

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY I MUST DO TO BE SAVED?

What does the Bible say I must do to be saved?

The good news is that “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes (*trusts*) in Him – (*Jesus, the Son of God, yet also a man, the Jew’s Messiah*) – shall not perish, but have eternal life”.

This paper takes the Bible, in its original languages, to be the authoritative Word of God. Starting from that position, it seeks to justify the simple message given above. It draws the reader’s attention to the message recorded in the New Testament – the message that was preached by the Apostles after the resurrection.

It rejects both the supposed gospel messages that focus on our ‘decision’, and also the teaching that places great emphasis on the complete surrender of a person to the Lordship of Jesus Christ as a condition for being saved. It points the reader to the Saviour alone, and rejects all the other things that are often added in by well-meaning but misguided Christians.

The paper also identifies and challenges some of the underlying assumptions that (as the writer sees it) lead people to wrong conclusions about what a person must do to be saved.

It calls the reader to abandon the various non-biblical ‘gospel’ messages that are often preached in evangelical circles, and return to what the Bible actually says, rather than what we may think it should say.

Written by Ralph Gillard, 2010  
email: [ralph@eol.co.nz](mailto:ralph@eol.co.nz)

## CONTENTS

### PART 1 WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Chapter	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 FOUR MISTAKES THAT MUST BE AVOIDED	2
3 WE ARE AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST	5
4 SO WHAT DOES THE BIBLE ACTUALLY SAY I MUST DO TO BE SAVED?	7
5 SALVATION IS FOR <u>ALL</u> WHO BELIEVE	8
6 WHAT DO THE WORDS “BELIEVE” AND “FAITH” REALLY MEAN?	10
6.1 ‘pisteuo’ (believe) – verb	10
6.2 ‘pistis’ (faith) – noun	11
6.3 ‘pistos’ (faithful) – adjective	11
6.4 Wuest’s Word Study on ‘Pisteuo’ (believe) and ‘Pistis’ (faith)	12
6.5 My Concluding Comments on the Meaning of ‘Pisteuo’	13
6.6 The error of redefining words	13
7 IT IS OF FAITH THAT IT MAY BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH GRACE	16
8 ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS	18
9 THE EXAMPLE OF CORNELIUS AND HIS FRIENDS	21
10 IS IT REALLY TRUE THAT FAITH IN CHRIST <u>ALONE</u> IS SUFFICIENT?	24
11 IMPORTANT FACTS RELATING TO THE GOSPEL	28
11.1 Jesus is the Christ	29
11.2 Jesus is LORD	29
11.3 He died for our sins, was buried and rose again	31
11.4 We all need a Saviour	33
11.5 The Lord Jesus Christ is the ONLY Saviour	34
11.6 The Lord Jesus Christ is the ALL-SUFFICIENT Saviour	34
12 JOHN CHAPTER 3 VERSES 14-16 – THE MESSAGE STATED SIMPLY	35
13 CONCLUSION OF PART 1	38

### PART 2 SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED, AND OTHER MATTERS

14 BUT WHAT ABOUT REPENTANCE – IS THERE A CONTRADICTION HERE?	41
15 THE MEANING OF THE WORD TRANSLATED AS ‘REPENT’	43
15.1 Literal Meaning of Metanoeo	43
15.2 Common Meaning of Metanoeo	44
15.3 Wrong Meanings Attached to the Word Repent	45
16 RECONCILING ‘BELIEVE’ AND ‘REPENT’	47
17 ‘CONVERSION’ IS A TURNING TOWARDS THE SAVIOUR	54
18 BUT WHAT ABOUT WHAT JAMES SAYS – “EVEN THE DEMONS BELIEVE”	57
19 BUT WHAT ABOUT THE RICH YOUNG RULER?	65
20 BUT WHAT ABOUT THE GOSPEL THAT THE DISCIPLES AND EVEN JESUS HIMSELF PREACHED EARLY ON?	80
21 BUT DIDN’T JESUS SAY THAT A PERSON MUST GIVE UP EVERYTHING TO BECOME HIS DISCIPLE?	85
22 ARE WE SAVED BY BECOMING A ‘FOLLOWER OF JESUS’? – CONFUSING CAUSE AND EFFECT	92
23 BUT SURELY GOD WOULD MAKE THE MESSAGE CLEARER	99
24 THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN CALLING THE ‘DEAD’ TO LIFE	103
25 THE CHANGED LIFE IS THE FRUIT OF BEING BORN AGAIN, NOT THE CAUSE	107
26 THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE FIRST PASSOVER	111
27 SUMMARY	115

## APPENDICES

		Page
1	A Collection of Verses Giving Faith or Believing as Condition for Salvation	121
2	Repentance – Complete List of Use of the Word in the New Testament	131
3	Terms of Forgiveness in the Book of Acts	137
4	Where in the Bible is the gospel Found	139
5	Some Difficult Verses (– only John 3 vs 36b has been done at this stage)	143
6	Understanding the Bible	145
7	John MacArthur’s book: “The Gospel According to Jesus” – How Did John MacArthur Manage to Get it Wrong?	165
8	Eternal Life – Why we need it, what it is, where it comes from, and how we get it	173

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The opinions expressed in this paper are my own and not necessarily those of the people acknowledged below. Nevertheless, in my quest to clearly understand the issue that is the topic of this paper I have been helped by the following people.

1. My father. When I was in my early twenties I had a short conversation with my father. He pointed out to me that what the Bible actually said we must do to be saved was simply to believe in Christ. At the time of our conversation, I thought that my father was probably wrong. But, after looking into and pondering the issue for a good many years, I have found that, contrary to my expectations, my father’s words were true.
2. Sir Robert Anderson’s book “The Gospel and its Ministry”.
3. The Grace Evangelical Society and their web page ([www.faithalone.org](http://www.faithalone.org)). I am not a member of that society, and I have only read a small portion of the papers they publish. Nevertheless I have found their writings to be worthy of serious consideration. In particular I have been helped by the comments of Robert Wilkin. (But it would be wrong for critics to dismiss this paper by thinking that I am simply a disciple of that group. I came to the basic conclusions of this paper before I had even heard of the Grace Evangelical Society.)
4. I cannot read New Testament Greek. I have relied heavily upon the book “Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words” by W E Vine and drawn on it extensively. I have also made use of “The Englishman’s Greek Concordance of the New Testament” by George V Wigram.

**“The words of wise men are like goads . . .”**  
*(these words are perhaps from Solomon and  
are recorded in Ecclesiastes ch 12 vs 11)*

## **Bible Translation Used in this Paper**

Almost all Bible quotations used in this paper have been taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) translation. Where a different translation has been used I have tried to state which translation it is, but there may be a few non-NASB translations that have slipped through unacknowledged.



## **PART 1**

# **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY I MUST DO TO BE SAVED?**

### **Chapter 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The topic of this paper is “What must I do to be saved?”.

There is probably no question more important than this one, and yet the church seems unable to give a consistent answer. For over forty years I have been listening carefully to the answer that evangelical christians give to this question. And do you know what? Different christians have different answers to the same question, and as often as not their answers contradict each other!

This is an appalling state of affairs. We **MUST** be able to answer correctly and consistently this most important of all questions: “What must I do to be saved?”

We have been told to “examine everything carefully – hold fast to that which is good”.<sup>1</sup>

I have written this booklet in the hope that you will test both this booklet and your own beliefs against what the Bible actually says, and if necessary, bring your thinking into line with the Word of God.

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5 vs 21

## Chapter 2

# FOUR MISTAKES THAT MUST BE AVOIDED

### **2.1 The Mistake of Following What Seems Right to Us**

Sometimes people make the mistake of answering the question “What must I do to be saved?” according to what makes sense to them, rather than by what the Bible actually says. This is a trap. As the proverb says: “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”.<sup>1</sup> This proverb is especially true in the religious realm.

God’s ways have often been radically different from what people were expecting. For example, Peter was appalled when Jesus started to speak of his coming suffering and death. That just didn’t seem right to Peter. It violated everything that seemed right and reasonable to him. But Peter was wrong, and Jesus very strongly rebuked him for it. God’s ways are not like our ways, and sometimes He surprises us. We must not fall into the trap of just going with what seems right to us. Rather we must listen carefully to what He actually does say.

MAYBE the Bible’s answer to the question “What must I do to be saved?” violates everything that seems right and reasonable to us. Even if this is the case, we must go with what God says, not with what seems right and reasonable to us.

As you read through this paper, what it says may not sit well with you. But you must discipline yourself to look beyond that. The question you must discipline yourself to evaluate is whether or not this paper sits well with what the bible says – whether or not it is in fact a true presentation of what the bible is actually saying. If it is a true representation then you must bring your thinking into line with the bible, not try to force the bible to conform to your thinking.

### **2.2 The Mistake of Following What Other People Say**

Other times people make the mistake of just passing on what they have heard others say, rather than finding out for themselves what the Bible actually says.

The important thing is NOT:

- what does Billy Graham say, or
- what do the people at Dallas Theological Seminary say, or
- what does John McArthur or some other favourite Bible teacher say, or
- what does the godly man in your church say

THE IMPORTANT THING IS WHAT DOES THE BIBLE ACTUALLY SAY!

In my experience most Christians have been playing a game of ‘Chinese Whispers’. (This is the game where someone whispers a message in the first person’s ear, who then whispers it to the next and so on and so on. When you come to the end of the line the

---

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 14 vs 12

message is quite different from the message at the start.) In the same way, Christians are passing on the gospel message that they have heard from someone else.

This needs to stop. Many, perhaps even most, have got the message thoroughly mixed up. We all need to stop listening to others and return to the source document – the Word of God – and find out for ourselves what God has actually said.

So, the question can better be phrased as: “What does the bible say I must do to be saved?”

### **2.3 The Mistake of ‘Forcing’ the Bible to Say What We Think it Should Say**

Following on from the above two, there is the mistake of pushing and shoving and twisting the Bible into saying what we think it should say, or what other people have told us it says, rather than accepting what it actually does say.

Unfortunately such twisting is a very sophisticated art form that is as old as the Bible itself. It is very difficult to avoid. I think we are all guilty of it to some degree, and that is a great shame.

But we must strive against it. The Word of God must be our master, not our servant. We must continually be disciplining ourselves, and continually asking ourselves the question: “Is this what the Bible really says, or am I trying to make it say what I think it should say?”.

A good deal of self discipline is required in this area. We should also value a lowly heart, that does not regard itself as wise, but rather realises it has much to learn. We should dread the cocky, ‘know-it-all’ attitude that can easily overtake us. As Proverbs says: “With the humble is wisdom”.<sup>1</sup> “He teaches the humble his way”,<sup>2</sup> but when we think we already know all the answers we become unteachable. Often the truth is revealed to those that have a lowly heart. On a different issue Jesus said:

**“I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.”** (Matthew 11 vs 25-26)

### **2.4 The Mistake of Looking for the Answer in the Wrong Place**

Most evangelical Christians accept that the answer to the question “What must I (a person living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century) do to be saved?” is not primarily found in the Old Testament.

What many have failed to appreciate is that the answer is also not primarily found in much of the teaching recorded in the New Testament, but given before the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ – i.e. in the records by Matthew, Mark and Luke.

In its most simple form, the gospel is simply a Person – a Saviour – Jesus the Messiah – the One who is the source of eternal life, and who can give eternal life to others.

---

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 11 vs 2

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 25 vs 9b

The death and resurrection of this Person, the very Creator of the universe, was a watershed event. It was a cataclysmic event that changed everything. It ended one age, and ushered in another.

Now, next to the Saviour Himself, the gospel message has much to do with this world-changing event – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is able to save us because of what He did. He “died for our sins according to the scriptures”! “He was wounded for our transgressions! He was bruised for our iniquities! By His stripes we are healed!” His ability to save us springs from His death and resurrection, and the significance of this event is primarily found in teaching given after His death and resurrection.

Matthew, Mark and Luke give much wonderful teaching from the lips of Jesus himself. It is however teaching given before the cross – it is teaching given to people who were living before the great sacrifice for sins had been made – and it does not really answer the question of what must I, a person living after the cross, do to be saved.

This is an important issue. It is dealt with again later, and also in Appendix 4. Appendices 6 and 7 also relate to it.



### Chapter 3

## **“WE ARE AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST”**

Writing to the church in Corinth, Paul says: “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God”.<sup>1</sup>

Note well. It is not the ambassador’s job to decide what the message should be. Rather, the ambassador is required to faithfully pass on the message he has been given by his government. This is really important so I am going to labour the point.

Let’s pretend that I am an American Ambassador to Iran,<sup>2</sup> and that Iran is building a nuclear bomb. Let’s pretend that the American Government has debated the issue at length, and made a decision on what to do. Let’s pretend the President then sends me (the ambassador to Iran) a fax and says to me: “Go and tell Iran that unless they immediately stop production of nuclear material America will attack their nuclear plants”. (For the sake of the example it could be any message, but let’s pretend it is the one above.)

Now, let’s pretend that I as the Ambassador get the fax and think to myself – “That’s not very sensible. They need to do more than just stop production of nuclear material. They also need to destroy all the nuclear material they have already made.” So I change the message the President has given me into something that makes more sense to me. I go to the Iranians and say: “Unless you stop production of nuclear material and also destroy all the material you have already made, we will attack you.”

Has our imaginary ambassador been a good and faithful servant? No he hasn’t. He deserves to be fired! It’s the American Government’s job to decide the terms of the ultimatum. The job of the ambassador is simply to pass the message on, not to change it into something that makes more sense to him.

Listen carefully. If we aspire to be an ambassador for Christ, our job is to pass on the message God has given us. We must NOT change it into something that makes more sense to us. I don’t see how Christ can say to us “Well done good and faithful servant” if we have changed the message that He has given us into one that makes more sense to us, no matter how well intentioned we may be.

Or let’s pretend again that I am the American ambassador to Iran. This time I am sitting in my office and my secretary calls out and says: “A fax has come through from the President – something about issuing an ultimatum to Iran over its nuclear programme. Shall I bring you the fax?”

Let’s pretend that I as the Ambassador then say: “No I don’t need to read it. It will be the same as what we said to North Korea.” And so I don’t even bother to read what the fax says and I go to the Iranians and tell them the same message that was given to the North Koreans.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 5 vs 20

<sup>2</sup> Yes I know. America does not have an ambassador in Iran. But lets pretend.

Have I been a good and faithful servant? No I haven't. I deserve to be fired!

I am sure that we can all see that our pretend American ambassador is behaving very badly. But are those who seek to be ambassadors for Christ doing any better? After listening carefully for 40 years, it is my strong conviction that most Christians aren't doing any better than our fictitious ambassador to Iran! I can't see how our Lord can be at all pleased with what is going on.

- Are you changing the message that God has given us in the bible into something that you consider to be more appropriate?
- Have you searched His word carefully to see exactly what He says? Or do you think it is good enough just to say what everyone else is saying?

If we are to be faithful ambassadors for Christ – good and faithful servants that He can be pleased with – we need to:

1. Read VERY carefully the message that God is proclaiming to a lost world, and
2. Stick VERY carefully to that message, whether it seems right to us or not, whether it is what other people are saying or not, and not change the message into something that makes more sense to us.

In this paper I try to draw your attention to the answer that the bible gives to the question: "What must I do to be saved?" As you read and evaluate this paper, make sure that you don't slide into the error of evaluating it according to whether or not the answer makes sense to you, or whether or not it agrees with your favourite bible teacher. Rather the question you should be asking yourself as you read is: "Is this what the Bible actually says?" If you test it and find that it is what the bible actually says, then you must bring your beliefs into line with what the bible says, not twist the bible to bring it into line with your beliefs.

## Chapter 4

### SO WHAT DOES THE BIBLE ACTUALLY SAY I MUST DO TO BE SAVED?

So, laying aside all preconceived ideas, and laying aside what seems right to us, and laying aside what we have heard others say, what does the Bible actually, actually say a person must do to be saved?

#### **The Overwhelming Testimony of Scripture is – Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and You Will Be Saved**

The overwhelming testimony of scripture is that the forgiveness of sins is given FREELY, as a GIFT, to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ – to all who place their faith in the Saviour, Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God.

In Appendix 1 of this paper, I have collected together many of the passages in the New Testament that give (or suggest) faith in Christ, or believing in Christ, as the condition that humans must meet in order to be saved.

The collection contains 70 passages, many of which are several verses long. The words 'faith' or 'believe' occur 130 times in these passages. Over 75 times faith in Christ, or believing in Christ, is given as the condition that humans must meet in order to be saved. This is the overwhelming testimony of the New Testament.

There are some other verses which, at least on the face of it, tend to suggest other conditions. For example Mark 16 vs 16 says – “he who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved”. The verses listed in Appendix 1 are however the overwhelming thrust of what the bible says.

I suggest to you that we should take the main thrust as the rule, and find explanations for the exceptions. It would be very foolish to make the exceptions the rule and disregard the main thrust of what the New Testament (especially the writings of Paul, the Apostle to us Gentiles) is saying.

In seeking to understand the Bible, the principle must be “Let that which is clear, shed light on that which is obscure.” We must not let the odd obscure verse, or the odd verse which appears to be out of keeping with the majority of the verses, over-ride the large amount of clear teaching.

There is an unfortunate quirk of human nature, whereby people “can’t see the forest for the trees”. We need to guard against this. We need to start by seeing the shape and size of the ‘forest’ – the broad thrust of what God has repeatedly said – not by concentrating on one particular tree. Once we have seen and understood the ‘forest’, then it is time to focus on an individual ‘tree’.

Clearly time does not permit me to go through all the verses listed in Appendix 1, but please take time to read them through and gain an appreciation of what the ‘forest’ looks like.

## Chapter 5

### SALVATION IS FOR “ALL WHO BELIEVE”

I now want to draw your attention to six of the passages given in Appendix 1.

Please consider for a moment the following passages:

1. **As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that WHOEVER believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that WHOEVER believes in Him (i.e. everyone who believes in Him <sup>1</sup>) shall not perish, but have eternal life.** (John 3 vs 14-16)
2. **"For this is the will of My Father, that EVERYONE who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."** (John 6 vs 40)
3. **"Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name EVERYONE who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."** (Acts 10 vs 43)
4. **"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him EVERYONE who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses."** (Acts 13 vs 38-39)
5. **For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to EVERYONE who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.** (Romans 1 vs 16)
6. **But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, . . . even the righteousness of God (i.e. the righteousness in God's eyes that God gives a person as a gift) through faith in Jesus Christ for ALL those who believe;** (Romans 3 vs 21- 22)

The above verses say that EVERYONE who believes (in Christ) is saved. Think about it. These verses cannot be true if there are other conditions, in addition to believing, that must be met for a person to be saved. If there are other conditions, only some of those who believe will be saved. (The ones who believe but do not meet this other condition, whatever it is, will not be saved. – i.e. it won't be everyone who believes that is saved.)

Every part of the bible is true, and **for the above verses to be true, 'believing' must be the ONLY condition for being saved.**

Again let us take an example from the natural world to help us understand clearly what God is saying.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Greek word translated here (and in the preceding sentence) as 'whoever' is the word 'pas' which is elsewhere translated as 'everyone'.

Let's pretend that I say that I will give a chocolate to EVERYONE in the building who has a Tee-Shirt on. Let's pretend that a 9 year old boy, with a Tee-Shirt on (but no shoes) comes to me to get his chocolate. Lets pretend I say to him – "No you can't have a chocolate because you have not got shoes on". Have I been true to my word? Have I acted honourably? The answer is – no I haven't, and even a 9 year old boy can understand that.

Yet many people think that God will on the one hand say "EVERYONE who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life",<sup>1</sup> and yet not save those who don't also meet some other condition they think a person must meet in order to be saved. That is outrageous!

If God is honourable – if God is not a liar – there can be no condition in addition to believing in Christ that a person must meet in order to be saved.

Thus, in order to understand what a person must do to be saved, all we have to do is to clearly understand what it means to "believe" in Christ. The next chapter addresses this issue.

---

<sup>1</sup> John 6 vs 40

## Chapter 6

# WHAT DO THE WORDS “BELIEVE” AND “FAITH” REALLY MEAN

The earliest New Testament records are in Greek. Often there is not a perfect one-to-one matching between words in different languages. Thus to be completely sure we fully understand what it means to ‘believe’ in Christ or to have ‘faith’ in Christ we need to look at the Greek words that have been translated as ‘believe’ or ‘faith’ in our bibles.

The Greek words and their meanings are as follows:

Greek	Usual Translation	Meaning of Greek Word by W. E. Vine <sup>1</sup> et al
<b><i>pisteuo</i></b>	believe	To believe, also to be persuaded of, and hence, to place confidence in, to trust, signifies, in this sense of the word, reliance upon, not mere credence.
<b><i>pistis</i></b>	faith	Primarily, firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing.

The first thing to note is that in Greek, *pisteuo* and *pistis*, are basically the same word. *Pistis* (faith) is just the noun form of *pisteuo* (believe) which is the verb form of the word. This suggests that *pisteuo* and *pistis* are likely to have a very similar meaning.

In English, ‘believe’ and ‘faith’ are spelt very differently. They come from different roots. Not so the Greek words being translated. Perhaps *pisteuo* and *pistis* are even more similar in meaning than the English words ‘believe’ and ‘faith’.

The next thing to note is that many of the best scholars have thought that, usually, the nearest English words to the Greek words are the words ‘faith’ and ‘believe’. (Why else would these scholars, when they have been engaged in making our English translations of the bible, have usually translated these words as ‘faith’ and ‘believe’?) If the scholars are right, ‘faith’ and ‘believe’ are usually the single English words that give the closest translation of the original Greek words ‘*pistis*’ and ‘*pisteuo*’. But that does not mean that they are a perfect or complete translation of the greek words.

These two words ‘*pisteuo*’ and ‘*pistis*’ are now looked at in a little more detail.

### **6.1 ‘pisteuo’ (believe) – verb**

This Greek word is used 128 times in the gospels – 99 times in John’s gospel – and a total of 246 times in the Greek New Testament. Usually it is translated by our word believe, but on some occasions, it cannot simply be translated by our English word ‘believe’. On at least some occasions ‘pisteuo’ clearly means more than the English word ‘believe’. It includes the idea of entrusting. On seven occasions the Authorized Version translates the word as “committed”. “Entrusted” would also be a good translation.

---

<sup>1</sup> In his book “Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words”, (first published in 1940)

Eight cases where 'pisteuo' is usually translated with a meaning such as 'entrust' are:

- Luke 16 vs 11 says: "Therefore if you have not been *faithful* (pistos – see 6.3 following) in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will **entrust** (pisteuo) the true riches to you?"
- John ch 3 vs 16 is a well-known bible verse. It is noteworthy, that a few verses before John 3 vs 16 – in John 2 vs 24 – the very same word that is translated as 'believe' in John 3 vs 16, is translated by a word such as 'entrust' in most bibles. The passage reads as follows: "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not **entrusting** (pisteuo-ing) Himself to them, for He knew all men," (John 2 vs 23-24)
- Romans 3 vs 1-2 says: "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that they were **entrusted** (pisteuo-ed) with the oracles of God.
- On 5 occasions – 1 Corinthians 9 vs 17, Gal 2 vs 7, 1 Thess, 2 vs 4, 1 Timothy 1 vs 11 and Titus 1 vs 3 – Paul spoke of the gospel being "pisteuo-ed" or **entrusted** to him.

So, on at least some occasions, the Greek word '*pisteuo*' must go beyond our English word 'believe' to include the idea of *entrusting*. In the cases quoted above it refers to entrusting someone or something to the safe keeping of someone else. It is also possible that in other usages of the word – e.g. "pisteuo-ing in Christ" – the idea of entrusting is also present. This is in line with the meaning of 'pisteuo' given by Vine and others at the beginning of this chapter where they say that 'pisteuo' means *to believe, also to be persuaded of, and hence, to place confidence in, to trust, signifies, in this sense of the word, reliance upon, not mere credence.* (See also section 6.4 following.)

## **6.2 'pistis' (faith) – noun**

This Greek word is used a total of 243 times in the Greek New Testament. With only two exceptions it has generally been translated with the meaning of faith. The two exceptions are:

1. Acts 17 vs 31 where it has the meaning of 'assurance', or 'guarantee' (Acts 17 vs 31 reads: "because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof" (NASB & NIV) / "assurance" (AV, ASV, NRSV) / "guarantee" (A Marshall) "to all men by raising Him from the dead."
2. Titus 2 vs 10 where it has the meaning of 'trustworthiness' or 'faithfulness' or 'fidelity'. (Titus 2 vs 10 reads: "not pilfering, but showing all good faith" (NASB, A Marshall) / "trusted" (NIV) / "fidelity" (AV, ASV, NRSV) "so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.")

So the word '*pistis*' can be used to include the idea of an assurance and a trustworthiness of character.

In addition the bible gives its own definition of *pistis* (faith). Hebrews 11 vs 1 says "**pistis** (faith) is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen".

### **6.3 'pistos' (faithful) – adjective**

There is also another similar word – 'pistos'. 'Pistos' is the adjective form of the root word that we are looking at. For completeness the meaning of this adjective form of the word is now included.

According to W E Vine <sup>1</sup> 'pistos' means, in the passive sense "faithful, to be trusted, reliable" and in the active sense "believing, trusting, relying".

### **6.4 Wuest's Word Study on the Words 'Pisteuo' (believe) and 'Pistis' (faith)**

Kenneth Samuel Wuest (1893–1962) was a professor of New Testament Greek at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, and a noted New Testament Greek scholar. He was one of the translators of the original New American Standard Bible (NASB) and later went on to produce his own English translation of the New Testament. He also published over a dozen books on the New Testament.

In his book "Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament" he had this to say:

"BELIEVE, FAITH, FAITHFULNESS. The verb is *pisteuo*, the noun *pistis*, the adjective *pistos*. In classical Greek *pisteuo* meant to *believe, trust, trust in, put faith in, rely upon* a person or thing. In the passive voice it meant *I am entrusted with a thing, have it committed to me*. *Pistis* meant *trust* in others, *faith*. *Pistos* meant *faithful, trusty, true*, used of persons one believes or trusts.

In the papyri, (Moulton & Milligan) we find the following illustrations of the use of these words; *Whom no one would trust even if they were willing to work*, (confidence in the person's character and motives) ; *I have trusted no one to take it to her*, (confidence in the ability of another to perform a certain task)." <sup>2</sup>  
(emphasis mine)

He also goes on to offer his assessment of what the words *pisteuo* and *pistis* mean when used in conjunction with saving faith in the Lord Jesus. Although Wuest does not give his reasons for his assessment, I think it is worth at least thinking about what he says. I thus include it below for your consideration. Wuest says that:

"When these words (*i.e. the words *pisteuo* and *pistis**) refer to the faith which a lost sinner must place in the Lord Jesus in order to be saved, they include the following ideas; the act of considering the Lord Jesus worthy of trust as to His character and motives, the act of placing confidence in His ability to do just what He says He will do, the act of entrusting the salvation of his soul into the hands of the Lord Jesus, the act of committing the work of saving his soul to the care of the Lord. This means a definite taking of one's self out on one's own keeping and entrusting one's self into the keeping of the Lord Jesus." <sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In his book "Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words", (first published in 1940) – entry under 'Faithful'.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth S Wuest "Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament", Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Volume 3 of 2004 reprint, pages 28 & 29

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth S Wuest "Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament", Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Volume 3 of 2004 reprint, page 29



When first read, what Kenneth Wuest says in the above paragraph sounds fairly complicated, and rather daunting. I think that it is not as complex as it first sounds. Consider the following example which illustrates what I think Wuest is saying:

*One night you are out driving and run out of petrol. To make matters worse, you have no money on you, and no phone. A passing driver pulls up alongside. He generously offers to take you to the petrol station, buy you a can of petrol, and then return you to your car.*

*What do you do?*

*Do you entrust yourself to this man or not?*

*I put it to you that within a few seconds, probably without even consciously realizing what you are doing, you will go through the process that Wuest lists in his paragraph above.*

*If you decide to go with the man, using Kenneth Wuest's words, you will:*

- *Consider him to be "worthy of trust as to His character and motives".*
- *"Place confidence in his ability to do just what he says he will do."*
- *Entrust yourself into his hands.*
- *Commit to him the work of taking you to the petrol station and back.*

*As Kenneth Wuest says, "this means a definite taking of one's self out on one's own keeping and entrusting one's self into the keeping of another".*

I think that the above example illustrates what Kenneth Wuest is saying, (and I put it to you that it is not as complicated as it first sounds). In the example above you did it all in a few seconds probably without even realising what you were doing.

## **6.5 My Concluding Comments on the Meaning of *Pisteuo***

It is clear to me that the word *pisteuo* can go beyond our English word 'believe' to include the idea of 'entrusting'. In reaching this conclusion I have noted that:

1. W E Vine includes the idea of 'trusting' and 'reliance upon' in his list of things that the word can mean. (See the table at the beginning of this chapter where the meaning of *pisteuo* has largely been taken from Vine's Expository Dictionary entry for that word.)
2. On at least some occasions, *pisteuo* cannot simply be translated as 'believe' and yield a sentence that makes sense in English. In these cases the sentence only makes sense if *pisteuo* is translated with a word such as 'entrust'. (See the eight examples given in section 6.1 of this chapter.)

The question I am still trying to understand better is this: "How much does the word *pisteuo* include the idea of 'trusting' when it is used in conjunction with '*pisteuo-ing*' in the Lord Jesus Christ. As noted in 6.4 above, Wuest thinks it does include this idea, and I think he is probably right.<sup>1</sup> Since the meaning of 'entrust' can at least sometimes be present in '*pisteuo*', from now on, when quoting bible verses using the word *pisteuo*, I will

---

<sup>1</sup> But on the other hand verses such as 1 John 5 vs 1 seem to perhaps be using the word '*pisteuo*' simply as 'believe' so I am still seeking to understand this issue better. (But I also note that 1 John 5 vs 1 could also be translated as: "everyone *trusting* that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God".)

sometimes translate it as *believe/entrust* to remind the reader that the idea of 'entrusting' is (or can be) present in the word '*pisteuo*'.

## **6.6 The Error of Redefining Words**

### **Error 1 – The teaching that faith is 'obedience to the truth'**

Hebrews chapter 11 starts with a definition of faith. It says: "*pistis* (faith) is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen". Faith is an assurance – a conviction. It is in the mind and heart. It is believing and/or entrusting.

The passage in Hebrews then goes on to list examples of those that exercised faith. It is noteworthy that in almost all cases the listed people, by faith, did certain things. The book of James also seems to say that faith will ultimately give rise to good works. A faith that does not result in actions is not real, and James seems to say that that kind of unreal faith can save no-one. Real faith gives rise to obedience. Where there is genuine faith there will be obedience.

BUT, as I see it, it is a gross mistake to say that faith is the same as works or that faith is "obedience to the truth". Obedience to the truth is the **RESULT** of faith. It is not the same as faith. Faith is in the mind and heart – in the inner man. Works are outward actions. Obedience is the fruit of faith. It is not the same as faith.

When you cook a meal on an open fire a lot of smoke is produced. But it is the fire that cooks the meal not the smoke. Similarly, it is faith in Christ that saves, not the obedience that springs from that faith.

Perhaps Martin Luther put it well when he said that a man is justified by faith alone but not by a faith that is alone. Genuine faith will produce good deeds, but it is faith alone in Christ that saves. The righteousness from God is through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe!

As the words of the song say: "The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives."

### **Error 2 – The teaching that faith is actually a complete surrender to the Lordship of Christ**

In many ways this error is like error 1 above.

To those who believe this teaching, let me ask you a question or two:

- "If we are saved by a complete surrender to the Lordship of Christ, why didn't the apostles just say that?"
- "If '*pisteuo*' doesn't actually mean 'believe' or 'entrust', but rather something else, why didn't God use the word he really meant?"

There are words in the Greek language that convey the idea of surrender and submission. For example there is the Greek word *hupatasso* which means 'to put in subjection' or 'to subject oneself', 'to obey', 'to be subject to'. Why didn't they use this word when preaching the gospel? Why didn't John say: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever SUBJECTS HIMSELF (i.e. *hupatasso*) to Him shall not perish, but have eternal life"? When preaching to Cornelius

and his friends, why didn't Peter say: "everyone who SUBJECTS HIMSELF (i.e. *hupatasso*) to Him receives forgiveness of sins"?

The answer is obvious. The reason they didn't say that, is because that is not what they wanted to say! That is not the gospel message that God had given them. What He has told us over and over again is that the righteousness of God (i.e. the righteousness in God's eyes that God gives a person as a gift) is "through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who BELIEVE / ENTRUST." (Romans 3:22)

Let me ask you another question: How likely is it that, in communicating to us this most important of issues, God would use the key words of 'pisteuo' (believe) and 'pistis' (faith) in a way that was quite different from their common meaning in the language of the time? One person trying to confuse another may use words in new ways, and assign new meanings to words. But surely this would not be done by God and His apostles when they were trying to communicate this most important of all matters to us.

I put it to you that God isn't using these words in strange new ways. Rather He is communicating clearly to us. I put it to you that the problem is NOT that God hasn't made it clear to us what the gospel message is. Rather, it seems to me that the problem is that the message God has given just doesn't seem right to some people. It seems to me that some don't believe God could have actually meant what He said using the plain sense of the words He used. They think He must have actually meant something else – something more in line with the way they think things ought to be. And so (it seems to me) they change the meaning of words to make them say what they think God should have said.

(This issue is dealt with further in Appendix 7)

## Chapter 7

### **“IT IS OF FAITH THAT IT MAY BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH GRACE”**

The Greek word that we have translated as ‘grace’ is ‘*charis*’. It means ‘*underserved kindness*’ – ‘*unmerited favour*’.

What the New Testament makes clear is that we are saved by God’s grace – by His ‘*charis*’. It is His undeserved kindness towards us – His unmerited favour – that saves us.

For example Ephesians 2 vs 8 tells us: **“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God”**.

Also Romans 6 vs 23 says: **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Life teaches us that if you want something good you have to work hard for it – in one way or another you have to pay the price necessary to get it. Thus we have great difficulty grasping the fact that salvation is given freely, as a gift. Surely there must be some sort of price we have to pay to get it. Surely there must be something good we have to do before we can be saved.

Certainly there is a good work that must be done before we can be saved, but thankfully the good work has already been done by Someone Else on our behalf. Jesus Christ has paid the price, and now the forgiveness of sins is offered freely, as a gift, to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not something we do to merit salvation. Rather we benefit from His saving work for us on the cross where:

**“He was wounded for our transgressions.  
He was bruised for our iniquities.  
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,  
and by His stripes we are healed”<sup>1</sup>**

As Romans 3 vs 24 tells us, we are **“justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus”**. (*Redemption* means the *rescuing/loosing/setting free* of someone or something upon payment of a ransom. Jesus gave His life as the ‘ransom’ [the release payment] for us.)

The word translated as ‘justified’ means ‘declared righteousness’. When a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are ‘justified’. They have righteousness (even the righteousness of Christ) credited to them. Their sins are all taken away and they are ‘reckoned’ to be righteous. They are ‘justified’ – i.e. ‘declared righteous’ by God Himself! It is not a righteousness they have earned themselves. Rather it is a righteousness that is credited to them as a gift.

---

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah chapter 53 vs 5 (New King James translation)

John chapter 3 vs 14-16 uses the example of when the Israelites were bitten by snakes and dying.<sup>1</sup> If they looked to the snake on the pole, they would live. Was it because of any good thing that the people did that they were saved? Was it because of any merit on their part? Not at all. Rather the only thing they had to do was to 'look' at the snake on the pole. This now corresponds to us 'looking' to the Saviour who died for our sins on the cross – 'looking' to Him to save us, even though we don't deserve it at all.

God has decided to give people forgiveness of sins, righteousness even, freely, as a gift. That is why He has made it on the basis of 'faith', or 'believing', because 'faith', or 'believing' is NOT some good thing that we do.

As Romans 4 vs 16 tells us: **"For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with GRACE . . ."**

---

<sup>1</sup> This example is examined further in chapter 12.

## Chapter 8

### **“ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS”**

The great example of faith referred to in the New Testament is Abraham.

Abraham and his wife Sarah were growing old and Sarah had remained childless. Genesis chapter 15 tells us how God then told Abraham that he would have a son and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

On the natural plane, this seemed more or less impossible to Abraham. But Genesis 15 vs 6 tells us: **“Then he (i.e. Abraham) believed in the Lord; and He (i.e. the Lord) reckoned it to him (Abraham) as righteousness.”**

The Old Testament of the bible is written in Hebrew. The Hebrew word being translated as ‘believed’ in Genesis 15 vs 6 is ‘*aman*’ (Strong’s word number 539). (It is the word that ‘amen’ has come from.)

#### What Does the HEBREW Word Translated as ‘Believe’ (i.e. the word ‘*Aman*’) Mean

Strong’s ‘Dictionary of the Hebrew Bible’ defines the word ‘*aman*’ as follows:

‘*aman* - a primitive root; properly, to build up or support; to foster as a parent or nurse; figuratively to render (or be) firm or faithful, to trust or believe, to be permanent or quiet; morally to be true or certain.

In the King James Bible, ‘*aman*’ is translated as: *believe* (44 times), *faithful* (20 times), *sure* (11 times), *established* (7 times), *trust* (5 times), *trusty* (1 time), *verified* (3 times), *assurance* (1 time), *steadfast* (2 times), *continuance* (2 times), *father* (2 times), *bring up* (4 times), *nurse* (2 times), *be nursed* (1 time), *surely be* (1 time), *stand fast* (1 time), and *fail* (1 time).

It is thus clear that the Hebrew word translated as *believe* in Genesis ch 15 vs 6 has a wider meaning than our English word ‘*believe*’. As is the case for the greek word that is translated as *believe*, (i.e. the word *pisteuo*), ‘*aman*’ can also include the idea of trusting, (as well as other ideas such as being faithful).

Four times the Apostle Paul quotes these words from the Old Testament **“Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness”**.<sup>1</sup> He also tells us that **“Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also . . .”**<sup>2</sup> Abraham is used as the pre-eminent example of how those who believe/entrust (i.e. ‘*aman* / *pisteuo*’) in Christ have their sins taken away and are “declared righteous”. Even though they don’t deserve it in any way, and even though they do nothing to earn it, they have all the righteousness of Christ credited to their account.

---

<sup>1</sup> Romans 4 vs 3, Romans 4 vs 9, Romans 4 vs 22. Galatians 3 vs 6

<sup>2</sup> Romans 4 vs 23-24

Romans ch 4 vs 1-5 reads as follows:

**What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.**

**For what does the Scripture say? "*Abraham believed (pisteuo-ed) God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.*"**

**Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favour, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes (pisteuo-s) in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness."**

And Romans ch 4 vs 18-25 continues as follows:

**In hope against hope he (i.e. Abraham) believed (pisteuo-ed), so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "*so shall your descendants be.*"**

**Without becoming weak in faith (pistis) he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith (pistis), giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.**

**Therefore *it was also credited to him as righteousness.***

**Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe (pisteuo) in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He (i.e. Jesus) who was delivered over (to crucifixion) because of our transgressions, and was raised (from the dead) because of our justification (i.e. our being 'pronounced righteous' <sup>1</sup>).**

So what did Abraham do that resulted in him having righteousness credited to him? He simply believed/trusted God. He believed what God had told him and put his faith in God's trustworthiness to do what He had said. God told Abraham that he would have numerous descendants, and Abraham believed God and trusted in Him. Abraham took God at His word and relied upon God to do what He had said. He entrusted himself into God's hands.

In a similar way, there is a message which God now wishes to tell everyone who will listen. It may not be the same message He told Abraham, but it has the same effect when we believe God and thus rely on Him to do what He says. The message He is now proclaiming to all men is "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes/entrusts** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John ch 3 vs 16)

The question is: Are we going to believe what God says and put our confidence in Him to do what He says or not? **"But to the one who does not work (for his salvation), but believes in Him who justifies (i.e. pronounces righteous) the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness"** (Romans 4 vs 5)

---

<sup>1</sup> This is what the word our English Bibles have translated as "justification" means.

It is not a matter of deciding to become a Christian or giving our life to God or any of the other things that people wrongly substitute for the gospel message. It is simply a matter of believing what God has plainly said, no matter how strange to our ears the message may seem to be, taking Him at His word, and putting our confidence in Him to keep His word and do what He says.

A person hears God's message to the world. (This may happen either by someone reading the Bible for themselves, or by some other person accurately passing on the gospel message.) They hear the good news about Jesus Christ. They hear the words "by which you are saved"<sup>1</sup>. They hear how Christ (the Jews' Messiah) died for our sins according to the scriptures, how he was buried and raised again on the third day.<sup>2</sup> They hear how "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life".<sup>3</sup> This is the message that is nothing less than "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes".<sup>4</sup>

The message comes with conviction from the Holy Spirit. As Paul said to the Thessalonians: "*for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction*",<sup>5</sup> and as he said to the Corinthians: "*my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*".<sup>6</sup> (God Himself is at work in this whole matter. He is doing something in the heart and mind of the person. He convicts a person of their sin and their inability to save themselves. He then opens their eyes to see that Jesus Christ is the Lord of all and the Saviour that they so desperately need.)

The person hears the message from God about Jesus Christ. They receive the message "not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God".<sup>7</sup> "Faith comes by hearing".<sup>8</sup> They believe what God says. They put their trust in Jesus (the Saviour!) and they are saved. The word of God "performs its work in you who believe".<sup>9</sup> They are "born again . . . through the living and enduring word of God".<sup>10</sup> The God, who said, Light shall shine out of darkness, has shone in their hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.<sup>11</sup> They believe God's message and thus 'look' to Jesus to save them, and He does. They are justified (i.e. pronounced righteous) just as Abraham was when he believed / trusted God.

The question is: Are we going to believe what God says? Are we going to believe the gospel message in all its simplicity? Are we going to take God at His word, and put our trust in Jesus to save us, freely, as a gift? Or are we not going to believe that message because it just doesn't seem right to us?

Are we going to be like Abraham who "believed / trusted God and it was credited to him as righteousness"? Or are we going to be like countless people down through the centuries who have thought that there must be something more that they themselves have to do before they can be saved?

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 11 vs 14 AND 1 Corinthians 15 vs 2

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15 vs 1-5

<sup>3</sup> John 3 vs 16

<sup>4</sup> Romans 1 vs 16

<sup>5</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1 vs 5

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 2 vs 4

<sup>7</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2 vs 13

<sup>8</sup> Romans 10 vs 17 "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"

<sup>9</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2 vs 13

<sup>10</sup> 1 Peter 1 vs 23

<sup>11</sup> 2 Corinthians 4 vs 6



## Chapter 9

### THE EXAMPLE OF CORNELIUS AND HIS FRIENDS

Let us now look at the case of Cornelius and his friends. Cornelius and his friends were the first Gentile (i.e. non-Jewish) people to be born again so they are of particular interest to us gentiles.

Cornelius was a Roman centurion and a good man. He gave generously to those in need. We are also told that he feared God, and prayed to God regularly.<sup>1</sup> But in spite of all this, he wasn't born again. He wasn't saved, and he needed to be.

In the very early days, the gospel was only spread amongst the Jews. Then perhaps several years after the resurrection, God sent an angel to the gentile Cornelius. The angel said to Cornelius: **"Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household."**<sup>2</sup>

So Peter came to Cornelius's house where all Cornelius's relatives and close friends had gathered, and there Peter spoke to them the gospel message. He spoke to them the "words by which you will be saved".

What were these "*words by which you will be saved*"? That is a very good and important question isn't it. The answer to that question is what we are searching for in this book. This is what Peter said:

**". . . You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.**

**We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.**

**And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." (Acts 10 vs 38-43)**

The bible passage then carries on immediately with this record of what happened next:

**While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. (Acts 10 vs 44)**

Often we can't tell for sure the exact point in time in which a person is truly born again. In this case however, for His own reason, God has made it very clear to us exactly when

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 10 vs 1-2 tells us these things

<sup>2</sup> Acts 11 vs 13-14

these people were saved. The Holy Spirit publicly fell upon them, and this was a public proof that they were now born again.

When did this happen?

It happened while Peter was still speaking and the people were still listening.

What was Peter speaking?

He was speaking the “words by which you will be saved” that God had told Cornelius that Peter would speak to him.

What were these words?

Peter spoke about Jesus – how He went about doing good – how He was put to death on the cross then rose again – how He is now the Judge of all – and that now, through His name, **“everyone who believes / trusts in Him receives forgiveness of sins.”**

(Now it is possible that Peter spoke other words that have not been recorded in the book of Acts. It is possible that what we have recorded is just a summary of what he said. But isn't it very reasonable to assume that God has recorded for us the important and critical parts of the message that Peter spoke? I put it to you that we have in the record quoted above the critical parts of the gospel message – the important parts of the “words by which you will be saved” that Peter spoke.)

So what did Cornelius and his friends do to be saved? Whatever it was, it happened while they were busy listening to the words Peter was speaking. Obviously it happened in response to the words they had just heard from Peter. What was it they did? What did they do to be saved? Later verses tell us what it was. When Peter returned to Jerusalem he told the other believers what had happened and said how **“God gave to them (the gentiles) the same gift as He gave to us also (i.e. the Holy Spirit) after (or having) believing in the Lord Jesus Christ . . .”**<sup>1</sup>

All they did was THEY BELIEVED IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST! They believed what Peter had just told them about who Jesus was and what He had done. They believed that **“everyone who believes / trusts in Him receives forgiveness of sins”**. They put their faith in Him to save them, and they were saved.

Whilst Peter was still talking they believed the message from God and put their trust in Jesus to save them. They immediately received the forgiveness of sins. They were immediately born again. And as a public witness that not only the Jews but also the gentiles were to be saved through believing in Christ, God caused the Holy Spirit to fall upon these first gentile believers in a very public way.

Abraham believed God “and it was credited to him as righteousness.” The same thing happened with Cornelius and his friends. They heard the message from God – the message about Christ – how He died and rose again – how He has been appointed the Judge of all – but **“that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins”**. It was a different message from the message given to Abraham, but the results were the same when they believed. They believed / trusted in the Lord Jesus, and their believing / trusting was credited to them as righteousness. They are saved.

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 11 vs 17

### **A Question to Ponder On**

Dear reader, can I ask you to ponder a question?

The question is this:

- Why is there a difference between what the Apostles preached and what people today usually say that a person must do to be saved?
- Why do people spreading the gospel message today almost always end up saying something more complicated than the “words by which you will be saved” that Peter spoke to Cornelius and his friends?
- Why do people today usually say something different from what the Apostle John wrote that a person must do to inherit eternal life?

You have just read what Peter said. Now read any tract that you can get your hands on and critically compare the differences between what Peter said and what the tract says. If there are differences, why are they there? Who, if anyone, is getting it wrong? Who is doing the best job of telling the gospel message?

Did Peter miss out something important when he spoke with Cornelius and his friends?

Was John not telling the whole truth when he wrote his gospel book?

Why are people routinely told to “ask the Lord Jesus into your heart” when we search almost in vain to ever find the Apostles saying such a thing?

Is it possible that a ‘folklore’ has grown amongst evangelical Christians that has little biblical support?

Is it possible that we are grieving our Lord by taking the gospel message from folklore rather than from His Word?

Why do most tracts specify two or more things that a person must do to be saved, when the Apostles typically only spoke of one?

Who is doing the better job of preaching the gospel – the Apostles or the tracts?

Wouldn't we be doing much better if the gospel we preached was more similar to what the Apostles preached?

Dear reader, can I be so bold as to suggest that, over the weeks and months ahead, you need to ponder these questions. You need study your bible, compare bible passage with bible passage and critically compare what the bible actually says with what others are saying and with your own understanding of what the gospel message is. You need to seek out the correct answers to these questions as if your life depended upon it. These issues are very important (lives do depend on getting the answers right) and we mustn't allow ourselves to engage in some sort of lazy-minded double-think.

I think that there is only one correct answer to the question: “What must I do to be saved?” I think that most Christians don't have a clear understanding of what that correct answer is. I also think that this state of affairs is nothing like good enough.

Am I just a silly old man with a bee in his bonnet? Or is there an issue here that you need to find the solution to?

## Chapter 10

### **IS IT REALLY TRUE THAT FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST IS SUFFICIENT? WHAT HAPPENS IF WE ADD IN OTHER THINGS WE MUST ALSO DO TO BE SAVED?**

Is it really true that faith alone in Christ is sufficient for salvation?

The early Christians in the province of Galatia were in danger of sliding into a very grave error. People were teaching them that faith alone in Christ was not sufficient. Rather, these teachers were saying that as well as believing in Christ, the Galatians also had to be circumcised and keep certain aspects of the Old Testament Jewish law.

Guided by the Holy Spirit the Apostle Paul wrote a strong letter to the Galatians. Amongst other things, this is what he said:

**“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.**

**But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!”<sup>1</sup>**

These are very serious and sobering words. They should cause us to take great care that when we pass on the gospel message we stick VERY closely to the message that has been given to us by the Apostle Paul. We must take extreme care to ensure that we don't either pass on the wrong message or re-work the message it into something that makes more sense to us. We must never add to, change, or deviate from the gospel message that Paul preached.

Later on in the book of Galatians we also read these words:

**Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.**

**For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.<sup>2</sup>**

As can be seen from this second passage, Paul went so far as to say that Christ would be of no benefit to those who were trying to get right with God by being circumcised and

---

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 1 vs 6-9

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 5 vs 2-6

keeping the Old Testament Law. Those who were seeking to be righteous in God's eyes by keeping the law had been severed from Christ! They had fallen from grace!

This is a very stern warning. Usually we tend to think that 'more must always be better'. We tend to think that the more 'boxes we tick' – the more 'bases we cover' – the more likely we are to succeed. That is the way things usually work in the natural world. Similarly, when it comes to our salvation, we are tempted to think that having both a 'belt and braces' must surely be a safer policy than just relying entirely upon the belt.

That is what the Galatians were doing. They were going for more. They were completely wrong. God, through Paul, told them that this approach would result in them having absolutely nothing! More is not always better! We can go for more and end up with nothing!

Why were the Galatians in so much peril? Because they weren't believing God's message – the message that forgiveness of sins is given freely, as a gift, to all who believe / entrust in Christ. They weren't simply relying upon Christ to save them. They were adding in something else that seemed right to them.

We must be extremely wary of teachings that in effect say faith alone in Christ is not sufficient to save us – teachings that in effect say that we also must do some additional thing.

For example:

- Some groups teach that water baptism is also needed (in addition to faith in Christ) in order to be saved.
- I know relatively little about the Catholic church, but, as I understand it, their official teaching is that faith alone in Christ is not sufficient to save. Rather, I think they teach that faith PLUS certain good works are necessary.<sup>1</sup>
- Many evangelicals place great emphasis on the surrender of the life to the Lordship of Christ as a condition that must be met if one is to be saved. It is true that it is only the LORD Jesus who can save, and that He is the One who has both the power and the right to reign over us. It is true that He is the One who, in His sovereignty, does actually reign over all people, and the One to whom all men must submit. The One we must believe in (or come to, or receive, as it is sometimes put in John's gospel) is none other than the LORD Jesus – the Lord of All.

---

<sup>1</sup> As far as I am aware, official Catholic teaching was defined in (and has remained unchanged since) the Council of Trent (1544-1563). I am guessing that the head document that this Council produced was written in Latin. Modern English versions of parts of it that I have found on the internet vary marginally. Below are three of the 'Canons' or 'Rules' from this document which I have found on the internet.

- Session 6, Canon 9 of the Council of Trent says: *"If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema (i.e. accursed)."*
- Canon 12 says: *"If any one shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy pardoning sins for Christ's sake, or that it is that confidence alone by which we are justified ... let him be accursed".*
- Canon 30 says: *"If any one saith, that, after the grace of Justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such wise, that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened (to him); let him be anathema (i.e. accursed)."*

BUT, placing much emphasis on our personal submission to Him in order to obtain salvation goes beyond the gospel message that God has given.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps not in someone's theory, but certainly in practice it becomes a good work that we must do in order to be saved. In the person's mind, the purchase price for their salvation tends to become their own life (which the person thinks they must surrender in order to gain salvation). This of course is completely wrong. The purchase price is Christ's life which He gave freely as a ransom for all.

The person tends to become focussed on their surrender, rather than on looking to the Saviour who "justifies the ungodly".<sup>2</sup> The person focuses on what they must do, rather than simply placing their faith in the Saviour who through His mighty, all-sufficient, finished work is able to save even a disobedient, self-seeking, wretch like them. They can end up looking to themselves and their surrender, rather than to the Saviour who loved them, and gave himself for them.

Rather than coming "Just as I am, without one plea", the person tends to think that their complete surrender carries some weight with God. In practice their plea tends to become that they have made a complete surrender to Christ.

I fear for those that go down this track. The person may be very committed. But if, at the heart of the matter, they end up looking to their own surrender to save them rather than to the Saviour, (a Saviour who in His underserved kindness saves sinners) they may well not be saved!

As I see it, this theology tends to become a rather perverse and highly deceptive form of seeking to be justified by works. In this case the 'good work' that is supposed to save is the complete surrender of the person to Christ.

Rather than focussing on our surrender, what a great blessing it is to be brought to the place where our attitude is that of the hymnist who wrote:

"Nothing in my hand I bring,  
simply to thy cross I cling  
Naked come to Thee for dress,  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly,  
Wash me Saviour or I die."<sup>3</sup>

We must heed the very strong warning of the book of Galatians. The Galatians were at risk of going for 'more' and were thus in grave danger of losing everything.

We need to stick with the words that God has actually said, and not go beyond them. As the proverb says: "**Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar**".<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Most evangelicals who emphasise the surrender of the life to the Lordship of Christ as a condition for being saved, also say they hold to the teaching that salvation is through "faith alone in Christ alone". They have thus developed ways of equating 'faith' with 'surrender'. My question is this: "Does this equating of 'faith' with 'surrender' come from a study of the meaning of the words 'pisteuo' and 'pistis'? Or is it an attempt to reconcile 'Lordship Salvation' doctrine with the many verses that say that salvation is through faith in Christ alone, by changing the meaning of words.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 4 vs 5

<sup>3</sup> From the hymn "Rock of Ages" by Augustus Toplady

<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 30 vs 6

What path are we going to take?

- Are we going to take God at His word? Or are we going to go with what sounds right to us? (Proverbs 3 vs 5 says: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do NOT lean on your own understanding.)
- Are we going to be like the Galatians who added in other requirements in addition to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and were told: "if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you . . . . You have been severed from Christ . . . you have fallen from grace."<sup>1</sup>
- Are we going to pass on the gospel message that the Apostle Paul preached. A message which he received from Christ Himself <sup>2</sup>?
- Or are we going to preach a "different gospel" and fall under the thunderous words "if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"<sup>3</sup>?

These are very serious matters and we need to get it right. We need to stop playing 'Chinese whispers'. We need to study the Word of God for ourselves to see what God has actually said. We need to take at face value what He has said without pushing, or shoving, or twisting His words into saying something more like what we think they should say. We need to discipline ourselves to simply stick with the message we have been given by God, and leave the outcome with Him. His job is to set the terms. Our job is simply to accept the terms (whether or not they are what we think they should be) and faithfully pass them on.

Not the labour of my hands  
Can fulfil Thy law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save, and Thou alone.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 5 vs 2-4

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 1 vs 11-12

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 1 vs 6-9

<sup>4</sup> From the hymn "Rock of Ages" by Augustus Toplady

## Chapter 11

### IMPORTANT FACTS RELATING TO THE GOSPEL

Near the beginning of his gospel, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, John writes:

**“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”<sup>1</sup>**

To become a child of God we must receive the real ‘Him’, not a false ‘Him’. Thus it is good to be clear as to who He actually is. We want it to be the real Lord Jesus Christ that we are turning to and receiving and believing in, not a false one or a false representation of who He is. It is only the real Lord Jesus who can save.

The above verse also says it is “even to those who believe in His name.”

What does it mean to “believe in His name”? His name stands for who and what He is, and thus His authority and power. Who is He? He is many things. For example He is the Son of God. He is the foretold, and long awaited, Messiah of the Jews. He is the Saviour – the One who saves.

It is good to know as much about Him as we can, but we certainly don’t need to know all about Him before we can be saved. (Discovering who He really is, is a lifelong mission, and even then we will only just be getting started!)

Also, we are not saved by getting all our doctrine right. We are not saved by believing all the right things about Him. We are saved when we turn to Him and put our faith in Him (not in a doctrine) – when we receive Him (not a body of teaching) – when we look to Him (not doctrine) to save us. As Jesus said to the Jewish authorities: **“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that bear witness of Me, and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life”.**<sup>2</sup>

Eternal life is found in Him, and we must come to Him (not to a doctrine) to receive it. Eternal life is His to give. As Jesus said again: **“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes”.**<sup>3</sup>

Even those with very little knowledge and understanding of Him – even I think young children – can hear His voice, take Him at His word, believe/entrust in Him, and receive eternal life.<sup>4</sup>

But having said all that, there are some facts that are of high importance. I now want to draw your attention to some of these important facts relating to the gospel “by which you are saved”.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> John 1 vs 12

<sup>2</sup> John 5 vs 39-40

<sup>3</sup> John 5 vs 21

<sup>4</sup> See John 5 vs 24-25

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 15 vs 1-2



Namely:

1. That Jesus is the Christ – i.e. the Jew's Messiah
2. That Jesus is LORD – i.e. the Almighty God Himself
3. That He died for our sins and rose again
4. That we ALL Need a Saviour
5. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the ONLY Saviour
6. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the ALL-SUFFICIENT Saviour

These six items are now dealt with in more detail.

### **11.1 Jesus is the Christ**

Jesus was a born and bred Jew and he lived in Israel in a Jewish culture.

But, the earliest records of the New Testament of the bible are in Greek, not Hebrew. The English word 'Christ' comes from the New Testament Greek word 'Christos', meaning 'anointed one'. They used this Greek word 'Christos' because it was the nearest Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word 'Mashiach' (or 'Messiah' as it is commonly written in English). To say that Jesus is the Christ is thus to say that Jesus is the Jew's Messiah, promised long ago in the ancient Hebrew scriptures we call the Old Testament.

The real Jesus is the Jew's Messiah – the Promised One – the anointed King who has the right to reign in Israel, and indeed over the whole world. He is the one who the Jewish prophets foretold would come to save His people (the Jews) and rule on earth.

This person is completely different from the 'Christ-spirit' or the "cosmic Christ" that some new-age and occult belief systems embrace – a Christ who is an avatar, or an "enlightened Master" who must take his place along with Buddha, Krishna, the Lord Maitreya and others.

Towards the end of his book John wrote: **"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these (i.e. the things recorded in the gospel of John) have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the CHRIST (i.e. the Jew's Messiah), the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."** (John 20 vs 30- 31)

### **11.2 Jesus is LORD**

The people of the ancient world believed that various 'gods' ruled over the peoples on earth, but they did not agree as to who these 'gods' were. The big question was: Who was it that ruled on high? Who was it that held humans at his (or her) mercy? Who was the divine ruler that held power over them? Who was it whose favour they must gain and whose wrath they must escape? Who was it that they should serve and appease? These were important issues to the people of the ancient world.

Was it Baal? Was it some other 'deity' that ruled over one part on earth, and another 'deity' that held power in another area? Elijah challenged the Israelites on this. At the contest on Mount Carmel he said: "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD (i.e. Yahweh) is God, follow Him, but if Baal, follow him." <sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 18 vs 21

The revelation of the Old Testament was that Yahweh (or Jehovah as the Name used to be mistranslated) was the one and only true God, and the ruler of the whole earth. In poetic language, heaven is Yahweh's throne and the earth is His footstool.<sup>1</sup>

In Hebrew they wrote his name as YHWH or YHVH <sup>2</sup>.

Some time between 200 and 300 years before Christ, Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. This translation (which is still available today) is known as the Septuagint (sometimes abbreviated as 'LXX'). When these scholars came to the sacred name YHWH, they wrote the Greek word 'KURIOS'. This Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament was in common usage when the earliest records of the New Testament (which are in Greek) were being written. (In fact I understand that when the New Testament writers quoted from the Old Testament, they quoted from the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament.)

Thus in Jewish usage of the time, 'KURIOS' was the name given to Yahweh – i.e. the Almighty God.

But 'KURIOS' also had a lesser meaning. It also simply meant 'lord', 'master', 'owner' etc. A slave would thus refer to his master as 'KURIOS'.

Thus at the time of writing the New Testament, the word 'KURIOS' had two meanings.

1. It was used as a name for the God of the Old Testament, the one true God, Yahweh, AND
2. It simply meant 'master', or 'boss', or 'owner', or 'lord' with a lower case 'l'

The New Testament was originally written in Greek using only capital letters. No lower case letters were used. (Lower case greek letters only gained usage well after the New Testament had been written.) Thus we cannot use capital letters to determine whether 'Lord' in the sense of 'God', or 'lord' in the sense of 'master' is meant. (Translators are using their own judgement in determining whether to translate 'KURIOS' as 'Lord' or 'lord'.)

But, the testimony of both the New and the Old Testaments is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God – He is the LORD – He is Yahweh. Jesus, the promised Messiah, is none other than Almighty God – Yahweh Himself. The Old Testament prophets spoke of the coming of Jesus as follows:

- **Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.**" (Isaiah 7 vs 14) (Immanuel means 'God with us'.)
- **"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."** (Isaiah 9 vs 6)
- **"This is the name by which he will be called 'Jehovah our Righteousness'."** (Jeremiah 23 vs 6)

---

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 66 vs 1

<sup>2</sup> but using the Hebrew alphabet of course. The third Hebrew letter can be given as either a 'W' or a 'V'. The original Hebrew had no vowels, only consonants. Thus although today most people pronounce the name as 'Yahweh', I don't think anyone knows for certain how it was actually pronounced. 'Yahwah' has also been suggested as a possibility.

The Saviour who came and dwelt amongst us and suffered for our sins is none other than Yahweh. There is only one Saviour, and it is Yahweh Himself!

- “I, even I, am Jehovah, and apart from me there is no saviour.” (Isaiah 43 vs 11)
- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” . . . “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . .” (John 1 vs 1-2, & 14)
- “Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. . .” (Philippians 2 v 7)
- “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2 vs 9-11)

Near the beginning of his gospel, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit John wrote: “**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe/entrust in His name.**” (John 1 vs 12)

At the middle of his book John records this: Jesus said: “**unless you believe that I am (He?), you will die in your sins.**” (John 8 vs 24). The word “He” is not there in the original Greek texts. Many translations add the word ‘He’ for clarity, but perhaps Jesus is suggesting that He is the great “I am” of the Old Testament, namely Yahweh. What He actually said was: “unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins.”

Towards the end of his book John wrote: “**these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the SON OF GOD; and that believing you may have life in His name**” (i.e. through who He is, and by His authority I think). (John 20 vs 31)

### **11.3 He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again**

The teaching given by Jesus before His crucifixion is NOT the heart of the gospel message – the message that was preached after the resurrection. Rather the heart of the gospel message is the Saviour Himself, who by merit of the work that He did on the cross, is now able to completely save all who believe/entrust in Him. At the heart of the gospel is not a doctrine or even a way of life, but rather a Person – a Saviour who suffered and died for our sins, and rose again from the dead.

There is a so-called ‘gospel’ that emphasises the earthly teaching of Jesus and tries to make the world a better place through people following the teaching of Jesus. This is not the gospel that saves us today. It is the Saviour Himself that saves us, not His teaching. The great fact is that He is able to save us because He died for our sins and rose again.

Writing to the Corinthians Paul reminded them of certain gospel facts that he had preached to them.

**Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.**

**For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that**

**He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures** (1 Corinthians 15 vs 1-3)

The 'good news' that Peter preached (after the cross) to the gentile Cornelius – the "words by which you will be saved" that we looked at earlier in this booklet – also focused on the death and resurrection of Christ.

The death and resurrection of Christ is also what Peter preached to the Jews both on the day of Pentecost,<sup>1</sup> and when the crowd gathered after he healed a lame man at the temple.<sup>2</sup> In fact the death and resurrection of Jesus, (along with the fact that He is the Messiah), seems to be a significant part of most of the gospel messages that the Apostles preached as recorded in the book of Acts. (Read the book of Acts and check for yourself what they preached.)

**11.3.1 His Death**

The significance of the death of Christ is that **"without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness"**.<sup>3</sup> Jesus is the "Lamb of God" who had to be sacrificed in order to take away the sins of the world.<sup>4</sup> There is no other adequate sacrifice that has, or can, be made for sins. In His death He made an atoning sacrifice for us, and without His death there is no atonement and no redemption. He is the one who **"has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows"**.<sup>5</sup> He is the one of whom the prophet foretold:

**"He was wounded for our transgressions,  
He was bruised for our iniquities;  
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,  
And by His stripes we are healed.  
All we like sheep have gone astray;  
We have turned, every one, to his own way;  
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."  
(Isaiah 53 vs 5-6 NKJ translation)**

This is an important fact upon which the 'good news' that was preached after the resurrection was founded. It is part of a message which could only be preached after Christ had in fact died for our sins. It is a foundational fact for the gospel message for today.

**11.3.2 His resurrection**

One significance of His resurrection is that it proves that He was who He claimed to be, and it verifies what He said. It gives proof to the fact that He is the LORD.

Writing to the Romans Paul says that Jesus "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead".<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See Acts ch 2 vs 14-36

<sup>2</sup> Acts 3 vs 11-16

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 9 vs 22

<sup>4</sup> John 1 vs 29

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 53 vs 4 (New King James translation)

<sup>6</sup> Romans 1 vs 4

Jesus claimed equality with God. (This was the supposed blasphemy that we crucified him for.) He also said that he would rise from the dead on the third day. His resurrection proves that all this wasn't just talk. It proves that He was indeed who He claimed to be. Deluded people may make all sorts of claims, but they do not prove their claims by rising from the dead.

In addition, His resurrection proves that He, a man, has conquered death. Now He is able to bring other men and women through death into new resurrection life.

#### **11.4 We ALL Need a Saviour**

You will recall that the angel told Cornelius **"Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household"**.<sup>1</sup> Even though Cornelius was a good man who prayed regularly, he still needed to be saved.

The problem goes right back to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. God planted a garden for man and put him in it, and then we read:

**The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."** (Genesis 2 vs 16-18)

Adam and Eve did eat the fruit and the whole of creation on earth fell. Ever since, all men and women, born in the line of Adam and Eve, have been a 'fallen' creation.

Death is separation from the living, and ever since then, humans have experienced not only physical death, but also spiritual death – i.e. separation from the Living God. We are not fit for the presence of God. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians **"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable"**.<sup>2</sup>

To Nicodemus, the Jewish Pharisee and Rabbi, Jesus said **"unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"**<sup>3</sup> and **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"**<sup>4</sup> From Adam we inherit death. Now new life is required if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus came to bring us this new life. It is a new type of life – eternal life – new spiritual life that a person receives when they are 'born again'.<sup>5</sup> (Appendix 8 deals in more detail with 'eternal life'.)

As He walked on earth, Jesus knew that the day would come when He would return to heaven. But He told the Jews that they could not go to the same place as He was going (i.e. heaven) unless they believed in Him. This is what He said:

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 11 vs 13-14

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 15 vs 50

<sup>3</sup> John 3 vs 3

<sup>4</sup> John 3 vs 6-7

<sup>5</sup> The words 'eternal life' are often misunderstood. It is not the existing human life going on forever. Rather it is a new kind of life – new spiritual life. The focus is on the type of life, rather than the length of it. It is the type of life that is needed to enter God's eternal kingdom. The human spirit is never extinguished. Even after death it will live on somewhere. Thus all people already have a never-ending life. But only those that are born again have this new type of life – eternal life – and can enter the Kingdom of God.

**Then He (i.e. Jesus) said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."**

**So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"**

**And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (John 8 vs 21-24).**

Along with all other peoples, his own people the Jews desperately needed a Saviour. They needed to be born again. Unless they were born again they would not see the long promised kingdom of God. He told them all that unless they believed in Him, the Saviour, they would die in their sins. The same is true for all people.

### **11.5 The Lord Jesus Christ is the ONLY Saviour**

There is only one way to heaven, and that is through Christ. He is the ONLY Saviour.

Jesus said: **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."**<sup>1</sup>

To the rulers and elders of Israel Peter said: **"there is salvation in no one else (i.e. other than Jesus); for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."**<sup>2</sup>

### **11.6 The Lord Jesus Christ is the ALL-SUFFICIENT Saviour**

Now nothing needs to be added to the work of Christ. He has done ALL that is needed. The FULL PRICE of our salvation has been paid by Christ.

Now the message is that the forgiveness of sins is offered freely, as a gift, to all who believe in Him.

**". . .everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."** (Acts 10:43)

**"For by grace (i.e. by God's undeserved kindness to us) you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God,<sup>3</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."** (Ephesians 2 vs 8-9)

Those who add to this simple message need to hear the warning of the book of Galatians and tremble.

---

<sup>1</sup> John 14 vs 6

<sup>2</sup> Acts 4 vs 12

<sup>3</sup> I think the thing referred to that is "not of yourselves" but rather "the gift of God" is our salvation, rather than our faith.

## Chapter 12

### JOHN CHAPTER 3 vs 14-16 – WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED? THE MESSAGE STATED SIMPLY

John chapter 3 vs 16 is one of the best known verses in the bible. The verses immediately before John 3 vs 16 should also not be neglected, because these preceding two verses greatly help us understand clearly what John 3 vs 16 is saying.

This passage reads as follows:

**As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him (i.e. everyone who believes in Him <sup>1</sup>) shall not perish, but have eternal life.<sup>2</sup>**

You may recall the background story. (It's recorded in Numbers ch 21 vs 4-9). Back in the days of Moses, the people had sinned and God sent snakes amongst them that bit them and caused many to die. The people then acknowledged their sin and asked Moses to intercede with God on their behalf. God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. God said that everyone who was bitten and then looked at the bronze snake would live. And so it came about. If a snake bit anyone, when that person looked to the bronze snake on the pole, they lived.

John chapter 3 is saying that this Old Testament event is a picture of the salvation that Christ brings.

- In the Old Testament picture, the people recognised that they had sinned. We too have all sinned. We have fallen short of the standard required for humans (created in the image of God!) and we need to recognise that fact.
- The people realised that they had a problem – they were dying – and we too must realise that we have a problem. Our sin brings about spiritual death – eternal separation from God. Spiritually, (as well as physically) we are “perishing” – i.e. ruined.
- The people realised that their sin was the cause of their problem. They had offended God, and they sought someone to intercede with God on their behalf. The wonderful truth is that Jesus is now a great Intercessor between God and man.
- God provided a remedy then – a snake lifted up on a pole – and he has provided a remedy again – Jesus lifted up on a pole (the cross). (Why is Jesus on the cross pictured as a snake on a pole? Possibly it is because on the cross Jesus, the Holy One, had our sins heaped upon Him. As 1 Peter 2 vs 24 says: “**He** (i.e. Jesus) **Himself bore our sins in His own body on the cross . . .**”, and as 2 Corinthians 5 vs 21 says: “**He** (i.e. God) **made Him** (i.e. Jesus) **who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf . . .**”.
- All the people needed to do was to look to the snake on the pole. (Obviously they would only do this if they realised that they had a problem, and believed that the

---

<sup>1</sup> The Greek word translated here (and in the preceding sentence) as ‘whoever’ is the word ‘pas’ which is elsewhere translated as ‘everyone’.

<sup>2</sup> John 3 vs 14-16

snake of the pole was the solution to their problem.) What must we do to be saved from the spiritual death sentence hanging over us? – from the “perishing” that is now attached to human life? –

- **“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.”**
- We need to realise that the Saviour (Jesus) is the solution to our problem and look to Him to save us.
- **“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved”.<sup>1</sup>**
- **“...everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life...”.<sup>2</sup>**
- **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”<sup>3</sup>**

Could it be more clear! **“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all”.**<sup>4</sup>

Listen carefully. We must look to the SAVIOUR or we are not saved! Facts are important but it is not just a matter of believing certain facts about God. Nor is it many of the other things people sometimes say. I hear people talking all about God – about how they have given their life to God – about what God is doing in their life – but never mentioning the Saviour. Are they saved? God alone knows for sure, but if the Saviour doesn't feature large in a person's thinking there is reason to wonder whether they have in fact ever actually come to the Saviour – ever ‘looked’ to Him – ever believed/trusted in the Saviour who died for them, and been saved.

We are not saved when we decide to become a Christian. I repeat. We are not saved when we decide to become a Christian. We are saved when are born again. We are born again when we look to the Saviour – when we believe/entrust in Him, Jesus the Son of God and the Messiah. I think that there are many people who think there are Christians (because they have decided to be Christians) but who aren't actually saved.

Human nature being what it is, people seem to do everything other than simply take God at His word – that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that forgiveness of sins is offered freely, as a gift, to all who believe in Christ – to all who look to Him to save them – to all who rely upon Him.

**“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever believes (/entrusts) will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes (/entrusts) in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life”.**<sup>5</sup>

This is the message that is nothing less than **“the power of God for salvation to everyone that believes (/entrusts)”**<sup>6</sup>

Knowing for sure what the gospel message is, is a treasure of great, great value. (Diligently study the matter for yourself until you are certain you have gotten the message correct.)

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts ch 16 vs 31

<sup>2</sup> John 6 vs 40

<sup>3</sup> John 3 vs 16

<sup>4</sup> 1 Timothy 2 vs 5-6

<sup>5</sup> John 3 vs 14-16

<sup>6</sup> Romans 1 vs 16



Being obedient to the message – i.e. simply believing/trusting in Christ to save you – swings the door to heaven wide, wide open.

- So wide open that the undeserving sinner can boldly enter into the presence of Holy God and be joyfully welcomed by God as His now born-again son or daughter!
- So wide open that Holy God will welcome with open arms and then embrace His son or daughter whose sins have now been washed away by the blood of Christ.<sup>1</sup>
  - A son or daughter who now is a “new creation”,<sup>2</sup> joined to Christ,<sup>3</sup> and “alive in Him”,<sup>4</sup> and thus clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ.<sup>5</sup>
  - A son or daughter who is now complete in Christ,<sup>6</sup> blessed with every spiritual blessing,<sup>7</sup> and having come to fullness of life in Him.
  - A son or daughter who has now exchanged the ‘perishing’ life they inherited from Adam for the eternal life that they now have in Christ.

This is the message which, when first laid hold of, can sometimes leave a person with a song bursting through every pore in their skin, as it did the slave-trader John Newton who wrote:

*Amazing grace (i. e. underserved kindness)  
how sweet the sound,  
that saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
was blind but now I see.<sup>8</sup>*

And as another song says:

*Love of Christ so freely given,  
Grace of God beyond degree,  
Mercy higher than the heaven,  
Deeper than the deepest sea.<sup>9</sup>*

(Much of this chapter is repeated and expanded in Appendix 8)

---

<sup>1</sup> for example see Revelation 1 vs 5

<sup>2</sup> for example see 2 Corinthians 5 vs 17

<sup>3</sup> for example see Ephesians 5 vs 30-32

<sup>4</sup> for example see Ephesians 2 vs 4-6

<sup>5</sup> for example see 1 Corinthians 1 vs 30, 2 Corinthians 5 vs 21 & Philippians 3 vs 9

<sup>6</sup> for example see Colossians 2 vs 10a

<sup>7</sup> for example see Ephesians 1 vs 3

<sup>8</sup> (But I must hasten to add that whilst John Newton was living an evil lifestyle “the hour he first believed”, once saved he did not remain in that lifestyle. He became one of England’s great preachers, and helped many others find the same amazing grace that he had experienced.)

<sup>9</sup> From a song by Thoro Harris

## Chapter 13

# CONCLUSION OF PART 1

I believe that what I have outlined in the previous chapters answers the question “What must I do to be saved?”

Check for yourself whether or not I have fairly represented what the bible says. Check for yourself whether or not it is in line with the message that the Apostles preached after the resurrection, as recorded in the book of Acts. Check for yourself whether or not it is what John said in his book – a book which he said he wrote so that “you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name”.<sup>1</sup> Check whether it is the same message that the Apostle Paul preached – a message that was revealed to him, and entrusted to him, by none other than Jesus himself.

Some issues you may have with what I have written thus far (e.g. the issue of repentance) are dealt with in the following Part 2 of this paper.

Then, after you have determined for yourself what the Bible actually says, remember what Paul said – “if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!”<sup>2</sup> – and tremble. If appropriate get down on your knees and confess to the Lord how you have sometimes said to others things that were quite different from this message – things that made more sense to you, or things that you had heard others saying – and resolve to never make that mistake again. Perhaps you will even see the need to correct those who are spreading a ‘different’ gospel.

---

<sup>1</sup> John 20 vs 31

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 1 vs 9

## **PART 2**

### **SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED, AND OTHER MATTERS**

In Part 1 I stated what the Bible says I must do to be saved. In Part 2 we will now investigate some issues arising from Part 1, and some other matters.



## Chapter 14

### BUT WHAT ABOUT REPENTANCE – IS THERE A CONTRADICTION HERE?

In Part 1 I argued that the gospel message is as spoken in the “words by which you will be saved”<sup>1</sup> that Peter preached to Cornelius and his friends. The message was (and is) that “everyone who BELIEVES / trusts in Him (the real Jesus – the Messiah and the Son of God) receives forgiveness of sins.” (Acts 10 vs 43)

BUT, on the very first occasion after the resurrection that the gospel was preached – on the day of Pentecost – Peter didn’t use the words ‘believe’ or ‘faith’ even once. Rather he said ‘REPENT’.

Acts 2 records this first gospel message. From verse 14 on Peter tells his Jewish listeners about what had happened. He tells how Jesus had worked miracles, been put to death and risen from the dead. Peter finished his declaration by saying:

**"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2 vs 36)**

The passage continues to tell us what happened next:

**Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"**

**Peter said to them, "REPENT, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2 vs 37-38)**

The above is not the only time people were told to ‘repent’, rather than to ‘believe’.

The second time that Peter proclaimed the good news he said much the same. Peter had healed a lame man and a crowd gathered. To this Jewish crowd Peter said: “Therefore REPENT and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, . . .” (Acts 3 vs 19)

And yet again to the men of Athens Paul said: “God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should REPENT . . .” (Acts 17 vs 30)

Appendix 3 summarises the book of Acts’ record of what the Apostles preached, and what the people did to be saved. Please look through this appendix. You will note that ‘believe’ is the word most commonly used but that the words ‘repent’ and ‘repentance’ are also used.

Isn’t there a contradiction here? Consider carefully the following:

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 11 vs 14

Don't the verses saying 'repent' contradict the other verses quoted in Part 1 that say that the gospel is the "power of God for salvation to EVERYONE who BELIEVES, to the Jew first and also to the Greek"? (Romans 1 vs 16)

***If repentance is an additional thing we must do for salvation, – then:***

1. How come the Apostle John doesn't mention the word 'repent' or 'repentance' even ONCE in his gospel <sup>1</sup> – a book that he says he wrote with the express intention of bringing salvation to his readers? <sup>2</sup>
2. How come the Apostle Paul scarcely mentions the word repent in his book of Romans – the book where he sets out the gospel clearly and logically? <sup>3</sup>
3. How come repentance is never mentioned in the book of Galatians – a book which also somewhat deals with the gospel?
4. How come Peter said nothing about repentance when he preached to Cornelius the "words by which you will be saved" that we looked at in chapter 9?

What must we do to be saved? Is it 'believe'? Or is it 'repent'? Or is it both?

1. If it is 'believe', why did Peter say 'repent' the first two times he preached the gospel?
2. If it is 'repent', why did John in his gospel and Paul in his writings say 'believe'?
3. If it is both, how do you explain the verses that say salvation is for "everyone who believes"? (If a person must both believe and repent, then surely it is not everyone who believes who is saved – only that smaller group who both believe AND also repent. It is not true to say it is for everyone who believes.)
4. If both believing and repenting are necessary, how come the Apostles John, Peter and Paul were so grossly negligent as to only mention one of the two necessary things? If both are necessary, they only told half of the story when they preached the good news, and surely that is not good enough.

Think about it. These are questions that need to be answered. Do you have an answer to these questions? I put it to you that you need to have one, and that you should search diligently until you find the answers.

On the face of it there appears to be a contradiction here. This is a problem for those of us that believe the Bible is the Word of God. God doesn't make mistakes, and He doesn't contradict Himself. So what is the solution to the problems outlined above?

Fortunately there is a solution to this apparent contradiction. The next chapter resolves this puzzle.

---

<sup>1</sup> That's right. The words 'repent' or 'repentance' don't occur even once in the gospel of John! It is not as if John wasn't familiar with the word. We know this because John used the words repent and repentance a total of 12 times in the book of Revelation which he wrote. Furthermore, it seems likely that John was initially a disciple of John the Baptist, and there is no doubt that he was an early disciple of Jesus. John was thus very familiar with the word 'repent' because both the message that John the Baptist preached, and also the early message that Jesus gave as he walked through Israel was "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". (Matthew 3 vs 2 & Matthew 4 vs 17) And yet in his Gospel, John doesn't use the word 'repent' even once. The question is: If repentance is necessary for salvation, why doesn't John use it in his gospel?

<sup>2</sup> John 20 vs 31

<sup>3</sup> The only time the words 'repent' or 'repentance' are mentioned in the book of Romans is in Romans 2 vs 4-5 which say: "*Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*" In contrast the words *pistis* (faith) and *pisteuo* (believe) are used 57 times in the book of Romans

## Chapter 15

### THE MEANING OF THE WORD TRANSLATED AS 'REPENT'

It seems to me that the problem outlined in the previous chapter is caused by the fact that we have attached a meaning to the word 'repent' that is not there in the original (Greek) word used in the New Testament.

So what does the word translated as "repent" actually mean?

It is my understanding that the word translated as 'repent' means a 'change of mind', a 'change of understanding'.

When used in conjunction with the gospel preached after the resurrection, I understand the word to be referring to the deep seated change of thinking – the change in a person's belief system – that comes about when a person is brought by God to the place where they look to the Saviour and believe (/entrust) in the Lord Jesus Christ. I understand it to be the change of mind that comes upon a person when they realise that they are on the wrong path, and that Jesus is the answer.

(When part of being born-again. this 'change of mind' is coupled with a 'turning around', of the inner man and a turning towards the Saviour in faith. But the word we have translated as 'repent' simply means a change of mind.)

When this meaning for repent is used, the apparent contradiction outlined in the previous chapter evaporates.

The bible is not only the word of God in a general sense, but it is also the 'very words' of God. But these 'very words' of God weren't given in English. Rather, the earliest texts of the New Testament are in Greek. Furthermore, there is not an exact matching of words between languages. Thus to best comprehend what is being said, we need to understand the meaning of the Greek words used in these earliest New Testament records.

Our English bibles say 'repent' and 'repentance'. But the words used in the earliest texts are the Greek words '**metanoeo**' (verb) and '**metanoia**' (noun).

#### **15.1 Literal Meaning of *Metanoeo* – (the word our bibles have translated as *repent*)**

According to W E Vine and his 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words', literally *metanoeo* means "to perceive afterwards". [*Meta* means *after* (implying change). *Noeo* means *to perceive, understand, apprehend*. (*Noeo* comes from *nous* - the mind, the seat of moral reflection.)]

We are all familiar with the word *metamorphosis*, a change of form. It also comes from the Greek. In some ways *metanoeo* is like it. *Metamorphosis* is a changing to a different form. *Metanoeo* is a changing to a different mind.

Meta	-	morphosis
Change	of	form
Meta	-	noeo
Change	of	mind

This is what the word *metanoeo* literally means – a change of mind, a change of understanding, a change of perception.

## **15.2 Common Meaning of Metanoeo**

But sometimes, in popular usage, words develop a meaning different from what their original literal meaning was. For example our English word ‘cupboard’ was no doubt originally a cup-board – a board on which the cups were placed. But the word has now evolved to mean something different from that.

Hence we need to see whether *metanoia* still meant a change of mind (at the time the New Testament was being written), or whether a different meaning had evolved.

I am no reader of ancient texts, but I understand from others that *metanoia*, as it was commonly used in non-religious writings, did simply have the meaning of a *change of mind*.<sup>1</sup>

In addition there is something else that helps us. The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language, but, hundreds of years before Christ, it was translated into Greek. This early Greek translation is known as the Septuagint. I understand that the Septuagint was in common usage at the time the New Testament was being written. This Greek Translation gives us insight as to what ‘metanoeo’ means. Some people say that *metanoeo* means to ‘turn away from sin’, but this is not borne out by the way *metanoeo* is used in the Septuagint.

For example, I understand from others that:

- When they translated the passage: “*Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.*” (1 Samuel 15 vs 29) into Greek they used the word metanoeo for “change His mind”.
- When they translated into Greek the passage about God changing His mind about bringing destruction on Nineveh – i.e. the passage: “*Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.*” *When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.*” (Jonah 3 vs 9-10) they used the word metanoeo for “relent”.

If the word *metanoeo* means ‘to turn from sin’ they would not have used it in the above passages. God was not turning from sin in the above passages. He was changing His mind.

Furthermore, there is a Hebrew word *shuwb*. (Strong’s word number 7725) *Shuwb* means to ‘turn back’ or ‘turn away’ or ‘turn about’ or ‘return’. For example it is the word

---

<sup>1</sup> Examples of this are given in the paper “New Testament Repentance – Lexical Considerations” by Robert N Wilkin. Much of the information I present in section 15.2 and 15.3 has been gleaned from this paper (and also no doubt reinterpreted by myself in the process). You can easily find this paper by doing a Google search for it on the internet. Check it out for yourself. I have found it helpful.



used in 2 Kings 17 vs 13 which says: "The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn (*shuwb*) from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets."

This word (*shuwb*) is used over a thousand times in the Hebrew Old Testament, but I understand from others that when they translated the Old Testament into Greek, they NEVER translated *shuwb* as *metanoeo*. If however *metanoeo* meant to turn from sin, surely they would have used it at least sometimes – for example in the passage quoted in the previous paragraph where the people were told: "*turn from your evil ways*".

In addition there is a verse in the New Testament that I think sheds some light on the issue. Speaking about Esau, Hebrews 12 vs 17 tells us "*For you know that even afterwards, when he (Esau) desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for metanoia, though he sought for it (i.e. for the blessing I think) with tears.*"

The above passage has puzzled many, but I think the best explanation is that it is referring to the events recorded in Genesis 27 vs 34-41. There we are told that, after Jacob had received the blessing, Esau "*cried out with an exceedingly bitter cry, and said to his father 'Bless me, even me also, O my father!'*", and how "*Esau lifted his voice and wept*". But it was too late. His father would not change his mind and give the blessing to Esau. I suggest that the best explanation of Hebrews 12 vs 17 is that it is not talking about Esau 'turning from sin'. Rather it is about Esau weeping and crying out to his father Jacob, asking Jacob to 'change his mind' and bless him.

Thus both the literal and the common meaning of *metanoeo* was 'to change one's mind'.

This is the meaning that W E Vine gives in his 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words'. Vine says that, *metanoeo* signifies "to change one's mind or purpose".

### **15.3 Wrong Meanings Attached to the Word 'Repent'**

When the early church translated the Greek New Testament into Latin, they translated the Greek word *metanoeo* as the Latin word *paenitentia*. This Latin translation was the translation that the Catholic church took as authoritative and relied upon. In addition, the Catholic church strayed from the truth. They took this word *paenitentia* to mean doing acts of penance – acts they erroneously taught were necessary to obtain God's grace.

The first English translation of the bible was made by John Wycliffe. Unfortunately he was not able to go back to the Greek New Testament, but rather made his English translation from the existing Latin translation of the bible. Regrettably he translated the word *paenitentia* as "do penance".<sup>1</sup> This 'do penance' translation was continued in the English translation made by the Catholic church in 1610, namely the Douay Bible.<sup>2</sup>

Thus as the word *metanoeo* went from Greek to Latin to English it went from a word meaning 'change of mind' to something different (and wrong), namely 'doing penance'.

---

<sup>1</sup> You can confirm this for yourself by going on the internet to a site such as BibleGateway.com and looking up the Wycliffe translation of a verse such as Acts 2 vs 38

<sup>2</sup> The English translations currently used by most English speaking Catholics, are the 1966 Jerusalem Bible and the 1985 New Jerusalem Bible. The New Jerusalem bible now uses the word 'repent' rather than 'do penance'. I think the Jerusalem bible does also, but I haven't been able to check this because the Jerusalem Bible is not available on line.

In 1526 William Tyndale produced a new English translation. Unlike Wycliffe he made his translation from the original Greek, rather than the Latin translation. He translated the Greek word *metanoeo* as *repent*. The subsequent King James Bible continued with this translation. 'Repent' was a vast improvement on 'do penance', but in most people's minds 'repent' still carries with it ideas beyond what I understand to be the meaning of the original Greek word *metanoeo*. As I see it, the problem is that some of the earlier ideas associated with 'doing penance' have clung to the word 'repent'.

For example most English dictionaries will give meanings for 'repent' like "to feel regret or contrition, to show penitence, to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one's life". This goes well beyond the meaning of the word *metanoeo*, which as previously stated means to change one's mind or purpose.

In summary then, it is my understanding that the word translated as '*repent*' namely '*metanoeo*' means to change one's mind or purpose, and we need to guard against attaching more meaning to the word than this. We need to look at the context in which the word is used to determine what the person is required to change their mind about.

Is this redefining the meaning of the word we have translated as 'repent'?

No, not at all. Just the opposite in fact. The problem is that the word *metanoeo* has already been redefined into something different from its original meaning. Translating *metanoeo* as to 'change one's mind' is not redefining the word. Rather it is simply returning it to its original meaning.

## Chapter 16

### RECONCILING 'BELIEVE' WITH 'REPENT'

In the preceding chapter I gave reasons for why the word most bibles translate as 'repent' (i.e. *metanoeo*) means a 'change of mind'. In the light of this understanding as to what the word (*metanoeo*) actually means, let us now go back and look at some of the times that the word *metanoeo* was used in preaching the gospel after the resurrection.

#### 1) Peter's First Proclamation of the Gospel

Peter proclaimed the gospel message to the Jews on the day of Pentecost. He concluded by saying:

**"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified."**

**Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"**

**Peter said to them, "METANOEO, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2 vs 36-38)**

What was Peter telling them to do? He had just told them how they had rejected their Messiah. He had just told them that the man they had crucified as a criminal was in fact none other than both Lord and their Messiah!

What must they now do?

They needed to '*metanoeo*' – to change their mind. They must have a complete and deep seated change of mind as to who Jesus was. Instead of believing Him to be a blasphemer, they needed to realise He was the Lord. Instead of crucifying Him as a wrong-doer they needed to receive Him as their Messiah and Saviour. Their thinking had to change completely. They needed to realise that, in their rejection of Jesus, they were completely and utterly on the wrong path. They needed to change their mind about the path they were on.

There is thus no conflict between Peter telling them 'repent' (*metanoeo*), and the many other verses we looked at in Part 1 of this paper that say that "everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."<sup>1</sup> (Acts 10:43) They had rejected their Messiah. Now they had to change their mind and believe in Him and receive Him as Messiah, LORD & Saviour.

#### 2) Peter's Second Proclamation of the Gospel

The second gospel proclamation is like the first.

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 10 vs 43

Peter had healed a lame man. An amazed crowd gathered, and Peter said to them:

**"Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?**

**The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. "And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.**

**"And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.**

**"Therefore METANOEO and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you. (Acts 3 vs 12b-20)**

What was Peter telling them to do? He had just told them how they had disowned and put to death the Holy and Righteous One, their Messiah, but that He rose from the dead.

What must they now do?

They needed to '*metanoeo*' – to change their mind about Jesus. They had rejected their Messiah. Now they had to change their mind. A complete change of thinking was required. They needed to realise that they were on the wrong path. They now had to believe in Jesus, and accept Him as their Messiah so that their sins would be wiped away and He would return.

### 3) Paul's Proclamation to the Greeks at Athens

The Apostle Paul went to Athens and Acts 17 vs 6 tells us that he was grieved by the idolatry that he saw. Paul was preaching about Jesus and the resurrection. The philosophers in the city wanted to hear what Paul was teaching, so they asked him to speak at one of their meetings. This is what Paul said to them:

**"Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.**

**The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things . . . .**

**. . . we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should METANOEO, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the**

**world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17 vs 22-31 [verses 26-28 omitted])**

What was Paul saying?

He was saying that people "ought not to think" (or suppose)<sup>1</sup> that God is an idol. God had overlooked such idolatry in the past, but now a change in thinking was required. They needed to realise that they were on the wrong path. Now God was commanding all people to 'change their mind' about idols, because it was not an idol but a Man, risen from the dead, Jesus, who was the Lord and who would be the judge of the world. Jesus was the LORD – the one who held them at His mercy – not some idol.

A radical change of thinking was required. Their belief system needed to change. Instead of believing in idols and making offerings to them in efforts to appease the gods, they needed to recognise that the resurrected Man, Jesus, was the LORD.

Some of the Athenians mocked, but as verse 34 says, others "believed".

#### New Testament Usage of the Word 'Metanoeo'

Attached as Appendix 2 is a complete list of all the times that *metanoeo* is used in the New Testament. Please take the time to read it through.

In Appendix 2, often the thing that people were being told to 'change their mind' about seems to be their sinful ways. (This would of course mean that they would turn from their sinful ways. Their thinking would change. They would realise they were on the wrong path. They would stop regarding sin as a light thing, start seeing it as a terrible thing that should be shunned, and thus turn from it.)

But I put it to you that this is not the only thing that people were told to 'change their mind' about. I put it to you that changing one's mine about sinful acts (of the general kind) is not the only meaning of *metanoeo*. (The word has never been limited to relating only to a generally sinful lifestyle.)

- Sometimes people were being called to 'change their mind' (*metanoeo*) about the greatest sinful act of all, namely that of rejecting Jesus – i.e. loving the darkness rather than the light.
- Sometimes people were being called to 'change their mind' (*metanoeo*) about idols (which of course meant that they would realise that idols were nothing and would thus stop worshiping them and trying to appease them).

We should not read any more into the word '*metanoeo*' (repent) than a 'change of mind' – a realisation that they were on the wrong path. We should let the context tell us what people were required to change their mind about.

I put it to you that when the word '*metanoeo*' is used as part the good news that was preached after the resurrection – the good news of how Jesus Christ the LORD died for our sins and rose again – then the heart of what people must 'change their mind' about is who Jesus is. He is not a wrong-doer. He is the Messiah! Idols aren't Lords. Jesus is LORD!

---

<sup>1</sup> The word here translated as "think" is *nomizo* which means to 'suppose', 'consider', 'think'.

There also needed to be a change of thinking about the position they were in. They needed to realise that they were on the wrong path. People needed to stop thinking that they were on the right track and that all was well. All was not well. The wrath of God was coming. They needed a Saviour, and Jesus, the man we humans had crucified, was LORD, Saviour and the coming Judge!

I put it to you that the call to 'repent' (more literally, *metanoeo*) MUST be compatible with the statements that salvation is for ALL who 'believe'. Thus, when after the resurrection they preached the good news and told people to "*metanoeo*", they were really saying nothing different from the gospel we looked at in Part 1 of this paper, namely "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16 vs 31). The message is as stated by John near the beginning of his gospel – "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." (John 1 vs 12)

I put it to you that "repenting" (or better *metanoeo-ing*) is NOT something people must do in addition to believing. Rather it is the deep seated change of mind – the change of thinking – the change of understanding – that comes about when God opens a person's eyes, and, led by the Holy Spirit, a person turns to the Saviour and believes in Him. It is the God given realisation that you are on the wrong path and an understanding of what the right path is. The right path is to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### An Illustration

Perhaps it is a little like a shipwrecked person who is floundering in the sea, holding in each hand a bag of gold that he has taken from his sinking ship. A rescue ship comes alongside and the rescuers throw him a rope. But he can't grab hold of the line because he is holding on to the gold.

Most people in the rescue ship shout out to him "Grab hold of the rope".

But others shout out to him "Drop the gold".

In reality both groups are telling him to do the same thing – grab hold of the rope – something he cannot do until he has dropped the gold. It is the rope he needs, not the gold. He needs to come to the understanding that he has a major problem so long as he holds on to the gold. He needs to change his mind about the wisdom of holding onto the gold. He needs to realise that the gold is his problem, and the rope his solution. Every drowning man who grabs hold of the rope is saved.

Similarly when after the resurrection they preached the good news, usually they said "*believe*" in the Lord Jesus Christ. (This is like 'grab hold of the rope'.) But sometimes they said "*metanoeo*" (repent). (This is like 'drop the gold'.) In reality they were saying the same thing each time. They were telling people to stop rejecting Christ, or to stop believing in idols, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ – to embrace Him as their Saviour. They needed to change their mind about the course they were on. They needed to realise that they were on the wrong path and turn to the Saviour.

The shipwrecked person couldn't grab hold of the rope without dropping the gold. The Jews couldn't believe in Christ without changing their mind about who Jesus was. The gentiles of the ancient world couldn't believe in Christ without changing their thinking about idols. [And I suggest to you that modern man can't believe(/entrust) in Christ until he realises that his is on the wrong path. He won't

turn to Christ until he realises that the course he is on is leading to disaster. He can't believe(/entrust) in Christ without changing his mind about who he is (a sinner in need of a Saviour) and who Jesus is (the LORD and Saviour he so desperately needs.)]

### What is the "Metanoia (repentance) that Leads to Life"?

In the earlier chapter 9 we looked at the "words by which you will be saved" which Peter preached to Cornelius and his friends. Peter said nothing to Cornelius about repentance, but he did say that "everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins".<sup>1</sup> "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message"<sup>2</sup> proving that they were now born again.

In reporting what had happened, again Peter said nothing about Cornelius or his friends repenting. Rather, Peter told the believers in Jerusalem that Cornelius and his friends received the gift of the Holy Spirit – i.e. they were saved – upon "believing in the Lord Jesus Christ".<sup>3</sup>

BUT, it is also recorded that when the Jewish believers in Jerusalem heard this they glorified God and said "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the metanoia (change of mind) that leads to life".<sup>4</sup>

I put it to you that the "metanoia that leads to life" – the 'change of mind' that leads to life – is the change of understanding that happens as a person realises that they are on the wrong path and that things are not going to end well the way they are going. It is the realisation that Jesus is the Saviour they need so that they come to believe/entrust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### What is the Metanoia (Repentance) that Jesus Said Should be Preached?

After the resurrection, and shortly before He returned to heaven, Jesus met with his disciples. He "**opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that metanoia** (repentance) **for**<sup>5</sup> **forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."**<sup>6</sup>

What is this "metanoia" that is to be preached in connection with the forgiveness of sins?

Previously I have tried to demonstrate that 'metanoia' means a change of mind. The question we are wrestling with is: What do the unsaved need to 'change their mind' about?

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 10 vs 43

<sup>2</sup> Acts 10 vs 44

<sup>3</sup> Acts 11 vs 17

<sup>4</sup> Acts 11 vs 18

<sup>5</sup> I understand that this verse (Luke 24 vs 47) is one of the occasions where the ancient manuscripts vary slightly. Some manuscripts say "metanoia eis (into/unto/to) forgiveness of sins". Others say "metanoia kai (and) forgiveness of sins". 'eis' is a preposition which means 'into/unto/to'. "kai" is a conjunction which means 'and'. Some translations (for example the NASB and the NIV) have opted for the 'eis' manuscripts, translating 'eis' as 'for' in those two translations. Others such as the Authorized Version have followed the 'kai' manuscripts, translating 'kai' as 'and'.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 24 vs 45-47

The “light of the world” had come, “full of grace and truth”. We humans revealed our heart condition and what we thought of Him by abusing Him and crucifying Him. As John who witnessed all these events wrote: “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil”.<sup>1</sup>

Now there is no salvation for anyone until they change their thinking about Jesus Christ. People need to change their thinking about many things, but most of all they need to change their thinking about Christ. I think that this change of thinking about Christ is at the heart of the “metanoia” that is to be preached for the forgiveness of sins.

Furthermore, I think that Peter was obedient to the Lord's instruction to preach it. Read again the messages that Peter gave as recorded in the book of Acts. Isn't this message of a change of mind about Christ at the heart of what Peter said? In fact, read all the gospel messages proclaimed in the book of Acts – the messages not only of Peter but also of Stephen and Paul. If you do, I think that you will find the following idea at the heart of many of them – Light has come into the world, but men have loved darkness better than light. Now a change of mind is desperately needed. I think that this concept is the heart (but not necessarily the full extend) of the “metanoia” that is to be proclaimed.

Furthermore, Romans chapter 1 tells us that truth about God is revealed through creation. The passage also tells us that people have rejected this truth in favour of a lie. They have thus chosen to not honour the Creator. People need to change their thinking about this course of action as well. As the next chapter of Romans tells us, they need to realise “. . . that God's kindness is intended to lead you to metanoia (a change of mind) But because of your stubbornness and your un-metanoia (unrepentant) heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself.”<sup>2</sup> People need to change their mind about the wisdom of rejecting the truth, whether it be Christ, who IS the Truth, or the truth revealed through Creation.

A change of thinking is necessary before a person will turn to Christ and be saved. God works to bring about this change of understanding. In Acts chapter 5 Peter told the leaders of Israel that “He (Jesus) is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Saviour, to grant metanoia (a change of mind) to Israel, and forgiveness of sins”.<sup>3</sup>

Those that proclaim the gospel also have a part to play. People need to come to the understanding that they are on the wrong track. The wrath of God rests over them. They need to change their mind about the course they are on and turn to the Saviour. They need to change their mind about who Christ is and who they are. Jesus is the LORD and the coming Judge. They are a sinner who desperately needs the forgiveness that now is only to be found in Him. They need to change their mind about the wisdom of rejecting Him. They need to come to understand that their only hope is to somehow find mercy with Him. I think that this change in understanding is the heart of the “*metanoia* that leads to life”.

Then people need to be told how to find mercy with Him. They need to hear the “words by which you will be saved” that were spoken to Cornelius. They need to hear that “EVERYONE who believes/entrusts in Him (Jesus Christ) receives forgiveness of sins”<sup>4</sup> They need to understand what they must now do to be saved. They need to hear the

---

<sup>1</sup> John 3 vs 19 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Romans 2 vs 4-5 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> Acts 5 vs 31

<sup>4</sup> Acts 10 vs 43



words: “**Believe (/ entrust) in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved**”.<sup>1</sup> Nothing else is required. They need to know that in His great, great, kindness, and because of His great, great work, Jesus now gives eternal life freely, as a gift, to all who believe/entrust in Him – even to those who have been on the side of those who crucified Him.

Then, with the helping and enlightening work of the Holy Spirit they can stop trying to do things to gain eternal life. Rather, they can turn to Christ and entrust themselves entirely to the Saviour. A Saviour who, in His undeserved kindness, extends to them an open and welcoming hand. A Saviour who is ready, willing, and able to save even dyed-in-the-wool sinners like them.

And, praise God, when, forsaking all other options, they turn to the Saviour and entrust themselves to Him alone, they are born again by the Spirit of God and blessed beyond all comprehension.

Oh the richness and the depth of His grace and mercy! It reaches higher than the highest heaven and goes deeper than the deepest sea. He certainly is a God who is unbelievably “rich in mercy”.<sup>2</sup>

“Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! . . . To Him be the glory forever.”<sup>3</sup> Hallelujah – what a Saviour!

The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;  
It goes beyond the highest star,  
And reaches to the lowest hell;

*Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure –  
The saints’ and angels’ song.*

Frederick M. Lehman

In this chapter I have outlined what I understand the *metanoia* that accompanies salvation is, and I have given my reasons for thinking as I do.

Can I suggest that over the months ahead you test what I have written to see whether or not it is in line with the biblical record.

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 16 vs 31

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 2 vs 4

<sup>3</sup> Romans 11 vs 33-36

## Chapter 17

### **‘CONVERSION’ IS A TURNING TOWARDS THE SAVIOUR**

What I am going to try to justify to you in this chapter, is that the ‘*conversion*’ that the King James Bible sometimes speaks of, is simply a ‘*turning towards*’ the Saviour.

In earlier chapters we looked at the Greek word that our English bibles translate as ‘repentance’. Coupled with ‘repentance’ – the “*change of mind*’ (*metanoeo*) that leads to life”<sup>1</sup> – there is a turning towards (*epistrophe*) the Lord Jesus Christ.

This chapter looks at that New Testament Greek word – the word ‘***epistrepho***’.

‘*Epistrepho*’ is the word that the King James bible sometimes translates as ‘conversion’ or ‘converted’. It actually means to ‘*turn towards*’. (It is compound word that comes from *epi* – towards, and *strepho* – to turn. *Epistrepho* is the verb form of the word; and *epistrophe* is the noun form.)

When it is part of being born again, the ‘*change of mind*’ that we looked at in previous chapters is coupled with a ‘*turning about*’ of the inner man – a ‘*turning towards*’ the Saviour – an ‘*epistrophe*’.

Our English word ‘conversion’ is often used in a strongly religious way, but the word *epistrepho* was an everyday word that simply meant to ‘*turn towards*’, to ‘*turn about*’.

On eight occasions the King James Bible translates the word *epistrepho* as ‘converted’. But on thirty other occasions the Authorised Version translates *epistrepho* with words such as ‘turn’, ‘turn around’, ‘turn about’, or ‘return’. For example:

- ‘*Epistrepho*’ is the word used in Mark 5 vs 30 where the woman touched the hem of His garment and Jesus “turned around” in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?”
- *Epistrepho*’ is the word used in Matthew 24 vs 18 (and Luke 17 vs 31) where Jesus said that when the people saw the Abomination of Desolation standing in the temple, “Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak.”
- *Epistrepho*’ is the word used in Revelation 1 vs 12 where, on the island of Patmos, John heard a loud voice behind him and “turned to see the voice that was speaking”.

*Epistrepho* is also the word that is used in the following verses:

- “And he (John the Baptist) will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1 vs 16-17)

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 11 vs 18

- "Therefore repent and return (or '*be converted*' in the King James translation), so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, (Acts 3 vs 19-20)
- And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. (Acts 9 vs 35)
- And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. (Acts 11 vs 21)
- . . . saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. (Acts 14 vs 15)
- Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. (Acts 15 vs 3)
- "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, (Acts 15 vs 19)
- . . . the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. (Acts 26 vs 17b-20)
- For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them. (Acts 28 vs 27 (and Matt 13 vs 15, & Mark 4 vs 12))
- But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (2 Corinthians 3 vs 15-16)
- For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1 vs 9)

In modern English, the word 'converted' is usually used in a way that implies a change of outward form. (For example, a car that is a 'convertible', is a car that can change its form.) But, if you peruse the verses quoted above, you will realise that this is not the meaning of the word '*epistrepho*'. 'Converted' is thus no longer a good translation of *epistrepho*. '*Epistrepho*', does not mean a change of outer form. Rather it is talking about a change in direction. It means to '*turn towards*', or to '*turn about*'.

Some people, if they believe in a God, picture themselves as a friend of God, travelling on a path towards Him, with their face looking in His direction.

The Bible seems to paint a different picture of humanity.

The Bible describes the person who is not born again as being an enemy towards God.<sup>1</sup> People may well embrace a 'god' they have created in their own imagination, but, towards the one true God, fallen man is in enmity. If the truth were to be told, it would be more accurate to say that until such time as a person is '*epistrophe*'-ed (turned around), they have their back to the one true God and are moving away from Him. There needs to be an '*epistrophe*' – a '*turning around*' of the inner person – a '*turning towards*' God – a '*turning towards*' the Saviour. A person needs to 'turn towards' Jesus and look to Him to save them.

Is this something a person must do in addition to believing in Christ?

No. Not at all. The gospel remains "the power of God for salvation to EVERYONE who believes (/entrusts)".<sup>2</sup>

It is like '*metanoia*' (repentance) that we looked at previously. Just as a person can't believe(/entrust) in Christ without 'changing their mind' about Christ, so also a person can't believe(/entrust) in Christ without 'turning towards' Him.

God has said: "**As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life**",<sup>3</sup> and that is the whole truth. A person who had been bitten by a snake couldn't look on the snake on the pole without 'turning towards' it. The person who realises they are perishing because they have been 'bitten' by sin, can't believe(/entrust) in Christ without 'turning towards' Him and looking/ believing/ trusting in Him to save them.

To be saved, a person needs to turn, not to religion, nor to some 'god' they have created in their imagination, nor to their own efforts to reform themselves, nor to a body of doctrine. Rather, they need to turn to Jesus, the LORD and Saviour. They need to turn to the One who died for their sins, rose again and now holds the keys to death and Hades<sup>4</sup> in His nail pierced hands. They need to turn to the one who has authority to forgive sins. (See Luke 5 vs 20-24) They need to turn to the One in whom is eternal life.<sup>5</sup> They need to turn to the one who holds eternal life in His hands and who can give it to others.<sup>6</sup> They need to 'look' to Him to save them. (And if a person doesn't turn to Jesus now and look to Him to be their Saviour, then, one day, a great and terrible summons will be issued and that person will (unwillingly no doubt) be brought before Him ("from whose presence earth and heaven flee away"! <sup>7</sup>) and He, the One who once offered to be their Saviour, will then be their righteous judge.<sup>8</sup>)

This turning of the inner man towards the Saviour is I believe something that goes hand in hand with the "'*metanoeo*' (change of mind) **that leads to life**"<sup>9</sup> – the change of mind that leads a person to turn to Jesus and 'look' to Him to save them.

It is a turning to Jesus, the Saviour, and believing(/trusting) in Him.

I put it to you that that is the '*epistrophe*' (conversion) that the New Testament speaks about.

---

<sup>1</sup> Romans 5 vs 10

<sup>2</sup> Romans 1 vs 16

<sup>3</sup> John 3 vs 14-15

<sup>4</sup> See Revelation 1 vs 18

<sup>5</sup> See John 1 vs 4

<sup>6</sup> See John 10 vs 27-28 and John 17 vs 2

<sup>7</sup> Revelation 20 vs 11

<sup>8</sup> See Revelation 20 vs 11-15, and my Appendix 8

<sup>9</sup> Acts 11 vs 18

## Chapter 18

### **BUT WHAT ABOUT WHAT THE BOOK OF JAMES SAYS: – “EVEN THE DEMONS BELIEVE”**

But, some may say, simply believing isn't sufficient because, as the New Testament book of James says, “even the demons believe”.

#### **JAMES CH 2 VS 14-26**

One of the bible passages that can seem to be saying something different from the theme of this book is James ch 2 vs 14-26. It reads as follows:

**<sup>14</sup> What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.**

**<sup>18</sup> But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."<sup>1</sup>**

**<sup>19</sup> You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.**

**<sup>20</sup> But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.**

**<sup>25</sup> In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.**

The passage quoted above presents quite a few difficulties, and I am not presently comfortable with my level of understanding of it. Nevertheless I offer the following comments for your consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup> ‘Open quotation’ marks ( “ ) are placed at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> word in verse 18, but where does the quotation end? The NASB places the ‘end quotation’ marks at the end of verse 18. But since the original Greek does not have quotation marks, the location of the end of the quotation is purely a matter of judgement on the part of the translators. Other translations place the ‘end quotation’ marks in at least 3 other places, namely: 1) after the first time ‘faith’ is used in verse 18, 2) after the first time ‘works’ is used in verse 18, and 3) at the end of verse 19. Because of the great uncertainty as to where the ‘end quotation’ marks should be placed, I have left them out altogether.

## OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF JAMES

The book of James is a book of practical wisdom. The book has little to say about theology. Rather is about being “doers of the word”. It is about living out the Word of God – expressing it in our daily walk – rather than being “merely hearers who delude themselves”.<sup>1</sup>

The book of James does not set out to tell us what we must do to be saved. Rather it is seeking to tell the early Jewish believers who had already embraced Jesus as the Messiah, how they ought to now live. That is the focus of the book. (If you are not convinced of this, read the whole book of James in one sitting for yourself. It only takes half an hour or less.)

## THE MAIN MESSAGE OF JAMES 2 vs 14-26

I am still seeking to understand the passage better. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the main task of the passage quoted on the previous page (i.e. James ch 2 vs 14-26) is to call into question a supposed ‘faith’ that does not express itself in the way we live, and to tell us that this is not the way things ought to be.

I think the main message is that there is no life in a faith that does not express itself. Such a faith is barren<sup>2</sup> and dead. It is useless. Such a state is definitely not the way things ought to be. Such a faith goes beyond being second rate – it is completely barren and does not bear any fruit at all. It goes beyond being unhealthy – it is dead! (I think that is the message of the passage. Re-read it for yourself and see if you agree with me.)

I put it to you that the passage does NOT say that works is the same as faith. Rather it seems to say that good works accompany a living faith. Presently I think that the best explanation is that the passage is saying that a faith that does not RESULT in works is quite possibly unable to save anyone, and certainly of little value to others because it fails to bear any fruit in our daily life.

I think the passage is speaking against the idea that a person can have a genuine, healthy faith, and yet not express that faith in actions.

I think that the passage is expressing the same general theme that runs right through James’s book. Just as a healthy tree bears good fruit, so also healthy faith spawns good works. “Prove yourselves doers of the word (i.e. those that live out the word – those in whom the word bears fruit) and not merely hearers who delude themselves”.<sup>3</sup>

Thus I put it to you that the passage does not contradict the theme of this booklet, namely that “everyone who believes in Him (the Lord Jesus) receives forgiveness of sins”.<sup>4</sup> Rather it seems to be saying that a different lifestyle is to be expected from those that believe. Faith that does not express itself in actions is certainly not healthy faith.

---

<sup>1</sup> James ch 1 vs 22

<sup>2</sup> The word translated as ‘useless’ in verse 20 is ‘argos’. According to W E Vine, ‘argos’ means idle, barren, yielding no return, because of inactivity. In the Authorised Version it is usually translated as ‘idle’, but also as ‘barren’ in 2 Peter 1 vs 8

<sup>3</sup> James ch 1 vs 22

<sup>4</sup> Acts 10 vs 43

## JAMES CH 2 VS 19

Verse 19 says: *You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.*

Three things should be noted about this verse:

### 1) There is at Least a Question as to Who is Speaking the Above Words

As noted in the earlier footnote, there is uncertainty about where the quotation opened in verse 18 should end. At least some scholars (albeit a minority) believe that the words in verse 19 are most likely not being spoken by James. Rather, these scholars think that verse 19 is most likely being spoken by the same hypothetical "someone" that James starts quoting in verse 18. (For example the Weymouth translation, and 'Young's Literal Translation' put the 'close quotation' marks at the end of verse 19.)

### 2) Believing Certain Things About God Will Save No-one – Least of All Demons

People often read far more into this verse than what the verse actually says. The verse does NOT say that faith alone in Christ alone is insufficient to save a human being. Rather it simply suggests (assuming that it is James that is speaking) that believing that "God is one" is insufficient to save. The passage suggests that the sort of faith that only involves believing certain facts about God, is not the sort of faith that saves.

This is VERY important. Believing certain truths about God does not save anyone! (Nor, might I add, does giving your life to God, or trying to live your life the way God wants you to.) Yet I hear some church people talk as if believing certain doctrines is what is required to be saved. Some seem to think they are saved because they believe that the God of the Bible is the true God, and that Christianity is the true religion. But as the passage rightly says, even demons believe certain truths about God.

A person may believe all the doctrines their church teaches. Their theology may be spot on. They may even be a well-respected bible teacher. They may be all these things and yet still be lost.

To be saved we must come to the Saviour. We must look to Him (Jesus the Son of God, the Saviour) to save us. But some church people just don't seem to 'get it'. It is almost as if their eyes are still closed.

(To be honest, I wonder if quite a proportion of the people in our churches have ever actually been born again. I question this because what I hear some say suggests to me that, in their hearts, to some it is all about giving your life to God, and to others it is all about believing certain doctrines. To many church goers it seems to be all about these things, rather than about the Saviour, who loved them and gave His life for them, and who they are now trusting to save them. But of course only God knows for sure those that are His.)

### 3) God's Gracious Offer of Salvation Has Been Made to Humans, Not Demons

When thinking about this verse (James ch 2 vs 19) there is something else we should keep in mind. We should note that God has never said that demons can be saved by believing in God, (or even by faith in Christ for that matter).

God has said clearly that for humans, "whoever believes/entrusts in Him (Jesus) shall not perish but have eternal life", but He has never said that this applies to demons. As far as I am aware God has never made an offer of salvation to demons. The offer is extended to humans only. It is only possible because Jesus, who called Himself the "Son of Man" became a man and gave His life as a ransom for all the other 'sons of men' who would look to Him to save them. He became a human, one of us, so that He could suffer on our behalf. "He was wounded for our transgressions – He was bruised for our iniquities". "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross",<sup>1</sup> not the sins of demons.

The ransom – the price for release – has been paid for humans, but not for demons (at least so far as I am aware). And God has never said that demons can be saved by believing that "God is one", (nor even by trusting in Christ to save them for that matter).

We must go back to what the bible says. To us humans God has said "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."<sup>2</sup> But He has never (that we know of) made any such wondrously generous offer to demons, and He has never said that any being (human or demon) can be saved by believing that "God is one".

### **HOW WERE ABRAHAM AND RAHAB "JUSTIFIED BY WORKS"?**

Another difficulty with the passage (James 2 vs 14-26) is that it says that Abraham and Rahab were "justified by works". James 2 vs 20b says that "faith without works is useless". On first reading, this appears to be at odds with what Paul taught, namely that a person is justified by faith in Christ. In the next few pages I will present for your consideration the best explanation (as I see it) of this apparent contradiction.

In trying to understand what James is saying, there is an important fact that we need to know. The important fact is this: The event that James writes about (where Abraham obeyed God and offered up his son Isaac) happened thirty years AFTER the event where God told Abraham that his offspring would be like the stars in the heavens and Abraham "believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness". The event James speaks of happened thirty years after Abraham had righteousness credited to him.

The first of these two events occurred when Abraham was about 85 years old. It is recorded in Genesis chapter 15 vs 1- 6 which reads as follows:

**After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."**

**Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."**

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 2 vs 24

<sup>2</sup> John 3 vs 16



**Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them " And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."**

**Then he (i.e. Abraham) believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.**

Abraham was "declared righteous" well before the event that James writes of where he offered Isaac.

After Abraham "believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness", life went on for Abraham. His actions in the following years were not above criticism.

- Following common practice of the day he had a child (Ishmael) by Hagar who was his wife's servant.
- Rather than trust in the Lord, he implemented his own dishonest scheme to protect himself (and no doubt others also). Fearing people would attack him to take his very beautiful wife Sarah from him, he lied about Sarah, saying she was only his sister. (She was in fact his half sister). This resulted in Abimelech the king of Gerar taking Sarah into his harem, which would have ended very badly had not God intervened.

Then Isaac the long, long awaited heir who would fulfil God's promise to Abraham was born, and grew up.

Only then, when Abraham was probably about 115 years old do we come to the event that James speaks of. Genesis ch 22 vs 1-3 reads as follows:

**"Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."**

**He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."**

**So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him."**

Thirty years earlier Abraham had believed God and been reckoned righteous. Now God was testing that faith by telling Abraham to kill his only son – the son that he loved. God was now telling him to kill his long awaited heir – the one who was to fulfil God's promise to him. What a test.

But, as ch 22 vs 18 tells us, Abraham obeyed God. He was at the point of offering his only son as a burnt offering when God intervened to rescue Isaac and "provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering".<sup>1</sup>

Thirty years earlier Abraham had believed / trusted God and been reckoned righteous. Now he obeyed God and proved the reality of his faith.

---

<sup>1</sup> Genesis ch 22 vs 8

It is clear from the record in Genesis that Abraham's offering of Isaac did not result in him being credited with righteousness. (This happened thirty years earlier when he "believed / trusted God". Rather his offering of Isaac was evidence of the fact that he trusted God. As Hebrews ch 11 vs 17-19 tells us:

**"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "in Isaac your descendants shall be called." He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type."**

As James ch 2 vs 22 tells us, in his offering of Isaac, Abraham's faith was "perfected". The word we have translated as 'perfected' is '*teleioo*'. It means to bring to an end by completing or perfecting,<sup>1</sup> to 'carry to the end'.<sup>2</sup> The NIV translates it as "made complete". Abraham exercised faith in Genesis Chapter 15 when he believed God and was credited with righteousness. Over the next thirty years, he sometimes failed to trust God as he should. But then his faith reached full bloom – it came to a full completeness – when he trusted God sufficiently to offer up his long promised, long awaited, and greatly loved son and heir.

James 2 vs 23 also tells us that, in his offering of Isaac, "the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness". The word we have translated as 'fulfilled' is '*pleroo*'. It means to fill, to fulfil, complete, to make full, to fill to the full.<sup>3</sup> Abraham's believing God and being reckoned righteous began in Genesis chapter 15. It reached its full-bodied fullness when Abraham proved that faith for all the world to see by his offering of Isaac (as recorded in Genesis ch 22).

- Abraham did not gain saving faith when he offered Isaac. Rather he proved that he already possessed saving faith. His faith also reached full bloom as displayed by his actions.
- Abraham did not have righteousness credited to him when he obeyed God and offered Isaac. Rather his obedience declared the faith he already had in God – a faith which previously had resulted in righteousness being credited to him, and now had come to such fullness that he would obey God, even when he could not see how God would work things out, and he was forced to walk entirely by faith and not by sight.

#### A Note About the Word We Have Translated as 'Justified'

Verse 20 of our passage says that Abraham was "justified by works". So what does the word '*justified*' mean.

The greek word we have translated as "justified" is *dikaioo*. W E Vine says that *dikaioo* means: "primarily to deem to be right, signifies, in the New Testament (a) to show to be right or righteous . . . . (b) to declare to be righteous, to pronounce righteous . . .".<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> according to W E Vine in his 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words' (His entry under the verb 'perfect'.)

<sup>2</sup> From the entry under James ch 2 vs 22-24 in the Bible Knowledge Commentary by J F Walwood & R B Zuck

<sup>3</sup> according to W E Vine in his 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words' (His entries under the verbs 'fulfill' and 'fill'.)

<sup>4</sup> 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words' by W E Vine (His entry under the verb 'justify'.)

Paul usually uses the word '*dikaioo*' of being declared righteous by God, but that is not the only way the word can be used. For example:

1. Jesus said: "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." (Matthew ch 11 vs 19). The word translated as 'vindicated' is this same word '*dikaioo*'. The NIV translates it as '*proved right*' in this verse.
2. The word *dikaioo* is also used of the lawyer who tested Jesus. Luke 10 vs 29 reads: "But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?". Here it is not God who is doing the justifying, by a man who is trying to justify himself.
3. Similarly, Jesus used it of the Pharisees who tried to justify themselves. He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." (Luke 16 vs 15)

Thus the word '*dikaioo*' does not necessarily mean to be declared righteous by God. It can also simply mean to be '*shown to be right*'.

#### So How Was Abraham 'Justified' by Works When He Offered Isaac?

I suggest to you that it is in the sense of being 'shown to be righteous' that Abraham was "justified" by his obedience in offering Isaac. His actions declared him – pronounced him – to be righteous in that they proved and declared to everyone, that this man did actually believe what God said, and did actually trust God to fulfil what He said. God put Abraham to the test and Abraham was 'shown to be righteous' by his actions.

- God alone knows for sure what is in a person's heart. He alone can reliably judge what is in the heart. In God's eyes (and thus in reality) a person is 'declared righteous' when they believe (/entrust) in their heart. BUT,
- Humans (and no doubt also the heavenly beings who are watching the drama on earth unfold) can only judge by actions. Thus in the eyes of onlookers it is the person actions that reveal whether or not a person truly believes, and that declare a person to be righteous. This is especially the case when, like Abraham, the person is tested by being placed in a very difficult situation. Then it is that actions speak louder than words and reveal what is in the person's heart. Thus it was that Abraham's actions proved that he really did trust in God.

As I see it, this is the sense in which Abraham was "justified by works when he offered Isaac".<sup>1</sup>

#### How Was Rahab 'Justified' by Works When She Protected the Spies?

Similarly Rahab proved the reality of what she believed when she protected the spies.

Hebrews ch 11 vs 31 tells us: "*By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.*" In her heart she believed that God had given the land of Canaan to the Israelites. She outwardly proved

---

<sup>1</sup> James 2 vs 21

the reality of what she believed when, at some risk to herself, she hid the spies and then helped them escape.

The actions of Abraham and Rahab made it evident to everyone that their faith was real. It wasn't a barren or dead faith, but rather a genuine, fruit bearing, living faith. It was a faith strong enough to cause them to act on their convictions and put their trust in God.

## **CONCLUSION**

What is the point that James is trying to make in chapter 2 vs 14-26? What is the conclusion of the matter?

James's conclusion is: "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (ch 2 vs 26)

I think that his point is simply this: Faith without good works is a lifeless faith, like a corpse. Where there is a healthy, living faith, works will go hand in hand with that faith, just as they did for Abraham and Rahab.

## Chapter 19

### BUT WHAT ABOUT THE 'RICH YOUNG RULER'?

Matthew 19 vs 16-26, Mark 10 vs 17-27 and Luke 18 vs 18-27 all record how a young man (often referred to as the 'rich young ruler' <sup>1</sup>) came to Jesus and asked Him – "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

All three records are fairly similar. The Matthew chapter 19 record reads as follows:

<sup>16</sup> **And someone came to Him (i.e. Jesus) and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"**

<sup>17</sup> **And He (i.e. Jesus) said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."**

<sup>18</sup> **Then he said to Him, "Which ones?"**

**And Jesus said, "You shall not commit murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; <sup>19</sup> honour your father and mother; and you shall love your neighbour as yourself."**

<sup>20</sup> **The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?"**

<sup>21</sup> **Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."**

<sup>22</sup> **But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.**

<sup>23</sup> **And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup> "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."**

<sup>25</sup> **When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?"**

<sup>26</sup> **And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."**

#### **19.1 How Does Jesus's Answer Compare with Other Parts of the New Testament?**

Now let us compare the answer that Jesus gave to the young man's question "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" with what the Apostle John and the Apostle Paul taught.

---

<sup>1</sup> Because if you piece the three records together, it is clear that he was rich, young, and a ruler.

- The Apostle John tells us: **“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”** (John 3 vs 14-16. John also records similar things on about 4 other occasions – See Appendix 1)
- The Apostle Paul asserts: **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Romans 6 vs 23), *and* **“Yet for this reason I (Paul) found mercy, so that in me as the foremost (of sinners), Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”** (1 Timothy 1 vs 16)

Isn't what John and Paul taught very different from Jesus's words to the 'rich young ruler'? Jesus said to him: "if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments", *and*, "sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come follow Me". Read the passages carefully again and think about it. Isn't "keep the commandments" different from eternal life being a free gift to those that believe in Christ?

IF:

1. Words mean anything, (and they do), AND IF
2. We take the meaning of words to be their common meaning in the usage of the time in which they were spoken, (as I suggest we should),

THEN we cannot escape the conclusion that Jesus told the 'rich young ruler' something very different from what the Apostles Paul and John tell us is the way to obtain eternal life.

What on earth is going on!

## **19.2 How Can the Answers Be Reconciled**

Two possible ways of reconciling Jesus's answer to the 'rich young ruler' with the teaching of the Apostles Paul and John are as follows:

### **19.2.1 – Option 1 – Redefining the Meaning of the Word 'Believe'**

One way to reconcile these passages would be to say that "believing in Christ" actually means something different from what we might first suppose it to mean. IF we were to say that:

1. Believing in Christ actually means a complete surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and that
2. A complete surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ actually means keeping the commandments given in the Old Testament Law,

THEN we would then we would have reconciled the passages.

But to reconcile the passages in this way, we must change the meaning of the words. We must change the meaning of the word translated as "believe" into something different from the common meaning and usage of the word at the time in which the New Testament was written. (As I have contended in chapter 6 of this paper, the

word we have translated as “believe” – i.e. the word “*pisteuo*” – means ‘believe’ and/or ‘entrust’. It does not mean “keep the commandments”).)

Isn't it true that if we can change the meaning of words in such ways, then, in effect, words become meaningless, and we can make the bible end up saying whatever we want it to say? Surely this is not a legitimate way to interpret the bible.

#### 19.2.2 – Option 2 – A Better Solution – Understand the Wrong Assumptions that Cause Us to Misapply this Passage

There is a much better explanation for the apparent contradiction in these passages. I think that the explanation I am about to give is pretty obvious really, once we manage to see through some incorrect assumptions that many Christians make.

What I am going to try to justify to you in the following few pages is this:

1. It is wrong to assume that we, today, are in the same position as the ‘rich young ruler’ was. When Jesus was speaking to the ‘rich young ruler’, he was not speaking to a person in the same position that you and I are now in. We are gentiles (i.e. non-jews) living after the great watershed event of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the ‘rich young ruler’ encounter however, Jesus was talking to a Jew, living before the cross. He was talking to a person who was still, as a Jew, rightly bound by the Old Testament law – the Mosaic Covenant. Also, at the time Jesus was talking to the young man, the ‘new covenant’ was not yet available.
2. Jesus was thus not telling you and I what we must do to receive eternal life.
3. Rather He was showing a young Jewish man what the Old Testament Law (a Law which said “love your neighbour as yourself”) required a Jew to do to inherit eternal life.
4. Perhaps the reason that Jesus did this, was to nudge his Jewish hearers towards the understanding that they did not have the moral strength to save themselves by keeping the Law – a law which required them to “love their neighbour as themselves”. Only once they had despaired of saving themselves by keeping the Law – i.e. of being righteous in God’s eyes by keeping the Law – would they see their need for a Saviour. Only then would they be ready to look to the One who would shortly die for their sins, be raised again and then offer eternal life freely, as a gift, to all those people that put their faith in Him (not the Old Testament Law) to save them.

The next few pages expand on this solution to the apparent contradiction.

#### 19.3 – Some Wrong Assumptions

Sometimes the most profound errors are not caused by faulty reasoning. Rather the source of the error is in the underlying assumptions upon which the reasoning is founded.

Often these underlying assumptions go completely unnoticed. Often we are unaware of the assumptions that our thinking is based on. Our assumptions are thus overlooked and tend to go unchallenged and untested. But if these assumptions are wrong, all the reasoning that rests upon them (no matter how accurate or refined the reasoning may be) can also be completely wrong.

As I see it, many, perhaps even most, Christians tend to make two wrong assumptions when they read the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke. These incorrect assumptions cause them to misapply Jesus's encounter with the 'rich young ruler', (and indeed other things that Jesus said as well).

These wrong assumptions are as follows:

#### 19.3.1 – The Wrong Assumption That 'It's all About Me'

We all seem to be born with a problem. Our problem is that we all tend to assume "Its all about ME". This is the assumption we usually start with until we come to know better. (For example, most ancient people started with the assumption that the sun revolved around them, not visa versa).

This problem has been aggravated by generations and generations of well meaning sunday school and bible teachers giving their hearers the message that they must take everything in the Bible – especially everything in the New Testament – and apply it directly to themselves.

We thus read what Jesus said to the 'rich young ruler' and we tend to assume "Its all about ME" – "What Jesus said to the young man applies directly to me also." But this is a wrong assumption to make.

This issue is dealt with further in my Appendix 6.

#### 19.3.2 – The Wrong Assumption that the answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" is best found in any of the books having the title of a 'Gospel'

Following on from the above is the assumption that the terms upon which God is offering eternal life to us today is best found in any of the books of the Bible having the title of a 'Gospel'.

A very important (but unfortunately little known) fact is that it is men – not God – who have given the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke the title of 'Gospel'. The titles of these writings such as "The Gospel According to Matthew" are titles that men, not God, have given to these works.

(Now, it is true that the actual text of Mark's book starts with the words: "The beginning of the 'gospel' (i.e. good news) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." What is Mark saying? He is simply saying that the good news of Jesus Christ had its beginning in the way he is about to describe. The chapter then goes on to describe the appearance of John the Baptist on the scene, and then Jesus. Mark IS telling us that Jesus Christ Himself is "good news". It certainly is also good news that Jesus came to earth. But Mark is NOT saying that in his book he is setting out to tell us people living after the resurrection what we must now do to benefit from the coming and the death and resurrection of Christ. He does not say that he is setting out in his book to tell us what we must now do to be saved.)

Luke does tell us at the beginning of his work what he is setting out to do in the writing of his book. He starts his book with the following:

**"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from**



**the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.”** (Luke ch 1 vs 1-4 – emphasis mine)

What does Luke say he is doing in his book? Does he say that he is telling us what we must do to be saved? No, he doesn't say that does he. Rather he says he is setting out for us an orderly account of what happened.

Unfortunately the title of 'Gospel' that men have added to these works tend to colour a person's reading and understanding of these books. The titles that men have given to the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke tend to make people think that these authors have set out to tell us today what we must do to be saved, but that is a wrong assumption to make.

The books of Matthew, Mark and Luke are not focussed on telling us Gentiles living after Christ's death and resurrection what we must do to have our sins forgiven and gain eternal life. They do not set out to tell ME what I must do to be saved. Rather they are a record – an “orderly account”<sup>1</sup> – of what happened when the Messiah came. (I have elaborated upon this idea in the following chapter 20, and in my paper “Where in the Bible is the Gospel Found” attached as Appendix 4.)

The incorrect assumption that Matthew, Mark and Luke are telling us gentiles living after the watershed events surrounding the crucifixion what we must do to receive eternal life is at the root of misunderstanding Jesus's interaction with the 'rich young ruler'.

#### **19.4 – The 'Rich Young Ruler' Was Different from Us Because a) He Was a Jew, Still Bound by the Old Testament Law and b) He lived Before the Cross**

There are two significant differences between us and the 'rich young ruler'.

##### **19.4.1 – First Difference – The Old Testament Law and the Mosaic Covenant Were Still Binding on the 'Rich Young Ruler'**

In the days of Moses, the Jewish people entered into, and bound themselves by, a formal agreement – a 'covenant' – with God. This agreement is often called the 'Mosaic Covenant'.<sup>2</sup>

God gave the Jewish people the Old Testament law, and they bound themselves by a covenant with God to keep that Law. (The terms of the Mosaic Covenant were that God would bless them if they kept the Law, and they would be cursed if they didn't.) Not only was this covenant binding on the Jewish people, but God also was bound by it. God is a covenant keeping God. His very nature prevents Him from breaking the covenants He makes.

Whilst Jesus was teaching on earth, this old 'Mosaic Covenant' was still in full effect, and not even Jesus Himself was going to violate the agreement. One thing that is

---

<sup>1</sup> as the NIV translates verse 3 of Luke chapter 1

<sup>2</sup> This 'Mosaic Covenant' should not be confused with the 'Abrahamic Covenant'. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God made an unconditional promise to Abraham that He would bless him, make him the father of a great nation, give him and his descendants the 'promised land', and through him bless the whole world. This is different from the 'Mosaic Covenant' which, 600 years after Abraham, the Jewish people bound themselves by.

abundantly clear is the God keeps His covenants. Certainly then Jesus was going to abide by the Mosaic covenant until such time as it was properly, correctly, and legally annulled.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it was, that, to his Jewish disciples Jesus said:

**"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."**

**"Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."** (Matthew 5 vs 17-19 – emphasis mine)

I put it to you that the "until all is accomplished" did not occur until the death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus, when (prior to the cross) Jesus was giving his teaching, he was speaking to (Jewish) people who were still living under the Old Testament Law, and who were still rightly bound by the Old Testament Law. I put it to you that even Jesus Himself was not going to annul the Law until the new situation was brought about - until "all is accomplished". Our God is a covenant keeping God!

We are now living in a different time from the 'rich young ruler'. Unlike this young man we are not Jews and we are not bound by covenant to keep the Old Testament Law.

For the Jews, the Old Testament Law was their "tutor", or "guardian" or 'supervisor' until such time as righteousness through faith in Christ was revealed following the resurrection.

As the Apostle Paul (a Jew) records:

**"Before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."**  
(Galatians 3 vs 23-25)

But following the resurrection Paul writes:

**"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."** (Romans 10 vs 4)

Most of the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke was given to people still living under, and bound by, the Mosaic Covenant – the covenant between God and the Israelites that the Jewish people entered into in the days of Moses.

---

<sup>1</sup> The only way for the agreement to be annulled was by the death of one of the parties to the agreement. This only occurred when Jesus, as the human representative, died. (See Romans ch 7 vs 1-6 – "the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives" and "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ")

#### 19.4.2 – Second Difference – The New Covenant Was Not Yet Available – It Did Not Become Available Until the Death and Resurrection of Christ

In the layout of our bibles, we humans have put a strong dividing line between the 'Old Testament' and the 'New Testament' – i.e. between the books of Malachi and Matthew.

Most people, in their minds, take the word 'Testament' to mean the same as 'covenant'. This division in our bibles between the Old Testament and the New Testament thus leads people to make the wrong assumption that the 'new covenant' came into effect with the coming of Jesus.

The new covenant did NOT come into force at the coming of Christ. Rather it was made available at the death and resurrection of Christ (or perhaps very shortly thereafter). Before it could come, it first needed to be sealed with the blood of Christ. As Jesus said just before his crucifixion: **"This cup is the new covenant in my blood".<sup>1</sup>**

If we want to place a dividing line between the Old Mosaic Covenant and the dawning of the New Covenant, the dividing line would have to be placed at the death and resurrection of Jesus.

At the time of most of Jesus's earthly teaching, the New Covenant had not as yet been offered to the Jewish people. Jesus' teaching was given to Jewish people who were at that time still living under the Mosaic Covenant. Great caution is needed when applying such teaching to people living after the resurrection of Christ. It may be a serious mistake to apply the teaching directly to the question of how a gentile (or a Jew for that matter) can now find salvation.

These facts need to be born in mind when we read the earthly teaching of Jesus, and His interaction with the 'rich young ruler'.

Many people tend to see things in the Gospels in terms of Christ speaking to the 'christian', or to the present day person wanting to become a christian, but this is a wrong assumption to make. Perhaps some of His teachings were more directed to Jews living under the Law, or even to the nation of Israel as a whole, rather than to the Gentile world.

Furthermore, at the time of the earthly teaching of Christ, the Holy Spirit (which was promised as part of the New Covenant) had not yet been widely given.

Most of Jesus's earthly teaching was given in a different age from the one we are now living in. Not only was the Holy Spirit not yet widely given, but the curtain in the temple had not yet been torn open – the way into the Most Holy Place – i.e. into the very presence of God – was not yet open! Nor was it yet possible for a person to be "in Christ". I may be wrong, but I seriously doubt that a person could even be 'born again' before the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost. (Certainly, before the cross, Jesus said to Nicodemus "You must be born again". But was He meaning: "be born again right here and now"? Or was He meaning: "be born again in the near future when the Holy Spirit is given"? I am not sure, but I think He was probably meaning the latter.)

---

<sup>1</sup> Luke 22 vs 20 and 1 Corinthians 11 vs 25

Thus again we need to deal very cautiously with teaching given before the cross and before Pentecost, when we are trying to answer the question of what a person living after the cross and after Pentecost must do to be born again.

### **19.5 – To Answer the ‘Rich Young Ruler’, Jesus Referred Him Back to the Law**

But, at the time that the ‘rich young ruler’ asked his question, he and the other Jews were still rightly bound by the Old Testament Law and certainly Jesus was not going to annul it “until all is accomplished” by His death and resurrection.

Thus when the young man asked Jesus “what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” Jesus referred him back to the Law and said: “if you wish to enter into life, **keep the commandments.**”

It is noteworthy that this referral of the man back to the “commandments” – i.e. to the Old Testament Law – is present in all three New Testament records of the conversation. (Matthew 19 vs 17, Mark 10 vs 19 and Luke 18 vs 20)

This instruction to the man to “keep the commandments”, is not the ‘good news’ of the grace of God that is relevant to us today. Rather it is Old Covenant teaching pure and simple. This is what the Old Testament Law required a man to do to obtain life. Leviticus 18 vs 5 says: “So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them.” It is reinforced in other Old Testament passages such as Ezekiel 20 vs 11 which says: “I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live”.<sup>1</sup>

The Apostle Paul specifically contrasts this old covenant way with the new way of faith in Christ. In Romans 10 vs 3-6 he writes about the Jews who did not know about the righteousness that God gives as a gift to all who place their faith in Christ. Such Jews were thus still trying to be righteous by keeping the Old Testament Law – i.e. by keeping the commandments. He says:

“For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: . . . . . whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed (vs 11)”

And again in Galatians 3 vs 11-13 he contrasts this old way of keeping the commandments with the new way of faith in Christ. He says:

“Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, *“the righteous man shall live by faith.”* However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, *“he who practices them shall live by them.”* Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us.”

Surely no one – not even those most skilled at getting the bible to say what they think it should say – can claim that this statement by Jesus to the ‘rich young ruler’ is the same as what the Apostles John and Paul say is required to gain eternal life!

---

<sup>1</sup> Other passages are Ezekiel 18 vs 9 and Nehemiah 9 vs 29

Rather Jesus's words **"if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments"** are in SHARP contrast with the writings of the Apostle Paul who made it VERY clear that keeping the Law was not the solution. Again in the books of Romans and Galatians we read things like: **"by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified** (i.e. declared righteous) **in His** (i.e. God's) **sight"**<sup>1</sup> and **"if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly"**.<sup>2</sup>

For us today **"the FREE GIFT of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."**<sup>3</sup> It is not gained by keeping the commandments. It is a gift to be found only "in Christ". **"God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son does not have life."**<sup>4</sup> Think about it.

Jesus wasn't telling you and me what we must do to gain eternal life. Rather he was telling a Jew still living in the days of the Old Covenant what the Law required him to do to gain life.

### **19.6 – Was Jesus Shining a Spotlight on What the Law Actually Required?**

So, returning to our passage, the young man asked Jesus what good thing he must do to obtain eternal life and Jesus, referring him back to the Old Testament Law said: **"if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments"**. All three records seem to imply that the conversation would have ended there if the young man had not pursued the matter further.

But the young man didn't leave the matter there. He claimed to have kept the law since his youth, but had he really?

Part of the Old Testament Law was: **"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might"**<sup>5</sup> and **"you shall love your neighbour as yourself"**.<sup>6</sup> Matthew, records the requirement to "love your neighbour as yourself" as one of the commandments that Jesus specifically said the young man must keep if he wished to inherit eternal life. (Matthew ch 19 vs 19)

Had the young man really done this?

If he loved his neighbour as himself, wouldn't he wish to sell his possessions and share them equally with his neighbours rather than keep them all for himself?

Thus, by telling him to sell his possessions and give to the poor, Jesus put a spotlight on the fact that the man didn't love his neighbour as himself. And if he didn't love his neighbour as himself, he wasn't keeping the Old Testament Law. Thus it should have become apparent to the young man that he wasn't able to gain eternal life by "keeping the commandments".

---

<sup>1</sup> Romans 3 vs 20

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 2 vs 21b

<sup>3</sup> Romans 6 vs 23

<sup>4</sup> 1 John 5 vs 11-12

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 6 vs 5

<sup>6</sup> Leviticus 19 vs 18

### **19.7 – A Similar Incident – This Time a ‘Lawyer’**

Luke chapter 10 vs 25-37 records another incident that in many ways is similar to the ‘rich young ruler’ encounter. This time the inquirer was a ‘lawyer’ – a person trained in interpreting and applying the Old Testament Law – but many other details are the same.

1. The lawyer asked the same question – “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
2. Again Jesus referred him back to the Old Testament Law.
3. Again the matter would have been left there if the lawyer hadn’t pressed Jesus further.
4. Again, when pressed further, Jesus shone a spotlight on the requirement of the Law that no one except Jesus had ever fulfilled – the requirement to love your neighbour as yourself. This time the issue was: “Who is my neighbour that the Law requires me to love as myself?” Jesus told a story that explained it.

The passage reads as follows:

**And a lawyer stood up and put Him (i.e. Jesus) to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"**

**And He (i.e. Jesus) said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"**

**And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself."**

**And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."**

**But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"**

**Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.**

**But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii <sup>1</sup> and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.'**

**Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?**

**And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him."**

**Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."**

The discussion can be summarised as follows:

---

<sup>1</sup> A denarii was a silver coin worth about one day's wages for a labourer.

1. The Lawyer asked “what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
2. To answer his question, Jesus entered into a discussion with him about what the Law required.
3. The Lawyer had previously come to the understanding that the Old Testament Law could be summed up by the requirements to love God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself.
4. Jesus told him that his understanding was correct.
5. Jesus said that if he did that (i.e. met the requirements of the Law by loving God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself) he would “live” – i.e. gain eternal life.
6. But the Lawyer did not know who he should consider to be his neighbour – who the person was that he should “love as himself”.
7. Through the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus showed him that the answer to his question: “And who is my neighbour?” is this: – Your neighbour is everyone whose path you cross.

Jesus thus showed his hearers that their neighbour (whom the Law required them to love as themselves) was everyone they came across. This is what the Law required them to do to inherit eternal life.

It thus should have been obvious to the lawyer and everyone else that heard the conversation (and indeed everyone since that has read about it), that no one (except Jesus) has ever “loved their neighbour as themselves” and that thus no one can inherit eternal life by keeping the Law. All have fallen short of the standard required. Unless there is another way to inherit eternal life there is no hope!

### **19.8 – What Was the Benefit of These Encounters to the Jewish People?**

It seems to me that, at least in part, in the answers He gave to the ‘rich young ruler’ and to the ‘lawyer’, Jesus was shedding light on, and explaining, what the Law required. As He did this, Jesus exposed people’s failure to meet the well-nigh impossibly high standard required by the Law – The requirement: **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself”**.<sup>1</sup>

The ‘Law’ is like a “lamp shining in a dark place”.<sup>2</sup> It is like a “mirror”<sup>3</sup> that shows us ourselves, warts and all. It shows us God’s standard – it reveals to people what they should be like – and thus it is able to reveal to all people (or at least everyone who is prepared to honestly reflect on the matter for a few minutes) that they fall short of the standard required.

The ‘Law’ showed the Jewish people what they must do to gain eternal life by their own actions. As recorded in the Old Testament, it said: **“So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them”**.<sup>4</sup> It set the standard. It defined the height of the hurdle that a person must jump over if they were to gain eternal life by their own goodness. But because of the moral weakness of men, the ‘Law’ wasn’t able to deliver eternal life. As Paul wrote in Romans 7 vs 10 “this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me”. Rather than deliver eternal life, it ended up showing people their failure to meet the standard required.

---

<sup>1</sup> Luke 10 vs 27

<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter 1 vs 19

<sup>3</sup> James 1 vs 23

<sup>4</sup> Leviticus 18 vs 5

There was a benefit to both the 'rich young ruler' and the other Jews listening from having their failure exposed. The benefit is that:

- when a person finally realises that they have fallen short of the standard required
- when they realise that they continue to fall short, and that they don't have the moral strength not to fall short
- when they realise that they don't have the ability to "inherit eternal life" by meeting the requirements of God's Law

then they are ready to give up on seeking to save themselves by their own efforts. Then they are ready to look to a Saviour who, through his work on the cross, is able, and willing, to freely save even sinners like them. Then they are willing to cast themselves entirely on the grace (i.e. the undeserved kindness) of God as their only hope.

At the time Jesus was speaking, the Jewish people's greatest need was to realise that they couldn't save themselves by keeping the Old Testament Law. To them this was a revolutionary idea, and it was to prove to be a stumbling block for most of them. But the hard fact was that before they could be saved – before they could gain eternal life – they had to come to the point where they realised that they were hopeless and helpless sinners. Only then would they see their need for a SAVIOUR – someone who could save them because they couldn't save themselves. They had to come to the place where they were ready to accept a Saviour who would shortly, by his sacrifice on the cross, provide a way to atone for their shortcomings.

As I understand it, in His interaction with the 'rich young ruler' and the 'lawyer', Jesus was, at least in part, exposing to these men (and to others listening) that they were unable to inherit eternal life by keeping the Law. (They had to understand this before they could see their need for a Saviour who could save them from their sins.)

He wasn't telling you and me – people who haven't entered into a covenant to keep the Old Testament Law, and people who are living after the cross and resurrection – what we must now do to be saved.

## **19.9 – How This Incident is 'Framed' in All Three Records**

Before we leave this incident, there is something else that is worth noting.

In the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke, the 'rich young ruler' encounter is set between two other incidents which frame the encounter. I suspect that these two other incidents are hinting at something important – something which was to be the ultimate solution to the 'rich young ruler's predicament.

### **19.9.1 – Before the 'Rich Young Ruler' Incident**

Immediately before all three records of the 'rich young ruler' encounter, we read of another incident. For example Luke 18 vs 15-17 tells us:

**And they (i.e. parents) were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them.**

**But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all." (emphasis mine)**



I think something is being hinted at here. Jesus said that only the person that receives the kingdom of God like a child will enter it.

How does a child receive something?

Children do not expect to earn the things they receive. They do not try to do something to gain it. Rather children receive things freely, as a gift, without doing anything to earn or merit it.

This is in sharp contrast with the 'rich young ruler' who said: "What good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" <sup>1</sup>

In placing the incident with the children immediately before the record of the 'rich young ruler', I suspect that the Spirit of God was hinting at something. I suspect that He was hinting about the soon coming time when the 'rich young ruler', and indeed all men and woman would be able to receive eternal life, not by keeping the Law, but rather in the way that children receive things, namely freely, as a gift.

Jesus's people, the Jews, were on the wrong course. They were trying to gain eternal life by doing some "good thing".

They had to come to the point where they realised they were unable to achieve eternal life by that means. They had to come to the point where they realised that they didn't have the moral strength to save themselves by keeping the Law, and that their only hope was a Saviour who could save them from their failure to meet God's requirements.

They had to come to the point where they despaired of saving themselves. Then and only then would they be ready to look to a crucified and resurrected Saviour and receive eternal life from Him in the manner that a child receives – i.e. freely, as a gift.

That was their only hope, and I think Jesus was trying to lead them to the point where they would be able to see it.

#### 19.9.2 – At the End of the 'Rich Young Ruler' Incident

In all three accounts, the record ends with a discussion between Jesus and the disciples on how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

In Matthew ch 19, the record reads as follows:

<sup>23</sup> **And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup> "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."**

<sup>25</sup> **When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?"**

<sup>26</sup> **And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."**

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew ch 19 vs 16

Most Christians focus on the first part of what Jesus said – that it is “**hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven**”, but they have failed to notice the second part.

Many Christians have accepted the theory that the “eye of a needle” was actually a man-sized door that it was very difficult for a camel to get through. I doubt this theory. Rather I think it more likely that Jesus was using a figure of speech to describe an impossible task. The camel was the largest animal commonly seen in Israel, and the “eye of the needle” was the smallest of openings. I think that Jesus is using a very colourful figure of speech to describe something that is impossible, even with the very greatest of effort.

But, lest there be any doubt, Jesus concluded the matter by saying something most Christians have missed. He spoke plainly and said: “**With people** (literally “*with men*”) **this is IMPOSSIBLE, but with God all things are possible.**”

It is not only hard to enter the kingdom, but “with men” it is impossible! Human beings do not have the ability to enter the kingdom of God! What a shame that most Christians seem to have missed this.

What is Jesus saying here?

Is He saying that a great deal of commitment – a great deal of self sacrifice – is the price a person must pay to gain entry into the kingdom of God? Is He saying that only those who are prepared to make this great sacrifice can enter the Kingdom of God?

I don’t think so. He spoke plainly and said “with men it is impossible”. Even those that try really, really hard cannot do the impossible! Impossible means impossible!

Jesus finished with the somewhat intriguing and open-ended words: “but with God all things are possible”. What was He referring to?

I think He is hintingly looking forward to the soon-coming time when, by His death and resurrection, He would be able to offer eternal life – entry into the kingdom of God – freely, as a gift. Then the gift would be received by all those who cease from their own efforts – all those who stop relying on sacrifices they themselves make – all those who put their faith in Him to save them, and “receive the kingdom of God like a child”.<sup>1</sup>

I think that Jesus is here hinting at the same thing that John records Him saying plainly:

1. Firstly that “**unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God**”<sup>2</sup> and “**unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God**”.<sup>3</sup> It is impossible.
2. But secondly, I think that He may be looking forward to the time when men and women would be “**born, not . . . of the will of man, but of God**”.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Luke 18 vs 17

<sup>2</sup> John 3 vs 3

<sup>3</sup> John 3 vs 5

<sup>4</sup> John 1 vs 13

In His statement to the disciples that **"with people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible"** I think that Jesus may have been looking forward to the time which He knew would soon come.

Shortly He was going to offer Himself as a great sacrifice. Shortly He Himself was going to pay the price for our release. Shortly He was going to **"give His life as a ransom (i.e. a release payment) for many"**.<sup>1</sup> As John records Him saying: **"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life"**.<sup>2</sup>

When that time came, in response to a question "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" the answer wouldn't be to refer a person back to "the commandments" – i.e. the Old Testament Law.

Then the answer would be found in the good news which, after the resurrection, was entrusted to the Apostle Paul – the good news which **"is the power of God for salvation to everyone who BELIEVES"**.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark 10 vs 45

<sup>2</sup> John 3 vs 14-15

<sup>3</sup> Romans 1 vs 17

## Chapter 20

### BUT WHAT ABOUT THE GOSPEL THAT THE DISCIPLES AND EVEN JESUS HIMSELF PREACHED EARLY ON?

John the Baptist came as a forerunner to prepare the way for Jesus the Messiah. This is what he preached:

***“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” . . . Make ready the way of the Lord. Make His paths straight! (Matthew 3 vs 2-4)***

Then John the Baptist was arrested and Matthew tells us that from that time Jesus himself started preaching saying:

***“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4 vs 17)***

Early in His ministry Jesus also sent out his 12 disciples. He specifically told them not to go to the Gentiles but to go to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel”<sup>1</sup> and say:

***“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 10 vs 7)***

The above messages are different from the message that I have been drawing your attention to in this paper, namely “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved”.

Why the difference?

#### **20.1 What Were They Actually Saying, and Who Were They Saying it To?**

As for the previous chapter, I think that the difficulty is caused by the wrong assumptions we make. The problem is caused by the fact that we Christians tend to assume that “its all about ME”. We assume that the message that John the Baptist preached, and that Jesus and His disciples preached near the start of Jesus’s ministry, is the gospel message for ourselves today. We are wrong to jump to that conclusion.

We need to look at the big picture. We need to look at the big context of what was going on.

The Jewish people had long been promised a Messiah who would set up His kingdom in Jerusalem and bring a time of unparalleled blessing and peace to the earth – a time when the lion would lie down with the lamb. Many places in the Old Testament speak of this time. The Jews, who knew the Old Testament well, were awaiting its fulfilment.

As I understand it, Jesus came and offered Himself to the nation of Israel as their long-promised Messiah – their King who would set up His kingdom and reign from Jerusalem. I think that this is what the message that John the Baptist, and that Jesus and His disciples preached at the beginning, was all about. They were saying: “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is ‘at hand’ (i.e. ‘near’, ‘close by’)”. The kingdom of heaven was close or “at hand”! The King Himself was even at that very time walking amongst them!

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 10 vs 5-6

In the early preaching, they were telling the Jews they needed to repent – to re-orientate their thinking (and of course undergo the change in lifestyle that flows from such a change in thinking) – and be ready to receive their King. Their Messiah and King was ready and waiting to set up His kingdom (the kingdom of heaven) on earth. They needed to prepare themselves to receive Him. As John the Baptist preached: “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”<sup>1</sup>

(If this concept of what their early preaching was all about is new to you, try to be as objective as you can and think about it. Tuck it away in the back of your mind and ponder on it as you read the gospels.)

(It is of course also true that Jesus had to die as an offering for sin. Even if the nation of Israel accepted Him, this would still have had to happen. This could have been achieved by, for example, Jesus being killed entirely at the hands of the Romans, and then immediately returning to set up His kingdom in Jerusalem. But God, who knows the end from the beginning, knew that this was not the way things were going to play out. Nevertheless, I put it to you that the offer made to the Jewish nation – the offer of the kingdom of Heaven on earth with Jesus as the King, ruling from Jerusalem, – was a real one. At the time Jesus was walking on earth it was ‘at hand’ or close, if only they were prepared to lay hold of it.)

But rather than receive their King, the nation of Israel rejected Him, and the coming of the physical earthly Kingdom was deferred to a later date. The nation of Israel missed its opportunity, but one day, when the full number of gentiles has been saved,<sup>2</sup> their opportunity will come again. The King of the Jews (and indeed the King of the whole world) will return! The setting up of the kingdom of Heaven on earth has been deferred, but it hasn’t gone for good.

This I believe is what was going on in the preaching of John the Baptist and the early preaching of Jesus and the disciples. They were not telling you and me about how we can have our sins forgiven. Rather they were telling the nation of Israel that the long promised ‘kingdom of God’ – the reign of God on earth through His Messiah – was close to hand, and a radical re-orientation of their thinking was needed. They needed to believe this good news and receive their King.

We need to guard against the assumption that ‘its all about me’. Once we manage to shake off that assumption, a lot of things in the bible start making a lot more sense. In particular the early preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples, makes a lot more sense.

This issue is dealt with in some length in Appendix 6. Please read it some time.

## **20.2 But Jesus Called This Message The “Gospel”. Shouldn’t We Listen to Him?**

But, some may argue, *“since Jesus Himself called this message He was preaching the ‘gospel’, shouldn’t we apply it to ourselves. Surely there only one ‘gospel’.”*

It seems to me that most of our difficulty here centres around our understanding of the word “gospel”.

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 3 vs 3 (NIV translation)

<sup>2</sup> See Romans 11 vs 25

In the English language, our word 'gospel' is almost entirely a religious word. It tends to be very specific in its meaning, and we scarcely use it outside the context of 'being saved'.

But, of course, the New Testament wasn't originally written in English. The word in the earliest manuscripts – i.e. the Greek word we have translated as 'gospel' – is the word '*euangelion*'. '*Euangelion*' was a common, everyday word that simply meant 'good news'. At the time the New Testament was being written the word '*euangelion*' did not have the strong religious associations that our word 'gospel' does today. It simply meant 'good news' of any kind.

Thus:

- When a new Caesar came to the throne, or when a Caesar had a birthday, it was announced as '*euangelion*' – good news.
- Kenneth Wuest, the professor of New Testament Greek, says that the question "Have you any good news (*euangelion*) for me today?" must have been a common question.<sup>1</sup>
- And I even dare say that if your headache went away, that too would be classified as '*euangelion*' – good news!

Thus, in the usage of the time, it is wrong to say that there is only one '*euangelion*'. There were as many '*euangelion*'s as there were pieces of good news floating around!

#### 20.2.1 The good news preached by John the Baptist and Jesus early on

Thus, when Matthew records that Jesus went about "proclaiming the 'gospel' (*euangelion*) of the kingdom",<sup>2</sup> we shouldn't take it to mean any more than that Jesus went about proclaiming the good news of the kingdom – the good news that the kingdom of God was close at hand. The anointed King – the Messiah – had come, and was at that very time actually walking amongst them!

#### 20.2.2 The good news preached after the resurrection

It is wrong to jump to the conclusion that the good news preached by John the Baptist and Jesus at the beginning must be the same as the good news that was spread after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the early preaching of Jesus, the good news was that the kingdom of heaven was close to hand. After the resurrection, the good news for us gentiles was that a Saviour had come and given His life as a ransom for all, Jew and Gentile alike.

After the resurrection, the 'good news' was (and still is) that Jesus, the anointed King, the Lord of all, not only came but even more importantly died for our sins, rose again, and now offers eternal life and the forgiveness of sins freely, as a gift, to everyone who believes (/entrusts) in Him. This differs from the 'good news' that was preached by John the Baptist, the disciples, and Jesus early on. The 'good news' that he died for our sins and rose again could only be preached after he actually had died and risen again. Hence the answer to the question "What must I (a person living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century) do to be saved?" is found mainly in teaching given after His death and resurrection, rather than in the teaching that Christ gave before He died and rose

---

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth S Wuest "Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament", Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Volume 3 of 2004 reprint, page 42

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 4 vs 23 and 9 vs 35

again. This teaching is thus found largely in the letters of the New Testament, but it is also found extensively in the gospel of John. (The following section 20.2.3 addresses the issue of why John's gospel is different from the other three.)

This message that was preached after the resurrection was:

- The good news of the grace (i.e. unmerited favour) of God.
- The good news that now the grace of God could flow freely to all those, (Jew and Gentile alike), who put their trust in the Saviour who died and rose again for them.
- The good news that: **“now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, . . . even the righteousness of God** (i.e. the perfect righteousness from God that God gives a person as a gift) **through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe”** (Romans 3 vs 21- 22)
- It was the good news that Paul said: **“is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”**. (Romans 1 vs 16)

### 20.2.3 Why is John's gospel different from the other three 'gospels'?

A person who compares the four 'gospels' will notice that John's book is different from the other three.

1. On the one hand many things recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke are absent from John's gospel.
2. On the other hand many times John says things like “He who believes in the Son has eternal life”,<sup>1</sup> but such words are largely absent from the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Why the difference?

As I see it, the difference is caused by the purpose of the books.

John wrote his gospel well after the resurrection. Unlike the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke, John's primary purpose does not seem to be providing a fairly full record of what happened when Jesus came. Rather he seems to have selected his material with another purpose in mind. He tells us clearly what this purpose was. Near the end of his book he says: **“these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name”**.<sup>2</sup> Thus John seems to have chosen his material from teaching given by Jesus that specifically relates to how a person living after the resurrection can gain eternal life.

Matthew, Mark and Luke's books are quite different. For example Matthew's book contains much teaching given by Jesus before His death and resurrection, but never says anything like 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved'. (Not that I've found anyway. This issue is dealt with more in Appendix 4)

I put it to you that the difference between John's gospel and the other three, springs from the reason their authors wrote them. Matthew, Mark and Luke were aiming to provide a record of what happened when Jesus came – an “orderly account”. John's

---

<sup>1</sup> John 3 vs 36

<sup>2</sup> John 20 vs 31

aim was that his post-resurrection readers might “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name”.<sup>1</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

The books of Matthew, Mark and Luke do not set out to tell us (people living after the resurrection) what we must now do to be saved. Rather, they are records of what happened when Jesus came.

We need to guard against the assumption that everything said in these books “is all about me”. Rather the early chapters of these books record how Jesus came to the Jewish people as their long-promised Messiah and called them to repent and receive Him as their King.

At that time, the long-promised ‘kingdom of God’ on earth was very close to the Jewish people. It was “at hand”. Their King was walking amongst them and was ready and willing to set up His throne in Jerusalem if only they would receive Him.

As I understand it, this is what the ‘gospel’ that Jesus and the disciples preached at the beginning was all about.

(But by and large the Jewish people rejected their King and thus, for the time being, they missed their opportunity for their Messiah to set up His Kingdom on earth with His throne in Jerusalem.)

---

<sup>1</sup> John 20 vs 31



## Chapter 21

### BUT DIDN'T JESUS SAY THAT A PERSON MUST GIVE UP EVERYTHING TO BECOME HIS DISCIPLE?

But didn't Jesus tell the crowds that a person couldn't be His disciple unless that person gave up everything?

#### THE SHORT ANSWER

Yes Jesus did say that.

Before His death and resurrection, as He travelled through Israel, Jesus turned to the crowds that followed Him and spoke to them. He told them that a person couldn't be His disciple unless that person gave up everything. That was the condition Jesus gave those in the crowd that wanted to become His disciple.

But it is not the condition that the Bible gives us today for being born again and receiving eternal life – i.e. for being saved.

As stated previously, the condition for being saved is faith alone in Christ alone. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord".<sup>1</sup> "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes (/entrusts) in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life".<sup>2</sup>

Jesus told the crowds that followed Him that a person could not be His disciple without surrendering everything. That does not necessarily mean that a person living after His death and resurrection must first surrender everything in order to be born again.

But, once a person is born again, it is to be expected that they will also be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. The true church also has a responsibility to require a godly life of those that say they belong to Jesus Christ.

#### JESUS'S REQUIREMENT TO BE HIS DISCIPLE AS RECORDED IN LUKE 14 v 25-35

The following is what Jesus said as recorded in Luke 14 vs 25-35.

<sup>25</sup> Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. <sup>28</sup> For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him,

---

<sup>1</sup> Romans 6 vs 23

<sup>2</sup> John 3 vs 16

<sup>30</sup> saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup> Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> **So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.**

<sup>34</sup> "Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? <sup>35</sup> It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

## THE LONG ANSWER

The question we are interested in is this: Does the bible say that, as a condition for being saved, a person must surrender everything and become a disciple as defined by Jesus in Luke chapter 14?

This chapter tries to answer the above question. It does so by:

1. Firstly looking at the argument in favour of the proposition that one must meet Jesus's requirements for becoming a disciple before one can be saved.
2. Then stating the argument against that proposition.
3. Then trying to evaluate which argument is best.

### **1) The Argument in Favour of the Proposition that a Person Must Become a Disciple (as defined by Jesus) in Order to be Saved**

Does the bible say that a person must become a disciple (as defined by Jesus in Luke chapter 14) as a condition for being saved?

The books of Matthew, Mark and Luke have been given the name 'Gospel'. These books also give a lot of information about the disciples and how they followed Jesus. Because of this we often tend to assume that the condition for being saved is to become a disciple. Rightly or wrongly, we tend to jump to that conclusion.

But, as outlined in the previous chapter and in Appendix 4, it is men (not God) who have given the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke the title 'Gospel'. We also need to take care with the assumptions we make, and the conclusions we jump to.

Is there anything more specific? Does the bible ever actually say that we need to become a disciple (as defined by Jesus) in order to be saved?

The only real argument that I have found <sup>1</sup> in favour of this proposition is the fact that, throughout the book of Acts, Christians are routinely referred to as 'disciples'.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> What follows is the only real argument that I have found that is more than an assumption that people make. I hope that I have not simply created a straw-man argument. All I can say is that it is the best argument in favour of the proposition that I have found.

<sup>2</sup> The word 'disciple' is used 31 times in the first 21 chapters of the book of Acts. In contrast, the word 'disciple' is not mentioned even once in any of the epistles. (Nor is it used again in the last 7 chapters of the book of Acts.)

Just a few of the many examples are:

- **Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.** (Acts 6 vs 1)
- **The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.** (Acts 6 vs 7)
- **For an entire year they (*i.e. Paul & Barnabas*) met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.** (Acts 11 vs 26)

This implies that being a christian is the same as being a disciple.

This in turn leads us to assume that to become a christian a person must become a disciple.

Jesus said that to become His disciple a person must give up everything. Thus, by a process of deduction, we come to the conclusion that in order to become a christian a person must give up everything and become a disciple as defined by Jesus.

Other things that Jesus said tend to lend some support the proposition. For example in Mark 8 vs 34-38 we read:

<sup>34</sup> **And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup> For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>38</sup> For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."**

The above is the best argument that I have found in favour of the proposition.

## **2) The Argument Against the Proposition that a Person Must Become a Disciple (as defined by Jesus) in Order to be Saved**

The argument against the proposition has already been extensively made in the preceding chapters of this booklet.

The argument is that, following the resurrection, over and over again, the condition that is placed on gaining eternal life is that a person believe (/ entrust) in Christ. Following the resurrection the message consistently is: **"through His name everyone who believes (/entrusts) in Him receives forgiveness of sins."** (Acts 10 vs 43)

The word translated as 'believe' (i.e. the word *'pisteuo'*) means to 'to believe', 'to be persuaded of', 'to place confidence in', 'to entrust', 'to rely upon'. I don't think that we can

say that 'pisteuo' means the same as "give up all possessions" and become a disciple as defined by Jesus in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

## **WAYS TO RESOLVE THE PERCEIVED CONTRADICTION**

On the face of it, there appears to be a contradiction between the proposition that a person is saved by becoming a disciple (as defined by Jesus) and the proposition that a person is saved by faith alone in Christ alone.

### **Is 'believe' a code-word for 'surrender'?**

One way to resolve the contradiction would be to say that 'believe' is actually a code-word for a complete surrender to Christ, including the giving up of all one's possessions.

In our culture, 'code-words' are sometimes used. The actual meaning of a code-word is somewhat different from what one might first expect on hearing the code-word. The true intention of the code-word is only clear to those that have learned the meaning of the code-word.

Is this what is happening in the New Testament? Is 'pisteuo' (believe / entrust) really a code-word for a complete and utter surrender of one's life?

I don't think so. I think that the writers of the New Testament were trying to communicate as clearly as they could, and I suggest to you that they were probably using words such as 'pisteuo' (believe / entrust) in their commonly accepted meaning, rather than as code-words for something else.

Furthermore, as I write this, the only present day code-words I can think of are those used by people who don't want to tell the whole truth forthrightly and bluntly. Rather code-words are used by people trying to 'spin' a harsh fact into something that sounds more acceptable. (For example, our culture uses the code-words 'reproductive choice' to try and make readily available abortion sound more acceptable. Hitler used the code-words 'final solution' to describe genocide, and more recently the code-words 'racial cleansing' have been used to describe similar acts.)

I put it to you that the writers of the New Testament were trying to communicate clearly and would have had no desire to use code-words.

### **A better solution – In the book of Acts the word 'disciple' is being used loosely in its broadest meaning.**

A better solution to the apparent contraction between the two propositions is to understand that in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts, the word 'disciple' is not always being used in the rigorous sense defined by Jesus in Luke chapter 14.

Jesus gave the crowds specific rigorous requirements to be met by those that wanted to become His disciple, but this is not the only way in which the word 'disciple' is used.

It is clear that, in general usage, the word 'disciple' can have a much broader meaning than that given by Jesus in Luke chapter 14. For example:

- Even Judas Iscariot was considered to be one of Jesus's disciples. John 12 vs 3 says: "But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him . . ."
- John 19 vs 38 tells us: "After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus . . ."
- John 6 vs 66 tells us: "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore".
- John the Baptist also had 'disciples'.
- The Pharisees considered themselves to be disciples of Moses. John 9 tells us how when Jesus healed a blind beggar, the Pharisees reviled the healed man and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses".<sup>1</sup>

These examples make it clear that in general usage the word 'disciple' can include:

- a) A false disciple (eg Judas)
- b) As secret disciple (eg Joseph of Arimathea)
- c) A disciple who turns back
- d) A person who simply associates themselves with a teacher and claims to be their follower.

It is thus clear that when the word 'disciple' is used in the New Testament, it does not necessarily mean a person who has met the rigorous requirements laid down by Jesus in Luke chapter 14. It can simply mean a person who associates themselves with someone and at least outwardly appears to be a follower of their teaching.

### **SO WHICH OF THE TWO ARGUMENTS ABOVE IS THE STRONGER?**

Earlier in this chapter I presented arguments for:

1. The thing we must do in order to be saved is to become a disciple as defined by Jesus in Luke ch 14, and
2. The thing we must do in order to be saved is to believe/entrust in Jesus alone.

On the one hand we are told clearly that eternal life is a "free gift". On the other hand discipleship as defined by Jesus in Luke chapter 14 is costly. Jesus specifically spoke of counting the cost of being His disciple. It is thus difficult to reconcile the two propositions, and we must determine which one is correct.

So which of the two arguments is the stronger?

For the following reasons I think that 'Argument 2' is the stronger.

---

<sup>1</sup> John 9 vs 28

### **Reason 1**

I put it to you that 'becoming a disciple in order to be saved' is largely just an assumption we make. I put it to you that it is a conclusion we jump to which perhaps springs from the fact that men (not God) have given the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John the title 'Gospel', and these books tell of how men became disciples of Jesus.

(I also challenge you again to search out and find for yourself what the bible actually explicitly states a person must do in order to be saved. It is not good enough if our understanding of the gospel message is based only on assumptions we make and conclusions we jump to. We must do better than that. Our responsibility to an unsaved world requires us to do better than that. What does the bible actually, explicitly, say a person must do to be saved? Find the answer for yourself. I can't see how our Lord can be pleased with us if we pass on the wrong answer to this question.)

### **Reason 2**

I put it to you that in the book of Acts, when the christians are being referred to as 'disciples' the word is being used in its broadest sense. It is simply meaning someone who associates themselves with Jesus and, at least outwardly, claims to follow His teaching. In this context the word is not limited to someone who meets the rigorous requirements given by Jesus in Luke chapter 14. It can simply mean someone who had joined the band of christians and claimed to be a follower of Jesus.

I put it to you that in the book of Acts, being labelled a 'disciple' did not necessarily mean that a person had met the rigorous requirements laid down by Jesus as recorded in Luke chapter 14.

If this is the case, then the argument I presented for the proposition that a person must become a disciple as defined by Jesus in Luke chapter 14 in order to be saved falls apart.

### **Reason 3**

Argument 1 above (i.e. the argument in favour of the proposition that a person must become a disciple [as defined by Jesus in Luke chapter 14] in order to be saved) uses a process of deduction to arrive at its conclusion. It relies upon putting 2 and 2 together to hopefully get the correct answer.

Argument 2 above (i.e. the argument against the proposition that a person must become a disciple [as defined by Jesus] in order to be saved) is based on what is clearly stated many times in the New Testament.

I put it to you that when there appears to be a contradiction, it is better to go with what is stated clearly and explicitly (i.e. argument 2 above) rather than with what is arrived at by a process of deduction (i.e. argument 1 above). As we all know from experience, it is easy to put 2 and 2 together and make 5. We are less likely to go wrong when we rely upon explicit statements than when we rely upon things arrived at by a process of deduction.

#### **Reason 4**

Jesus's requirements for being His disciple (as recorded in Luke chapter 14) is teaching given by Jesus before His death and resurrection.

As previously outlined in various places in this booklet, we need to be cautious about taking the answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" from teaching given by Jesus before His death and resurrection – i.e. before the great sacrifice for sins was made. The ability of Jesus to save us springs largely from His death and resurrection. The significance of this great watershed event, and its relevance to us, is largely found in teaching given after the resurrection.

Thus, when trying to answer the question "what must I do to be saved?", we should be cautious about relying heavily upon teaching given before the death and resurrection of Jesus.

#### **Reason 5**

It is a mistake to assume that the discipleship referred to in the book of Acts must be a cause of salvation. It is possible that it is a result of salvation, not a cause.

The next chapter considers further this cause and effect relationship.

## Chapter 22

# ARE WE SAVED BY BECOMING A 'FOLLOWER OF JESUS'? – CONFUSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

This chapter should be read in conjunction with the previous chapter.

## CONFUSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

Jesus said: “**My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me**”.<sup>1</sup>

Following Jesus is thus an effect of being one of His ‘sheep’. The verse quoted above does not necessarily mean that following Jesus is the cause of a person *becoming* one of His sheep.

Literal sheep eat grass and live in a paddock. But eating grass and and living in a paddock does not cause a person to become a literal sheep. Nor does trying to follow Jesus turn a person into one of Jesus’s spiritual sheep.

The Chinese people followed Mao Tse Tung, but following Mao does not make a person Chinese. To become Chinese you must be born Chinese. To become a sheep you must be born a sheep, and to become one of Jesus’s sheep you must be born again by the Spirit of God. Trying to follow Jesus (when you are not born again) just won’t do it.

It is to be expected that those who are born again will become disciples of Jesus in the sense of being committed to Him and His teaching. It is to be expected that they will join themselves to the band of people that are committed to following Jesus and the teaching of His apostles.

Just as it is natural for a baby to grow into an adult, so also it is natural for a born again person to become a disciple of Jesus. In fact, becoming a disciple usually goes hand in hand with being born again. If a person believes in their heart that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the only one who can save them – if they entrust themselves to Him to save them – then they will inevitably take great notice of what He says, and rely on what He says. They will inevitably entrust many aspects of their lives to Him. They will inevitably tend to follow what He says in many aspects of their lives.

Furthermore, when a person is born again they are indwelt by the Spirit of God, and, at least to some degree, they have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. These changes encourage the person to follow Jesus.

Yet again, one of the major functions of the true church (i.e. the fellowship of all those that are truly born again) is to help in the process of turning ‘believers’ into ‘disciples’. More than that, once a person is born again, the true church has a responsibility to require a godly life of those that associate themselves with Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy and said: **Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Everyone who names the**

---

<sup>1</sup> John 10 vs 27



**name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.”<sup>1</sup>** In books such as the book of Jude the New Testament makes it clear that those that live wicked lives should have no place in the true church of God.

Living a godly life is something that should flow from being born again. It is not a cause of being born again, any more than eating grass and living in a paddock causes a person to become a sheep, or following Mao makes a person Chinese.

## **ARE WE SAVED BY BECOMING A ‘FOLLOWER OF JESUS’?**

It is to be expected that true and strong discipleship will spring from salvation, but isn't it going beyond what the bible says if we make it something we must do to be saved? Believing/entrusting is in the inner man – in the heart. Becoming a disciple is an outward action – a ‘work’ that we do. James said that “faith without works is dead”, but it is the faith in Christ that saves us, not the works that inevitably tend to spring from that faith.

In fact, we cannot be saved whilst we are relying upon the works that we do to save us! Ponder the implications of that. We are on VERY dangerous ground when we tell people that what they must do in order to be saved is to become a disciple, or follower, of Jesus.

I hear people who seem to say that a person is saved when they decide to become a follower of Jesus. What do they mean by this? What are they really saying?

Often the person themselves is unclear about what they are actually saying. But if the person is saying that the way to be saved is to become a follower of Jesus in the sense that we try to live life in the way that Jesus lived it, and in the way that Jesus taught that life should be lived, as I see it, they are making a very, very, grave mistake.

Jesus lived life exactly the way God required a man to live. He "loved the Lord His God with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all His strength, and with all His mind; and His neighbour as Himself".<sup>2</sup> He thus completely kept the Old Testament Law in the way God required a Jewish man to keep it. He lived His life exactly the way the Law required.

To say that we are saved by following Jesus's example in the way we live, is in effect the same as saying that we are saved by keeping the Old Testament Law in the perfect way that Jesus kept it.

Other people seem to put the emphasis on obeying Jesus. They seem to be saying that we are saved by obeying Jesus and living life the way He tells us to. This also is very wrong. Jesus is God, and to say that we are saved by obeying Jesus, is really just the same as saying we are saved by keeping God's commands. Think about it. Isn't obeying Jesus the same as obeying God? And isn't obeying God the same as keeping God's commands? To say that we are saved by obeying Jesus is the same as saying that we are saved by obeying God's commands as given and explained by Jesus.

Although they are subtle, teachings such as these are in effect a ‘works’ based system of salvation. They do not lead to salvation. They do not lead to peace with God. Rather they lead to condemnation. The book of Galatians tells us the fate of those that try to get right with God by keeping the Old Testament Law. It says:

---

<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 2 vs 19

<sup>2</sup> See Luke 10 vs 25-37

**“For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.”<sup>11</sup> Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “The righteous man shall live by faith.”<sup>12</sup> However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “He who practices them shall live by them.”<sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”<sup>1</sup>**

If we are seeking to be saved by being a follower of Jesus, we must follow Him perfectly, and live life perfectly just as He did. We must “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.”<sup>2</sup> If our discipleship falls short of this it is insufficient to save us.

Salvation does not come from keeping the Law, nor does it come from being obedient to Jesus and living the way Jesus tells us to live. It does not even come from seeking to follow Jesus.

We are on the path towards salvation when we realise that we don’t have the strength to live in a way that is able to save us. We are on the path towards salvation when we realise that we cannot save ourselves and despair of trying to save ourselves through our own efforts. Salvation comes when we entrust ourselves to the One who, on the cross, carried our load of sin and thus became a curse for us – when we entrust ourselves to the One who offers eternal life freely, as a gift, to all who believe/entrust in Him.

Let me ask three questions of those of you that are happy with saying that we gain salvation by becoming a follower of Jesus.

1. My first question is this: What verses or passages in the New Testament can you show me where, after the resurrection, people are told that deciding to become a follower of Jesus is a cause of gaining eternal life? There certainly are verses saying that it is something we should do. There certainly are verses that suggest that it is an effect of salvation. But where, after the resurrection, are the verses that say that it is a cause of being saved? I can show you many verses giving ‘*pisteuo*’ (i.e. believe/entrust) and ‘*pistis*’ (i.e. faith) as the human response that is required to gain eternal life. What teaching, given after the resurrection, can you show me that says that ‘following Jesus’ is the response that is required to gain eternal life?
2. My second question is this: If there is no teaching, given after the resurrection, that says that deciding to be a ‘follower of Jesus’ is the human response required to gain eternal life, why are you happy with telling people that they must become a follower of Jesus in order to gain eternal life? Why are you happy with saying something different from the good news that was preached after the resurrection?
3. My third question is this: If the message is that a person must become a follower of Jesus in order to be saved, why didn’t the apostles just say that when they preached the gospel after the resurrection? Why didn’t Paul just say that when he wrote the book of Romans? For example, why didn’t he say in Romans 1 vs 16, I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who becomes a follower of Jesus? Why didn’t John write: For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever becomes a follower of Jesus shall not perish, but have eternal life?

---

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 3 vs 10-13

<sup>2</sup> See Luke 10 vs 25-37

## **AN ILLUSTRATION FROM THE LIVES OF CHARLES AND JOHN WESLEY**

The brothers Charles and John Wesley became two of England's most famous evangelists. Charles Wesley wrote some of our greatest hymns and is the most prolific hymn writer in England's history. The road these two brothers travelled before they finally found peace with God illustrates many of the points that I have been trying to make in this booklet.

For the early part of their adult lives, the brothers earnestly sought to serve God. Most people today would no-doubt say that they were 'followers of Jesus'. Nevertheless it seems that they weren't actually born again. Through a long struggle they themselves came to the conclusion that they weren't as yet "converted" (their word not mine).

Charles was born in 1707. At Oxford University Charles, along with some friends, formed a prayer group among their fellow students. His brother John eventually assumed leadership of the group. The group focused on prayer, the methodical study of scripture, and living a holy life. Other students mocked them, saying they were the "Holy Club". After graduating with a Masters' in classical languages and literature, Charles was ordained in the Anglican Church. John was also ordained in the Anglican church.

Then, in 1735, at 27 years of age, Charles, along with his brother John, set sail for America. At least part of their intention was to be missionaries to the North American Indians.

If you met Charles and John at this stage of their lives would you not have said that each of them was a 'follower of Jesus'? Nevertheless, in spite of all their endeavours, neither Charles nor John could find assurance that they themselves were in fact saved.

Things did not go well in America. Before long they returned to England believing their lives and ministry had failed. John Wesley wrote of his missionary experience: "I went to America to convert the Indians; but, oh, who shall convert me?"

In their travels, the brothers had been impressed with the faith of Moravian Christians. On returning to England they sought out this christian group. Both Charles and John were in almost daily contact with a Moravian preacher named Peter Bohler.

One day Peter Bohler asked Charles "Do you hope to be saved?"

"I do!" Charles replied.

"For what reason do you hope it?" Peter Bohler continued.

"Because I have used my best endeavours to serve God." replied Charles.

Charles reports: 'He (i.e. Peter Bohler) shook his head, and said no more. I thought him very uncharitable, saying in my heart, 'What, are not my endeavours sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavours? I have nothing else to trust to.'

The brothers' contact with the Moravian Christians continued.

On 17 May 1738 Charles read Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians and saw with surprise how far the Anglican church of his day had strayed from the gospel of the grace of God received through faith in Christ alone.<sup>1</sup>

Then, on 21 May 1738, at 31 years of age, Charles Wesley found peace with God. Charles said he felt the Spirit of God striving with his spirit "till by degrees He chased away the darkness of my unbelief". In his journal he wrote: "I found myself convinced . . . I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ. I saw that by faith I stood."<sup>2</sup>

John recorded the event in his Journal. He wrote: "I received the surprising news that my brother had found rest to his soul."

Three days later his brother John had a similar experience. He went to a meeting where they were reading Martin Luther's preface to the book of Romans. In his journal John wrote: "I felt my heart strangely warmed . . . I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given to me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Note how these two brothers:

- started and led an earnest prayer and bible study group
- were mocked for the holy lives they were endeavouring to live
- were ordained ministers
- became missionaries
- earnestly sought to serve God

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, it appears that the brothers came to the conclusion that they weren't actually saved. I tend to agree with them.

It is not for us to say with certainty whether or not people are born again, or when that event occurred. But I put it to you that, in all likelihood, the brothers were not actually born again until they finally stopped relying on all the things they were doing and came to rely entirely on the Saviour who promises to save sinners who trust Him to save them. The Saviour grants eternal life freely, as a gift. But the sad fact is that those who labour to gain it are at risk of never finding the grace – i.e. the undeserved kindness – of God.

But, for the Wesley brothers, the story did end well. The Wesley brothers did find the grace of God. Once they themselves had found peace with God, the two brothers then went on to become two of the greatest evangelists ever. Once they knew what the gospel message was, God used them, and other men such as George Whitfield, to proclaim that gospel message far and wide. God used them and the message they preached to turn a whole country around.

On 23 May 1738, 2 days after the entry quoted above, Charles Wesley wrote in his journal "I began a hymn upon my conversion". He did not tell us which hymn it was, but perhaps it was the well-known hymn that starts "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood". That hymn appears to be describing his own experience.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Charles Wesley's journal – entry for 17/5/1738 (Charles Wesley's journal is available freely on-line at sites such as the 'Wesley Centre On Line') The journal reveals an intense (and in my opinion also unnecessarily introverted) struggle to find saving faith.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Wesley's journal – part of entry for 21/5/1738

Part of verse 3 says:

'Tis mercy all, immense and free,  
for O my God, it found out me!

Verse 4 says:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray;  
I woke the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose went forth and followed Thee!

## CONCLUSION

Before his death and resurrection Jesus said to the crowds that were going along with Him that if a person wanted to be His disciple he must give up all his own possessions and follow Him.

After His death and resurrection, the New Testament makes it clear that the thing we must do to gain eternal life is to believe (/entrust) in the Lord Jesus Christ, who, on the cross, carried our load of sin so that we, the guilty ones, might receive His underserved kindness, and go free. "Tis mercy all, immense and free"!

It is of course very good to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ in the sense that we are completely committed to learning from Him and to following Him and His teaching. Furthermore, it is to be expected that those that are born again will follow Jesus. As Charles Wesley wrote: "My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose went forth and followed Thee!"

But, 'following Jesus' is an effect of being born again, not a cause. We need to be careful with the assumptions we make. We need to try hard to not jump to unjustifiable conclusions. We must not confuse cause and effect. We also must take great care to stick very closely to the message we have been given and not go beyond it, even though we may have the very best of intentions.

I put it to you that being a disciple, or a follower of Jesus, is an effect of salvation. It is not a cause of salvation. Those that make it a cause of salvation are at risk of never finding the grace (i.e. the undeserved kindness) of God.

(Chapter 25 following has more discussion on the cause and effect of salvation.)

I put it to you that the New Testament states clearly what we must do to be born again (and thus become one of the Saviour's 'sheep'). After the cross and resurrection, we are not told that we must become a follower of Jesus in order to gain salvation. We are on the path towards salvation when we realise that we have been on the wrong course and that now we need a saviour (i.e. we '*repent*' as explained in chapters 15-16). We must turn to the Saviour – the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e. be '*converted*' as explained in chapter 17). We must look to Him, and rely on Him to save us (i.e. put our '*faith*' in Him – '*believe*' in Him).

But isn't it going a step too far to say that we gain eternal life by becoming a follower of Jesus? Rather, the thing we are repeatedly told we must do is to believe (/entrust) in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself – to entrust ourselves to the One who promises to save sinners who rely on Him to save them.

Which mind-set do you have? That of the Wesley brothers before they were apparently born again, or that of them after they found peace with God?

What, or Who, are you relying on?

What, or Who, do you tell others they should rely on?

We need to take great care and get the gospel message right. We need to scrupulously stick to the message we have been given and not deviate from it.

It is a serious, potentially even fatal, mistake to come to Him with the plea that in order to gain eternal life we will follow Jesus for the rest of our lives.

But there is one plea that is a sinner's perfect plea. The following song speaks of it.

Just as I am, without one plea,  
but that Thy blood was shed for me,  
and that Thou bidst me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not  
to rid my soul of one dark blot,  
to Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about  
with many a conflict, many a doubt,  
fightings and fears within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;  
sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
yea, all I need in Thee to find,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,  
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
because Thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thy love unknown  
has broken every barrier down;  
now, to be Thine, yes Thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

(Hymn by Charlotte Elliott)

## Chapter 23

### **BUT SURELY GOD WOULD MAKE THE ANSWER TO “WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?” CLEARER, AND EASIER TO UNDERSTAND**

Another objection people may have to the previous few chapters is that “*its all too complicated*”. They think that surely God would have made things a lot clearer.

#### **23.1 God HAS Made it Clear, but WE Have ‘Muddled the Water’**

I put it to you that whilst there are some difficulties, overall, God has made the message clear. It is we humans that have ‘muddled the water’ and confused the situation.

Consider the following:

- God has given us the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke – “orderly accounts” – that tell us exactly what happened when Jesus came.
- He has given us John’s book, and in this book John expressly tells us why he wrote it. He said: “these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” (John 20 vs 30- 31)
- He has given us the book of Acts which tells us how the gospel came to leave the bounds of Judaism and go to us gentiles as well.
- He has told us how the risen Lord Jesus appeared to Paul and entrusted Paul with His gospel message for us gentiles today.
- He has given us Paul’s letter to the Romans in which Paul sets out logically and plainly the gospel message that Jesus entrusted him with – a message which Paul tells us in Galatians 1 vs 12 he received directly from the Lord Jesus Himself.
- He has even gone so far as to say: “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we (i.e. Paul) have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!”<sup>1</sup> How could God make it any clearer that we shouldn’t stray from the good news that Paul preached? How could He say it any more strongly? (And how stupid are we not to take what He says to heart?)

But then we humans ‘muddled the water’ and confused the situation.

- Perhaps prompted by a degree of self-centred arrogance, we assumed that we gentiles must be the prime focus of God’s attention, and assumed that everything recorded in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke is ‘all about me’.
- It is we humans that have translated the word ‘*euangelion*’ as something much more focussed and specific than simply ‘good news’.
- It is we humans that also gave the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke the title of “Gospel”, thus causing readers ever since to start with the assumption that these books set out to tell us gentiles what we must do to be saved.

---

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 1 vs 6-9

- In the layout of our bibles, it is we humans that put a strong dividing line between the books of Malachi and Matthew, and this dividing line has caused readers ever since to assume that the 'new covenant' came into force at the coming of Jesus, rather than being made available at His death and resurrection.
- The above assumptions and misunderstandings have become so embedded in our thinking that even many bible teachers have failed to see through them. These bible teachers, in their sermons, thus pass these wrong assumptions on to their hearers, and so the cycle goes on.
- In addition we have tampered with the meaning of critical gospel words. It is we humans that have assigned a wrong meaning to the word '*metanoeo*' (i.e. the word we have translated as *repent*). Even now some people are tampering with the meaning of the words '*pisteuo*' (believe) and '*pistis*' (faith).
- Too often we have ignored the very strong words given through Christ's special messenger to us gentiles – namely the words: **"if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, (from the Apostle Paul) he is to be accursed!"**<sup>1</sup>
- Even right now we humans are continuing to muddy the water somewhat. At the time of writing this, in New Zealand, it is becoming increasingly difficult to buy a bible that does not have the words of Jesus in red print. The bible publishers no doubt do this with the very best of intentions. I guess they are trying to honour Christ by giving special emphasis to His words. But it seems to me that they have been remiss in not adequately thinking through the unintended consequences of their actions. Putting Jesus's words in red tends to suggest to the reader that he or she should place extra importance on these particular words. But, as I have previously pointed out, SINCE
  1. Most of Jesus's teaching was given before his death, AND SINCE
  2. The gospel message for us today is founded upon the death and resurrection of Jesus (and is thus typically not found in the teaching of Jesus, but rather in teaching given after his resurrection),

putting the words of Jesus in red does not help a person who is seeking the answer to the very important question: "What must I do to be saved?" Rather it tends to point him in the wrong direction. As I see it, it just further muddies the water.<sup>2</sup>

### **23.2 Do We Think That God Has a Responsibility to Make Us Understand?**

Perhaps, we also sometimes think that God has a responsibility to make everything easily available and easily understandable to us all. Perhaps we tend to think that making everything easily understandable to us is God's problem not ours. Do we even sometimes go so far as to think that if we don't understand it, then God is to blame?

A brief look at history will quickly rid us of any such delusion.

- We may think that God has a responsibility to speak to us plainly and unambiguously, but consider this: When the Jewish leaders started to turn against Jesus, then Jesus stopped speaking plainly in public, and started speaking to the

---

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 1 vs 6-9

<sup>2</sup> (Furthermore, as I see it, there may perhaps be another unintended consequence of putting the words of Jesus in red. It may tend to undermine the understanding that the bible is the "very words of God". If the bible is indeed the Word of God, then those parts of the bible given through say the Apostle Paul, are every bit as much the 'words of Jesus' as the words that Jesus spoke whilst he walked on earth. My question is this: Does emphasising the words that Jesus spoke on earth by putting them in red, tend to devalue these other 'words of Jesus'? Does it make them into something slightly less than "the very words of God"? If it is all the Word of God, should it not all be given equal emphasis?)



crowds in parables. The disciples asked him “Why do You speak to them in parables?”<sup>1</sup> Jesus replied that it was “**so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand**”<sup>2</sup> He deliberately spoke in ways they would find difficult to understand! Ponder on that for a moment.

- The English went for 1300 years before they started to have access to a translation of the bible that was in their own language – the Wycliffe bible. But even this bible had serious flaws. It wasn’t translated from the original languages, but rather it was a translation of the Latin translation that was used by the Catholic Church. Think about it – 1300 years! – and then only a translation of a translation. The English then had to wait another 200 years before they got a reasonably good translation – the Tyndale Bible which was made from the original languages. But even then, bibles were rare, and most people couldn’t read. Even now some peoples do not have the complete bible in their mother tongue.
- Right through the thousand odd years of the dark and middle ages, most people of the world had no way of discovering the true gospel message. Even in the supposed realm of ‘Christendom’ they were at the mercy of an often corrupt church establishment that not only misrepresented the truth, but also sometimes did its best to prevent others from teaching it.
- Even today some countries do their best to forbid the spreading of the gospel message amongst their citizens.

We are extremely blessed and privileged to have easy access to the Word of God in our own language, and even access to the original languages of the bible. But it is clear from history that this is a privilege, not a right. Let’s make the most of the opportunity whilst the privilege remains.

May I respectfully suggest that you have a responsibility to study diligently, (asking the Lord for His help and His wisdom) to determine whether or not what I have written in this booklet is accurate. If it is, I put it to you that you have a responsibility to do what you can to pass on what you have learnt and to respectfully and intelligently correct those who are preaching a different ‘gospel’.

History teaches us that we have no right to easy access and easy understanding of God’s word. History teaches us that God hasn’t always made it easy for people to find out and understand what His Word says. Certainly some difficulties still remain. (They do for me anyway.) Diligence and persistence will help. But even then, like most of God’s people down through the ages, there will probably still be some things we don’t understand, and there will probably be some things we get wrong. Nevertheless, as we continue our search for understanding, let us take heart from the following encouraging words from Proverbs ch 2 vs 1-10, (NIV translation)

**My son, if you accept my words  
and store up my commands within you,  
turning your ear to wisdom  
and applying your heart to understanding,  
and if you call out for insight  
and cry aloud for understanding,  
and if you look for it as for silver  
and search for it as for hidden treasure,  
then you will understand the fear of the LORD  
and find the knowledge of God.  
For the LORD gives wisdom,**

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 13 vs 10

<sup>2</sup> Luke 8 vs 10 (and Matthew 13 vs 13)

**and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.**

**He holds victory in store for the upright,**

**. . . . .**

**Then you will understand what is right and just  
and fair – every good path.**

**For wisdom will enter your heart,  
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.**

I put it to you that whilst some difficulties may remain, the answer to the question “What must I do to be saved?” is clearly spelled out in His Word. Perhaps the main thing that stops us seeing the answer clearly is the wrong assumptions we bring to the table, especially the assumption that ‘it’s all about me’.

May the merciful and tender-hearted God, in His grace, help each of us to have a humble, teachable heart, and open the eyes of our understanding so that we see and understand what His gospel message for us today is.

## Chapter 24

# THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN CALLING THE 'DEAD' TO LIFE

For many of us, the message that "everyone who believes (/entrusts) in Him receives forgiveness of sins" just doesn't seem right. We have a deep sense that somehow there must be something more to it than that. Thus we are tempted to start adding in other things that people must do to be saved.

Also we see people who say they are Christians but whose lives seem to prove otherwise, and we are tempted to try to 'raise the bar' of entry into the kingdom of God. We are tempted to try to raise the height of the hurdle that people must jump over so that only the more committed get in.

I put it to you very strongly that we must NOT change the gospel message into something that makes more sense to us. Self-discipline is required. We are not the ones that set the conditions. Rather we are to simply be ambassadors that pass on the message we have been given. We must simply stick with the message we have been given and leave the outcome in God's hands.

BUT there is something more going on when a person is truly born again. There is something more, but it is not something more that the person does. Rather it is something more that God does. Both this chapter and also the next one look at this 'something more'.

The factor that is sometimes overlooked is that the Spirit of God is at work in bringing a person to the point where they truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are born again. It is not just a human process.

The person who is not born again is spiritually dead. They are "dead in their trespasses and sins".<sup>1</sup> A dead person cannot find their way to God. God must be at work to change this. Only He can call the 'dead' to life. When a person is born again, there is something going on at a spiritual level. God Himself is actively calling the person. It is a mistake to leave God out of the process and just see it entirely in human terms.

Typically we humans like the sound of words such as "*I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul*",<sup>2</sup> but there is a problem with this. The trouble is that we are a fallen creation. Left to ourselves, we, as captain, relentlessly sail our ship away from the only true God and towards the rocks of destruction.

Only the intervention of the Spirit of God can turn this sad situation around.

Thus it is that Jesus said: "**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him**".<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See Ephesians ch 2 vs 1 & 5

<sup>2</sup> from a poem by William Ernest Henley

<sup>3</sup> John 6 vs 44

No one can truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unless he has been brought to that place of faith in Christ by the working of the Spirit of God. God is at work in the process. Something miraculous is going on at the spiritual level. God is calling the dead to life.

Thousands of years ago God had a plan. He set that plan in motion by calling Abraham. He called him out from his home city of Ur, to travel to a land that God would show him. Abraham heard the call of God and responded in faith. As we read in Hebrews 11 vs 8: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance." The plan wasn't initiated by Abraham. God initiated the plan and actively called Abraham.

In a similar way God still sometimes calls to people. Presently He is creating a fellowship of 'called-out-from' ones. (The word most bibles translate as 'church' is '*ekklesia*'. It is a compound word coming from '*ek*' [meaning 'out from'] and '*klesis*' [meaning a 'calling']. Thus *literally* the word means 'called-out-from ones'. In common usage it meant a called together group. For example it was used of a body of citizens gathered to discuss the affairs of state, or an assembly of citizens summoned by the town crier.) Today God is creating a group of people who have been "**called out of darkness into His marvellous light**".<sup>1</sup> – people who have been "**called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ**".<sup>2</sup>

Turning to the Saviour is not just a human process. It requires the Father to intervene and open people's eyes and call them to Jesus Christ, the Saviour. God is doing something. He is bringing something about. He is opening the eyes of the blind. He is calling the dead to life. He is giving birth to something – a new creation – a 'born-again' person – a 'called-out-from' person.

This is very important and needs to be borne in mind.

God is opening the person's spiritual eyes and bringing the person to the place where, perhaps despairing of all other solutions, they are ready to look to the Saviour and trust Him alone to save an undeserving, disobedient wretch like them.

There is a change in thinking – a change of understanding – going on in the person. God is bringing this about as He opens their eyes to see things. He may grant them to see the grossness of their sin and their inability to save themselves. They may come to fear the coming wrath of God. He may then open their eyes to see the wonderful truth that there is a Saviour – Jesus – who gave His life as a ransom for them – and that Jesus now offers forgiveness of sins freely, as a gift, to all who look to Him to save them.

Through the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit, God is granting a change of mind to the person just as He did to the Gentiles in Cornelius's house.

This is important. I suspect that failure to take note of what God is doing is one of the factors that leads people to add in things that the person must do in order to be saved. So please bear with me as I run through it again.

Typically people don't seek a Saviour until they realise they need one. Before people look to the Saviour, they are often convicted of their sinfulness. This is the work of the Spirit of God. As Jesus said when He spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit: "**And He,**

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 2 vs 9

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 1 vs 9

**when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment”.**<sup>1</sup>

Thus, by the working of the Spirit of God, a person may come to realise the desperate predicament they are in. They may fear the coming wrath of God. Sometimes, they may come to hate their sin which is dragging them down to hell. They may even try for all they are worth to loose themselves from their sin, only to find that they are ensnared, and do not have the strength to break free.<sup>2</sup> Then, if they hear the good news that there is a Saviour who died for their sins, and now freely saves sinners, as a gift, it will be like cool clear water to a desperately thirsty soul.

Furthermore, if God is at work, (as He must be if a person is to truly believe and truly be born again), then the gospel message does not come on a purely human, intellectual level. Rather it comes with spiritual conviction from God Himself as He calls the person. As Paul said to the Thessalonians: **“for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction”.**<sup>3</sup> And as he said to the Corinthians: **“my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”.**<sup>4</sup>

God Himself is calling the person! What a blessing it is to hear His voice! (And we must not forget the solemn warning that goes with it – a warning that is given three times in Hebrews chapters 3 & 4 – **“Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart.”**<sup>5</sup>)

A person receives the gospel message **“not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God”.**<sup>6</sup> **“Faith comes by hearing”.**<sup>7</sup> They hear what God says, and they believe what God says. They thus ‘look’ to the Saviour and they are saved. They are **“born again . . . through the living and enduring word of God”.**<sup>8</sup>

God has been at work in this whole business of bringing into being a new creation – a ‘born again’ person who is alive in Christ Jesus. He has opened the person’s eyes. **“The God, who said, Light shall shine out of darkness, has shone in their hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ”.**<sup>9</sup> He has **“called them out of darkness into His marvellous light”.**<sup>10</sup> God Himself has **“called them into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ”.**<sup>11</sup>

They are born again from above. They are born again **“not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”.**<sup>12</sup> They were “dead in their trespassers and sins”<sup>13</sup> but God has raised the dead. He has called the dead to life.

It is not ‘our decision’ – not even our surrender to Christ – that results in us being born again. Rather it is the call of God Himself, and the sovereign, creative, work of God.

---

<sup>1</sup> John 16 vs 8

<sup>2</sup> I am not saying that this struggle with sin must always happen in every case – only that it sometimes happens.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1 vs 5

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 2 vs 4

<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 3 vs 7 & 15 and Hebrews 4 vs 7

<sup>6</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2 vs 13

<sup>7</sup> Romans 10 vs 17 “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”

<sup>8</sup> 1 Peter 1 vs 23

<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 4 vs 6

<sup>10</sup> 1 Peter 2 vs 9

<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 1 vs 9

<sup>12</sup> John 1 vs 13

<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 2 vs 1

Only He can remove the scales from the eyes. Only He can unlock the heart. Only He can call the dead to life.

Thus it was with Lydia, the first European to turn to Christ in the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys. Whilst Paul was speaking to some women who had gathered by a river outside Philippi, Lydia was listening and **"the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul"**.<sup>1</sup>

And thus it was with Cornelius and his friends that we looked at in chapter 9. When Peter reported to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem what had happened at Cornelius's house – when he told them how **"God gave to them** (i.e. to the Gentiles at Cornelius's house) **the same gift** (the Holy Spirit) **as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ"**<sup>2</sup> – they **"glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the 'metanoia' (change of mind) that leads to life".**<sup>3</sup>

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
Come unto me and rest  
Lay down O weary one, lay down  
Your head upon my breast.  
I came to Jesus as I was  
Weary and worn and sad  
I found in Him a resting place  
And He has made me glad

I heard the voice of Jesus say  
Behold I freely give  
The living water - thirsty one  
Stoop down and drink and live  
I came to Jesus and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived  
And now I live in Him

I heard the voice of Jesus say  
I am this dark world's light  
Look unto me your morn shall rise  
And all your day be bright  
I looked to Jesus and I found  
In Him my star, my sun  
And in that light of life I'll walk  
'Till travelling days are done.

Horatius Bonar

---

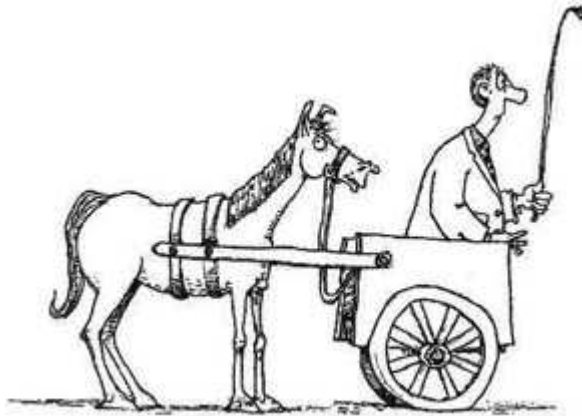
<sup>1</sup> Acts 16 vs 14

<sup>2</sup> Acts 11 vs 17

<sup>3</sup> Acts 11 vs 18

## Chapter 25

### THE CHANGED LIFE IS THE FRUIT OF BEING BORN AGAIN, NOT THE CAUSE



In an earlier chapter I pointed out that the word the King James Bible sometimes translates as 'converted' – i.e. the word '*epistrepho*' – does not mean a change of outer form. Rather it is talking about a change in direction – a 'turning towards' the Saviour.

But this does not mean that there is no need for a christian to undergo a 'change of form'. There should be a 'change of form' in the christian, but this change of form is the fruit of being born again, not the cause.

Writing to people who were already born again, the Apostle Paul said: ". . .do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . ." <sup>1</sup> The word here translated as 'transformed' is the word '*metamorphoo*' which means "to change into another form". <sup>2</sup> We get our word 'metamorphosis' from it.

When a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ they are born again.

Being 'born again' (or 'born from above' – the word we have translated as 'again' can equally well be translated as 'from above') is actually the receiving of new spiritual life – eternal life – life from above. Christ Himself comes to indwell the believer in the person of the Holy Spirit. The person is baptised (i.e. immersed <sup>3</sup>) into Christ – i.e., the person is placed 'in Christ' – and Christ is in them. They are joined to Christ.

As has been previously stated, this giving of new life – eternal life – comes about when a person believes (/entrusts) in the Lord Jesus Christ. As John's gospel quotes Jesus as saying: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life". <sup>4</sup> Nothing else is

---

<sup>1</sup> Romans 12 vs 2

<sup>2</sup> According to W E Vine in his 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words'.

<sup>3</sup> The Greek word our bibles have translated into English as 'baptised' was a simple, everyday word meaning 'immersed'.

<sup>4</sup> John 6 vs 47

required. (But as has been previously stated, this receiving of the gift of eternal life is accompanied by a '*metanoia*' (change of mind) and an '*epistrophe*' (turning towards the Saviour)).

The same John who wrote John's gospel, also wrote the New Testament letter of 1 John. In this letter, John again speaks of this 'eternal life'. For example he says:

**"The testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life".<sup>1</sup>**

But in his letter (1 John) he also says something more. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he makes it clear that those that have eternal life abiding in them are different from those that don't have the Spirit of God in them. They are born of God and the new, eternal life that is in them does not sin.<sup>2</sup>

BUT, we must take care not to confuse CAUSE and EFFECT.

The CAUSE of being born again is believing (/trusting) in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The changed life is the EFFECT of being born again.

If a person says that you must change your life in order to be born again he is confusing cause and effect and making a great mistake. He is putting the cart before the horse. And, more seriously, he is preaching a 'gospel' different from the one that the apostles preached after the resurrection.

When a person is born again, God's Spirit enters them and there is a fundamental change. Sometimes the change is dramatically visible. Other times the new life may be more like a seed that takes time to grow and blossom.

Long ago the Old Testament prophets foretold the day when God would make a new covenant with His chosen people, the Jews. They foretold how He would pour out His Spirit upon them, and give them a new heart.

For example:

In Jeremiah ch 31 vs 31-33 God said to the Jewish people:

**Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, . . .**

**"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."**

And in Ezekiel 36 vs 26-27 God said to the Jewish people:

**"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My**

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 John 5 vs 11-12

<sup>2</sup> A literal translation of 1 John 3 vs 9 is "Everyone having been born of God does not sin". But I do not think John is saying that those that are born of God never sin. Rather I think that he is saying that the part of them that is born of God does not sin.



**Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”**

So God promised that the day would come when He would put His own Spirit within the Jewish people and give them a new heart.

Then Christ came, was rejected, crucified, and rose again. Fifty days after the resurrection, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was given to the Jewish believers. Peter told the crowd that gathered: “this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: “And it shall be in the last days God says, that I will pour fourth of My Spirit on all mankind”.<sup>1</sup>

Some Jews believed, but most of the nation continued to reject their Messiah. The world thus still awaits the day when the words spoken by Jeremiah and Ezekiel so many years ago will be fulfilled. In that day, the Holy Spirit will be poured out on the house of Israel and the house of Judah, they will be given a new heart, and they will enter into the blessings of the new covenant. All this will yet happen just as foretold in the Old Testament.

When Israel rejected her Messiah, God started sending the gospel message to the Gentiles as well. Perhaps several years after the resurrection, to everyone’s surprise, the Holy Spirit fell also on the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius – just as He had on Peter and the other Jews at the beginning.<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit promised to the Jews was given to the Gentiles as well.

Furthermore, along with the Holy Spirit came an appreciation of the love of God. As Paul wrote to the both Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome: “. . . the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us”.<sup>3</sup>

A person comes to the Saviour as a hopeless and helpless sinner. The person has nothing he can offer and nothing he can plead of himself. If the truth be told, he does not love God. He is a fallen creation and cannot live the way God wants him to. But, when such a person ‘looks’ to the Saviour, then, upon believing, they are forgiven freely, for Christ’s sake – i.e. because of what Christ has done. Now, upon believing, Christ washes them from their sins “by His blood”.<sup>4</sup> Now, not only are they forgiven, washed from their sins, and “declared righteous”,<sup>5</sup> but God, for Christ’s sake, accepts the sinner as a son! They are now placed “in Christ”. God now accepts them in Christ. Now, in Christ, they are “blessed with every spiritual blessing”.<sup>6</sup>

Such an outpouring by God of unconditional love can have a profound effect on the undeserving sinner that believes. This is especially the case since it is accompanied by the Spirit of God’s Son in the sinner’s heart now whispering to Almighty, Holy God (of all things!) “Abba! Father!”.<sup>7</sup> Such an outpouring of God’s grace – such an outpouring of His undeserved kindness to the sinner – can facilitate a marked change in a person. Now the sinner who did not love God and did not keep His commands can experience the truth of the words: “we love because He first loved us”.<sup>8</sup> Now the saved sinner can start

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2 vs 16-17

<sup>2</sup> See Acts 11 vs 15-17

<sup>3</sup> Romans 5 vs 5

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 1 vs 5

<sup>5</sup> This is what the word most bibles translate as “justified” means

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 1 vs 3

<sup>7</sup> Galatians 4 vs 6

<sup>8</sup> 1 John 4 vs 19

to prove in practice Jesus's words "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments".<sup>1</sup> Now Christ Himself, living in the man or woman in the person of the Holy Spirit, can start to bring about a change in the person's conduct.

The indwelling Holy Spirit, and the "shed abroad" love of God can soften the heart of even the most callous sinner.

The individual also has a part to play in the new life that he has entered into. The 'born again' person can either "sow to the Spirit" and reap the fruit of the new life, or "sow to the flesh" (i.e. the fallen human nature) and continue to reap the bad fruit that comes from the fallen human nature.<sup>2</sup> There should also be an on-going process – an on-going transformation. Speaking to people who are already Christians, 2 Corinthians 3 vs 18 tells us: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (*metamorphoo-ed*) . . ."

BUT, BUT, BUT, we must take care not to confuse cause and effect. The change in conduct is the FRUIT of being born again, not the CAUSE. The transformed life is something that should follow being born again. It is not the cause of being born again. The cause of being born again is faith alone in Christ alone. True obedience to Christ and the changed life that results are the FRUIT of being born again, not the cause.

Telling a person they must abandon their sin in order to be saved is not good news at all. (Only a person who does not yet know the wickedness of their own heart will find any hope in such a message.) It is like telling a person in a dungeon they must get out of the dungeon if they want to be saved! I know. I've been there! The person who is not born again is a slave to sin, and they cannot get free of it even if they want to.

BUT THERE IS A SAVIOUR, and the good news is that He "**justifies** (i.e. declares righteous) **the UNgodly**".<sup>3</sup> He saves **SINNERS** who believe/entrust in Him. And when they believe, they are born again – God's Spirit comes to indwell them. Then and only then, the words that Charles Wesley wrote in his hymn can start to come true: "He breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free". Then it is to be expected that the words that Paul wrote to the Romans will come true: "**But thanks be to God that though you were slaves to sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness**".<sup>4</sup>

In an earlier chapter we looked at the lives of Charles and John Wesley and their long and intense struggle to find peace with God. After his "conversion" (his word not mine) Charles wrote the following words in a hymn:

"He breaks the power of cancelled sin.  
He sets the prisoner free.  
His blood can make the foulest clean.  
"His blood availed for me."

---

<sup>1</sup> John 14 vs 15

<sup>2</sup> See Galatians chapter 5 vs 16 to chapter 6 vs 10

<sup>3</sup> See Romans 4 vs 5

<sup>4</sup> Romans 6 vs 17-18

## Chapter 26

# THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE FIRST PASSOVER

Perhaps the greatest 'picture' of deliverance that the Old Testament gives us is the record of how God delivered the Children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. (If you are not familiar with what happened, it is recorded in chapters 3 to 14 of the Old Testament book of Exodus.) At least some aspects of this story are an illustration (hidden away in the Old Testament in advance) of the salvation that Jesus Christ would later bring.

On the one hand we should learn all we can from the story, but on the other hand we need to take care that we don't read more into the story than God intends us to. Drawing the line in the right place can be difficult, and you, my reader, will have to make your own judgement on how far we should take the illustration. Nevertheless I put out the following for your consideration.

### **23.1 Christ is Our Passover Lamb**

Not all parts of the illustration are open to question. Some things are certain.

Without doubt, the passover lamb that the Israelites were told to select is a picture of Jesus Christ. We can be sure of this because in the New Testament Paul plainly says **"Christ our passover also has been sacrificed"**.<sup>1</sup> The lamb the Israelites selected also had to be a male and without blemish,<sup>2</sup> and in the New Testament Peter tells us that we have been redeemed (i.e. set free by the paying of a ransom) by **"the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."**<sup>3</sup>

### **23.2 The Bigger Picture of What God Was Doing**

Stepping back and looking at the bigger context of what was going on, we cannot fail to note that God's message to Pharaoh from the beginning was – let my people go "that they may serve/worship me".<sup>4</sup>

But what about today? In my estimation, it seems that God's main intention is not to simply save people from their sins. Rather it seems that His main intention is to create worshippers – new 'born-again' people whose lives (both here and in the age to come) are to the praise of His glory.

God's focus seems to be not so much on the forgiveness of our sins, but more on the creation of a people, whose lives bring honour to Him – whose lives are to the praise of His glory. The Saviour **"gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds"**.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 5 vs 7

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 12 vs 5

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 1 vs 19

<sup>4</sup> for example Exodus 4 vs 23 but also in at least 8 other places in Exodus.

<sup>5</sup> Titus 2 vs 14

Also, in the bigger picture, God was delivering the Israelites from the control of Pharaoh – from the “house of slavery”.<sup>1</sup> This seems to be in keeping with what God is doing through the gospel. Jesus commissioned Paul to be His special messenger, bringing the gospel to the people. Paul tells us that on the road to Damascus Jesus said to him:

**“I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”**<sup>2</sup>

God’s intention is to set people free from the dominion of Satan.

In passing I also note that the children of Israel were told to eat the passover lamb as follows: “Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste”.<sup>3</sup>

They were thus told to be ready and prepared to leave Egypt and the dominion of Pharaoh.

### **23.3 But, On the Fateful Night it was the Blood Alone that Made the Difference**

But, in spite of all the above, on the fateful night when the angel of death passed through the land, the only thing that made any difference was the presence or otherwise of the blood of the lamb on the door frame. God said **“When I see the blood I will pass over you.”**<sup>4</sup>

I put it to you that on that fateful night there may perhaps have been good, upright people – people committed to serving God – people eager and ready to leave Egypt – but people who somehow had not got around to applying the blood of the lamb to the door. I put it to you that in such households, the firstborn would still have been struck down.

I also put it to you that there may have been other households in which the people were basically rat bags – people who had sold out to the Egyptians and become their lackeys – people who, to their shame, weren’t all that keen to leave their masters in Egypt – people who had been lackadaisical about eating the passover lamb “with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand”.

Perhaps even most of the people were of two minds about leaving Egypt. A few days after they had left Egypt it seems that most of the people said to Moses “Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”<sup>5</sup>

I put it to you that, irrespective of the no doubt varying levels of commitment of the people inside the house, if the people had applied the blood of the lamb around the door, their firstborn would have been spared.

---

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 13 vs 3 & vs 14, Exodus 20 vs 2, Deuteronomy 5:6, 6:12, 8:14, 13:5, 13:10, plus Joshua 24:17, Judges 6:8

<sup>2</sup> Acts 26 vs 17b – 18

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 12 vs 11

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 12 vs 13

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 14 vs 12

When it came to the crunch, it was not about the condition and commitment of the people inside the house. That was not the issue. Rather the issue was whether or not there was the blood of the lamb around the door. It was the blood alone that made the difference! God's word to them was **"when I see the blood I will pass over you"**,<sup>1</sup> and God was going to be true to His word.

And so it is for us today. It is the blood of Christ – the "Lamb of God" – that makes the difference, not the level of our commitment to following the Lord. **"Christ our passover has been sacrificed"**.<sup>2</sup> and we have been redeemed by **"the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."**<sup>3</sup>

#### **23.4 How Was the Blood to be Applied? – What did they have to do to gain the benefit of the blood of the Lamb?**

When they killed the passover lamb, the Israelites were told to catch its blood and apply it around the doors of their houses. But what were they to use to apply the blood to their houses? What were they told to use as a paint brush? Was it to be a special holy brush that only a priest could give them? Was it to be a brush that was very difficult to obtain – say a brush made only from selected hairs from a rare Mongolian badger?

No. God made it as easy for them as he possibly could. They were told to take a bunch of hyssop and use that as a paint brush to apply the blood around the door. Hyssop is a common plant that grew almost as a weed in the region. Everyone could easily find a bunch of hyssop to use as the paintbrush.

Today, how do I gain the benefit of the shed blood of Christ? What must I do to be saved?

I put it to you that for us also God is making it as easy as he can. What the New Testament, especially the writings of the Apostle Paul make very clear, is that the good of Christ's death is given as a gift to all who believe in Christ. It is given freely to all who trust in him. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

The hard work has been done by Christ. I put it to you that now He wants to make it as easy for us as He can.

- Everyone could easily find a bunch of hyssop to apply the blood with. – *just as*:
- When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, everyone who had been bitten by a snake could easily look to the bronze snake on the pole and live. – *just as*:
- Today everyone can 'look' to a crucified and risen Jesus and entrust their salvation to Him.

Even though:

- We may not understand how it can be that God seeks worshipers, yet promises to save believers, but that is God's business. He is the one that sets the conditions.
- We may not understand how a person goes from being a "slave to sin" to being "obedient from the heart", and a "slave of righteousness".<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 12 vs 13

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 5 vs 7

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 1 vs 19

<sup>4</sup> Romans 6 vs 17 & 18

- The changes flowing from the new birth may be a bit of a mystery to us (just as we may not understand the changes brought about by a natural birth).

Even though the above may be true, we must not let our lack of understanding cause us to deviate from the gospel message we have been given which is the “power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (/entrusts)”. Reason is a good and wonderful thing, but, if the Bible really is a revelation from God, it is a mistake to put our reason above God’s revelation.

I put it to you that God wants us simply to take Him at His word and look to Christ to save us – to place our confidence in Christ alone. As the song says: “What can wash away my sin? – nothing but the blood of Jesus”.

And as a man once wrote in another song:

The blood of Christ, Thy spotless Lamb,  
O God, is ALL my plea;  
Nought else could for my sin atone;  
I have no merit of my own  
Which I can bring to Thee.

No sacrifice save His who bore  
My load upon the tree,  
No other plea which lips could frame,  
No other blood, no other name,  
Accepted is by Thee.

Since Christ has entered by His blood  
The holiest on high;  
By that same hallowed, blood-stained track  
Thou welcomest the wanderer back,  
And biddest me draw nigh.

Oh, wondrous cross! Oh, precious blood!  
Oh, death by which I live!  
The sinless One, for me made sin,  
Doth now His wondrous heart within  
Eternal refuge give!

By that blest cross, that cleansing blood,  
I know His power to save;  
The merits of His work confest,  
I stand in Him completely blest,  
A conqueror o'er the grave!

## Chapter 27

### SUMMARY

1. The 'Good News' for those living after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as stated in various ways MANY times in the New Testament, is that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes (/entrusts) in Him – *Jesus, the Jew's Messiah and the Son of God* – shall not perish, but have eternal life". As Peter said to Cornelius and his friends: ". . . EVERYONE who believes (/entrusts) in Him receives forgiveness of sins."
2. We are ambassadors for Christ. Our job is to pass on the message we have been given. We must NOT change the message into something that makes more sense to us.
3. We are saved by GRACE – i.e. God's UNDESERVED kindness to us. Salvation is a GIFT, given FREELY, to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. The word translated as 'repent' (i.e. metanoeo) means a 'change of mind' – a 'change of understanding'. We need to look at the context in which the word is used to determine what people are being required to 'change their mind' about. OFTEN the word is referring to a change of mind about sin, (which would of course result in a shunning of sin). BUT, when it is used in the gospel preached after the resurrection as a condition for being saved, it is referring to a change of mind about rejecting Christ, and hence an embracing of Christ. Or it is referring to a change of mind about false gods (idols) and hence a turning from idols to the true LORD, Jesus Christ. When used as a condition for being saved, it is referring to the change in understanding a person has when they realise they are on the wrong path and need to turn to the only one who can save them – Jesus the Messiah, LORD and SAVIOUR. Thus there is no contradiction between the requirement to 'metanoeo' (repent) and the message that "EVERYONE who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins".<sup>1</sup>
5. Many of our misunderstandings of the gospel are fuelled by the wrong assumptions we bring to the table. It is men (not God) that have given the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke the title of 'Gospel'. It is a mistake to assume that these records tell a person living after the resurrection of Christ what they must do to be saved. We also need to guard against the assumption that "its all about me". Many of the things recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke were spoken to Jews, who at that time were still bound by the Mosaic Covenant. They were spoken to Jews who were living before the death and resurrection of Jesus and before the 'new covenant' was sealed by the blood of Christ. We now live in a different age and it is a mistake to assume that all of Jesus's teaching in Matthew, Mark, and Luke applies directly to us gentiles living after the resurrection.
6. In one sense we are right when we think there must be something more to it than "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved". There is something more going on when a person is truly born again. It is something more that God does. One thing He does is open the eyes of the spiritually blind so that they can see and

---

<sup>1</sup> Acts 10 vs 43

understand the way things really are. The Spirit of God is at work in bringing a person to the point where they believe in Christ and are born again. It is not just a human process. It is a mistake to leave God out of the process and just see it entirely in human terms.

7. When a person truly believes in the Lord Jesus Christ they are born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Also, at least to some degree, the love of God is “shed abroad in their hearts”. This brings about a change. The change may be spectacular, or it may be like a small seed that starts to grow and blossom. We must take care not to confuse cause and effect. The changed life is the FRUIT of being born again, not the CAUSE. The cause of being born again is faith alone in Christ alone.

## CONCLUSION

Is what I have written in these pages true?

Can it survive the test of hard scrutiny?

**“Examine everything carefully – hold fast to that which is good”<sup>1</sup>**

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5 vs 21



**“the gospel . . .  
is the power of God for salvation to  
EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES/ENTRUSTS”<sup>1</sup>**

In the words of the hymns:

**“The vilest offender, who truly believes,  
that moment from Jesus  
a pardon receives”**

**“’Tis mercy all, immense and free,  
for O my God it found out me.”**

**Praise the Saviour, O my soul,  
He has drunk the bitter gall,  
Paid your ransom, set you free,  
Praise Him, praise Him, cheerfully.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Romans 1 vs 16



# APPENDICES



## APPENDIX 1

# Verses in the New Testament Giving (or suggesting) FAITH in Christ or BELIEVING as the Condition for Humans to be Saved

### EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. This appendix is a collection of verses giving (or suggesting) faith (or believing) in Christ as the condition that humans must fulfil in order to be saved. Only those verses suggesting faith in Christ are included in the list. There are some other verses which, at least on the face of it, tend to suggest other conditions. (e.g. Mark 16 vs 16 says – “he who has believed *and has been baptized* shall be saved”). The verses that follow are however the overwhelming thrust of what the bible says. I suggest to you that we should take the main thrust as the rule, and find explanations for the exceptions. It would be very foolish to make the exceptions the rule and disregard the main thrust of what the New Testament (especially the writings of Paul, the Apostle to us Gentiles) is saying.
2. I have also included in the list verses that say that people received the Holy Spirit when they believed. The reasoning for this is as follows: When a person is saved they are born again of the Spirit of God. Thus the receiving of the Spirit goes hand in hand with a person being saved. They both happen at the same time. Thus, if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed, they were saved when they believed. (This receiving of the Holy Spirit should not be confused with the aberrations of the present day charismatic movement.)
3. In addition, I have also included in the list verses referring to the Christian as a ‘believer’, or someone who ‘believed’. I have been of two minds whether or not to include these verses. My reasoning for including them is because these passages seem to be defining the person who is saved as one who believes. These verses may not state precisely that believing is the condition for being saved. But they do at least suggest people were saved when they became ‘believers’.
4. The translation used throughout is the New American Standard Bible (NASB)

## **LIST OF VERSES**

- Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" And He said to the woman, "Your **faith** has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:48-50)
- "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not **believe** and be saved. (Luke 8:12)
- But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who **believe** in His name. (John 1:12)
- "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever **believes** in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. "He who **believes** in Him is not judged; he who does not **believe** has been judged already, because he has not **believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:14-18)
- "He who **believes** in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36)
- "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and **believes** Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24)
- "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and **believes** in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:40)
- Truly, truly, I say to you, he who **believes** has eternal life. (John 6:47)
- Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you **believe** that I am He, you will die in your sins." (John 8:24)
- Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who **believes** in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and **believes** in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)
- I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who **believes** in Me will not remain in darkness. (John 12:46)

- Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you **believed**? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet **believed**." Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing** you may have life in His name. (John 20:29-31)
- But many of those who had heard the message **believed**; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. (Acts 4:4)
- And the congregation of those who **believed** were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. (Acts 4:32)
- But when they **believed** Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. (Acts 8:12)
- [And Philip said, "If you **believe** with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I **believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] (Acts 8:37 – *Apparently most ancient manuscripts do not contain this verse*)
- It became known all over Joppa, and many **believed** in the Lord. (Acts 9:42)
- "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who **believes** in Him receives forgiveness of sins." (Acts 10:43)
- All the circumcised **believers** who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. (Acts 10:45)
- "Therefore if God gave to them the same gift (i.e. the Holy Spirit) as He gave to us also after **believing** in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11:17)
- And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who **believed** turned to the Lord. (Acts 11:21)
- "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who **believes** is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. (Acts 13:38-39)
- When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life **believed**. (Acts 13:48)

- In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people **believed**, both of Jews and of Greeks. (Acts 14:1)
- When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had **believed**. (Acts 14:23)
- When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of **faith** to the Gentiles. (Acts 14:27)
- After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and **believe**. "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by **faith**. (Acts 15:7-9)
- and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "**Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:30-31)
- And some of them were **persuaded** and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. (Acts 17:4)
- Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Therefore many of them **believed**, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. (Acts 17:11-12)
- Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, **believed** in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were **believing** and being baptized. (Acts 18:8)
- And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had **believed** through grace. (Acts 18:27)
- solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and **faith** in our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:21)



- "But concerning the Gentiles who have **believed**, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication." (Acts 21:25)
- to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by **faith** in Me.' (Acts 26:18)
- For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who **believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from **faith** to **faith**; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY **FAITH**." (Romans 1:16-17)
- even the righteousness of God through **faith** in Jesus Christ for all those who **believe**; for there is no distinction; or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through **faith** This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has **faith** in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of **faith**. For we maintain that a man is justified by **faith** apart from works of the Law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by **faith** and the uncircumcised through **faith** is one. (Romans 3:22-30)
- For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM **BELIEVED** GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favour, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but **believes** in Him who justifies the ungodly, his **faith** is credited as righteousness. (Romans 4:3-5)
- Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "**FAITH** WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the **faith** which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who **believe** without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the **faith** of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of **faith**. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, **faith** is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation. For this reason it is by **faith**, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the **faith** of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (Romans 4:9-16)

- Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who **believe** in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, (Romans 4:22-24)
- Therefore, having been justified by **faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom also we have obtained our introduction by **faith** into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-2)
- What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by **faith**; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by **faith**, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written, BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO **BELIEVES** IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (Romans 9:30-33)
- For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who **believes**. For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on **faith** speaks as follows: "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"--that is, the word of **faith** which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe** in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person **believes**, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER **BELIEVES** IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." How then will they call on Him in whom they have not **believed**? How will they **believe** in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? (Romans 10:4-14)
- Quite right, they were broken off for their **unbelief**, but you stand by your **faith**. Do not be conceited, but fear; (Romans 11:20)
- For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who **believe**. (1 Corinthians 1:21)
- And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the **unbelieving** so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

- nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through **faith** in Christ Jesus, even we have **believed** in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by **faith** in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. (Galatians 2:16)
- This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with **faith**? (Galatians 3:2)
- So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with **faith**? Even so Abraham **BELIEVED** GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of **faith** who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by **faith**, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." So then those who are of **faith** are blessed with Abraham, the **believer**. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY **FAITH**." However, the Law is not of **faith**; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"-- in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through **faith**. (Galatians 3:5-14)
- But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by **faith** in Jesus Christ might be given to those who **believe**. But before **faith** came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the **faith** which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by **faith**. But now that **faith** has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through **faith** in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:22-26)
- In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also **believed**, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, (Ephesians 1:13)
- and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who **believe**. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might (Ephesians 1:19)
- For by grace you have been saved through **faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through **faith** in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of **faith** (Philippians 3:9)

- so that you became an example to all the **believers** in Macedonia and in Achaia. (1 Thessalonians 1:7)
- You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you **believers**; (1 Thessalonians 2:10)
- when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marvelled at among all who have **believed** – for our testimony to you was **believed**. (2 Thessalonians 1:10)
- in order that they all may be judged who did not **believe** the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. (2 Thessalonians 2:12)
- But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and **faith** in the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13)
- Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would **believe** in Him for eternal life. (1 Timothy 1:16)
- men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who **believe** and know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:3)
- For it is for this we labour and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of **believers**. (1 Timothy 4:10)
- and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through **faith** which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:15)
- For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by **faith** in those who heard. For we who have **believed** enter that rest, just as He has said, "AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. (Hebrews 4:2-3)
- But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have **faith** to the preserving of the soul. (Hebrews 10:39)

- For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are **believers** in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Peter 1:20-21)
- For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO **BELIEVES** IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." This precious value, then, is for you who **believe**; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," (1 Peter 2:6-7)
- Whoever **believes** that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. (1 John 5:1)
- The one who **believes** in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not **believe** God has made Him a liar, because he has not **believed** in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who **believe** in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:10-13)



## APPENDIX 2

### **A Complete List Of Every Usage Of The Words: Metanoeo (Repent), Metanoia (Repentance) & Ametanoetos (Unrepentant) In the New Testament**

Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."  
Matthew 3 vs 1-2

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with **repentance**; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. "As for me, I baptize you with water for **repentance**, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.  
Matthew 3 vs 7-11

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."  
Matthew 4 vs 17

But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. "But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners (*to repentance*)." (The most authentic manuscripts omit the word repentance – Vine pg 280)  
Matthew 9 vs 13

Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not **repent**. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have **repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes.  
Matthew 11 vs 20-21

The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they **repented** at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.  
Matthew 12 vs 41

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of **repentance** for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 1 vs 4

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1 vs 14-15)

When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners *(to repentance)*." (The most authentic manuscripts omit the word repentance – Vine pg 280)

Mark 2 vs 16-17

They (i.e. the 12 disciples) went out and preached that men should **repent**.

Mark 6 vs 12

And he (i.e. John the Baptist) came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of **repentance** for the forgiveness of sins;

Luke 3 vs 3

So he (i.e. John the Baptist) began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with **repentance**, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

Luke 3 vs 7-8

And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to **repentance**."

Luke 5 vs 31-32

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have **repented** long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

Luke 10 vs 13

"The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they **repented** at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Luke 11 vs 32



Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? "I tell you, no, but unless you **repent**, you will all likewise perish. "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? "I tell you, no, but unless you **repent**, you will all likewise perish."

Luke 13 vs 1-5

"I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who **repents** than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no **repentance**. "Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? "When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!' "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who **repents**."

Luke 15 vs 7-10

"Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he **repents**, forgive him. "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I **repent**,' forgive him."

Luke 17 vs 3-4

Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that **repentance** for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem".

Luke 24 vs 45-47

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "**Repent**, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2 vs 37-38

"Therefore **repent** and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,

Acts 3 vs 19-20

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

Acts 5 vs 29-31

"Therefore **repent** of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you." (Peter speaking to Simon the magician, who believed, but then tried to buy the power to bestow the Holy Spirit)

Acts 8 vs 22

When they heard this, (i.e. when Peter had explained to the Jewish believers how he had gone to the house of Cornelius the centurion and how the Holy Spirit had fallen upon the gentiles) they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the **repentance** that leads to life."

Acts 11 vs 18

From the descendants of this man, (i.e. David) according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of **repentance** to all the people of Israel.

Acts 13 vs 23-24 (Paul preaching in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch)

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should **repent**, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Acts 17 vs 30-31 (Paul preaching to the Athenians)

Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of **repentance**, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 19 vs 4-5

how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of **repentance** toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20 vs 20-21 (Paul speaking to the elders from Ephesus)

"So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should **repent** and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to **repentance**.

Acts 26 vs 19-20 (Paul speaking to Agrippa)

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to **repentance**? But because of your stubbornness and **unrepentant** heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

Romans 2 vs 4-5

For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it--for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while-- now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of **repentance**; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a

**repentance** without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

2 Corinthians 7 vs 8-10

I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not **repented** of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.

2 Corinthians 12 vs 21

The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them **repentance** leading to the knowledge of the truth,

2 Timothy 2 vs 24-25

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of **repentance** from dead works and of faith toward God  
Hebrews 6 vs 1

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to **repentance**, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Hebrews 6 vs 4-6

that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for **repentance**, though he sought for it with tears.  
Hebrews 12 vs 16-17

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to **repentance**.

2 Peter 3 vs 9

'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and **repent** and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you **repent**.

Revelation 2 vs 5 (letter to Ephesus)

'Therefore **repent**; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

Revelation 2 vs 16 (letter to Pergamos)

I gave her time to **repent**, and she does not want to **repent** of her immorality. 'Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they **repent** of her deeds.

Revelation 2 vs 21-22 (letter to Thyatira)

'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

Revelation 3 vs 3 (letter to Sardis)

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

Revelation 3 vs 19 (letter to Laodicea)

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

Revelation 9 vs 20-21

Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory. Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

Revelation 16 vs 9-11

## APPENDIX 3 - THE BOOK OF ACTS – WHAT THEY PREACHED & WHAT THEY DID TO BE SAVED

PREACHER	HEARERS	CITY	EVENT	Chpt & Vs	WHAT MUST THEY DO?
Peter	"Men of Israel"	Jerusalem	Pentecost	2 vs 38	" <b><u>Repent</u></b> , and each of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. . ."
Peter	"Men of Israel"	Jerusalem	Healing of lame man	3 vs 19 4 vs 4	"Therefore <b><u>repent and return</u></b> , so that your sins may be wiped away, . . ." "But many of those who had heard the message <b><u>believed</u></b> ; ."
Peter & the Apostles	The Jewish Sanhedrin	Jerusalem	When apostles were questioned by the High Priest	5 vs 31	"He (i.e. Jesus) is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Saviour to grant <b><u>repentance</u></b> to Israel and the forgiveness of sins."
Philip	Samaritans	Samaria	The gospel comes to Samaria	8 vs 12	"But when they <b><u>believed</u></b> Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptised, men and women alike."
Philip	Ethiopian eunuch	Road to Gaza	Just prior to Ethiopian's baptism	8 vs 36-37 (not in most manuscripts)	". . . What prevents me from being baptised?" And Philip said, "If you <b><u>believe</u></b> with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I <b><u>believe</u></b> that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
Peter	Cornelius and his relatives & close friends (gentiles)	Caesarea	First conversion of Gentiles	10 vs 43	". . . everyone who <b><u>believes</u></b> in Him receives forgiveness of sins."
Peter	Jewish believers	Jerusalem	Reporting on the conversion of Cornelius and the other gentiles	11 vs 17-18	"Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after <b><u>believing</u></b> in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" When they heard this they quieted down and glorified God saying, "Well then, God has granted Gentiles also the <b><u>repentance</u></b> that leads to life."
Unnamed christians	Gentiles (greeks)	Antioch	Christians scattered by persecution go to Antioch	11 vs 21	"And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who <b><u>believed</u></b> turned to the Lord"
Paul	Jews and "God fearing proselytes"	Pisidian Antioch	Paul asked to speak in the synagogue	13 vs 39, 40	"through Him everyone who <b><u>believes</u></b> is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. Therefore take heed, . . ."
Paul & Barnabus	"nearly the whole city" – (mainly Gentiles)	Pisidian Antioch	The Jews opposed Paul	13 vs 48	"as many as had been appointed to eternal life <b><u>believed</u></b> ."
Paul & Barnabus	Jews & Greeks	Iconium	Speaking in the synagogue	14 vs 1	"a large number of the people <b><u>believed</u></b> , both of Jews and of Greeks"
Peter	The apostles and elders	Jerusalem	Meeting called to decide whether gentiles need to be circumcised	15 vs 7-9	". Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and <b><u>believe</u></b> . And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by <b><u>faith</u></b> ." PTO

Paul & Silas	Philippian Jailor	Philippi	Earthquake in the prison	16 vs 31	" <b><u>Believe</u></b> in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . . "
Paul	Jews & God-fearing Greeks	Thessalonica	Speaking in the synagogue	17 vs 4	"And some of them were <b><u>persuaded</u></b> (the word being translated here and in Acts 28 vs 24 below is 'peitho' which means to cause belief in a thing) and joined Paul & Silas
Paul & Silas	Jews and gentiles	Berea	Speaking in the synagogue & perhaps elsewhere	17 vs 12	"Therefore many of them <b><u>believed</u></b> , along with a number of prominent Greek women and men."
Paul	Greeks	Athens	To the Areopagus	17 vs 30 & vs 34	"God is now declaring that to men that all people everywhere should <b><u>repent</u></b> " "But some men joined him and <b><u>believed</u></b> ."
Paul	Jews and others	Corinth		18 vs 8	Crispus the leader of the synagogue, <b><u>believed</u></b> in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were <b><u>believing</u></b> and being baptised
Paul	"some disciples"	Ephesus	Paul comes across people who had received Apollos's teaching before Apollos was acquainted with the full gospel	19 vs 2-4	"He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you <b><u>believed</u></b> ?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptised?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptised with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to <b><u>believe</u></b> in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."
Paul	The elders of the church at Ephesus	Miletus	Speaking to the Ephesus elders before going to Jerusalem	20 vs 20-21	"how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of <b><u>repentance</u></b> towards God and <b><u>faith</u></b> in our Lord Jesus Christ"
Paul	Agrippa, Bernice with commanders and prominent men of the city	Caesarea	Paul's defence before Agrippa	26 vs 19-20	"So King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea and even to the Gentiles, that they should <b><u>repent</u></b> and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance."
Paul	The leading men of the Jews	Rome	A meeting called by Paul	28 vs 23-24	". . . they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus from both the Law . . . and the Prophets . . . Some were being <b><u>persuaded</u></b> by the things spoken, but others would not <b><u>believe</u></b> ."

*Quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB)*

QUESTION: Throughout the book of Acts, people are consistently being told to "believe" (or "repent") to receive forgiveness of sins. They were saved when they "believed". My question is: Why aren't we consistently saying the same thing as they did? Why do we very often tell people to "ask the Lord Jesus into your heart" or some other thing in order to be saved? Wouldn't we be doing better if we preached the gospel the same way the apostles did?

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **WHERE IN THE BIBLE IS THE GOSPEL FOUND?**

#### **1 THE PERSON OF THE GOSPEL**

Where in the Bible is the gospel found?

The answer of course is that the gospel is found in the whole bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Expressed in its most simple form, the good news – or the gospel – is none other than a Person, Jesus Christ Himself, and the whole of the Bible speaks of Him. In Genesis we have pictures and allusions to Him and His work. He is at the centre of the book of Revelation. And all the books between speak of Him. Thus the gospel in its most simple form is found throughout the Bible.

#### **2 THE FACTS OF THE GOSPEL**

Where in the Bible are the facts of the 'Good News' found?

The gospel is Christ Himself, and His saving work was done when He, the Almighty God, came to earth as a baby, lived amongst us as a man (whilst still retaining His Deity), died for our sins and rose again. Only thus could He save humanity.

The FACTS of this most stupendous of events – the 'good news' of how Christ came, gave himself as an offering for sin, and rose again – are of course most fully recorded in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

#### **3 THE TERMS OF THE GOSPEL**

Where in the Bible are the terms of the 'Good News' found?

Where does the Bible spell out the TERMS upon which a person, living after the death and resurrection of Christ, can come into the blessings of what Christ achieved in His death and resurrection? Or, put another way, where do we find the answer the question "What must I (a person living after the resurrection) do to be saved from my sins?"

It is my conviction that the answer to this question is most fully given firstly in the book of Romans but also in the book commonly known as 'John's Gospel'.

##### **3.1 Does the Name of a Book Matter?**

The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are commonly known as: 'The Gospel of Matthew', 'The Gospel of Mark'. 'The Gospel of Luke' and 'The Gospel of John', but it is my understanding that these are names that MEN have given the above records. It is my

conviction that these man-given names have not been particularly helpful to people who are seeking the answer to the question “What must I, a person living after the cross, do to be saved?” In fact, I think that these names have perhaps tended to point people in slightly the wrong direction.

When a person seeks the answer to the question “What must I do to be saved?” the natural tendency is to seek the answer in any one of the ‘Gospels’. The ‘Gospels’ are good for presenting the Person of Christ, and the FACTS of what he did. They thus are an exceedingly good start. The specific answer to the question “What must I do to be saved?” is however better spelt out in a book that does not have the word ‘gospel’ in its title, namely the book of Romans, as well as in the book known as John’s Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

The names: ‘The Gospel of Matthew’, ‘The Gospel of Mark’, ‘The Gospel of Luke’ and ‘The Gospel of John’ are man made. The Nestle Greek New Testament gives the titles in the original language simply as “Kata Mathaion” (i.e. ‘According to Matthew’), “Kata Markon” (“According to Mark”) etc. As I understand it, the word ‘Gospel’ is not to be found in an original (God-given) title. If men had given these records other titles, perhaps we would have been pointed in a slightly different direction. How would our understanding be different if Matthew’s book had been given the name “How the Jewish Nation rejected its King”? Would we have been pointed in a different direction if the book of ‘Romans’ had been titled “The Gospel Set Out Plainly”?

I am not for one moment suggesting that the books be given such names. (I think that we should simply call them ‘Matthew’, ‘Mark’, ‘Luke’, ‘John’ and ‘Romans’ – i.e. we shouldn’t add to the name. We should call the books more or less what we find in the original manuscripts.) But I am trying to point out that the name given to a book tends to point us in a certain direction – it tends to pre-condition us to the meaning and contents of the book. Without us realising it, the title can colour our whole understanding of the book. Thus we need to take care with man-given names to parts of God’s word. In particular, we need to guard against the presupposition that the terms of the gospel must be best found in any of the books of the bible that have the word ‘Gospel’ in their title.

### **3.2 Where are the TERMS of the ‘Good News’ for Us Today Best Found?**

The crux comes when we seek to understand the TERMS on which God now offers the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection to us Gentile sinners. It is my conviction that the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke do not present these terms well. As I understand it, these books are records of what happened – of what Jesus said and did. As I have tried to point out in another paper titled ‘Understanding the Bible’<sup>2</sup>, Christ came not only to die on the cross for all people, but also to restore the nation of Israel, and this complicates things somewhat. The problem that arises is as follows: – If terms are given in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke, are they the terms offered to today’s individual, non-Jewish sinner, living after the cross, to be forgiven? Or are they the terms being offered to the nation of Israel for its restoration and the setting up of God’s kingdom on earth? Are the terms for these two different matters the same? These are the questions we must face as we read these books. John’s record, (which was apparently written much later than Matthew, Mark and Luke) does not seem to contain this difficulty.

---

<sup>1</sup> If we are forced to choose only one book to present the whole gospel, I think that the ‘Gospel’ of John is the best single book to be given to a person who is seeking peace with God. I say this because John’s book covers all the bases. It presents the person of Christ. It gives the facts of the gospel, and it also gives the terms – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”.

<sup>2</sup> Attached as Appendix 6



The records of Matthew, Mark and Luke are full of valuable information and wonderful teaching from the mouth of Christ Himself. But, as I understand it, these three records do not focus on giving today's sinners the answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?". John's record however does. In John chapter 20 vs 31 John tells us that his book was "written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (i.e. Messiah), the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."

But, lest there be any doubt as to the terms upon which God is offering forgiveness to us Gentiles, God has had His 'Apostle to the Gentiles', Paul, set out the terms very clearly, very logically, and very unambiguously in that great treatise on the whole of the 'good news', the Book of Romans.

## **SUMMARY**

1. The whole of the Bible presents the PERSON of the gospel – Jesus Christ.
2. The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John present well the FACTS of the gospel.
3. The TERMS for the benefits of the gospel coming to today's sinner are best (but by no means exclusively) found in the book of Romans, and in the record of John.



## APPENDIX 5

### SOME DIFFICULT VERSES

#### 1 JOHN 3 vs 36 (SECOND HALF OF VERSE)

In the NASB translation the verse reads:

**"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."**

#### Difficulty

The difficulty is that the second half of this verse seems to be saying that escaping the wrath of God is conditional upon our obedience to Christ, rather than upon faith in Christ. This also seems to contradict the first half of the verse which states bluntly *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life"*.

Alternatively, is the verse saying that believing is the same as obeying? – something I argued against in section 6.6 of chapter 6 of the paper. (As I see it, obedience is the FRUIT of believing. It is not the same as believing.)

#### Discussion

The first thing to note is that other versions translate the second half of the verse differently. For example:

- The NIV translates the second half of the verse as: "whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him".
- The AV translates the second half of the verse as: "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him".

Clearly the Greek word translated as "does not obey" or "rejects" or "believeth not" needs to be looked at fairly carefully.

The Greek word being translated is '**apeitho**'. It is the opposite/inverse of '**peitho**'

According to W. E. Vine,

- '**peitho**' means "to persuade", to win over. He says: "**peitho** and **pisteuo** 'to trust' are closely related etymologically (i.e. in their source and development as words); the difference in meaning is that the former implies the obedience that is produced by the latter". He also says: "The obedience suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion."
- '**apeitho**' means "to refuse to be persuaded, to refuse belief, to be disobedient".

### Usage of '**peitho**' in the New Testament

'Peitho' is used 50 times in the Greek New Testament, and almost all of these usages are not in relation to salvation. (Exceptions would be Acts 17 vs 4, Acts 28 vs 24).

'Peitho' is usually translated as 'persuade' or 'trust' or 'confidence'. But, in the Authorised Version, it is also translated as 'obey' seven times. (Acts 5 vs 36 & 37, Rom 2 vs 8, Gal 3 vs 1, Gal 5 vs 7, Heb 13 vs 17 & James 3 vs 3) Of these 7 cases the NASB only translates 'peitho' as 'obey' 4 times.)

### Usage of '**apeitho**' in the New Testament

'Apeitho' is used 16 times in the Greek New Testament.

- In the NASB translation, 'apeitho' is always translated as 'disobedient' EXCEPT for 1 Peter 2 vs 7 where it is translated as 'do not believe'.
- In the NIV version, 'apeitho' is 5 times translated as 'unbelieving' or 'refused to believe', 2 times translated as 'rejects', and 6 times translated as 'disobedient'.
- In the Authorized Version, 'apeitho' is 10 times translated as 'unbelieving' or 'believeth not', and 7 times translated as 'disobedient'.

I am no Greek scholar, but from the research I have done (as outlined above), the root meaning of the word seems to be that of 'being persuaded' (or 'not being persuaded' in the case of its inverse 'apeitho').

If someone persuades us to do something, we will be obedient to what they want us to do. Thus it is not surprising that the idea of being obedient can also be attached to the word (in at least some cases). A 'persuaded' person is a tractable, easily led, obedient even, person.

### **Solution**

The first part of the verse we are looking at (John 3 vs 36) makes it clear that "He who believes (/entrusts) in the Son has eternal life". I think the best explanation for the second part of the verse is that it is saying that those who are not persuaded by the Son of God – i.e. those that reject the Son (as translated by the NIV) – will not see (eternal) life, but rather the wrath of God rests over them.

I hesitate to criticize the NASB translation because I think that overall it is the best translation. (Also the scholars who made it obviously have a MUCH greater understanding of Greek than I do.) Nevertheless it seems to me that, for this verse, the NIV has rendered a better translation than the NASB.

Who is it that will not see eternal life? I put it to you that it is those who are not persuaded – those that do believe/entrust in the Son of God – those that reject the Son. If this is the correct understanding of the verse, then there is no contradiction between the second half of the verse and the first half. Also, if this is the correct understanding, the whole of the verse is compatible with the many other verses given in Appendix 1 to this paper, and with the main thrust of this paper.

## **Appendix 6**

# **UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE**

## **1 CONTENTS**

This paper is written with a typical Christian in mind as the reader. It seeks to:

1. Highlight a basic mistake many Christians are making when they read the Bible, and
2. Highlight a perspective of God's dealings as recorded in the bible, so that Christians can understand the Bible better.

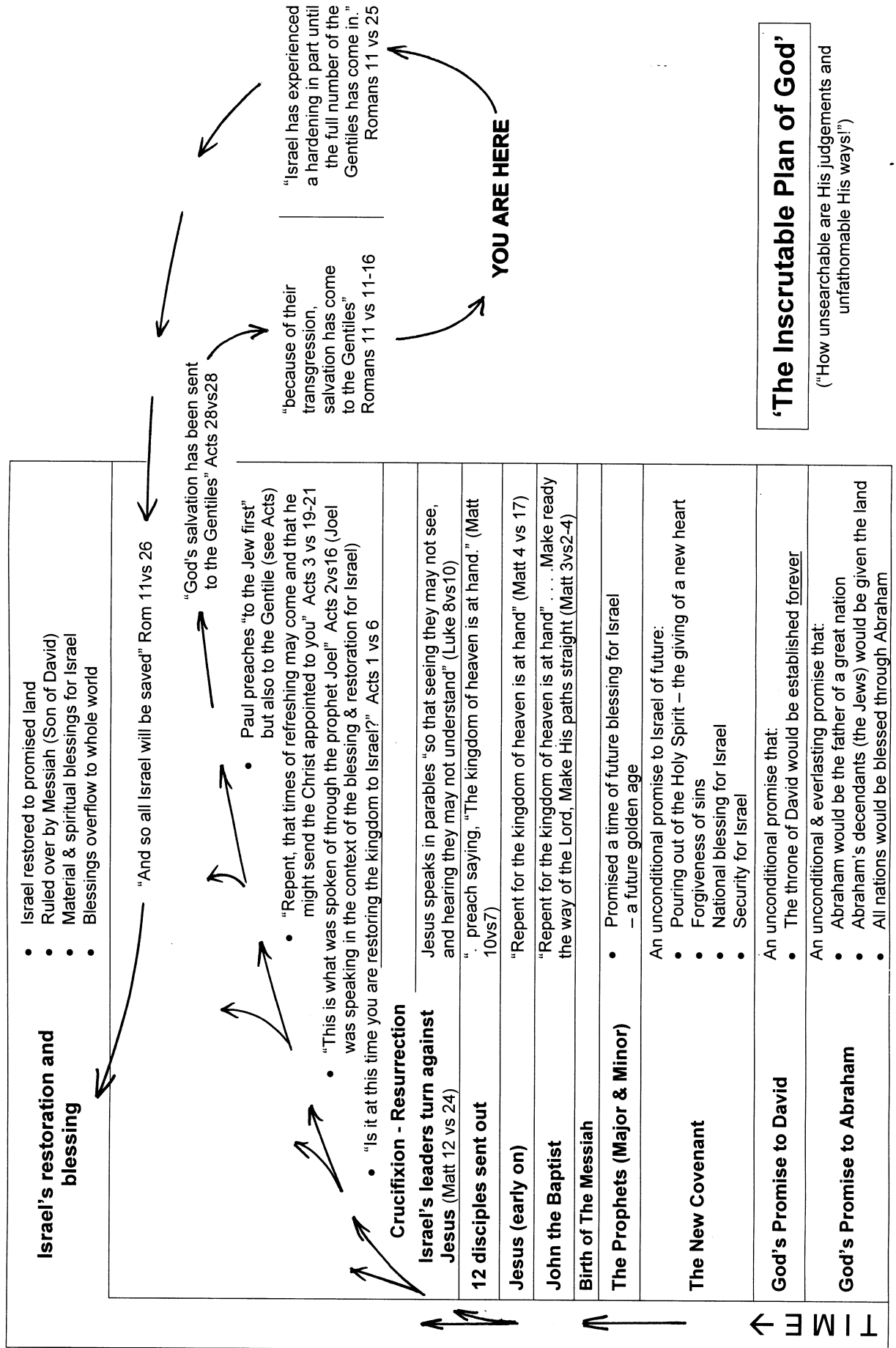
The contents and structure of this paper are as follows:

- 1 Contents**
- 2 Summary Chart**
- 3 A Basic Mistake Most Christians are Making**
- 4 A Perspective on Old Testament History**
  - 4.1 God's Promise to Abraham (the Abrahamic Covenant)
  - 4.2 God's Promise to David
  - 4.3 The New Covenant
  - 4.4 Promises Made through the Prophets
  - 4.5 Summary of Old Testament Promises
- 5 Then Jesus Came**
  - 5.1 Why Did Jesus Come – Isaiah's Perspective
  - 5.2 John the Baptist's Preaching
  - 5.3 The Early Preaching of Jesus and the Twelve Disciples
  - 5.4 What is Meant by the "Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"
  - 5.5 Israel's Leaders Turn Against their Messiah
  - 5.6 The Jewish Nation's King is Crucified
- 6 From Jerusalem to Rome - The Transition Recorded in Acts**
  - 6.1 The Period Between Christ's Death and His Ascension
  - 6.2 Pentecost and Peter's First Message to the Jewish People
  - 6.3 The Second Recorded Message of Peter
  - 6.4 The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles
  - 6.5 The Gospel in Rome
- 7 God's Explanation of What Has Happened to the Jewish People**
- 8 Concluding and Balancing Comments**

## **2 SUMMARY CHART**

On the following page I have attempted to summarise the main idea of this paper in the form of a chart.

1. The chart starts at the bottom of the page with God's promises to Israel.
2. Time proceeds up the page towards the fulfilment of these promises in the restoration and blessing of Israel.
3. Half way up the page the process seems, from one perspective, to go off the rails. The Jewish leaders reject their Saviour and King and salvation goes to the Gentiles.
4. Finally, when the full number of Gentiles has been saved, the Jewish people will recognise their folly and turn to their Messiah. Then the time of Israel's restoration and blessing that was promised by God will finally come. From Jerusalem, the blessing will overflow to the whole world.



### **3 A BASIC MISTAKE MOST CHRISTIANS ARE MAKING**

It is my conviction that most Christians are making a fundamental mistake when it comes to understanding the bible.

The mistake is to, unwittingly, put oneself (a 21<sup>st</sup> century non-Jewish Christian) at the centre of things rather than the Jewish people.

There is a very natural human tendency for each of us to see ourselves at the centre of things, but more often than not such a perspective is wrong.

- As a little baby, the whole world completely revolves around us.
- When my children were young, they saw our family at the centre of Tauranga, Tauranga at the centre of New Zealand, and New Zealand at the centre of the world.
- It was quite natural for the Europeans of 600 years ago to see the earth as the centre of the universe with the stars and the sun revolving around the earth.
- It was quite natural for the Catholic church of 1000yrs ago to see themselves at the centre of the bible, and it was quite natural for Martin Luther and the reformers of 400+ years ago to continue with the same perspective.
- It is quite natural for us, when we read our bibles to interpret it completely in terms of ourselves, but in so doing we can be making a fundamental mistake.

The whole of the bible is good for our instruction and correction – we should read the whole bible and learn from everything that is written in it. But the whole of the bible is not addressed directly to us. We gentile Christians, living in this present age, are not at the centre of the bible.

As we know, Christ is at the centre of the bible, and indeed everything else as well. Its all about HIM. As Romans 11 vs 36 says: “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” Ever since Abraham, His plan has been to work out a large part of His purposes on earth through the Jewish people. Next to Christ, the Jewish people are at the heart of the ‘plot’. We, non-Jewish Christians, are not the main plot of the Bible. We are a sub-plot. We are not the trunk or even a natural branch of the tree. As Romans tells us we are a wild olive branch that has been grafted into the tree. We tend to see ourselves as being on the Main Highway. Perhaps it would be nearer to the truth to regard ourselves as being on a detour. (Although of course, in the inscrutable plan of God, He knew all along that this ‘detour’ would be the route that had to be taken.)

We can understand how Christendom came to think that, following the crucifixion, God had replaced His chosen people, the Jews, with us Christians, and that everything God had promised to the Jews now applied to the Christians. But they were wrong, and frankly the mistake is inexcusable! How can we be so sure they were wrong? Because, many of the promises that God made to the Jewish people were unconditional and eternal, and God isn't a liar. If we read what God says to the Jewish people in the Old Testament, and believe that God will stand true to his word, we cannot escape the conclusion that God has yet to fulfil many of the promises he made to the Jewish people. As Paul says in Romans ch 11 vs 29 when speaking about the place of the Jewish People: “The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” God isn't a liar and He is not deceitful. He will completely and utterly fulfil His promises.

You have heard of people wearing ‘rose coloured spectacles’, so that everything they see is slightly distorted. It has rosy tint to it. Well it is my conviction that when most Christians read their Bibles they are wearing ‘Christian tinted spectacles’. They are

interpreting everything through a lens which distorts it. They are not seeing it as it really is. They put a subconscious skew on the words God has written. They read the words, but what they read only enters their mind through a lens which distorts it slightly. The effect is that sometimes they fail to understand what God has clearly stated.

What we need to do as we listen to the very words of God is make sure that we are not automatically and unconsciously interpreting them in terms of ourselves and the age we now live in. We need to take off any spectacles we may be wearing and try and see what God is actually saying and who he is saying it to. And we cannot escape the fact that much of what he was saying in the Old Testament was addressed to the Jewish people. We can learn from what he said, but much of it isn't directly addressed to us and it is a mistake to read it as such.

Let me use an example to make myself as clear as I can.

One day, Mr Average Christian reads the following passage from the bible:

*"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." (Gen 22 vs 2)*

Fortunately, most Christians (even those with a son called Isaac) when they read the passage above realise that God is telling Abraham only (not them) to sacrifice his son. They do not think God is speaking directly to them in this passage.

Mr Average Christian then reads another passage in the Old Testament such as:

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29 vs 11)*

Unfortunately, without thinking, the average Christian will think God is speaking directly to him in the second passage.

Why the difference? In both passages the context makes it clear who God is talking to. In the first God is speaking to Abraham, and in the second God is speaking to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. (Jeremiah 29 vs 4, a few verses before the second verse quoted above says: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon . . . ."). The passage then continues on to the verse quoted above.)

My point is this: All of the Bible is good for our instruction and learning, but many of the words written in it, and the promises made, are not directly addressed to us. In particular, much of the Old Testament is addressed to the Jewish nation, rather than gentile Christians. We should learn from what is said. (For example, in the passage from Jeremiah quoted above, we learn something of the nature and heart of God – how he plans good for those that belong to him, even for those he is chastening. We can compare Jeremiah's words to passages in the New Testament that are addressed to Christians, see the similarity, and be encouraged and confirmed in our trust in a loving God.) But we should always take care, especially when reading the Old Testament, to note who the words are directly addressed to.

So now I am going to ask you to take off any spectacles you may have on and stand back with me and look at the big picture. Let's look at some key aspects of God's dealing with the people of Israel.



## **4 A PERSPECTIVE OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY**

For the first 2000 years or more of human history there was no Jewish race. Adam wasn't Jewish, nor was Noah. This first period of history only occupies the first 12 chapters of the book of Genesis. Then, about 2000 years before Christ, God called Abraham and decided to set up through him a nation – the Jewish people. Ultimately, all peoples on earth were to be blessed through the Jewish race.

The major aspects of Old Testament History that I want to highlight to you are God's unconditional promises:

1. to Abraham,
2. to David,
3. to the Jewish people in the 'new covenant', and
4. to the Jewish people in the writings of the Old Testament prophets.

### **4.1 God's Promise to Abraham (the Abrahamic Covenant)**

God made a covenant with Abraham.

This covenant (or promise) is recorded and repeated several times in the book of Genesis, namely Genesis 12 vs 1-7, Genesis 13 vs 14-17, Genesis 15 vs 4-21, Genesis 17 vs 1-8 and Genesis 22 vs 15-18. Few things in the bible are more explicit than this covenant that God made with Abraham.

The major provisions of God's promise to Abraham were:

1. Abraham was himself to be blessed and honoured.
2. Abraham was to be the father of a great and numerous nation.
3. Abraham and his descendants were given everlasting title to a large piece of land in the Middle East.
4. All nations of the earth will be blessed through Abraham.

All the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant were repeated to his son Isaac in Genesis 26 vs 2-5. In Genesis 28 vs 13-15 provisions 2, 3 and 4 above are to a degree repeated to his grandson Jacob. Thus the line of descendants by which the covenant is to be fulfilled passes through Abraham to Isaac and then from Isaac to Jacob. As you know, Jacob was the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. God's promise to Abraham is thus to be fulfilled through the Jewish people. But, as Romans ch 9 vs 6-13 points out, it is only a portion of the Jewish people that will inherit the promise.

Just as only one of Abraham's sons inherited the blessing, and just as only one of Isaac's sons inherited the blessing, so also it is only a portion of the sons of Jacob that are the Israel that will finally inherit the blessing.<sup>3</sup> In the present time, it is only a small portion of the Jewish people who find their Messiah. In the future, it will only be a 'remnant' – that small part of the nation that remains after the coming "time of Jacob's trouble" – that will turn to their Messiah and enter the long promised kingdom of God.

Key features of the Abrahamic Covenant were as follows:

---

<sup>3</sup> Romans chapter 9 is often misinterpreted. I put it to you that the passage is NOT saying that gentiles believers have now become the true Israel of God. Rather I put it to you that the passage is saying that only a portion of those who are genetically Jewish will be the true spiritual Israel that will inherit the promised blessing.

1. The covenant was with Abraham and his descendants. (Gen13vs15 & Gen17vs7)
2. The covenant was an everlasting covenant (Gen 13 vs 15 & Gen 17 vs 7&19)
3. The covenant was unconditional. (Gen 15 vs 9-21)

It is important to note that God's promise to Abraham was both unconditional & everlasting. In Genesis 17 vs 7-8 God promises Abraham: **"I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."** The promise was established with Abraham's son Isaac as an "everlasting covenant". In Genesis 17 vs 19 God says to Abraham: **". . . Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him."**

(This Abrahamic covenant should not be confused with the Mosaic Covenant that God made with the People of Israel at Mount Sinai in the days of Moses. This Mosaic Covenant was conditional – if the Jewish nation obeyed God they would be blessed and if they disobeyed they would be cursed.)

#### **4.2 God's Promise to David**

God made a covenant with King David. Amongst other things he promised him that David's house, kingdom and throne would be established forever. This covenant is recorded in 2 Samuel 7 vs 5-16. Again this promise was unconditional. There was nothing David had to do to make it come true.

#### **4.3 The New Covenant**

In Jeremiah ch 31 vs 31-34 God says he will make what he called a "new covenant" with the Jewish people. The passage reads:

<sup>31</sup> "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,<sup>32</sup> not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord.

<sup>33</sup> "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>34</sup> They will not teach again, each man his neighbour and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

The main provisions of the "New Covenant" as outlined in the passage above and elsewhere are:

- He would give the people of Israel a new heart - the Holy Spirit would be poured out on them.
- He would forgive Israel's sins.
- There would be national blessing for Israel.
- There would be security for Israel.

Although present day Christians seem to be participating in some of the spiritual blessings of this “new covenant”, in Jeremiah ch 31 God says clearly that this new covenant will be “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” – i.e. with the Jews.

Again the promise was unconditional.

It is also worth noting that the passage quoted above is immediately followed by verses 35 to 37. In these verses God continues by saying:

<sup>35</sup> Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the Lord of hosts is His name:

<sup>36</sup> “If this fixed order departs from before Me,” declares the Lord, “Then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.”

<sup>37</sup> Thus says the Lord, “If the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,” declares the Lord.

In the above passage (Jeremiah ch 31 vs 35-37), God promises very strongly that as long as heaven and earth exist, the Jewish people would never cease to be a nation before Him and that he would never cast them all off.

In the light of these verses, can anyone doubt that God has entered into an everlasting covenant with the Jewish people and that this covenant still stands today?

#### **4.4 Promises Made through the Prophets**

Through many of the Old Testament prophets God promised a future time of great blessing for the nation of Israel. In that time they would be restored to the land promised to Abraham and live in peace, security and abundance. The bible describes this time in many ways. For example Joel said “And it will come about in that that day that the mountains will drip with sweet wine and the hills will flow with milk.” (Joel 3 vs 18) In this paper I will often refer to this time as Israel’s future ‘golden age’. (I am not a theologian but it is my impression that many of these promises can be considered to be part of the “new covenant” outlined previously.)

#### **4.5 Summary of Old Testament Promises**

Putting the above pieces together a picture emerges of what God has unconditionally promised Israel in the Old Testament.

1. The Jewish people would become a great and numerous nation. (This has already happened, and, against the odds and in spite of on-going opposition, they have continued to survive as a people. Satan may seek to destroy them but God will ensure that they survive so that his promises can be fulfilled.)
2. The Jewish people have been given an everlasting title deed to an area of land in the Middle East in excess of the area they presently occupy. <sup>4</sup>
3. All nations of the earth will be blessed through the Jewish nation.

---

<sup>4</sup> Some people seem to have a problem with this, but since God made the earth, does he not have the right to give part of it to whomever he will?

4. A king who is a descendant of David (the “Son of David”) will reign over them from Jerusalem. (We can now see that this king will be Jesus.)
5. The day will come when God will pour out his Holy Spirit on the people of Israel and there will be a time of great blessing, security and prosperity for the nation. Their sins will be forgiven and they will occupy the whole of the land God has promised them.

These promises God made are all recorded in the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi. Then, after the writing of the Old Testament, for four hundred long years there was silence. The Greeks conquered the Persians and took control of the land promised to Abraham’s descendants. Then the Romans came, displaced the Greeks and dominated Israel. But still God did not speak to his people. Had God forgotten his promise? Had he abandoned his chosen people? Would he ever speak to them again?

## **5 THEN JESUS CAME**

The perspective I am going to try to justify to you in much of the remainder of this paper is as follows:

1. From one perspective, Jesus came to restore Israel, set up his Kingdom on earth, centred in Jerusalem and usher in the golden age spoken of by the prophets.

BUT

2. The Jewish people did not receive their King – they had Him crucified.

HOWEVER

3. Their rejection of their King resulted in salvation coming to the Gentiles. (Romans 11 vs 11 says “by their (i.e. the Jews) transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles” and Rom 11 vs 25 says: “A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”)

THEN

4. The time will come when the Jewish nation will realise its folly. They will mourn for the one they pierced (i.e. the man Jesus, who is also none other than Jehovah himself (see Zechariah 12 vs 10)). Then Jesus will return to Israel as their king. He will set up his throne in Jerusalem and usher in the golden age spoken of by the prophets.

Thus, on the one hand, it seems that the Jewish people’s failure to accept their King when he came was not God’s plan – their Messiah came to restore Israel not to be rejected by it. But on the other hand, the rejection of the Messiah was all part of the inscrutable plan of God. It was necessary that the Messiah must die. This had also been foretold in the Old Testament. The ‘Lamb of God’ had to die for the sins of all men. Only by His death could He provide an atoning sacrifice for all men, Jew and Gentile alike. And God used Israel’s rejection of Christ to bring salvation to the Gentiles as he had also promised.

### **5.1 Why Did Jesus Come – Isaiah’s Perspective**

We are all familiar with Isaiah ch 53 and the perspective given there of Jesus dying for the sins of others. This perspective is completely true. As the bible says in Mark ch 10 vs 45 “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a

ransom for many.” But that is not the whole story, and it is not the only perspective that Isaiah had. I am not as familiar with the Old Testament as I should be, but I have the impression that another perspective of the bible is that of the Messiah coming to restore Israel. The Old Testament also spoke of the blessing overflowing to the Gentiles but only as a secondary issue.

Most evangelical bible commentators regard Isaiah chapters 49 to 56 to be prophecies about the coming Messiah, who is the Servant of Jehovah, the Son of David and also, we now know, none other than Jesus of Nazareth. Listen to the perspective given by Isaiah in chapter 49 of his book on the reason Jesus came. (Isaiah’s prophecy is quoted below.)

The perspective in the verses quoted below is that Jesus, the Servant of Jehovah, saw his mission as being to restore Israel back to the Lord (verse 5). On the face of it, he seemed to fail in this, but nevertheless he trusted God the Father to give him his just reward (verse 4). But the Lord said that just restoring Israel was too small a thing for him and that he also would be a “light to the Gentiles” and bring God’s salvation not just to Jewish people, but to the ends of the earth. (verse 6)  
Isaiah Ch 49 vs 1-6 reads as follows:

*<sup>1</sup> Listen to me, you islands;  
hear this, you distant nations:*

*Before I was born the LORD called me (I think the “me” is Jesus);  
from my birth he has made mention of my name.*

*<sup>2</sup> He made my mouth like a sharpened sword,  
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;  
he made me into a polished arrow  
and concealed me in his quiver.*

*<sup>3</sup> He said to me, “You are my servant, Israel,  
(The name ‘Israel’ probably means ‘God fights’. I believe that here ‘Israel’  
is being used as a name for Jesus rather than the nation.<sup>5</sup>)  
in whom I will display my splendour.”*

*<sup>4</sup> But I said, “I have laboured to no purpose;  
I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing.  
Yet what is due me is in the LORD’s hand,  
and my reward is with my God.”*

*<sup>5</sup> And now the LORD says-  
he who formed me in the womb to be his servant  
to bring Jacob back to him  
and gather Israel to himself,  
for I am honoured in the eyes of the LORD  
and my God has been my strength-*

*<sup>6</sup> he says:  
“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant  
to restore the tribes of Jacob  
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.  
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,  
that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”*

---

<sup>5</sup> Some have suggested that the name ‘Israel’ means ‘he strives with God’, but I understand that ‘God fights’ is probably (but not certainly) a more accurate translation. The translation ‘God fights’ also fits the context of the passage. God was going to fight through His Servant, Jesus. As the passage says, God called his Servant from before birth and made his mouth “like a sharpened sword” and made him into a “polished arrow” (vs 2) Sharpened swords and polished arrows are both implements that one fights with. Hence the Servant’s name – “God fights”.

As I understand it, the perspective of the above verses is that Jesus came to restore Israel, but God the Father had not only this but an even bigger plan in mind. The Father's intention was that somehow Jesus would also be a "light to the Gentiles" and bring salvation not just to Jewish people, but to the ends of the earth. (The latter part of Isaiah chapter 49 and the last part of the book of Isaiah then goes on to tell of how Israel will yet be restored and greatly blessed.)

## **5.2 John the Baptist's Preaching**

Then, after 400 long years of silence from God, the, long awaited Messiah was born. He was one of their own, a descendant of Abraham, a Jew, and they named him Yeshua<sup>6</sup>. The "Servant of the Lord" prophesied by Isaiah, who would restore Israel, had come. The "Son of David" – the King of Israel – who would reign in Jerusalem was in the land of Israel.

God sent his messenger, John the Baptist, ahead of him to prepare the way for Israel's King.

Before John's birth the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah, John the Baptist's father. This is what Gabriel said John the Baptist's mission was: "Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1 vs 16-17)

John the Baptist grew to manhood and began preaching. This is what he preached:

*"Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" . . . Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight (Matt 3 vs 2-4)*

## **5.3 The Early Preaching of Jesus (Yeshua) and the Twelve Disciples**

Then John the Baptist was arrested and Matthew tells us that from that time Jesus himself started preaching saying:

*"Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4 vs 17)*

Early in his ministry Jesus also sent out his 12 disciples. He specifically told them not to go to the Gentiles but to go to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" and say:

*"The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt 10 vs 7)*

---

<sup>6</sup> This was most probably his name – Yeshua with a small e or Y'shua. This was written in New Testament Greek as Iesous, and then later translated into Latin as Iesus. When the letter J was added to the English alphabet in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it became Jesus, the name by which he is typically known in the English speaking world today. The English word 'Christ' comes from the New Testament Greek word 'Christos', which is the nearest Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word 'Mashiach' or 'Messiah' as it is usually written in English.

#### **5.4 What is Meant by “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand”?**

What is meant by the terms “kingdom of Heaven” and “kingdom of God”? Are they the same? What did John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples mean when they said “The kingdom of heaven is at hand”?

I am still keen to understand the situation better, but for what it is worth I offer the following:

The terms “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of Heaven” seem to be fairly broad in their meaning. The word in the original language that is translated ‘kingdom’ means sovereignty, royal power, dominion, but also can refer to the territory or people over whom a king rules. Sometimes the terms seem to mean simply the sphere of God’s rule, or the sovereignty or the dominion of God. Other times they seem to be referring to a more physical kingdom. W E Vine thinks that the term “kingdom of heaven” is more specific than “kingdom of God”.

What did John the Baptist, Jesus and the disciples mean when they preached: “the kingdom of heaven is at hand”?

One thing I am fairly sure of, is that the average Jewish hearer would have understood them to be saying that the golden age spoken of by the Old Testament prophets was near. (The following section of this paper has some more to say on this topic.)

#### **5.5 Israel’s Leaders Turn Against Their Messiah**

It is my understanding that the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus and his disciples has thus far focused on the restoration of Israel, and God setting up his physical kingdom on earth.

Then, from a human perspective, things started to go off the rails.

Rather than welcome their Messiah, the leaders started to turn against Jesus, the ‘Son of David’ and their King. Matthew, in chapter 12 vs 14 of his book, records how the Pharisees conspired together to destroy him and in chapter 12 vs 24 he tells how they accused him of doing his miracles by the power of Satan.

When this happened things started to change.

Rather than speaking plainly, Jesus now spoke to the crowd in parables. The disciples asked him “Why do You speak to them in parables?” (Matthew 13 vs 10). Somewhat strangely to us, Jesus said that it was “so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand” (Luke 8 vs 10 and Matt 13 vs 13)

The first group of Jesus’s parables were about the kingdom of heaven. They are the parables of: “the sower”, “the tares sown amongst the wheat”, “the grain of mustard seed”, “the leaven hidden in the flour”, “the treasure hidden in the field”, “the pearl of great price” and “the fishing net cast into the sea”. They are all recorded in Matthew chapter 13. These parables seem to be preparing Christ’s followers for the kingdom of heaven now coming and growing in a more secretive and individual way than perhaps they expected. Was Jesus trying to prepare his followers for that fact that, whilst the Jewish nation as a whole rejected him, the kingdom (dominion / rule) of God would have to be on an individual basis rather than a national basis? Was he preparing them for the

mystery (i.e. the long hidden but now revealed secret) of the “church” age in which we now live? Perhaps.

### **5.6 The Jewish Nation’s King is Crucified**

Then, at the time appointed by God, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and presented himself to the nation as their King. Most of the crowd spread their coats on the road and were shouting “Hosanna (i.e. ‘save now’) to the Son of David. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” The whole city was stirred.

A few days later another crowd, stirred up by Israel’s leaders, chanted “Crucify him, Crucify him. We will not have this man to reign over us.”

And so the Roman Governor had him crucified. And on his cross, above his head, Pilate had a sign hung for all to see. It read: “JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS”

With his death, the hopes of many of his followers were crushed. As the two downcast followers on the road to Emmaus said in Luke 24 vs 21: “we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel” (– i.e. to release Israel from bondage to the Roman Empire). My guess is that the disciples’ hopes were still focussed around Jesus setting up a physical ‘kingdom of heaven’ on earth and bringing in Israel’s golden age.

## ***6 THE TRANSITION RECORDED IN THE BOOK OF ACTS***

So far, the preaching has been confined to the Jewish people. (Christ himself had said to the gentile Canaanite woman: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 15 vs 24)) How did the gospel get to go to the Gentiles? The book of Acts records the transition.

- The book of Acts starts in Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish nation. It finishes in Rome, the head of the Gentile power.
- The book of Acts starts with Peter preaching to Jews in Jerusalem. It ends with Paul preaching to both Jews and Gentiles in Rome.
- The book of Acts starts with the apostles asking: “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1 vs 6) It finishes with the Apostle Paul telling the Jews in Rome “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” (Acts 28 vs 28)

This transition is now dealt with in more detail below.

### **6.1 The Period Between Christ’s Death and His Ascension**

As we all know, Christ rose from the dead, then ascended to heaven. But, before ascending into heaven, for a period of 40 days he met with his disciples (on at least nine different occasions) and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.

In Acts 1 vs 5-6 Luke tells us that on one such occasion Jesus said that in a few days they would be “baptised with the Holy Spirit”. The apostles were no doubt well aware of the promises God had made about the Holy Spirit being poured out on the nation of



Israel in Israel's future golden age. Perhaps it was this that prompted the apostles to ask him: "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1 vs 6)

What were they asking? I think they were asking whether the Lord was going to now usher in Israel's golden age – the age promised to the Jewish nation by God through the "new covenant" he said he would make with Israel and also promised by God through the prophets.

Note Christ's answer. He didn't say that the disciples had got it all wrong and that he wasn't going to "restore the kingdom to Israel". He simply said to them "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1 vs 7) His answer suggests that the kingdom would in fact be restored to Israel. But it had not been given to the disciples to know when. His answer allows for the possibility that the restoration of the kingdom to Israel could be soon, or it could be many years away.

## **6.2 Pentecost and Peter's First Message to the Jewish People**

Then about 50 days after the resurrection, in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples. The Jewish crowd was utterly amazed. Peter stands up to explain, and what does he say?

Peter explains the phenomenon by saying: "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel". He then quotes the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people . . ." (Acts 2vs1)

But what was it that was spoken about by the prophet Joel?

Many Christians interpret the day of Pentecost as being the start of the Christian church as we know it today. But this is not the focus that the prophet Joel had, nor is it the focus of the passage from Joel that Peter quoted. Nor do I believe it was what Peter had in mind when he quoted from the prophet Joel. The focus of Joel's prophecy quoted by Peter is the restoration of the nation of Israel and Israel's 'golden age' that I have spoken so much about in this paper – the time of great material and spiritual blessing promised by God to the nation of Israel. Do you disagree? Take off any 'tinted glasses' you may have on and read for yourself the book of Joel. It is only three chapters long.

Peter finished quoting half way through the last verse of chapter 2 of Joel. Chapter 3 of Joel starts: "In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgement against them." He then speaks of God's coming judgement upon the Gentile nations for the way they have mistreated His chosen people the Jews. He then continues in Joel ch 3 vs 18. "And it will come about in that day that the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; and a spring will go out from the house of the Lord."

So what was Peter saying on the day of Pentecost? How did he interpret the out pouring of the Holy Spirit? I put it to you that his focus wasn't on the setting up of a largely Gentile church but on the time of spiritual and material blessing for the nation of Israel. I put it to you that this is what his hearers, who were no doubt familiar with the whole of Joel's prophecy, would have understood him to be talking about.

When they heard Peter's message, and were told how they had crucified their Messiah, the Jewish hearers were understandably pierced to the heart and said "What shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus

Christ for the forgiveness of you sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2 vs 37-38)

### **6.3 The Second Recorded Message of Peter**

Acts 3 records how Peter healed a crippled beggar in Jerusalem. The people were astonished. Peter takes the opportunity to tell them that the miracle was done through Jesus, the Holy and Righteous One that they had killed, but who God had raised from the dead.

In verse 17 of ch 3 of Acts he continues:

*"Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.' "Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."*

Note carefully what Peter told them. They were to repent and turn to God so their sins would be wiped out. But this wasn't the only blessing they would receive. In addition Peter said that the result of their change of mind and turning to God would be:

1. that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, AND
2. that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus

What was Peter saying? Well, different people have different ideas, but I can't understand him to be saying anything other than that if the Jewish people repented and turned to God, then their Messiah and King, Jesus, would physically return to earth and the nation of Israel would be restored.

Take off any tinted glasses you may have on and read Peter's words carefully for yourself. What else can they mean? Notice how Peter said that Jesus must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything. Surely the 'restoration of everything' must mean at least the restoration of Israel that had been promised to the Jewish people. Peter said that Jesus must remain in heaven until the time came for this restoration, but that if the Israelites "repented and turned to God" He would send Jesus to them. And, as we have already noted, if Jesus left heaven, then the time of restoration must come.

But, generally speaking, the Jewish nation didn't repent (i.e. change their mind about Jesus and recognise him as their Messiah and King). So Jesus didn't return and the time for God to restore all things didn't come. All these events (the repentance of the Jewish people, the return to earth of Jesus, and the restoration of all things) are still awaited.

#### **6.4 The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles**

The Jewish leaders had said the Jesus was doing his miracles by the power of Satan. They had plotted against him and then had Him put to death. But still, as we have just seen above, God stretched out his hand to his deeply loved people.<sup>7</sup> Now the Jewish leaders started to persecute their fellow Jews who believed in Jesus the Messiah. It began after Peter's preaching referred to above, and culminated in the stoning of Stephen and the ravaging of the early Jewish believers by the Jewish Rabbi Saul (later known as Paul), probably about 3 years after the resurrection.

Only after all these things did God send the gospel to the Gentiles. The irony and grace by which he did this is so audacious that only He could have planned it. The chief instrument he used to bring the gospel to the Gentiles was none other than the zealous Pharisee Saul – the stoner of Stephen and ravager of the early disciples.

God grabbed hold of this young Jewish Pharisee and, probably about 15 years after the resurrection, sent the Apostle Paul off on his first missionary journey. But even now, as he went from city to city through what is now Turkey, Paul's practice was to take the gospel to the Jewish citizens first. Typically his first stop in any city was the Jewish synagogue. The book of Acts makes this very clear. (See Acts chapters 13 vs 5 & 14, 14 vs 1, 17 vs 2, 10 & 17, 18 vs 4, and 19 vs 8.) But when the Jewish congregation refused to hear any more and threw him out, he also took the gospel to the Gentiles.

#### **6.5 The Gospel in Rome**

The book of Acts starts in Jerusalem, the heart of God's dealings with the Jewish people. It ends in Rome, the heart of the Gentile empire of the day. Finally Paul got to Rome, and within three days he had called a meeting with the leading Jews of the City. Acts 28 vs 23 onwards tells us what happened.

*They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet:*

*'Go to this people and say,  
"You will be ever hearing but never understanding;  
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."  
For this people's heart has become calloused;  
they hardly hear with their ears,  
and they have closed their eyes.  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts  
and turn, and I would heal them.'*

*"Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!"*

---

<sup>7</sup> Note how he loved them. He still loves them. He loves them with an "everlasting love" (Jer 31 vs 3). He loves them as Hosea loved his unfaithful wife. They are his people. Anti-Semitism is an abomination, doubly so when it is found amongst people calling themselves 'Christians'.

And so it has been to this day. By and large, the Jewish people have continued in their rejection of their Messiah, but God's salvation has gone and borne at least a measure of fruit among Gentile nations.

But God's promises to Abraham and to the Jewish people still stand. And, as Paul says in Romans 1 vs 16, the gospel is "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile". The day will yet come when the Jewish people will mourn for what they did to their Messiah 2000 years ago. When this happens Jesus will return to his chosen people, set up his kingdom in Jerusalem and usher in the golden age for the Jewish people, promised so many times so long ago. From there the blessing will overflow to the whole earth.

## **7 GOD'S EXPLANATION OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND WHY THE GOSPEL WENT TO THE GENTILES**

Do not be alarmed If you think that what has happened needs further explanation. Apparently God also thought we would benefit from further explanation. Accordingly he had his servant Paul devote three whole chapters of his letter to the Romans to addressing the issue of God's dealing with the Jewish people. Three chapters! That's as many chapters as are devoted to justification by faith! Why haven't Christians taken more notice of them?

The chapters are Romans chapters 9, 10 and 11. They cover:

1. the problem of the Jewish Nation's failure to recognise its Saviour when he came,
2. how salvation then went to the Gentiles and
3. how, once the full number of Gentiles has been saved, the surviving Jewish nation will then finally be saved.

Chapter 11 of Romans is particularly relevant to the topic of this paper. It is worth reading carefully. I think Christians generally have been remiss in their failure to understand and accept all of what is clearly stated in this chapter.

Amongst other things chapter 11 asks the following questions and gives the following answers:

Ch 11 vs 1	<i>Question:</i>	Has God totally rejected his people the Jews?
	<i>Answer:</i>	By no means!
Ch 11 vs 11	<i>Question:</i>	Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?
	<i>Answer:</i>	Not at all!

Two passages from this chapter are now quoted below:

*Again I ask: Did they (i.e. the Jews) stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (Romans 11 vs 11-15)*

Notice how this passage says that “because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles” and “their transgression means riches for the world” and “their loss means riches for the Gentiles” and “their rejection is the reconciliation of the world” When did you last hear someone in church draw your attention to this? But the above is what God has said and we Gentiles should have been paying more attention. Is it a degree of self-centred arrogance on our part that has prevented us seeing what is clearly written? Note how three times in the following passage we are told: “do not boast over those branches”, “do not be arrogant”, “so that you may not be conceited”. Romans 11 vs 17-32 continues:

*If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!*

*I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:*

*"The deliverer will come from Zion;  
he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.  
And this is my covenant with them  
when I take away their sins."*

*As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.*

Jews were offended by the idea that God's salvation should go to the Gentiles. Gentiles often seem unable to accept the idea that they are not the prime focus of the bible – that they are only a sub-plot of the bible rather than the main plot – that they are not the trunk of the tree or even a natural branch but rather a wild branch that has been grafted into the tree – that everything revolves around a people other than themselves.

What about you? Do you agree with the way God has gone about things? Does it seem fair to you? Is it what you think should have happened? Do you think God should have done things slightly differently? Do you accept what He has stated clearly in the Bible?

After considering the whole question of God's dealing with the Jewish people and with the Gentiles, Paul finishes with the following very wise and appropriate words:

*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

*How unsearchable his judgments,  
and his paths beyond tracing out!  
"Who has known the mind of the Lord?  
Or who has been his counsellor?"  
"Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?"  
For from him and through him and to him are all things.  
To him be the glory forever! Amen.  
(Romans 11 vs 33-36)*

## **8 CONCLUDING AND BALANCING COMMENTS**

In this paper I have sought to show that, next to Jesus Christ, the Jewish people are at the focus of the bible and at the focus of God's dealings in human history since Abraham. I have also sought to show that whilst to die on the cross for all men was certainly one reason Jesus came to earth (he had to die as a sacrifice for sins for all people), his coming was also for the restoration of the nation of Israel. (He will yet come again for this purpose, but not until the Jewish nation as a whole changes its mind about Him and turns to Him.)

My reason for writing this paper is so that we can understand our bibles better – and, most importantly of all, so that we can understand the terms for forgiveness of sins that God is offering all people in this age in which we live. The bible makes more sense when we take off those glasses we are prone to wear (glasses that put us gentiles at the centre of everything) and simply take the words that are written at face value. We must also take care to note who the words of God are being spoken to. In the Old Testament especially, more often than not, God is speaking to the nation of Israel, rather than to us gentiles (although there is much that we can learn from what he says).

But this is not to say that we gentile believers are not dear to the heart of God and exceedingly precious to him. What we need to realise however, is that the promises God made were largely made to the nation of Israel, and their provisions still stand. As Paul wrote – “to them belong the . . . covenants . . . and the promises”.<sup>8</sup> and, “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”.<sup>9</sup> The church has not replaced the nation of Israel. We belong to a somewhat different order of things from God's chosen and privileged people the Jews. We gentile believers are one of the ‘mysteries’ of God. (The ‘mysteries’ are secrets that were not revealed in the Old Testament, but that now have been revealed.)

The Jewish people are, and always will be, God's chosen earthly people. He may deal with them severely, but they are nevertheless deeply loved by Him and very dear to His heart. As Psalms 118 and 136 tell us, His loyal, steadfast, love endures forever! He loves them as a good father loves his son. He has entered into a covenant with them and loves them as a true and faithful husband loves his wife – even as Hosea loved his unfaithful wife. The Jewish people still have a part to play in His plans for the earth, although in the end, it will only be a ‘remnant’ of Jews that are saved and finally inherit the promised blessing. (Ultimately, His intention is to fulfil all the many promises He has so clearly and unambiguously made to them. He still plans to bless the remaining Jews, and from them – from Jerusalem – the blessing will overflow to the whole earth.) This is the reason that God's recorded dealings on earth, more often than not, focus on the Jewish people.

---

<sup>8</sup> Romans 9 vs 4

<sup>9</sup> Romans 11 vs 29

We gentile believers, on the other hand, have also been greatly blessed. We, the 'wild olive branch', have been grafted into the tree of God's blessing. We are now "fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel".<sup>10</sup> We have been very greatly blessed in our union with Christ. All the earthly blessings promised to the Jewish people will yet come to them. We gentile believers have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.<sup>11</sup> We have been raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realm. We, along with individual Jewish believers, (but not the Jewish nation as a whole), are part of a mystery, long hidden, but now revealed.<sup>12</sup> We are part of a new identity, the 'ecclesia' or 'church' as it is usually translated. (In popular usage, the word 'church' has come to mean all sorts of things, but the real church or 'ecclesia' is an assembly of 'called out ones' who have been called out of all the nations of the world and joined to Christ in heaven.) We are part of a new creation. In this era in which we live, both gentile believers, and Jewish believers have been reconciled to God in one body – in 'one new man'. We are 'in Christ'. We are His body. We have been joined to him. We are one with him. We are near to him, dearly loved by him, and exceedingly precious to him.

We gentile believers have not taken over the place of the Jews but we have become partakers of God's blessing. We who were afar off, separate from the Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God, have been brought near through the shed blood of the Messiah. We have not taken the place of the Jewish nation, but we now are no longer "strangers" and "aliens". We are now part of God's great "household".<sup>13</sup> We too are now His own, and His love and care for us is beyond our comprehension. How wonderful. What grace.

As the hymn says:

Near, so very near, to God –  
nearer I could not be.  
For in the Person of his Son,  
I am as near as He.

If the ideas presented in this paper are new to you, I do not expect you to accept them without careful checking. Rather my hope is that you will tuck these ideas away in the back of your mind, and, over the years as you read your bible, test them to see whether or not they are a fair representation of what the bible states clearly.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

R Gillard, Feb 04

---

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 3 vs 6

<sup>11</sup> See Ephesians ch 1 vs 3 and following verses

<sup>12</sup> See Ephesians ch 3 vs 2-6 and Colossians ch 1 vs 25-27

<sup>13</sup> See Ephesians ch 2 vs 11 to end





## **APPENDIX 7**

### **THE BOOK “THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS” – HOW DID JOHN MACARTHUR MANAGE TO GET IT WRONG?**

#### **1 BACKGROUND**

John MacArthur, the pastor of Grace Community Church in California, has written a book titled “The Gospel According to Jesus”. In this book he sets out his understanding of what the gospel is. Much of his book focuses on the earthly teaching of Jesus – hence the title of the book “The Gospel According to Jesus”.

First published in 1988, the book has been accepted by many evangelicals as a classic. At least 3 editions have been made, the latest being the 2008 “Revised and Expanded Anniversary Edition”.

John MacArthur and his book have perhaps become the leading proponent of what has become known as “Lordship Salvation”, (although this is not a term that John MacArthur chose, nor is it a term he likes).<sup>14</sup> Many people in evangelical churches believe in “Lordship Salvation” and think that the book “The Gospel According to Jesus” has done the church a great service by providing all the justification needed to support this teaching.

I think that the answer that ‘Lordship Salvation’ teaching gives to the question “What must I do to be saved?” is wrong.

#### **2 PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER**

The purpose of this paper is mainly to challenge the assumptions that ‘Lordship Salvation’ is based upon. There are no-doubt as many variations to ‘Lordship Salvation’ as there are people that hold to it. Thus I have focused on the teaching John MacArthur gives in his book “The Gospel According to Jesus”.

I am not a theologian. I am out of my league when I cross swords with John MacArthur. Nevertheless there are times when something needs to be said. There are times when even the boy needs to call out: “The king has got no clothes on!”.

In this paper I don’t want to focus so much on the wrong conclusions (as I see it) in the book “The Gospel According to Jesus”. Rather I want to focus mainly on the assumptions that lead a person to draw such wrong conclusions, and that lead many readers to accept the book’s conclusions.

I put the following thoughts out in the hope that those who have read the book, may find them useful and that those that believe in ‘Lordship Salvation’ may be challenged to reconsider the assumptions that this teaching is based upon.

---

<sup>14</sup> John MacArthur “The Gospel According to Jesus”, Zondervan, 2008 Revised and Expanded Anniversary Edition, Page 44, footnote 20

### 3 WHAT JOHN MACARTHUR TEACHES – AS I UNDERSTAND IT

It is easy to misunderstand people. Although he might not express it in exactly these terms, if I understand him correctly, John MacArthur's view is as follows:

Unless a person makes a complete surrender of their life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ they cannot be saved. As a condition of being saved the person must surrender all, and meet the rigorous requirements of becoming a 'disciple' as given by Jesus in His teaching recorded in the gospels. The above being the case, these rigorous requirements need to be included as part of a presentation of the gospel.

Also, if I understand him correctly, John MacArthur's view is that, in simplified terms, trusting Jesus means obeying him.<sup>15</sup>

### 4 A CAUTIONARY NOTE – WE HAVE ONLY ONE AUTHORITATIVE “TEACHER”

To the crowds and his disciples Jesus said:

**“do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers”**<sup>16</sup>

Jesus wants us to follow Him alone as our teacher, not a famous bible teacher such as John MacArthur. Bible teachers have the job of helping us understand God's word, but we must never regard them as the authority. It seems to me that Jesus allows all bible teachers to get some area of their teaching wrong.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps He allows this so that our faith will be in Him, not in some bible teacher. Just because a bible teacher hits the nail squarely on the head in one area of his teaching, doesn't mean that he is correct in every area of his teaching.

The truth of the matter is that we all – myself and yourself included – must study the bible for ourselves and work out for ourselves what the Bible – the very words of God – teaches. If we don't do this we are following human teachers rather than our Lord. He Himself is to be the only 'teacher' that we follow. (I feel sure that John MacArthur would be the first to agree with this.)

### 5 JOHN MACARTHUR HASN'T GOT EVERYTHING WRONG

Firstly I need to say that I certainly don't think John MacArthur has got everything wrong.

Some of his books are very good and have been of benefit to the church world wide. Unfortunately his book “The Gospel According to Jesus” is (in my estimation) not in that category. In fact I think that the answer he gives in this book to the question “What must I do to be saved?” is gravely in error. As I see it, the book is preaching a gospel different from the one that the Apostle Paul preached, and that is a very serious matter indeed.

But even in “The Gospel According to Jesus”, not everything is wrong. I agree with many things in the book.

---

<sup>15</sup> For example see John MacArthur's response to a question on how to explain the gospel to children at the top of page 279 of the 2008 edition of “The Gospel According to Jesus”

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 23 vs 8

<sup>17</sup> This can be easily verified by comparing what various bible teachers say on various issues. There is much disagreement between them. Hence many of them must often be getting it wrong.

- I agree that the 'make a decision' or 'accept Christ into your heart' gospel presentations are not right.
- I agree that there are probably many people in evangelical churches that think they are saved but who aren't.
- I agree that it is to be expected that a born-again person does not live life like an unsaved person.

What I don't agree with is John MacArthur's answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" I disagree with him because his answer goes well beyond what Paul – Christ's 'special messenger' (i.e. Apostle) to us gentiles – said a person must do to be saved.

In seeking to get people out of the ditch on one side of the road, he directs them to the ditch on the other side of the road (a regrettably common occurrence in human affairs).

## **6 HOW DID JOHN MACARTHUR MANAGE TO GET IT WRONG – AS I SEE IT**

How did John MacArthur manage to get it wrong?

As I see it, his error largely springs from the four fundamental mistakes outlined below.

### **6.1 Mistake Number 1 – As I see it, his book may be based upon the wrong assumption that the Gospel of Matthew is telling us Gentiles (living after the cross and resurrection) how we can have our sins forgiven.**

In the Preface to the latest "Revised and Expanded Anniversary Edition" of his book "The Gospel According to Jesus", John MacArthur tells of his 7½ year long teaching series on Matthew's gospel. John MacArthur then says: "*A few years after finishing that series in Matthew, I wrote this book to distil my observations about how Jesus proclaimed His own gospel and to take a hard look at the truths He included in the gospel message.*" <sup>18</sup>

The book thus to some degree springs from a study of the book of Matthew. To some degree, John MacArthur is thus basing the gospel (for people living after the cross and after the giving of the Holy Spirit) upon Jesus' teaching in Matthew – i.e. teaching given before the cross, and before the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

For reasons given later on, I think that this could be a major source of the wrong conclusions that John MacArthur has come to.

Sometimes the most profound errors are not caused by faulty reasoning. Rather the source of the error is in the underlying assumptions upon which the reasoning is founded.

Often these underlying assumptions go completely unnoticed. Often we are unaware of the assumptions that our thinking is based on. Our assumptions are thus overlooked and tend to go unchallenged and untested. But if these assumptions are wrong, all the reasoning that rests upon them (no matter how accurate or refined the reasoning may be) can also be completely wrong.

---

<sup>18</sup> John MacArthur "The Gospel According to Jesus", Zondervan, 2008 Revised and Expanded Anniversary Edition, page 10

Furthermore, we all tend to have a problem. Our problem is that we all tend to assume "Its all about ME". This is the assumption we usually start with until we are educated to know better. (For example, most ancient people started with the assumption that the sun revolved around them, not visa versa). We read the bible and we tend to assume "Its all about ME". BUT, as I understand it, we gentiles are not the main plot of the Bible. Next to Jesus, the main plot revolves around the Jewish people.<sup>19</sup>

As I understand it, the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke are not focussed on telling us Gentiles living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century how we can have our sins forgiven. They do not set out to tell ME what I must do to be saved. Rather they are a record – an "orderly account" – of what happened when the Messiah came.<sup>20</sup> In Matthew's gospel the focus is especially on what happened when Jesus came and presented himself to the Jewish people as their long-promised Messiah.

As I see it, John MacArthur's assumption that Matthew is telling us (gentiles living after the watershed events surrounding the crucifixion) what we must now do to be saved may thus be a major source of the wrong conclusions he has come to.<sup>21</sup>

**6.2 Mistake Number 2 – As I see it, John MacArthur does not make sufficient allowance for the fact that whilst Jesus was teaching on earth, the old Mosaic Covenant was still in full effect.** (The Mosaic Covenant is the covenant that the Israelites entered into in the days of Moses. God gave them the Old Testament Law and they entered into a covenant with God to keep that Law. The terms of the Mosaic Covenant were that God would bless them if they kept the Law, and they would be cursed if they didn't.) **At the time of Jesus' teaching the New Covenant had not as yet been made available. Much of Jesus' teaching was thus given to Jewish people who were at that time still bound by the Mosaic Covenant. Great caution is needed when applying such teaching to people living after the resurrection of Christ.**

To his Jewish disciples Jesus said:

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5 vs 17-19 – emphasis mine)

---

<sup>19</sup> This idea is elaborated upon in my paper "Understanding the Bible" attached as appendix 6

<sup>20</sup> I have elaborated upon this idea (but not sought to justify it) in my paper "Where in the Bible is the Gospel Found" attached as Appendix 4.

<sup>21</sup> I wonder what John MacArthur's conclusions would have been if his book has risen out of a 7½ year study of John's gospel. Some may disagree with what I think Matthew's gospel is focused on, but there is no dispute about what John is trying to do in his gospel. He wrote well after the resurrection, and tells us plainly: *"these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."* (John 20 vs 31) One cannot help noticing a stunning difference between John's gospel and Matthew's book. Many times John tells us that those that believe in Jesus receive eternal life, but Matthew never says anything like that (not that I have noticed anyway). Read Matthew's book for yourself and see what you reckon.

I put it to you that, for the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant, the “until all is accomplished” did not occur until the death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus I put it to you that when (prior to the cross) Jesus was giving his teaching, he was speaking to (Jewish) people who were still living under the Old Testament Law, and who were still rightly bound by the Old Testament Law. I put it to you that even Jesus Himself was not going to annul the Law “until all is accomplished”.

Thus, when Jesus answered the question of the rich young ruler: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

1. Was he telling you and me – people living after the cross – what we must do to be saved?, OR
2. Was he telling a Jew living under the Old Testament Law what the Law required him to do to inherit eternal life?”

The above incident is recorded in Matthew 19 vs 16-26, Mark 10 vs 17-27 and Luke 18 vs 18-27. Luke chapter 10 vs 25-37 also contains a similar incident. It should be noted that in each of these passages Jesus started by referring the man back to the “commandments” – i.e. to the Law.

It seems to me that, in the answers He gave, Jesus was shedding light on and explaining what the Law required. (In the process of doing this, Jesus exposed people’s failure to meet the well-nigh impossibly high standard required by the Law – “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself*”.<sup>22</sup>) Take the time to read these four passages if you can.

In passing I must mention that there is a benefit in having our failure exposed. This is what the Law does. It is like a “light shining in a dark place”. It is like a “mirror”<sup>23</sup> that shows us ourselves, warts and all. The benefit is that when a person finally realises that they have fallen short of the standard required – when they realise that they continue to fall short and that they don’t have the moral strength not to fall short – when they realise that they don’t have the ability to “inherit eternal life” by meeting the requirements of God’s Law – then they are ready to give up on seeking to save themselves by their own efforts. Then they are ready to look to a Saviour who, through his work on the cross, is able, and willing, to freely save even sinners like them. Then they are willing to cast themselves entirely on the grace (i.e. the undeserved kindness) of God as their only hope. At the time Jesus was speaking, the Jewish people’s greatest need was to realise that they couldn’t save themselves by keeping the Old Testament Law. Rather they had to come to the point where they saw their need for a Saviour who by his sacrifice on the cross would atone for their shortcomings.

But I have digressed. Returning to the point I am trying to make, I put it to you that questions such as the two listed above are the sorts of questions we must wrestle with as we read the book of Matthew.

One of the keys to understanding John MacArthur’s error is actually found in the title to his book “The Gospel According to Jesus”. The title sounds so right, but consider this: Most of the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke was given to people still living under the Mosaic Covenant – the covenant between God and the Israelites that the Jewish people entered into in the days of Moses.

---

<sup>22</sup> Luke 10 vs 27

<sup>23</sup> James 1 vs 23

At the time of most of Jesus's earthly teaching, the New Covenant had not yet been made available. The new covenant did NOT come into force at the coming of Christ. Rather it was made available at the death and resurrection of Christ (or perhaps very shortly thereafter). Before it could come, it first needed to be sealed with the blood of Christ. As Jesus said just before his crucifixion: **"This cup is the new covenant in my blood"**.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, at the time of the earthly teaching of Christ the Holy Spirit (which was promised as part of the New Covenant) had not yet been given.

These facts need to be born in mind when we read the earthly teaching of Jesus.

John MacArthur is no novice and certainly must be aware of these ideas, but he does not appear to take adequate notice of them in reaching his conclusions on what we must do to be saved. Much of the teaching and parables of Jesus were spoken to Jews still bound by the old mosaic covenant but Mr MacArthur applies them directly to the question of how a gentile (or a Jew for that matter), living after the resurrection, can find salvation.

John MacArthur tends to see things in the Gospels in terms of Christ speaking to the 'christian', or to the present day person wanting to become a Christian, whereas perhaps some of his teachings were more directed to Jews living under the Law, or even to the nation of Israel as a whole.

Furthermore, in some of His teaching before the cross:

1. Is Jesus telling his (Jewish) hearers what they must do to be saved in the terms of what we gentiles living after the cross understand by being 'saved' from our sins? OR
2. Is Jesus (and John the Baptist, and the disciples when they were sent out as recorded in say Matthew ch 10 for that matter) telling the nation of Israel what they must do before He, their Messiah, will set up His kingdom on earth as promised to the Jews in the Old Testament?

Again, these are questions we must wrestle with as we read the gospels. (But we don't encounter this problem in the writings of Paul, the "Apostle to the gentiles", whose teaching was given after the cross.)

John MacArthur takes much of his argument from teaching given by Jesus prior to His death and resurrection, and the giving of the promised Holy Spirit 50 days later at the time of Pentecost. This teaching was given in a different age from the one we are now living in. Not only was the Holy Spirit not yet given, but the curtain in the temple had not yet been torn open – the way into the Most Holy Place – i.e. into the very presence of God – was not yet open! I may be wrong, but as yet I am not convinced that a person could even be 'born again' before the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost.<sup>25</sup>

Thus again we need to deal very cautiously with teaching given before the cross and before Pentecost, when we are trying to answer the question of what a person living after the cross and after Pentecost must do to be born again.

---

<sup>24</sup> Luke 22 vs 20 and 1 Corinthians 11 vs 25

<sup>25</sup> Certainly, before the cross, Jesus said to Nicodemus "You must be born again". But was He meaning be born again right here and now? Or was He meaning be born again in the near future when the Holy Spirit is given as part of the New Covenant? I am not sure. Presently I think He was probably meaning the latter.

### **6.3 Mistake Number 3 – As I see it, John MacArthur's theology requires the meaning of the word 'faith' to be changed or redefined into something it isn't.**

Following on from a paragraph outlining how Moses gave up the treasures of Egypt for a heavenly reward John MacArthur says: *"This is the kind of response the Lord Jesus called for: whole hearted commitment. A desire for Him at any cost. Unconditional surrender. A full exchange of self for the Saviour. It is the only response that will open the gates of the kingdom."*<sup>26</sup> (emphasis mine)

But John MacArthur also no doubt believes that faith alone in Christ alone is the only response required to 'open the gates of the kingdom'. Thus, as I understand his view, 'faith' must (in his theology) equate to unconditional surrender to Christ. As I understand it, his position requires saving faith to be defined as a complete surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

I see no justification for this. The bible itself defines faith for us. God Himself tells us directly that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen".<sup>27</sup> If words mean anything, faith is an assurance, a conviction, a belief, not a surrender.

As I see it, John MacArthur's teaching requires the meaning of the word 'faith' to be changed to make it comply with 'Lordship salvation' theology. This is a great shame. What those that hold this teaching should do is change their theology to make it comply with the meaning of the word 'faith'!

Obedience – surrender to Christ – is the FRUIT of faith. It is not the SAME as faith. This leads on to my last point.

### **6.4 Mistake Number 4 – As I see it, John MacArthur confuses cause and effect, and jumps to an unwarranted conclusion.**

John MacArthur spends much time in his book showing that truly born again people do not live like unsaved people – that if a person claims to be a Christian, yet lives his life like a non-christian, there is very good reason to doubt that the person has ever been born again. I do not dispute this.

He identifies the change in a person that comes about when they are born again. But then, as I see it, he makes a fatal flaw. He goes a step too far. He draws an unwarranted conclusion. He makes this change in a person (which is an effect of being born again), a condition – i.e. a cause – of being saved.

As I see it, one of his main underlying assumptions seems to be as follows:

SINCE born-again people are changed people – (they live their lives differently from unsaved people),  
THEREFORE the Christian life must start with the life-changing event of a complete surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> John MacArthur "The Gospel According to Jesus", Zondervan, 2008 Revised and Expanded Anniversary Edition, bottom of page 150.

<sup>27</sup> Hebrews 11 vs 1

<sup>28</sup> I cannot recall this argument being explicitly stated in his book. Rather, after reading the book, it is my impression that this is one of the underlying assumptions of the book. You read the book and judge for yourself.

It is a mistake to jump to this conclusion. There are other possible reasons for the changed life.

But even if we cannot understand clearly what brings the change about, we need to simply stick with the post-resurrection gospel message that we have been given – the message that has been explicitly stated in scripture. We can easily make mistakes when we start putting 2 and 2 together and arriving at answers by a process of deduction. As we all know only too well we humans can easily put 2 and 2 together and make 5. It is far more reliable to rely upon what is explicitly stated.

And what scripture explicitly teaches is that we are born again when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, not when we surrender. 'Pisteuo', (the original Greek word used in passages such as John 3 vs 16) means 'believe', or 'entrust', not 'surrender'!

The Holy Spirit wasn't widely given until after Jesus had completed His earthly teaching. Perhaps John MacArthur doesn't put sufficient weight on the fact that a significant cause of the changed life that is to be expected in the post-resurrection 'believer' is the presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling within, rather than the believer's surrender to the Lordship of Christ at the time of conversion.<sup>29</sup>

## 7 CONCLUSION

As I see it, 'Lordship Salvation' teachings are partly based upon wrong assumptions.

The unfortunate end result is that John MacArthur, and those that follow his teaching on the issue of what a person must do to be saved, are preaching a gospel different from the one preached by the Apostle Paul. This is a serious matter and they need to reconsider.

## 8 ENDNOTE

In this paper I have written against the teaching that emphasises surrender to the Lordship of Christ as a condition for salvation. This does not in any way mean that I am against surrender to the Lordship of Christ. Not at all! Surrender to the Lordship of Christ is of course a wonderful thing. It should be the normal state for all Christians. It is all the better when, as is often the case, a complete surrender to Christ occurs at the time of conversion. Furthermore all Christians should continually be encouraged to live a surrendered life.

All I am writing against is the teaching that emphasises surrender as a condition for salvation – as something that a person must do in order to be saved. I am only against this teaching because, as I understand it, it goes beyond the gospel message that we have been given.

Written by: Ralph Gillard, January 09

---

<sup>29</sup> An example of a change in a person being caused by the Holy Spirit (rather than by the person's own surrender or commitment) is King Saul. When Samuel anointed Saul as king he said: "Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man." (1 Samuel 10 vs 6). Three verses later 1 Samuel 10 vs 9 records: "Then it happened when he turned his back to leave Samuel, God changed his heart."



## APPENDIX 8

# ETERNAL LIFE – WHY WE NEED IT, WHAT IT IS, WHERE IT COMES FROM, AND HOW WE GET IT

### **PREAMBLE**

*Have you seen those cars that can drive on water? – the Aquada Sports Amphibian by Gibbs Technologies.*

*Those cars can do something a normal car cannot do. They remind me of a spiritual truth. They remind me of the words that the Lord Jesus Christ said: **“Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God”**. (John 3 vs 3)*

*A car of the normal type cannot drive on water, and a person who only possesses the normal type of human life that we get from Adam (the first prototype for humans) cannot enter the kingdom of God.*

*To enter the kingdom of God, we must be created in the pattern of the second prototype – Jesus. We must be born again. To enter the kingdom of God, we must be created spiritually in the image of the second prototype (Jesus) and receive the sort of spiritual life that only He can give – i.e. eternal life.*

### **SUMMARY**

In this paper, the matters which I am going to try to bring to you from the Bible are as follows:

1. We need eternal life because only those who have eternal life can enter the coming eternal, beautiful, holy city – the place where God will dwell amongst men – the place that most people would call heaven.
2. Eternal life is not simply ‘this life’ going on forever. Rather it is a new kind of life. It is a new type of spiritual life that enables a person to have fellowship with the eternal God.
3. Eternal life came to earth with the coming of Jesus Christ. In Him is this new sort of life – eternal life.
4. Jesus Christ can also give this kind of life – eternal life – to others.
5. We get eternal life by a birth – by being “born again” by the Spirit of God.
6. We are “born again” when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. As is recorded in John’s gospel: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life”.
7. Eternal life is given as a free gift!

Using the above numbering system these matters are now dealt with in some detail.

## 1 ETERNAL LIFE – WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Perhaps the most terrible words that have ever been written are found in the bible.

God gave the Apostle John a vision – a revelation – of things to come. John wrote down what he saw, and it is now recorded in the last book of the Bible, the book called “The Revelation of John”. Near the end of his record he wrote this:

**Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.**

**And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.**

**And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.**

**Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.**

**And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

(Revelation 20 vs 11-15 emphasis mine)

To me these are the most awe-filled words ever written.

The next chapter in the book of Revelation tells us about the “new Jerusalem” – the coming holy and beautiful city of God – the place where God will dwell amongst men. The chapter finishes with these words:

**“and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life”.** (Revelation 21 vs 27 emphasis mine)

There are three things related to the above passages that I especially want to tell you.

1. Those who enter the new holy city where God dwells are only those whose names are written in the “Lamb’s book of life”. We are not told much about this “Lamb’s book of life” but I hope that by the time you get to the end of this paper you will agree with me when I say that this “Lamb’s book of life” is most probably a record of those that have eternal life.
2. The person who is sitting on the throne and judging all people is almost certainly the Lord Jesus Christ. (The passage above does not tell us this, but we know this from other passages recorded in the Bible’s New Testament such as John 5 vs 22 & 23 in which Jesus says “For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honour the Son even as they honour the Father” (& also John 5 vs 27, and Acts 10 vs 42, and Acts 17 vs 31))

3. In the second passage, the book is called the "Lamb's book of life". This suggests that the writer, or perhaps the owner, of the book is the "Lamb of God" – i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **1.1 What is Our Problem?**

Our problem goes back a long way. You will recall that the first book in the bible – the book of Genesis – records how God created man and woman. After God had finished His creation we read: "*God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good*".<sup>30</sup>

But things didn't stay that way.

God planted a garden for man and put him in it, and then we read:

**The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely DIE."** (Genesis 2 vs 16-18 emphasis mine)

What is meant by the words "in the day that you eat from it you will surely die"?

I understand that the words translated above as "*in the day that*" could equally well be translated as "*when*" or "*in the very day, as soon as*".<sup>31</sup> But Adam didn't physically die "as soon as" he ate the fruit. He lived for many years thereafter. This suggests that perhaps it is a spiritual death rather than a physical death that is being spoken about here. Perhaps he died spiritually on the very day that he ate the fruit.

Death is essentially separation from the living. Physical human death is separation from the land of the living and entering the realm of the dead. Spiritual death is separation from the eternal God, and entering the realm of those separated from God. Certainly, from the day that Adam ate the fruit, there has been not only physical death, but also spiritual death. There is a barrier – a separation – between God and man.

Furthermore, when Adam and Eve ate the fruit, the whole of creation on earth fell. Ever since, all men and woman born in the line of Adam and Eve have been a 'fallen' creation. We have followed in the pattern of the 'fallen' Adam, not the innocent Adam.

We are no longer fit for God's presence. We are sinners. We wrong each other. We are not the people we ought to be. God is holy, and we are not. We now fall short of the standard that is required of human beings, and, according to the Bible, the wrath of God hangs over us.<sup>32</sup>

So why do we need eternal life? We need eternal life because now we are "perishing". Just as rubber can lose its 'health' and perish – be ruined – when it is left in the sun, so we too have been ruined by the great fall that started when Adam and Eve sinned.

Once a person reaches middle age, it starts to become obvious that their body is "perishing", but our bodies are the least of our problem. Spiritually (as well as physically) we are ruined.

---

<sup>30</sup> Genesis 1 vs 21

<sup>31</sup> From the translation and notes given in the Net Bible which is available on line.

<sup>32</sup> For example John 3 vs 36 which reads: ". . . whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." (NIV translation)

We have lost our spiritual (and physical) health and well-being.<sup>33</sup>

We all have done wrong, and God's judgement is coming. Only those who have eternal life will escape the "lake of fire" – the ultimate destination of those that are "perishing" – and enter the place where God dwells.

## 2 ETERNAL LIFE – WHAT IS IT?

When people first hear about "eternal life", they usually assume that it is simply natural human life going on forever. But, for the reason given below, "eternal life" must be something more than that.

The human spirit is never extinguished. ALL people ALREADY possess a life which is going to go on forever. Death is not the end for anyone. ALL people are going to live on somewhere after death. Thus ALL people already have an ever lasting life.

But only SOME people possess "eternal life", so the term '*eternal life*' must include something more than *everlasting* human life.

So what is it?

As I understand it, "eternal life" certainly is never ending life, but it is much more than that. As I see it, the emphasis in "eternal life" is more on the TYPE of life than the LENGTH of life.

Eternal life is a new KIND of spiritual life. It is the opposite of the 'perishing' type of life – the ruined, fallen type of life – that we inherit from Adam. It is a new TYPE of life that only some people possess.

In John's gospel we are told this:

**"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."** (John 17 vs 3)

Just as death is separation from the living –

- Normal human life is mixing in the world of the "living" – fellowship with the living.
- "Eternal life" is mixing in the world of the eternal God – fellowship with the Living God. As the above verse says: *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*

Eternal life is the sort of life we need if we are to enter into the eternal kingdom – the beautiful, holy 'City of God', where God will dwell with men and "wipe every tear from their eyes".

---

<sup>33</sup> This is the meaning of the word that the New Testament of the Bible often translates as "perish" (e.g. in verses such as John ch 3 vs 16) – i.e. the word '*apollumi*'. '*Apollumi*' (perish) is not a loss of being, but a loss of well-being. It is not extinction, but ruin. (See the entry for Destroy, No.1 – i.e. '*apollumi*' in W E Vine's 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words'.) Thus '*apollumi*' (perish) is more akin to the way we speak of rubber "*perishing*" (i.e. being ruined) than of people "*perishing*" (i.e. ceasing to live) in a plane crash.

### 3 ETERNAL LIFE – WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

- There are two 'prototypes', Adam and Jesus. Through the first man (Adam, the first prototype) DEATH came into the world and spread to all men and women.
- Through the 'Second Man', Jesus the Messiah (the second prototype), ETERNAL LIFE has come and been made available to all people.
- Through the first man (Adam) sin came and spread to all people.
- Through the Second Man (Jesus) the gift of righteousness (i.e. the gift of being declared righteous in God's eyes, and hence the ability to enter God's presence and fellowship with Him) has been made available.<sup>34</sup>

As humans we are all born after Adam's prototype. Physically and spiritually we are out of his 'mould' and bear his likeness.

If we wish to enter the kingdom of heaven we must be born again and become a human being out of the 'mould' of the second prototype, Jesus the Saviour – a man in whom there is eternal life. We must become a new creation, created in the likeness of the Second Prototype. We must become a human being that possesses eternal life.

The New Testament book of John's Gospel is, in a few ways, similar to the first book in the bible, the book of Genesis.

- Genesis tells us that at the time of creation, the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.<sup>35</sup>
  - John's Gospel tells us how the Spirit of God works to bring about a "new creation" – i.e. a born again person.<sup>36</sup>
- Genesis tells us how God said "Let there be light".<sup>37</sup>
  - John's Gospel tells us how "Light has come into the world"<sup>38</sup> (in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ who said "I have come as Light into the World"<sup>39</sup>), but that "men loved darkness rather than the Light for their deeds were evil".<sup>40</sup>
- Genesis tells us about the creation of human life.
  - John's Gospel tells us how we can be "born again", and become a "new creation".
- Genesis tells us how God created man and "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being".<sup>41</sup>
  - John's gospel tells us how God, by His Spirit, imparts to a person a new kind of life – eternal life.<sup>42</sup>
- Genesis tells us about the coming of death.
  - John's Gospel tells us about the 'undoing' of death. It tells us about the One who said "I am the resurrection and the life". It tells us of the coming of eternal life, and how we may get it.

---

<sup>34</sup> See the argument in Romans 5 vs 12-21

<sup>35</sup> Genesis 1 vs 2

<sup>36</sup> See John 3 vs 8

<sup>37</sup> Genesis 1 vs 3

<sup>38</sup> John 3 vs 19

<sup>39</sup> John 12 vs 46

<sup>40</sup> John 3 vs 19

<sup>41</sup> Genesis 2 vs 7

<sup>42</sup> For example see John 3 vs 8. (If you look up this passage, be aware that in both Hebrew and Greek, the word for 'wind' and the word for 'spirit' are the same. i.e. the word has a double meaning. It can be translated as 'wind' and it can also be translated as 'spirit'.)

- The book of Genesis starts with the words “In the beginning God . . .”.
  - John’s gospel starts with similar words. At the beginning of his book John wrote:

**In the beginning was the Word (the ‘Word’ is Jesus Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. (John 1 vs 1-4)**

Where does eternal life come from?

Eternal life came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said: “**I am the way, the truth and the life . . .**”.<sup>43</sup>

Later on the Apostle John wrote a letter which has also become part of the bible. At the beginning of the letter he writes about how he and the other disciples had seen and touched the Lord Jesus – the Word of Life. He wrote:

**What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life – and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us (1 John 1 vs 1-2)**

and,

**And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. (1 John 5 vs 11-12)**

#### **4 JESUS CHRIST CAN GIVE ETERNAL LIFE TO OTHERS**

Not only does Jesus Christ have eternal life, but he also has the power to give it to others. He said:

**My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. (John 10 vs 27-28)**

and,

**“even as You (God the Father) gave Him (Jesus the Son) authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He (i.e. Jesus) may give eternal life.” (John 17 vs 2)**

---

<sup>43</sup> John 14 vs 6

## 5 ETERNAL LIFE – HOW DO WE GET IT?

### **Eternal Life comes by a new birth – by being born again**

We get our natural human life by a birth. So also we get this new type of life – eternal life – by a birth. We get this new type of spiritual life by a new birth – by being born a second time – by being born again. God Himself does this. Near the beginning of his Gospel John wrote:

**He (i.e. Jesus) came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.**

**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.** (John 1 vs 11-13)

A few pages further on John records a meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus. (Nicodemus was one of the Jewish rulers in Israel, and a member of the strict religious sect, the Pharisees.)

**Jesus answered and said to him (i.e. to Nicodemus), "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again (or born from above<sup>44</sup>) he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

**Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"**

**Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again (or born from above).'**

**The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."** (John 3 vs 3-8)

So now we have come to the crux of the matter. We have seen how we need eternal life, and this eternal life is found in Jesus Christ. We have seen how Jesus Christ gives eternal life to others, and that we get it by a birth process – by being born from above by the Spirit of God.

So the last question is this: What must we do to be born again? What must we do to receive eternal life? Read on for the answer.

---

<sup>44</sup> The word most of our bibles have translated as 'again' (i.e. the Greek word '*anōthen*') has a double meaning. It may mean either 'anew' or 'from above'. Jesus may have had the second meaning in mind because he went on to explain how a person could be born 'from above' by the working of the Spirit of God – i.e. by the Spirit from above.

## 6 JESUS CHRIST GIVES ETERNAL LIFE TO ALL WHO BELIEVE IN HIM

Carrying on with the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus recorded above, Nicodemus asked Jesus: "How can these things be?" The explanation recorded in John's gospel is as follows:

**No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man (i.e. Jesus). As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**

**For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3 vs 13-18)**

The background to what Jesus is talking about here is recorded in the Old Testament book of Numbers (ch 21 vs 4-9). Back in the days of Moses, the people had sinned and God sent snakes amongst them that bit them and caused many to die. The people then acknowledged their sin and asked Moses to intercede with God on their behalf. God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. God said that everyone who was bitten and then looked at the bronze snake would live. And so it came about. If a snake bit anyone, when that person looked to the bronze snake on the pole, they lived.

In John chapter 3 Jesus is saying that these Old Testament events are a picture of the eternal life that Jesus Himself brings.

- In the Old Testament picture, the people had sinned, and we too have all sinned.
- In the picture the people had a poison coursing through their veins – snake's venom. We too have a 'poison' at work in us – sin is at work in us doing all kinds of damage.
- The people realised that they had a problem – they had sinned and now they were dying. We too must realise that we have sinned and because of that we too have a problem.
- Then the problem was physical death. Now the problem is that our sin brings about spiritual death – separation from God. Spiritually (and physically) we are perishing.
- The people realised that their sin was the cause of their problem. They had offended God, and they sought someone to intercede with God on their behalf. The wonderful truth is that Jesus is now a great Intercessor between God and man.
- God provided a remedy then – a snake lifted up on a pole – and he has provided a remedy again – Jesus lifted up on a pole (the cross). (Why is Jesus on the cross pictured as a snake on a pole? Possibly it is because on the cross Jesus, the Holy One, had our sins heaped upon Him. As 1 Peter 2 vs 24 says: "He (i.e. Jesus) Himself bore our sins in His own body on the cross . . .", and as 2 Corinthians 5 vs 21 says: "He (i.e. God) made Him (i.e. Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf . . ."
- All the people needed to do was to look to the snake on the pole. (Obviously they would only do this if they realised they had a problem, and believed that the snake on the pole was the solution to their problem.) What must we do to



be saved from the spiritual death sentence hanging over us? What must we do to receive eternal life? **“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up (on a cross) so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.”** We need to realise that the Saviour (Jesus) is the solution to our problem and look to Him to save us. **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”**

Listen carefully. A SAVIOUR HAS COME!!! What is a saviour? A saviour is someone who saves us! We don't have to try to save ourselves. Rather we need to 'look' to the Saviour to save us. Some people 'look' to their good works to save them. Others 'look' to the church. Still others 'look' to their surrender of their life to Jesus Christ. BUT, only those who 'look' to the SAVIOUR receive eternal life!

I hear people talking all about God – about how they have given their life to God – about what God is doing in their life – but never mentioning the Saviour. Are they born again? God alone knows for sure, but if the Saviour doesn't feature large in a persons thinking there is reason to wonder whether they have in fact ever actually come to the Saviour – ever believed in the Saviour who died for them, and received the free gift of eternal life.

We are not saved when we decide to become a Christian. I repeat. We are NOT saved when we decide to become a Christian. We are saved when are born again. We are born again when we look to the Saviour – when we believe in Him, and as per His word receive the free gift of eternal life. I think that there are many people who think there are Christians (because they have decided to be Christians, or done some other thing that they have been told is required to become a Christian) but who aren't. I think there are many people who think they are Christians, but who have never actually looked to the Saviour, believed/entrusted in Him, and thus been born again and received the free gift of eternal life!

Human nature being what it is, people seem to do everything other than simply take God at His word – that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that forgiveness of sins and eternal life is offered freely, as a gift, to all who believe/entrust in Christ – to all who look to Him as their Saviour.

People say we must do all sorts of things to be saved, but the Gospel of John consistently states what is required to receive eternal life. We need to pay attention to what God has said in His word, not to what various men may say and teach.

Here is some more of what the Bible says as recorded in the Gospel of John:

- **He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who *'rejects'* (NIV translation) the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."** (John 3 vs 36)
- **Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.** (John 5 vs 24)
- **For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."** (John 6 vs 40)
- **Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.** (John 6 vs 47)

- **Jesus said to her (i.e. Martha), "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11 vs 25-26)**

If the above sounds different to what your favourite bible teacher says, then it is your bible teacher who is wrong, not the Apostle John.

John wasn't the only Apostle that taught this. The Apostle Paul said this:

**Yet for this reason I (Paul) found mercy, so that in me as the foremost (of sinners), Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. (1 Timothy 1 vs 16)**

And, in the book of Acts, Luke records what happened when the Apostle Paul preached in Pisidian Antioch:

**When the Gentiles (i.e. non-jews) heard this (that the gospel was now going to the gentiles), they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. (Acts 13 vs 48)**

(The only further thing that needs to be noted is that the word we have translated into English as 'believe' – i.e. the word '*pisteuo*' – is a little wider in its meaning than our English word 'believe'. It can include the idea of '*entrusting*'. Thus to 'believe' in Christ (i.e. to *pisteuo* in Christ) may include the idea of *trusting* and *relying on* Christ.)

## **7 ETERNAL LIFE IS GIVEN AS A FREE GIFT!**

Does the above sound to you to be just too good to be true? It does to most people. Nevertheless the above is what the Bible clearly teaches. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6 vs 23)**

It is a free gift to us because it has been paid for by Another. Someone Else has paid the cost.

**"He was wounded for our transgressions,  
He was bruised for our iniquities;  
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,  
And by His stripes we are healed.  
All we like sheep have gone astray;  
We have turned, every one, to his own way;  
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."  
(Isaiah 53 vs 5-6 NKJ translation)**

And now that 'Someone Else' – the Son of God, who died for our sins and rose again – the suffering Saviour who became the 'snake on a pole' for us – the One who is also the Lord of All and the coming Judge – offers eternal life freely, as a gift, to ALL who believe/entrust in Him.

Written by: Ralph Gillard  
February 09

Unless noted otherwise, all Bible quotations are from the NASB translation.

## **FURTHER READING**

Should you wish to examine the matter further, may I suggest the Gospel of John (the fourth book in the New Testament of the Bible).

Towards the end of his gospel John wrote: "but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name". (John 20 vs 31) What John says we must do to receive eternal life is markedly different from what many (perhaps even most) preachers and Bible teachers are saying. Many (perhaps even most) preachers and Bible teachers are thus wrong.

Get a reasonably accurate translation of the Bible (such as the New International Version (NIV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB) or the New King James Bible and read John's Gospel for yourself.