian language and printed in Jakarta, Indonesia. Now they are being printed here in the U.S.A. From here they will be sent all over the world by our office and by teachers of World Bible School.

In a time of so many religious teachings, the most of which are false, we are often asked why we believe what we believe. The sermons of this book were intended to answer that question. They were originally written for those who have English as their second language, in the Third World countries, but they can also be helpful in acquainting people in any part of the world with the great themes of the Bible. It is my prayer that these sermons will continue to be the means of leading many souls to Christ.

I want to thank my wife, Betty, Sis. Eulene Ramsey and Sis. Barbara Oliver, for helping to prepare these sermons for printing.

J.C. Choate  
Winona, MS  
June 26, 1996

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## Lesson 1

# Why We Believe in God

The world today is a paradox. On one side, you have people who do not believe that there is a God. They deny the existence of God. They say the world came into being by accident, and man is the descendent of a lower organism. These people do not believe they are accountable to anyone higher than man himself. On the other side are people who believe there is one or more gods in the world today. The majority of these believe that images and idols represent their gods. Where do you stand on these matters? What do you believe?

I am a Christian and a member of the Church of Christ. My brethren and I therefore believe in God. We believe there is but one true and living God, he is the creator of all things, he is all powerful, all knowing, and all seeing. We believe he is eternal, he is Spirit, and he is everywhere. We would like to encourage you to believe in him also.

You may be wondering why we believe in God. You have every right to question our faith. We therefore want to give you some reasons why we believe in him.

First, we believe in God because it is logical to believe he exists and he is the creator of all things. The very fact that the earth exists, along with all living things, surely indicates that someone is responsible for it. Like a book has an author, a house has a builder, a car has a maker, so with the earth and its inhabitants. In the first words of the Bible, we read, *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1).

Second, we believe in the God of heaven, the creator of all things, because of intelligent life being upon the earth. Not only does the earth exist, along with plant and animal life, but man also lives on the earth and he is a superior being in comparison to all other existing things. Humans have the ability to think and to reason. Not only so, but man has grown in his knowledge with the passing of time. That means he has the ability to learn and build upon the knowledge of his predecessors. That means that an intelligent creator is responsible for man. But look again at animal life. It has remained the same since the beginning. That means a wise creator placed animal life, and all other things, here for man's use. When we turn to Genesis 1 of the Bible, we are told that God created the heaven and the earth and in the days following he created all things therein, including those things that creep upon the earth, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea. Then finally he created man and woman. We read, *"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over every*

*living thing that moveth upon the earth*" (Genesis 1:28).

Third, we believe that God is the creator of man because man is a dual being. He has both a physical being and a spiritual being. We are told that *"God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them"* (Genesis 1:27). Again, we read, *"And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"* (Genesis 2:7). To understand this we must be aware of the fact that God is a Spirit (John 4:24), and when it says man was created in his image that means God gave man something that was likened unto himself. He placed within him an inner being, a spirit, a soul, which would never die. Speaking of the body and soul, the wise man, Solomon, said, *"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it"* (Ecclesiastes 12:7). This is referring to the physical body dying and returning to the dust of the earth, while the spirit of man will live on and will return to God who gave it. This within itself is another incentive for man to believe in God. Who wants to die and for that to be the end of everything? According to those who deny God this is all man has to look forward to. But to the one who believes in God, he not only has this life to live, but after physical death his spirit or soul will live on forever. Christ said, *"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that*



*have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"* (John 5:28,29).

Fourth, we believe in God because of the unity of his creation. The seasons, climate, plant life, sea life, and even human life, all live side by side on planet earth and each complements the other. Each depends on the other for survival. But what about the sun and moon and stars? They are all placed at just the right distance. For instance, if the sun was much closer, the earth would be destroyed by severe heat. Yet, if the sun was much further away the earth would freeze over. How amazing is God's creation! In the long ago, the Psalmist David said, *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race"* (Psalms 19:1-5).

Fifth, we believe in the existence of God because the Bible teaches this, and the Bible is declared to be the word of God, the greatest book in all the world. This book depicts God as the one who formed all things (Proverbs 26:10), as being the mighty God, the everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6), as the true and living God (Jeremiah 10:10), as a Spirit (John 4:24), as being one of love (1 John 4:1). It is said that God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11), and he cannot be tempted (James 1:13). Hundreds of other things are said about

God to acquaint us with him and to enable us to see how he deals with his creation.

Sixth, we believe in God because he is said to be one. There is therefore no other besides him. Paul declared in Ephesians 4:6, "*One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*" God is a jealous God and will not allow his creation to bow down to lifeless images and idols. In the long ago it was said, "*For thou shalt worship no other god . . .*" (Exodus 34:14). Again, we read, "*Thou shalt make thee no molten gods*" (Exodus 34:17). On another occasion he said, "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments*" (Exodus 20:4-6). The scriptures show the absurdity of idolatry by telling of a man who cut down a tree. Part of it he used to make a fire to cook his food, another part he used to burn for warmth, and finally he used another piece of it to make an idol for the purpose of worship (Isaiah 44:15,16).

Seventh, we believe in God because he has extended his mercy to us by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us that we might be saved and have the hope of eternal life (John 3:16,17; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:8,9).

And finally, we believe in God because the only alternative left would be to reject the idea of God and eternal life and accept the idea that all things happened by accident and men evolved from a lower animal like an ape. This is only a theory, something that is unproved, which is unreasonable. In the words of the Psalmist David, *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"* (Psalms 14:1). Those who would reject God are free to do so, but we are told *"...it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:11,12).

Do you believe in God? If you don't, please seriously consider what has been said. If you will believe in God and Christ the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God with your mouth, and if you will be baptized in water for the remission of your sins, the Lord will save you and add you to his church. Our prayer to God is that you will do this.



## Lesson 2

# Why We Believe In Christ

If one believes something there must be some reasons why he believes it.

This is certainly true with me and my brethren since we are Christians and members of God's family, the Church of Christ.

I have already given you some reasons why we believe in God and now I want to tell you why we believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of the Living God.

First of all, let me explain that Jesus was not just another man. He was not a false teacher. Neither did he die to live no more. Second, although Christ was with God in the beginning (Genesis 1:1), and through him and by him all things were created (John 1:1-3), he is not spoken of as the Father but as the Son of God. Please keep in mind that in the Godhead, as it is called in Acts 17:39, Romans 1:20, and Colossians 2:9, there are three distinct personalities: God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit who gave the Word or who is the Author of the scriptures (Ephesians 4:1-6). Again, the scriptures speak of one God and then three-in-one as stated in 1 Timothy 2:5 and John 17. Some find this

hard to understand. In an attempt to explain it, there are those who say that Jesus is God and that Jesus is the Holy Spirit but again and again the scriptures portray them as being distinct personalities, speaking to each other, working with one another, etc. (Matthew 17:5; John 16:13). Then there are those who argue that if Christ was God's Son, that means God had to be married. In this case they are attempting to apply human traits and rules to deity and of course that will not work. Christ is spoken of as a Son in that he was with God in the beginning, was equal to God, but humbled himself to come to this world, to be born of woman, and to die for the sins of the world that man might be saved and have the hope of eternal life. Although we may not understand the Godhead in the fullest, it is not necessary that we have full knowledge of such things. We don't understand, as human beings, how God could have always existed and that he will exist forevermore, but we accept it by faith. The same is true with Christ being the Son of God.

Let's proceed by giving you some reasons why we believe in Christ, the Son of God, and resurrected Lord who returned to the Father in heaven to be man's saviour. That means we look on Christ as being more than a prophet or a great teacher, but as one who loved us so much he was willing to die for us in order that we might be saved in this world and in the world to come.

We believe in Christ because he has always existed. He was with God in the beginning according to Genesis 1:1. Speaking of Christ in John 1:1,2, we read concern-

ing him, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."*

We believe in Christ because it was through him and by him all things were created. He was involved in the creation spoken of in Genesis 1:1. In Genesis 1:26, 27 he was associated with God in creating man. In John 1:3 we are told, *"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."* That means that as we look around us and see what is in existence we must conclude all of this came from somewhere. But where did it come from? We are told that it was created. By whom? By Christ. If that be true, when we see all of the things about us, and even when we take account of ourselves, we are reminded of Christ. How could we then fail to believe in him? Paul wrote concerning Christ, *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist"* (Colossians 1:14-17).

We believe in Christ because it was prophesied that he would come, and then those prophecies were fulfilled with his coming. After the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, and man was alienated from God, it was said that Christ would come to save Man (Genesis 3:15). The

prophets often spoke of the coming of the Messiah. As a matter of fact, they pinpointed many things concerning his coming: where he would be born, how he would be taken into Egypt to escape the wrath of the king, how he would be betrayed by one of his own, then to be given a false trial, crucified, buried, and three days later to be resurrected, and finally to return to the Father in heaven. For example, Isaiah 53 speaks of Christ and in Acts 8 we read that Philip taught a man from Ethiopia about Christ by reading from that same Old Testament passage. Surely this was not by accident.

We believe in Christ because he was miraculously born into this world. The prophet of old said, *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14). Regarding its fulfillment the record says, *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all of this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the*

*prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus" (Matthew 1:18-25).* That means Christ had no earthly father but that he came from his Father in heaven. Had Christ been born as any other human being, with an earthly father and mother, he could not have been man's saviour, since he would have been but a man himself.

We believe in Christ because he performed miracles to prove he was from God. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. He changed water to wine at the wedding feast, calmed the angry sea, walked on water, and raised the dead. The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John of the New Testament record all these miracles. Then we read, "*Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did" (John 2:23).* Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, said unto him, "*Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2).* Finally, we read, "*And 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 believ-*



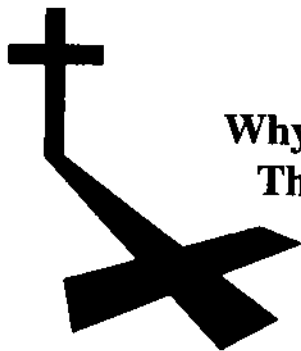
*ing ye might have life through his name”* (John 20:30,31).

We believe in Christ because God, the Apostles, and many others — even his enemies and the devils — confessed him as being the Son of God. After the transfiguration of Christ, God spoke from heaven, and said, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him”* (Matthew 17:5). On another occasion, Peter and the Apostles confessed Christ as the Son of God (Matthew 16:16-18). Surely they, and others, had good reason for doing this.

We believe in Christ because he lived a sinless life, died that man might be saved, and was resurrected from the grave. Peter said there was no sin within him (1 Peter 2:22). Paul said that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). But to assure us of forgiveness, Christ came forth triumphantly from the grave to be our saviour and our hope of eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Do you believe in Christ? Do you believe that he is the Son of God? Christ said that if we believe in God we should also believe in him (John 14:1). Christ said that if we will confess him before men, he will confess us before the Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32,33). Our salvation therefore depends on our faith in Christ.

Let me encourage you to believe in Christ, to repent of your sins, to confess Jesus as the Son of God, and to be baptized or buried in water for the remission of your sins. If you will do this the Lord will save you and add you to his church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47).



## Lesson 3

# Why We Believe In The Holy Spirit

I have definite reasons for believing what I do and I want to share those with you so that if you are not a believer you might become one. For sure, I am not alone in my faith. I have brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world who believe as I do. We have the same faith because we believe in the same God, the same Christ, the same Spirit, and all of this is based on the teachings of God's word as contained in the Bible.

For our study at this time we are going to tell you why we believe in the Holy Spirit and the work that he does. The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Godhead. Paul declared in Ephesians 4:4-6 that there is one God, one Lord, and one Spirit. Speaking about Christ, he said, *"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father"* (Ephesians 2:18). Again, the three persons of the Godhead are individually mentioned here. In Matthew 3:13-17 we have the account of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. Let us read: *"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I*

*have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" Please note that in this setting we have Christ being baptized, the Spirit descending upon him like a dove, and God speaking from heaven to express his approval of his Son. That means if we believe in God, and Christ as the Son of God, we must also believe in the Spirit. Again we read, *"And there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one"* (1 John 5:7). The Word spoken of has reference to Christ (John 1:1). It should also be pointed out that the Holy Ghost and the Holy Spirit are the same person. Unless you are aware of this it could be confusing.

We believe in the Holy Spirit because it was through the Holy Spirit that Mary conceived and gave birth to Jesus. We read, *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost"* (Matthew 1:18). The angel of the Lord explained to Joseph that he should not fear to take Mary as his wife, *"for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost"* (Matthew 1:20). When Mary

wanted to know how it would be possible to have a child since she had not been with man, "...*the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*" (Luke 1:35). In other words, it was through the working of the Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost, that Mary conceived and brought forth her first born, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We believe in the Holy Spirit because the scriptures as set forth in the Bible represents the testimony of the Spirit, or the words of the Spirit. Over a period of hundreds of years, the Spirit directed various ones to write down God's will for man. That is why we read that "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The word is Spirit and life; it makes free; it represents truth (John 8:32; John 17:17).

We believe in the Holy Spirit and his work because of the way he worked in the time of Christ and the Apostles. Christ was said to have the Spirit without measure. We read, "*For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him*" (John 3:34). That means the Holy Spirit dwelt with Christ and he was not limited in his use of the Spirit. But if the Lord received the Spirit without measure, that means others have received

the Holy Spirit with measure.

Christ promised the disciples his kingdom, or church, would come with power (Mark 9:1). This refers to the fact that the church would come with the power of the Holy Spirit. Later Christ promised he would send the Comforter or Holy Spirit upon them. He knew he would soon be going away. He knew also the Apostles were but men, subject to error. Therefore he promised to send the Holy Spirit to call to their remembrance all things he had said to them, the Spirit would guide them into all truth, he would give them power to speak in other languages, and to perform miracles. In John 15:26 Christ refers to the Spirit as being the Comforter and in John 16:13 he is spoken of as being the Spirit of truth. Therefore, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit all things would be done right, and the word would be confirmed through signs and wonders, thus producing faith in the hearts of the hearers.

After the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, and just before his return to the Father in heaven, he said to the Apostles, *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). Then in Acts 2:1-4, we read, *"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon*

*each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*" These people were amazed that the Apostles had the ability to speak in their own languages. At first they thought they were drunk, but Peter explained to them that this was that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, that in the last days the Lord would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. The record goes on to say that many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles (Acts 2:43). But to whom did the Lord promise the power of the Holy Spirit? The Apostles, of course. Therefore they were baptized with the Spirit or the Spirit came upon them to enable them to do these miraculous things. As a result of this, and hearing the gospel proclaimed by them, some 3,000 obeyed the Lord by believing in him, repenting of their sins, and being baptized for the remission of their sins. By doing this, the Lord saved them, gave them the Holy Spirit, and added them to the church (Acts 2:38,40,47).

But the Apostles were not able to do all the work by themselves, so the Lord enabled them to lay their hands on a select number, and therefore they were likewise given the power to speak in other languages and to perform miracles to convince the people they had been sent of God to declare his word (Acts 6:1-8).

Other than the Apostles, and those they laid their hands on, all others received the ordinary measure of the Holy Spirit. There was one exception to this, as recorded in Acts 10 and 11. Cornelius and his household received the baptism of the Holy Spirit to prove that the

Gentiles had been accepted by the Lord, as well as the Jews.

Eventually the Apostles, and those they laid their hand on, died. By then the Holy Spirit had guided various ones to write down the Lord's word, and so from that day to this, faith has been produced in man's heart through reading or hearing God's word preached, and all who obey the Lord are saved and are given the non-miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit. Signs, miracles, and wonders are no longer needed, and this would include speaking in other tongues or languages, since the word has been confirmed. Therefore, the Spirit does not work through man today to produce miracles. If one will not believe the word of the Spirit, as set forth in God's word, then neither would he be moved by a miracle even though he saw one.

But if the Holy Spirit does not enable us to perform miracles, how do we know we have the Spirit, and what is the purpose of the Spirit dwelling in us? The same could be asked about God or Christ. We believe the testimony of the Spirit as set forth in the Bible. When we believe the Lord and obey his will, he saves us and we are given the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The Spirit then directs us through his word (Romans 8:1). We are told that the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16), that the Spirit makes intercession for us (Romans 8:16), that the Spirit is the earnest of our salvation (Ephesians 1:14), and that the Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17).

There are many false spirits but one true Spirit of God, which is the Holy Spirit. Do you believe in him? Does he live within you? If you have not the Spirit, then you do not belong to the Lord.

When you believe in the Lord, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and you are baptized for the remission of your sins, then the Lord will save you, give you the Holy Spirit, and add you to his church. If you have not already done this, we pray that you will.





## Lesson 4

# Why We Believe The Bible

The Bible is an ancient book. It took hundreds of years to write it. The authors had varied backgrounds. Yet, when all of it was put together, it made one complete volume, with one theme, and without contradiction. It starts with the beginning of creation and ends with the destruction of the earth and all things therein. It tells the story of man, giving his good points and his bad points alike, showing his need for a saviour. The Bible, meaning "the book", is made up of two major divisions: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament consists of 39 books and the New Testament has 27 books, for a grand total of 66 books. It concerns itself with three major laws and distinct periods of time. The first was the Patriarchal Law or Age. It began with Adam and continued up to the time of Moses, covering 2500 years. During this time God spoke to the fathers and they conveyed God's will to their family members. The second was the Mosaical Law or Age. It began with Moses and continued till the time of Christ, comprising some 1500 years. During this period God spoke through a written

law referred to as the Law of Moses. The third is the Christian Law or Age, beginning with the death of Christ and continuing until Christ returns. This age has already lasted for almost 2000 years and no one but God knows how much longer it will continue. Someone has described these ages like this: the Patriarchal period being the Starlight Age, the Mosaical period being the Moonlight Age, and the Christian period being the Sunlight Age. The idea here is that with each age more light was given and of course the Sunlight Age represents a period in which there is full light.

Since there are two major testaments revealed in the Bible we need to understand the difference in these two. First, God revealed his will to his people and this continued through the Patriarchal and Mosaical Ages. Then God instituted a new law for his people. This law was given through Christ and continues to be binding until this day. When God gave a new will, that made the first testament, or will, old. Therefore the first testament ceased to be binding as a law. It still serves as history, giving examples of how God blesses the obedient and punishes the disobedient, and is filled with principles that all can benefit by, but as a law it is no longer binding. The law that is binding today is the one found in the New Testament. When Christ died on the cross, he took away the old law in order that he might present a new law. Please hear the words of the Hebrew writer, *"For where a testament is, there must also be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the tes-*

*tator liveth*" (Hebrews 9:16,17). Continuing, *"Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"* (Hebrews 10:9,10).

Considering the foregoing, why would this not be just another historical book or novel? True, it is a historical book, and also a book of geography, a book of science, and a great literary work, but it is more than all of that. We believe the Bible to be inspired of God, a book that contains the word of God. It claims to be the word of the Lord (Jeremiah 14:1), and Paul had this to say about it: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Peter declared, *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (2 Peter 1:20,21).

We believe the Bible because it is called the Word of God, or the Word of the Lord. Christ prayed to the Father, *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"* (John 17:17). Paul wrote, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"* (Colossians 3:16). Again, he said, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"*

(Romans 10:17). Hear him once more: *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine”* (2 Timothy 4:2). James said, *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”* (James 1:22). The Bible is called the word of God, the word of the Lord, the word of Christ, the word, the scriptures, the commandments of God, the truth, and we believe that it is.

We believe the Bible because it lives up to the standards of our day in the fields of archaeology, history, geography, science, and other areas of learning. For instance, hundreds of years before many of the great archaeological discoveries, the Bible had already revealed these things. One of the great finds of recent times has been the Dead Sea Scrolls. Before their discovery the Old Testament text was based on manuscripts that were dated from A. D. 900 to 1000. The Dead Sea Scrolls, however, containing portions of all the Old Testament books, except for Esther, were dated between 200 B.C. and A.D. 68. These writings help to confirm that the Old Testament Scriptures are genuine. With regard to history, the Bible story and secular history agree. In geography, the cities, mountains, rivers, and seas that we are familiar with today have come down to us through the Bible. Some have thought that the Bible and science disagree but this is not true. The word “science” is based on the idea of true facts, and for sure, the Bible contradicts no truth. The scriptures and false science, or the theories of men, would of course come into

conflict with each other. One example of the Bible and science agreeing would be that the earth is round (Isaiah 40:22; Job 26:7). There are many other examples that could be given if we had the time to present them.

We believe the Bible to be the word of God because of all of the prophecies it contains and how they were fulfilled. One was that Christ would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). Its fulfillment is described in Matthew 1 with the virgin Mary giving birth to Christ. In Joel 2:28,29 it was prophesied that the Lord's Spirit would be poured out on all flesh and fulfilled in Acts 2. We could go on with dozens and dozens of prophecies, and then see how they were fulfilled.

We believe the Bible because it answers the great questions of life. It tells us where man came from, why man is here, and where he is going. It answers the question, "*What must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 2:37,38; Acts 16:30-33).

We believe the Bible because of its great influence upon man for good. It condemns sin and encourages righteous living. The world has been made better because of it.

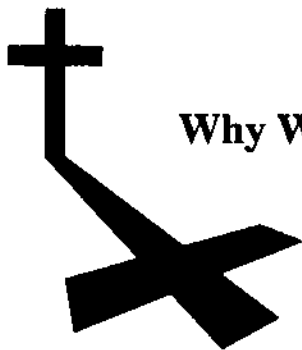
We believe the Bible because the Lord's word will never pass away. Christ said, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*" (Matthew 24:35). Peter tells us that the word of God will live and abide forever (1 Peter 1:23). Christ said we will be judged by the word in the last day (John 12:48).

True, the Bible has had many enemies but they have

come and gone while the Bible lives on. What is your evaluation of this book? Do you believe it? Many do. As a matter of fact, it is the most translated book in the world, being the world's best selling book.

I would like to encourage you to read the Bible. Christ said, "*Search the scriptures*" (John 5:39). Paul urged us to study to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Timothy 2:15). Again, Christ said, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4). John wrote, "*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand*" (Revelation 1:3).

If you will read and study God's word, believe it and obey its teaching by believing in God and believing in Christ as the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Christ, and be baptized, that is, buried in water, for the remission of your sins, the Lord will save you and add you to his church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38,47).



## Lesson 5

# Why We Are Not Under The Law

In our study on the Bible we showed how it is divided into three main periods of law. The first was the Patriarchal law, the second was the Mosaic law, and today we are living under the law of Christ. The Bible helps us to distinguish between these laws by being divided into the Old and New Testaments. The Patriarchal and Mosaic laws are to be found in the Old Testament while the law of Christ is to be found in the New Testament portion of the Bible. That within itself helps us to understand that the Old Testament law is no longer binding, whereas the New Testament law continues to be binding up to this time and will remain binding as long as time shall stand. We'll be showing this from the scripture as we proceed with our study.

Whether you are aware of it or not, there are three different major religions in the world today that go to the Old Testament for their faith. They believe it is binding on them and they seek to bind it on others. We will show from the Bible that they are mistaken.

Let me explain now that a testament has reference to

a will. For example, we talk about the last will or testament of this person or that person. Many people of our day make out a will concerning what should happen to their money and property after their death. It is possible that before their death they will make more than one will. This may be because sometime later in life they decide they don't like the first will, and so they make a new will. It should be remembered that as long as they live they can make as many wills as they choose. They can do whatever they want to do with their wealth. But once they die, it is the last will that becomes binding, and if it is a legal will, the money and property must be disposed of according to the stipulations of that will.

Likewise, God made a testament or a will for his people that continued for hundreds of years. During these years it was binding. But the day came in which God made a new testament or will. When he gave that will, and it was sealed with the death of Christ, the first testament became old. That is why we refer to the Old Testament and the New Testament. Just as one can't live under the secular laws of this country as they existed a hundred years ago, neither can we go back to the Old Testament law for the things we do in the name of religion. Rather, the people of this day must live by the present day law and likewise we who live today must be content to be governed by the law of Christ as revealed in the New Testament.

Let us now go to the scriptures to see if this is what they teach. Turn with me to the book of Hebrews in the New Testament. There the writer says, in speaking of



Christ, *"And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth"* (Hebrews 9:15-17). Please notice that when Christ died on the cross, he made it possible for those who were faithful under the first testament to be saved, but when he died he took away the first testament and replaced it with a new testament. Observe again that he said a testament comes into force only after the testator is dead.

Continuing our study, the Hebrew writer goes on to say, *"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Therefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he*

said, *Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law: Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*" (Hebrews 10:1-10). Note that the writer is showing that the law as set forth in the Old Testament was only a shadow of things to come. He goes on to show that the sacrifices made were not able to permanently take away sin since there was a remembrance again of their sins each year. Then he shows how Christ became a sacrifice once and for all for man's sins and that when he came and offered himself for the sins of man, then he took away the first, that is, the Old Testament, that he might establish the second, that is, the New Testament. Now who would want to go back to the Old Will or Old Law, even if it were possible? Surely no one would want to do so if they understand the significance of Christ's death on the cross and how we are now under a much better law.

Christ himself lived his life under the law of Moses as set forth in the Old Testament, but spent his time in teaching truths and principles that would be binding under the New Testament which would come into existence at the time of his death. Therefore, while Christ lived, he kept the law and encouraged others to do so. He explained, *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth*

*pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*" (Matthew 5:17,18). Here Christ was saying the law would not be destroyed but it would be fulfilled. What would happen to it once it was fulfilled? Naturally it would pass away or no longer be binding.

When Christ died on the cross, the veil of the temple was rent, or torn, from the top to the bottom (Matthew 27:51). This was symbolic of the fact that the temple and all of the things of the old law were being removed and that they would no longer be binding on man.

In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul says we have been made "*ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*" In this verse, and the verses following, Paul makes a contrast between the law, the commandments written in stone, and the law of the Spirit or law of Christ. He shows how the law kills, that it is the ministration of death, but that the law of Christ brings life.

The Apostle Paul wrote the Galatian Christians and talked to them about the differences in the law of Moses and the law of Christ. He said, "*Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under*

*sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For we are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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. And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"* (Galatians 3:19-29). Paul is showing these people that the law brought them to Christ and once that had been done, they were no longer under the law. The schoolmaster represents the law, and faith represents Christ. In other words, the law served its purpose and was taken away. Now we are all one in Christ, that is, if we have obeyed him.

There are many other passages of scripture which show clearly that we are no longer under the law of Moses, or the Old Testament law, but rather we are now under the law of Christ. How blessed we are to be under a better law, a perfect law.

My friends, Christ died for you that you might be saved. If you will believe in him, repent of your sins, confess him as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins, he will save you and add you to his church.



## Lesson 6

# Why We Need To Be Saved

Up to this time we have considered subjects such as why we believe in God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible. In our last lesson we talked about why we are not under the law, that is, the law of Moses or the law of the Old Testament. The scriptures reason that had it been possible to be saved under the law, it would not have been necessary for Christ to come. The very fact that Christ came is proof the law could not save man, and if it could not save man then it cannot save man now.

Since we are talking about why we need to be saved, this implies that man is lost, and this is true. The Apostle Paul wrote, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). Again we read, *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one"* (Romans 3:10). Would that include children or infants? No, since sinners are identified in Romans 3 as being those who speak lies, curse, kill, and oppose God. This would describe those who have grown up to know right from wrong. Infants and children who have not reached the age of accountability are portrayed in the

scriptures as being pure and innocent. Jesus taught that the people of his day should become as little children to enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 18:1-6). Sinners then are beyond that innocent state. They have reached the age when they know right from wrong. They are at this point accountable for their actions. Therefore, sinners are said to be those who are unrighteous, those who have come short of the glory of God, and those who are ungodly. To further describe sinners, John says, "*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law*" (1 John 3:4).

But let's go back to the beginning and see why man became a sinner. When God created man and woman and placed them in the garden of Eden they were without sin. Their job was to dress and keep the garden. God also said they could eat of every tree in the garden except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He said the day they ate of that tree they would surely die. Now let us turn to Genesis 3 and read and see what happened: "*Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good*

*and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons"* (Genesis 3:1-7). The record goes on to tell how God confronted them and both made excuses. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. God then revealed to them that they would have to suffer definite consequences for their disobedience. This included the serpent, or Satan, too. Of course they had been told that on the day they partook of the forbidden fruit they would die, and they did die spiritually, that is, sin came between them and God, thus separating them from each other, and therefore making them enemies of God.

The Bible teaches that God is without sin, that he is perfect, that he is holy. The scriptures further tell us that God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18) and neither does he tempt any man (James 1:13). We are also told that Christ, his Son, was without sin (1 Peter 2:22). All of this is to say that since God was perfect, and since he hated sin, but man had become a sinner, it was not possible for man to approach God while he was still in his sin. The prophet of God said, "*Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*" (Isaiah

59:1,2). Again we read, *"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil"* (1 Peter 3:12).

Throughout the Old Testament period God required sinful man to make atonement for his sin by offering animal sacrifices. In spite of this, man's sin was remembered every year and therefore sacrifices had to be continually made. Such is to say that the blood of bulls and goats could not permanently take away sin (Hebrews 10:1-4). Finally, God sent his own son into the world to become a perfect sacrifice once and for all time for the sins of mankind (Hebrews 10:5-10). Peter said, *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed"* (1 Peter 2:21-24). So man was lost. He was in sin, ungodly, and unrighteous. He could not be saved by his own righteousness or by doing good works. He could not be saved by the law. Paul said, *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"* (Titus 3:5). Again, he said, *"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). Therefore, when Christ died upon the cross, as a perfect man, and therefore a perfect sacrifice, he became man's saviour and hope. We therefore read, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved*" (John 3:16,17).

Again, we read that with the death of Christ his blood was shed and through and by his blood our sins are washed away. Paul said, "*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*" (Ephesians 1:7). Christ himself said, "*For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matthew 26:28). But for Christ's blood to clean one of his sins, that individual must meet the conditions Christ has set forth. Christ has stated that we must believe he is the Son of God (John 14:1; Acts 8:37). He has commanded that we repent of our sins (Luke 13:3). He has said it is necessary to confess him before men (Matthew 10:32). And finally, he has commanded baptism. Peter told a group of people, after they wanted to know what they should do, that they should repent of their sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). It is only when one obeys the Lord that his sins are forgiven and this makes it possible to enter into God's presence as his friend and as his

child. And as one continues faithfully, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses such a person of his sins (1 John 1:70). In other words, although man is a sinner, his sins are hidden from the face of God by the blood of Christ, that is, as long as he puts forth every effort possible to walk according to God's will. Should he purposely and intentionally sin or oppose God then once more sin would come between him and God. In this case the only way to be able to return to God, being an unfaithful child of God, would be to repent of those sins, to confess his faults, and to ask the Lord for forgiveness (James 5:16).

When Christ died for man, he became man's mediator, his reconciler, his advocate, and his High Priest in an effort to bring him back to God and to represent him before the Father (1 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 2:16; 1 John 2:1; Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 10:21).

My friends, we are sinners, lost souls. We cannot save ourselves and neither can any man or man-made law or organization save us. We cannot bribe our way to heaven. We are therefore at the mercy of the Lord. We are not even in a position to bargain with him. We must, however, unconditionally surrender and appeal for the Lord to have mercy upon us. But listen; there is good news for us. Christ died for us that we might be saved, reconciled to God, and one day go to live with God in heaven forevermore. But as stated before, there are some conditions. The Lord wants to see how much we believe in him, how far we are willing to go to be saved. No, this will not make it possible for us to earn

our salvation. We could never do enough to pay for all the Lord is going to do for us. But he does require that we believe in him, turn away from our sins to follow him, confess him as being the Son of God, and be baptized, or buried in water, to reach the blood of Christ and to have our sins washed away (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Matthew 10:32; Romans 6). On doing this, the Lord will forgive us, save us, cleanse us of all of our sins, and add us to his church where we can serve him and be faithful to him until death so that we can go to heaven one day, where we can live with him forevermore.



## Lesson 7

# Why The Gospel Is God's Power To Save

Why would anyone need to be saved? To say that one needs to be saved indicates that he is lost, that he is in danger, that he needs to be rescued, that man is not sufficient within himself. There would be many people who would resent the very thought of such. But these are the ones who are in the worst state of all. It is bad enough to be lost, and to know that you are lost, and especially if you don't know how to be saved, but if you are lost and don't know you are lost, or will not acknowledge that you are lost, how can you be helped? There are many others who are lost, but they think they have been saved, and are in a saved state. These need help, but they are difficult to reach.

But getting back to the question, why is man lost? Man is lost because he is in sin and therefore he is a sinner. Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4) and all unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17). Sin therefore is committed when one does bad or wrong, or breaks God's law. John says, "*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning*" (1 John

3:8). Paul says all have sinned and there are none good (Romans 3:23; Romans 3:10). Of course he is speaking of those who are accountable for their actions. James says, *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"* (James 4:17).

If man is in sin and lost, what can he do to rid himself of sin? He cannot save himself, for sure. Other sinners cannot save him. Good works alone cannot save him. Then, is there no hope? Yes, there is hope. There is hope since there was one who loved us and who was willing to make a way of escape for us.

For hundreds of years God required that man offer animal sacrifices to atone for his sins. But this could not permanently take away sin, since his sins were remembered again each year (Hebrews 10:1-4). Therefore God made the supreme sacrifice by sending his son to be offered as a sacrifice upon the cross, once and for all, for the sins of the world (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). The Hebrew writer says, concerning Christ, *"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified"* (Hebrews 10:12-14).

When Christ died upon the cross for the sins of man, and especially after his burial and resurrection, to assure one and all that he was from God, the Son of God, and a Saviour, it was good news. It was good news because it now meant man could be saved and have the hope of eternal life. This was called the Gospel, that is, the

death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, which meant good news. It is still good news. It is good news provided man will believe it and apply it to his life.

Paul wrote, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Romans 10:13-15). Again, Paul said, *"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. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).

But how can facts save anyone? How can preaching save them? Or how can they save one through believing them? Let's see what the scriptures say. After the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, and just before his return to the Father in Heaven, he said to the Apostles, *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15,16). Matthew recorded the words of our

Lord like this, *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”* (Matthew 28:10,20). In Luke’s account, Christ said, *“Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”* (Luke 24:46,47).

In all three accounts, Christ was saying to the Apostles that they should go into all the world, even to every nation, and every individual, and preach the gospel. In preaching the gospel they were to tell the good news of the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection. But these were only facts. Wasn’t something else preached? Didn’t the Lord command the Apostles to preach something else? Yes, they were to preach belief and baptism and then they were to baptize the believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. But what did this have to do with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? As we study through the book of Acts in particular we see that in all of the cases of conversion there was the preaching of Christ, or the gospel, that the people therefore heard it and understood it. Next they believed it, and then they repented of their sins, confessed their faith in Christ as being the Son of God, and finally they were baptized.

But again what did all of this have to do with the

death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? It just means that Christ not only died that man might be saved, but he placed some conditions before salvation. Being the Son of God, and the one who had died on the cross that man might be saved, and having all authority in heaven and in earth, he had every right to ask man to do certain things. He was saying, in substance, if man wants to be saved, he must believe. He must believe in God and he must believe Christ. He must repent of his sins or turn away from all that is bad and wrong. Next, he must confess Christ as the Son of God. And finally, he must be baptized, buried in water, that his sins might be washed away. Now if he will do that, he will prove to Jesus that he believes in him and wants to be saved. Paul said there is power in the gospel, that is, the Lord works through the death, burial, and resurrection. He said, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith"* (Romans 1:16,17).

In Romans 6 Paul shows that Christ died, was buried, and was resurrected from the grave. He further shows that when one obeys the Lord he sets forth the death, burial, and resurrection in his actions. In other words, as one believes in Christ and repents of his sins, or dies to his sin, he portrays the death of Christ. When he goes down in the waters of baptism to be buried with the Lord, he comes into contact with the benefits of the



Lord's death, and this pictures the burial of Christ. And finally, as one comes up out of the water as a new person, one who is forgiven and free from his old sins, it is suggestive of the Lord's resurrection. Note these words by Paul: *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin"* (Romans 6:3-6). He then goes on to say, *"But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness"* (Romans 6:17,18). The doctrine is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The form he refers to that they had obeyed is a likeness or something similar to the doctrine. As already pointed out, they portrayed or pictured the death, burial, and resurrection by dying to their sins, by being buried in the waters of baptism, and coming up out of the water, that is, to be resurrected from the watery grave to walk in newness of life, to be a new creature, to be a follower of Christ with the hope of eternal life.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 Paul said that the Lord would come back one day to take vengeance on those

who obey not the gospel. Also Peter implied that those who obey not the gospel will be lost (1 Peter 4:17). So the gospel is not only something one is to believe, but it is also that which one must obey. When one believes it and obeys it the Lord saves that person and adds him to his church.

The gospel is clearly set forth in the Scriptures. Paul said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). He also said the curse of the Lord would be upon him if he preached another gospel (Galatians 1:6-9). In other words, he had already preached the one true gospel, and God would curse anyone who preached another gospel, since there was no other true gospel beside the one that had already been preached.

My friends, have you obeyed the gospel of Christ? Do you believe it? Will you obey it? I pray that you will. The Lord has no other way to save you.



## Lesson 8

### Why Faith Is So Important

What is faith? Is there any way to define it? We often go to Hebrews 11:1 where the writer says, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* To illustrate, I believe that great men like Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, and others lived but I have never seen them. There have been facts and evidences left behind that suggests they lived. Their stories have been recorded in the Bible. I have no reason to doubt the Bible. Therefore, I accept such testimony, and based on my trust in the scriptures, I believe those men once lived. I likewise believe that Christ, Paul, Peter, and others lived in the first century. In this case, it is like Paul wrote in Romans 10:17, *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*

There are many great world leaders today whom I have never met them personally, but I believe they exist. There are certain evidences which lead me to have faith in their existence. There are reports about them and newspaper pictures of them. I have seen them on TV and heard their voices on radio broadcasts. Because of

all of these proofs and evidences from reliable sources I have come to believe that these world leaders are genuine.

Likewise, I have never seen God, but I am not the only one. John says, "*No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us*" (1 John 4:12). But even though I have not seen God, I still believe that he exists. Why? Because of the many evidences that prove to me that he is real. There is all creation (Genesis 1:1), the Bible that tells us about him (2 Timothy 3:16,17), and our great need for him (Jeremiah 10:23). The Hebrew writer said, "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*" (Hebrews 11:6).

Lest we have blind faith or vain faith, the Lord has spoken to us so we might better know him and his will for man. He speaks to us through his Son. At the transfiguration of Christ, God spoke from heaven, and said, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him*" (Matthew 17:5). The Hebrew writer said, "*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*" (Hebrews 1:1,2). But how does God speak to us? Through Christ, of course, and the written word. James speaks of it as being the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25). Paul said, "*All scripture is given by inspi-*

*ration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Peter said, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 2:20,21). He said on another occasion, “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 forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:22-25).*

Now if the Lord has spoken to us, and it has been revealed in written form, that is, as recorded in the Bible, then it is up to you and me to read and study God’s word that we might know what God requires of us today. Paul said we should study (2 Timothy 2:15), and Christ says we ought to search the scriptures (John 5:39). But why should we read and study God’s word? Again, that we might know God’s will, believe what he has said and obey him.

There are two ways we can be lost in spite of the fact that God exists and that he has revealed his will to

us. First, we can refuse to believe in God regardless of what he has said. Second, we can mentally accept the fact that God exists, that Christ is his son, and that the Bible contains his word, but we may not choose to obey the Lord. There are many in the world today who advocate that faith alone saves. They point to verses of scripture like John 3:16 where only belief or faith is mentioned. But the question is this: if we really believe in the Lord, will we not do what he has asked us to do? If we fail to obey his teaching, can we say we have the kind of faith he is pleased with?

James discusses the importance of faith, when he said, *“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye gave them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which said, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto*

him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rehab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:14-26). As James illustrated, it is one thing to say you have faith, and it is another thing to prove it. What can faith only do, anyway? Of what value is it? As James pointed out, it is dead. A faith that is alive is a faith that acts, a faith that works.

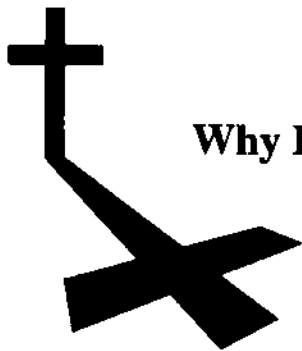
But if faith works, does that not mean salvation is no longer by grace? Paul says, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:8,9). Certainly man can never do enough good works separate and apart from God to be saved and to go to heaven. Neither can man be saved by keeping the law of Moses. And yet, Paul is saying the very thing that many oppose. He is saying here that by grace we are saved through faith. What does that mean? It means grace represents God but faith represents man. God has provided salvation through his grace, but it is up to man to accept salvation through his faith. If God provides, but we refuse to accept, we cannot be saved. If God provides and we accept, he saves us. But how do we accept? By believing what he has said and doing what he has asked us to do. But if we do something, will that not mean salvation is no longer by grace? Not

at all. We can never obey God to the point where we can say we have earned our salvation.

When we turn through the book of Acts and read about the various cases of conversion recorded there, we will see that in every case the gospel, or the will of the Lord, was presented to those who needed to be saved. As a result of hearing God's word, they became believers. But they were not saved at this point. Rather, on the basis of their faith they went on to repent of their sins, to confess Christ as the Son of God, and to be baptized for the remission of their sins. Now when they did that, the Lord saved them and added them to his church. Read Acts chapters 2,8,9,10 and 16 in particular. But could they have been saved by faith only? No, no one. It was only when their faith was strong enough to lead them to obey the Lord that they were saved. The same is true today. Christ said one must believe and be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16). Suppose one believes but he is unwilling to be baptized? Can he be saved anyway? Not according to Mark 16:16. In this case he would be classified as an unbeliever, and Christ said if one believed not, he would be damned. When we believe in the Lord, we will do what he says every time, provided we have a saving faith.

What kind of faith do you have? Is your faith a working faith? Are you willing to act on you faith? If you will obey the Lord, he will save you and add you to his church.





## Lesson 9

# Why Repentance Is So Necessary

Repentance is a Bible subject. It means to have a change of mind, a change of course which leads to a change of life. At the same time repentance is more than just feeling sorry for the wrong that has been done. Sorrow would be included in repentance but one might be sorry for his sin because he got caught. In that case, he still needs to repent or to quit that which is bad and wrong in his life. The Apostle Paul said, *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death”* (2 Corinthians 7:10).

The Lord defined repentance in the story of the man who had two sons. We read, *“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the*

*kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him"* (Matthew 21:28-32). Jesus was dealing here with the chief priests and the elders of his day. In other words, these were religious people. Yet, they were in religious error. Jesus is therefore telling them that they need to repent and then he illustrates what it means to repent. He said a person who repents is one who said he would not but then he changed his mind and decided he would. The other son said he would go and work in his father's vineyard but then he would not. Christ asked his audience which son did the will of the father. They said the first one, the one who said he would not go but then he chose to go. The Lord said that the publicans and harlots of that day would enter the kingdom of God before the religious people of that time because the publicans and harlots would repent, but the priests and elders would not.

But why is repentance so necessary? Because the world is so full of sin, unrighteousness, ungodliness, immorality, and the works of the flesh. Whether sin is in the mind, in one's speech, or in one's life, it can destroy. Paul said, "*For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 6:23). Again, he said, "*Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that*

*soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*" (Galatians 6:7,8).

If sin is destructive, and it is in this world, who must repent or turn from their sins? All accountable people, since all who know right from wrong have sinned (Romans 3:23). They have either broken God's law or have neglected to do the Lord's will.

Back in Old Testament times the world became so wicked God even repented he had made man. That means he was sorry he had created man since he had become so evil. God then sent forth Noah, a righteous man, to preach repentance to the people and to warn them that if they did not repent they would be destroyed in a great flood. Had they listened, and had they turned away from their wickedness, they would have been spared. But they would not listen and as a result all except Noah and his wife and their three sons and their wives were destroyed in the flood (Genesis 6-8).

Perhaps you remember the story of Jonah. We read, *"Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare thereof and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord"* (Jonah 1:1-3). The record goes on to tell how there was a storm on the sea, and the crew, deciding that Jonah was the one who was responsible for this, took him immediately and cast

him into the sea. Then the Lord made a great fish to swallow him, and he remained in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. Then the Lord had the fish to vomit Jonah up on dry land. Reading on, the record says, *"And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three day's journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, and they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not"* (Jonah 3). You will note that Jonah repented of trying to run

away from the Lord and the responsibility that had been given to him, and when he went to preach to wicked Nineveh the great city repented and turned away from her sin. Finally, God changed his mind about destroying Nineveh and thus spared it because the city was willing to repent. We can see that when God's word was proclaimed, and when it produced repentance, this resulted in God being willing to spare all concerned. But had repentance not taken place all of these would have been destroyed.

Throughout the Old Testament period God pleaded with Israel again and again to turn away from wickedness and to walk according to his will. He promised that if they would do this, he would be their God, would fight their battles for them, and would bless them as no other people had been blessed. But Israel continued to go astray, to accept the gods of those around them, and to walk in the paths of wickedness. As a result, God punished them, even allowing the enemy to take them away into captivity more than one time. All of this was the direct result of failing to repent. The wise man said, "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Proverbs 14:34).

We read in Matthew 3:1-3 that John the Baptist came preaching, "*Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" Christ explained to the people of his day that if they failed to repent they would perish (Luke 13:3). When Peter and the Apostles preached to a large audience on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem, some of whom had taken part in crucifying

Christ, and they were cut to the heart by the things they heard, that is, they became believers and wanted to know what they should do. *"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 Spirit"* (Acts 2:38). That means that it was necessary for them to turn away from their sins, or to quit sinning, if they wanted to be forgiven of their sins. It further meant that repentance was one of the conditions of pardon. Suppose, however, they had been unwilling to repent. Then they could not have been saved even though they might have been willing to believe in Christ and to be baptized. On the other hand, repentance alone could not save them. To be saved they had to hear the truth of God, believe in Christ, repent or turn away from their sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:37,38; Acts 8:36-39).

In Acts 17:30 we read, *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."* He is saying that at one time God may have overlooked certain things, or might have tolerated some things, but he says now God commands all men everywhere to repent. Then in Acts 17:31 he says the day will come in which all will be judged by him who was raised from the dead. Therefore to be prepared to meet him, we must repent, or turn away from our sins, that we might do all the things the Lord requires of us so we can be saved in this world and in the world to come.

But what about the Christian who falls away or sins? That means that sin has hidden the Lord's face from him (1 Peter 3:12), and the only way sin can be removed or forgiven is for the erring to repent of his sins, confess his faults, and to ask the Father for forgiveness (Acts 8:14-25; James 5:16).

Now, what about you? Have you repented or turned away from your sins? Realize that this is in your interest. When you obey God by believing in Christ, repenting of your sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God, and you are baptized to wash away your sins, and you live a good and godly life, you are going to be a changed person, and your life will be better, richer, and happier. When enough do this, things all around you are going to begin to change for the better. Try it and see if it doesn't work.



## Lesson 10

# Why We Are Baptized

Baptism is a Bible subject. We must therefore go to the Bible to find out what it is, the purpose of it, and the importance of it.

Going to the scriptures, we first read of a man named John who went out baptizing. John baptized so many he was referred to as John the Baptist, or John the baptizer. In Matthew 3:1 we read, *"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."* Again we read, *"And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized"* (John 3:23).



As we continue to look at John's work, we read where he even baptized Christ. The record says, *"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:13-17).

Now what is the significance of John's baptism? John was the forerunner of Christ, the one who was sent to prepare the way for the Lord. He was also given the task of introducing baptism to the people of his day, making it easier for Christ and the Apostles to come along and teach baptism. But the baptism that John preached was one that was preceded by repentance, was an immersion in water, and was for the remission of sins. It was not done in the name of Christ and it did not carry the promise of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when Paul came across a group of people at Ephesus who had been baptized according to John's baptism, but who knew nothing of the Holy Spirit, after being further taught the truth concerning what Christ required of them, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:1-5). That means John's baptism lasted until the death of Christ, and then it was replaced with the

baptism that Christ taught.

After the death of Christ, prior to his return to the Father in heaven, he said to the Apostles, “...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15,16). Matthew’s version goes like this: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19,20). In these various verses of scripture we have what we call “The Great Commission.” This commission was simply to take the gospel to all the world, that is, the good news that Christ had died, had been buried, and had been resurrected. There were also certain conditions that were to be preached, namely belief in Christ and baptism. Only by obeying these commands could one be saved. Notice that Christ said, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16).

Baptism then is one of the conditions of salvation. We are told in 1 Peter 3:21 that baptism saves but it does not say, and neither does any other verse of scripture teach, that baptism only saves. Baptism is merely the last condition one must comply with before one is saved.

As we read through the book of Acts we observe time and time again where people obeyed the Lord. In

every case it was directly stated that these people heard the word of God preached, they believed it, and they were baptized. In most of the cases it either states it, or it is implied, that those who obeyed the Lord also repented of their sins and confessed Christ as the Son of God. Putting all of these together, you have the scriptures teaching that the word of God must be preached to produce faith. Read Acts 2 and see how Peter and the Apostles preached the gospel to a great crowd of people and only after they had heard the truth of God did they obey the Lord. Then we read in Acts 16:31, after the question was asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?", Paul and Silas told the jailer there that he should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But this man didn't know about Christ to believe in him. The solution was to preach to him and his family. When that was done they became believers in Christ and were baptized. Next, we read in Acts 2:38 that the people wanted to know what they should do. They were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins that they might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). They had already heard the gospel preached and believed it (Acts 2:37), but they wanted to know what else they should do. They were told they now needed to repent and be baptized. Next, in Acts 8:29-39 we have the story of the conversion of the man from Ethiopia. The record tells how Philip preached Christ to him. When they came to a body of water, the eunuch wanted to obey the Lord in baptism. Philip explained to him that he could do so if he believed with all of his heart. Then we read, "*And he*

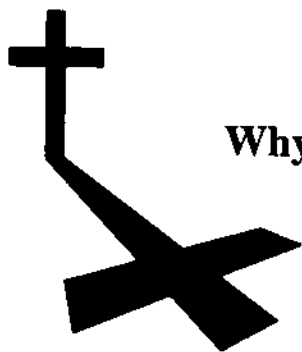
*answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"* (Acts 8:37). Then Philip took him down into the water and baptized him. And finally, in all of the cases of conversion in the book of Acts, it specifically states that in every case the individual or individuals who wanted to obey the Lord was baptized. We read in Acts 2:38 that the people were told, *"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."* In Acts 8 we are told that Philip baptized the eunuch. In Acts 10 Cornelius and his household were baptized. In Acts chapters 9 and 22 the scripture tells us how Saul obeyed the Lord, and in so doing he was asked to arise and be baptized to have his sins washed away. In Acts 16 the jailor and his household were baptized the same hour of the night.

We are told that baptism is a burial. Paul said, *"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead"* (Colossians 2:12). Also, read Romans 6:3,4. The scripture says baptism is a burial in water. When Philip baptized the man from Ethiopia, he took him down into the water and baptized him and he brought him up out of the water (Acts 8:29-39). Baptism puts one into Christ (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27) and puts one into the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). We read in John 3:3-5 that one must be born of water and of the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. The water there refers to baptism and the kingdom of God is talking about the Lord's church. At that

time the kingdom, or the church, had not been established, and therefore one could not enter it, but Christ was talking about that which would shortly come to pass. Today, of course, one must be born of water and of the Spirit to enter the church and that just simply means one must obey the commands of the gospel to be saved and be added to the church according to the word of the Spirit, the Bible.

Why then are we baptized? We are baptized because Christ has commanded we do it to be saved, to enter Christ and the church, a symbol of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection in our obedience as recorded in Romans 6. That is, Christ died on the cross and we are to die to our sins. Christ was buried in a literal tomb and we are to be buried in the waters of baptism. Christ came forth from the grave, resurrected from the dead, triumphant over hell, death, and the grave, and when we come up out of the water we are resurrected from a watery grave with the forgiveness of our sins, being a new creature, and thus to walk in newness of life or to live the Christian life. So in obeying the Lord in baptism we are saying that we believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and any time one sees a person being baptized according to the teaching of the Bible, he is being taught of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection and that Christ still lives.

Have you been baptized according to the teaching of the Bible? If not, we pray you will continue to study these matters, and hopefully you will soon make a decision to obey the Lord.



## Lesson 11

# Why We Believe In Obedience

Obedience is a very important lesson to learn and I trust you will think very seriously about the things which will be said.

In a time in which so many people have little respect for authority, and where there is so much civil disobedience, it is refreshing to read in the Bible where God not only required obedience, but rewarded those who did obey. In a time when so many people in the religious world go stubbornly on their way to do as they please, thus exalting the teachings of men, it is interesting to see that in the scriptures the emphasis is on being doers of the word and traveling on the straight and narrow way which leads to heaven.

Go with me now to the Bible itself to see how God blessed those who obeyed him and punished those who disobeyed him. The Apostle Paul had this in mind when he said, "*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off*" (Romans 11:22).

First, we'll consider some examples of those who

obeyed the Lord. One of the best known examples of obedience in the Old Testament is that of Noah. He built an ark to save himself and his family members when the Lord sent a flood to destroy the wicked upon the earth. The Bible says, *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord"* (Genesis 6:5-8). The record goes on to show how God revealed to Noah his intention to send a flood to destroy the wicked. At the same time, God commanded Noah to build an ark, giving him all of the plans, so that he and his wife and their three sons and their wives, along with a specified number of animals, might be saved from the flood. Then the record goes on to say, *"Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he"* (Genesis 6:22). As a result, Noah and all of those in the ark were saved from the flood, but all of the wicked and disobedient were destroyed by the flood.

In 2 Kings 5 there is the story of Naaman. We read, *"Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a*

leper" (2 Kings 5:1). Yes, he was a leper and therein he had a real problem. As it turned out, when Syria went out to battle Israel, they brought back captive a little maid and she waited on Naaman's wife. One day she remarked to her mistress, "*Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy*" (2 Kings 5:3). Someone took this information to Naaman and then the King agreed to send him with a letter to the King of Israel, along with some gifts. The King of Israel was very upset over this because he thought Syria would use this as excuse to further punish him and Israel since he would not be able to cure Naaman of his leprosy. But Elisha, the prophet of God, heard about it and sent word to the King of Israel that he should send Naaman to him. Then Naaman came to his door, but Elisha sent a messenger out to him, to tell him he should go and wash in Jordan seven times, and on so doing his flesh would come again to him, and he would be clean. This made Naaman very angry, since the prophet had not even shown the courtesy to come out to meet him. Furthermore, he thought the prophet would come out and call on his Lord and strike his hand over the place and he would be cured of his leprosy. He further reasoned that surely the rivers of Abana and Pharpar back in Damascus were just as good as the waters of Jordan. So he turned and departed in a rage. Then his servants began to reason with him, and they asked him if the prophet had given him some difficult instructions, would he not have attempted to carry out those instruc-



tions so that he might be healed. After thinking about it, he then went and dipped in the river Jordan one time, two times and up to five times, and six times, but he was still a leper. But when he dipped the seventh time and came up out of the water, the record says "*his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean*" (2 Kings 5:14). Now who healed Naaman? God healed him. But when did he heal him? Only after he carried out the prophet's instructions. What if he had not obeyed? He would not have been healed. Obedience made all the difference.

We could cite numerous other examples to show that when there was obedience that God's blessings followed. But there are many other examples of individuals who disobeyed God and how they were punished. You remember the story of Adam and Eve, and how they listened to the serpent and disobeyed God by partaking of the forbidden fruit? As a result they died spiritually that day and were punished physically in other ways, including having physical death passed upon them and all of mankind (Genesis 3). In 1 Samuel 15, through Samuel God commanded Saul, the King of Israel, to destroy the Amalekites, enemies of God's people. Saul gathered his army and went forth to obey the Lord. But he spared King Agag, the "*best of the sheep and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly*" (1 Samuel 15:9). Then they went home. Reading on, the record says, "*And Samuel came*

*to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"* (1 Samuel 15:13,14). Saul explained that the people had spared the best of the sheep and oxen that they might offer them as a sacrifice to the Lord. After further discussion, we read, *"And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"* (1 Samuel 15:22). Then Saul confessed he had sinned, but it was too late. As a result of his disobedience, Saul was rejected by the Lord as being king over Israel. How easy it would have been for him to have obeyed the Lord, but the sad part was that he did not.

When people disobeyed the Lord, they had to suffer the consequences. As we have been doing, Paul went back to the Old Testament to give some examples of how God dealt with the people of that time and then he said, *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scripture might have hope"* (Romans 15:4). For sure, we ought to learn valuable lessons from these Old Testament stories.

But coming on over to Christ himself, we read concerning him, *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"* (Hebrews 5:8,9).

Therefore, as Christ obeyed God in all things, likewise he requires obedience of us and all of mankind. Read through the life of Christ, as recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John of the New Testament, and see how the Lord always required obedience of those who would come to him. This was the means of testing their faith in him, their sincerity, and their humility. You will never find one example of the Lord bestowing his blessings on those who refused to obey him.

Christ said, *"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). Again, he said, *"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock..."* (Matthew 7:24). James said, *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"* (James 1:22). Peter said we have purified our souls through obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22). Paul tells us that if we fail to obey the gospel the Lord will come to take vengeance on us (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Christ promises that if we will do his commandments and remain faithful unto death we will receive a crown of life (Revelation 22:14; Revelation 2:10).

The reason people are lost is simply because they choose not to obey the Lord. Man cannot save himself and neither can he be saved by doing things his way, even religiously. One can believe as he wishes, be a member of some man-made church, wear the names of men, worship God his way, but he can't be saved and go

to heaven that way. If he is going to be saved he must do what the Lord wants him to do. There are no exceptions.

Have you obeyed the Lord? Will you obey him? Christ said, *“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15,16). If you will read through the book of Acts of the New Testament, you will find in every case of conversion all the people did the same thing. They all heard the gospel, they believed in Christ, they repented of their sins, they confessed Christ as the Son of God, and they were baptized for the remission of their sins. When they did that the Lord saved them and added them to his church. There were no exceptions.



## Lesson 12

# Why We Are Members Of The Church Of Christ

The word church comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* and means "the called out." In this case Christ has called people out of the world to follow him. Speaking of his disciples, Christ said, *"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"* (John 17:14). At the time Christ was being taken into custody, to be later tried and crucified, he said to those gathered around him, *"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence"* (John 18:36). The kingdom which Christ speaks of here has reference to the church. It had not been established but was near at hand (Matthew 3:1).

The church as set forth in the Bible is spoken of in the sense of being local, as in the case of the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2), the church at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1), as well as many others. Then it is spoken of in a world-wide sense. In this case, all of these local churches or congregations put together make

up the one church, Christ's church, or the church of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16). Of course, whether local or world-wide, the church is one; it belongs to Christ, and wears the name of Christ.

The church of Christ is spoken of in the scriptures as being the kingdom of God (Luke 21:31), the kingdom of Christ (Ephesians 5:5), the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19), church of God (Acts 20:28), churches of Christ (Romans 16:16), body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), house of God (1 Timothy 3:15), and so on. The Lord's word also talks about the church as being the bride of Christ (John 3:29), the sheepfold (John 10:1-18), and the vine and branches (John 15:1-8). Another way of putting it, the church is the spiritual body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12), being made up of Christians (Acts 11:26), and those who are saved (Acts 2:47).

The church of Christ is the one and only church you can read about in the scriptures. There are many imitations, all of which are man-made, but there is but one true church.

Now I want to tell you why my brethren and I are members of the church of Christ instead of some other church.

We are members of the church of Christ because it was spoken of in prophecy. Isaiah said the Lord would set up his kingdom, or house, in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-3). Joel said it would come with power (Joel 2:28,29). Daniel said it would never be destroyed but that it would stand forever (Daniel 2:44). All of these prophecies were fulfilled with the establishment of the kingdom, or

church, as recorded in Acts 2.

We are members of the church of Christ because Christ promised to build it. Christ said it would come with power in the life time of some of those who were living at the time (Mark 9:1). Again, after the Apostles had confessed Christ as the Son of God, he responded by saying, *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18). The church had not been established yet, but it was going to be built shortly thereafter. If one was going to be a member of any church how could he find a church that would be better than the one Christ said he would build?

We are members of the church of Christ because it was established in the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 33. This is the one which was spoken of in prophecy and the one promised by Christ himself. It was on the day of Pentecost, a Jewish feast day, when Jews had come together from all parts of the world, the Lord chose as being the day he would build his church. It was on this day that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles enabling them to speak in the languages of the people and to perform miracles to convince them they were men of God. Then after preaching Christ to them, some 3000 of them obeyed the Lord by believing in Christ, repenting of their sins, and by being baptized for the remission of their sins that they might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The record goes on to say the Lord added the saved to the church. All of this is stated in

Acts 2. Now if this be true, and it is, this means that any church in existence which did not have its beginning in Jerusalem in A.D. 33 cannot be the Lord's church. In this case, you might respond by saying we are saying that our church is the only church that belongs to Christ. No, we are not talking about **our** church. Instead, we are speaking of the Lord's church. We don't have a church. If this church was our church it would be a waste of time to have anything to do with it. Rather, we are saying the church belongs to Christ and it is identified as being the one which was established in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, in A.D. 33. That church has been in existence ever since that time, and is the one and only church which belongs to Christ. Check it out and see for yourself.

We are members of the church of Christ because it is built on Christ. Again, when Peter and the Apostles confessed Christ as the Son of God, he said he would build his church upon that rock, or upon the fact that he was the Son of God (Matthew 16:18). And the church rests upon that fact even to this day. If it could have been proven that Christ was not the Son of God the church would have ceased to exist long ago. Paul said, *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 3:11). Peter described Christ as being the chief corner stone in the foundation (1 Peter 2:4-8). Any other foundation beside Christ would not last (Matthew 7:24-27). Because the church does rest upon Christ, the church therefore is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). That is,



the church is built on Christ and because of this the church is able to uphold the truth or to proclaim the truth to the world.

We are members of the church of Christ because it was purchased by the blood of Christ. Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus, *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). Paul said in Ephesians 5:25 that Christ gave himself for it. That means he died for it. In Matthew 16:18 Christ said he would build his church, that it would be his. Another way of explaining it, Christ died on the cross to save man from his sins. When one or more obeys him he saves them and adds them to others who have also been cleansed and purified through the shedding of his blood. Again, he died on the cross, he paid the price with his life, so man might be saved and all of the saved together are called the church. We read in Acts 2:47 that the saved are added to the church. Now, if the church was so important Christ was willing to die for it, to shed his blood for it, surely that makes the church important.

We are members of the church of Christ because it wears his name. Christ said it would be his and he is said to be the saviour of the body, the church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:23). That being true, it denotes ownership, and when one owns something, it is in his name. There are many indications of this in the scriptures, like churches of Christ, speaking of congregations

of the church (Romans 16:16), the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), kingdom of his dear son (Colossians 1:13), all of which simply refer to the church of Christ. Not only so, but all of the members also wear the name of Christ, being called Christians (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). Peter declared that salvation is in the name of Christ (Acts 4:12).

We are members of the church of Christ because Christ is saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), head of it (Colossians 1:18), and there is but one (Ephesians 4:4; Ephesians 1:22,23).

Are you a member of this church? Are you a member of any church? Keep in mind that Christ has but one church, and it is therefore the church you need to enter. If you will believe in Christ, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins, the Lord will save you and add you to his church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38,47). The church does not save, but Christ is the saviour of the church. Therefore we must be members of the church to be saved, and to live the Christian life. Finally, the Lord will come back one day to receive it and to take it to heaven.



## Lesson 13

### Why We Are Christians Only

As you may know, there are millions of people around the world who claim to believe in Christ but they do not wear his name. Instead, they wear the names of men, the names of doctrines or teachings, or the names of some day of the week. We believe this is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. At the same time, there are several millions of us throughout the world who reject the teachings and names of men. We believe that when we became believers in Christ, and we obeyed his teachings, that made us Christians and Christians only.

When we go to God's word we are told salvation is in the name of Christ. We read, "*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). True, there are some great men in the world today. We appreciate them and respect them for who they are and what they are. There have always been great men, and no doubt this will continue as long as time shall stand. But there is no man big enough, important enough, or great enough that we could honor

him by wearing his name. That is because no man can save us. Only Christ can save us, and as proof that he is our saviour, then we should wear only his name.

The Bible teaches that when we became believers in Christ and we obeyed him by repenting of our sins, confessing him as the Son of God, and by being baptized to wash away our sins, then he saves us, and adds us to his church, and therefore means that we belong to him, and we wear his name to denote his ownership. Christ said, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:16). Then we read where a group of people gladly received his word and were baptized (Acts 2:47). As a result of this, we read, *"And the Lord added those daily such as should be saved"* (Acts 2:47). But whose church were they added to in this case? They were added to Christ's church. He said he would build his church (Matthew 16:18), and this was that church. Again, we read in Acts 20:28 that Christ bought the church with his blood; that is, he paid the price that was necessary so souls might be saved, and all the saved together make up the church. In Ephesians 5:23 Paul says Christ is the saviour of the body, or the church. But again, all of this denotes the fact that those who are saved, and those who have been added to the church, belong to Christ since he is the saviour of the church. This means that if Christ is the saviour and the saviour of the church, that we must wear the name of Christ as individuals and as the church to show we belong to Christ. If we do not belong to him then naturally we have no right to wear his name. If we

wear the names of others, it indicates we do not belong to Christ. You see, if something belongs to me it is in my name, it wears my name. If I own some property or a house, it is recorded in my name. If I have a wife she honors me by wearing my name. If I have children they indicate that I am their father by wearing my name. If these and other things are in the names of others, how would I be able to prove they belong to me? The same is true with Christ and his people. This is why we wear the name of Christ, why we are Christians only.

The word Christian appears three times in the New Testament. The first of these is found in Acts 11:26, "*...And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*" What were they before this time? They were also Christians, or followers of Christ, but the Lord's people first began to be called Christians there at Antioch. The next reference to the name Christian is found in Acts 26:28. On this occasion Paul was teaching King Agrippa, and on questioning his faith, we read, "*Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*" Some have said that the King was making mockery of the idea of becoming a Christian. But whether he was sincere or not, he knew something about the name Christian. Perhaps he had already heard a great deal about Christianity even prior to meeting Paul. As a matter of fact, Paul was in custody at this time and would soon be sent to Rome to be tried by Caesar because he was a Christian and because he was preaching Christ wherever he went. King Agrippa probably was already fully acquainted with the

Christians of his day, but if not, surely Paul told him about Christ and what he would need to do to become a Christian. Notice also that if the followers of Christ had been wearing other names of that day then King Agrippa would have also made mention of it. But since he spoke of only the name Christian we must conclude that followers of Christ were known as Christians in 1 Peter 4:16. He said, "*Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*" Here Peter was contrasting the idea of suffering because of sin and suffering for the name Christian. He shows that it would be such a disgrace to suffer for some bad or wrong, and especially if one were guilty, but if one had to suffer for the name Christian there was nothing to be ashamed of in this case. Who is a Christian? He is a follower of Christ, one who is like Christ. He is a godly person, one who is honest, and one who always tries to do right. What's wrong with that? Nothing. Therefore one should not be ashamed to have to suffer some for the name Christian, but rather he should rejoice and glorify God for the opportunity to suffer some for that worthy name. Although James does not mention the name Christian, still he no doubt is referring to that name when he said concerning the enemies of Christ, "*Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?*" (James 2:7). This inspired writer therefore speaks of a worthy name, a name by which God's children were called. What greater name could they have worn than the name of Christ, than the name Christian? But one is

not only to take the name Christian when he obeys the Lord, but that person must show by his life that he is a Christian, that is, he is Christ-like, he is a faithful follower of Christ in all he says and does. Therefore, Paul wrote to the Christians of his day, *“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).

We are Christians only because of what the Bible teaches. The scriptures tell us when one becomes a believer in Christ and obeys the Lord Christ saves him and therefore he belongs to Christ. As such, he wears the name of Christ, the name Christian, to show who owns him, who he belongs to. How could one wear some other name and show that ownership? How could he wear some man-made name and honor the name of Christ?

We are Christians only because we follow only Christ. Christ is our Lord and Master. We were invited to come to him (Matthew 11:28-30) and we answered his call. He asked us to believe in him and to obey him, and we did so (Mark 16:15,16).

We are Christians only because we are members of his family, the church. As family members we wear the family name (Ephesians 3:14,15).

We are Christians only because we are living the Christian life. We meet each first day of the week for worship (Acts 20:7), and we strive daily to follow Christ (Luke 9:23).

Now, let me ask you something. Are you a believer

in Christ? Are you a Christian only? If you are a member of a church which you cannot read about in the Bible, and you wear some man-made name, you are not a Christian even though you may claim to be one. Many claim to be Christians when they are not. If you are a Christian you are able to go to the word of God and give book, chapter, and verse to show what you did to become a Christian and to show why you are a Christian.

If you are not a Christian, we would like to encourage you to become one. If you will believe in Christ, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins, then the Lord will save you and add you to his church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38,47). As a member of the Lord's family, his church, as an individual member you will be a Christian. It is so easy to do and it is so satisfying to know that you are a Christian just like Peter, Paul, John, and all the others were of the first century. If they could be Christians only, you can be only a Christian. Why be more or less? Just be what the Lord wants you to be and that will be enough.





## Lesson 14

### Why We Believe In Unity

There is nothing more important in religion than unity. There is unity between God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. There is unity in the scriptures. There is unity among believers, God's family, the church. There is unity in the Christian life between man and the Lord.

Unity means oneness, wholeness, and completeness. It is being able to agree, to unite, to cooperate, and to work together.

We as the Lord's people, the church of our Lord, believe in unity because the opposite of that is division. Before continuing to think about unity, let us see what the scriptures say about division. I believe when we see what division is, what it represents, and what it leads to, then we will be greater believers and promoters of unity. The wise man, Solomon, said in the long ago one of the things the Lord hates is *"he that soweth discord among brethren"* (Proverbs 6:19). That simply has reference to one who causes division. The Apostle Paul wrote the Christians at Rome, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the*

*doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple"* (Romans 16:17,18). Please note that he encouraged them to mark those who were causing divisions and offenses. He further says that these people were to be marked because they were doing and teaching things that were contrary to the doctrine, or what they had been taught, and these were the things, he says, that caused divisions. Paul says that in this case that they should be avoided because they were not serving the Lord. He says that instead, they were serving their own belly, that is, they were doing such things for their own personal gain. Finally, he warns against them because they were deceiving people with their good words and fair speeches. He was very specific, wasn't he? And yet it was necessary to warn them about such people lest more of them be misled.

In 1 Corinthians 1:11-17 Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, "*For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, 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. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to*

*baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."*

In the foregoing we note that Paul found that there was division among the Christians at Corinth. Some of the members were claiming to belong to Paul, some to Apollos, some to Peter, and some to Christ. To help them to see that this was wrong, Paul asked them three questions: Is Christ divided? Was Paul, Apollos, or Peter crucified for you? And finally, were you baptized in the name of Paul, Apollos, or Peter? Of course they knew Christ was not divided, that Christ had been crucified for them, and they had been baptized in the name of Christ. That being true, it was absurd for them to follow Paul and others. Since Christ was not divided, but Christ had been crucified for them, and they had been baptized in the name of Christ, they should follow Christ and Christ only. In doing so they would be united. But because of the situation that had developed there at Corinth, Paul said he was glad he had not baptized more of them lest they try to follow him. He said, however, that he had baptized the household of Stephanas and Crispus and Gaius. He went on to state that the Lord had not sent him to baptize but to preach the gospel. We know he was not saying baptism was not necessary, or that he should not baptize, because he mentioned some he had baptized, but he was saying that he had not been sent to baptize only but his main purpose in coming was to preach the gospel. Naturally, if he preached the gospel, and there were those who want-

ed to obey the gospel, then it would be necessary to baptize them. But he was saying that first things should come first.

I think we can see in the various verses of scripture we have quoted, and in the case of the Christians at Corinth, the Lord is not pleased with division, but rather, he opposes it and condemns it. That being true, let us see what the scriptures have to say about unity. Going back to the church at Corinth, Paul wrote the Christians there, *"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 in the same judgment"* (1 Corinthians 1:10). As you can see, division is condemned while unity is encouraged.

In John 17 the Lord prayed to the Father on behalf of the Apostles, and all of those believers who should follow them, *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 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 sent 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 17:20-23). Please notice that Christ said he was praying for those who should believe on him through their word, that is, through the preaching of

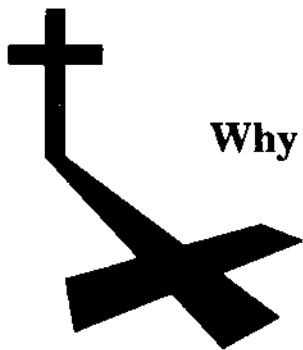
the gospel as recorded in Mark 16:15,16, and that they all might be one. Naturally, if all the apostles preached the same message, and all believed it, all would believe the same thing, do the same thing, and all would be one. Again, Christ prayed they all might be one even as he and the Father were one. This would be perfect unity. Another reason he prayed they all might be one was to convince the world the Father had sent him. He knew if they were all divided and opposing one another, it would only do harm, and the world would laugh at them. Remember that unity is a powerhouse for good but division is destructive.

In Ephesians 4:1-6 the Apostle Paul lays down a basis for unity. He says, *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* Please observe that Paul makes a plea for unity on the basis that there is one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, one body or church, and one hope. In other words, he says here there is one God or Father who has revealed his will to us through the Holy Spirit, one Lord and saviour Jesus Christ, and when we all believe the same teaching and obey the same Lord in baptism, which is a burial in water, the Lord adds all of us to the one body,

the church, and in the church we all have the hope of eternal life. My friends, how can we be divided if we all believe and obey the same Lord? That will not divide us but unite us. In the long ago, the Psalmist David said, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*" (Psalms 133:1).

My friends, we know there is much division in the religious world today among those who claim to follow Christ. This is sad and heartbreaking, but do not blame Christ and his teaching for this. Rather, man is responsible for this because so many are not willing to do what the Lord has asked. Please do not let this deceive you. Go to Christ and his word for the truth. Believe it and obey it and in so doing you will be saved and added to the one church, the Lord's church, which we read about in the Bible. As such, you will be united with all others who have truly obeyed the Lord. Yes, it is still possible to have the kind of unity Christ prayed for. If we want to be saved and go to heaven we will settle for nothing less.

Are you a Christian and a member of the church of Christ? If not, we pray you will become one. You can do so by believing in Christ, repenting of your sins, confessing your faith in Christ, and by being baptized for the remission of your sins. The Lord will save you and add you to the church so you might be one in Christ. Not only so, but you can be sure the Lord will not make a mistake. He knows when you obey him and he knows which church to add you to, his church, the one and only church which belongs to Christ.



## Lesson 15

# Why Christ Died On The Cross

In the beginning when God created man and woman they were perfect and without sin. But they did not remain in that pure state for long. Soon they disobeyed God and died spiritually, being driven from the beautiful garden of Eden, to suffer the consequences of their sin, such as man having to make his living with the sweat of his brow and woman having to suffer the pain of childbirth, and to eventually die physically (Genesis 1-3). Man had now become God's enemy with sin coming between them.

Since man could not restore himself to that once perfect state, and inasmuch as even animal sacrifices could not permanently take away sin, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world, and to serve as a mediator between God and man, thus to make it possible for man to return to God (Hebrews 10:4; Genesis 3:15). So in due time, God sent his Son into the world to be born of the Virgin Mary. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary, and said, *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name **Jesus**: for he shall*

*save his people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21).

We are told that Jesus came into this world as had been promised and as had been prophesied. Strange, but God sent him to die. We read, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved*" (John 3:16,17). Not only did he send him to die, but he was sent to die for sinners, the ungodly and the wicked. Paul said, "*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him*" (Romans 5:6-9). Christ said to his disciples, "*This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*" (John 15:12-14). John wrote, "*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*" (1 John 4:9,10).

While Christ was on earth, he went about doing good. He healed diseases, gave sight to the blind, raised



the dead, and performed many other miracles so he might prove he was sent from God. John wrote, *"And 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).

Jesus was a good man; he was without sin. Paul said of God in speaking of Christ, *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). Peter said there was no sin in him, neither was guile found in him (1 Peter 2:22).

And yet, we are told that this good man who went about doing good, this one who had no sin, the very Son of God, died on the cross for the sins of the world. Paul said, *"And being found in the fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"* (Philippians 2:8). Peter declared, *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed"* (1 Peter 2:21-24). Paul said Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3).

But why was Christ crucified, that is, why would anyone want to put a good man to death? Although he came to save man, he had to deal with sinful man. Even those who supposedly represented God, like the priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, etc., had gone off after the doctrines and commandments of men, and therefore they were full of envy, jealousy, and wickedness. We are told, "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not*" (John 1:11). Again, he said, "*And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life*" (John 5:40). Speaking to these religious people on the day of Pentecost, at the time the Lord's church was established, Peter said, "*Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it*" (Acts 2:22-24). At the time Christ appeared before Pilate to be tried, the record says Pilate knew the chief priests had delivered him for envy (Mark 15:10). Thus, Christ was given a false trial and sentenced to die on the cross. With wicked hands then he was taken and beaten, mocked, cursed, nailed to a cruel cross, placed between two thieves, and left there to die. He was then taken down, wrapped, and placed in a tomb with a huge stone being rolled in front of it. But Jesus had promised that if he

died that in three days he would come forth (John 14:10). And three days later he came forth from the grave as a resurrected Lord. On the morning of the third day, when the women came to visit the sepulchre, an angel appeared and said, "*He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see where the Lord lay*" (Matthew 27:6). After appearing before his disciples, and as many as five hundred at one time, he ascended back to the Father in heaven to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Acts 1:1-11), where he remains to this day.

Now again, why did Christ die on the cross? There are many reasons, but of course the main one was in order that man might be saved. But Christ also died on the cross to fulfill the prophecies concerning his death (Isaiah 53; Acts 8), to take the old law out of the way and to give a new law (Colossians 2:14; John 1:17; Matthew 26:28), to shed his blood that man might have the remission of his sins (Ephesians 1:7; Acts 22:16), to establish the church (Ephesians 5:25), and to give the saved the hope of eternal life (2 Thessalonians 2:16).

But in spite of the fact that Christ died on the cross to save the world, most people around the world are lost. Why? There are many reasons for this. Most are ignorant of God's will. Paul said before he became a Christian he persecuted the church out of ignorance (1 Timothy 1:13). Others are trusting in themselves or a good moral life to save them. But Cornelius and his household were good people, but it was still necessary for them to obey the Lord to be saved (Acts 10). There

are those who love the praises of men more than the praises of God. Christ spoke of some who believed in him but they would not confess him for fear they would be rejected by the religious leaders of their day. Then he explained why they would not confess him: *"For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God"* (John 12:43). Yes, there are many like that even in our day. There are worlds of people who are deceived in religious matters. John wrote, *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1). Since there are so many false teachers, even now, many are led astray by them. And finally, many love the world and enjoy the works of the flesh. The only problem with this is that the Lord tells us not to love the world (1 John 2:15) and that the works of the flesh lead to death (Galatians 5; Romans 6:23).

My friends, did you know that Christ died for you that you might be saved? Please do not reject him or deny him when he is your only means of being saved and the only one who can give you hope. If you will believe in him, repent of your sins, confess him as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins, he will save you and add you to his church and if you will remain faithful to him, he will one day give you a home in heaven (Mark 16:16; Matthew 10:32; Acts 2:38,47; Revelation 2:10).



## Lesson 16

# Why We Believe That Christ Arose From The Grave

Surely we are all aware of the fact that Jesus Christ lived and died on the cross almost two thousand years ago. Had that been the end of it he would have been forgotten long ago. But he still lives in the minds and lives of thousands and even millions of people around the world. Why? For the simple reason that he was crucified on a cruel cross, was buried, and three days later he arose from the grave. We are therefore proclaiming even on this day that Christ not only died but he was resurrected from the dead. Because of this we can say with the Hebrew writer that, "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever*" (Hebrews 13:8).

Even while Christ lived he promised he would rise from the dead. He said, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" Of course the Jews thought he was talking about the literal temple there in Jerusalem and they said, "*Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body*" (John 2:19-21). We read again, "*From that time forth began*

*Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day*" (Matthew 16:31). At the time the disciples did not understand the significance of these statements, but the day came in which they themselves witnessed the fact that Christ was a resurrected Lord, and then they remembered and understood what he had said.

After Christ was given a false trial, was crucified on a cross, and had died an agonizing death, the record says, "*When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple. He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed*" (Matthew 27:57-61). At this point it looked as if this was the end of Jesus. Even the disciples, although still in shock, seemed to accept this, and they began to think in terms of returning to their former homes. In spite of this, the enemies of Jesus had not forgotten what he had said about coming forth from the grave. Therefore we read, "*Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre*

*be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure sealing the stone, and setting a watch" (Matthew 27:62-66).*

Please note in the foregoing that they did not believe Christ would actually come forth from the grave, but they feared the disciples might come and steal him away, and as a result his popularity might spread even more so than it had already. To be sure that did not happen, they went to the tomb to be sure it was properly sealed, and then they left two men there to keep watch over it.

Now let us continue to read. It says, "*In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him:*

*lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me"* (Matthew 28:1-10). Now this doesn't sound like the disciples had previously planned to steal away the body of Jesus, does it? Rather, it sounds as though they were as surprised as the guards. Some of the Apostles even doubted this in the beginning.

Reading on, let us see how the guards dealt with the resurrection. We are told, "*Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day"* (Matthew 28:11-15). Now think about what happened here. As we read in some of the previous verses, those who had gone to watch the tomb were very much aware of what took place. When the angel appeared to roll back the stone, great fear came upon them, they trembled, and pretended to be dead. Then after all of this, they went into the city to



tell the chief priests what had happened. Rather than to be honest and to admit to themselves that Jesus had truly come forth from the grave, they assembled with the elders, discussed the matter, and then a large amount of money was given to these men, and they were instructed to spread the word that the disciples of Christ had come and stolen him away while they were sleeping. That meant they were being bribed to lie. Had that actually happened, it would not have been necessary to give them money, and the watchmen would not have had to lie. But even then, how would it sound for soldiers to admit the disciples of Christ had stolen his body while they were asleep? In many such cases, soldiers guilty of sleeping on the job would have paid with their lives. Of course the elders assured these men that should this come to the governor's ears they would explain it to him in such a way they would be safe.

Odd as it may be, but even to this day there are those who say Jesus did not actually die on the cross, and therefore, on being placed in the tomb, during the night he slipped away or his disciples stole him away. That is absurd. The records of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as well as the whole Bible, testify to the fact that Christ arose from the grave. Not only so, but salvation, baptism, the church, the Lord's Supper, and Christianity in general all base their existence and significance on the resurrection of Christ. There are those who say the Bible has been changed so that it teaches these things. But who would have changed it? Not the Jews, because they did not believe in Christ. At the

time the scriptures came into existence, the Gentiles as a whole were counted as infidels. Furthermore, we have Bible texts, especially the Old Testament portion, going all the way back to 200 B.C. Surely then, the Bible represents the truth, God's holy word, and it definitely teaches that Christ arose from the grave.

Paul wrote, *"Moreover, brethren, I declared unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye had 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. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time"* (1 Corinthians 15:1-8).

Now who was Paul? Before becoming a Christian he was known as Saul. He was a Jew, educated at Gamaliel's feet, a Pharisee, and very zealous for his religion (Philippians 3:4-7). As such, he was a great persecutor of the church; that is, until the Lord appeared to him and he was converted to Christ (Acts 9:22). Then he went forth to preach Christ as the Son of God and a resurrected Lord (Acts 9:20; 17:18). To turn so abruptly and dramatically from being an unbeliever to a believer

would have been very unlikely had it not been for the fact that, in seeing Christ, he realized Christ indeed was a resurrected Lord.

What about you? Do you believe that Christ came forth from the grave? Do you believe that he lives today and some day he will return for his people, the church? If you are not a believer we pray you will become one. If you will believe in Christ, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins, the Lord will save you and add you to his church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47).



## Lesson 17

# Why We Believe Christ Will Come Again

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he arose from the dead.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul declared the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ offered evidences of his resurrection. He mentioned a number of different people who were eyewitnesses of Christ having been raised from the dead. Then he said, *“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and became the first-fruits of them that slept”* (1 Corinthians 15:12-20).

Now because we do believe in the resurrection of Christ, we also believe Christ will come again. Christ himself promised he would return. Christ said, *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:1-3).

At the time the Lord returned to his Father in heaven, the record says, *"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel: Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:9-11). There are those who advocate that Jesus will come again one day and he will set up his kingdom in Jerusalem and there he will reign with the righteous for one thousand years. But you will notice that the two men robed in white, and therefore being angels of God, said Christ would come again in like manner as he had gone away, but nothing was said about him coming to this literal earth again or to set up a kingdom over which he would reign for a thousand years. First, the Lord said he would set up his kingdom in the lifetime of his disciples (Mark 9:1). Second, Jesus said even death itself would not prevent him from building

his church or kingdom (Matthew 16:18,19). Third, in Acts 2 we read of the establishment of the church and thereafter we read of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Christ being in existence (Acts 8:12; Colossians 1:13). In Hebrews 12:28 the writer says we have received the kingdom of God. And finally, the scriptures tell us Christ is now reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15). All of this means the kingdom and the church are the same, that it has been established, and Christ is now reigning over his kingdom. If that be true, and it is, that means Christ will not come back to set up a kingdom and to reign over it one thousand years. If he will not be doing that, what will he be doing?

Peter says, concerning the Lord's return, "*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless*" (2 Peter 3:10-14).

Paul writes, *"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words"* (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Continuing, Paul says, *"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).

To the Corinthian Christians, Paul wrote, *"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father: when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power"* (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Now let us sum up what has been said in the forego-

ing scriptures which we have just read:

First, Christ has promised he will come again.

Second, he will come as he went away, that is, he will come in the clouds.

Third, he will come as a thief in the night, meaning he will come unannounced.

Fourth, at the time of his coming all things will be destroyed, that being the heavens and the earth and all things therein.

Fifth, at the time of Christ's coming the righteous dead will rise first. They, and those still alive, shall all be caught up together in the clouds to meet him in the air and there to ever be with the Lord.

Sixth, at the time of his coming the Lord will take vengeance on those who know not God and those who have not obeyed the gospel. Christ will not accept ignorance as an excuse for not knowing him, and neither will he save those who have not obeyed the gospel. Christ said, *"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15,16). Those who obey the gospel will be saved, but those who fail to obey the gospel, regardless of the reason, will be lost. We have no indication from the scriptures that the Lord will act otherwise at the day of judgment. Christ said, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48). The Hebrew writer said, *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the*



*judgment*" (Hebrews 9:27). Then Christ will say to those who shall appear before him at the judgment, referring to both the wicked and the righteous, "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal*" (Matthew 25:46).

Seventh, at the time of the Lord's coming the wicked will be gathered out of the kingdom or church and cast into hell (Matthew 13:41), and the kingdom or church, representing the righteous and faithful, will be delivered up to God where they will ever dwell with the Lord. Christ said, "*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*" (John 5:28,29).

We, therefore, believe that Christ will come again. The Lord has warned us, given us his will, provided salvation for us, and the opportunity to accept it. It is up to us to obey him and to prepare ourselves for his second coming.

Do you believe in Christ? Have you obeyed him? Are you prepared to meet him? If so, then all is well. If you are not ready to meet him, you need to believe in Christ, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins. If you will do that the Lord will save you and add you to his church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 2:47). Then if you will remain a faithful Christian unto death the Lord will give you a crown of eternal life (Revelation 2:10).



## Lesson 18

# Why Christianity Is Needed Today

There is a lot of religion in the world today representing a number of distinct religions. In spite of that, there is no religion like Christianity. Neither is there a religion needed like Christianity.

Christianity is based on the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It is from Christ. It is practiced by those who obey the teachings of Christ.

We may believe in Christianity or preach the religion of Christ, but more important is the practice of it. James said, *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"* (James 1:22). Again, James said, *"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed"* (James 1:25). Reading on, he says, *"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself*

*unspotted from the world"* (James 1:26,27).

Surely we are all aware of how wicked the world is today. Moral values have fallen to a new low. Lack of respect for authority is seen everywhere. Bribery and dishonesty are the order of the day. With the way things are going, what is the world coming to? For sure, we need some changes. But what can change the world for the better? You may not be surprised when I say that I believe what the world needs more than anything else is pure New Testament Christianity, the true religion of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, this is man's only hope. I say that on the basis that men have tried different religions. They have tried military might. They have gone after pleasure. They have emphasized material things. The world has tried it all. But has this made the world better? Is man any happier? No, not at all. The only thing that is really left that can make the difference is God, Christ, and Christianity. This will give man something to live for and something to die for even in this modern world.

In spiritual matters, Christianity is what man needs. Not just Christianity in the sense of all the religious groups, but the one religion of Christ as set forth in the Bible. It is based on belief in Christ, obeying the same gospel, being members of the same church, wearing the same name, worshipping alike, teaching the same things, working together, and with the same hope. Christ prayed that we might all be one in him (John 17). Division is condemned in the Bible (Romans 16:17,18). Not only so, but the teachings of men are contrary to the

teachings of the scripture since they result in division (Matthew 7:21-23).

Those who practice Christianity make good citizens. They believe in obeying the laws of their country. The Apostle Paul said, *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake”* (Romans 13:1-5). Christians believe also in paying their rightful taxes. Paul continues, *“For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor”* (Romans 13:6,7). Christians believe in paying respect to their leaders. Peter reminds us that we should. *“Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king”* (1 Peter 2:17). Likewise we should love our country. If we don’t like all that we see, and all that is practiced, then we should try to change things for the better. Certainly

it is not Christian to work against our leaders, to refuse to respect authority, to fail to pay taxes, etc. Some want all that they can get from their country or government, but they never want to give in return. As Christianity grows in a country, so will respect for authority, obeying the laws of the land, and helping our nation to make progress.

Those who practice Christianity are opposed to social evils. This would include abortion, drinking alcoholic beverages, smoking, divorce and remarriage for every reason, gambling, homosexuality, bribery, and such like. Paul said, *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). Can you imagine a religion where things like those just mentioned are not practiced? Other religions often encourage or condone many sinful and immoral practices. Not Christianity. Christianity brings out the best in people. If there are those who claim to be Christians, but they are engaged in bad things, then that does not mean Christianity is wrong, but it does mean those who do such things are wrong and therefore in sin. Again, Paul says, *"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revel-*

lings, and such like: of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in the time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). When it says that those who engage in such sins cannot inherit or become a part of the kingdom of God, it means as long as they continue to do such things they cannot be saved and therefore they cannot enter the Lord's church. Of course when they repent and obey the Lord he will save them and add them to his church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47). Then as Christians, members of Christ's church, they must refrain from such sinful practices and strive to live pure and godly lives in Christ Jesus.

Those who practice Christianity try to improve their lives. They believe in having clean bodies and clean clothes and clean houses. They try to give their children an education. They are hard workers and try to be honest with all people. Paul said, "*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*" (Romans 13:8). Again, he said, "*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things,*

*but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:9-21).*

Those who practice Christianity believe in doing good works among their fellow men. This includes helping the poor, caring for the needs of the fatherless and widows, etc. Christ said, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

Now when this kind of Christianity is practiced in this country, or any country, and all countries around the world, all of mankind will be benefitted. Furthermore, as more and more accept Christianity, and practice Christianity, the world is going to gradually make progress. Christianity can change things, and will change things, when practiced according to the teaching of the Bible. All of those who do so are changed for the better.

But where to begin is the question. Begin with yourself. If you are not a Christian, then become one. Then as you practice Christianity you can encourage others to do as you have done.

If you will believe in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Christ and be baptized in water for the remission of your sins, the Lord will save you and add you to his church. Read all of the cases of conversions in the book of Acts and you'll see that that was what all of them did. When you do the same the Lord will also save you. Read Mark 16:16; Matthew 10:32; Acts 2:38; and Acts 2:47.