

Mailing address:

Bible Study #1: *What is the Bible?*

Introduction

Dear friend,

Welcome to correspondence Bible study! We are so glad that you have decided to study the Bible, God's perfect Word to mankind. To complete these studies, you will need a copy of the Bible. Throughout this course we use the King James Version of the Bible (KJV), the standard English Bible for the last four hundred years. You can be confident that when you read the KJV, you are reading the very Word of God preserved intact for you in English. If you do not have a King James Bible, contact us and we will send you one for free. Also, please note that at the end of each of these studies you have some questions to answer so that we can see that you have understood the Biblical teaching, and some blank space upon which you can write down any questions that you have. Also, please use this space to provide us with the names and addresses of any friends or acquaintances of yours who would also be interested in studying the Bible, so that we can send this free correspondence course to them as well. This Bible study course is provided to you courtesy of Bethel Baptist Church, 4905 Appian Way, El Sobrante, CA 94803, (510) 223-9550/ (510) 223-8721, www.pillarandground.org, betbapt@flash.net. Please let us know if you would like a personal visit for Bible study, and feel free to visit us for Sunday school at 9:45 a.m., Sunday morning worship at 11:00 a.m., Sunday evening worship at 6:00 p.m., or Wednesday prayer and Bible study at 7:00 p.m. Once again, we are overjoyed that we can assist you in studying the Bible.

Basics about your Bible

If you turn to the front section of your Bible, you will see the table of contents. The Bible is one Book, yet it is made up of 66 different books, with about forty different authors, who wrote from a period stretching from before 1,400 B. C. to almost A. D. 100. In the table of contents, you will notice that the books of the Bible are divided into two major sections, the Old Testament, which was composed before the coming of Jesus Christ, and the New Testament, which was written after His coming. The Bible begins with “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), and ends with an account of the end of all things and the establishment of the eternal reign of God in its last book, the book of Revelation. As you do this Bible study, you will learn more and more about the content and teachings of the books of the Bible.

Throughout this study, you will see references, like the “Genesis 1:1” in the paragraph above, following (or in some cases, before) quotations from the Bible. It is essential that you know how to look these up. (If you already know how to do this, great—don’t worry, soon we will cover something that is almost surely new for you. If you do not know this, though, you cannot do any of the rest of this Bible study.) In a reference like “Genesis 1:1,” the word at the front, here “Genesis,” refers to the book of the Bible from which the quotation comes. To find a book of the Bible, look in the table of contents. You will notice that Genesis is the first book of the Old Testament. A page number is given so that you can find the book; you will find Genesis shortly after the table of contents. The “1:1” refers to the chapter and the verse in the book of the Bible specified by the word that comes before it; the “1” before the colon refers to the chapter in the book of Genesis, and the “1” after the colon to the verse in that chapter. Turn to the first page of the book of Genesis. Find the heading that says “chapter 1.” Then look in the left column, and you will see numbers going down the side of the page. Those are the verse numbers. If you look at chapter one, the first verse, you will see “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” the reference quoted in the previous paragraph. Look down to verse 26 of chapter one; there you see “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” The reference for that verse would be Genesis 1:26, since it is in the book of Genesis, chapter one, and is verse 26 in chapter one. Flip over now to Genesis chapter two, and verse eight, or Genesis 2:8; there you will see “And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden: and there he put the man whom he had formed.” Now go back to the table of contents, and find Proverbs 30:5; locate the book of Proverbs, which is in the Old Testament, then go to chapter thirty, and to verse five. Fill in the blank for this verse:

Every ____ of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

Did you find the verse? Good job! You now know how to look up references in the Bible.¹

Also, notice in Proverbs 30:5, that the word “is” in the verse is italicized (*like this*) twice, in “God *is* pure” and in “he *is* a shield.” The italics are there to represent words that are not in the original languages of the Bible, Hebrew for the Old Testament (except for a few chapters in Aramaic), and Greek for the New Testament, but are needed in an English translation. The scholars who gave us the King James Version made it into a very literal, word-for-word translation, so that the Word of God would be faithfully represented in our language. In this verse, for example, “every” translates the Hebrew word for “every,” *kol*, “word” translates the Hebrew for “word,” *imrah*, “of God” translates the Hebrew for “of God,” *’eloha*, and “pure” translates the Hebrew word for “pure,” *tserupha*. The “is” in italics represents a word that is needed in English, but is not in the original Hebrew; in Hebrew, to say “Every word of God is pure,” you could just say “Every word of God—pure,” meaning the same thing we do in our English Bible, but just not using the verb “is.” The King James Bible is so accurate that it even puts words needed in English like this in italics, so that you can tell what English words directly represent Hebrew and Greek words, and what words are needed in English but do not directly represent a word in the original. How blessed we are to have, in the King James Version, a Bible so accurate that even these little details of the original language texts are preserved!

Now turn to John 3:7 in the New Testament. This verse says:

“Marvel not that I said unto __ __ __ __, __ __ must be born again.”

What is the meaning of this “thee” and “ye”? Today, in ordinary speech we would simply say “you” both times—that is what both “thee” and “ye” mean—speaking technically, the words are 2nd person pronouns. However, both the Hebrew and the Greek languages have a different word

¹ You should also know that books of the Bible that have only one chapter just put the verse number in the numerical part of a reference. For example, to quote verse four in the book of Jude, which has only one chapter, one would write (Jude 4), not (Jude 1:4). For books of the Bible with a number of chapters, if someone wishes to cite an entire chapter rather than a specific verse only, the chapter number would appear without a verse number. For example, to reference the entire thirtieth chapter of the book of Proverbs, one would write (Proverbs 30). The twentieth chapter of Exodus would be (Exodus 20), while the first verse in the twentieth chapter would be (Exodus 20:1). Notice that (Jude 4) and (Exodus 4) mean different things: the one is the fourth *verse* in the only chapter in Jude, while the other is the entire fourth *chapter* of the book of Exodus. Also, if a particular chapter is the topic of discussion, a reference such as (v. 20) means the twentieth verse in that chapter. If we were discussing Exodus chapter 20, (v. 4) would be the fourth verse of that chapter, while (v. 8) would mean the eighth verse. You should also know that the annotation “cf.” means “compare.” Sometimes people will abbreviate the books of the Bible; they might write (Gen 1:1) instead of (Genesis 1:1), or (Ex 20:4) instead of (Exodus 20:4), to designate the books of Genesis or Exodus. Usually such abbreviations are self-explanatory. In fact, looking up verses is pretty self-explanatory. We have given you all this explanation just in case, but it really is not very hard. You can definitely figure it out.

for “you” when referring to only one person, (for example, “You, John, need to come here.”) and for “you” when referring to more than one person (“You, Jack and Jill, both need to run up the hill.”). In modern English, we have lost this distinction, so that one cannot tell from the word “you” if the speaker refers to only one person or thing or to a group. However, the King James Bible preserves the distinction; when the Bible says “thou,” or “thee,” or “thy,” it translates the Hebrew or Greek words for “you” referring to only one person: “Thou, John, needest² to come here,” while when it uses “ye” or “you,” it translates a Hebrew or Greek word that refers to “you” as more than one person: “You people, Jack and Jill, come ye up the hill over here.” When distinctions such as these are preserved, and, for such a literal and accurate translation, it has such remarkable beauty and amazing literary style, can we wonder that the King James Bible has been, and continues to be, the standard English Bible? When you hold it in your hands, you hold the very Word of God, pure and powerful just as when it was originally given. You can trust your Bible! We will consider this subject in more detail later.

As we continue in these studies, it is essential that you look up the verses with words missing and blanks to fill in. Other verse references will be mentioned for further study—if you look them up too, you are doing very well, but they are not as essential to the main point. You are far better off looking up only the verses with blanks and finishing the study than looking up everything, getting bogged down, and never sending it back in the mail because you never finish! Also, it is very possible that you will not complete the entire Bible study in one sitting. If you stop somewhere to take a break, give yourself a definite time, perhaps the next day, or the day after, when you will return to it, set a schedule, and work at it regularly until you finish. If you misplace or lose it, do not hesitate to contact us for another copy. If God says that laziness in general is sinful and brings terrible consequences in life (Proverbs 6:6-11), how much more sinful is laziness in learning about God’s Word?

You now know how to look up verses, and understand some of the basic features of your English Bible. Having gained this knowledge, let us see what Scripture claims for itself.

The Inspiration of the Bible:

What the Bible claims for itself

Look at 2 Timothy 3:16. The Bible states there that “All scripture *is* given by — — — — — of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

² Note as well that when a verb has an *est* or *eth* ending, you can just drop it; *needeth* means *needs*, *heareth* means *hears*, *doest* means *does*, *walkest* means *walks*, and so on.

instruction in righteousness.” The word “inspiration” means “God-breathed.” The Bible claims that its words are God's Words; it records Him speaking. Look at Matthew 4:4:

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every ___ ___ ___ that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Here Jesus Christ is speaking about the Bible, as an examination of the verses before and after 4:4 demonstrates. He states that man is to live by every “word” of the Bible, for each one “proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” In fact, look at what He said in Matthew 5:17-18:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one ___ ___ or one ___ ___ ___ ___ shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Here, Christ spoke about the “law and the prophets” (the Old Testament, the part of the Bible that had already been written; sometimes it was also called “the law,” as you can see by comparing v. 17 and v. 18). The “jot” was the smallest letter in the Hebrew language, the *yod*, just like the “i” is our smallest English letter. The “tittle” referred to the smallest details of the Hebrew text; it would be similar to the dot on the “i.” Christ said that the Bible was so sure that, as it were, not one “i” or even the dot on the “i” would pass away! The Bible clearly claims that its own words are inspired.

Furthermore, the entire Bible from cover to cover is God's Word; there are no parts that are “less inspired” than others. Look back again at 2 Timothy 3:16. Note that it says that “___ ___ Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” The whole Book, from Genesis to Revelation, is God's perfect Word.

Peter gives us a powerful statement about the inspiration of the Bible in 2 Peter 1:16-21:
For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, ___ ___ ___ is my beloved ___ ___, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more ___ ___ ___ word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the ___ ___ ___ ___ is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

The apostle Peter was with Jesus Christ throughout His ministry upon the earth, was with Him in the times surrounding His crucifixion, and was an eyewitness of His resurrection and His

ascension back to heaven. He assures the readers of 2 Peter that he and the other apostles did not just make everything up, or follow “cunningly devised fables,” and testifies that he had been an eyewitness to the “majesty” of Christ. He then refers to a time when he was with Jesus Christ in the “holy mount” and heard the voice of the heavenly Father. (Matthew 17:1-9 describes what took place). You will see in that passage that the Lord Jesus took Peter up a mountain with James and John, and appeared to them in His glory. You will also notice in Matthew 17:5 the statement “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” which Peter quotes again in the passage we are talking about, 2 Peter 1:16-21. Peter had heard the actual audible voice of God the Father! We can only imagine how incredible that must have been; no wonder that he and the other disciples, when they heard it, “fell on their face, and were sore afraid” (Matthew 17:6). However, here in 2 Peter chapter one, he says that the “prophecy of the Scripture” (v. 20) is “more sure” (v. 19) than even the audible voice of God! How highly Peter viewed the Scriptures! Every word, phrase, line, chapter, and book is God speaking. Furthermore, note that Peter in 2 Peter 1:20 says that the Scripture is not “of any _____ interpretation.” This statement means that we cannot say that anything in the Bible is “just how you interpret it” or “just how I interpret it.” It means exactly what it says, and it has one correct interpretation, the one that God meant when He inspired it. Think about it. God gave us the Bible so that we could learn about Him; do you think He would make it so that nobody could understand what He said, or people could have thousands of conflicting “interpretations” of it that were all “true,” even though they all totally contradicted each other? We don't say “that's just your interpretation of the law” to a police officer when he pulls us over for running a red light or speeding—we know it will not work. God says that we can't say that with His Word either.

Finally, in 2 Peter 1:21, we find out how God used man to write the Bible. The words of the Bible did not come “in old time by the will of _____, but holy men of God spake as they were _____ by the Holy Ghost.” The human writers of Scripture were not writing whatever they wanted, but the Holy Spirit controlled them so that their very words were God's. We can compare God's authorship and the human recording of the Bible to what we do when we write a letter with a pen. The words of our letter are our words, but it is the pen that actually puts our words on the paper. Just like that, God wrote the Bible, but He used “holy men of God” as His “pens.” We can see this process described in Acts 4:24-25: “Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: _____ by the _____ of thy servant _____ hast said,” etc. God's servant David wrote the words that follow in Acts 4:25, which quotes Psalm 2:1. However, it was God who really said it “by [David's] mouth.” Since the Bible is, from cover to cover, the Word of God, and Titus 1:2 tells us that God “cannot lie,” we can be sure that everything the Bible says about God, life, history, science, and everything else is entirely free from error. We can say, as Jesus Christ said in prayer to God

the Father, “thy _____ is truth” (John 17:17). Considering all of this, we should have the utmost reverence and respect for the Holy Bible. God says, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isaiah 66:2).

We have seen what the Bible claims for itself. However, cannot someone say, “These claims are all very well, but I could write a book and claim that its very words were God’s words as well; how do we know that the Bible is any better than something I could just make up?” This is an important question. What evidence do we have for these Biblical claims?

The Inspiration of the Bible: Evidences for it

First of all, we have internal evidence for the inspiration of the Bible. The Bible is self-attesting—it claims to be the very Word of God, and all who read it know that it is so—however, those who do not wish to submit to the God of the Bible suppress that knowledge. In John chapter 7, the enemies of Jesus Christ sent officers to arrest Him, but they did not do as they were commanded. They were then asked “Why have ye not brought him?” (John 7:45). John 7:46 says, “The officers answered, _____ man _____ like this man.” The people who heard Jesus preach, according to Matthew 7:28-29, “were _____ at his doctrine: for he taught them as *one* having _____, and not as the scribes.” In Luke 4:22, “all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.” The Bible is the Word of God, and all who read it know it to be so deep within. Hebrews 4:12 states that the Word of God is “quick [which means living], and _____, and sharper than any twoedged sword, _____ even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a _____ of the _____ and intents of the heart.” Jesus Christ said in John 7:17 that “If any man _____ do his will, he shall _____ of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself.” All who are willing to follow God, when they come to the Bible with a willing and a seeking heart, will know that it is indeed the Word of God, just as it claims. The fundamental question is not intellectual; as we will see by the end of this study, the evidence for the Bible’s inspiration is so overwhelming that those who reject it are “professing themselves to be wise, [but] they [are] fools” (Romans 1:22). The fundamental issue is moral; are we willing to submit to God and the Bible? Are we willing to do His will? If we are, we will “know of the doctrine, whether it be of God” or not. If we are not willing to obey the Lord, we will always be able to think up some flimsy excuse to do what we want to do. Scripture tells us that there would “come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts” (2 Peter 3:3). They do not reject the Bible because of a lack of evidence, but, knowing that it is true, they

rejected the evidence so that they would not have to give up their sins. The Bible simply is the Word of God—and when God speaks, man knows He has spoken.

The Bible also has powerful external evidences. It contains many scientific facts. For example, many hundreds of years before science could confirm it, the Bible stated:

1.) The world is round. Isaiah 40:22, “*It is he that sitteth upon the _____ of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.*”

2.) The earth hangs in space. Job 26:7, “*He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and _____ the earth upon _____.*”

3.) The ocean has currents. Psalm 8:8 refers to the “the _____ of the seas,” and Isaiah 43:16 to “a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters.”

4.) The importance of blood for life. Leviticus 17:11 states that “the _____ of the flesh is in the blood.”

5.) Air has weight. Job 28:25, “*To make the _____ for the _____; and he weigheth the waters by measure.*”

6.) No new matter is being created, as the First Law of Thermodynamics affirms. After His work of creation, Genesis 2:2 states that “*God _____ his work which he had made.*”

7.) The universe is running down, as the Second Law of Thermodynamics affirms. Psalm 102:25-27 states, “*Of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall _____, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall _____ like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.*”³

The Bible also contains no scientific errors—or any other kinds of errors, despite being penned by over forty different people over a period of some 1,500 years!⁴ In addition to its

³ The Bible presents many other scientific truths, such as the fact that the earth rotates on its axis, producing sequences of day and night (Job 38:12-14), the ocean floor has springs (Job 38:16), light travels and is moving, unlike darkness (Job 38:19), light can be parted into a spectrum, and light from the sun creates wind as it heats the earth (Job 38:24), the wind has circuits (Ecc 1:6), and there are huge numbers of stars, far beyond what can be seen with the naked eye (Gen 22:17; Jer 31:37), which differ in brightness or magnitude (1 Cor 15:41). The Bible likewise presents the hydrological cycle (Job 26:8; 36:27-28; 37:11, 16; 38:25-30) and many other facts not validated scientifically until very recently.

⁴ Some might say that the theory of evolution is proof that the Bible is not true. However, the Biblical account of the creation of the world is far more scientifically reasonable than evolution. An objective investigation of the evidence reveals that evolution is not only unbiblical but also is unreasonable pseudo-science. For evidence in favor of creation and against evolution, please ask us for a free copy of the booklets *The Scientific Case Against Evolution*, which deals generally with scientific evidence in relation to the issue, and *Biblical Catastrophism and Geology*, which deals more specifically with the Biblical worldview and the issue of the flood in the days of Noah. Both pamphlets were written by Dr. Henry M. Morris, who had been a professor of Hydraulics and head of the Civil Engineering department at Virginia Tech University before becoming the president of the Institute for Creation Research. They can be downloaded for free at: <http://faithsaves.net/is-the-Bible-Gods-Word/>. For a book length

scientific accuracy, the Bible is historically accurate; archeology has confirmed, over and over again, its accuracy in its statements about nations, peoples, and cities; and no archeological evidence has ever contradicted a Biblical statement.

In Isaiah chapter 44, God states that His ability to predict the future shows that He is the true God, for by doing this He can do what no idol or false god, or mere man, is able to do. Isaiah 44:6-8 reads, “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and beside me *there is* no God. And who, as I, shall call, and _____ it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the _____ that are _____, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it*? ye *are* even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*.” The God of the Bible affirms that we can know He truly exists as the Lord of all through His ability to predict the future. The Bible stands alone in its numerous, clear, and specific prophecies, often made hundreds of years in advance of their subsequent fulfillment. By one count there are 1,817 predictions in the Bible, 1,239 in the Old Testament and 578 in the New. No other book that alleges to be from God, whether the Koran, the Book of Mormon, the Vedas, etc. has prophecy like the Bible. The predictive prophecies of Scripture are an irrefutable evidence of its inspiration by God. Many of these prophecies deal with Jesus Christ; we will study some of these later (in Bible study #4)—but the Bible has many other prophecies. Let us look at three examples:

1.) Around 700 B. C., the prophet Isaiah predicted, in the same context where God stated He would show that He was the true God by predicting the future (Isaiah 44:6-8; cited above), that the nation of Judah would be taken into exile by the Babylonians and Jerusalem would be destroyed (Isaiah 39:5-7; 2 Chronicles 36:14-19). Isaiah then prophesied that, after the time of captivity, a king named Cyrus would allow Judah to return to the Promised Land from exile and rebuild the Jerusalem temple. Isaiah 44:28 states, “That saith of _____, *He is* my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to _____, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.” Over 150 years later, c. 536 B. C. (see Ezra 1), this is exactly what happened. Who besides God could predict the exact name and actions of a world ruler 150 years before he was born?

treatment of the issue, please read *Evolution: The Fossils Still Say No!* by Duane T. Gish (PhD, Biochemistry, University of California, Berkeley), available through our church bookstore, at www.icr.org, or at your local library through interlibrary loan.

2.) The prophet Ezekiel, writing around 587 B. C., made astoundingly accurate predictions about the fate of the city of Tyre (KJV “Tyrus”) in Ezekiel chapter 26. He predicted that the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (or “Nebuchadrezzar”) would devastate the mainland city of Tyre: “For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people. He shall _____ with the _____ thy daughters in the field: and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee” (Ezekiel 26:7-8). Ezekiel predicted that many nations would come against Tyre: “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause _____ to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up” (Ezekiel 26:3). He predicted that the city would be made bare like the top of a rock: “And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the _____ of a _____” (Ezek 26:4). He predicted that fishermen would spread nets to fish over the site of the city, which would somehow be in the ocean: “It shall be *a place* for the _____ of nets in the _____ of the _____: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD: and it shall become a spoil to the nations” (Ezekiel 26:5). A somewhat related prediction was that the debris from the city would be thrown into the water: “And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall _____ thy _____ and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the _____” (Ezek 26:12). The city would also never be rebuilt: “And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be *a place* to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built _____: for I the LORD have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 26:14). Some of these predictions would have sounded, when they were made, far-fetched and contradictory. How, for example, could Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the nation of Babylon, crush the city, but “many nations” come against it? How could a city end up in an ocean so that fishermen would spread nets over it? And would it be likely that the great and famous city of Tyre, the capital of the Phoenician empire, would never again be rebuilt?

Future history, however, confirmed the accuracy of Ezekiel’s prediction in an amazing way. In 573 B. C., Nebuchadnezzar broke down the gates of the mainland city of Tyre and subdued it after a long and difficult siege. When he did, however, he found the city almost empty; the majority of the remaining populace had moved by ship to an island a half mile off the coast and fortified a city there. Despite the defeat of the mainland city, this island city of Tyre remained powerful for several hundred years. In 332 B. C., Alexander the Great sought to subdue the island city of Tyre. To accomplish this, he took the stones of the old mainland city and built a land bridge with them to reach the island city, which he then

defeated. He made the site of the mainland city bare as the top of a rock, as the Bible had predicted. The debris of the city was thrown into the water, as Ezekiel had foretold. The land bridge is used even to this day for fishing, and fishermen spread their nets out to dry over the flattened rock that once held the mainland city; indeed, down the coast from the location of the original city is a small fishing village. After being sacked by Alexander the Great, the island city of Tyre managed to recover somewhat, but was again reduced by Antigonos in 314 B. C. Many centuries later, after the rise of Islam, the city was taken by Muslim armies, which caused the Crusaders to fight for it, which they did successfully. It became an important base for the Catholic armies, but was reconquered for Islam in A. D. 1291 and the population was massacred and sold into slavery. After that time, the former capital of the Phoenician empire was never rebuilt, despite the fact that Tyre has a fresh water supply sufficient for a large modern city. All of the Biblical predictions concerning the city have been fulfilled, in all their richness and specificity, some of them many centuries after they were originally made. Could anyone other than the all-foreseeing God make predictions such as these?

3.) Moses, writing around 1,400 B. C., predicted the future history of Israel in absolutely astounding detail. Please take your Bible and read Deuteronomy 28:47-68. Some refer the events of this passage to the removal of the northern ten tribes of Israel from the land of Canaan under the Assyrians in 722 B. C. and the leading of the southern two tribes to Babylon in 586 B. C. If this were the case, it would prove a most remarkable prediction, since it was made at the very least over 700 years in advance. However, a careful examination of the text indicates that the exile predicted goes beyond the days of Assyria and Babylon to the expulsions of the Jewish nation from the land in A. D. 70 and A. D. 135, and it includes the subsequent history of the nation for the years that follow. Notice that in v. 49 the invaders come “from the ___ ___ of the ___ ___ ___, as swift as the ___ ___ ___ flieth.” From the viewpoint of the land of Israel, it would have been considerably more appropriate to designate Rome and the Roman armies as enemies from “the end of the earth” than the Babylonians or Assyrians. It is also noteworthy that the eagle was the Roman ensign. Consider as well that these enemies would be “a nation whose ___ ___ ___ thou shalt not ___ ___ ___ ___ ___” (v.49); a statement more applicable to the Roman language Latin, which was utterly alien to Hebrew, than the speech of the Babylonians and Assyrians, which was, although different, a related language. Moses predicted, in v. 64, that “the LORD shall scatter thee among ___ ___ ___ ___, from the one ___ ___ of the ___ ___ ___ even unto the other.” This did not take place in the days of Babylon or before, but the Romans in A. D. 135 utterly crushed the Jews that remained in Palestine after their terrible defeat in A. D. 70, confiscated all their land, and sold it to non-Jews. A worldwide scattering,

as predicted here by Moses c. 1,400 B. C., was also confirmed as a future event by Christ around A. D. 33 as recorded in Luke 21:24. From the time the Romans scattered Israel, for close to two millennia (until 1948, when the Jews returned to their land, which also relates to Bible prophecy, as we shall see), the land was under Gentile (non-Jewish) control by those strongly hostile to the sons of Israel. Jews were scattered “from the one end of the earth even unto the other” (v. 64) for many hundreds of years, and in these lands they experienced the terrible fulfillment of v. 65-67:

And among these nations shalt thou find no __ __ __ __, neither shall the sole of thy foot have __ __ __ __: but the LORD shall give thee there a __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ heart, and failing of eyes, and __ __ __ __ __ __ of mind: And thy __ __ __ __ shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt __ __ __ __ day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

Hated by the Romans, and later by the Catholic nations of Europe and the Islamic nations of the Arab world, the Jews were driven from nation to nation, despised, oppressed, banished, and massacred, unable to find a place of safety and protection by the law. These verses provide a remarkable commentary on the sad history of centuries of anti-Semitism, from the days of Israel’s dispersion from Palestine until modern times. Jewish history since the exile from the land is a tale of constant persecution. Also, the statement of Deuteronomy 28:68 that “the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with __ __ __ __ __, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be __ __ __ __ unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and __ __ __ __ shall __ __ __ __ you,” never took place in connection with the Babylonian or other earlier captivities, but was literally fulfilled after Jerusalem fell to the Roman armies under Titus in A. D. 70. The first century historian Josephus records that 97,000 prisoners were taken at that time, and huge numbers of Jews were enslaved and conveyed to Egypt by ship, where they proved to be a glut on the slave market, so that nobody bought them. Who other than the God of the universe could predict what would happen around 1,500 years later?

However, the evidence for the truth of God and His Word in the history of Israel is yet more evident in the Bible’s predictions of the continued existence of Israel as a nation. This is implied in Deuteronomy 28; the Israelites would have to continue as a distinct body if they were to continue to be persecuted. It is also very clearly stated in Romans chapter 11 and many other portions of the Bible. This constitutes a very remarkable prophecy in itself. The nations of Israel’s past have vanished—today we have no more Ammonites, Philistines, Moabites, Jebusites, Edomites, Hittites, Amorites, and so on, as identifiable ethnic groups—

but the Jews, despite having no homeland for nearly two thousand years, have remained a distinct nation to the present day. No other people destitute of a homeland in this manner have remained unassimilated in the history of the world. The Jews have done so because the Bible said they would. Furthermore, the return of Israel to the Promised Land and her restoration as a nation was also predicted in Scripture, and we are beginning to see this fulfilled in our own day. In 1948 Israel became a nation again. In 1967, the Six Day War made Jerusalem a united Jewish city. Ezekiel 36:24 states, "I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land." Ezekiel 11:17 reads, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel." Amos 9:14-15 reads, "And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God." Shortly after the passage in Deuteronomy 28 where Moses predicts the dispersion and persecution of the Jews, he says that there will come a day when "the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and _____ thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If *any* of thine be driven out unto the outmost *parts* of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God _____ thee, and from thence will he _____ thee: and the LORD thy God will _____ thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers" (Deuteronomy 30:3-5). The ultimate restoration of Israel to the Promised Land in Scripture is associated with the second coming of Jesus Christ, when He will set up His throne and reign over all the earth from Jerusalem for 1,000 years (see Zechariah 12:10-14:21; Isaiah 9:6-7; Micah 4-5; Romans 11:26-27; Revelation 19-20; etc.). The predictions of the Bible that dealt with Israel's past have been fulfilled in an unmistakably supernatural way, and we see Biblical prophecy in the process of fulfillment before our eyes today. The complete restoration of Israel will also soon come to pass in the future upon Jesus Christ's return; then nobody will be able to deny that the Bible is the Word of God, but it will be too late to get any saving benefit from this recognition.

God said in Isaiah 44, as we saw, that He would prove that He was the true God through His ability to predict the future. We have seen, in these three prophecies, undeniable evidence that validates His claim. Biblical prophecy is absolutely unique; no other religious or secular book in the world, whether the writings of Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, Nostradamus, Joseph Smith, or anyone else, contains inerrant written prophecies as the Bible does. We have

The Preservation of the Bible

The Preservation of the Bible: What the Bible claims for itself

14

says, “The _____ of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. 7 Thou shalt _____ them, O LORD, thou shalt _____ them from this generation _____.” Jesus Christ said in Matthew 24:35, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my _____ shall not _____.” These are very clear promises that God would preserve every word of the Bible. In Matthew 5:18, the Lord Jesus said, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one _____ or one _____ shall in no wise _____ from the law, till all be fulfilled.” We mentioned earlier that the “jot” was the smallest Hebrew letter, and the “tittle” referred to the minutest parts of their language, like the dot on our letter “i.” The Bible claims that not one word of its inspired text will ever be lost. In fact, not even one letter, one consonant or vowel, or even the smallest part of a letter, would ever be corrupted! This is because, as Matthew 4:4 states, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” If we are to live by every one of God’s words, they must all be preserved for us. Furthermore, they must be accessible, not just preserved somewhere where nobody knows about them or uses them. God promises us in Isaiah 59:21, “As for me, this *is* my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that *is* upon thee, and my _____ which I have put in thy mouth, shall not _____ out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy _____, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and _____.” God promised that His people would have His words in their mouths, and so would their seed (descendants), in every generation. The Bible teaches that all of God’s inspired words will be preserved forever, and that they will be available to those who want to live by them. God did not give us a perfect Bible and then let it disappear. He preserved it for us today. In the standard English Bible, the King James Version that you hold in your hand, which was accurately translated from the Hebrew Masoretic text and the Greek Received Text, you hold a copy of this preserved Word of God. His Word has not been lost. Surely God, who is powerful enough to ensure the fulfillment of His prophetic predictions, as we have seen earlier in this study, is able to keep His promises about the preservation of His Word. Let us, however, examine the historical evidence that confirms these promises of perfect preservation.

The Preservation of the Bible:

The Confirmation of History

The Bible is by far the best-attested document of antiquity. There are over 5,600 known Greek manuscripts (abbreviated MSS) of the New Testament in existence, along with over

10,000 Latin manuscripts and at least 9,300 of other early versions,⁶ for a total of more than 24,000 manuscript copies or portions. The book with the second largest number of copies is the *Illiad* of Homer, with 643 manuscripts, less than 2.7% of the evidence for the New Testament, although it was the most widely read book of antiquity! Furthermore, New Testament MSS date back to the era of the composition of the books themselves; a number of papyri from the Qumran caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered have been dated as early as A. D. 50, and New Testament papyri from other locations date to close to A. D. 100, shortly after the final books of the New Testament were written. After this time the amount of evidence begins to grow with tremendous speed. In contrast to this early evidence, of the 643 MSS of Homer's *Illiad*, the earliest complete preserved text dates from the 13th century A. D.! Furthermore, all but 11 of the 7,957 verses of the New Testament could be reproduced without a single manuscript from the 36,289 quotes made by early writers in Christendom from the second to the fourth century. With this kind of evidence, to assert that the New Testament has been corrupted requires one to not only reject God's promises of perfect preservation but to throw out all of ancient history. Compare the evidence for the New Testament to that for these other representative ancient documents:

AUTHOR	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of Copies
<i>Casear</i>	100-44 B. C.	A. D. 900	1,000 yrs.	10
<i>Plato (Tetralogies)</i>	427-347 B. C.	A. D. 900	1,200 yrs.	7
<i>Tacitus (Annals)</i>	A. D. 100	A. D. 1100	1,000 yrs.	20
<i>Pliny the Younger</i>	A. D. 61-113	A. D. 850	750 yrs.	7
<i>Thucydides (History)</i>	460-400 B. C.	A. D. 900	1,300 yrs.	8
<i>Suetonius</i>	A. D. 75-160	A. D. 950	800 yrs.	8
<i>Herodotus (History)</i>	480-425 B. C.	A. D. 900	1,300 yrs.	8
<i>Sophocles</i>	496-406 B. C.	A. D. 100	1,400 yrs.	193
<i>Catullus</i>	54 B. C.	A. D. 1550	1,600 yrs.	3
<i>Euripides</i>	480-406 B. C.	A. D. 1100	1,500 yrs.	9
<i>Aristotle</i>	384-322 B. C.	A. D. 1100	1,400 yrs.	49
<i>Aristophanes</i>	450-385 B. C.	A. D. 900	1,200 yrs.	10
NEW TESTAMENT	c. A. D. 35-95 for different books	Papyri 7Q5-7 c. A. D. 50	negligible	24,000+

⁶ These would include the Ethiopic, Slavic, Armenian, Syriac Peshitta, Bohairic, Arabic, Old Latin, Anglo-Saxon, Gothic, Sogdian, Old Syriac, Persian, and Frankish versions.

If the New Testament is not preserved, accurate, and historical, nothing is.⁷

What about the Old Testament? Can God's promises to perfectly preserve it be trusted? We also have a great many Hebrew manuscripts and a wide variety of other sorts of attestation for it. For example, one source, the Cairo synagogue geniza (a storehouse for manuscripts), discovered in the 1890s, held over 10,000 manuscript portions. Over six thousand other Hebrew manuscripts from a wide variety of sources also exist elsewhere.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 provided an opportunity to test the validity of the promises of Biblical preservation. The Scrolls were over a thousand years older than previously known Old Testament MSS—if men had changed or corrupted the Bible, their actions would now be exposed by the discovery of the much older text. Furthermore, all the books of the Old Testament, except the short book of Esther, were discovered among the scrolls, so the test would either validate or invalidate the whole Hebrew Bible. They turned out to provide an astounding confirmation of the accuracy of the Old Testament—the Hebrew Masoretic text, which underlies the King James Bible and most other Bible versions, was found in the scrolls. The Bible had not been changed! Other early manuscripts found in other locations, such as those in the ancient fortress of Masada, also evidence the accuracy of the Hebrew text; for example, fragments from the Psalms, Leviticus, Ezekiel, and Deuteronomy were found that were letter-by-letter identical to our printed Hebrew texts.⁸

The Jewish scribes were also phenomenally careful in their copying of the Hebrew text. They followed elaborate sets of rules to ensure an accurate textual transmission. The Jewish Talmud, for example, mandated, among other rules, that a scribe needed to: 1.) Write no word or letter from memory, but have an authentic copy before him and read and pronounce each word before writing it. 2.) Wipe his pen each time before writing the word for “God” (*Eloheim*) and wash his whole body before writing the name *Jehovah*. 3.) Finish a roll within thirty days; otherwise the work was worthless. One mistake on a sheet condemned the sheet—three copying mistakes on any page and the entire manuscript was condemned. 4.) Every word and every letter was counted, and if a letter was omitted, an extra letter inserted, or if one letter touched another, the manuscript was condemned or destroyed at once. Evidence for the use of these rules is seen in the Masoretic notes found in the Hebrew Bible. For example, at the end of the book of Genesis, we find a note that reads in part:

⁷ Much of the material in this section is compiled from the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* by Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999) and *Evidence That Demands a Verdict, vol. 1* by Josh McDowell (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1979). For more information, please contact us or examine these resources.

⁸ pg. 45-46, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Gleason Archer, rev. ed. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994.

“The number of the verses of the book of Genesis is a thousand and five hundred and thirty and four. . . . And its middle point is, ‘And by thy sword shalt thou live’ (27:40). And the words are twenty thousand and six hundred and twelve. And the letters are eight and seventy thousand and sixty and four.”

Think of it! Every verse, word, and letter was counted and accurately tabulated! Another note, this one at the end of the first five books of the Bible, referred to as the Pentateuch or the Law, reads in part:

“The number of the verses of the whole Law is five thousand and eight hundred and forty and five. . . . And its middle point is, ‘And he placed on the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim’ (Lev. 8:8). The number of all the words is eighty-one thousand four hundred and forty. The number of all the letters is three hundred and four thousand and eight hundred and seven.”⁹

This kind of stunningly meticulous care for the accurate transmission of the Hebrew text provides amazing confirmation that God’s promises of preservation have been fulfilled. The Bible we have today in our hands is indeed the same as that which was originally given by inspiration. To say otherwise not only requires one to reject God’s promises, but to deliberately close one’s mind to overwhelming evidence.

The Conclusion: The Bible is the inspired, infallible, perfect Word of God!

We have seen, over the course of this Bible study, that the Bible claims that it is the inspired Word of God. We saw that this means that the Bible is as much God’s Word as if you actually heard Him speak audibly to you. The Bible is not just God’s Word in some vague and general sense, but each and every one of its words is from God. We then saw some of the powerful evidence that backs up this fact. Finally, we saw both that God had promised to perfectly preserve His Word for us today, and that history provides very powerful corroboration for this claim. Since all of this is true, what should you do? 2 Timothy 2:15 says you should “__ __ __ __ to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). In John 5:39, Jesus Christ said “__ __ __ __ the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Let us, therefore, search and study the Bible with reverence and with a

⁹ The translation is that on pgs. 63, 67-68 of *Introduction to the Ginsburg Edition of the Hebrew Old Testament* (C. D. Ginsburg, London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1928). The notes are found at the end of the Ginsburg edition of the traditional Hebrew Masoretic text as published by the Trinitarian Bible Society.

willingness to immediately submit to all that we see that it teaches. Psalm 19:7-11 says, “The law of the LORD *is* __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD *are* right, __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* __ __ __ __ __, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* __ __ __ __ *and* righteous altogether. More to be desired *are they* than __ __ __ __ __, yea, than much __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __.” The Bible is a priceless treasure that God has given to us. Let us see, then, what it says about who He is! This will be the subject of the next Bible study: *Who is God?*

Review Quiz For Bible Study #1

- 1.) The Bible is a good religious book, but it has some minor errors in it since it was written by man. True False
- 2.) Every word of the Bible is as much God’s Word as if the Lord actually spoke it directly to you out loud. True False
- 3.) Words in the Bible are in italics to show that they are important, to emphasize them. True False
- 4.) Science, archeology, and history all confirm that the Bible is true. True False
- 5.) There is more historical evidence that the text of the Bible has been preserved than there is for any other ancient document. True False
- 6.) The main reason that some people do not believe in the Bible is because there is not enough evidence for it. True False
- 7.) We must reverently study the Bible, since every one of its words is inspired by God and preserved by Him for us today. True False

Materials Mentioned in Study #1 and a Request for Study #2

___ I have returned the first Bible study to you with the answer blanks filled in and have answered the review quiz questions. Please send me the next Bible study, *Who is God?*

___ I would like more evidence that the Bible is the Word of God. Please send me the booklet *The Book of Daniel: Proof that the Bible is the Word of the Living God.*

___ I have questions about creation and evolution. Please send me the booklet *The Scientific Case Against Evolution.*¹⁰

___ I have questions about how science relates to the flood of Noah's day. Please send me the booklet *Biblical Catastrophism and Geology.*

___ I do not own a King James Version of the Bible. Please send me a free copy.

___ I would like to meet with or talk to someone in person. I have put information in the spaces below (phone number, times available, etc.) to contact me.

Please use the spaces below to write down any other questions that you have. You can also write down any changes of address. Please also put down the names and addresses of people you know who might also like to do this Bible study.

¹⁰ Both *The Scientific Case Against Evolution* and *Biblical Catastrophism and Geology* can be downloaded for free at: <http://faithsaves.net/is-the-Bible-Gods-Word/>.

Mailing address:

Bible Study #2: *Who is God?*

Introduction and Review

Dear friend,

We are so glad that we are able to help you in your continuing study of the Bible. As a reminder, in study #1 we learned, first of all, a few basic things about the content of the Bible, and how to look up verse references. We then looked at the inspiration of Scripture, and we saw that each and every Word of the Bible was God's Word, as much as if one heard Him speak audibly, so that from cover to cover it is the error-free, perfect Word of God. We then looked at the preservation of the Bible, and saw that God has not allowed any of His inspired Word to be lost, but that it is available today, perfectly preserved and accurately translated into English in our King James Version, the standard English Bible. We ended the study where we are going to begin today—with the nature of God. We are going to see what God has told us about Himself in His Word.

With study #2 you have also received your completed version of study #1, which has been checked and graded. Please look over that study for corrections by your Bible teacher, especially on the quiz questions, and for comments, especially at the very end of the study. Also, please keep your study available so that you can look back at it later. Remember that at the end of each study you have some questions to answer so that we can see that you have understood the Biblical teaching, and some blank space upon which you can write down any questions that you have. Also, please use this space to provide us with the names and addresses of any friends or acquaintances of yours who would also be interested in studying the Bible, so that we can send this free correspondence study to them as well. Finally, let us mention again that this Bible course is provided to you courtesy of Bethel Baptist Church, 4905 Appian Way, El Sobrante, CA

94803, (510) 223-8721/ (510) 223-9550, www.pillarandground.org, betbapt@flash.net. Please let us know if you would like a personal visit for Bible study, and feel free to visit us for Sunday school at 9:45 a.m., morning worship at 11:00 a.m., Sunday evening worship at 6:00 p.m., and Wednesday prayer and Bible study at 7:00 p.m. Once again, we are overjoyed that we can assist you in studying the Bible.

Who is God?

The Importance of the Question

Why does it matter who God is? Why do we need to make sure that we have the right ideas about Him? There are many, many reasons why we should learn about the nature of God. As we shall see later in this study, He created us, and gives us everything that we have; who would not want to find out about One who has done so much for us? He is the only all-powerful Being; who would not wish to know what He is like? He is going to be our Judge, and determine if we will receive endless happiness or punishment—we ought to find out what He is like! Indeed, knowing who God is and what He wants of us is the most important matter we can ever consider. Revelation 4:11 says, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created ___ ___ things, and for thy ___ ___ ___ they are and were created.” From this verse, we can see that we were created for His “pleasure”—we exist to fulfill His will, to be and do what is pleasing to Him. This is the meaning of life—but we cannot put it into practice without knowing who God is and what He wants. Furthermore, from Hebrews 11:6, we see that God “is a ___ ___ ___ of them that diligently seek him,” so those who truly know God can look for His superabounding and everlasting blessing. Indeed, in John 17:3, Jesus Christ said that “[T]his is life eternal, that they might ___ ___ ___ thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Knowing God is essential if we hope to have eternal life; indeed, if we do not know Him, we have no spiritual life now or eternity with Him later. The Bible repeatedly speaks of salvation as knowing God (Titus 1:16) or knowing the LORD (Jeremiah 31:34). This is so important that the phrase “Know that I am the LORD” is found 72 times in the Bible, while related phrases and commands everywhere abound. Furthermore, Jesus said the greatest commandment of all was “Thou shalt ___ ___ ___ the Lord thy God with all thy ___ ___ ___, and with all thy ___ ___ ___, and with all thy ___ ___ ___” (Matthew 22:37). We cannot love Him if we do not know who He is; our hearts cannot appreciate Him, our souls cannot desire Him, and our minds cannot understand or submit to Him without this knowledge. We have seen that knowing God is foundational to the purpose of our lives on earth, essential to the acquisition of eternal life, and required for obedience to the greatest commandment. Let us, then, proceed with this all-important study!

What God is like:

Basic Characteristics

In many places, the Bible teaches that there is only one God. 1 Corinthians 8:4 declares that “*there is none other _____ but _____.*” The Lord says “*I am the _____, and I am the _____; and beside me there is _____ God*” (Isaiah 44:6; cf. Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5). John 4:24 tells us further that “*God is a _____.*” He is, therefore, not a material being with a body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39) like us. Along these lines, Colossians 1:15 tells us that He is “*the _____ God.*” He is also a personal Being; He is not just some sort of “force” or “higher power” but One who has self-consciousness and self-determination. He is said to “know” (Exodus 3:7), to “will” (Exodus 3:17), and to feel (Genesis 6:6; 1 Kings 11:9; Romans 5:8). He also is interested in fellowship with mankind; the godly of all the ages have “*_____ with God*” (Genesis 5:22, 6:9; cf. 17:1, Leviticus 26:12). God promises to His own that He “will forgive their iniquity” and “remember their sin no more” and they will “Know the LORD” (Jeremiah 31:34). People that have been brought into a right relationship to God can say “truly our _____ *is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*” (1 John 1:3). We can know who God is and what He wants from us, and have fellowship with Him.

God also has a number of characteristics that make Him unlike anyone or anything else. With “*God _____ are possible*” (Matthew 19:26), for He is all-powerful, “the Almighty” (Genesis 17:1; 49:25, etc.). He showed this by creating the universe. Jeremiah 32:17 reads, “Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast _____ the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, *and* there is _____ too hard for thee.” He also shows this by the fact that He sustains the universe. All things “that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers . . . were created by him, and for him” (Colossians 1:16), and He is the One who is “before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17); they consist in Him—He is the sustainer of all things.

1 John 3:20 states that “God . . . _____ all things.” He knows from eternity past what will be in eternity future (Isaiah 46:9-10; Acts 15:18), knows all about His creation (Hebrews 4:13), knows every action of man (Psalm 139:2), every word ever spoken (Psalm 139:4), and every thought (1 Chronicles 28:9).

God is also present everywhere. Psalm 139:7-10 read, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy _____? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* _____: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. If I take the wings of

the morning, *and* dwell in the _____ parts of the sea; _____ shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.” In Jeremiah 23:24, God asks, “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I _____ heaven and earth? saith the LORD.” While God is everywhere-present, this does not mean that He is everywhere in exactly the same sense; God the Father is, for example, especially present in heaven (Matthew 6:1).

God also is eternal; as Psalm 90:2 says, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from _____ to _____, thou *art* God.” There has never been a time when God has not existed, nor will there be a time when He will no longer be around. He is the first cause of all that there is, and is self-existent. In Exodus 3:14 “God said unto Moses, _____: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, _____ hath sent me unto you.” God gives Himself this amazing title, the I AM, as the eternal, self-existing God!

God is also, since He is completely and fully perfect in all His being and attributes, unchangeable; He says in Malachi 3:6, “For I *am* the LORD, I _____ not.” James 1:17 reads, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no _____, neither shadow of _____.”

In all of the characteristics mentioned above, God is absolutely unique. He also has other important attributes, which His creatures can in certain ways share with Him. These include:

- *His holiness.* Psalm 99:9 commands, “Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God *is* _____.” Before His throne seraphim cry “Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). That God is holy means that He is infinitely set apart from sin and evil, since He is perfectly good and righteous. Because He is holy, He also commands us to be holy. 1 Peter 1:15-16 reads, “But as he which hath called you is _____, so be _____ holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be _____ holy; for _____ am holy.” His holy character is the basis of the commandments He has given us to keep; since He is holy, His “law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). We will look in the next study at what commands God has given us in His law. This is extremely important, since God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Habakkuk 1:13). His character of being right or righteous is related to His holiness. Psalm 145:17 reads, “The LORD *is* _____ in all his ways, and holy in all his works.” Psalm 11:7 declares that “the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.”

- *His justice.* This characteristic is also related to His holiness. He calls Himself “a ___ ___ God and a Saviour” in Isaiah 45:21. He is the just “Judge of all the earth” according to Genesis 18:25. His justice leads Him to require the punishment of all violations of His law. Psalm 11:6 reads, “Upon the ___ ___ he shall rain snares, ___ ___ and ___ ___, and an horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup.” He judges in accord with truth, for He is Himself the God of truth (Romans 3:4, Titus 1:2). God’s wrath, His holy anger against evil and evildoers, is also related to His justice. Psalm 7:11-13 tell us that “. . . God is ___ ___ *with the wicked* every day. If he turn not, he will whet his ___ ___; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of ___ ___; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.” Romans 1:18 tells us that “the ___ ___ of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”
- *His love.* This is a great and defining characteristic of God; The Bible says, in fact, that “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is ___ ___” (1 John 4:8). His mercy is related to His love. Ephesians 2:4 speaks of “God, who is rich in ___ ___, for his great ___ ___ wherewith he loved us.” Titus 2:11 also speaks of “the ___ ___ of God.” Mercy and grace are related; the former relates to God’s not giving a sinner what he deserves, and the latter to giving him something he does not deserve. The way that God can be perfectly just, but also be merciful to sinful mankind, and so show His love for us, is something we will study later; His ability to do this also shows His wisdom, another one of His characteristics; He is “the only ___ ___ God,” according to 1 Timothy 1:17.
- *His faithfulness.* This relates to God’s unchanging nature. Deuteronomy 7:9-10 reads, “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he *is* God, the ___ ___ God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations: and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.” He is both faithful in His kindness to those who are His friends and faithful in His severity against those who are against Him. Another characteristic of God, His goodness, also relates to both His justice and His mercy. Romans 2:4 speaks of “the ___ ___ of God.” and of “the riches of his ___ ___ and forbearance and longsuffering.”
- *His sovereignty or kingship.* 1 Timothy 1:17 reads, “Now unto the ___ ___ eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, *be* honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Psalm 93:1 reads, “The LORD ___ ___, he is clothed with majesty.” He

is called in Psalm 97:5 “the Lord of the whole earth.” He oversees and rules over all that happens; Ephesians 1:11 tells us that He “worketh _____ after the counsel of his own _____.”

All of these amazing and wonderful characteristics of God should lead us to say, “Let them _____ the name of the LORD: for his name alone is _____; his _____ is above the earth and heaven” (Psalm 148:13).

What God is like:

Basic Words for Him

God refers to Himself with many different names and titles in the Bible. However, there are three especially common ones with which we should be familiar. The first is simply the word “God.” This is the basic term for Him. It appears over 2,500 times in the Old Testament, and translates the Hebrew word *Eloheim*. It appears in the first verse of the Bible, where we see that “In the beginning God [that is, *Eloheim*] created the heaven and the earth.” A second very common name is found in Psalm 83:18, which reads, “That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone is _____, *art* the most high over all the earth.” This name, which appears over 6,500 times in the Old Testament, means “I AM THAT I AM” (see Exodus 3:13-15) and emphasizes God’s self-existence and His relationship to His people. In the New Testament Jesus Christ and the apostles translated the Hebrew *Jehovah* as “Lord” to show respect for the great Divine name (notice Exodus 20:7). We can see this by comparing Matthew 22:44 and Psalm 110:1. In the New Testament verse, Jesus Christ said “The Lord (Greek *kurios*, “Lord”) said unto my Lord” while quoting the Old Testament verse in the book of the Psalms, which reads “The LORD (Hebrew *Jehovah*) said unto my Lord.” (Other examples of this include Matthew 23:39+Psalm 118:26 and Acts 2:25+Psalm 16:8). In accordance with this example of Christ and the early church, most of the time our Old Testament translates the Hebrew name *Jehovah* as *LORD* in all capital letters; wherever you see this in your Bible, you can assume this is the word being translated. (Genesis 2:4 is an example; there “the LORD God” is, in Hebrew, *Jehovah Eloheim*.) A third common word for God, *Adonai*, appears over 400 times in the Old Testament, and is translated as *Lord*, with the letters after the first in lowercase instead of in all caps, as with *Jehovah (LORD)*. In Exodus 15:17, you can see both *Jehovah* and *Adonai* together; the verse reads, “Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD [*Jehovah*], which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord [*Adonai*], which thy hands have established.” The term *Adonai* emphasizes God's rulership or lordship, His position as the Master. When *Adonai* is found in conjunction with *Jehovah* as a compound name, since “Lord LORD” would be strange,

Jehovah is translated as “GOD” in all capital letters; for example, in Genesis 15:2 we see the phrase “Lord GOD,” which translates the Hebrew *Adonai Jehovah*. Understanding what is emphasized by these three extremely common Bible words for God will help you as you look up the verses in this Bible study, and as you read the Bible on your own. (A great place to start to read it would be the gospel of John in the New Testament. If you read three chapters of the Bible a day, you can read the whole Book in a year.)

What God is like: Tri-unity or Trinitarianism

Up to this point we have not dealt with an extremely important characteristic of the true God, who gave us the Bible to enable us to know who He is. This characteristic distinguishes Him from all the gods which men have invented in all false religions. It is essential that we understand this aspect of who God is, for, as we mentioned earlier, we do not have eternal life unless we know the *true* God (John 17:3), not a counterfeit version of Him. In the Bible, while God has clearly revealed that He is only one in essence, He has also shown us clearly that He exists eternally in three distinct Personalities or Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Believers through essentially the whole church age have called this fact of three Persons in the one God the doctrine of the Trinity. We can see all three of the Persons of God (or of the “Godhead,” Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9) in Matthew 28:19. There baptism is commanded “in the name of the _____, and of the _____, and of the _____” (“Holy Ghost” is the same thing as “Holy Spirit.”). Also, in 1 John 5:7, we read, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the _____, the _____, and the _____: and these three are one.” Here “Word” is a title for God the Son, as we can see in John 1:1-18, which we will examine below. We can also see many references to the multiple Persons of the one God in the Old Testament; for example, in Isaiah 48 Jehovah (the LORD) is speaking, and in 48:16 He says “Come ye near unto ____, hear ye this; __ have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am __: and now the _____, and his _____, hath sent ____.” Jehovah is speaking, and yet the Lord Jehovah, and His Spirit, are going to send Him! We see all three Persons of the Godhead clearly in this verse; the speaker is “the LORD, thy Redeemer” (48:17), God the Son; the “Lord GOD” who sent Him is God the Father, and “his Spirit” is God the Holy Spirit. Let us look specifically at all three Persons of the Trinity, and show that the Bible identifies each one as God.

God the Father is said to be God in many verses in the Bible. For example, Ephesians 1:2 shows us grace and peace come “from God our _____, and *from* the Lord Jesus

Christ.” Titus 1:4 refers to “Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the _____ and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.” The Father is clearly God. Ephesians 4:6 speaks of “One _____ and _____ of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.”

God the Son is also said to be God in many places in the Bible. For example, Hebrews 1:8 reads, “But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O _____, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom.” God the Father is the One speaking in verse eight (notice Hebrews 1:1-7), and here He calls His Son God. In John 20:28 the apostle Thomas “answered and said unto him [Jesus], My _____ and my _____.” Jesus then said Thomas had spoken well, that he had correctly “believed” (v. 29). Indeed, the disciples knew that when Jesus said He was the Son of God, He was telling them that He had the very same nature as His heavenly Father, and so was Himself God. In Matthew 14:33, the disciples “came and _____ him [Jesus], saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.” Jesus had taught very clearly that nobody except God was to be worshipped (Matthew 4:4), yet He accepted the worship of His disciples as the Son of God. Both the Father and the Son are referred to together as God in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 50:1-6, Jehovah is speaking in verses 1-3 (“Thus saith the LORD”), but then Jehovah says that the Lord GOD (*Adonai Jehovah*) has done a variety of things for Him in verses 4-5, and in verse six, Jehovah, who is still speaking, says “I gave my _____ to the smiters, and my _____ to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my _____ from shame and spitting.” How can Jehovah say that the Lord Jehovah has given Him different things, and then say that He would be beaten and spat upon? This is possible because God the Son is the speaker, and He fulfilled Isaiah 50:6 during His trial before His crucifixion (Matthew 26:67). The “Lord GOD” of Isaiah 50:4-5 is the Father.

John 1:1-18 gives us many details about the relationship between God the Father and God the Son:

“1 In the beginning was the _____, and the Word was _____ God, and the Word _____ God. 2 The same was in the _____ with God. 3 _____ things were made by _____; and without him was not _____ thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. . . . 9 *That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the _____ was _____ by _____, and the world knew him not . . . 14 And the _____ was made _____, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth . . . 17 For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 18 No man hath _____ God at any time; the only begotten _____, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.”

Notice that verse 1, the Word (Jesus Christ, verse 14), is said to be both “with” God, referring to the Father, and yet also to be God Himself. Verse two repeats that God the Son was always with God the Father, even in eternity past. Verse three then tells us that God the Son was the Creator; if He made all things, He obviously was not ever created Himself. Verse ten repeats this truth for us. Finally, in verse fourteen, we see that God the Son became Man as Jesus Christ. Nobody has ever seen God the Father, verse eighteen tells us, but the only begotten Son, God in the flesh, reveals the Father to us. Here we see this amazing fact; Jesus Christ is God in the flesh! He is 100% human, having taken upon Himself a human nature just like ours (Hebrews 2:14-17), except without sin (Hebrews 4:15)—1 Timothy 2:5 refers to “the ____ Christ Jesus”—but He is also 100% God! The Son had, from the eternal past, been fully God. When He came into the world, He took to Himself a human nature, so that now, although still one Person, He has two distinct natures; He is fully human, and fully Divine. This union of two natures in the one Person of the Son will continue to all eternity future. God was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, was born, grew up, died for our sins, was buried, rose again from the grave, returned to heaven to His Father, and will eventually come again to judge the earth (1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 23). 1 Timothy 3:16 sums it up nicely: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: ____ was manifest in the ____, justified in the Spirit, ____ of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, ____ up into glory.” So, just like God the Father is God, God the Son, Jesus Christ, is God.

The Bible also tells us that the Holy Spirit is God. For example, Hebrews 3:7-12 reads:

“7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost ____, To day if ye will hear his voice,
 8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9 When your fathers tempted ____, proved ____, and saw ____ works forty years. 10 Wherefore I was ____ with that generation, and ____, They do alway err in *their* heart; and they have not known my ways. 11 So I ____ in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) 12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living ____.”

Verse seven tells us that the Holy Spirit spoke all the words in the parentheses from “To day” in verse seven to “rest” in verse eleven. He is talking about the nation of Israel in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. He was grieved with the sins of Israel, according to verse ten, and He therefore swore that they would not enter into His rest. This is then made into a warning not to depart from the living God, who, in context, would be the Holy Spirit. Now look back at Psalm 95:6-11. This passage in the Old Testament is clearly the one that is quoted here Hebrews 3:7-11. However, back there, the speaker is said to be “the LORD our maker” (v. 6), who is “our God” (v. 7). If the New Testament says that the Holy Spirit said these words, but the Old

Testament passage said that Jehovah our God said them, the Holy Spirit must be Jehovah God, just as the Father is Jehovah and the Son is Jehovah. Other passages where the New Testament identifies the Holy Spirit as Jehovah in this way are Hebrews 10:15-17 (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34) and Acts 28:25-27 (cf. Isaiah 6:1-10). In 2 Samuel 23:2-3, king David said, “The _____ of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue. 3 The _____ of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be* just, ruling in the fear of God.” We see here in the Old Testament that the Spirit of Jehovah, who speaks here, is Himself “the God of Israel.” The apostle Peter said that to “lie to the Holy Ghost” is not to lie “unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:3-4). The Scriptures sternly warn against blaspheming the Holy Ghost (Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10), because He is God.

How do we put this all together? Certainly there are not three different Gods; “God is one” (Galatians 3:20). Does this mean that the Father, Son, and Spirit are really the same Person—the Father is the Son, and the Son is the Spirit, and the Spirit is the Father? Are these three only three modes of appearing, or three titles for only one Personage? No—the Bible teaches that all three are distinct Personages. When we looked at John 1:1-18 above, we saw that from all eternity past God the Father was with God the Son; they were both God, yet were always distinct from each other (John 1:1-3). We also saw in 2 Samuel 23:2-3 that God the Spirit is also “the Spirit of the LORD,” so He is distinct from the Father and the Son; He is the Spirit of the Father (John 15:26) and the Spirit of the Son (Galatians 4:6), and since He is the “eternal Spirit” (Hebrews 9:14), He is as eternally distinct from the Father and the Son as they are from each other. Look at Matthew 3:13-17. Here we see all three Persons of the Trinity together: God the Son, Jesus Christ, is baptized (v. 16), God the Spirit descends upon Him like a dove (v. 16), and God the Father speaks from heaven (v. 17). Certainly the Father, Son, and Spirit are not the same Person. But all three are fully God, and so have all the Divine attributes. Since the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equally Almighty, all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-present, eternal, and so on, what makes the Divine Three distinguishable?

God the Father is neither begotten nor proceeding from any, God the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and God the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. John 3:16 tells us that “God [the Father] so loved the world, that he gave his only _____ Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” See also John 3:18; Hebrews 1:5; 1 John 4:9. This being begotten is an eternal process; the Son’s “goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). The Holy Spirit is not begotten, but He eternally “proceedeth from the Father” (John 15:26) and the Son (Revelation 5:6; John 16:7; 20:22; 16:15). It is not possible for us to understand exactly what the Son’s being begotten and the Spirit’s procession means; there is a great mystery here (cf. 1 Timothy 3:16). However, God has revealed it, so we should believe it. These differences are what makes

the Father the Father, the Son the Son, and the Spirit the Spirit, within the unity of the one and only God.

It may be hard for us to understand, but God has shown us in the Bible that He is in essence one and only one, yet eternally existent in three distinct and eternal Persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God the Father eternally begets the Son, and the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. Isaiah 55:8-9 reads, “For my _____ are not your thoughts, neither are _____ my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways _____ than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” God's thoughts and ways are infinitely above all that we can comprehend; God has revealed Himself to be a Tri-unity, so it is our responsibility simply to accept this as true.¹¹

The Conclusion:

Let's know and serve this glorious God!

We began this study by learning that it is extremely important to know who God is, for without this knowledge we miss the meaning of life on earth and are lost for all eternity. We then saw that there is only one God, who is a Spirit, the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe, and a personal Being with whom we can have fellowship. We learned that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-present, eternal, self-existent, and unchangeable. He is also holy, just, loving, good, faithful, and sovereign, among other characteristics. We saw that the Hebrew word *Eloheim* is the most common and basic Old Testament word for God. We saw that *Jehovah* is the name of God that emphasizes His self-existence and His relationship to His people. We also saw that *Adonai* is a title for God that stresses His lordship. We then studied the truth that the one God has always existed in three distinct Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father eternally begets the Son, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. These are all marvelous truths about God, and they are extremely important for us to understand. Now that we have studied these things about who God is, we can go on to discover what God wants us to do, and what obedience

¹¹ Some people claim that the Bible does not really teach the doctrine of the Trinity, and they use a variety of arguments to support their view. For a more detailed presentation of the truth of the Triune God, and a refutation of arguments against this essential Biblical teaching, please ask for our free pamphlet *The Triune God of the Bible*. A specific organization that strongly opposes the Trinity is the Watchtower society, commonly called “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” If you have questions about them and their teachings, please ask for our free pamphlet *Are You Worshipping Jehovah?*

or disobedience to His Law brings us. We will look at these matters in Bible study #3: *What does God want from me?*

Review Quiz For Bible Study #2

- 1.) It is not important to know exactly who God is, as long as you try to live your life in a good way. True False
- 2.) God is so separate from us that we cannot really know or say anything about Him. True
False
- 3.) The English phrase LORD God in the Bible represents the Hebrew *Jehovah Eloheim*. True
False
- 4.) The name *Adonai* emphasizes God's self-existence and relationship to His people. True
False
- 5.) Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but not God Himself. True False
- 6.) The Holy Spirit is Jehovah. True False
- 7.) The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all the same Person; the Father is the Son, the Son is the Spirit, and the Spirit is the Father. True False
- 8.) The Holy Spirit is eternally begotten by God the Son. True False
- 9.) God the Father eternally proceeds from God the Son. True False

Materials Mentioned in Study #2 and a Request for Study #3

___ I have returned the second Bible study to you with the answer blanks filled in and answered the review quiz questions. Please send me the next Bible study, *What does God want from me?*

___ I have questions about the doctrine of the Trinity. Please send me the booklet *The Triune God of the Bible*.

___ I have questions about the Watchtower Society (the Jehovah's Witness organization) and their rejection of the Trinity. Please send me the free booklet, *Are You Worshipping Jehovah?*

___ I would like to meet with or talk to someone in person. I have put information in the spaces below (phone number, times available, etc.) to contact me.

Please use the spaces below to write down any other questions that you have. You can also write down any changes of address. Please also put down the names and addresses of people you know who might also like to do this Bible study.

Mailing address:

Bible Study #3: *What Does God Want From Me?*

Introduction and Review

Dear friend,

We are so glad that we are able to help you as you continue to study the Bible. As a reminder, in study #1 we learned, first of all, a few basic things about the contents of the Bible, and how to find verse references. We then looked at the inspiration of the Bible, and we saw that each and every word of the Bible was God's Word, as much as if one heard Him speak audibly, so that from cover to cover the Scriptures are the error-free, perfect Word of God. We then looked at the preservation of the Bible, and saw that God has not allowed any of His inspired Word to be lost—it is available today, perfectly preserved and accurately translated into English in our King James Version, the standard English Bible. We then learned in study #2 about many characteristics of God. We saw that there is only one God, a Spirit, who created and sustains the universe, and who wants to have fellowship with us. We then looked at a number of attributes of God; among other characteristics, He is all-powerful, eternal, and self-existent, as well as holy, just, loving, and good. We also learned the meaning of the words *Eloheim*, *Jehovah*, and *Adonai*. Finally, we saw that this one God has eternally existed in three Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. With this understanding of what the Bible is, and who God is, we are now ready to see what it is that God wants from us, and what His Law promises for obedience and for disobedience.

With study #3 you have also received your completed version of study #2, which has been checked and graded. Please look over that study for corrections by your Bible teacher, especially on the quiz questions, and for comments, especially at the very end of the study. Also, please keep your completed studies available so that you can look back at them later. Remember

that at the end of each study you have some questions to answer so that we can see that you have understood the Biblical teaching, and some blank space upon which you can write down any questions that you have. Also, please use this space to provide us with the names and addresses of any friends or acquaintances of yours who would also be interested in studying the Bible, so that we can send this free correspondence study to them as well. Once again, this Bible course is provided to you courtesy of Bethel Baptist Church, 4905 Appian Way, El Sobrante, CA 94803, (510) 223-8721/ (510) 223-9550, www.pillarandground.org, betbapt@flash.net. Let us know if you would like a personal visit for Bible study, and feel free to visit us for Sunday school at 9:45 a.m., morning worship at 11:00 a.m., Sunday evening worship at 6:00 p.m., or Wednesday prayer and Bible study at 7:00 p.m. We are overjoyed that we can assist you in studying the Bible.

What Does God Want From Me?

The Importance of the Question

At the beginning of study #2, we saw that we were created to please God (Revelation 4:11), so, if we want to fulfill our purpose for existence, we must conform to His will, and be and do what He wishes. One who does not do what God says misses out on everything in this life, and in eternity, that has any real value. Furthermore, God has said that “it is appointed unto men once to __ __ __ __ __, but after this the __ __ __ __ __” (Hebrews 9:27). Someday we will stand before God and give an account of our lives. Some people “shall go away into everlasting __ __ __ __ __: but the righteous into __ __ __ __ __” (Matthew 25:46). Nobody will think at that time that he paid too much attention to what God wanted! Thankfully, God has told us what the standard for judgment is going to be. In John 12:48, Jesus said that “he that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the __ __ __ __ __ that I have spoken, the same shall __ __ __ __ __ him in the last day.” The Lord told us that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by __ __ __ __ __ that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). We are going to be judged according to what the Bible, the Word of God, says. The result of that judgment will have eternal consequences. Imagine that you were in school, taking a very important class, which you needed to pass to graduate, and in that class the final exam was going to be 100% of your grade. What an important test it would be! If you failed, you would not be able to graduate, no matter how everything else went. Imagine, then, that the teacher told you that a copy of the exam, with the exact questions you were going to have to answer, and the correct answers marked in, was in the library, and all students were free to look at it and study from it. Would you say, “That is nice, but I don’t think I’ll do that. There are too many other things going on. I’ll just go to class on

the day of the final exam and see what happens.” Of course not! You would run to the library to read over the exam. How carefully you would look at the questions and study the answers! Only a fool would do anything else. God has told us in His Word exactly what the standard for His “final exam” will be, and He has commanded us to “search the scriptures” (John 5:39) to get ready. To not diligently prepare for His coming judgment is the greatest possible folly. As the Lord Jesus said, “For what shall it ____ a man, if he shall gain the ____, and ____ his own ____?” (Mark 8:36). Let us, then, see what God’s Law has commanded for us!

God’s Law: His holy standard

Our Bible has been calculated to contain 31,101 verses and 791,328 words, all of which are from God, and all of which we are to live by. Obviously we cannot cover everything the Bible tells us to do in just one study. (This is a good reason why, in addition to doing this Bible study, you should daily spend time reading the Bible on your own so that you get to know it cover to cover). We will, however, take a good survey, which will give us an idea of how we match up. Remember that God’s Law reflects who He is; He commands us “Be ye holy” because He Himself is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). Also, the Bible tells us that “____ is the transgression of the ____” (1 John 3:4); we sin when we do what God says not to do, do not do what He tells us to do, or are not what He tells us to be. With this in mind, let us begin our study of God’s Law with the ten commandments, found in Exodus chapter twenty.

The first commandment is found in Exodus 20:1-3: “And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have ____ other ____ before me.” God here forbids all worship not directed to Him, Jehovah, the great Triune God. To worship anyone or anything else is idolatry and sin. This would forbid the worship of Islam, modern Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and all other non-Biblical religions, as well as the worship of those groups within Christendom that deny the Trinity, such as the Watchtower society (so-called “Jehovah’s Witnesses”), Mormonism, Unitarianism, Oneness Pentecostalism, etc. However, God wants more than just a rejection of all false religion; He wants to be in first place in your life. People can make “gods” of all sorts of other things. You could worship the “almighty dollar” by putting money first in your life. You could worship yourself by putting what you want ahead of what God says. You could put friends or family ahead of God. Jesus Christ (who is God) demands first place in your life, and if others will not follow Him, you must do so anyway. He said in Matthew 10:34-37, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send

peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his __ __ __ __ __, and the daughter against her __ __ __ __ __, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother __ __ __ __ than __ __ is not worthy of me: and he that __ __ __ __ __ son or daughter more than __ __ is not worthy of me.” Have you always put the true God first in your life, and loved and sought for Him before all other persons or things? If not, you have broken the first commandment!

The second commandment is found in Exodus 20:4-6: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any __ __ __ __ __, or any __ __ __ __ __ of __ __ __ __ __ that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not __ __ __ __ __ thyself to them, nor __ __ __ __ __ them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a __ __ __ __ __ God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” Here God forbids any to worship Him with “pictures . . . [or] images” (Num 33:52). This prohibits the making of any pictures of God Himself, as well as practices such as bowing down before statues or pictures (Ezekiel 8:10) of saints¹² or Mary, even with the intent to worship God, not them. John 4:24 says, “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in __ __ __ __ __ and in __ __ __ __ __.” All physical images of God necessarily misrepresent Him—as an invisible Spirit, He is not material and cannot be pictured. The Lord commands mankind to offer Him spiritual worship as commanded in His Word, not worship with images. Furthermore, the second commandment agrees with other Scripture in forbidding the making or use of images of Jesus Christ in worship. Since Jesus Christ is God, no images of Him should be made. No image could be made to represent His Divine nature, since that is invisible and spiritual. No image correctly represents the awe-inspiring glorified body He received after His resurrection. One who saw His glorified humanity fell at his feet as dead (Revelation 1:10-18); no image can make this happen. No image correctly represents His human nature during His earthly ministry, for the Bible records nothing of His appearance at that time (compare 1 Peter 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:16). No image can, therefore, correctly represent the eternal Son of God, who is one Person with two natures, a human and a Divine. Furthermore, the common pictures of Christ with long hair are a Satanic attempt to imply that He was sinful, since “if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him” (1 Corinthians 11:14). If you have attempted to worship God using images,

¹² Many people think that the saints are only a tiny category of extraordinarily good dead Christians. However, the Bible teaches that every single one of God's people is a saint, whether already dead or still alive (Psalm 16:3; 116:15; 1 Corinthians 14:33). The Word of God never tells us to pray to dead saints or supports the idea that they have special powers to intercede for us before God—Jesus Christ is the only Mediator. We should only come to God through Him (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1).

you have broken the second commandment—and worship with an “image . . . the LORD thy God hateth” (Deuteronomy 16:22). However, there is more to the second commandment than this. The point of the second commandment is that we recognize God for who He is and serve and worship Him in the way that He has commanded. Romans 1:18-25 explains how mankind turned from the true God to idolatry, which then led to many other sins (Romans 1:26-32). Please read Romans 1:18-32. We see there that “the _____ of God” (v. 18) was upon men for rejecting what the character of God (v. 19), which included His “eternal _____ and Godhead” (v. 20). They saw who God was, since v. 21 says that they “knew God,” but they “_____ *him* not as God, neither were _____; but became _____ in their _____, and their foolish heart was darkened” (v. 21). They would not recognize God for who He was, nor reverence Him, or love or be thankful for who He was, but set up their own ideas of God instead. This is very much the idea behind the second commandment. Since they would not have God for who He was, they “changed the glory of the _____ God into an _____ made like to _____ man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things” (v. 23). They turned from the true God to worship gods of their own imagination, gods that were like them, gods that they liked better. They “_____ the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the _____ more than the _____, who is blessed for ever” (v. 25), and had terrible judgment fall upon them (v. 18, 24, 26-32). God demands that you understand and accept Him for exactly who He says He is in His Word, and worship and serve Him on His own terms. The second commandment forbids, obviously, both the idolatry and image-use mentioned before, but also all other false concepts of God. For example, if you believe in a god that is so “good” that he lets you do whatever you want, and just overlooks sin, or who is so merciful that he will not punish anyone in hell (Rev 21:8), you have a false concept of God which violates the second commandment. If you want God to be kind of like a lucky charm or like Santa Claus, so that you don’t live for Him for His own sake, but only seek Him when you are in trouble and or want something—perhaps some material thing, or help in sickness, or a way out of a difficult situation—you have also broken the second commandment. Do you rebelliously get angry at God if He does not fulfill your own desires? To attempt to re-fashion the Lord of the universe into someone you like better is a very wicked thing, deserving of severe punishment. He is a “jealous” God (Exodus 20:5), demanding exclusive devotion (Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9; 6:15). He will not tolerate false worship.

The third commandment is found in Exodus 20:7: “Thou shalt not take the _____ of the LORD thy God in _____; for the LORD will _____ hold him _____ that taketh his name in _____.” This commandment certainly does forbid

references to God and Jesus Christ in curse phrases. We have an example of a man in Israel who sinned by cursing using God's name in Leviticus 24:10-16. The man "____ the name *of the LORD*, and ____" (v. 11). Jehovah commanded, in v. 14-16, "Bring forth him that hath ____ without the camp; and let all that heard *him* lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation ____ him. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever ____ his ____ shall bear his sin. And he that ____ the name of the LORD, he shall ____ be put to ____, *and* all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name *of the LORD*, shall be put to death" (Leviticus 24:14-16). Today many wickedly curse like this and think nothing of it, when God had those who did it in Israel put to death. A bad situation, such as getting dangerously cut off by a car on the road, or hitting your finger with a hammer, is no excuse. This man cursed during a fight (Leviticus 24:10), but he was still put to death. Although the government today will do nothing to you, if you have cursed with God's name, you deserve to die. Furthermore, it was customary when one heard blasphemy in Israel to rend or tear his clothes as an expression of great sorrow and horror (2 Kings 18:37; 19:1; cf. 2 Kings 18:28-35; 19:3, 6). Perhaps you do not curse yourself, but it does not bother you when others do it—the kind of sorrow and horror over bad language that would make you tear your clothes is the farthest thing from your mind! Do you watch TV programs with cursing, or read books with it? When others do it do you reprove them, and try to get them to stop? Or do you say nothing, and so share in their guilt?

However, there is more to the third commandment than cursing or blaspheming God. What is forbidden is to take His name in "vain." This would forbid speaking of God in a light or frivolous way, rather than speaking of Him reverently and giving Him the honor that is His due. The commandment forbids making jokes or speaking in an irreverent way about God, about Christ, the Bible (which God has "magnified . . . above all [His] name," Psalm 138:2), the things of God, and so on. It would also forbid careless references to Him, such as singing hymns or songs about God without paying attention to what you are saying, or prayer where you are not really speaking to God but it is just a ritual or a formality or something done for show. Consider that "if any man . . . seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain" (James 1:26). If you have cursed, or spoken of God in a light and careless way, you are guilty of breaking the third commandment!

The fourth commandment is found in Exodus 20:8-11: "____ the sabbath day, to keep it _____. Six days shalt thou _____, and do all thy work: But the _____ day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any _____, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy

cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates: For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and _____ the seventh day: wherefore the LORD _____ the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” In Israel, every Saturday was set apart for the worship of God, and secular work ceased. In the New Testament, churches assemble to worship on Sunday,¹³ and Christians are not to be “forsaking the _____ of ourselves _____, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). If you skip church on Sunday, you are sinning against God. Watching a TV preacher, listening to Christian radio, spending some time on Sunday reading the Bible or talking with friends about spiritual things is not enough; the verse commands “assembling . . . together” in church. Furthermore, just as in Israel the Sabbath was set apart for the worship of God, so we should remember that church is about worshipping God, not about our convenience or preferences, and so we must go to one of Christ’s true churches,¹⁴ where the Bible is believed and practiced, and not just whatever happens to be closest to our house or whatever we prefer for some reason; if we are not in a real church, we are not obeying God’s command. Nor does it honor God if we go merely out of a sense of duty or necessity. The attitude of the godly is seen in Psalm 122:1: “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.” Those right with God love His times of public worship because they love Him. They can say with Psalm 84:2, “My soul _____, yea, even _____ for the courts of the LORD: my _____ and my flesh _____ for the living God.”

We should not just serve God on Sunday, however; He wants us to use all of our time for Him. The worship and religious service of those who live for themselves is “vain . . . abomination . . . iniquity . . . [something God’s] soul hateth . . . a trouble unto [Him],” and when they “make many prayers, [He] will not hear” (Isaiah 1:13-15; cf. Psalm 50:16; Zechariah 7:4-14). We are to be “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). 1 Corinthians 10:31 commands, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or _____

¹³ Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Sunday (Mark 16:9), and appeared to His assembled disciples (Matthew 28:8-10; Luke 24:34; John 20:19-23; etc.). The church met on Sunday on the day of Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-16; Pentecost was fifty days after a Saturday Sabbath, and so was always on Sunday), and saw Christ’s tremendous blessings (Acts 2:1-41). The New Testament example for church meetings is Sunday (Acts 20:6-7; 1 Corinthians 16:2); no Biblical pattern of churches keeping Saturday exists, and no verse commands churches to worship on Saturday. The Jewish Sabbath, a sign given specifically to the nation of Israel (Exodus 31:12-17; Ezekiel 20:10-12), and not enforced from the time of creation until Israel left Egypt (Nehemiah 9:13-14), was a type of salvation-rest in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 3-4), and so has been fulfilled. Since it is fulfilled, the New Testament tells Christians they do not have to keep it (Colossians 2:16-17; Romans 14:5-6). Groups that say that Christians need to meet and worship on Saturday are consequently in error. If you have questions on this subject, please ask us, and we will be happy to explain this truth in greater detail.

¹⁴ A later Bible study, *The Church of Jesus Christ*, deals with the nature of Christ’s true churches.

___ ye do, do ___ ___ to the glory of God.” Does all your time belong to God? Certainly if it does, you will be in church—but can you say your time is His if you do not daily practice even such basics as reading His Word (2 Timothy 2:15) and prayer (Psalm 5:3)? Do you spend more time on hobbies, watching TV, amusing yourself, and doing other non-Scriptural things, than you do in the service of God? Certainly we learn from the fourth commandment that church attendance is necessary, and if you skip it for anything other than matters like severe sickness, you are guilty. God commands you to go to church, love His worship, and glorify Him with all your time. If you do not, you are guilty!

The fifth commandment is found in Exodus 20:12: “___ ___ ___ thy ___ ___ ___ ___ and thy ___ ___ ___ ___: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” Obedience is certainly related to honoring parents (Ephesians 6:1, “Children, obey your parents,” cf. Colossians 3:20); if your parents command you to do something, unless they command you to act sinfully, it is hard to see how you could honor them and disobey. But honor is more than just obedience. Notice Deuteronomy 27:16: “___ ___ ___ ___ be he that ___ ___ ___ ___ by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.” Honor involves respecting your parents and giving great weight to their wishes, desiring always to please them. It goes beyond obedience to their commands to knowing their desires, and, with a spirit of love and respect, acting in accordance with their wishes without ever being asked. Notice Leviticus 19:3: “Ye shall ___ ___ ___ every man his ___ ___ ___ ___ , and his ___ ___ ___ ___ , and keep my sabbaths: I *am* the LORD your God.” You must give your parents a reverential fear and respect from your heart. To not honor your parents is terrible evil. In Israel, God commanded that one who hit his parents (Exodus 21:15), or who cursed his parents (Exodus 21:17), should “surely be put to death,” and a child who is “stubborn and rebellious” and consistently will “not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother” was worthy of death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). God also specifically condemns not listening to and despising parents (Proverbs 23:22), robbing them (Proverbs 28:24), not blessing them (Proverbs 30:11), and mocking them (Proverbs 30:17). Children must behave in this way simply because of their parents’ position over them; God never says that only parents who are a good example themselves, or who always treat their children correctly, or who are loving and kind, etc. must be treated in this way. While parents are responsible to act properly toward their children (Proverbs 22:6), children must honor them no matter what. You should also honor your elders in general; Leviticus 19:32 commands, “Thou shalt ___ ___ ___ ___ before the hoary head [someone with gray hair], and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I *am* the LORD.” If you have not at all times and in all ways honored your parents, you are guilty of breaking the fifth commandment!

The sixth commandment is found in Exodus 20:13: “Thou shalt not ____.” God forbids the taking of innocent life. Since mankind is in the image of God, murder strikes at Him by killing one created in His image (Genesis 9:6). Not only is killing adults and youth murder, but abortion is the murder of a pre-born baby. In Exodus 21:22-25, if a man hurt a pregnant woman with child, so that she gave birth prematurely and the child died, God said to give “life for life.” God uses the same word for both the “babe . . . in [the womb]” (Luke 1:41, 44) and the “babe” outside of his mother, in a crib and desiring his mother’s milk (Luke 2:12, 16; 1 Peter 2:2). God has a purpose for and knows children before their birth (Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139:13-16). One becomes a new person in the image of God at the time of conception (Psalm 51:5). You are a murderer, or are involved in the commission of murder, if you have had an abortion, assisted in an abortion, counseled someone to have an abortion or not warned someone you knew who planned to have one, voted to support abortion (the official party platform of the Democrats, and the position of some Republicans), directly owned companies that support abortion through possessing their stock, or indirectly possessed such stock through mutual funds. Furthermore, some “contraceptive” devices actually prevent the implantation of the already conceived child, rather than conception, and so lead to abortions: the IUD regularly causes early abortions, and the standard birth control pill, the “morning after” pill, Norplant, and other chemical “contraceptives” sometimes do not prevent conception but abort already conceived children instead. If you have used, sold, recommended, or not warned against any of these things you are involved in murder. Furthermore, you are responsible for more than just not killing others yourself; you must seek to protect those whom others seek to murder. Proverbs 24:11-12 reads, “If thou _____ to deliver *them that are* drawn unto death, and *those that are* ready to be _____; If thou sayest, Behold, we _____ it _____; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider *it*? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth *not* he know *it*? and shall *not* he render to *every* man according to his works?” If you do nothing to oppose abortion, you are guilty, just as you would be if you saw a criminal attack and kill someone in the street and did nothing. God absolutely forbids murdering anyone, and commands us to seek to protect innocent life.

The Lord Jesus Christ also commented on the sixth commandment in Matthew 5:21-22: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the _____: But I say unto you, That whosoever is _____ with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the _____: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of _____.” Christ equated unjust anger with murder. The only just anger is a selfless hatred of sin (cf. Mark 3:1-5). If someone has done you wrong, so you have been angry with him, or someone has cut you off on the road and

you have been angry with him, or you have in anger insulted someone (“Raca” was an insult in the Lord Jesus’ day), you are a murderer. If you have broken the sixth commandment, it is extremely serious; Jesus Christ said that you are “in danger of hell fire” (Matthew 5:22).

The seventh commandment is found in Exodus 20:14: “Thou shalt not commit _____. ” God forbids all sexual relationships outside of marriage. Hebrews 13:4 reads, “Marriage is _____ in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and _____ God _____.” Adultery, sexual relations with someone other than one’s spouse in marriage, is sin. So is fornication, sex before marriage. Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 10:8, “Neither let us commit _____, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand,” referring to Numbers 25:1-9, when the Lord killed 23,000 in Israel for that sin in one day, and a total of 24,000 in the plague. God also condemns all sexual perversion, such as homosexuality and bestiality (Leviticus 18:22-30; Romans 1:26-28). Furthermore, Christ said in Mark 10:11-12 that “Whosoever shall _____ his wife, and _____ another, committeth _____ against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be _____ to another, she committeth _____.” Jesus Christ forbade divorce (“putting away”—Malachi 2:16), and if someone divorces his spouse and marries someone else, adultery is committed. Only after the death of one’s husband or wife is remarriage not adultery (Romans 7:1-3).

God not only commands us to abstain from the actual commission of sexual sin, but He commands in Ephesians 5:3-7 that “fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be _____ among you, as becometh saints; neither _____, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the _____ of _____ upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” God not only forbids all sexual immorality, but the dirty or off-color joke, and all uncleanness of speech.

Christ said in Matthew 5:27-28, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever _____ on a woman to _____ after her hath committed _____ with her already in his _____.” You can have “eyes full of adultery” (2 Peter 2:14) without ever committing the actual act. If you look at pornography, allow your eyes to linger over people in immodest clothing (or wear it; compare Proverbs 7:10; Zephaniah 1:8; 1 Timothy 2:9), or simply have lustful thoughts, the Lord Jesus Christ says you are an adulterer. You have broken the seventh commandment!

The eighth commandment is found in Exodus 20:15: “Thou shalt not _____. ” God forbids taking anything that is not yours. It does not matter if it is only a “little” thing which you may think does not matter. The commandment also condemns things like not telling the grocery store clerk when you are accidentally undercharged—you seek to get your money back when you are overcharged, don’t you? You are also a thief if you rip people off selling things—this is an “abomination to the LORD” (Proverbs 20:10; Leviticus 19:35-36; Proverbs 11:1; 16:11). God forbids exploitation of the poor for gain (Deuteronomy 24:10-15; Matthew 5:42), and all “extortion” and “dishonest gain” (Ezekiel 22:12-13). You break the eighth commandment if you do not put in all your time at work; arriving late or leaving early without the consent or knowledge of your employer is stealing, for you are not working all the time you said you would to get your pay; so is staying home “sick” when you feel fine. Using pirated software or violating copyright laws is stealing. Cheating on your taxes is stealing (Romans 13:6-7). Furthermore, in Malachi 3:8 God says, “Will a man _____ God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In _____ and _____.” If you do not give tithes (10% of your income) and offerings through God’s institution for this age, the church (1 Corinthians 16:2; 9:13-14; Matthew 23:23; Hebrews 7, etc.) you are robbing God! The Bible also condemns borrowing things and not giving them back. Psalm 37:21 reads, “The wicked _____, and _____ again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.” We should work hard at honest employment, and then be generous with what we earn; as Ephesians 4:28 says, “Let him that stole _____ no more: but rather let him _____, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” God forbids all dishonest gain in the eighth commandment. If you have stolen anything, you are guilty!

The ninth commandment is found in Exodus 20:16: “Thou shalt not bear _____ against thy neighbour.” To “bear false witness” is to lie. Proverbs 6:16-19 tells us that “the LORD [doth] hate . . . a lying tongue . . . [and] a false witness that speaketh lies.” In fact, Revelation 21:8 informs us that “all liars . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” John 8:44 tells us that “the devil . . . is a liar, and the father of it,” so when you lie, you act like the devil. In contrast, God is a “God of truth” (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 31:5), One who “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). You break the ninth commandment not only by boldfaced lies, but also by “white” lies, twisting or coloring the facts a bit, such as saying that someone looked good when you did not think that was the case, saying on the phone that someone was not home when he was, and so on. The commandment also forbids slander, gossip, and other sorts of speech that falsely attack people. You also bear false witness if you tell only part of the truth and cover up the rest to make yourself look good and mislead people. The Son of God is “the faithful and true witness” (Revelation 3:14), so to

bear false witness is utterly contrary to His character, and a horrible sin before God. In Matthew 12:36, Christ warns, “But I say unto you, That ___ ___ ___ ___ idle ___ ___ ___ that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” If you have ever borne false witness, you are guilty!

The tenth commandment is found in Exodus 20:17: “Thou shalt not ___ ___ ___ ___ thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour’s.” To covet is to desire what God has not provided for you or be dissatisfied with what you have. It is to see someone else’s house, or car, or clothes, or spouse, and to say, “Why does he get that, and I don’t?” When other people receive good things, you should be happy about it, and you should never rejoice because disaster or trouble comes to them (Job 31:29; Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 13:4). Hebrews 13:5 shows us that covetousness and contentment are opposites when it says, “*Let your conversation* [in KJV English, this word means “conduct”] *be* without ___ ___ ___ ___ ___; *and be* ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. Verse eight commands, “having ___ ___ ___ and ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ let us be therewith content.” Gambling is certainly based on covetousness; out of a lust for wealth and a dissatisfaction with what God has provided for you, it hopes to take the money or other goods supplied by others without honest work (compare 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; Ephesians 4:28). Covetousness is associated with envy, which God calls “earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:14-16). Covetousness also leads to complaining, against which God warns in 1 Corinthians 10:10: “Neither ___ ___ ___ ___ ye, as some of them also ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ , and were ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of the destroyer.” God knows what is best for you (Matthew 6:25-34). When you wish for what God has not given you, you attack His goodness, and declare He is not caring, and is unjust towards you. This is why Colossians 3:5 states “covetousness . . . is idolatry.” When you are covetous, you break the first and second commandments as well as the tenth commandment. Ephesians 5:5 reads, “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” Have you always been fully content with your own condition, and happy with the prosperity of others, without any envy of what is theirs? If not, you are guilty of breaking the tenth commandment!

The ten commandments do not cover all that God demands of you. Romans 1:18 tells us that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against ___ ___ ___ ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,” not just violations of the ten commandments. If you read Romans 1:19-32, you will see that many other sins are mentioned. For example, Romans 1:29-31 mentions “unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness . . . envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; [being] whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful,

proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, [and] unmerciful.” Read that list carefully, pausing for a moment over each sin that is listed. Are you guilty of any of them? Romans 1:32 tells us that “the judgment of God [is] that they which commit such things are _____ of _____.” God also condemns the drinking of alcoholic beverages; Proverbs 20:1 reads, “_____ is a mocker, _____ is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (cf. Proverbs 23:29-35; Leviticus 10:9-11; Hosea 4:11). Habakkuk 2:15 warns, “Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink,” so giving alcoholic beverages to others by selling them, passing them to others at meals, or in any other way helping others drink, brings God’s curse. The Bible also states that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). Many other commands are also found in the 31,101 verses and 791,328 words of the Bible.

One day a man asked the Lord Jesus Christ what the greatest commandment was in the whole law. In Matthew 22:37-40, “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt _____ the _____ _____ with all thy _____, and with all thy _____, and with all thy _____. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt _____ thy _____ as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Perfect love for God with all you are, which brings perfect obedience (John 14:15), and perfect love for all mankind, which will lead you to even “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44), is what the Lord demands of you. A lack of this love makes your sins far worse, and unless this sort of love motives all your attempts at obedience, all your “good” is also sin (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Remember that the standard God has revealed in His Law reflects who He is; He commands you to be holy because He is holy. This is why Matthew 5:48 commands, “Be ye therefore _____, even as your _____ which is in heaven is perfect.” God orders you to be as sinless and righteous as He is. He will accept nothing less than this. He will allow no sin of any kind in His presence; “there shall in no wise enter into [heaven] any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination” (Revelation 21:27). You cannot hope to get by with keeping as much as you can but continuing to break some of His commandments: “For whosoever shall keep the _____ law, and yet offend in _____ *point*, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). God has given you His Law, and He demands that it be obeyed perfectly. Perfect obedience will be the inflexible standard when you stand before Him.

God’s Law:

Results of obedience and disobedience

If you are entirely free from sin in your nature, thoughts, and acts, in all that you are, so that you are perfect, even as God the Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48), you will have life with God. Leviticus 18:5 reads, “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I *am* the LORD.” In Matthew 19:16, a man came to the Lord Jesus and “said unto him, Good Master, what _____ shall I _____, that I may have eternal life?” In reply, the Lord told him that he was sinful, since only God was good, and if he wished for heaven through doing good things he must perfectly “keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17), and then listed some of them (Matthew 19:18-22). For those whom God views as holy and sinless He promises a tremendous reward. Immediately upon their death they are “present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8; cf. Philippians 1:23; Hebrews 12:22-23) in heaven, in unimaginable glory and joy. They remain with the Lord in heaven until the time described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, when “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” At that time those whose spirits are already in heaven will receive their bodies again, and God’s people then living on the earth will be caught up to the clouds to be with the Lord without ever facing death. (The resurrection of the saved dead, and catching up of living believers, could happen at any moment—it could happen today! As Luke 12:40 says, “Be ye therefore _____ also: for the Son of man _____ at an hour when ye _____.”) Following the removal of God’s people from the earth, a seven year period of terrible judgment on the wicked, who are left behind, follows, as described in Revelation chapters four through nineteen. Then Jesus Christ returns with His people, the “armies which were in heaven,” to set up His kingdom on the earth, as described in Revelation 19:11-16: “And I saw _____ opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in _____ he doth judge and make war. His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many _____; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God [This is Jesus Christ; see John 1:1-18]. And the armies *which were* in heaven _____ him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should _____ the nations: and he shall _____ them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, _____ OF KINGS, AND _____ OF LORDS.” The Son of God will then kill all the wicked people who are still alive after the seven years of judgment (Revelation 19:21), and rule the earth from

Jerusalem for a thousand years with His people (Revelation 20:1-6; cf. Isaiah 2:1-5; 11:1-16; Zechariah 14), in a time of incredible peace and prosperity. At the end of this period, after the final condemnation of all the lost, He will create “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1) where He will dwell with them forever, as described in Revelation 21-22. They will live in “the holy city, new Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:2) where, as Revelation 21:3-4 states, “the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will _____ them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be _____, neither _____, nor _____, neither shall there be any more _____: for the former things are passed away.” They shall “inherit all things” (Revelation 21:7). The gates, walls, and foundations of this place are precious stones, pearls, and gold, of incredible beauty and glory (Revelation 21:12-21); even “the street of the city [is] pure gold, as it were transparent glass” (Revelation 21:21)! Furthermore, “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the _____ of _____ did lighten it, and the _____ [Jesus Christ, John 1:29, 36] *is* the _____ thereof” (Revelation 21:22-23). In that wonderful place, “there shall be no more _____: but the _____ of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his _____ shall _____ him: and they shall _____ his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and _____ shall _____ for ever and ever” (Revelation 22:3-5). This is the eternal happiness of those who belong to God.

However, if God sees any sin in you at all, you are under His curse. Deuteronomy 27:26 reads, “Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.” Galatians 3:10 states, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that _____ not in _____ things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” The Law pronounces damnation for everything less than perfect obedience. Deuteronomy 28:15-68 lists the terrible judgments that Jehovah promised to bring upon Israel if the nation did not perfectly obey all that He commanded them. “Cursed *shalt* thou *be* in the city, and cursed *shalt* thou *be* in the field. Cursed *shall be* thy basket and thy store. Cursed *shall be* the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed *shalt* thou *be* when thou comest in, and cursed *shalt* thou *be* when thou goest out” (Deuteronomy 28:16-20). Romans 6:23 tells us that “the _____ of _____ *is* _____; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” If you have a job, and put in your hours, you deserve your paycheck, your “wages.” Romans 6:23 tells us that what you have earned for your sin is death. Notice that God does not say that the wages of a few really big sins is death but the rest are not that bad, or

the wages of lots and lots of sins is death. God says “sin,” not “sins”; the word is singular, not plural. If you have ever broken God’s Law in any way, He says that you deserve death, and the penalty must be paid. You are in a state of spiritual death; Ephesians 2:5 speaks of being “___ ___ in sins.” Spiritual death is separation from God because of your sin. Physical death is also a result of sin. Before sin entered the world, there was no physical death (Romans 5:12-19), but now God tells mankind that “dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19). Physical death is the separation of the soul and spirit from the body (Genesis 35:18; Acts 7:59-60, etc.). Those that die physically while in a state of spiritual death will face “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the ___ ___ ___ ___ death.” (Revelation 21:8; cf. Revelation 2:11, 20:14). The second death is separation from God forever in a state of conscious and unbearable fiery torment.¹⁵

If you have not fully and perfectly fulfilled God’s Law, you face a future more terrible than anything you can imagine. As soon as you die physically (Luke 16:22-23; cf. Hebrews 9:27), you will be “cast into ___ ___ ___ ___: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:47-48). You will stay in this “place of torment” (Luke 16:28) without any hope of escape, for between you and the righteous there will be a “great gulf fixed” so that you cannot “come from thence” (Luke 16:26)—the Bible does not teach a “purgatory” where people who die worthy of punishment have their sins purged away until they are clean enough to enter heaven. You will suffer in “unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12), and will “dwell with the devouring fire . . . with everlasting burnings” (Isaiah 33:14; Matthew 25:31; Jude 7). Every sin deserves eternal punishment, so you will, from day to day, week to week, year to year, century to century, millennium to millennium, and for all eternity, be continually paying for your sins, but you will never pay the debt. God also describes the place of your eternal torment as “outer ___ ___ ___ ___: there shall be ___ ___ ___ ___ and ___ ___ ___ ___ of teeth.” (Matthew 8:12; cf. Matthew 22:13, 25:30). You will be in total darkness, and feel pain so intense that you will weep and “gnash” or grind your teeth in agony. You will “remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things . . . but now . . . art tormented” (Luke 16:25). You will vividly and bitterly recollect all the good things you had in this life, which you will have no more forever. You will remember your material things, which “shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire” (James 5:3). You will remember warnings to get right with God, and your refusal to do so. Every good thing God gave you in this life will bring you a greater eternal curse (Luke 12:45-48). When the Lord Jesus Christ raises the righteous dead and

¹⁵ Some people deny the everlasting conscious torment of the wicked. They take certain verses from the Bible out of their context to support their view, and ignore other verses. If you have questions about the Biblical teaching that the lost face eternal torment, contact us, and we will help you understand what God has said about it.

catches up His people that are still alive from the earth, you will remain in hell. If Christ returns before your physical death, you will be left behind on earth to face the terrible judgments of the seven year period described in Revelation 4-19, such as locust-like creatures that will “not kill [men], but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them” (Revelation 9:5-6), and “[the sea] bec[oming] as the blood of a dead *man*: and every living soul d[ying] in the sea” (Revelation 16:3), and supernatural “horses . . . and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses *were* as the heads of lions; and out of their mouth issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails *were* like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt” (Revelation 9:17-19). Even worse than all these plagues, if you miss the time when the righteous are caught up to be with the Lord, “God shall send [you] strong delusion, that [you] should believe a lie . . . [and] be damned” (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12); you will follow Satan and the Antichrist, and will either die during the seven years of judgment or will die at the end when Jesus Christ returns with His people to establish His kingdom on the earth (Matthew 5:5) and slaughters all the wicked who are left. You will remain in hell for the entire course of His glorious thousand-year reign (Revelation 20:5). You will then be raised to face your final condemnation, along with all the rest of the spiritually dead, as described in Revelation 20:11-15: “And I saw a great white throne, and him [Jesus Christ] that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the __ __ __ __, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were __ __ __ __ __ out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their __ __ __ __ __. And death and hell were cast into the __ __ __ __ of __ __ __ __ __. This is the __ __ __ __ __ death. And __ __ __ __ __ was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” In terror before Jesus Christ, you will feel like those who “said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Revelation 6:15-17). You will have no place to flee—and you will not be able to stand, because everything that does not conform to God’s standard of perfect holiness and sinlessness, all your sin, will be judged, and you will be condemned. Your judgment after Christ’s thousand year earthly reign will not determine if you finally escape hell and enter heaven, for none in hell ever escape, and besides, you are

“condemned already” (John 3:18), already under God’s curse for your sins; your condemnation will not come wait until then—it is upon you today. Now, at this very moment, the infinite anger of the holy God of heaven burns against you, and you are already condemned for your sins! This judgment will simply show to all creation the Lord’s glorious justice in your damnation. After your final doom is pronounced, you will be cast into the lake of fire, where you will be tormented forever and ever. Revelation 14:10-11 states, “The same shall drink of the wine of the _____ of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be _____ with _____ and _____ in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up _____ and _____: and they have _____ day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name [note that only a particular group of lost people are warned in this passage, but the pronounced punishment is something all the lost will experience, Psalm 11:5-6].” Romans 9:22 states that on the “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,” all lost people, God is “willing to _____ his wrath, and to make his power _____.” Just as God has determined to show the greatness of His goodness, mercy, and love upon those that are with Him forever, He has purposed to show to all the infinite weight of His unrestrained wrath, fury, and fierceness upon the damned, whom He hates (Psalm 5:5; 11:5). You will know “the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:15)—what He who created the universe out of nothing can do when He uses His power against you, when He “will rejoice over you to destroy you” (Deuteronomy 28:63). In that day God will say, “I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you” (Proverbs 1:26-27). Each and every sin that you commit deserves, by itself, this eternal punishment. We have seen that God promises His blessing and eternal life for sinless obedience to His Law, and His curse and the lake of fire for any disobedience to it.

God’s Law: How Come I Don’t Match Up?

When you compare yourself to God’s Law, it is obvious that you simply do not match up to His standard. This was Christ’s point when, in the Matthew 19:16-22 passage quoted earlier, He said to the man who had asked Him what he could do to inherit eternal life that “there is none good but one, *that is*, God.” The Bible says in Romans 3:23 that “all have _____, and come short of the glory of God.” 1 John 1:8 states, “If we say that we have no sin, we

deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Why is this the case—why is it that no one obeys God's Law perfectly, and so earns eternal life?

The Bible tells us that God created everything “very good” (Genesis 1:31). After creating the rest of the universe, God made the first man, Adam, from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7; cf. Genesis 1:1-2:25), then made his wife Eve (Genesis 2:21-25). The whole human race came from Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:20; 1 Corinthians 15:45). When the Lord created Adam, He “took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it [that is, to care for it]” (Genesis 2:15). In this garden, “the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou _____ eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely _____” (Genesis 2:16-17). God had provided a rich abundance for Adam and Eve, which they could “freely eat” from, but He tested their obedience through requiring that they not eat from one tree out of all those in the garden. The first man and woman, since God created them good, had the ability to obey this command of God. However, they disobeyed, ate of the fruit of that forbidden tree, and plunged the human race into sin (Genesis 3:1-6).

Read Romans 5:12-19. Verse twelve tells us that “by one man _____ entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death _____ upon _____ men, for that all have sinned.” Adam was the father of the entire human race, and we all have a certain union with him (cf. Hebrews 7:9-10; Abraham lived hundreds of years before his descendent Levi, yet Levi was in a mysterious way “in the loins of his father”). When Adam sinned, we all sinned, and became worthy of condemnation. Through “the offence of one [Adam] many be dead [the whole human race]” (Romans 5:15). When Adam sinned, “the judgment *was* by one to condemnation” (Romans 5:16). “[B]y one man’s offence death reigned by one” (Romans 5:17) and “by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation” (Romans 5:18). As Romans 5:19 states, “by one man’s disobedience _____ were _____ sinners.” 1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us that “in Adam all die.” We not only sinned in our father Adam, but also now begin life with a sinful nature. Psalm 51:5 states, “Behold, I was shapen in _____; and in _____ did my mother _____ me.” From the moment we begin our existence at conception, we are sinners and have a sin nature. Jeremiah 17:9 reads, “The heart is _____ above all *things*, and _____: who can know it?” By nature, “every imagination of the thoughts of [a man’s] heart [is] only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). We begin life “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1), separated from God. Everyone starts out, as Ephesians 2:2-3 states, walking “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan], the _____ that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we _____ had our conversation in times past in the _____ of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the _____

___ and of the ___; and were by ___ the children of ___, even as others.” We are naturally of our “father the devil” and follow his lusts (John 8:44). Our sinful nature leads us to commit all kinds of sin (Matthew 15:19). Just like a fig tree naturally produces figs, not apples or some other fruit, and a grape vine produces only grapes, not blackberries or watermelons, so our sinful nature leads us to commit all kinds of sin (Luke 6:43-45); it is unable to do any good. Our sin in Adam, our sinful nature, and the sinful actions that come from it, make it so that in the entire human race “There is ___ righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). Nobody has any goodness in himself before God. In fact, Romans 3:11 tells us “There is none that understandeth, there is none that ___ after God.” The sinful nature is so corrupt that nobody, left to himself, would ever even truly desire to seek for God! This is why the Lord Jesus said in John 6:44, “No man ___ to me, except the Father which hath sent me ___ him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” 1 Corinthians 2:14 tells us, “the natural [lost] man ___ the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither ___ he ___ *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” Let us imagine that you had two plates set before you; one filled with your favorite food, perfectly prepared, and the other overflowing with rotting and stinking filth from a garbage dump. If you are told that you can choose to eat whichever one you want, you will, obviously, choose to eat your favorite food every time—nobody has to force you to not eat the garbage, because you find it disgusting! You will, of your own free will, choose what fits with your nature. In a similar way, because of the sin nature, people will choose evil, of their own free will, every time—our fallen race likes the garbage better than the good food. Any desire for God that is found within a person is a result of His grace in drawing that soul to Himself, for man has nothing good within himself at all. As Romans 3:12 states, “they are ___ gone out of the way, they are together become ___; there is ___ that doeth good, no, not one.”

This sinful or fleshly nature corrupts everything that a person does (John 3:6), so that, until God steps in and takes care of the problem (John 1:12-13), it is impossible for us to please Him in any way. Romans 8:7-8 states, “the carnal mind [the fleshly or unsaved mind] *is* enmity against [is the enemy of] God: for it is ___ to the law of God, neither indeed ___ be. So then they that are in the flesh [all the lost] ___ please God.” We start out in our very nature “abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16). Isaiah 64:6 reads, “but we are all as an ___ *thing*, and ___ our ___ *are* as ___ rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” God does not, in this verse, call “filthy rags” those things that you admit are evil, but those things that you

think are good, your “righteousnesses.” If He calls even these “righteousnesses” filthy, how terribly must God view your even worse acts!

In Romans 3:8 the apostle Paul mentions certain people that were opposing his message from the Bible, and states, at the end of the verse, that their “_____ is _____.” But in the next verse, he continues, “What then? are we _____ *than they?* _____, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” (Romans 3:9). Paul states that God would be just to condemn those that oppose the Bible to hell—but then he states that he and the church to whom he wrote the book of Romans (the “we” of verse 9) are not in any way better, because they are also sinners—their own damnation would be just, as would his own! The conclusion is inescapable that God would be just to condemn every person in the whole world—including you—to hell. You sinned in your father Adam, you have a sinful nature, which you cannot change, just as a man cannot change his skin color or a leopard its spots (Jeremiah 13:23), and you have committed countless sins in your thoughts, words, and actions, each of which deserves eternal death. As a sinner, at this very moment the “wrath of God abideth” on you (John 3:36). He is “angry *with the wicked* every day” (Psalm 7:11), and prepares to destroy them (Psalm 7:12-13). Consider that there are people who are in hell today who have sinned less than you have—God is more angry with you than with many who already are in torment! His wrath is like flood waters continually rising higher and higher behind a dam, which will soon burst and fall upon you. Your life is nothing but sin, you are under the curse of God, and as you continually keep on sinning Divine justice cries out more and more for your condemnation—yet the only One who keeps you out of hell one moment is the very God you are sinning against! The Lord Jesus Christ said to some lost men in His day, “*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, _____ can ye escape the _____ of hell?*” (Matthew 23:33). This is a question that you must seriously consider!

God’s Law:

Man's attempts to escape its curse

The fact that you have sinned, but God’s Law pronounces that all sinners deserve damnation, leaves you in deep trouble. Through the years, men have tried to escape what God’s Law says about sin in a number of different ways:

- Some have simply said that God’s threats of eternity in the lake of fire just did not seem possible, so they rejected them. However, Proverbs 14:12 states, “There is a way which _____ unto a man, but the _____ thereof *are* the ways of _____ death.” What we think about God’s judgment on sinners, or His demand for sinless perfection, does not change the facts at all. If we reject what He says,

or we ignore it, or we sincerely believe something else, nothing changes. The only thing that we get by going a way that seems good to us, but is not in the Bible, is hell fire.

- Others are simply not willing to admit that they deserve to go to hell. They deny what Romans 3:8-12 and many other passages of God's Word teach. It is a fearful thing to reject what the Bible teaches; Proverbs 13:13 tells us that "whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed." Fundamentally, to say that one does not deserve hell is pride. Proverbs 16:5 reads, "Every one *that is* _____ in heart *is* an _____ to the LORD: *though* hand *join* in hand, he shall not be _____." If you are too proud to agree with God when He tells you in His Word that you are a wicked sinner who has earned hell many times over, you have a big problem. You will, without any doubt, burn there forever unless you humble yourself. You are also guilty of idolatry. You do not put God first place in your life, since you reject what He says about your sin and its penalty; you are breaking the first commandment. You have a false view of who God is, because you think that somehow He will just overlook your sin; you are breaking the second commandment. You are breaking these two commandments just like someone who worships trees or rocks or openly worships the devil—and "idolaters . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Revelation 21:8). Furthermore, someone who denies that he deserves hell rejects Jesus Christ, since the Savior said in Luke 5:31-32, "They that are _____ [healthy] need not a physician; but they that are _____. I _____ to call the _____, but _____ to repentance." People do not make appointments to see a doctor when they are feeling fine; they go when they know they are sick. In the same way, Jesus Christ said that He came to save those who know they are sinners, not those who think they are righteous (although they are not, Romans 3:10). If you do not think you need to be saved from your sin and its penalty, you do not understand your need for Jesus Christ, the Savior (Galatians 3:24; 1 John 4:14). You deserve hell for your sins. God has said so—it is true, whether or not you think it is fair, have objections, or do not think you are bad enough to deserve everlasting punishment.
- Many people think that religious acts like baptism, communion, prayer, church attendance, confessing sin, giving money, learning the Bible, helping the poor, or attempting to stay faithful will help them to merit heaven and escape the punishment of the Law for their disobedience. However, none of these things can take away even one sin. The Law demands perfect obedience (Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12), and promises sinners nothing but judgment. The most religious people during the earthly life of Jesus Christ were the scribes and the Pharisees, but the Lord said "except your righteousness

shall _____ *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall _____
 _____ enter into the kingdom of heaven.” God has clearly stated only those
 whom He sees as absolutely sinless will be with Him forever (Revelation 21:27; Matthew
 5:48). There are levels of punishment in hell (Matthew 11:24; Mark 6:12; Luke 12:47-
 48), and those who disobey more will face worse torment, so attempts to obey are better
 than outright rejection of God’s commandments. However, trying to be religious will
 never take care of your sin.

- Reformation of life will not get rid of your sin. Even if you stopped sinning right now
 and perfectly obeyed the rest of your life (which you cannot do), got rid of your sin
 nature (which you cannot do), and somehow got out of the fact that you sinned in Adam
 (which you cannot do), you would still deserve damnation for all the sins you have
 already committed. God’s Law demands that “every transgression and disobedience
 receiv[e] a just recompense of reward” (Hebrews 2:2); “he that despised Moses’ law died
 without mercy” (Hebrews 10:28). Imagine that a mass murderer, who had been found
 guilty and condemned to die, started to try to be nice to people while he waited for the
 day of his execution. Suppose that, the day before he was to die, he sent a letter to his
 judge, and said, “Your honor, I know that I killed all those people and was given the
 death penalty. But since I have been condemned to die, I have turned my life around. I
 have been nice to everybody. I have not killed anyone else. Can I go free?” Obviously
 no judge in his right mind would let a man like this go; he had been sentenced, and
 needed to pay the penalty. In the same way, you may attempt to reform your life, but it
 will not take care of your sin. Besides, God deserves perfect obedience, so you would
 not be able to balance out your sins through doing better anyway. In Luke 17:10
 (compare 17:7-9), the Lord Jesus Christ said, “[W]hen ye shall have done _____ those
 things which are commanded you, say, We are _____
 servants: we have done that which was our _____ to do.” Trying to change your
 life cannot take away even one sin. Romans 3:20 states, “Therefore by the deeds of the
 law there shall _____ be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the
 knowledge of sin.”

The fact of the matter is that every attempt of man to take care of his disobedience to God's Law
 completely fails.

The Conclusion:

God's Law eternally curses all sin

We have learned in study #3 that God is going to judge mankind, and His standard of judgment is His Law. We found that God has commanded us to be perfectly holy like Him. We looked at the ten commandments, along with a few other commandments in the Bible. We learned that the Law offers eternal life and heaven to those that perfectly obey it, but it promises eternal damnation in hell for all who disobey it, since every sin deserves the second death. However, we saw that nobody has perfectly obeyed God's Law, because the whole human race sinned in Adam, has a sinful nature, and has transgressed the Law in many ways. In fact, we learned that we are by nature so wicked that we would never even choose to seek for God, and, unless this sinful nature and our sins are somehow taken care of, absolutely nothing we do truly pleases God. We learned that mankind is spiritually dead, is headed for physical death, and deserves the second death, the lake of fire. Finally, we saw that man's attempts to escape what God's Law says fail; one can deny that judgment is coming, or think he is not bad enough to be condemned, or be very religious, or attempt to reform one's life, but none of these things will save anyone from hell.

The simple fact is that God's Law demands your eternal condemnation, and unless all your sins are taken care of and God sees you as righteous as He is, you are certainly lost. When a realization similar to this came to the Lord Jesus' disciples in Matthew 19:25, "they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?" The Lord answered them, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). God has made a way that the penalty of the Law can be satisfied, and sinners can be delivered from hell—a way that He can be merciful, while not in any way compromising the demands of His holiness and justice. "How," you may ask, "can this be?" This is the subject of the next Bible study—*How Can God Save Sinners?*

Review Quiz For Bible Study #3

- 1.) As long as we sincerely try to follow God's law and confess our sins, we will go to heaven.
True False
- 2.) The greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and the second greatest is to love our neighbor as ourself. True False
- 3.) One sin makes a person deserve eternity in hell. True False

4.) When we are born, we are neither good nor evil, and our actions later in life make us either good or bad at heart. True False

5.) When Christ returns, He will catch up His people that are alive on earth to be with Him in heaven, but those that are lost will be left behind to face His judgment. True False

6.) Some people deserve to go to heaven rather than hell. True False

7.) God's Law demands that we be as holy as He is, so anything less than perfect sinlessness deserves His curse. True False

Request for Study #4

___ I have returned the third Bible study to you with the blanks filled in and answered the review quiz questions. Please send me the next Bible study, *How Can God Save Sinners?*

___ I would like to understand more about God's judgment and the need for salvation. Please send me a free copy of Jonathan Edwards' *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, the most famous sermon ever preached in America.

___ I would like to meet with or talk to someone in person. I have put information in the spaces below (phone number, times available, etc.) to contact me.

Please use the spaces below to write down any other questions that you have. You can also write down any changes of address. Please also put down the names and addresses of people you know who might also like to do this Bible study.

Mailing address:

Bible Study #4: *How Can God Save Sinners?*

Introduction and Review

Dear friend,

We rejoice that we have been able to help you study the Bible through the materials that you have already completed and are glad to continue to help you with this fourth study. To review, in study #1, after learning a few fundamentals about the organization of the Bible, we looked at its inspiration and found out that it is God's perfect, error-free Word. We saw that God has preserved every word that He inspired, and we have them available to us today in our English Bible. We also studied some of the many proofs God has given us that He did indeed inspire and preserve the Bible. Then, in study #2, we studied characteristics of God Himself. We learned many of His attributes and discovered the meaning of three very common words for Him in the Bible, *Eloheim*, *Jehovah*, and *Adonai*. We also learned that God has eternally existed in three distinct Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, a truth commonly called the doctrine of the Trinity.

With this foundation of the nature of the Bible and the nature of God Himself, we looked in study #3 at the Law of God. We saw that the Law is a reflection of God's holy character. We studied the ten commandments, as well as a few of the other commandments in Scripture. We learned that God commands us to live by every one of the 791,328 words in the Bible, and His Law promises blessing and eternal life for sinless obedience. However, we also saw that God's curse and eternity in the lake of fire is the penalty for any and every disobedience to His Word. This is a big problem, because nobody has obeyed God's Law perfectly. The whole human race sinned in Adam, every person has a corrupt and sinful nature, and we commit countless sins. Therefore, we deserve eternal damnation. We then looked at some of man's attempts to escape the punishment of God's Law; many people just ignore what God says, deny that they really are

that bad, try to be very religious, or try to reform their lives. However, none of these things can take care of sin. This left us in a bad situation, for until one's sins are taken care of, it is impossible to truly please God at all. Everyone God does not view as sinlessly perfect is already under His wrath and is already condemned. We found out, though, that there is hope—God has made a way to save sinners! We will learn in this study just how He can do this.

With study #4 you have also received your completed version of study #3, which has been checked and graded. Please look over that study for corrections by your Bible teacher, especially on the quiz questions, and for comments, especially at the very end of the study. Also, please keep your completed studies available so that you can look back at them later. Remember that at the end of each of them you have some questions to answer so that we can see that you have understood the Biblical teaching, and some blank space upon which you can write down any questions that you have. Also, please use this space to provide us with the names and addresses of any friends or acquaintances of yours who would also be interested in studying the Bible, so that we can send these materials to them as well. Once again, this Bible course is provided to you courtesy of Bethel Baptist Church, 4905 Appian Way, El Sobrante, CA 94803, (510) 223-8721/ (510) 223-9550, www.pillarandground.org, betbapt@flash.net. Let us know if you would like a personal visit for Bible study, and feel free to visit us for Sunday school at 9:45 a.m., morning worship at 11:00 a.m., Sunday evening worship at 6:00 p.m., or Wednesday prayer and Bible study at 7:00 p.m. We are overjoyed that we can assist you in studying the Bible.

God's Provision to Save Sinners: The Gospel

Since God's Law demands perfect righteousness, and we are sinners, how can we have any hope of salvation? We are helpless and hopeless on our own; if God did not step in to save people, we would certainly perish forever in the lake of fire. However, God has made a way that sinners can be saved: the gospel of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 reads, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the _____ which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also _____, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that _____ for our _____ according to the _____; 4 And that he was _____, and that he _____ the third day according to the scriptures." We can see by comparing verses 1 and 2 that it is the "gospel" (v. 1) by which we are "saved" (v. 2). The word "gospel" means "good news"—and certainly it is very good news that God has made a way for sinners to be saved! Verses 3 and 4 define the gospel: it is the good news that Christ

The Person of the Gospel: “Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:3)

63

to save men, the Son appeared to His people in various ways in the Old Testament. John 1:18 states “No man hath _____ God [the Father] at any time; the only begotten _____, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath _____ him.” Throughout the Old Testament, people saw God the Son and learned of the Father through Him. Jacob said, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Genesis 32:30). The leaders of the nation of Israel “saw the God of Israel” (Exodus 24:10), Joshua saw Him (Joshua 5:13-6:2), and when he did, he “fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?” (Joshua 5:14). When Isaiah saw God’s Son (compare John 12:36-41; Isaiah 6:9-10; 6:1-8), he said “Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).

Finally, “when the _____ of the time was come, God _____ forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to _____ them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4-5). The Bible had predicted that “a _____ shall be with child, and shall bring forth a _____, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, _____ with _____” (Matthew 1:23; cf. Isaiah 7:14). The eternal Son now took to Himself a human nature, so that, although still one Person, He now had two natures, His Divine nature and a human nature. He who had always been (and continued to be) 100% God became also 100% Man! (1 Timothy 3:16; Philippians 2:5-11). The Son was conceived through the working of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) in the womb of a virgin named Mary, who was engaged to a man named Joseph. God revealed His plan to use Mary to bring the Savior into the world to the couple (you can read the whole story in Luke 1:26-2:52), and she eventually gave birth to Him. Jesus’ virgin birth made Him free from the effects of Adam’s sin and of the sin nature, so that He was perfectly sinless. Joseph and Mary raised Him, and as perfect Man, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). During His entire life, He “did _____, neither was guile found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). He alone, of all men, perfectly fulfilled the Law of God. He alone was therefore worthy of the reward the Law promised for sinless obedience. He was then betrayed by one of His twelve apostles, Judas, who plotted against Him with the Jewish religious leaders. They delivered Him to die at the hands of the Roman government on a cross. (You can read all about this in Matthew chapters 26-27, or John chapters 13-19.) On the cross, the Father laid the sins of the world on His Son, who suffered and died to pay the penalty for the sins of mankind. Christ “bare our _____ in his own body on the tree [cross]” (1 Peter 2:24). He was then buried in a tomb; but three days later, the tomb was empty, for He had risen from the grave! (See Matthew chapter 28, or John chapters 20-21. We will look at the significance of His death and resurrection in more detail later.) The Lord Jesus then “shewed [showed] himself _____

— after his passion [suffering and death] by many infallible proofs, being seen [by His disciples for] forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). After the end of those forty days, He said to His disciples:

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you [which happened ten days later, as described in Acts 2]: and ye shall be — — — — — unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the — — — — — of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was — — — — —; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward — — — — — as he went up, behold, two men [angels who appeared as men] stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is — — — — — from you — — — — — heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:8-11).

After “the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and — — — on the — — — — — of God” (Mark 16:19), receiving the highest honor and exaltation. He will return from heaven in the future to set up His kingdom upon the earth, reward His people and destroy His enemies, and reign for a thousand years. Then, after the final judgment, He will dwell with His people in the “heavenly Jerusalem” (Hebrews 12:22) forever, while He will condemn the unrighteous to the lake of fire forever. (See Revelation chapters 20-22 for all of this). This is He who “the Father sent . . . to be the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14)!

This great Redeemer has a number of names and offices that we will now look at. Our examination will by no means exhaust the titles given Him in Scripture, but these are some of the most central:

- *Jesus*. “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name — — — — —: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). This name means “Jehovah-Savior” or “Jehovah is salvation.” We must know this “Jesus,” for “neither is there — — — — — in any other: for there is — — — — — other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).
- *Christ*. John 20:31 reads, “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the — — — — —, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have — — — — — through his name.” *Christ* is the Greek word with the same meaning as the Hebrew *Messiah* (Daniel 9:25-26; John 1:41). Both titles mean “Anointed One,” and designate the Ruler whom God would send to save and rule over the world, as predicted throughout the Old Testament.
- *Lord*. Acts 10:36 tells us that “Jesus Christ . . . is — — — — — of all.” A believer will call Jesus, as the apostle Thomas did, “My — — — — — and my God” (John 20:28).

Because “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name,” one day soon “at the name of _____ every knee [will] bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; 11 And [then] every tongue [will] confess that Jesus Christ *is* _____, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11). The Greek word *Lord* translates the Old Testament name for God, *Jehovah* (compare Matthew 22:44 + Psalm 110:1; Romans 10:13 + Joel 2:32, Hebrews 1:8-12 + Psalm 45:6-7; 102:12, 25-27). Christ is Lord because He is Jehovah, “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). He is also Lord because He is the absolute Master and King over everyone and everything. People who belong to Him submit to Him as their Ruler today, and those who will not surrender to His Lordship will face His everlasting and all-powerful wrath.

- *Savior*. Titus 2:13-14 reads, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our _____ Jesus Christ; Who _____ for us, that he might _____ us from all iniquity, and _____ unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Jesus Christ is the Savior because His death saves believers from their sin. He saves them from sin’s *penalty*, eternal damnation. He saves them from sin’s *power*, enabling them to know and live for God even in this life. He also saves them from sin’s *presence*, for, made holy, they will dwell with Him forever, sin having been removed from the world (John 14:1-6).

- *Mediator*. “For *there is* one God, and one _____ between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). The Lord Jesus is the Mediator between believers and God the Father. Since Christ is God the Son, His obedience and sufferings to reconcile humanity to God possess infinite worth. He has all power and knowledge to direct the work the Father has given Him to do. His mediation is also perfectly acceptable and immeasurably pleasing to the Father (Matthew 17:5; John 8:29). Since Christ is perfect Man, He can identify with, represent, and redeem the race by His substitutionary death, satisfying the penalty required by justice against fallen men (Hebrews 9:15). He is the perfect and absolutely sufficient go-between to bring people to God. “He is able also to _____ them to the _____ that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make _____ for them” (Hebrews 7:25). Because of the perfection of His mediation, the Lord Jesus is the only mediator (1 Timothy 2:5); no other person, such as a human priest, a saint, or Mary, and no religious organization (even ones found in the Bible like the church) can serve as mediator. Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Three aspects of Christ’s office of Mediator are emphasized in His titles of Prophet, Priest, and King.

• *Prophet.* The Old Testament predicted that God would “raise up a _____ from among [Israel] . . . and [would] put [His] words in his mouth; and he [would] speak unto them all that [God] would command him” (Deuteronomy 18:17-18). Christ was the Prophet predicted (Acts 3:22-23), as He Himself claimed (Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24; John 4:44) and those who heard Him recognized (Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 4:19; 7:40). As Prophet, Christ revealed God to man as no one had done before Him. As “he whom God hath sent,” He “speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*” (John 3:34).

• *Priest.* Hebrews 7:26-27 reads, “For such an _____ became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up _____, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he _____ up _____.” Jesus Christ is the great High Priest (head priest) for all His people. Since “every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins” (Hebrews 5:1), the fundamental role of the priest is to reconcile men to God through the offering of sacrifices. God’s law states that sins are “purged with blood; and without _____ of _____ is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22), and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Therefore, Jesus Christ needed to die and shed His precious blood to satisfy the law of God, or mankind could never be restored to fellowship with God. Therefore “by means of [His] death, for the redemption of the transgressions” and “by his own blood he . . . obtained eternal redemption *for us*” (Hebrews 9:15, 12). Jesus Christ, to be His people’s High Priest, was “in _____ things . . . made _____ unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17). He became 100% Man so that He could perfectly represent His chosen ones before God. All the priests and sacrifices in the Old Testament foreshadowed Christ and His great priesthood and sacrifice. Because the Lord Jesus has now come, a special human priesthood has been abolished; there is no special group of believers, or religious ministers, who are in a special sense priests to God, or who offer further sacrifices to bring sinners back to Him. The Lord Jesus’ one sacrifice on the cross does it all. Hebrews 9:24-28 reads, “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: _____ yet that he should offer himself _____, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others [this happened every year in the Old Testament system, Leviticus 16]; For then must he often have suffered since the

foundation of the world: but now _____ in the end of the world hath he appeared to _____ by the sacrifice of _____. And as it is appointed unto men _____ to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was _____ offered to _____ the _____ of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” Hebrews 10:10-14 further emphasizes the sufficiency of Jesus’ sacrifice, stating that “we are sanctified through the _____ of the body of Jesus Christ _____ *for all*. And every priest [besides Christ] standeth daily ministering and offering _____ the same sacrifices, which can _____ take away sins: But this man, after he had offered _____ sacrifice for sins _____, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath _____ them that are sanctified [set apart as His own].” Jesus Christ is the perfect Priest who, on the basis of His sacrifice of Himself, completely removes the sins of His own, and, having risen from the dead and returned to heaven, perpetually intercedes for them before His Father on the basis of His death and shed blood (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 4:14-16; cf. John 17).

- *King*. Jesus Christ is, as Revelation 19:16 tells us, “_____ OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” as He represents the rule of God to man. With the Father and the Spirit, the eternal Son of God “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will . . . according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself” (Ephesians 1:11, 9), as He has from all eternity. Furthermore, He now rules the spiritual and invisible kingdom of God, made up of all His people (Romans 14:17; John 3:3, 5), leading and guiding them, and conquering their sinful tendencies so that they live for Him. He also is the King or Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22). Jesus Christ will soon return to earth, destroy His enemies, and establish His kingdom over the earth; He will bring the righteous into it (Matthew 25:34) and cast the wicked out from it into hell (Matthew 22:13). At that time “of the increase of *his* _____ and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David [He will reign over the earth from Jerusalem where king David reigned], and upon his _____, to order it, and to establish it with _____ and with _____ from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:7). He will reign over the earth for 1,000 years, execute the final judgment, and then bring in a new heaven and a new earth, where He will reign forever and ever (Revelation 19:11-22:5). Soon “the kingdoms of this world [will] become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his _____; and he shall _____ and ever.” (Revelation 11:15).

The work of the gospel:

**“Christ died for our sins . . . he was buried, and . . . he rose again the third day”
(1 Corinthians 15:3-4)**

It is amazing that God would send a Person like the Lord Jesus Christ into the world—that the eternal Son of God would be made flesh and take to Himself a human nature is incomprehensible condescension. How much more amazing to realize that “the Son of man [Jesus Christ] came not to be ministered unto, but to minister [serve], and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). He came, not to destroy His enemies, not to immediately send everyone who had sinned against Him into eternal torment (exactly what we deserve), but to die to save those very enemies and sinners! “God so _____ the world, that he _____ his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “God commendeth his _____ toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ _____ for us” (Romans 5:8). What exactly happened when the Lord Jesus died? What did God accomplish? Why is the death of Christ, and His subsequent burial and resurrection, the “gospel,” such “good news” for us? His death was:

- *Sacrificial.* The Son of God came “once in the end of the world . . . to put away sin by the _____ of himself” (Hebrews 9:26). On the cross, Christ “offered himself without spot to God” (Hebrews 9:14), being “once offered to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:28), making a payment to the Father for the sins of all mankind. The Lord Jesus’ sacrifice was made to satisfy the just judgment of God’s Law against us for our sins. He did not die simply as a good example of suffering. His death was a payment to God for our sins, not a ransom given to Satan or anyone else. God is able to reconcile “enemies . . . by the _____ of his Son” (Romans 5:10). Jesus Christ “loved us and washed us [who are saved] from our sins in his own _____” (Revelation 1:5). His death and shed blood were the perfect sacrificial offering for sin.

- *Substitutionary.* “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the _____ for the _____” (1 Peter 3:18). A substitute is one who comes in the place or in the room of another. Did you ever have a schoolteacher who was sick, and learn from a substitute teacher that day? The substitute took the place of your normal teacher. Christ came “to give his life a ransom for [in the place of] many” (Mark 10:45); He died as our Substitute, bearing our sins in our place, suffering the wrath of God in our stead so we would not need to suffer God’s wrath forever in hell, dying for our sins so we would not need to die eternally for them. Imagine that your bank account was overdrawn by billions of dollars—you were in debt by an incomprehensibly large amount of money.

Imagine as well that you were friends with the richest man in the world, who loved you and saw your desperate need. He gave you a call, you met together, and signed papers switching bank accounts; now he was in debt billions, while you were rich beyond imagination. This is the sort of substitution Christ made for you; He took your sins to give you His righteousness. One who receives the benefit of Christ's substitutionary death has no sin debt left to pay, but is accounted perfectly righteous before God. God's Son suffered all the judgment we deserve so we could have all the blessing, righteousness, glory, and exaltation that pertains to Him.

- *Propitiatory*. 1 John 4:10 declares, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the _____ for our sins," while 1 John 2:2 states Christ "is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world." The word *propitiation* indicates that God's wrath against us is appeased or placated by the death of Christ. God is no longer angry with those who receive the benefit of His Son's death; the blood of Jesus is sufficient to remove the Father's wrath, and enables Him to justly look upon the saved with favor.

- *Redemptive*. Galatians 3:13 reads, "Christ hath _____ us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree [cross]." Ephesians 1:7 tells us that in Him "we have redemption through his blood, [and] the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." To *redeem* is to purchase back what has been lost by the payment of a ransom. A slave might be bought out of and freed from slavery if someone paid a price to free him. Christ's sacrifice on the cross is the payment to free us from the penalty of sin and from slavery to its power. God can be just, and yet show mercy to sinners, because of the Savior's redemptive death.

- *Complete*. John 19:30 tells us that the Son of God, immediately before His death, said "It is _____: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost [he died]." The Lord Jesus suffered in full the penalty that we owe for our sin and did all that was necessary to save lost mankind. Nothing that we have ever done, are doing, or will do, can in any way add to or help complete the work of salvation, since Christ has done it all. He "by _____ purged our sins" (Hebrews 1:3); we do not purge them or help Him accomplish this work. We are "not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Nothing is needed to save us besides that Jesus "washe[s] us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5). If this has taken place, we are certain of salvation, for His work on the cross is enough to eternally save the worst sinner. If His blood has not washed our sins away, we will certainly be damned; for apart from Him,

“there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26-27).

After Christ “died for our sins according to the scriptures . . . he was buried” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). After His crucifixion, “When the even [evening] was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea [a town northwest of Jerusalem], named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus’ disciple: he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new __ __ __ __, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he __ __ __ __ __ __ a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed” (Matthew 27:57-60). A tomb such as Joseph’s would have been closed with a large stone that rolled down an incline, making it easy to close but difficult to open; several men might be needed to roll the stone back up the incline. After Christ’s burial, the chief priests and Pharisees, the Jewish religious leaders who had agitated for His death in the first place, posted guards at the tomb, and sealed it with an official seal (Matthew 27:61-66). Breaking such a seal would bring the wrath of the Roman government on the offender; the guards risked death if they allowed anyone to enter the tomb (cf. Matthew 28:14).

After Christ was “buried . . . he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:4). Before His death, the Lord had predicted that He would “be betrayed into the hands of men: [who would] kill him, and the third day he [would] be raised again” (Matthew 17:22-23). Matthew 28:1-8 records that “as it began to dawn toward the _____ day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great _____: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers [the guards] did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is _____: for he is _____, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is _____ from the _____; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.” Soon afterwards the apostles Peter and John ran to the tomb and found it empty (John 20:3-10). His body was not there—He had risen from the dead! Among many other appearances (Acts 1:3), the Lord Jesus was seen after His resurrection by “Cephas [Peter], then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above _____ brethren at once . . . After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of [Paul] also” (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). His physical body was changed into a “glorious body” (Philippians 3:21), yet it was still very real; after one miraculous

appearance in the midst of His disciples (Luke 24:36), He said, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is ___ ___ ___ ___: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not ___ ___ ___ and ___ ___ ___, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39), and ate before them “a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb” (Luke 24:40-44).

After the Lord Jesus “shewed himself alive after his passion [his death on the cross] by many infallible proofs, being seen of [many groups of people for] forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3), “he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11), where He will remain until He comes again to establish His kingdom on the earth. Now “being by the right hand of God exalted, [He sent] . . . the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:33) ten days after the Lord Jesus had ascended to heaven (Acts 2). The Spirit now indwells all of God’s people (Romans 8:9). Christ received “all power . . . in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18) and tremendous glory (Revelation 1:10-18). When God raised Christ “from the dead, [he] set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:20-23). When one of God’s people sins, he now has “an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1), who effectually pleads His death and blood to secure the sinner’s pardon. God’s own can rejoice and say, “Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that ___ ___ ___, yea rather, that is ___ ___ ___ again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ for us” (Romans 8:34). Christ bore our sins on the cross. His resurrection demonstrates God’s perfect satisfaction with His Son’s work. The Lord Jesus’ ascension to heaven and His place on the throne of God is proof positive that the sins of God’s people are gone forever. Christ is at this time preparing mansions for them in heaven (John 14:1-3). His resurrection means that they, too, will rise, to be with Him (1 Corinthians 15:20). He is also now saving the souls of all the lost who come to Him for pardon (Matthew 11:28-30).

The Lord Jesus will soon come again, when He “shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ with everlasting ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). At that time, “there [will be] given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be

destroyed” (Daniel 7:14). After a thousand years of rule over a paradise-like earth (Revelation 20:1-6; Isaiah 2:1-5), He will execute judgment upon the ungodly, condemning them to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15). He will then make a new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1) and dwell with those He has washed in His blood in “the heavenly Jerusalem” for ever and ever (Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21-22). In that “city . . . [there will be] no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God [will] lighten it, and the Lamb [Christ] *is* the light thereof” (Revelation 21:23). The death, burial, and resurrection of this soon returning Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is truly good news—it is the work of the gospel!

The prediction of the gospel:

**“Christ died . . . according to the scriptures . . . was buried,
and . . . rose again . . . according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).**

The good news of salvation through Jesus Christ is the “everlasting gospel” (Revelation 14:6), the only means through which anyone has ever been or ever will be saved. Immediately after the fall of man with Adam’s sin (Genesis 3:6), God promised a Deliverer whose coming would defeat Satan (Genesis 3:15). Recognizing the coming salvation through Christ, Abel, the child of Adam and Eve, offered a sacrifice as a manifestation of his faith in the Savior (Genesis 4:4; Hebrews 11:4). Throughout the Old Testament, God instituted various animal sacrifices and other offerings to picture the coming redemption through the blood of the Lord Jesus (Exodus 12; Leviticus 1-7, 23, etc.). Other events in Scripture also pictured the Father’s offering of His Son for sin (Genesis 22; Hebrews 11:17-19). Believers in the Old Testament era knew that they were sinners (1 Kings 8:46; Ecclesiastes 7:20), and that their works could not remove sin; God told them that “it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11). In addition to these many pictures of Christ’s redemptive work, the Old Testament is filled with predictions about Him. Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is one powerful example:

13 Behold, my ____ [this is the title for Christ in this passage] shall deal prudently, he shall be ____ and ____, and be very high. [This will take place when He returns to reign at His second coming.] 14 As many were astonished [meaning “astonished”] at thee; his visage [face] was so ____ more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: [This took place when Christ was beaten before His crucifixion, Matthew 26:66-68; John 19:2-3.] 15 So shall he ____ many nations [this refers to the salvation of the Gentile or non-Jewish nations through Christ’s blood; “sprinkle” is a technical term used for the blood of the sacrificial offerings; see Leviticus 4:6, 17; 5:9]; the ____ shall shut their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see; and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider [The Gentiles, even their kings, shall be amazed at this story of salvation through His blood]. 1 Who hath ____

our report? [In contrast to the many believing Gentiles, only a few in Israel would believe; see the verses in Isaiah 53 below; also John 12:38; Romans 10:16.] and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a _____ out of a dry ground [The “root” image is one for the Messiah or Christ in the Old Testament, Isaiah 11:1, 10]: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no _____ that we should desire him. [Christ did not come as if He were a great king, but was born in a stable and grew up in a lowly carpenter’s household, Luke 2:7; Matthew 13:55; Israel did not see His spiritual beauty, Psalm 45:2.] 3 He is despised and _____ of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we _____ as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. [Men in general rejected Him and despised Him.] 4 Surely he hath _____ our griefs, and _____ our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. [He was our Substitute and sin-bearer; this truth is emphasized down to v. 6.] 5 But he *was* wounded for _____ transgressions, *he was* bruised for _____ iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes [black and blue marks as from a whip, Matthew 27:26] _____ are _____. 6 All we like sheep have gone _____; we have _____ every one to his own way; [everyone has sinned] and the LORD hath _____ on him the iniquity of us all. [The Father laid our sins on His Son when Christ died on the cross.] 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he _____ his _____: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb [silent], so he openeth not his mouth. [This is exactly what happened to the Lord Jesus during His trial. He was silent while multitudes of false accusations were brought against Him by those who sought His death, Mark 14:55-60; John 19:9-10.] 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was _____ out of the land of the _____: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. [He was put to death as a sacrifice for the sins of God’s people.] 9 And he made his grave with the _____, and with the _____ in his death [He was crucified and died between two wicked thieves (Luke 23:33; Matthew 27:38), and wicked men also guarded his grave (Matthew 27:65-66), but Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, put His body in his tomb (Matthew 27:57-60; John 19:38-41).]; because he had done _____ violence, neither *was* _____ deceit in his mouth [He was sinless, and even those who tried Him knew He was innocent, John 8:46; Luke 23:4, 13-16; John 18:38; 19:4, 6.] 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his _____ an _____ for sin [It is again emphasized that He died as a sin offering, bearing the sins of the world that were put upon Him by the Father.], he shall _____ *his* seed, he shall _____ *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall _____ in his hand. 11 He shall _____ of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied [The only way one who is dead can then “see,” “prolong his days,” and “be satisfied,” is if he rises from the grave, which is what Christ did, Matthew 28:6-7.]: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant _____ many; for he shall bear their iniquities [Many will be justified, declared righteous, on the

Proceeded by a forerunner (John the Baptist)	“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 3:1)	“And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? . . . This is <i>he</i> , of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” (Luke 7:24, 27)
Declared the Son of God	“I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou <i>art</i> my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” (Psalm 2:7, 12; Proverbs 30:4; Isaiah 9:6; Daniel 3:25)	“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)
Ministry in the area of Galilee, in and around the tribal land of Zebulun and Naphtali	“Nevertheless the dimness <i>shall</i> not <i>be</i> such as <i>was</i> in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict <i>her</i> by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” (Isaiah 9:1-2)	“And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, <i>by</i> the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light.” (Matthew 4:13-16)
A prophet	“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me [Moses]; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deuteronomy 18:15)	“Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.” (John 6:14; 7:40; Luke 7:16; Acts 3:20-23)
Unparalleled healings	“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame <i>man</i> leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” (Isaiah 35:5-6; 42:7; 61:1-2; Jeremiah 31:8)	“And great multitudes came unto him, having with them <i>those that were</i> lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus’ feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.” (Matthew 15:30-31; 4:23-24; Luke 4:18-19; 7:19-22)
Presentation as the Messianic King by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey	“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he <i>is</i> just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” (Zechariah 9:9)	“And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed <i>them</i> in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed <i>is</i> he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed <i>be</i> the

		kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple.” (Mark 11:7-11)
Presentation as the Messianic King on March 30, A. D. 33, followed by His substitutionary death and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans for rejecting Him (fulfilled in A. D. 70).	“Know therefore and understand, <i>that</i> from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince <i>shall be</i> seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof <i>shall be</i> with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” (Daniel 9:25-26) ¹⁷	“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things <i>which belong</i> unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” (Luke 19:41-44)
Betrayed by a close friend	“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up <i>his</i> heel against me.” (Psalm 41:9)	“And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:47-48)
Betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, which was later used to purchase a potter’s field, after being cast down in the temple	“And I said unto them, If ye think good, give <i>me</i> my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty <i>pieces</i> of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised [priced] at of them. And I took the thirty <i>pieces</i> of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.” (Zechariah 11:12-13)	“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said <i>unto them</i> , What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. . . . Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What <i>is that</i> to us? see thou <i>to that</i> . And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not

¹⁷

For more information about this complex prophecy, please request a free copy of our booklet *The Book of Daniel: Proof that the Bible is the Word of the Living God*, or download the booklet at <http://sites.google.com/site/faithalonesaves/salvation>.

		lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in." (Matthew 26:14-15; 27:3-7)
Accused by false witnesses	"False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge <i>things</i> that I knew not." (Psalm 35:11)	"And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." (Mark 14:57-58)
Scorned and mocked	"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, <i>saying</i> , He trusted on the LORD <i>that</i> he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." (Psalm 22:7-8)	"And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads. . . . Likewise also the chief priests mocking <i>him</i> , with the scribes and elders, said, . . . The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." (Matthew 27:39-44)
Spat upon and smitten	"I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." (Isaiah 50:6)	"Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote <i>him</i> with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" (Matthew 26:67-68)
Pierced through hands and feet	"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet." (Psalm 22:16; cf. Zechariah 12:10)	"Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. . . . Then saith he . . . Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust <i>it</i> into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." (John 20:25, 27; cf. 19:18)
Executioners gambled for His garment	"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (Psalm 22:18)	"And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take." (Mark 15:24)
Forsaken by God	"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? <i>why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?</i> " (Psalm 22:1)	"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)
No bones broken	"He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." (Psalm 34:20)	"The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day . . . besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and <i>that</i> they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which

		was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs . . . For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. (John 19:31-36)
Resurrection from the dead and ascension to God's right hand in heaven	<p>"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence <i>is</i> fulness of joy; at thy right hand <i>there are</i> pleasures for evermore. . . . But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. . . . Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, <i>for</i> the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell <i>among them</i>." (Psalm 16:10-11; 49:15; 68:18, cf. Psalm 110:1; Isaiah 53:10-12)</p>	<p>"And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. . . . he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." (Mark 16:6, 19; Ephesians 4:8; Hebrews 12:2)</p>

Truly, the Lord Jesus is He "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write" (John 1:45; cf. 5:46; Luke 24:27, 44)!

The result of the gospel:

"I declare unto you the gospel . . . by which also ye are saved" (1 Corinthians 15:1-2)

The gospel, the fact of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, according to the scriptures, is the basis of the salvation of sinners. The Lord Jesus brings His people a vast number of benefits by means of His death and resurrection on their behalf. Some of the most important are:

- **Adoption.** Galatians 4:4-7 reads, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the _____ of _____. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba [a tender word for "Father"], Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a _____; and if a son, then an _____ of God through Christ." The Lord says to those lost in sin, "Ye are of your father the devil" (John 8:44), for they are "child[ren] of the devil" (Acts 13:10) and "children of disobedience . . . children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:2-3). However, when one is redeemed, he becomes God's child (John 1:12-13), the object of the tender care of his loving heavenly Father, and one who will, through Jesus Christ, "inherit all things" (Revelation 21:7), for all of eternity! The Holy Spirit indwells the adopted sons

of God (Romans 8:14-15), and He “beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). This indwelling gives the adopted inestimable comfort now, and is a guarantee of their future resurrection to eternal glory (Romans 8:23).

• *Justification.* Romans 5:1 reads, “Therefore being _____ by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Justification, to be “declared righteous,” is a judicial act where God pardons the sins of, and accounts and accepts as righteous, all believers, not because of anything worked in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone, by crediting to them His righteousness. We cannot be justified by our own righteous actions, for “all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6), but in the act of justification, God, the blood of His Son having washed our sins away, gives us Jesus’ righteousness instead, so we are “covered . . . with the robe of [Christ’s] righteousness” (Isaiah 61:10). God’s people are made “the righteousness of God in [Christ],” (2 Corinthians 5:21). God’s Law demands not only absolute freedom from all sin, but perfect obedience; one must not only have done nothing wrong, but must have actively fulfilled all of the Law’s commands. This requirement is met in justification. Christ died so we would not need to die for our sins; He paid our penalty so we would not need to pay it, and He lived a sinless life so that God could reckon to the justified His Son’s perfect obedience. Having accounted Christ’s righteousness to His people, God can treat them as if they had never sinned but had instead perfectly obeyed His Law their entire lives! This reckoning of sinners righteous is not based upon anything they have done, are doing, or will do; “God imputeth [credits/accounts] righteousness _____” (Romans 4:6); “to him that worketh _____, but believeth on him that justifieth the _____, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:5). In the justification of sinners by means of Christ’s redemption, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*” (Psalm 85:10); not only does God’s mercy require that the justified enter into eternal glory, but His justice likewise demands it. The Law being satisfied, the same inflexible holiness that had previously necessitated their condemnation as sinners now requires that they receive eternal life. Since God has declared them righteous, they can, rejoicing, ask, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect [those He has chosen to save]? *It is* _____ that _____. Who *is* he that condemneth? (Romans 8:33-34). The Judge has declared them holy and sinless. No one can say otherwise!

• *Reconciliation.* Romans 5:10 reads, “For if, when we were _____, we were _____ to God by the _____ of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be _____ by his life.” Before one receives the benefits of Christ’s death, he is God’s enemy—God is against the sinner because of his

sin, and the sinner is against God because He is holy. However, by means of the death of the Lord Jesus, the justified are brought into fellowship with the Father; no longer are they enemies, but they are God's friends, indeed, His dearly beloved children. This is what reconciliation accomplishes. God, "in Christ, [was] reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Having been restored to a right relation to God, the saved also desire to walk with Him. This relates to the next benefit of Christ's death, sanctification.

• *Sanctification.* Hebrews 13:12 reads, "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might _____ the people with his own blood, suffered without [outside of] the gate." To be sanctified is to be set apart, to be separated from the world and consecrated to God. It is related to the word *holy*. Christ sanctifies His people positionally and practically. Positional sanctification is the one-time event of being set apart as one who belongs to God. This positional sanctification happens at the same moment as justification and reconciliation; when one is transformed from a child of the devil into a child of God, he is permanently set apart as one of the heavenly Father's own. Hebrews 10:10 tells us that the justified "are _____ through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*," while Hebrews 10:14 states that "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are _____." The Son of God's death is the righteous basis upon which God eternally saves all those who belong to Him. Practical sanctification is day-to-day growth in holiness, through which God makes His chosen ones more and more like the Lord Jesus, more separated from sin, and more conformed to His will. The Holy Spirit works this kind of sanctification within the justified over the course of their whole lives. The Lord Jesus, the great High Priest, prayed that those He represented would be made holy through the Word of God, requesting of the Father, "_____ them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Those who have been positionally sanctified will grow in practical godliness, for "now being made _____ from _____, and become _____ to God, ye have your fruit unto _____, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:22). The word "saint" means "holy/consecrated/set-apart one," and it refers to every born-again person, all those adopted into God's family (1 Corinthians 1:2; Colossians 1:2).¹⁸ The saints enjoy both positional and practical sanctification; they became God's possession when they entered His family, and their lives are characterized by holiness and purity. Without the Savior's death, no sinner could become God's peculiar treasure in positional

18

As mentioned in Bible study #3, every born-again person is a saint.

sanctification, nor be freed from bondage to sin to walk in God's ways in practical sanctification. The work of Christ in the gospel also secures the saints a holy eternity, one set apart to God and entirely free from the presence of sin—their glorification is a future certainty.

- *Glorification.* Hebrews 2:10 states, “For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto _____, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” The saints are not only currently set apart as God's own, and growing in holiness, but they will be forever separated from sin, made perfectly holy. They will then enjoy eternal glory dwelling in the presence of the glorious God. At the resurrection they will be “raised in glory” (1 Corinthians 15:43). The Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven with a glorified, spiritual body (Revelation 1:10-20), and God's people can say their “conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall _____ our _____ body, that it may be fashioned like unto his _____, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Philippians 3:20-21). “When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). With glorious, resurrected bodies, “the righteous [will] shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43), who will make “known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy [the redeemed], which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Rom 9:23). They will reign forever with Christ, obtaining a “far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory” than the “light affliction, which is but for a moment” (2 Corinthians 4:17) which they endure in this life. How does all the glory of this life fade away into nothing in comparison! Surely is it more important to enter into the glorious kingdom of God than to have anything, or everything, this life can offer! God “called [the reconciled] by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:14) by means of “Christ, *who is* our life” (Colossians 3:4); the “riches of the glory of this mystery . . . is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). The elect are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ . . . glorified together” with Him (Romans 8:17). The saints will be glorified because of their eternal, unbreakable union with their glorious God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Every benefit the redeemed will receive in eternal glory is based on the fact that they are “in Christ”—they receive every grace, mercy, and blessing because of their spiritual union with the Son of God. First Corinthians 1:30 states that they are “_____ who of God is made unto [them] wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” God “hath blessed [them] with _____ spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* _____” (Ephesians 1:3). Since the saints are in Christ, Romans 8:32 can ask,

“He that spared not his own _____, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not _____ also freely give us _____?” Jesus Christ is infinitely more precious than all the universe, greater than the totality of all that has ever existed, or that will exist, in the kingdom of God—if the Father gives us Him, then God will by no means withhold adoption, justification, sanctification, and glorification from us. Despite their immeasurable value, they are all together as nothing compared to the Gift of Gifts, the only begotten Son of God.

Conclusion:

The gospel of Jesus Christ saves

We asked, at the beginning of this study, how the righteous God could save sinners. We have now discovered the answer—God can save the guilty by means of the redemptive work of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus, who was from eternity fully God, became fully Man, and entered the world to deliver us from our sins. He is *Jesus*, Jehovah-Savior. He is *Christ*, the Ruler predicted throughout the Old Testament who would come to save and rule the world. He is *Lord*, the absolute Master and Sovereign of all, and One who is Himself God. He is *Savior*, delivering His people from the *penalty* of sin, eternal damnation; the *power* of sin, its rule and control; and ultimately from the *presence* of sin, for Christ’s chosen will live with Him forever in His eternal kingdom. He also is the *Mediator*, the only go-between who can bring us to the Father. His mediation is manifested in three offices. As *Prophet*, he reveals the will of God and speaks the Word of God. As *Priest*, He reconciles His people to God on the basis of His sacrifice of Himself and effectually intercedes for them before the Father. As *King*, He rules, in accordance with His eternal good pleasure, over the current invisible kingdom of all the saints, over His church, and, upon His return, over the world.

This One, the boundlessly glorious Son of God, was sent into the world to die for our sins. His death was *sacrificial*, a payment to the Father for the sins of the world, and *substitutionary*, for He endured the judgment of God in our place, that by taking our penalty we might receive His righteousness. His death is also both *propitiatory*, since it forever appeases God’s wrath, and *complete*, for His perfect sacrifice is absolutely sufficient to save to the uttermost. Having died this incomparably valuable death, he was buried, and rose again on the third day, demonstrating God’s satisfaction with His sacrifice and vindicating His claims. He then ascended to the right hand of the Father, from whence He will soon return to judge and rule the earth. We also saw that the Lord Jesus was predicted with astonishing accuracy in numerous Old Testament prophecies.

Christ's saving work brings salvation to His own. They are *adopted* into God's family, becoming His children, and securing a blessed eternity. They are *justified*, having Christ's righteousness credited to them, and so are counted perfectly obedient and holy before the Law of God for their crucified Savior's sake. They are *reconciled*, brought back into fellowship and peace with God. They are *sanctified*, set apart as God's own, and led into the paths of holiness. Finally, they wait expectantly for their *glorification*, the everlasting honor and exaltation they will possess in their resurrected state. All of this results from their identification with the Lord Jesus, their standing "in Christ."

We have seen that 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 defines "the gospel . . . by which also ye are saved . . . [as] that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." In this passage, the apostle Paul informs the church at Corinth that this "gospel, which I preached unto you . . . [is that] which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand" (1 Corinthians 15:1). How does someone receive the benefits of the gospel? How can you, personally, appropriate the benefits of Christ and His saving work, and be given eternal life? This is the subject of our next study—*How Do I Receive the Gospel?*

Review Quiz For Bible Study #4

- 1.) The gospel is the good news that salvation is obtained through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. True False
- 2.) Jesus Christ is the Savior, and His death takes care of most sins, but we must live holy lives to pay for the rest of our sins. True False
- 3.) After the Son of God came into the world, He and His apostles preached a new and different gospel that nobody had ever heard before, and which the Old Testament said nothing about. True False
- 4.) Justification takes place gradually as we live more and more holy lives and become righteous people. Our own righteousness will enable us to stand before God. True False
- 5.) Certain sins, like murder, are so bad that nothing, not even the blood of Jesus, will wash them away. True False

6.) The work of Christ on the cross is substitutionary, since the Lord Jesus suffered and died for our sins so we would not need to suffer and die for them. He died this substitutionary death so that we might have His righteousness credited to us, and stand before God on that basis. True
False

7.) We are controlled by Satan before we are redeemed, so Jesus Christ's sacrifice was a price paid to Satan to free us from his control. True False

8.) If we are "in Christ," we will have all the benefits of union with Him, including the forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation, but if we are not in Christ, damnation is certain. True
False

Request for Study #5

___ I have returned the fourth Bible study to you with the answer blanks filled in and answered the review quiz questions. Please send me the next Bible study, *How Do I Receive the Gospel?*

___ I would like to understand more about Christ's work to save us. Please send me a free copy of the Christian classic *The Blood of Jesus*, by William Reid.

___ I would like to meet with or talk to someone in person. I have put information in the spaces below (phone number, times available, etc.) to contact me.

Please use the spaces below to write down any other questions that you have. You can also write down any changes of address. Please also put down the names and addresses of people you know who might also like to do this Bible study.

Mailing address:

Bible Study #5: *How Do I Receive the Gospel?*

Introduction and Review

Dear friend,

We rejoice that we have been able to help you study the Bible through the materials that you have already completed, and are glad to be able to continue helping you with this fifth study. To review, in study #1, we learned the Bible was inspired; it is God's perfect, error-free Word. We also learned that God has perfectly preserved the Bible, so when we read our English Bible we are reading the pure and uncorrupted Word of God, preserved intact for us today. We also examined some of the many proofs that God inspired and preserved His Word. Then, in study #2, we studied characteristics of God Himself. We learned many of His attributes, the significance of three central words for Him in the Bible, *Jehovah*, *Eloheim*, and *Adonai*, and discovered God has eternally existed in three distinct Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Then, in study #3, we studied the ten commandments, as well as a few of the other commandments in the Bible, obtaining a sampling of the standard humanity will face in the judgment. We learned that God commands us to live by every one of the 791,328 words in the Bible, and His Law promises blessing and eternal life for sinless obedience. However, God's curse and eternity in the lake of fire is the penalty for any and every disobedience to His Word. This left us in serious trouble, since all mankind sinned in Adam, is born with a corrupt and sinful nature, and commits countless sins. We are therefore worthy of eternal damnation; in fact, until our sins are taken care of, we cannot truly please God at all, and all whom God does not view as sinless and perfect are already under His wrath and are already condemned. Furthermore, people's attempts to escape the punishment of God's Law by ignoring it, denying their total depravity, trying to be religious, or attempting to reform their lives, totally fail.

However, in Bible study #4 we learned that God has provided salvation for sinners through the redemptive work of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus, who was always fully God, became fully Man, and entered the world to deliver us from our sins. We found out that Jesus, Jehovah the Savior, was the Christ, the One who would come to save and rule the world; the Lord, the absolute Master and Sovereign; and the Savior, delivering His people from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. He also is the only Mediator who can bring us to the Father. We learned of His mediatorial actions as Prophet, revealing the will of God and speaking the Word of God, Priest, reconciling His people to God on the basis of His sacrifice of Himself, and effectually interceding for them before the Father; and King, ruling the saints and the church now, and, upon His return, ruling the world. This great Person came into the world to die for our sins. His death was a sacrificial payment to the Father. On the cross He performed the work of a Substitute and endured the judgment of God in our place, that by taking our penalty we might receive His righteousness. His blood was a propitiation, since it forever appeased God's wrath against the redeemed, and it was fully complete, for His death is absolutely sufficient to save. Having died this incomparably valuable death, the Lord Jesus was buried, then rose again on the third day, proving that He was indeed the Messiah and manifesting God's satisfaction with His Son's sacrifice. Christ then ascended to the right hand of the Father. He will soon return again to judge and rule the world. We found out that the gospel was predicted in the Old Testament, and that the Son of God's saving work brings His people adoption, for they become the children of God; justification, having Christ's righteousness credited to them, so that they are counted perfectly obedient and holy for Jesus' sake; reconciliation, for they recover fellowship and peace with God; sanctification, as they are set apart as God's own, and led into the paths of holiness; and glorification, everlasting honor and blessing in God's presence. God's people receive all these blessings on account of their standing "in Christ." This left us with the question, "How do I personally receive the benefits of the gospel?" How can you, individually, pass from spiritual death to life, enter God's family, and be found in Christ, and so receive eternal salvation? This is the subject of our current study.

With study #5 you have also received your completed version of study #4, which has been checked and graded. Please look over that study for corrections by your Bible teacher, especially on the quiz questions, and for comments, especially at the very end of the study. Also, please keep your completed studies available so that you can look back at them later. Remember that at the end of each of them you have some questions to answer so that we can see that you have understood the Biblical teaching, and some blank space upon which you can write down any questions that you have. Also, please use this space to provide us with the names and addresses of any friends or acquaintances of yours who would also be interested in studying the Bible, so that we can send these materials to them as well. Once again, this Bible course is

provided to you courtesy of Bethel Baptist Church, 4905 Appian Way, El Sobrante, CA 94803, (510) 223-8721/ (510) 223-9550, www.pillarandground.org, betbapt@flash.net. Let us know if you would like a personal visit for Bible study, and feel free to visit us for Sunday school at 9:45 a.m., morning worship at 11:00 a.m., Sunday evening worship at 6:00 p.m., or Wednesday prayer and Bible study at 7:00 p.m. We are overjoyed that we can assist you in studying the Bible.

Receiving the gospel: Expressions in Scripture

Mark 1:14-15 tells us that “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: _____ ye, and _____ the gospel.” When the Lord Jesus preached the gospel, He called on those listening to Him to repent and believe. The apostles also preached repentance and faith; Paul testified “both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, _____ toward God, and _____ toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). These two words summarize the means through which sinners personally appropriate the gospel, and we will examine them in more detail further on in this study. Other Biblical terms for receiving the gospel include conversion, as in Acts 3:19: “Repent ye therefore, and be _____, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord,” receiving Christ, as in John 1:12: “But as many as _____ him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name,” and coming to Christ, as in John 6:37: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that _____ to me I will in no wise cast out.” These all represent the same human response to God; one is converted, receives Christ, and comes to Him, when he repents and believes. The Bible employs a variety of other terms for coming to or receiving Christ, such as taking the water of life (Revelation 21:6), looking to the Savior (Isaiah 45:22), eating the living bread from heaven, Jesus Christ (John 6:51), pressing into God’s kingdom (Luke 16:16), entering the flock of God through Christ, the door (John 10:9), etc. Certain other ideas that people who often mean well equate with receiving the gospel, such as asking Jesus into one’s heart, baptism, going forward at the invitation in a church service or revival meeting, receiving the laying on of hands, taking communion, praying the sinner’s prayer to accept Christ, having unique emotional experiences, coming to the altar, seeing visions, signing a decision card, speaking in tongues, and many others, are never said to be the means of receiving forgiveness of sin in the Bible. In our study, we will stick to what God’s Word tells us on this subject, rather

than utilizing humanly originated ideas which often cause soul-threatening confusion on this all important matter.

At the same moment that one repents and believes the gospel, he is “born again” (John 3:3, 5), a term which means the same thing as “regeneration” (Titus 3:5). These terms refer to the radical, permanent, life-altering change God performs upon the one who has come to Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 reads, “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a ____: ____ things are passed away; behold, all things are become ____.” At that moment, when one in repentance believes the gospel and is regenerated, adoption and justification take place, along with positional sanctification; one is now “in Christ.” Practical sanctification also becomes a certainty, for one is given a new inward principle of holiness, a new heart (Hebrews 8:10) to replace the old depraved one (Jeremiah 17:9), with a consequent transformation of one’s desires and actions. The new child of God characteristically “bringeth forth good things” out “of the good treasure of [his] heart” rather than the “evil things” which came from the “evil treasure” of his old sinful nature (Matthew 12:35). Ultimate glorification also becomes a certainty, for the Lord promises that “whosoever drinketh of the [spiritual] water that I shall give him shall never thirst [a guarantee]; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

One repents and believes, and is regenerated, at a specific moment in time. In John 5:24, the Lord Jesus promises, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, ____ [present tense] everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but ____ from death unto life.” One is either spiritually dead or spiritually alive, a child of the devil or a child of God, saved or lost, forgiven or unforgiven, justified or condemned, headed to hell or headed to heaven; there is no in-between stage where one is half God’s child and half the devil’s, half dead and half alive, somewhat in Christ but somewhat not, partially headed to heaven and partially to hell. The new birth is not a process that takes place over days or weeks or months or years, but the work of an instant. It is the most important event in the life of God’s people. All who never experience it will be eternally lost. In light of the conscious workings of the mind and will associated with repentance and faith, and the radical transformation involved in regeneration, one who has been born again will know when this change took place. How could one possibly repent, or be given a new heart and a new nature, or pass from being God’s enemy to being His dear child, and receive all the other effects of salvation, without knowing about it? One who cannot identify the point in his life when he was born again is still lost in his sins; he has never been regenerated.

Repentance and faith are simultaneous; one cannot savingly repent without believing the gospel, nor believe in Christ without repenting. They are like two sides of the same coin; as one cannot have the front of a quarter without the back, no one can have either repentance or faith

without the other. There are no truly repentant unbelievers, or unrepentant true believers. Since repentance and faith involve each other, Scripture often states eternal life is conditioned only upon faith (“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already,” John 3:18) or upon repentance (“Repentance [is] unto life,” Acts 11:18, and “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,” Luke 13:3). Although both repentance and faith express the single act of receiving or coming to Christ, they emphasize different aspects of that decision. We will therefore study what God tells us repentance is, and what it is not, and what faith is, and what it is not. Thus we will gain a clear understanding of what this conversion, this receiving of the gospel, is that God requires of us. Nothing could be more important to you, for without genuine repentance and faith, the benefits of Christ’s saving work are unobtainable, and without Christ as your Savior, you will certainly suffer the unbearable wrath of God for all eternity.

Saving Repentance:

What it is not

Before we study what saving repentance is, we will examine what it is not. Many people never truly repent because they are content with imitations of repentance that fall short of it. Satan, with these counterfeits of repentance, “hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Substitutes may pacify the conscience now or convince other people that you have repented and are a Christian, but they will do no good in the day when you stand before God; then all who have not repented will be damned. We cannot look at every possible type of false repentance, but we will examine a number of common ones.

- *Taking up the profession of Christianity is not repentance.* Titus 1:16 reads, “They ____ that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being ____, and ____, and unto every good work reprobate [rejected, unapproved by God].” The people described in these verses claim to be Christians, but God calls them abominable, that is, loathsome or abhorrent, and He rejects them. In Matthew 7:21-23, the Lord Jesus warns, “Not every one that ____ unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ____ will ____ to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I ____ knew you: ____ from me, ye that work iniquity.” Many, the Lord warns us, will be rejected—not just all those who know nothing of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12), but many who say to him, “Lord, Lord,” as these do. He here rejects not only those who

simply profess Him without ever having repented, but warns us that even many preachers, prophets, miracle-workers, and zealous doers of good works in Christ's name will be damned! These were not people who were justified at one point but then became unjustified (something that is impossible), but people who were never saved; Christ tells them, "I never knew you" (v. 23). Certainly it is a good thing to profess Christ, and one who has truly repented will certainly do so—but profession is not enough, and one may claim Christianity without being a Christian. Do you not even profess to be a Christian? Woe to you! If you profess to be one, have you repented? Your claim alone will not save you from hell. Have you repented, or do you simply say you are a Christian?

• *Receiving baptism is not repentance.* One may be baptized without having repented. A sorcerer (Acts 8:9-11) named Simon, amazed at the power of the true God, claimed to have become a Christian and convinced Philip the evangelist to baptize him (Acts 8:13). He not only deceived Philip, but was also likely self-deceived; he thought that he had indeed been converted, although he had not. In this he was like many people today, who think they are converted, but are not. Later Simon showed that he was never saved by trying to buy the miraculous power the apostles had (Acts 8:18-19). Peter rejected his request, telling him, "Thy money _____ with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. _____ therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be _____ thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:20-23). If even apostolic preachers baptized people who had not really repented, we should expect that multitudes today have been baptized who are unrepentant. On the other hand, a thief who was crucified with Christ on the cross genuinely repented, saying to the other thief who was also crucified but was mocking Christ, "Dost not thou _____ God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed _____; for we receive the _____ of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, _____, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:40-42). Then "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Whereas Simon the sorcerer was baptized but unrepentant and unforgiven, so this thief was repentant and forgiven, although unbaptized.¹⁹ How is it with you? Baptized or unbaptized, you are still dead in your sins unless you have genuinely repented!

¹⁹ Some groups claiming Christianity argue that baptism is required for salvation, an absolutely false statement and an accursed false gospel (Galatians 1:6-9). For an in-depth refutation of the idea that baptism is a

• *Possessing mere moral righteousness or external conformity to the rules of piety is not repentance.* Luke 18:11-12 reads, “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am ___ ___ ___ as ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” This Pharisee was a very moral person. He was just in his dealings with others, abstained from sexual immorality, and performed many religious duties. However, Christ said that he was still lost (Luke 18:14). One may escape the pollutions of the world by knowing truth about Jesus Christ (2 Peter 2:20-22), have a form of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5), pray long (Matthew 23:14), fast often (Luke 18:12), hear the Word gladly (Mark 6:20), and be zealous for the service and worship of God, though costly and expensive (Isaiah 1:11), and still be lost, having never repented. The repentant man is a moral person, as the Christian man is a human being, but one can be moral and not be repentant, as one can be human but not be Christian. If you are moral and pious, but not converted, you will certainly be damned; and if you are not even moral and pious, how terrible is your coming condemnation!

• *Having powerful, or even miraculous, spiritual experiences is not repentance.* You can have tremendous spiritual encounters or miraculous events, such as speaking in tongues, seeing visions, or experiencing healings, and still be eternally damned. Christ warned that “an ___ ___ ___ ___ and adulterous generation ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ after a ___ ___ ___ ___” (Matthew 12:39). Even if you could know that a spiritual experience or miracle was from God, not from demons, who can also work miracles (Revelation 16:14), it would be no proof that you were born again. Christ healed ten lepers on a trip to Jerusalem, but only one of the ten actually placed his faith in the Lord and was spiritually saved—the other nine were still lost (Luke 17:11-19). God gave the unconverted apostle Judas power to do miracles (Matthew 10:4-5, 8). The wicked high priest Caiaphas, who plotted the Lord Jesus’ death, spoke true prophecy from God (John 11:49-52; 18:14). God even made a donkey miraculously speak His Word (Numbers 22:28-30; 2 Peter 2:16)—that you have seen a miracle, or even performed one, does not make you any more born again than that donkey. Furthermore, even if “one went unto [you] from the dead” in what would be a profoundly shocking miracle, you would still need to repent, or you would perish (Luke 16:29-31). Scripture records the example of a man who had an astounding miracle of healing done in his life by Jesus Christ, who desired on that account to be His disciple, and who even suffered persecution because of the Lord Jesus, who was still unconverted

prerequisite for forgiveness of sin, please ask us for a free copy of *Heaven Only For The Baptized? The Gospel of Christ vs. Pardon through Baptism*.

(John 9:1-34)—not until he, after all of this, finally repented and believed the gospel (John 9:35-41) were his sins forgiven. The multitudes who saw the Son of God during His earthly ministry but never received His gospel, and the damned who will stand before the great white judgment throne of Jesus Christ, will have an unquestionably genuine sight of the Lord and His glory and power, one far more powerful than anything anyone claims to have seen today in a vision, but they will still be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15). Many people think they are born again because they have had a spiritual experience or experienced the supernatural. Very often such experiences are from Satan, but even if they were from God directly, it would not mean one's sins are forgiven.

• *Chaining up or reforming inward corruption by education, human laws, or the force of affliction, is not repentance.* King Joash appeared to be a good man; he “did *that which* was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest” (2 Chronicles 24:2). Jehoiada guided Joash in the ways of righteousness from his youth, educating him and pointing him to worship and follow Jehovah. As long as Jehoiada was around, Joash followed him and did righteousness. Jehoiada had trained the king so well that Joash even initiated a project to “repair the house of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 24:4, 12). He did not think of himself as one who was just waiting for the chance to do evil, but certainly believed that he did indeed know God and had been converted. However, “Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he ____; an hundred and thirty years old *was he* when he died. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house. Now ____ the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the ____ unto them. And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and ____: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they ____ give ear. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the ____ of ____ the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and ____ with stones at the ____ of the ____ in the court of the house of the LORD. Thus ____ the king ____ the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but ____ his _____. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon *it*, and require *it*” (2 Chronicles 24:15-22). Once Jehoiada

was gone, Joash turned away from the Lord to worship false gods, and when Jehoiada's own son preached to him and reprov'd him for his sin, Joash had him murdered! A good upbringing, or laws which enforce godly behavior, or a well-trained conscience, may lead you to act in a righteous way, but you may still be without that supernatural change of nature that comes with the new birth. Outward restraints may suppress the expression of the wickedness of your heart, so that it smolders, hardly to be noticed, but once the restraints against evil are removed, your depravity will flare up as an all-consuming fire; your sin was never rooted out, just hidden. As with education and human laws, times of distress and difficulty may lead one to seek God, yet without genuine repentance. In Israel, "when [God] slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. . . . Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant" (Psalm 78:34-37). Your inward wickedness may be restrained by education, laws, or affliction, but if you have not repented, you will still be damned; the new birth will not simply curb the manifestations of your depraved heart (Jeremiah 17:9), but give you a new heart (Hebrews 8:10).

• *Illumination of spiritual need by the Spirit or conviction of sin alone, is not repentance.* Scripture speaks of those who were "enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost [partook of His ministry of convicting of sin]" but who never came "unto repentance" and "whose end is to be burned" (Hebrews 6:4, 6, 8). When Paul preached to the wicked Roman ruler, Felix, as Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix _____, and answered, _____ for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). God showed this pagan Roman, Felix, his need for Christ, and he trembled in recognition of the truth—but instead of repenting, he told Paul to "go" for "this time," putting off receiving the gospel. He seems to have put it off the rest of his life, and therefore burns in hell today. King Herod heard [John the Baptist preach] gladly . . . knowing he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things" (Mark 6:20), but Herod never received the gospel. He later beheaded John (Mark 6:27-29) and was involved in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Luke 23:7-11) with Pilate. Some hearts, when broken by the Spirit working through the preached Word, were brought to repentance (Acts 2:37-38, 41), but others "were cut to the heart" and "took counsel to slay [the preachers]" instead (Acts 5:33; 7:54). God may have been at work in your life, enabling you to see your great need of the gospel, and perhaps you even responded to that conviction in some way; but unless you repented and believed the gospel, you are still lost.

• *Partial surrender, or making conditions with God, is not repentance.* Pharaoh gave in part way and tried to negotiate when God sent the plagues to deliver Israel from Egypt under the hand of Moses. His heart was hardened, not broken, by the work of God (Exodus 7:3). When in distress from the plagues, he made promises to submit to God (Exodus 8:8); but he never actually changed. When the reasons for his fear and affliction were gone, he returned to his disobedience and hardened his heart the more (Exodus 8:15; 9:34). The Lord had said all the Israelites needed to leave, but Pharaoh tried to make deals with God, offering, after successive disastrous plagues, to allow Israel to worship Jehovah in the land of Egypt; or leave, but not go very far away (Exodus 8:25-28); or to let only the men go, but not the women and children (Exodus 10:10-11); or to let all the people go, but not their flocks and herds (Exodus 10:24-28). Pharaoh would also admit his sin in part, but not fully confess his complete sinfulness (Exodus 9:27), nor completely humble himself (Exodus 10:3). Because he would not completely give in to God, he brought upon himself total disaster, as his firstborn son was slain (Exodus 12:29-33), his land destroyed (Exodus 10:7), his army drowned in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-30), and his soul eternally lost. You cannot only partially give in to God, so that you hold on to certain sins. You cannot only half-heartedly agree with what He says about your wickedness and sinful nature. He will accept you only on His own terms: unconditional surrender.

• *Sorrow over only the results of sin is not repentance.* Esau was a “profane person” who “for one morsel of meat sold his birthright,” and “afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was _____: for he found _____ place of _____, though he sought it carefully with tears” (Hebrews 12:16-17). As the firstborn of Abraham’s son Isaac, Esau possessed a birthright that promised him the tremendous blessings and privileges God had given to his grandfather Abraham. Esau was in a position to be the father of the chosen nation and to be the one through whom the Messiah would be born. However, one day after returning from hunting, he was hungry, and sold his birthright to his brother Jacob for a bowl of soup. In an act of almost incomprehensible sin and foolishness, Esau “despised his birthright” (Genesis 25:29-34). Later, when the full realization of what he had lost came to him, Esau “cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry” (Genesis 27:34) and “lifted up his voice, and wept” (Genesis 27:38). While he hated the consequences of his sin, he never repented—instead of admitting how awfully he had sinned, he blamed Jacob for his loss (Genesis 27:36), selfishly thought only about what he would now fail to gain, not about his crimes against God (saying “me/my” eleven times in three verses, Genesis 27:34, 36, 38), and, rather than submitting to God’s will, determined to kill his brother after Isaac’s death (Genesis

27:41). Scripture contrasts a “godly sorrow [which] worketh repentance to salvation” with “the sorrow of the world [which] worketh death” (2 Corinthians 7:10). Many people today are like Esau, and have sold their souls and eternity in God’s presence for the perishing things of this world, a greater folly than Esau committed in trading his birthright for some soup. Many also have seen the bad results of their sins, and have hated these results: they have taken drugs, or gotten drunk, and hated the consequences of destroyed bodies, destroyed families, destroyed relationships, and a destroyed life; they have been sexually immoral, and hated the disease, the loss of purity, the hosts of other awful consequences; they have stolen, or cheated, or lied, and hated the penalties when they were caught—yet they did not hate their sins for their own sake, as evils contrary to the nature of the holy, pure, good, and loving God. Many people hate hell, and find the concept of eternal torment for their sins an awful, unbearable consequence. They may feel great anguish over this punishment God has decreed for their sins, so that they may shed streams of tears over it—yet they would keep their sin and have heaven too, if they could. It is right to hate the consequences of sin, but it is not enough. You may have a worldly sorrow that regrets the damage sin causes and the terrible results it brings with it, without hating sin itself, wanting God for who He is, or ever repenting. This is not enough. You will be damned unless you repent!

Beware that you are not content with any of these Satanic alternatives to genuine repentance; if you are, you will be lost. Not only will these not save, but other false hopes, such as your sincerity, God’s (apparent) answers to your prayers, experiences of peace and joy, someone else telling you that you were saved, a powerful decision about salvation you made in a church service, or saying a sinner’s prayer, will not save you. Reject any false repentance and all other false hopes, and take heed to the Lord Jesus Christ’s solemn warning: “except ye __ __ __ __ __, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3)!

Saving Repentance:

What it is

We could briefly define “repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18) as *a change of mind about God and sin that results in a change of life*. This change of mind involves a number of things. One who comes to Christ in repentance for salvation must agree that he is lost. He must agree not only that his sins are dangerous, because they are sending him to hell, but that they are filthy and vile, because they are contrary to the holy nature and law of God. Understanding this, and seeing that God promises mercy through Jesus Christ, the sinner must so grieve for and hate his sins that he turns from them all to God and the Lord Jesus. He turns to God intending to

endeavor to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments. Saving repentance is not a process of walking with God, but the decision of one particular moment. However, those who have repented will desire and endeavor to walk with God because of the new holy nature they are given at the moment they repent (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Putting all this together, an expanded definition of repentance would be: *A lost sinner savingly repents when, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature, and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ to such as are repentant, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all to God, purposing to endeavor to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments.* We may note the following characteristics of this repentance, without which no one will enter the kingdom of God:

- *Repentance is proceeded by the work of the Holy Spirit.* Nobody will repent (or believe) the gospel without the Holy Spirit working in him the desire and ability to do so; left to himself, “there is none that seeketh after God” (Romans 3:11); this is why the Lord Jesus said, “no man _____ unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father” (John 6:65). However, the Spirit “reprove[s] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8), and His work enables the lost sinner to see his spiritual darkness, the truth of the gospel of Christ, and his need of salvation. The Spirit also gives the spiritual desire and ability to turn to the Savior. Genuine repentance is a gift from God (2 Timothy 2:25); one repents when God permits (Heb 6:3), “for it is God which worketh in you both to _____ and to _____ of *his* good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). This is one reason why it is extremely important to immediately respond if the Lord causes you to desire Christ and salvation—if you do not repent and believe, your heart will become hardened, and God is under no obligation to give you further opportunities when you wickedly resist His Spirit. Furthermore, since God does not change His mind when He gives the gift of repentant faith (Romans 11:29), one who has repented and believed the gospel will continue to be a repentant person—a repenter at heart. God irrevocably implants a characteristic rejection of sin, love for Christ and holiness, and submission to Scripture in all whom He gives the gifts of repentance and faith. He also gives them a new and holy nature (2 Corinthians 5:17; Hebrews 8:10) that they cannot alter (and will never wish to give up) any more than they could alter the old sinful nature they inherited from Adam.
- *Repentance is motivated by God’s goodness.* Romans 2:4 asks, “Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the _____ of God leadeth thee to repentance?” Instead of immediately sending you to the hell fire you deserve, God has spared you for years, manifesting His longsuffering

and patience toward you, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Not only has He spared your life, given you the Bible, and showered you with innumerable physical and spiritual mercies, but He made the ultimate sacrifice in sending His Son to die for your sins: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he _____ us, and _____ his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). When you deserved to be punished, the Father punished His Son, who freely endured the cross, for you. Can you refuse to repent when confronted with such amazing and incomparable love, kindness, and mercy?

- *Repentance is intellectual, volitional, and emotional.* Repentance is *intellectual*—you change your mind. Jeremiah 8:6 reads, “I hearkened and heard, *but* they spake not aright: no man _____ him of his wickedness, saying, _____ have I _____? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.” Here people were unwilling to change their mind about their sin, and so they did not repent. Repentance involves giving up false ideas about God, the Bible, and the way of salvation; one acknowledges his sin and receives as true all that Scripture says about the means of deliverance from it. You must acknowledge the eternal consequences of your disobedience, its filthiness to the holy God of heaven, and understand His way of deliverance from it.

Repentance is also *volitional*, that is, it involves the will—you change your direction. Ezekiel 18:30 reads, “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and _____ *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.” You must give up your way for Christ and His commandments.

Finally, repentance is *emotional*—you change your desires. One says to God in repentance, “O my God, I am _____ and _____ to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens” (Ezra 9:6). A “godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation” (2 Corinthians 7:10), for “The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit” (Psalm 34:18). To the lost man, sin, or at least certain types of sin, are a light thing, but the repentant man grieves for and hates his sins—sin is shameful to him, a burden he would rejoice to have removed. In Ezekiel 6:9, those that repented “lothe[d] themselves for the evils which they [had] committed in all their abominations.” They were angry or disgusted with themselves because by sin they had made themselves vile to the pure and holy God, who cannot look upon iniquity. If sin in general is truly an abomination to us, sin in ourselves will especially be so; the nearer it is to us the more loathsome it will be.

God spares those who “sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done” by them, and by others (Ezekiel 9:4). A change of mind, direction, and desire are the three basic aspects of genuine repentance.

• *Repentance involves agreeing with God.* When Nehemiah prayed in repentance for the nation of Israel, he said, “Howbeit *art* in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but have done : Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. For they have thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither they from their wicked works” (Nehemiah 9:33-35; cf. Leviticus 26:40-41). One who repents must agree with God about His Word, Person, and characteristics; someone who does not believe in the infallible inspiration of Scripture, or in the Trinity, or in salvation based only on the work of Jesus Christ, rather than his own works, is not ready to repent. The sinner must also take God’s side against himself, agreeing with the Lord about his own lost condition and his sin. In relation to his salvation, he accepts that he is condemned for his sin in Adam, his sin nature, and his innumerable personal sins; that he has never genuinely pleased God in his life; that he has no good in him, but is worthy of damnation, and God would be absolutely just to immediately send him to hell and leave him there forever; that if he were to die at that moment, he would be lost eternally; and that all that God says is sinful is truly so, and must be forsaken and detested. Sometimes unconverted people are not certain that they are indeed lost, but think they may have been born again already; perhaps they made an emotional decision in childhood, attended an evangelistic meeting and responded to an altar call, or performed some other religious ritual through which they think God may have regenerated them. Such people are not yet ready to repent, for they do not agree with God that they are truly lost. Others deny the existence of hell, or think that God would be unfair to torment them there eternally for their sins; such are not yet ready to repent, for they reject what the righteous Judge has revealed about the extent of their depravity and its just reward. Many are unwilling to agree that even their religious or moral actions, apart from the new birth and Christ, are actually sinful. They do not want to admit that they truly have no spiritual good in them, that they have not done anything acceptable to God in their entire lives, prior to being justified by faith—but unless they admit it is so, they cannot repent, and so will take all their proud morality with them into the pits of hell. Without surrender to God’s declarations about one’s spiritual condition, repentance and forgiveness are impossible.

• *Repentance involves a desire to make things right.* In Luke 19:1-10, a man named Zacchaeus, a “publican” or tax-collector who, using the power of the Roman government, had exploited and stolen from many people to become rich, was called to salvation by Jesus Christ, and “received Him joyfully” (Luke 19:6). When the people heard that the Lord was going to stay that day at Zacchaeus’ house, “they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner” (v. 7). But “Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the ____ of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I ____ him ____” (Luke 19:8). When Zacchaeus repented, he did not just go to the people he had sinned against and say that he was sorry—he did what was in his power to make things right. He returned what he had taken from them—with a great deal extra. When one who has sinned against other people repents, he will confess his error to them as well as to God, and make restitution. If he has broken the law as a thief, a tax-evader, or in any other way, he will turn himself in and pay up. Have you sinned against others, either through ungodly speech or unrighteous actions? If you repent, after confessing your sin to God, you will need to confess it to those whom you have sinned against, and get things right with them.

• *Repentance involves turning from all known specific sins, as well as sin in general, to surrender unconditionally to Christ as Lord.* The lost sinner turns from his sin in general; Isaiah 55:7 reads, “Let the ____ forsake his ____, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” He no longer wants to go his own way, but now he wants to go God’s way. He comes to an end of himself and his lifestyle and surrenders himself to Christ without holding anything back. He recognizes that Jesus Christ is “Lord of all” (Acts 10:36), and he therefore submits to Him unconditionally as Lord. He also turns from all known specific sins. When the wicked man “considereth, and ____ away from ____ his ____ that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die” (Ezekiel 18:28). This does not mean that a born-again individual who did not know something was sinful, but finds out it is so after his conversion, or one who committed some sin fifteen years before he was justified and forgot about it, and so did not specifically repent of that action, is not truly saved—what it does mean is that you cannot repent and hold on to any known sin. If you wish to be saved, you must repent of all the sins mentioned in Bible Study #3 that you have committed. Is there something evil, even a “small” thing, that you are not willing to give up? “God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:26). Your sins are loathsome,

not precious; they do nothing good for you, but are your worst curse—to be delivered from them is a wonderful blessing. Is there some iniquity that you value more highly than you do the Son of God? If so, you cannot repent—but if you do not repent, you will surely be damned. Jesus Christ is both Lord and Savior, and He will not save you from hell unless you also want Him to be your Lord and save you from your sinful practices.

Specifically, in repentance you *turn from the world*. Paul testifies in Philippians 3:8-11, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* _____ for the excellency of the _____ of _____ my Lord: for whom I have _____ the _____ of all things, and do count them *but* _____, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may _____, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” The converted person views the things of this age, the world-system, as nothing compared to knowing and having fellowship with Christ. Compared to the infinitely precious Savior, all the riches, power, glory, and delights of this world are like a pile of manure. His primary desire and ambition is heavenly, not earthly. Jesus Christ, not this world, is uppermost in his goals, love, and estimation. 1 John 2:15-17 states, “_____ the world, neither the _____ *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For _____ that *is* in the world, the lust of the _____, and the lust of the _____, and the _____ of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

In repentance you also *turn from false religion*. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 reads, “Be ye not _____ together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial [Satan]? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore _____ from among them, and be ye _____, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and _____ will _____ you, And will be a _____ unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us _____ ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” God commands

the believer to separate from false religion and other evil practices. Indeed, he is not just to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,” but is to “reprove *them*” (Ephesians 5:11), to publicly take a stand against such evil. If you are part of a false religious organization, one that does not put in practice what the Bible says, you must be willing to leave it, and join one of Christ’s true churches, a practice taught in Hebrews 10:25 and other passages discussed in connection with the fourth of the ten commandments in Bible Study #3. (Bible Study #7 will deal extensively with the nature of Biblical religion and the true church.) The “Father seeketh . . . true worshippers” (John 4:23), those who “worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). God saves sinners to worship Him, not to continue in the false worship they practiced before their new birth. It may cost you a great deal to leave your false religion, but you cannot hold on to it and have Jesus Christ as well.

You must also *turn from all self-righteousness*. The Lord Jesus said, “I came not to call the _____, but _____ to repentance” (Luke 5:32). Christ here warned people who thought they were good (which no one is of himself, Romans 3:10), that He would never save them unless they gave up their false hope. There is no merit in repentance; we have already seen that all who have not been justified have nothing good in themselves whatsoever. You do not earn God’s favor or become inherently righteous when you repent. As long as you think you have some goodness in you, and so do not recognize your total depravity, you are not ready to turn to the Lord. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, not your repentance, that is the ground of forgiveness; repentant faith is simply the means through which you receive the gospel. If you say, “I am [spiritually] rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” and “knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17), you will never be with those who “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14). Only those wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked sinners who come to the Savior with nothing but their sin receive mercy. To these, however, salvation is freely given—for although He came not for the “righteous,” the Lord Jesus will save the worst sinner who repents.

In repentance you *turn to God*. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 reads, “For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned _____ from idols _____ the living and true _____; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.” In repentance, one not only turns away from “idols,” whatever he would put before God, but he turns to the Father, Son, and Spirit; and, being given a new heart, he is enabled to say of God, “*Thou art my portion, O LORD*” (Psalm

119:57). He wants God in life now, and fellowship with Him is the jewel that makes up his eternal bliss. He says, “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation *is* from him. He only *is* my rock and my salvation: *he is* my defence; I shall not be moved. In God *is* my salvation and my glory” (Psalm 62:5-7). The man who has repented now has his deepest desires and happiness not in pleasure, or material goods, or fame, but in God—his glory is in Jehovah’s Person, attributes, and works; he takes his rest in Him. Before he repented, he viewed his business, friends, or worldly goals above Christ, but now the Lord Jesus is his necessary food, the life of his heart. Since he turns to God and Christ, he turns to his Lord’s laws, ordinances, and ways. God’s judgments, which before he kicked at as unendurably strict, he now sees as righteous and reasonable—indeed, as lovely. He says, “More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb . . . I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. . . . Therefore I esteem all *thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and* I hate every false way. Thy testimonies *are* wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them” (Psalm 19:8-10; 119:128-129). The desire of his heart, the free and resolved choice of his will, and the tendency of his course of life is now to keep the laws of the God he loves. On the other hand, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema [accursed by God, eternally damned] Maranatha [when the Lord returns]” (1 Corinthians 16:22).

- *Repentance involves taking up the cross.* Mark 8:34-36 reads, “And when [Christ] had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him _____ himself, and _____ his _____, and _____ me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” In New Testament days, one took up a cross if he was condemned by the Roman government and on the way to his place of execution. He would, while being mocked and rejected by watching crowds, carry his cross to the place of crucifixion, where he would be placed upon it, and slowly die an excruciating and humiliating death. Taking up the cross, then, as a metaphor for repentance, signifies a willingness to deny self, and suffer shame, persecution, and death for Christ’s sake. Anyone who wishes to “save his life,” to live his own way, will eternally lose his life in hell; repentance is losing one’s life, giving up his own way to follow Christ, even to death if necessary—one who in this manner loses his life “shall save it,” for he will gain eternal life with the Lord. If you repent, it means that the Lord Jesus Christ will be first in your life, even if it means poverty, rejection by family, torture, or agonizing death—and the Bible promises that “all that will live godly

in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). However, the reward is great—you will possess your soul, which is more valuable than the whole world. If you do not repent, you will lose it, and all else, an infinite loss greater than all the temporary ease and comfort you gain in this life.

• *Repentance includes counting the cost.* In Luke 14:26-33, Christ told the multitudes hearing Him, “If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. [The command is not literal hatred, but to love Christ more than anyone else, so that compared to Him, your feelings towards all others is like hate; cf. Matthew 10:37; 19:19.] And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and _____ the _____, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to _____ *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador [a group of ambassadors, a delegation], and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that _____ not _____ that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” Repentance is not an unthinking, careless commitment, but a definite decision to forsake everything for the Lord Jesus. You should count the cost of becoming a Christian. Do you want to be holy? Are you willing to turn from your sins—not just the sins you have no special taste for, but those you find especially dear and pleasant—to set your affection on the Son of God instead? Are you willing to do what is in your power to get right with people you have sinned against? Will you forsake all self-righteousness and agree with God’s declarations about your miserable, hell-worthy state? Do you wish to persevere in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ the rest of your life, to take your stand with Him despite the inevitable hostility, rejection, and persecution you will face from the world-system, from false religion, and very possibly from some—or many—or perhaps even all—people who are close to you? If not, you cannot be His disciple. You would rather have your sins than the Savior who left His everlasting glory to die for you. Do not deceive yourself into thinking that you can have both your sin and Christ, or that you will somehow be saved without repentance. There is not the slightest chance that you will escape the lake of fire, where the smoke of your torment will ascend forever and ever, and you will have no rest day or night (Revelation 14:10-11).

Do you want Jesus Christ, whatever the cost? Then consider, finally, that in repentance *one turns to Christ in faith*. We have mentioned that repentance and faith are inseparable, but have not emphasized the part faith has in repentance because we were going to describe this aspect of receiving the gospel in considerable detail in its own section. Let us, then, consider saving faith!

Saving faith:

What it is not

Many people are confused about the nature of true repentance, substituting unbiblical counterfeits for it to their own ruin, yet it is likely that an even higher number are confused about the nature of saving faith. God promises to save believers, those with faith, in a vast number of verses. How essential it is, then, that we have a correct understanding of the nature of justifying faith! To help us understand it, we will first consider:

- *Dead faith is not saving faith.* Consider James 2:14-26. In v. 14, James says, “What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man ___ ___ he hath ___ ___ ___ , and have not ___ ___ ___ ? can faith save him?” Does someone who says that he has faith, but does not have any works, no change of life, have the kind of faith that justifies? Can this kind of “faith,” one that produces no holy actions, take one to heaven? The question is answered in v. 15-18: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit? Even so ___ ___ ___ , if it hath not ___ ___ ___ , is ___ ___ ___ , being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will ___ ___ ___ thee my faith ___ my ___ ___ ___ .” Imagine a cold winter night. You, on account of persecution for Christ, have lost everything. Only a few rags cover your body. You have not eaten for three days and have found no shelter. The freezing wind rips through your thin clothes like a sharp knife. You knock on the door of someone who claims to be a fellow Christian. He opens the door—you feel the warmth radiating toward you from inside his house, and a savory smell of a delicious dinner fills your nostrils. You explain your sad situation to him as best you can through your chattering teeth. With a compassionate look, he says, “Boy, that is really too bad. I hope things turn out well, and you can get food, clothing, and a place to stay. Good bye.” He then closes the door in your face and leaves you to freeze and starve. Did that do you any good? In the same way, a *faith that does not produce works is a dead faith*, one that will not save. Justifying faith will demonstrate its presence by works. Many people today say that they have faith in Jesus Christ, but they live like devils. James 2 makes the point that

such people have never really believed in the Lord at all. Furthermore, James 2:19 states, “Thou believest that there is _____; thou doest well: the _____ also _____, and tremble.” Just as faith that does not produce works is dead faith, so *faith that is merely mental*, that does not actually trust or rely on Christ for salvation, *is dead*. The devils believe that there is one God; they believe in the infallible inspiration of the Bible; they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who died for the sins of the world and rose again the third day; they believe in the Trinity; they believe in the return of Jesus Christ, in heaven, in hell, in creation, in the salvation of sinners simply by repentant faith, and in every other doctrine in the Bible—they are entirely theologically orthodox. They even know that they will lose and God will win, just as Scripture says (Matthew 8:29), which is why they “tremble” when they think about these Biblical truths. James 2:19 informs us that he who accepts these things “doest well”—but recognizing these things as true (and even trembling on account of them!) does not of itself save any sinner any more than it saves the devils, and it does not of itself constitute justifying faith. We see an example of merely mental faith in John 2:23-3:21. During the Lord Jesus’ earthly ministry, there were many who believed that He was able to do miracles and was from God, but had never exercised justifying faith (2:23-25). In a conversation with one of these men (3:1-2), the Lord explained that such recognition did not of itself bring the new birth (3:3-7), but saving faith was more (3:13-18). James 2:21-24 then continues to contrast dead faith and living faith using the example of Abraham, who believed in God and was accounted righteous before Him at the moment of faith (v. 23, quoting Genesis 15:6), and consequently was willing to give up his son Isaac for the Lord’s sake, a powerful testimony of the changed life which resulted from his conversion years earlier (v. 21, referring to Genesis 22). Rahab the harlot is another example (v. 25-26)—because she believed in Jehovah (Joshua 2:9-11) and was justified in God’s sight by faith (Hebrews 11:31), she hid the Israelite spies (Joshua 2:6) from their Canaanite enemies; her faith in their God led her to risk her life for the sake of her Redeemer and His people. While, in the sight of God, one is declared righteous or justified simply by repentant faith apart from works (Romans 4:1-8), in the sight of man, one is shown righteous “by works . . . and not by faith only” (v. 24). One does not become saved, or obtain living faith, by doing good works, but good works will always be the fruit of living faith. When a tree that has been bare all winter sprouts new leaves in the spring, the leaves do not make the tree alive—the tree is alive before the leaves appear. The leaves simply prove that the tree is living. On the other hand, if no leaves appear all spring and summer, you know that the tree is dead. The lack of leaves did not kill the tree—because it was dead, no leaves came forth. In the same way, good

works do not bring living faith into existence; but where genuine faith is present, works will certainly follow. You can accept the truth of Biblical doctrine, and say that you are born again, but unless works result from your faith, you have never been converted.

- *Emotional or volitional actions without intellectual understanding is not saving faith.*

We have seen that mental comprehension that does not lead to good works is not saving faith. However, one can want to be saved, to have Christ as Lord and Savior and follow Him, but without a proper understanding of God and His gospel, justifying faith is impossible. Mental comprehension is not sufficient, but there is no saving faith without it. Acts 19:1-6 tells us about people who sincerely wanted to be “disciples” (v. 1), but they had “not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost” (v. 2). Since they did not believe in the true Triune God, they were not saved—but since they were sincere, once Paul explained the gospel to them (as summarized in v. 4-5), they immediately repented and believed in Christ, were saved, and submitted to baptism. One who does not understand the nature of the gospel cannot receive it, no matter how sincere he may be (Proverbs 14:12). Sometimes people claim that they received Christ as very young children, when they were not yet old enough to understand the gospel (Deuteronomy 1:39; Jonah 4:11). Such are still unconverted. Others claim that they were born again at a particular point in time, but only after that time did they come to understand the gospel—this is also impossible, for one does not “grow” into an understanding of salvation after one already has it; you must understand the gospel before you can believe it. Some people have had powerful religious experiences—perhaps they saw a vision of Jesus (or what they thought was Jesus, 2 Corinthians 11:14), telling them their sins were forgiven, or had some other similar supernatural encounter, but they did not understand the gospel—these also are still lost, dead in their sins. Many claim to have saving faith, but they have received a false gospel, instead of believing the true one; these also will be damned (Galatians 1:8-9). You must understand the nature of salvation before conversion is possible.

- *Faith without communion with Christ is not saving faith.* Saving faith makes one “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3), joined in union with the Son, and those whom the Lord gives saving faith have consequently been brought into a state of genuine fellowship with the living God. In John 10:14, Christ says, “I am the good shepherd, and ___ ___ ___ my *sheep*, and ___ ___ ___ of mine.” The Lord Jesus said to His Father, “this is life eternal, that they might ___ ___ ___ thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). One can recognize facts about the historical Jesus, and do things in service to Him, without having experiential knowledge of Christ, or having come into living communion with Him (1 Samuel 3:1, 7); God’s people can say, “truly

our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3), for through the Son the Triune God has supernaturally revealed Himself to them (Matthew 11:25-27; 2 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10; Revelation 22:3-4). One who has never been brought into this kind of union with the Savior will hear Him say in the day of judgment, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23).

- *The daily serving faith of the Christian life is not saving faith.* When the lost sinner “worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:5)—justifying faith is a one-time event in which a person ceases to trust his own works, and relies for pardon upon the Christ who was crucified to save him. One is either relying on Christ alone for salvation, or one is not—there is nothing between the two. The very moment a lost sinner so places his faith in the Savior’s Person and cross-work, he is forever forgiven and becomes part of God’s family. Faith also has an important, but different, role in the life of the child of God. The faith of the already justified is not a one-time committal to Christ, but a daily, growing confidence in the Savior. The Christian’s faith is intimately connected with works; he gains victory in what God wants for his life by faith (Hebrews 11:30). By faith the saint lives for God and does His will, whether it be working “righteousness, obtain[ing] promises . . . out of weakness [being] made strong, [growing] valiant in fight . . . [or being] tortured . . . [enduring] trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment” (Hebrews 11:33-38), or whatever else his Father wants for him. The faith of the lost soul coming to Christ is not a matter of degree, nor is it a process. It requires a total rejection of works to simply trust the blood of the Savior. The faith of those already born again does have degrees—it can grow or be diminished, it changes over time, and it is associated with works; it is the faith which inspires the Christian soldier to fight his spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18). These two must not be confused. The child of God seeks and serves his heavenly Father in a different way than the rebel comes to Christ for pardon. The cart cannot be put before the horse, or the car run unless the engine has been started. If one thinks he must grow in faith to the point where he finally has enough of it to be forgiven, or if he thinks he has saving faith because every day he tries to live a faith-filled life, or because he trusts God for strength to do different tasks in life, he is confusing the responsibility of the convert with the command to the one who still must be converted. Such a one does not have saving faith.

- *Faith that does not endure is not saving faith.* Just as genuine repentance is a gift from God, so justifying faith is supernaturally bestowed (Philippians 1:29). Philippians 1:6 consequently promises that “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” God will not take away the gift of saving faith, so all truly

born-again people will never stop believing in Jesus Christ, turn to a false gospel (Galatians 1:8-9; Matthew 24:24), or reject the faith, for they are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Peter 1:5). Although they may struggle, they will overcome temptations and trials to victoriously persevere. One who does not persevere never had the faith that God gives; this is why the Lord Jesus stated, “He that shall ____ unto the ____, the same shall be ____” (Mt 24:13). God will keep His people in the faith from the moment He gives it to them, to the time of their death, to all eternity future.

Vast numbers of people today have a type of faith that will never get them into the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus warned, “Enter ye in at the strait [narrow] gate: for ____ is the gate, and ____ is the way, that leadeth to ____, and ____ there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and ____ is the way, which leadeth unto ____, and ____ there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). Only genuine repentance and faith will lead to life. No dead faith, that does not result in holiness, or that is only mental assent to facts, will save. No emotionalism or desire to follow God, without an understanding of the gospel, will save. A faith that does not result in genuine fellowship with the living Christ, or one that does not endure to the end, is not saving faith. The role of faith in the lost sinner’s receiving justification must also not be confused with the role of faith in the life of the saint of God. If you have a type of faith that fits into any of the categories above, you are lost, dead in your sins. Do not deceive yourself. Only those with “the faith of God’s elect [chosen]” (Titus 1:1) will enter heaven.

Saving Faith: **What it is**

Since one must understand the nature of saving faith before one can exercise it, we will now look at this essential aspect of receiving the gospel. Romans 5:1 states, “Therefore being justified by ____, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Peace with God immediately follows justification, and justification comes by faith. In a certain way, all we have learned so far in these Bible studies about the nature of Scripture, God, the Law, our sinful actions and nature, eternal rewards and punishments, Christ and His saving work, and repentance, has prepared us for this point, for we must understand all of these earlier things to grasp the nature of saving faith. However, if we never come to genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, all our other knowledge will bring us no eternal benefit. What, then, is saving faith? We could define it as follows: *Believing to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word of God, saving faith receives, believes on, trusts in, and rests upon the Lord Jesus Christ for justification,*

sanctification, and eternal life. Let us break this definition down into parts, and examine it carefully.

Saving faith includes *believing to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word of God.* One who does not believe the Bible is the perfect, error-free Word of God cannot exercise saving faith. Furthermore, God the Spirit works through the Word of God to produce the new birth; “Of his [God’s] own will begat he us with the word of truth” (James 1:18). “So then _____ cometh by hearing, and hearing by the _____ of _____” (Romans 10:17). Regeneration will be associated with the Word, whether through hearing it preached, having it explained by someone else, reading it on one’s own, or doing a Bible study like this one. Genuine conversion does not come through visions, dreams, special feelings, or anything other than the Word.

Saving faith *receives, believes on, trusts in, and rests upon the Lord Jesus Christ.* There is a great deal to notice in this section of the definition. First, since Jesus Christ is *Lord*, saving faith includes repentance. Since we already examined repentance, we will not spend more time on it now. Second, saving faith receives, believes on, trusts in, and rests upon *the Lord Jesus Christ*. He alone is the object of saving faith. Since He alone is the Savior, salvation is not by works—it is by repentant faith alone. Ephesians 2:8-9 states, “For by grace [undeserved favor] are ye saved through _____; and that _____ of _____: *it is the _____ of God: _____ of _____, lest any man should boast.*” Salvation is not based on anything you have done, are doing, or will do in the future. It is a “gift.” The one who receives a gift pays nothing—the price is paid in full by the giver. Jesus Christ paid the price to save sinners on the cross; they receive salvation for free. One reason it is “not of works” is that otherwise you could “boast.” Nobody will be able to say, “I was baptized; I did good things; I am such a good person, and did all these works for God, so now I am saved.” You have never done any good works anyway—you cannot please God until you receive Christ (Romans 8:8). You are not the slightest bit more worthy of God’s grace than the most despicable person who has ever lived. The Lord alone makes the saved differ from the lost. 1 Corinthians 4:7 reads, “For who maketh thee to _____ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst _____ *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*” Since justification is based entirely on Christ’s work, God alone receives the glory in the salvation of the lost. Since “by grace are ye saved,” your works are entirely excluded, for “if [salvation is] by _____, then *is it* no more of _____: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of _____, then is it _____ more _____: otherwise work is no more work” (Romans 11:6). Either someone is saved entirely by God’s grace, His undeserved favor, or he is saved by his works, in which case salvation is not undeserved, but earned. Salvation is 100% by God’s grace through faith and 0% by works—God has given no

law of any kind that can save anybody (Galatians 3:21). This essential truth is found in many verses in the Bible. Titus 3:5 states, “___ ___ ___ by ___ ___ ___ of righteousness which we have done, but according to his ___ ___ ___ he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” If we merited salvation, it would not be through God’s mercy. Romans 3:28 reads, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith ___ ___ ___ the ___ ___ ___ of the law.” Indeed, saving faith’s very nature excludes works. Romans 4:5 states, “But to him that worketh ___ ___, ___ ___ believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” One must either work for salvation or believe on Jesus Christ for it. If someone is working for salvation, he does not believe in Christ for it; if he believes, he will not work for it. Let us imagine that you needed to go somewhere, and a friend of yours had promised to give you a ride there. Let us say that it was essential that you got there on time. He promised to be at your doorstep at 5:00 p. m. sharp. If you believe your friend’s promise, what will you do? You will wait for him to come, and, as soon as the clock strikes five, you will open the door, expecting him to be there. If he is trustworthy, you will not expect him at 5:05, or 5:10, but exactly at 5:00 p. m. Let us imagine, though, that you left your house for the bus stop at 4:30. What would that mean? It would mean that you did not believe your friend’s promise, so you took things into your own hands. What if you called the taxi company at 4:45 and told one to show up at 5:05, just in case your friend did not come, so you could still get to your destination on time? Again, it would show that you did not believe your friend was absolutely trustworthy. If you made any backup plan at all—if you even were worried about if he would really be there at 5:00—you did not totally trust your friend. Now we humans are not all-powerful—far from it—so sometimes circumstances arise that are beyond our control, and we are not able to do what we promised. However, God always keeps His promises. Jesus said, “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47). What are you saying about His truthfulness if you think you must do good works to be saved? Do you believe His promise, or not? Is Jesus Christ trustworthy, so that He will, beyond any doubt whatsoever, give everlasting life to all who believe on Him, as He promised? This is why Romans 4:5 says justification is for he who “worketh not, but believeth.” Works and justifying faith are opposites; one who thinks that doing good works contributes in any way to his receiving forgiveness of sin does not truly believe in Jesus Christ at all—he may know facts about Him, but does not really trust Him, or believe that He is a Savior who really saves. The lost sinner comes to the Lord Jesus with nothing good; he brings only his sin, and he freely receives from the Savior His perfect righteousness (Isaiah 55:1). The sinner’s attitude is that of the words of a hymn: “Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to thy cross I cling.”

In fact, the Son of God promised in John 10:28-30, “I give unto [my people] eternal life; and they ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my

hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and _____ is _____ to _____ *them* out of my Father's hand. I and *my* Father are one." No one is able to take a person who has received Jesus Christ and cast him into hell—the Bible teaches the wonderfully comforting truth that once you are saved, you are always saved. Romans 8:29-30, 38-39 (the rest of the passage is good as well) promises, "For whom [God] did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did _____, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he _____, them he also _____ . . . For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be _____ to _____ us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." God the Father, who has had the salvation of His elect on His heart from eternity past, has predestinated or pre-determined that they would be with Him forever in glory, being made like His Son—He certainly will not allow His purpose to be frustrated now! He has decreed that everyone who is ever "justified" is also certain to be "glorified"—not one of them is lost. Absolutely nothing, not death, nor anything in life, nothing that presently exists, nothing that will exist in the future, nothing from the height of heaven to the depths of hell, can separate one of God's people from Him. This eternal security is the unfailing promise of all whom Jesus Christ saves.

How does eternal security relate to the nature of justifying faith? Saving faith trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ to actually save. One who thinks that he must do good works in order to be forgiven is lost; he has a false view of the gospel. Likewise, the person who thinks that God will take salvation away from him and send him to hell if he does not maintain a certain level of obedience after he has been justified is confused about the nature of the gospel—even if he claims to agree with the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith without works. Good deeds do not bring initial salvation, nor do they keep one saved—God does all the saving and the keeping. When the child of God disobeys, he loses out on fellowship with his Father until he confesses his sins and gets right again (1 John 1:9); but God will never disown him, cast him out of His family, and send him to eternal torment. A denial of eternal security requires as a consequence that God fails to honor the promises He has made to keep all His own saved. If the justified can be eternally lost, Christ's blood does not totally cleanse all the past, present, and future sins of sinners the moment they trust Him. Rejecting God's promises to keep His own, and denying the sufficiency of the blood of Christ, are heresies that destroy the gospel. A rejection of eternal security is inconsistent with saving faith.

The object of saving faith is Christ alone. Specifically, it is Jesus considered as crucified for your sins. In John 3:13-18, the Lord was explaining salvation to a man named Nicodemus (v.

1-3). The Savior said, “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that _____ from heaven, *even* the Son of man which _____ in _____. And as _____ lifted up the _____ in the wilderness, even _____ must the Son of man be _____: That whosoever _____ in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that _____ in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that _____ on him _____ not condemned: but he that believeth not _____ condemned _____, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” In explaining the way to receive eternal life to Nicodemus, Christ pointed to Himself as the One who is both God and Man in v. 13. The Lord is fully human, for He is the “Son of man.” He also is fully God, for He is everywhere-present, a characteristic unique to Deity; while on earth speaking to Nicodemus, the Lord was at the same moment “in heaven.” In His humanity, He was localized on earth where He was having the conversation, but in His Deity, the Son “ filleth all in all” (Eph 1:23). In v. 14-16, the Lord Jesus compares saving faith, believing in Him, to what happened in the wilderness when Moses put a serpent on a pole—as that serpent was lifted up from the earth, so Christ would be crucified on the cross, and everyone who believes in Him will receive everlasting life. Verses 17-18 show that life is received the very moment one believes—at that instant, one “is” no longer condemned. Nicodemus, as a well-educated Jew who would have been very familiar with the Old Testament, knew what Christ meant when He spoke of Moses and the serpent in the wilderness—to us, it may not be as familiar. What exactly did the Savior mean by this comparison? The passage in view is Numbers 21:4-9: “And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass [go around] the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake _____, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is* no bread, neither *is there any* water; and our soul _____ this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery _____ among the people, and they _____ the people; and much people of Israel _____. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have _____, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a _____, and _____ upon a _____: and it shall come to pass, that _____ that is bitten, when he _____ upon it, shall _____. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he _____ the _____ of _____, he _____.” The nation of Israel

was journeying from Egypt to the Promised Land, Canaan, and they became discontent because of their circumstances in their wilderness journey. Consequently, they began to complain (v. 5). They said they had no food—yet they also hated the “light bread,” the delicious manna God provided for them to eat every day—a rather inconsistent complaint! On account of their sin, God punished them by sending poisonous serpents to bite them, so that many of them began to die. Recognizing the trouble they were in, they admitted they had done wrong, and Jehovah provided them with a solution: Moses made a brass serpent and put it on a pole, and everyone who had been bitten, when he simply looked at the serpent, was immediately healed.

Why does Christ compare this story to saving faith in Him in John 3:14-15? There are quite a few comparisons. As the Israelites were going to die from the poison in their bodies, which was there because of their sins of complaining and discontent, so we all begin life doomed to suffer spiritual death because of the poison of sin. Just as the Israelites had no remedy for the poison in themselves, but death was certain unless God provided a solution, so spiritual death is certain for the lost man unless God delivers him. The Israelites were not ready for a solution until they saw they were in trouble; so the lost are not ready to be saved until they see their need and are willing to repent. The solution God provided in Moses’ day was a brass serpent on a pole, which tells us about Jesus’ death on the cross. The Savior is compared to a serpent, the symbol for sin and evil in the Bible, because, on the cross, He was “made sin” for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). Brass in Scripture is often compared to judgment, so a brass serpent shows us that the Son of Man endured the wrath and judgment of God for our sins on the cross. For the Israelites in the wilderness to be physically saved, they needed to look at the serpent; so spiritual salvation is by looking to the crucified Savior in faith (Isaiah 45:22; Hebrews 12:2). As healing was immediate upon looking to the serpent, so spiritual salvation is received the very moment one believes in Christ; it is not a process where one gradually becomes justified or forgiven. The instant the snake-bitten Israelite looked at the brazen serpent, he was completely healed physically; so the moment one looks in faith to the Crucified One, he is perfectly and eternally saved—the poison of sin is completely gone!

Let us imagine that one of the children of Israel had been bitten by a snake, so he said, “I have been bitten! I will go to the tabernacle and offer a sacrifice, and so I will be saved from death.” Would he be saved? No! God told him to look at the serpent for healing. What if he had said, “I have been bitten; I will fervently pray to God for healing, and He will save me.” Would he be saved? No! God told him to look to the serpent, not pray for healing. What if he had said, “I have been bitten; this is because of my sin of complaining; I will try to do better, and sin no more. I will do many good deeds, and so pay for my sins, and God will save me from the snakebite.” Would he be saved? No! God did not promise healing based on doing good deeds, but promised that all who looked at the serpent would be immediately healed. In the same

way, many people today do not look to Jesus' death to save them. They say, "I will be religious, and so I will be saved," or "I will pray and ask God to forgive me of my sins when I commit them; so I shall be saved," or "I will try to sin no more, but do good; so I shall be saved." However, all who trust in prayer, religion, good works, or anything other than the blood Jesus shed on the cross, will not be saved—they do not have saving faith, for they are looking to the wrong thing. Saving faith does not look to one's inward spiritual condition, or to good works done in the past or planned in the future. Nor can you look to faith itself for salvation. Faith is not the Savior; it is only the instrument or means through which Christ has promised to save. It is not as if you must have a pint and a half, or two quarts, or three gallons, or some other amount of faith, before Christ's blood will wash away your sins; someone who says, "I do not know if I have a strong enough faith to be saved" is not looking to Jesus, but to faith itself to save him, and is yet unconverted. Nor is the object of faith conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit; while no one will look to Jesus without the work of the Spirit, it is the Christ who died, not the Holy Spirit, that saving faith looks to. The Israelite would not look at the serpent unless he knew he was dying, but if he did no more than stare at the place he was bitten, he would perish; so conviction of sin will proceed saving faith, but one does not look to the conviction, but to Christ. Whether the Israelite was faint from snakebite so that he could barely turn his eyes upon the serpent, or whether he stared strongly at it, the result was the same—perfect healing. So when one looks in faith to Jesus, spiritual salvation comes immediately. Justifying belief looks outside of oneself to Jesus' death, and rests its full confidence upon Him and His saving work. All who look in faith to the crucified Savior are immediately and eternally forgiven of all sin. The Lord commands, "____ unto ____ and ____ ye _____, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is none else*" (Isaiah 45:22). Look to the Lord Jesus—He died for your sins on the cross! Look to Him—He was the spotless Substitute, who took your place to give you His righteousness! Look to Him—He was buried, and rose again victorious! Look to Him—He sits at the right hand of the Father, and has sworn to immediately save all who trust in Him! Oh sinner, look to Him and live!

Saving faith has three aspects, which are well illustrated in Hebrews 11:13. Speaking of God's people in the Old Testament, the verse declares, "These all died in _____, not having received the promises, but having _____ afar off, and _____ of *them*, and _____ *them*, and confessed [a result of saving faith] that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." First, justifying faith requires *knowing the facts* ("seen them"). One cannot place his faith in Christ without first knowing the facts of the gospel. Second, justifying faith involves *accepting the facts as true* ("were persuaded"). One can have heard that the Lord Jesus died, was buried, and rose again, and know He promised to save all who trust in Him, but think it is a fable, and the Word of God

is in error. Justifying faith then *trusts or relies upon Christ as promised in the gospel* (“embraced them”). This third aspect is key—many people know the facts of the gospel story, but they never actually transfer their dependence for salvation from their works, or whatever else they are relying on, to trust in or depend upon the Savior for pardon.

Imagine that you were in the top story of a burning building. The lower floors are already engulfed in flame; you cannot escape down the stairs. The situation seems hopeless, and death certain. However, firemen arrive, spread a net, and tell you to jump out the window into it. They promise you that, if you jump, you will be safe, but if you do not jump, you will surely die. Your escape to safety involves the same three aspects as saving faith. First, you need to know that the firemen are there with the net; if you did not see or hear them, perhaps because you were not by the window, you could not leap to safety. You must *know the facts*. Then you must accept the declaration of the firemen as true; you must be convinced that, upon jumping, the net will not break, although it is such a long way down; that the firemen are not going to let you fall and die; and that unless you jump, you will certainly burn up; you cannot think that, perhaps, some other and better way of escape will come along. You must *accept the facts as true*. However, if you stop there, you will still die. You then must actually trust your life to the firemen and their net by casting yourself out the window; you must *trust or rely* upon them in accordance with their promise. Likewise, saving faith requires that you know and accept the facts, but then you must come to a point where you actually trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; until you trust Him, you are still lost. Saving faith says, “I know whom [Christ] I have _____, and am _____ that _____ is _____ to keep that which I have _____ unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). When Abraham was accounted righteous by faith, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being _____ that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed [counted] to him for righteousness” (Romans 4:20-21). The Bible draws the conclusion, “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 4:22-5:1). One with saving faith is “fully persuaded” that Christ’s promise to save all who trust in Him (John 6:47) is true; he therefore actually trusts in the Savior.

Repentant faith alone is the only instrument or means through which justification is received; it is the empty hand that takes the gift God offers freely. Two things in connection with this point must be emphasized. *First*, nothing else must be added to faith as the means of obtaining justification. Religious sacraments, good deeds, trying to do better, trying to love

Jesus Christ more, experiences with (what is thought to be) the Holy Spirit, seeking to feel more sorry for sin, and all else, is excluded. Many people also make prayer the means of obtaining justification; they assume that if they pray and sincerely ask God or Christ to save them, and they mean it, their prayer will be answered. They think that if they believe God will answer their prayer, they have saving faith. They therefore repeat the words found on the back of a religious tract, or repeat a prayer after someone who speaks to them at an altar call in an evangelical church, or perform some other prayer ritual, and conclude that they must have saving faith, because they were sincere. Sometimes they think that if they pray and ask Jesus to come into their heart they will be saved. However, God never promises to save those who sincerely pray and ask Him for salvation—Scripture states, on the contrary, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31), over and over again. Christ and the apostles never led anyone to repeat a “sinner’s prayer” where he confessed his sins and asked to be forgiven, nor did the Lord or any Christian in the Bible ever say that everyone who sincerely prays in this manner is saved. Nowhere does Christ tell any lost person to ask Him to come into his heart—nor did the apostles tell anyone to ask Jesus to come into their hearts.²⁰ Prayer does not bring you to faith, which then brings you to Christ; you must directly come to Him by faith alone. Making prayer necessary for salvation is as false a gospel as making baptism necessary for salvation. It is possible for someone to place his faith in Christ while praying (Luke 18:13); indeed, this is surely quite common. However, you receive the gospel by repentant faith in the Son of God, prayer or no prayer. *Second*, remember that our definition told us that saving faith receives, believes on, trusts in, and rests upon the Lord Jesus Christ *for justification, sanctification, and eternal life*, not for help in other things. One who is born again will be able to be a better husband or wife, gain victory over drug addiction, have a truly happy life, and gain many other blessings; but saving faith is not coming to Christ for any of these other things, but trusting Him for *justification*—perfect remission of sins and the imputation of His righteousness;

²⁰ People who believe that one must ask Jesus to come into one’s heart to be saved often quote Revelation 3:20 to support their view. They claim that the verse is teaching that Jesus is standing at the door of the lost person’s heart knocking on it, and if a lost person asks Him to come inside, He will come into that person’s heart and forgive the one who prays to be saved from his sin. However, Revelation 3:20 has absolutely nothing to do with a sinner getting eternal life by inviting Christ to come inside through his heart’s door. The verse is talking about members of the church at Laodicea (3:14) getting right with God—at that time, Christ was not dwelling in the midst of their church, but if the church members were to repent, He would come in and have fellowship with them. There is no necessary connection between a lost sinner inviting Jesus to come into his heart and a lost sinner relying on the Person and work of Christ for salvation—indeed, the former is spiritually dangerous, for it gets the lost to look at themselves, at their hearts, and at their prayers, rather than looking outside of themselves to Christ’s death as their Substitute. Rather than asking Jesus to come into their hearts, the lost should listen to the words of the Lord: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47). A sinner may believe in the Lord Jesus *despite* asking Him to come into his heart, but no sinner has ever been saved *because* he has invited Him to come in the “heart-door.”

sanctification—freedom from sin’s power and control; and *eternal life*—fellowship with God now and an everlasting enjoyment of Him to come.

Conclusion: Receive the Gospel!

In this Bible study, we have learned that the gospel is received by repentance and faith. We looked carefully at what repentance is not, then at what it truly is. We followed this by studying what saving faith was not, and what it is. Now you must ask yourself, “Have I received the gospel?” Have you ever repented and believed in Christ? Have you recognized not only the danger, but also the filthiness and odiousness of your sins, as contrary to the holy nature, and righteous law of God? Has this led you, because of an understanding of His mercy through Christ, to so grieve for and hate your sins, that you turned from them all to God, purposing to endeavor to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments? Have you, believing to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word of God, received, believed on, trusted in, and rested upon the Lord Jesus Christ for justification, sanctification, and eternal life? You have had a time when you were born, and you will certainly have a time when you will die (unless you are born again and Christ returns first). The Lord Jesus could return, or you could die, at any moment. Are you ready to stand before God? Have you been born again? “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5). Nothing is more important than this question. Do you know (1 John 5:13) you have eternal life? If you have been converted, Psalm 107:2 states, “Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*.” We have left some space on the following page where you can write down how you came to Jesus Christ. Use more space if needed; please record your testimony of salvation with clarity. You should be able to specify the moment you repented and believed, the events that brought you to that point, and how your life changed after the point of your conversion, as a bare minimum. In Matthew 10:32 Jesus Christ states, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” There is nothing to be ashamed of or to hide—if you have been born again, tell us when, and let us rejoice with you!

Perhaps, as you examine your life, you see that you have never yet received the gospel—you have not yet repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. If this is the case, you should immediately receive the Savior. Scripture says, “_____ , let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). The Lord Jesus promises, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that _____ to me I will _____ cast out” (John 6:37). You have His promise—why not turn to Him now? Why are you not yet converted? What is there that you do not understand? What sin are you unwilling to

give up? Will you disobey the command to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved? Jesus suffered the awful punishment you deserve when He died on the cross out of love for you—will you reject His payment, and go to hell despite His death? 2 Corinthians 6:2 states, “Behold, ___ ___ ___ is the accepted time; behold, ___ ___ ___ is the day of salvation.” You may never have another opportunity! Proverbs 27:1 reads, “Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” The God that made you graciously invites you—the doors of heaven are thrown open to you—the Lord offers you unimaginable blessings and glory, eternal heavenly riches greater than all in this present universe, in Christ. You can know the living God! The terms of mercy are brought very low: repent and believe the gospel! “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?” (Ezekiel 33:11). Why not come to Jesus in faith right now? Why not go, right now, to a place where no one else is around, and, recalling Christ’s precious promises to save all who trust Him, seek Him until you find Him? He will save you the very moment you look to Him in faith. If you are not yet willing or ready to be saved, please use the sheet attached with this study, to explain what is holding you back from coming to Christ, and send that in with this Bible study. Also, we would love to help you further in these matters; we would love to hear from you on the phone, have you visit church, or offer you direct, personal help in whatever other way we can. The most important thing that can ever happen to you is your conversion. Do not put it off! Also, please ask us for Bible study #6: *The Christian: Security in Christ and Assurance of Salvation*.

Review Quiz For Bible Study #5

- 1.) Repentance and faith are simultaneous; they are two aspects of the one decision to receive Jesus Christ. True False
- 2.) Everyone who sincerely asks Jesus to come into his heart will be saved. True False
- 3.) You must improve your life and stop sinning before you can repent and believe the gospel. True False
- 4.) You cannot improve your life or stop sinning until you repent and believe the gospel. True False
- 5.) Doing righteous actions is the way to gain eternal life. True False

- 6.) One is not forgiven until he is baptized. True False
- 7.) If a saved person starts to disobey and do bad things, he falls out of a state of justification and is once again lost, and he will go to hell unless he confesses his sins. True False
- 8.) The object of faith is the Holy Spirit—one looks to the Holy Spirit to wash away his sins. True False
- 9.) Everyone who come to Christ in repentant faith will surely be saved. True False
- 10.) All who think the gospel message written in the Bible is true have saving faith, for saving faith is identical to accepting the facts about Christ as true. True False
- 11.) Good, moral people are more worthy of God's grace than others. True False
- 12.) There must be a particular point in time when one is converted to Christ; the new birth is not a process. True False

Request for Study #6

___ I have returned the fifth Bible study to you with the answer blanks filled in and answered the review quiz questions. Please send me the next Bible study, *The Christian: Security in Christ and Assurance of Salvation*.

___ I have more questions about how I can receive the gospel. Please send me the classic book on this subject, *All of Grace*, by Charles Spurgeon.

___ I have been told that baptism is required for the forgiveness of sin. Please send me the book, *Heaven Only For The Baptized? The Gospel of Christ vs. Pardon through Baptism*, by Thomas Ross, so that I may understand why the Scriptures do not teach this widespread false doctrine.

___ I would like to meet with or talk to someone in person. I have put information in the spaces below (phone number, times available, etc.) to contact me.

[illegible]

[illegible]

Mailing address:

Bible Study #6: *The Christian: Security in Christ and Assurance of Salvation*

Introduction and Review

Dear friend,

We rejoice that we have been able to help you study the Bible through the materials that you have already completed, and are glad to be able to continue helping you with this sixth study. We have learned so far that the Bible is God's perfect, error-free Word, preserved uncorrupted for us today. We have studied a number of characteristics of the one Triune God. We have examined God's Law, its promise of life for sinless obedience, and its promise of eternal damnation for every failure to match up to it. Since we have committed many sins, and have a sin nature, we were left certain of eternal loss, but we found that God has provided salvation for sinners through the redemptive work of His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Lord, the Savior, and the only Mediator between God and man. His mediation appears in His roles of Prophet, Priest, and King. His death was a sacrificial payment to the Father. On the cross He performed the work of a Substitute and endured the judgment of God in our place, that by taking our penalty we might receive His righteousness. His blood was a propitiation, since it forever appeased God's wrath against the redeemed, and His sacrifice was fully complete, for His death is absolutely sufficient to save. After dying on the cross, Christ was buried, then rose again on the third day, and ascended to the right hand of the Father. He will come again. Those who receive the gospel are adopted, justified, reconciled, sanctified, and certain of glorification. The only way to receive the gospel is by repentant faith in Christ.

We defined repentance unto life as *a change of mind about God and sin that results in a change of life*. We also gave a larger definition: *A lost sinner savingly repents when, out of the*

sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature, and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ to such as are repentant, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all to God, purposing to endeavor to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments. Since this statement explains the nature of genuine repentance, we learned that repentance was more than simply taking up the profession of Christianity, or being baptized, or living a moral life in external conformity to the rules of piety, or having powerful or even miraculous spiritual experiences, or reforming inward corruption by education, human laws, or the force of affliction, or conviction of sin from the Holy Spirit, or partial surrender to God, or sorrow over the results of sin. Rather, saving repentance, which is motivated by God's goodness and is impossible without a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, is intellectual, volitional, and emotional surrender to the Lord. In repentance one agrees with God about who he is and what he deserves. One is willing to get things right with other people. Repentance involves turning from all known specific sins, as well as sin in general, to surrender unconditionally to Christ as Lord. The repentant soul turns from the world-system, false religion, and self-righteousness, to God. He is willing to take up the cross. Having counted the cost, he determines to follow Jesus Christ. He therefore turns to Him in faith.

We defined saving faith as follows: *Believing to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word of God, saving faith receives, believes on, trusts in, and rests upon the Lord Jesus Christ for justification, sanctification, and eternal life.* We learned that saving faith is more than a dead faith that does not lead to works, or a faith that is merely mental acknowledgement of facts. Neither is it an emotional or volitional action without intellectual understanding. It is different from the daily serving faith of the Christian life. Those who have a type of faith that does not bring them into fellowship with Christ, or that have a type of faith that does not endure, do not have saving faith. One who has the faith that justifies believes everything that is in the Word of God, and his conversion will be associated with the Word. He receives, believes on, trusts in, and rests upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows that good deeds did not save him, nor do they keep him in a state of salvation—forgiveness is based entirely on the work of Christ, and is received simply by depending on Him. The object of saving faith is Christ crucified. One with saving faith knows the facts about the gospel, accepts them as true, and trusts or relies upon Christ and His promises to save all who believe in Him. Furthermore, one who has been justified by faith alone is eternally secure; once one is saved, he is always saved.

We also saw that someone must repent and believe at a particular moment in time. One who has been born again will know when it happened. The end of the last study asked you to consider if you yourself had ever been converted. If you have never seen yourself as lost, repented, and believed in Christ, you are yet dead in your sins, under God's wrath, and headed

for hell. We asked you to write down either your testimony of conversion or whatever it was that was keeping you from coming to the Savior. It is very important that you have repented, and so been justified and become a new creature in Christ. If you have not, at Christ's return, or your death, either of which could happen at any moment, you will be eternally lost. Furthermore, Bible study #6 is about the security the Christian has in Christ, and about his assurance of salvation. While it certainly is good for anyone to keep studying the Bible, if you are not saved, the blessed promises from God mentioned in this study have nothing to do with you. You are not eternally secure. You have no reason to rest in the comfort of assurance of salvation, for you are assured of damnation. Repent, and believe the gospel! On the other hand, if you have now come to Christ, the truths in this Bible study relate directly to what God has done, and will do, in your life. Come and learn about the great and glorious things God has promised you!

With study #6 you have also received your completed version of study #5, which has been checked and graded. Please look over that study for corrections by your Bible teacher, especially on the quiz questions, and for comments, especially at the very end of the study, and in association with the testimony of salvation you wrote at the end (or your reasons why you have not yet come to Christ—by the way, there are no good reasons). Also, please keep your completed studies available so that you can look back at them later. Remember that you can use the blank space at the end of the study to write down any questions that you have. Also, please use this space to provide us with the names and addresses of any friends or acquaintances of yours who would also be interested in studying the Bible, so that we can send these materials to them as well. Once again, this Bible course is provided to you courtesy of Bethel Baptist Church, 4905 Appian Way, El Sobrante, CA 94803, (510) 223-8721/ (510) 223-9550, www.pillarandground.org, betbapt@flash.net. Let us know if you would like a personal visit for Bible study, and feel free to visit us for Sunday school at 9:45 a.m., morning worship at 11:00 a.m., Sunday evening worship at 6:00 p.m., or Wednesday prayer and Bible study at 7:00 p.m. We are overjoyed that we can assist you in studying the Bible.

The Christian: Security in Christ

Security Defined

God promises all who repent and believe in Jesus Christ eternal life. The moment they trust in the Savior, they are secure forever, kept by the power of God. God will never cast away any of His children. The moment they are justified, they are as certain of eternal glory as believers who are in heaven already. Romans 4:16 shows us that eternal security is one of the reasons God has made salvation by faith, rather than by works: “Therefore *it* [salvation] *is* of ___ ___ ___, that *it might be* by ___ ___ ___; to the end the promise might be ___ ___ ___ to

— — — the seed [believers]; not to that only which is of the law [Jews], but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham [Gentiles]; who is the father of us all.” If salvation were not by faith alone, it could not be sure to all believers; we would have to keep doing works while in constant fear that we were not good enough to meet the standard. However, since God has promised to save all who believe on His Son, salvation is sure to every sinner who trusts the Lord Jesus. Redemption is not based on what you have done, what you are doing, or what you will do in the future—it is based on what Jesus has done for you. As long as Jesus is a perfect Savior, so long is every one of His own secure. Once you are saved, you are always saved.

Since eternal security is tied into the very nature of the gospel, many Scriptural truths, passages, and individual verses support it. We will look at seven.

1.) The Christian is *secure because of unchanging and eternal election*. Romans 8:33 reads, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s — — — — —? *It is God that justifieth.*” The elect are those whom God “hath chosen . . . in [Christ] before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9). *Elect* means *chosen*—the elect are those who God has determined to save. They are “ordained to eternal life” (Acts 13:48). Jesus prayed to His Father, “Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. . . . I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me . . . I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. . . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:2, 6, 8, 24). Before the creation of the world, God the Father gave the elect to the Son as a gift. The Son came into the world to redeem them and give them eternal life. Those the Father gave to the Son in eternity past receive the gift of faith and so believe in Jesus. In John 6:37, Christ says, “All that the Father — — — — — me shall — — — — — to me; and — — — — — that — — — — — to me I will in no wise [absolutely not] cast out.” Have you come to Jesus? Then “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13). The Father chose you and gave you to His Son before the foundation of the world. For you to be lost, God would have to change His eternal purpose, which He will never do (Romans 11:29). The Father’s gift to the Son would have parts missing; the people who did not do enough works to remain saved would not be there. If you would not give someone you love a damaged, altered, broken present, do you think that God the Father would give something like that to His beloved Son (James 1:17)? The all-powerful God will not, cannot, fail to bring to heaven those He has chosen to save. Election is a glorious reason for the eternal security of the believer.

2.) The Christian is *secure because of Divine predestination*. God has “_____ us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:5-6). *Predestinate* means *predetermine*. God has eternally determined that all who believe in His Son will be like the Lord Jesus and be with Him in heaven forever. He “did predestinate [them] *to be* conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29), so that they “have obtained an [heavenly] inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Ephesians 1:11). As a result, we “who first trusted in Christ” will “be to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:12). The Father has ordained that all who trust in Christ will be in heaven and give the Triune God praise and glory there forever. His decree is certain. Predestination is a sure ground for the eternal security of the believer.

3.) The Christian is *secure because of Christ’s High Priestly ministry*. We learned in study #4 that Jesus Christ is the great High Priest for all believers. On the basis of His sacrifice of Himself, He completely removes the sins of His own, and, having risen from the dead and returned to heaven, perpetually intercedes for them before His Father on the basis of His death and shed blood. Romans 8:34 states, “Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh _____ for us.” The Lord Jesus takes the Christian’s side before His Father. Are you converted? Then Jesus is your advocate, your lawyer, as it were, to plead before the bar of God. The Savior has never lost a case. He is “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). 1 John 2:1-2 states, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.” You should not sin, but when you do, your perfectly righteous High Priest takes the stand for you and pleads His death and blood, His substitutionary work, for you. Jesus has prayed on your behalf, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). For one believer to be lost, the Father would have to reject the intercession of His beloved Son. Christ’s ministry as High Priest would be a failure, and the Lord Jesus’ prayers would have to be rejected. This is all absolutely impossible (John 11:42), indeed, unthinkable. The perfect High Priest never fails, so no Christian can be lost.

4.) The Christian is *secure because of the nature of justification*. We learned in study #4 that justification is the act whereby God “declares righteous” the believer. We said that it was a judicial act in which God pardons the sins of, and accounts and accepts as righteous, all

believers, not because of anything worked in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone, by crediting to them His righteousness. Since we are "now _____ by [Jesus'] blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:9). The moment you came to Christ, all your past, present, and future sins were paid for. You were also credited the Lord Jesus' righteousness. God treats you as if you were free from Adam's sin, were sinless in your nature, and perfectly obeyed His Law your entire life, because of your holy Substitute. The moment you believed in Christ, you were "perfected forever" (Hebrews 10:14). You can say with the apostle Paul, "[I am] found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9). All your sin is forever paid for and erased. How could you possibly be more secure? The Law requires death for sin, and the Savior has died in your place. The Law promises life for sinless obedience, and the Savior has obeyed for you. Justice smiles, and asks no more. The righteousness, faithfulness, and holiness of God require your salvation. The justified can never perish.

5.) The Christian is *secure because salvation is not by works*. We learned this glorious truth in Bible study #5. Galatians 2:16 reads, "Knowing that a man is _____ by the _____ of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have _____ in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and _____ by the _____ of the law: for by the works of the law shall _____ be justified." You were not justified because you did good deeds, and you do not stay justified by doing good deeds. Justification by grace and justification by works are mutually exclusive (Romans 11:6). Salvation is "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9:16). "He that is entered into [God's salvation] rest, he also hath ceased from his own works" (Hebrews 4:10). If we needed to stay saved by doing good works, we would have a big problem. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). If redemption could be lost, you would lose it as soon as you sinned once. None of us ever at any time do enough good, or are inwardly holy enough, to meet the standard of "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), so even the holiest Christian on earth perpetually falls short of God's standard. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). If we had to keep ourselves saved by works, we would all be lost instantly, and we would never get salvation back again until we had worked our way into perfect inward purity and outward sinlessness. Since we would never reach that point, nobody would be saved—the entire human race would go to hell. Aren't you glad that salvation is not received or maintained based on your works?

6.) The Christian is *secure because of the seal of the Holy Spirit*. Ephesians 1:13-14 reads, “In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were _____ with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the _____ [downpayment] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” A “seal” was attached to goods in transit to indicate ownership and secure possession. The Spirit, whom all believers receive the moment they are regenerated (Romans 8:9), is God’s pledge that the saints belong to Him and that He will bring them to be with Him eternally (Romans 8:11). This is also seen from the fact that the Spirit is an “earnest” (Ephesians 1:14) of the Christian’s inheritance (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5). This word was borrowed from the commercial world and means a deposit or first installment in a purchase. It was a payment assuring the vendor that the full amount would eventually follow. When confirmed in this manner, no room was left for a change of mind. God gives all believers this earnest of the Spirit. He thus promises that He will bring them into His heavenly kingdom forever. The “redemption” (v. 14) of their bodies in the resurrection unto life is secure (cf. Romans 8:23; John 5:29). They are already God’s “purchased possession,” which He will not give up. Since all believers have this wonderful seal and earnest, God the Spirit Himself, they will certainly dwell forever with the Lord.

7.) The Christian is *secure because of many plain promises of security*. In Bible study #5, we looked at several passages that promised this. Romans 8:28-39 gives at least twelve different proofs for eternal security, a few of which were mentioned. We saw the evidence for the doctrine in John 10:28-30. Since security is tied into the nature of the gospel itself, we should not be surprised that many other verses demonstrate this comforting truth. We will look at five of them here:

i.) Philippians 1:6 states, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you _____ it until the _____ of Jesus Christ.” The God who gave you repentance and faith, who justified and regenerated you, will continue that good work in you until you meet Christ. The preservation of the saints is based on His faithfulness, not your own.

ii.) In John 4:13-14, “Jesus answered and said unto [a woman], Whosoever drinketh of this [physical well] water shall thirst _____: But whosoever drinketh of the [spiritual] water that I shall give him _____ thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” The Lord Jesus was preaching the gospel in John chapter four to a woman that had come out to a well. He contrasted the physical well water with the spiritual water, the spiritual life, that He gave. To avoid thirst with physical water, we need to keep drinking and drinking; if we stop, we then will be thirsty again not that long

afterwards. With the spiritual water that Christ gives, in contrast, if we drink one time, we will never, ever thirst again. The sinner who comes to the Lord Jesus spiritually at one point in time can never afterwards be spiritually lost. He is secure from that point on to all eternity future.

iii.) Psalm 37:28 promises, “For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; ___ ___ ___ are ___ ___ ___ for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.” The Old Testament promises eternal security just like the New Testament does. This should not surprise us, since justification was by faith alone, apart from works, in the Old Testament era, just as it is today.

iv.) John 6:39-40 records Jesus’ teaching, “And this is the ___ ___ ___ which hath sent me, that of ___ ___ ___ which he hath ___ ___ ___ I should ___ ___ ___, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that ___ ___ ___ which seeth the Son, and ___ ___ ___ on him, may have ___ ___ ___: and I will raise him up at the last day.” Those who believe on Christ are those whom the Father gave to His Son in eternity past. God has decreed that none of these would be lost. They are therefore secure. Christ also promised that He “will” raise them up in the resurrection of the just. This is a second promise of eternal security in this passage. A third reason is that, upon believing, God gives them “everlasting” or eternal life, not temporary or conditional life. Imagine if someone sold you what he said was an everlasting lawnmower. If it broke down the first time you used it, was it everlasting? Far from it! What if it ran great for three years, but then it broke down—was it everlasting? No. What if it worked for three thousand years, but then broke down—was it everlasting? No! It would need to continue to operate for all eternity future. (Lesson: don’t believe someone if he says he will sell you an everlasting lawnmower.) The point is that if something is everlasting, it must ever-last—it must continue forever. Many verses (like John 6:40) promise that as soon as you believe in the Lord, you possess “everlasting” or “eternal” life (see John 3:15, 16; 3:36; 5:24; 6:47). You do not need to wait until the return of Christ or the time of your death to get eternal life. The moment you trust Christ, you have everlasting life, just like the saints do who are already in heaven. Each of these verses promise eternal security for all who ever place their faith in the Savior.

v.) 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 reads, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man ___ ___ ___ upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s ___ ___ ___ shall be made manifest: for the ___ ___ ___ shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by ___ ___ ___;

and the fire shall _____ every man's _____ of what sort it is. If any man's work _____ which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a _____. If any man's work shall be _____, he shall suffer _____; but _____ shall _____; yet so as by fire.” This passage deals with what will happen to Christians when they stand before God for judgment. The justified will not stand before God to determine if they have done enough good to enter heaven, or enough evil to merit hell. The eternal death in hell that the saints deserve was already judged at the cross, and their condemnation was forever removed the moment they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:18). Their judgment will be about how faithful they were. Good works, faithful living, is here compared to “gold, silver, [and] precious stones.” As these valuable items will withstand a fire, so the things a Christian does that glorify God will stand the test in judgment, and “he shall receive a reward” for them. The sins of the Christian are compared to “wood, hay, [and] stubble [*stubble* is like dry leftover stalks of grain].” These things burn up when put through a fire. The bad works of the justified will be burned up in the judgment; rather than receiving a reward, the Christian will “suffer loss” for them. He will deeply regret his disobedience and will have less glory in heaven forever than he would have had if he had done what was right. “He shall suffer loss,” and his evil works will be destroyed “as by fire.” But will the disobedient child of God be sent to hell? Can he be cast away and lost? No—“he himself shall be saved”! The redeemed cannot be lost eternally.

These verses plainly promise eternal security to the believer. People who reject the gospel for works salvation often say that it is proud for a believer to say that he is sure that he is saved, but it is no such thing—security is based on God's faithfulness, not on one's faithfulness or goodness. Denying eternal security is what really is proud—it is a stubborn refusal to submit to what God has declared in His Word.²¹ The God of love has promised us many, many times that He will never leave or forsake us.

All who ever place their faith in Christ are safe forever. The certainty of the believer's salvation is bound up with the nature of the gospel itself. God's eternal election and predestination require eternal security. So does the Lord Jesus' unfailing ministry as High Priest for His people. The nature of justification, the fact that salvation is not by works, and the permanent sealing by the Spirit given the saints, all require security. Many specific promises

²¹ Some religious groups that call themselves Christian, such as the Methodist denomination, advocates of so-called “Holiness” theology, defenders of Arminianism, the overwhelming majority of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, and all who openly assert salvation is by works, deny the eternal security of the believer, misinterpreting various passages to support their view. If you have further questions on the doctrine of eternal security, please contact us, and we will help you with your question.

prove the doctrine as well. The Old Testament states that no believer will ever be forsaken. God has promised to continue the good work of salvation in all those in whom He has begun that work. The Son of God has promised that all who ever drink of Him spiritually will never, ever thirst again. They will certainly rise in the resurrection of the just, for they possess everlasting life already. The Bible demonstrates that when the Christian sins, he loses heavenly reward, but he does not become unsaved. God's unchanging character requires your presence in heaven. God's love for His Son guarantees your salvation, for He is your intercessor, and you were given to Him; God's love for you guarantees your future blessedness as well. His holiness and righteousness, His eternal decree, and His faithfulness to His Word, all guarantee your salvation. Oh blessed promises! Oh great salvation! What a great and good God is our Lord! The infinite goodness and mercy of God towards you in giving you this eternal salvation is a powerful motivation to love God and live a holy life. The child of God who doubts that he is secure, or who does not know that he, personally, is truly saved, is deficient in very important aspects of his spiritual life. Assurance powerfully aids Christian growth. We therefore turn now to this topic.

The Christian: Assurance of Salvation And the Results of Security

Eternal security in Christ is the objective state of every child of God. It is unchanging; it is not based upon the Christian's feelings, but upon Divine realities. The redeemed never grow less secure, and they cannot become more secure than they already are. Assurance is the subjective recognition by the Christian of his salvation. While he is always secure, he may fail to recognize this fact and lose the comfort of it. It is possible for the saints to doubt that they belong to God. They can also gain a stronger confidence in that invariable certainty, and have their assurance increase. It is possible for the believer to have 100% certainty of his eternal happiness, for those "that believe on the name of the Son of God . . . may know that [they] have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). The moment they trust in Christ, God certainly knows they belong to Him. They are able to share in that Divine certainty.

Assurance is important. God commands us to have it. 2 Peter 1:10 reads, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give _____ to make your calling and election _____." This verse is not saying that somehow believers must make God sure that they are saved. God has foreordained the salvation of His elect from the foundation of the world—certainly it is sure to Him! Rather, the command is for them to make sure that they themselves are saved. Scripture commands them to gain assurance of salvation. Those who do what is involved in gaining Biblical assurance are promised that they "shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto [them] abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ” (2 Peter 1:10-11). Assurance also helps a believer to “sin not” (1 John 2:1). Knowing for sure that he is on his way to heaven, the Christian who has assurance of his salvation can serve God with love and gratitude for the eternal life he knows he possesses, instead of having his spiritual growth crushed by doubt and fear. Furthermore, believers should have assurance “that [their] joy may be full” (1 John 1:4). To know with confidence that your future is everlasting fellowship with God, glory in His kingdom, and perfect holiness and freedom from sin, is a source of tremendous joy. A lack of assurance, by contrast, is a source of great misery. How can one who recognizes the infinite horrors of hell be happy without knowing that he will not go there? How can one who loves and longs for God be satisfied without knowing that he will enjoy holy fellowship with Him forever? Both the command of the Bible to obtain assurance and the peace of heart brought by possessing it demonstrate its great value.

Assurance assumes certain prerequisites. You cannot have assurance of salvation unless you first have salvation. Not everyone who claims to be a Christian and claims to believe the gospel has really been born again. If you cannot identify a point when you repented and trusted in Christ, as explained in study #5, you are lost. You can have no genuine assurance of salvation because you are still dead in your sins. You do not have the bedrock foundation of regeneration in Christ upon which to build the house of assurance. You are not certain to go to heaven, but certain of hell. In fact, to think that you are saved, when you are not, is one of the worst things that could happen to you. It is a tremendous barrier to your true conversion. Unless you recognize that you really are still lost, you can never genuinely come to Christ. Matthew 7:21-23 records the case of some who thought they belonged to God, but found out on the day of judgment, when it was too late, that they did not. Jesus warned, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. — — — will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I — — — — — you: — — — — — from me, ye that work iniquity.” These people thought that they belonged to God—had they not done miracles? Had they not done many good works in the name of the Lord? However, they were condemned—they never had been born again! On the day of judgment, it is too late to recognize that you never were saved, and that your assurance had no basis. Do not make this mistake and lose your soul! Furthermore, the Christian who wants full assurance must be obedient to God. If we are saved, “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16), but the disobedient child of God will “grieve” and “quench” the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19). The saint who is not following God’s commands is still eternally secure, but he will not have the assurance of this fact that he should. Regeneration and obedience are the two great prerequisites before Biblical assurance is possible.

Assurance comes from Scriptural evidences of the new birth in your life. God gave the book of 1 John to those who “___ ___ ___ ___ ___ on the name of the Son of God; that ___ ___ may ___ ___ ___ that ye have eternal ___ ___ ___” (1 John 5:13). First John is the book of assurance. Sometimes unsaved people are deceived into thinking they are converted, or Christians fear that that they do not belong to God, because of confusion about the basis for assurance. We will not concentrate upon the many non-Biblical reasons that people think they have been born of God. People say they have assurance because they remember praying the sinner’s prayer, or have experienced signs and wonders, or have felt what they assumed is God’s presence, or have made it through a crisis experience where they think they relied on the Lord, or countless other reasons which God never says are genuine grounds for assurance. Instead, we will look at seven marks of true conversion given in the book of 1 John. These marks will always appear in those who have received Christ. If you see them in your own life, you can have confidence that God has indeed given you a new heart and made you His dear child. If you claim that you have been born again, but these marks are not present in your life, you have no reason to think that you belong to God. Rather, you have plenty of reason to think that you are still lost. All believers have these seven marks, and no unbeliever can have any of the seven marks.

The first mark is that the Christian does not live in sin, that is, he will not practice sin as a lifestyle. 1 John 3:2-10 reads:

2 Beloved, now ___ ___ ___ we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And ___ ___ ___ ___ man that hath this hope in him ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ himself, even as he is pure. 4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. 5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. 6 Whosoever abideth in him ___ ___ ___ ___ ___: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. 7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ is righteous, even ___ ___ ___ ___ is righteous. 8 He that committeth sin is of the ___ ___ ___ ___; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whosoever is born of God doth not ___ ___ ___ ___ sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___, because he is born of God. 10 In this the children of God are ___ ___ ___ ___ ___, and the children of the devil: whosoever ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ not ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

As in the rest of the epistle of 1 John, the apostle John addresses believers (v. 2). He tells them that everyone who is a child of God, and therefore looks forward to the return of Christ, purifies himself in light of this certain future event (v. 3). The one who belongs to Christ “sinneth not” (v. 6). This does not mean that he never sins even one time—that would contradict what John

had said in 1 John 1:8, 10. It means, rather, that he does not sin as a continuing action. This use of the present tense for continuing action is very common in the book of 1 John. The one who does not live in sin belongs to God, while whosoever “sinneth,” that is, lives in sin, has never known God. Verses seven and eight make this even more clear; only the one that “doeth” righteousness, whose life is characterized by righteousness, is born of God (cf. 2:29). Such a one has been justified, not by his acts of righteousness, but by Christ’s perfect righteousness accounted to him—he who perseveres in obedience is “righteous, even as [Christ] is righteous” (v. 7). On the other hand, the one that “committeth sin,” who lives a lifestyle of sin, is “of the devil” (v. 8). The one who is born of God “doth not commit sin” (v. 9) as a practice, because God’s “seed remaineth in him”—he has been given a new nature that desires and will practice holiness. He “cannot sin” (v. 9), that is, continue in sin, because it is contrary to his nature as a child of God. Verse ten shows us that the practice of righteousness demonstrates that one is a child of God, while characteristic disobedience is a sure mark of the children of the devil. Clearly, the genuine Christian will not live in sin. He no longer sins with his heart and will and whole inclination, like the ungodly. He hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, groans under the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be delivered from it altogether. He guards or keeps himself (1 John 5:18), watching carefully against sin and whatever may lead to it. Sin no longer pleases him, nor is even a matter of indifference; it has become an abominable thing which he hates. He cannot prevent its dwelling within him (Romans 7:14-25). Bad thoughts will at times arise within him, and shortcomings, omissions, and defects will appear, both in his words and actions. But he can say truly, and as in the sight of God, that these things are a daily grief and sorrow to him, and that his whole nature does not consent to them. Do you have this mark of the children of God?

The second mark is genuine faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. 1 John 5:1 (cf. v. 4-5) states, “Whosoever _____ that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” The true Christian believes that Jesus Christ is the only Savior by whom his soul can be pardoned. In himself he sees nothing but unworthiness, but in Christ he sees ground for the fullest confidence, and trusting in Him, he believes that his sins are all forgiven. He believes that for the sake of Christ’s finished work and death upon the cross, he is reckoned righteous in God’s sight, and may look forward to death and judgment without alarm. He may have his fears and doubts. He may sometimes feel as if he had no faith at all. But ask him whether he will rest his hopes of eternal life on his own goodness, his own achievements, his prayers, his baptism, or his church, and see what he will reply. Ask him whether he will give up Christ, and place his confidence in any other way of justification. Depend upon it, he would say that though he does feel weak and bad, he would not give up Christ for all the world. Depend upon it, he would say he found a preciousness in Christ, a suitableness to his own soul in Christ, that he found nowhere else, and

that he must cling to Him (John 6:66-69). Having been given the gift of saving faith at the moment of his new birth, he will continue to place all his confidence in the only Savior of sinners. Do you have this mark of the children of God?

The third mark is love for God and other true Christians. 1 John 4:7-11 reads, “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that _____ is _____ of _____, and _____ God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to _____.” 1 John 3:14 states, “We _____ that we have passed from death unto life, because we _____ the _____. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death.” Scripture affirms that “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha [accursed or damned when the Lord comes]” (1 Corinthians 16:22), but we are also told in these passages from 1 John that the one who does not love the brethren is equally lost. Love for God will result in obedience to Him: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). Love for God will result in holy actions (John 14:15), in meditation upon and speaking about the Lord (Malachi 3:16-17), in a deep desire for fellowship with Him (Philippians 3:10), in a reverential fear and awe of God (Psalm 128:1; Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Isaiah 66:2; Hebrews 12:28-29), in a delight in His Word (Psalm 119:47) and in His worship (Psalm 26:8), and a love for His people. The new heart given in the new birth will always lead the saint to love the other children of God. Love for God and the saints are very closely connected; indeed, we love God when we love the children of God (1 John 4:20-21) and love the children of God when we love God (1 John 5:2). The regenerate man, like his Father in heaven, loves all men with a great general love, but he has a special love for those who are his fellow-soldiers in their spiritual warfare, his fellow-travelers to heaven. A certain unbreakable spiritual union and fellowship exists among all believers (John 17:20-23). The one who prefers the company of those made holy by the gospel evidences that he is one with them (Acts 2:42), and will share their blessed eternal destiny, while he who prefers the fellowship of the wicked should expect to join them in their coming damnation. The convert prefers the holy deeds and conversation of those also in Christ. He understands them, and they understand him. They may differ in social background, ethnicity, or wealth, but they are fellow children of the same heavenly Father. The disciple values Christ-likeness in others—those who are most like his Savior are the ones he most loves. This love for the saints will manifest itself in self-sacrificing practical action, rather than being a matter of the lips alone; it is not “in word, neither in tongue;

but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:15-19). Do you evidence love for God and His people? Do you have this mark of the children of God?

The fourth mark is that the Christian practices righteousness. 1 John 2:29 reads, “If ye know that he [God] is righteous, ye know that every one that _____ is born of him.” The regenerate will characteristically obey Scripture. The one who “saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). The saint seeks to live according to God’s will, to do the things that please Him, and avoid the things that He hates. The believer’s aim and desire is to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength, to love his neighbor as himself, and do whatever Christ commands. No doubt he is not perfect. None will tell you that sooner than he will. He groans under the burden of indwelling corruption cleaving to him. He finds an evil principle within him constantly warring against grace, and trying to draw him away from God (Romans 7:14-25). But he does not consent to it, though he cannot prevent its presence. He will persevere in righteousness to the end. In spite of all shortcomings, the average bent and bias of his way is holy, his doings are holy, his tastes holy, and his habits holy. In spite of all his swerving and turning aside, like a ship beating up against a contrary wind, the general course of his life is in one direction—toward God and for God. He can say, “I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be. I am not what I hope to be in another world, but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.” Do you do righteousness? Do you have this mark of the children of God?

The fifth mark is continued belief and practice of true doctrine. 1 John 2:19-21, 26-27 reads, “They _____ from us, but they were _____ us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have _____ with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made _____ that they were not all of us. But ye have an _____ [anointing] from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. . . . These *things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him _____ in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same _____ of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye _____ in him.” The Holy Spirit lives inside true Christians, and He protects them from false teaching (like that mentioned in 2:22-23). The Spirit draws the believer to a congregation that honors Christ, and leads the saint to worship and serve the Lord there. Someone who rejects God’s church, its doctrines and practices, who “goes out from” it (v. 19), or who is removed from its membership roll because of his unbiblical deeds or doctrine (Matthew 18:17), should very seriously consider if he has ever been genuinely converted. Also, someone who is not faithful to church, but can

easily skip services, has no grounds for assurance of salvation. In Acts 2:41-42, 47, all “they that gladly received his word [Peter’s preaching of the gospel, 2:14-40] were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” The three thousand converts were all baptized and persevered in faithfulness to church. It was not 3,000 saved, 500 baptized, and 22 still in church a year later, but 3,000 saved, 3,000 baptized, and 3,000 added to the church membership and continuing faithful—even in the face of persecution. This is the pattern throughout the New Testament. No one is saved because he goes to church, but those who do not go to church should seriously think about if they are truly born again. Furthermore, while the justified may be confused to a certain extent, the Spirit protects the elect, so that they are not ultimately deceived and led astray by false teachers (Matthew 24:24). They will never deny the Trinity, justification by faith alone, the inspiration of Scripture, and other teachings of the Bible like these. Their Savior protects them from apostasy from the faith (Luke 22:32; John 17). Someone who claims he was born again, but then rejects Christ, or returns unashamedly to an immoral life, did not fall out of a state of justification, but was never truly saved in the first place.

The Holy Spirit, the Author of Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:13), also opens the true convert’s mind to understand and love the Word of God, and to instinctively submit to its authority and rule. 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 reads, “But the natural man [the unsaved man] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are _____ unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are _____ discerned. But he that is spiritual [the saved man] judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” When people come to know God, they no longer see the Bible as a dry, incomprehensible book, a chore to read, and a burden to obey. The convert has new eyes to see the spiritual beauty and glory of the Scripture. This does not mean that he will instantly understand everything in its pages—there are “some things hard to be understood” (2 Peter 3:16) in its text—but it is no longer generally or in its entirety a closed book. The regenerate also implicitly submit to its authority. They do not try to get out of obedience to its commands. They steadfastly persevere in the study and practice of Scripture. Continued belief and practice of true doctrine, including faithfulness to church and a love for and obedience to Scripture, is a mark of God’s elect. Do you have this mark of the children of God?

The sixth mark is the testimony of the Spirit. 1 John 4:13 states, “Hereby _____ we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath _____ us of his _____.” The Holy Spirit, who dwells within all those born of God, witnesses to the saint of his new,

forgiven state and produces a variety of fruits in the Christian's life. Romans 8:9-16 explains this well:

9 But ye are not in the _____, [unsaved] but in the _____, [in the realm of the Spirit, saved] if so be that the Spirit of God dwell _____. Now if any man _____ the Spirit of Christ, he is _____ of _____. 10 And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [make alive] your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are _____ by the _____ of God, _____ are the _____ of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we _____, Abba [a tender word for “Father”], Father. 16 The Spirit itself _____ with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Every believer has the Spirit of God living inside of him—people who do not have the Spirit do not belong to God (v. 9; Jude 19). The indwelling Spirit is a promise of eternal life and resurrection with the just (v. 10-11). Those indwelt will characteristically reject fleshly, ungodly works by the Spirit's power (v. 12-13). The general course of their life is not one where the sinful nature is in control, but is one where the Holy Spirit is in control (v. 14). The Spirit leads the children of God to the practice of genuine prayer (v. 15; cf. Galatians 4:6). The child of God naturally seeks his Father in prayer in a manner unknown before conversion. Along with this, the Spirit testifies to the Christian's spirit that he is born of God (v. 16).

One truly born of God may have this testimony from the Holy Ghost greatly weakened if he falls into sin. If he grieves the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), although His indwelling presence still remains, the comfort of His testimony to the saint's conversion will decrease. Indeed, the Spirit will make the disobedient saint miserable until he repents. The sinning Christian cannot expect to regain comfort and assurance from the Spirit until he confesses his sin and returns to unhindered fellowship with God. Also, sometimes people claim that the Holy Spirit witnesses to them that they have been born again, but they lack the other marks of regeneration or otherwise plainly evidence that they are unconverted. Such people are self-deceived, and their false assurance comes either directly from the devil or from their own deluded minds. Nevertheless, the witness of God the Spirit in the heart of the child of God is an important evidence of salvation. Scripture affirms that those who have received Christ are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He leads them in the way of righteousness, leads them to pray in a manner they never knew before their conversion, and directly testifies to their spirit that they are indeed born of God. Do you have the Spirit? Do you have this mark of the children of God?

The seventh mark is that the convert overcomes the world. 1 John 5:4-5 declares, “For whatsoever is born of God _____ the _____: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18-19). The system of this world, its loves, goals, and values, is against God and His Christ. 1 John 2:15-17 therefore commands, “_____ the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is _____ in _____. For all that *is* in the world, the _____ of the _____, and the _____ of the _____, and the _____ of _____, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” Worldly people, conversation, appearance, desires, manners, music, customs, and all else are no longer the aspiration of the Christian. He no longer loves the lust of the flesh, from sexual immorality in deed and thought to excess in eating, drinking, and partying. He no longer loves the lust of the eyes, from looking at evil and sensual things to covetousness for worldly goods. He rejects the pride of life, desires for worldly honor, important positions, and living in a rich and luxurious manner. He is “not conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2) because of “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto [him], and [he] unto the world” (Galatians 6:14). The new nature and the power of God’s grace and Spirit in his life radically change him. He does not mind going against the stream of the world’s way. He finds no pleasure in things that most people around him call happiness. He cannot enjoy their enjoyments: they weary him. They appear to him vain, unprofitable, and unworthy of an immortal being. He overcomes the fear of the world. He is content to do many things which all around him think unnecessary, to say the least. They blame him; it does not move him. They ridicule him; he does not give way. He loves the praise of God more than the praise of men. He fears offending his Lord more than giving offense to man. He has counted the cost. It is a small thing with him whether he is blamed or praised. He is no longer the servant of fashion and custom. To please the world is quite a secondary consideration with him. His first aim is to please God. Are you of this world, or of the next? Does the world overcome you, or do you overcome the world? Do you have this mark of the children of God?

The book of 1 John has given us seven marks of the new birth with which we can test our lives. It has shown us that those whom God has saved do not live in sin, have genuine faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, love God and other true Christians, practice righteousness, continue in the belief and practice of true doctrine, have the Holy Spirit, and overcome the world. It is certainly true that these marks will vary in their depth and clarity in different people. In some

they are faint, dim, and feeble. In others they are bold, sharp, clear, plain, and unmistakable. Some of these marks are more visible in some people, and other marks are more visible in others. Nevertheless, after every allowance, here we find seven definite marks of being born of God. Only those persons are born again who have these seven marks about them, and all men and women who do not have these marks, are not born again. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5). After the time of your conversion, has God worked these marks in your life? If so, rejoice! You have every right to confidence that you belong to God, that your sins have been washed away in the Lord Jesus’ blood, and that God has made you a new creature in Him. Your heavenly Father loves you and will never cast you out. You can rejoice in the sure hope of everlasting life and an unimaginably joyous and glorious eternity with your God. If, on the other hand, you have not seen these marks developing in you since the time you claimed you were born again, you are in big trouble. If God has not given you a new nature so that these marks appear in your life, you are still lost. Do not deceive yourself—without holiness, no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). You may have performed various religious rituals, and created a “salvation testimony” of a sort, but you never have really been converted. You have no Biblical grounds to conclude that you are saved. You should carefully and prayerfully review Bible study #5 and this Bible study. Read the gospel of John, which was written so that you could believe in Christ and have eternal life (John 20:31). Also read 1 John, which was written so that believers could have assurance and clearly distinguishes the marks of genuine and spurious conversion (1 John 5:13). Contact us—we want to help you. Make sure that you understand the gospel. God commands you to immediately repent and believe in the Lord Jesus. Christ’s promise is sure: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

Conclusion:

Be Saved, Sure, and Serving!

We have learned in this Bible study that God always saves those who come to Christ from sin’s penalty and power. They are eternally secure, so that once they are justified they can never fall from their redeemed state, and they are irrevocably changed, so that they will be characterized by godliness. Eternal security is bound up with the gospel itself, so it is taught throughout Scripture. We looked at seven Biblical reasons for it: the doctrine of election, the doctrine of predestination, Christ’s High Priestly ministry, the nature of justification, the fact that salvation is not by works, the seal of the Holy Spirit, and many plain promises of security. Having seen that all Christians are objectively and forever certain of heaven, we turned to

personal assurance of salvation, the subjective recognition by the Christian of his forgiven state. We learned that God commands believers to have assurance, and that it is a great source of joy for them. Before anyone can have assurance, he must actually belong to God—the unregenerate cannot have Biblical assurance—and he must be obedient to Scripture. We looked at seven marks of true salvation, given in the book of 1 John. When a believer sees these evidences in his life, he should have the peace and happiness that comes from knowing for sure that God has saved him. The seven marks were the inability to live in continual sin, genuine faith in Jesus Christ, love for God and other true Christians, doing righteousness, continued belief and practice of true doctrine, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and overcoming the world-system. Those who have these seven marks should rejoice in the certainty of a wonderful eternity in the kingdom of God. Those without them should not have assurance, but re-examine the nature of genuine conversion. As the saint grows in spiritual maturity, the marks will grow clearer, and although they can be dimmed by disobedience, the new birth itself will always bring these evidences.

Are you saved? Are you sure? Then the question for you should be, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). You have begun a new life—the only life with real value—a life of service to your God and Savior! God has set up an institution that is extremely important in your service for Him—the church. It is not possible for you to serve God the way He wants you to without an association with His church. However, as we examine the religious world today, we see many different organizations that claim to be the church of Christ. How can we know what the truth is on this subject? We will look at this in our next Bible study—*The Church of Jesus Christ*.

Review Quiz For Bible Study #6

- 1.) It is absolutely impossible for a true Christian to fall from a state of salvation; once he is saved, he is always saved. True False
- 2.) Everyone who says that he believes in Jesus Christ is eternally secure. True False
- 3.) Eternal security is connected to the gospel itself; the fact that we are justified by faith without works requires eternal security. True False
- 4.) Since Christians are eternally secure, they should go out and live in sin, since what they do does not matter to God. True False
- 5.) Everyone who really has been born again will have assurance of his salvation. True False

- 6.) Eternal security is an unchanging fact for all the redeemed, but some believers can lose assurance or grow stronger in their assurance. True False
- 7.) God commands His children to be absolutely certain that they have been eternally cleansed from their sins. True False
- 8.) A lost person may deceive himself and think that he possesses God-given assurance. True False
- 9.) The book of 1 John gives (at least) seven marks of regeneration, and those who have these marks in their lives after they have received Christ should be 100% certain that they have been born again. True False
- 10.) It is possible for a Christian to live unashamedly in perpetual sin. True False
- 11.) While the marks of regeneration will be more obvious in some saints than in others, every Christian has all seven marks given in 1 John, and no lost person has these seven marks. True False
- 12.) Believing in eternal security, and having personal assurance of one's own salvation, is very important in the Christian life. True False

Request for Study #7

___ I have returned the sixth Bible study to you with the answer blanks filled in, and answered the review quiz questions. Please send me the next Bible study, *The Church of Jesus Christ*.

___ I would like to meet with or talk to someone in person. I have put information in the spaces below (phone number, times available, etc.) to contact me.

Please explain in the space below whether or not you personally know 100% for sure that you will go to heaven when Christ returns or when you die, and give us the reasons for your assurance or lack of assurance. You can also ask any other related question that you have. Please also record any changes of address, as well as the names and addresses of people you know who might also like to do this Bible study.

[illegible]

Mailing address:

Bible Study #7: *The Church of Jesus Christ*

Introduction and Review

Dear friend,

We rejoice that we have been able to help you study the Bible through the materials that you have already completed, and are glad to be able to continue helping you learn with this seventh study. In our previous studies, we learned about the inspiration and preservation of the Bible, about the character of the one Triune God, and about the commands of God's Law, with its associated promises and punishments. We saw that we sinned in Adam, had a sinful nature, and had committed many sins, but that God provided salvation through the Person and work of Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. This good news, or gospel, brings us adoption, justification, reconciliation, sanctification, and glorification, when we receive it by repentant faith alone. Genuine repentance is *a change of mind about God and sin that results in a change of life*. We defined true faith as: *Believing to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word of God, saving faith receives, believes on, trusts in, and rests upon the Lord Jesus Christ for justification, sanctification, and eternal life*. One repents and believes in Jesus Christ at a particular moment in time, after which one is eternally secure. We saw that election, predestination, Christ's High Priestly ministry, the nature of justification, the fact that salvation is not by works, the seal of the Holy Spirit, and many plain promises guarantee that one who has come to Christ cannot by any means perish. This is an objective fact for all saints. God also wants His people to experience the joy of subjectively recognizing that they have been forgiven. In the book of 1 John, the Lord has given us seven marks of true salvation, so that those who have the marks may have certain confidence that they are indeed born of God. The seven marks

were the inability to live in continual sin, genuine faith in Jesus Christ, love for God and other true Christians, doing righteousness, continued belief and practice of true doctrine, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and overcoming the world-system. Since God works these marks in all His people, those who have them belong to Him, while those who do not have these marks have never been born again. Having studied the security of salvation and the nature of assurance, we are now ready to look at the institution God has placed on the earth for His service and worship, the church.

With study #7 you have also received your completed version of study #6, which has been checked and graded. Please look over that study for corrections by your Bible teacher, especially on the quiz questions, and for comments, especially at the very end of the study, and in association with your comments on whether or not you have assurance of salvation. Also, please keep your completed studies available so that you can look back at them later. Remember that you can use the blank space at the end of the study to write down any questions that you have. Also, please use this space to provide us with the names and addresses of any friends or acquaintances of yours who would also be interested in studying the Bible, so that we can send these materials to them as well. Once again, this Bible course is provided to you courtesy of Bethel Baptist Church, 4905 Appian Way, El Sobrante, CA 94803, (510) 223-8721/ (510) 223-9550, www.pillarandground.org, betbapt@flash.net. Let us know if you would like a personal visit for Bible study, and feel free to visit us for Sunday school at 9:45 a.m., morning worship at 11:00 a.m., Sunday evening worship at 6:00 p.m., or Wednesday prayer and Bible study at 7:00 p.m. We are overjoyed that we can assist you in studying the Bible.

The Church: Its Importance

Does it really matter if we faithfully worship and serve God as a member of His church? Scripture answers this question with a resounding *yes!* There are many reasons why we should view the church as exceedingly important. First, Ephesians 5:25 tells us that “Christ also _____ the _____, and _____ himself for it.” While Christ died for everyone in the world (Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2), He had His church in view in a special way. If our perfect Example, Jesus Christ, loved His church enough to die for it, should we not also have this passionate, sacrificial love for it? Second, God commands us to assemble in church. Hebrews 10:25 tells us not to be “forsaking the _____ of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day [of Christ’s return] approaching.” The fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) also requires church attendance, as we saw when we studied the ten commandments in Bible study #3. In fact,

characteristically choosing to skip church is a sign that one is unconverted, as we learned from 1 John 2:19 in Bible study #6. Third, the church is the place where we can be built up in the faith under God-ordained leadership. The “overseers” are to “feed the church of God” spiritually (Acts 20:28), and “watch for [their] souls” (Hebrews 13:17). God gave the church officers (Ephesians 4:11) for “the _____ of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ [the church, Ephesians 1:22-23]: Till we all come in the unity of the _____, and of the _____ of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we *henceforth* be no more _____, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every _____ of _____, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may _____ into him in all things, which is the _____, *even* Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-15). Do you want to make progress in holiness? Do you want to understand the faith and believe right doctrine? Do you want to grow more like Christ, have Him as your Head, and pass from spiritual immaturity to spiritual adulthood? Then you need the church! Do you want to avoid being tossed to and fro by false teaching and false teachers? This protection from evil is found in the church. God did not design us to grow as Christians on our own. In fact, removal from church membership is called being “delivered unto Satan” (1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5; Matthew 18:15-20). It is not safe to be outside the church! Our Lord’s way is for us to learn His Word and mature spiritually in “the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

The church is the place of the Savior’s special presence. Christ walks in the midst of His churches (Revelation 1:12-13, 20). Three metaphors in Scripture illustrate this special presence. First, the church is “the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27; 1:2). This metaphor emphasizes the particular service each Christian has in his congregation as believers edify, serve, and help each other (1 Corinthians 12:13-27; Romans 12:1-16). It also emphasizes special closeness to Jesus Christ: in the church, “we are members of his _____, of his _____, and of his _____” (Ephesians 5:30). If you are not a church member, you lose out on the special presence of your Redeemer. Second, the church is “an holy temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:21; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Chronicles 25:6; 1 Peter 2:5). The Spirit of God dwells in the church in a special way (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Your prayer should be, “O God, thou *art* my God; early will I _____ thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh _____ for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To _____ thy _____ and thy _____, so *as* I have seen thee in the _____” (Psalm 63:1-2). Jehovah’s spiritual power and glory are wonderfully revealed in His temple, His sanctuary for this age, the church. How could a believer abandon his Savior’s temple? Third, the church is Christ’s bride. In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul tells the church at Corinth, “I am jealous over you

with godly jealousy: for I have — — — — — [engaged] you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.” (Note also Ephesians 5:23-33.) The church is the special object of love to her spiritual Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ. She has a special closeness to Him, as a wife has a unique union with her husband. She is the object of His special care, watchfulness, protection, and affection. While every believer will, in eternity future, have the special closeness to Christ symbolized by the bridal relationship (Revelation 21:2; Romans 7:4), on the earth, only those who are part of the church have this union. Who would want to miss out on this?

This special closeness to Christ is found, before heaven, only in the church of God. It is not available by listening to Christian radio, TV preachers, or Internet sermons. It is not found through reading good Christian books. It is not found in a home Bible study group with a few friends. All of these other things can be spiritually beneficial (although there are so many very deceptive false teachers on the radio, TV, and Internet, as well as writing books, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, that you should avoid (Romans 16:17) the great majority of them, and be extremely cautious about the rest—you need the discernment you will only gain in a good congregation!), but they are no substitute for the only institution God has ordained for His work in this age, the church.

The Church: Its Definition

What does the word *church* mean, anyway? It is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which appears 115 times in the text of the New Testament.²² In addition to being translated as *church*, it could be rendered as *assembly* or *congregation*. In the New Testament *ekklesia* is translated as *assembly* three times (Acts 19:32, 39, 41), and our English Bible has the word *congregation* where the Greek translation of the Old Testament has *ekklesia* (cf. Deuteronomy 23:1; 31:30). Outside of the Bible, the word *ekklesia* was in “common usage for several hundred years before the Christian era and was used to refer to an assembly of persons constituted by well-defined membership.”²³ The Lord Jesus Christ called His congregation “my church”

²² The word appears in Matthew 16:18; 18:17; Acts 2:47; 5:11; 7:38; 8:1,3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3-4, 22, 41; 16:5; 18:22; 19:32, 39, 41; 20:17, 28; Romans 16:1, 4-5, 16, 23; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 4:17; 6:4; 7:17; 10:32; 11:16, 18, 22; 12:28; 14:4-5, 12, 19, 23, 28, 33-35; 15:9; 16:1, 19; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 8:1, 18-19, 23-24; 11:8, 28; 12:13; Galatians 1:2, 13, 22; Ephesians 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23-25, 27, 29, 32; Philippians 3:6; 4:15; Colossians 1:18, 24; 4:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:1, 4; 1 Timothy 3:5, 15; 5:16; Philemon 2; Hebrews 2:12; 12:23; James 5:14; 3 John 6, 9-10; Revelation 1:4, 11, 20; 2:1, 7-8, 11-12, 17-18, 23, 29; 3:1, 6-7, 13-14, 22; 22:16.

²³ *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989.

(Matthew 16:18), to distinguish it from other types of assemblies or congregations. As we will see in greater detail as we proceed in this study, *the church of Christ is an assembly of baptized believers, organized to carry out the Lord's work.*

Many people today use the word *church* in senses that are entirely absent from the Bible. Some call the building where people meet for worship a *church*, but the word *ekklesia* does not designate the building, but the congregation, whether or not it meets in a church building. In the days of the apostles, there were few, if any, churches that had a building specifically constructed for their assemblies. People also use the word *church* to refer to a denomination; they speak of “the Methodist Church” or “the Catholic Church” or “the Baptist Church.” However, an *ekklesia* is an assembly of people, not a denomination. There were no denominations in the first century, anyway—they developed later. There were only independent churches.

Many speak of the “Universal Church,” which, although variously defined, often is said to consist of all believers in the whole world. Particular congregations are then said to be little parts of the one, great universal church made up of all the Christians on earth. However, in the Bible, the *church* or *ekklesia* never refers to all believers in the whole world. (You can look up all the references in the last footnote to see this for yourself.) The *family of God* is a universal, invisible entity that consists of all believers everywhere (Galatians 3:26), but a *church* is a particular, local, visible congregation. The metaphors for the church show that the idea of a universal or an invisible church is false. The church is Christ's body, His temple, and His bride. Bodies are very local and visible—a bunch of flesh and bones scattered around the globe is not a body. A temple is in one particular location, available for everyone to see; bricks scattered all over the place are not a building at all. And certainly every man on his wedding day rejoices that his bride is very local and visible, not invisible or cut into little pieces which are scattered all over the earth! Christ's church is not a building, a denomination, or something universal and invisible; it is a particular type of assembly. What is it that distinguishes Christ's assembly from all other assemblies?

The Church: Its Marks

Different types of assemblies have different identifying marks. The distinguishing features of an assembly of baseball fans at a stadium, of an assembly of opera lovers at a music hall, and of an assembly of legislators in congress make them easy to tell apart. Likewise, the church of Christ has a number of marks that set it apart from all other assemblies. We will look at five of these marks. The Lord's church has the Bible for its sole authority, is a self-governing,

independent congregation, practices the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, is faithful to Biblical doctrine, and conforms to Biblical practices.

I. The Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice

2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that “_____ is given by _____ of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be _____, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” The church of God accepts the Bible as the inspired Word of God. As we learned in study #1, every word of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is as much God's Word as if He spoke it audibly. “All” Scripture is given by “inspiration.” Also, the church accepts the Bible as its only authority. Since Scripture is able to make us “perfect” and “thoroughly furnished,” completely equipped, for “all” good works, the church neither needs nor accepts any other authority for its belief and practice. God has said, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2; cf. Deuteronomy 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Matthew 15:3; Revelation 22:18-19). The Lord Jesus' church rejects the authority of human traditions, of other books that pretend be inspired and to add to or complete God's already perfect Word, and of human beings who claim to be infallible or to be prophets bringing new revelation. It follows the whole Bible, and only the Bible.

We also learned in Bible study #1 that God has preserved every word of the Scriptures. Recall that Psalm 12:6-7 promised, “The _____ of the LORD are _____ words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt _____ them, O LORD, thou shalt _____ them from this generation for ever.” All of those preserved words would be available and in use by God's people from generation to generation (Isaiah 59:21). In the Old Testament era, Israel was the guardian of the Scriptures (Romans 3:2). In our current time period, the church, as “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15; cf. Matthew 28:18-20; John 17:8), is the guardian of the preserved Word of God. While Satan has never been able to defeat God and take His Word from His people, the devil has used wicked men to attempt to corrupt the Bible. The apostle Paul testified that even in the first century there were “many, which corrupt the word of God” (2 Corinthians 2:17). A good church will defend the perfectly preserved Word of God, which is found in the traditional Old Testament Hebrew Masoretic text and the traditional New Testament Greek Received Text, the basis for the English King James Version of the Bible. The New Testament Greek text underlying the King James Bible has been available and in use by God's churches and people ever since it was given to the first century churches by inspiration. Satan has corrupted various passages in modern English

Bible versions that seek to replace the King James Version. Note the comparisons below between the pure Word of God in the King James Bible (KJB) and the corruptions in various modern “Bible” versions. The popular New International Version (NIV) is used, but these, and many other corruptions, are found in almost all other modern English “Bibles”:

King James Bible	New International Version	Doctrine attacked	Comment
And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: <u>God</u> was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)	Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: <u>He</u> appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)	Deity of Christ	Nearly 100% of Greek manuscripts (MSS) in existence read <i>God</i> . A handful have been corrupted to read <i>who</i> or <i>which</i> instead. Both of these readings have grammatical problems. Not one Greek MSS says <i>he</i> . The NIV has a very deceptive footnote on the word <i>he</i> which states, “Some manuscripts [read] <i>God</i> .” One would think that most MSS say <i>he</i> , while “some,” that is, a few, read <i>God</i> , but actually the overwhelming majority read <i>God</i> and not even one says <i>he</i> ! Textual footnotes in modern “Bible” versions should not be trusted. The NIV’s alteration removes the testimony of this verse to Christ’s Deity.
And every spirit that confesseth not <u>that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh</u> is not of God: and this is that <i>spirit</i> of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. (1 John 4:3)	but every spirit that does not acknowledge <u>Jesus</u> [“Christ is come in the flesh” removed] is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. (1 John 4:3)	Humanity of Christ	The overwhelming majority of MSS read with the KJV again. The NIV allows for a false “Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:4; Matthew 24:24) in this verse, one who is not fully God and fully Man in one Person.
But I say unto you, That <u>whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause</u> shall be in danger of the judgment: (Matthew 5:22)	But I tell you that <u>anyone who is angry</u> [“without a cause” removed] with his brother will be subject to judgment. (Matthew 5:22)	Sinlessness of Christ	Once again, thousands of Greek MSS have “without a cause.” Five do not. In Mark 3:5, Christ was angry because of the hardness of men’s hearts. The NIV, by teaching that men should never be angry, even at sin, blasphemously makes the

In whom we have redemption <u>through his blood</u> , <i>even</i> the forgiveness of sins: (Colossians 1:14)	in whom we have redemption, [“through his blood” removed] the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)	Blood of Christ	Lord Jesus into a sinner. “Through his blood” is found in the majority of Greek MSS. The NIV’s removal of this passage attacks the fact that Christ’s blood washes away our sins.
Who being the brightness of <i>his</i> glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had <u>by himself</u> purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; (Hebrews 1:3)	The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins [“by himself” removed], he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (Hebrews 1:3)	Cross of Christ	“By himself” is found in the overwhelming majority of MSS. The truth that Christ’s work on the cross is perfectly sufficient to save is attacked by removing the fact that the Lord Jesus purged our sins “by himself.” The NIV leaves room here for us to help pay for our own sins and denies the sufficiency of Christ’s redemptive work.
Mark 16:9-20 records the resurrection of Christ and His ascension into heaven.	The NIV separates Mark 16:9-20 from v. 8 with a large line to indicate that the gospel “really” ends in v. 8, and it then states that the “most reliable” sources do not have Mark 16:9-20.	Resurrection of Christ	Mark 16:9-20 is found in thousands of Greek MSS. It is missing in only three. Two of these have clear signs of being tampered with at this point and are some of the most corrupt MSS ever discovered, ²⁴ while the third was only created in the 12 th century! The NIV, after an extremely deceptive and inaccurate footnote, removes 11 whole verses from God’s Word, removes entirely the record of Christ’s appearances after His resurrection from the book of Mark, removes His

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The two manuscripts are codex Sinaiticus (also called *Aleph*) and codex Vaticanus (also called *B*). Sinaiticus is “covered with . . . alterations of an obviously correctional character[,] brought in by at least ten different revisers . . . it is plain that this . . . codex bears upon its face the most incontestable proof of its corrupt and defective character . . . on many occasions 10, 20, 30, 40 words are dropped through very carelessness . . . the impurity of the Codex Sinaiticus, in every part of it, was fully recognized by those best acquainted with it, and that from the beginning until the time when it was finally cast aside as worthless for any practical purpose.” Likewise, “in the Gospels alone Codex B (Vatican) leaves out words or whole clauses no less than 1,491 times. It bears traces of careless transcription on every page.” Anyone who places weight on what these two MSS say, when they differ from over “ninety-nine out of a hundred of the whole body of extant MSS,” is exceedingly foolish. (Quotes from pgs. 73-80 *True or False? The Westcott-Hort Textual Theory Examined*, ed. David Otis Fuller. Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1973).

			return to heaven to sit at the right hand of God, and ends Mark's gospel, the "good news," not with Christ's triumphant resurrection and ascension, but with "they [the disciples] were afraid"!
For there are three that bear record in heaven, <u>the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.</u> (1 John 5:7)	For there are three that testify ["in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" removed]: (1 John 5:7)	The Trinity	Ancient translational, patristic, and MSS evidence support the reading of the KJB, which was also found in every English Bible before its day. Removal of the Trinity in 1 John 5:7 creates a grammatical error in the Greek text. God did not inspire grammar errors. The NIV removes the clearest single verse on the Trinity from the Word of God!
As it is written in <u>the prophets</u> , Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. (Mark 1:2-3)	It is written in <u>Isaiah the prophet</u> : "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"—"a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" (Mark 1:2-3)	Error-free nature of Scripture	Over 99% of Greek MSS have the KJB reading. "I send my messenger . . . before thee" is Malachi 3:1, and "The voice of one . . . paths straight" is Isaiah 40:3. The KJB correctly states these quotes are from the "prophets." The NIV says that Malachi 3:1 was written by "Isaiah the prophet," inserting an error into God's Word.
But go ye and learn what <i>that</i> meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners <u>to repentance</u> . (Matthew 9:13)	But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners ["to repentance" removed]." (Matthew 9:13)	Salvation	The overwhelming majority of MSS have "to repentance." The NIV attacks the fact that sinners must repent if they wish to be saved.
Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark 9:44, 46)	Mark 9:44, 46 are taken out of the Bible.	Hell	Once again, 99%+ of MSS have the verses. The NIV removes these warnings about hell.
And as they went on <i>their</i> way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, <i>here is</i> water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? <u>And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine</u>	As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" [v. 37 removed] And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip	Baptism	Acts 8:37 is clearly attested by extremely early textual witnesses, reaching close to the lifetime of the apostles. It has the support of Greek MSS and the ancient Old Latin, Latin Vulgate, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, Arabic,

<u>heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.</u> And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. (Acts 8:36-38)	and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. (Acts 8:36-38)		Slavonic, etc. versions. The KJB shows that baptism is for believers only, upon confession of their faith in Jesus Christ. The NIV, in this passage, would allow for the baptism of unrepentant Muslims, Hindus, atheists, and whoever else wants it.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: <u>For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.</u> (Matthew 6:13)	And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one [“for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” removed]’ (Matthew 6:13)	Prayer	Thousands of Greek MSS read with the KJB; only three do not, and these three do not even agree with each other on how to change the passage. In Matthew 6:9-13, the Lord Jesus gives us a model for prayer. He tells us that we should end our prayers by giving glory to God for His eternal kingdom, power, and glory. The NIV denies that we should end our prayers with this, teaching instead that we should end focusing on ourselves. In the KJB, prayer begins and ends with God. In the NIV, prayer begins with “our Father,” v. 9, but ends with the “evil one,” the devil!

A faithful church will take the warning of Revelation 22:18-19 very seriously: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.” It will fulfill its role as the institution ordained by God to defend the Scriptures. It will not preach from corrupt English versions, but will warn its membership about them. It will use the pure, preserved Word of God, found in English in the King James Version.²⁵

The Lord’s church recognizes the Bible as the perfectly inspired Word of God. It does not follow any other book, nor recognize any human traditions, as an authority for what it should believe and practice. It should also reject all corrupt translations of the Bible to follow the Greek

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Please contact us if you would like further information on the matter of Bible texts and versions.

and Hebrew texts God has perfectly preserved, which are represented in the English language in the King James Version, the traditional English Bible.

II. Congregational government and church autonomy

Within the world of what calls itself Christianity today, people have many different ideas about the structure of the church. There is much confusion on this topic. Thankfully, the Bible is clear. The church of Christ has a *congregational* form of government. This means that the members of the assembly have ultimate decision making authority, under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and with the advice of the pastor or pastors. Also, nobody is allowed to join the church of God, or remain in its membership, who has not been born again and whose life does not show evidence of regeneration. Furthermore, Christ's churches are *autonomous*: every assembly is independent of every other congregation. No hierarchy tells the church what to do. Where does the Bible teach these things?

1 Peter 2:5, 9 refers to believers as “an holy _____, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. . . . But ye *are* a chosen generation, a _____, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” Everyone who has been born again is, in a spiritual sense, a priest. He can come directly to God and offer Him the sacrifices of praise, thanks, and a holy life. No believer, including church leadership, has this position of spiritual priesthood any more than every other believer. Church membership is limited to those who are already born again, and are thus spiritually priests. People do not join the church to be saved, but because they already are saved. Notice the membership of the church at Corinth included only “them that are _____ in Christ Jesus, called *to be* _____” (1 Corinthians 1:2; cf. Romans 1:7; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2). Those who could not testify of their conversion or show evidence of sanctification in their lives were not let into the membership. If “ungodly men . . . crept in unawares [secretly]” (Jude 4) into the congregation, so that some who already were church members stopped living a holy life, or departed from the faith, the church was responsible to remove the disobedient ones from the membership roll. In Matthew 18:15-17, the Lord Jesus explained the steps of this process: “Moreover if thy brother shall _____ against thee, go and _____ his fault between thee and him _____: if he shall _____ thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of _____ or _____ witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, _____ *it* unto the _____: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an _____

and a publican.” If someone in the congregation falls into sin, another member is to deal with him privately about his error. If he repents, no further action is necessary. However, if he will not listen to the private rebuke, then two or three are to deal with the sinning one. If he listens to them, once again, it is all over. If he will not listen to them either, the matter is taken before the entire church. If the disobedient member will still not repent, he is treated like a “heathen man [an unsaved person] and a publican [a Roman tax collector—an ungodly man],” that is, he is removed from the church membership and is treated like an unsaved person. The church members are to “put away from among [themselves] that wicked person” (1 Corinthians 5:13), to “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which [they] have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17) and to “withdraw . . . from every brother that walketh disorderly . . . if any man obey not [the Word of God], [they are to] note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14). This is done to honor and obey God and to maintain the testimony of the church to the world. Church discipline is also done in hope that the sinning one will repent and be restored to church fellowship (Galatians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5; 2 Corinthians 2:6-7). A congregation that allows unsaved people into its membership, or refuses to remove those who are unrepentantly living in sin, and so gets filled up with ungodly people, ceases to be a church of Christ (Revelation 1:20; 2:5; 2:16; 3:3). The true church maintains a membership roll (Acts 1:15; 5:13) of born-again and faithful people.

No hierarchy tells the congregation of the Lord what to do—only “Christ is the head of the church” (Ephesians 5:23). Each assembly is autonomous or independent. We have just learned that Matthew 18:15-17 teaches that when someone falls into sin, he is dealt with privately, then by two or three, and then by the congregation. If he does not repent, the church has the power to remove him. The assembly does not need to appeal to the decision of some person or group higher in authority before expelling the sinner from its membership—it can decide on its own, and its decision is final, ratified by heaven (Matthew 18:18-19) with the authority of Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:20). Whoever or whatever can control the membership of an organization has ultimate power over it; since, as Matthew 18 demonstrates, the church body as a whole controls its own membership, it is the highest authority for its own affairs. Other passages of Scripture illustrate how individual churches determine their own courses of action. In Acts 15:22-23, decisions were made by the “whole church,” not the leadership alone. In Acts 6:5, the “whole multitude” of the church membership chose the deacons. The church membership authorized its own church planters or missionaries (Acts 13:1-4; 15:40). In Acts 14:23, the church voted to select its own elders or pastors, for the word translated *ordain* means

“to choose or elect to office by the raising of hands,”²⁶ as is verified in the only other place the word appears in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 8:19, “*was . . . chosen* of the churches”). The Bible contains no trace of archbishops, metropolitans, cardinals, a pope, presidents, or any other sort of top-down chain of command. Nor does it refer to any convention, national assembly, ecumenical council, association, world headquarters, or any equivalent body that has the power to tell churches what to do. Rather, the Lord Jesus said, “One is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are _____. And call no *man* your _____ [in the sense of a spiritual office] upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, *even* Christ. But he that is _____ among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 23:8-12). While united in love and concern for each other, every church of Christ is organizationally independent of every other church. The Lord’s assemblies are free to choose to work together to promote the work of God in the world, and they often do work together in this way, but no governmental tie or hierarchy binds them together.

The Biblical doctrine of congregational church government does not exclude offices of leadership in the assembly. The Bible teaches that there are two positions of leadership in the church today:²⁷ the offices of pastor and of deacon. Three Greek words refer to the pastoral office: *episcopos*, translated *overseer* (Acts 20:28) or *bishop* (1 Timothy 3:1), *presbuteros*, translated as *elder* (1 Timothy 5:17), and *poimen*, translated *pastor* (Ephesians 4:11) or *shepherd* (1 Peter 2:25). The bishop, elder, and pastor are not three different officers, but three different titles for the same position. In Acts 20:17, 28 the “elders” (from *presbuteros*) are also “overseers” (from *episcopos*), and they are to “feed,” that is, “shepherd” or “pastor” (related to

²⁶ Ceirotonéw (*Cheirotoneo*), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989. The *Greek-English Lexicon*, H. G. Liddell & R. Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), gives the meaning to “stretch out the hand, for the purpose of giving one’s vote in the assembly . . . vote . . . elect . . . by show of hands,” and the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd. ed. (BDAG), rev. & ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2000), states it is “to elect or choose someone for definite offices or tasks, choose,” giving instances of the word in the New Testament and early Christian literature where it is used for “congregations choos[ing] a representative . . . congregations choos[ing] envoys . . . congregations are to elect their own supervisors (*episcopoi*) and ministers (*diakonoi*).”

²⁷ The church also sends out *evangelists*, who are commonly called *missionaries* today, to preach the gospel and start new churches (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 21:8; 8:5, 12, 40). The offices of *apostle* and *prophet* were only for the foundation period of the church (Ephesians 2:20) and are no longer needed since, with the completion of the New Testament, the foundation of the church is complete and finished. There were only twelve apostles (Revelation 21:14), and they had physically seen Christ after His resurrection and so could bear eyewitness testimony to that fact, among other qualifications (Acts 1:21-22). They could do miracles like raising the dead (Acts 20:9-10). If someone claims to be an apostle today, it is worth asking him if he has been alive for the last 2,000 years and is an eyewitness of the Lord’s resurrection. He can also be asked which one of the twelve he is. Finally, he should be asked for the names and addresses of some people he has raised from the dead.

poimen) the “flock” (*poimneon*). In 1 Peter 5:1-2, the “elders” (from *presbuteros*) are to “feed” (from *poimen*, “shepherd/pastor”) the “flock,” taking the “oversight” (from *episcopos*, “bishop”) thereof. While the pastors or overseers of the church are not to act as dictators, being “lords over God’s heritage” (1 Peter 5:3), church members should have deep respect for them. Hebrews 13:7, 17 command, “_____ them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith _____, considering the end of *their* conversation. . . . _____ them that have the _____ over you, and _____ yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.” The overseers are very important to a church. While they are obviously not infallible, we must take what they say very seriously, recognize their wisdom and knowledge of the Scriptures, and obey their godly counsel. Rejecting pastoral guidance is a dangerous business! The position of *deacon* is one of service to the church and of meeting physical needs; in Acts 6:1-5, seven deacons were chosen to help with the material needs of the congregation so that the pastors could “give [themselves] continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). The word *deacon* is sometimes translated *servant* in the Bible (Matthew 23:11; Mark 9:35). The church chooses deacons to help and serve the pastors and church body. Neither the pastor nor the deacon is referred to as a class of “clergy” which is over the “laity,” supposedly the rest of the church. Nothing like the word “laity” or “layman” is found in the Bible, while the Greek word *kleros*, from which the English word *clergy* is derived, is found in 1 Peter 5:3, where it is translated “heritage” and refers to the entire congregation! The true church, then, has no “laity,” but is made up entirely of “clergy.” Nor should the pastor or deacon be called *reverend*, a title only used for God (Psalm 111:9), or *Father*, for God is our only spiritual and heavenly Father (Matthew 23:9). The two Biblical offices in the congregation do have certain qualifications, listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-13²⁸ and Titus 1:5-9.²⁹ These passages are worthy of serious study and

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1 This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 8 Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless. 11 Even so *must* *their* wives *be* grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

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5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: 6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children

meditation. The pastor must be a holy, “blameless” man (1 Timothy 3:1), with knowledge, ability and experience in the study and teaching of the Scriptures (v. 2, 6). He must be the “husband of one wife,” and must be one who “ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity,” (v. 2, 4), so a man who is divorced, remarried (unless his wife has died), or who has rebellious and ungodly children, is disqualified (cf. Mark 10:11-12; Romans 7:1-3; Titus 1:6). Since it is obvious that only a man can be a “husband” (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6), women cannot have the office of pastor (cf. 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Corinthians 14:34-37). Deacons must also be holy men with obedient, godly families (1 Timothy 3:7-13). The two offices of pastor and deacon are very valuable to the church of the Lord Jesus.

We have learned that each one of the Lord’s churches is an independent congregation, free from all hierarchy and organizational ties. The members of each assembly, as spiritual priests of God, have the authority to govern the affairs of their church, following Jesus Christ, the only Head of the church. True churches guard their membership, allowing only those who have been born again and show evidence of regeneration in their lives to be members. God has instituted two important positions of leadership in the church: the pastor, also called the overseer, bishop, or elder, and the deacon. These offices have specific spiritual qualifications. Obedience to the Biblical pattern for church government is extremely important if congregations are to give glory to their Lord and effectively serve Him.

III. Biblical ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper

Paul commended the church at Corinth because it kept “the ordinances” as he had “delivered them” (1 Corinthians 11:2). Christ has given His church two ordinances to practice today: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is also called *communion*. The Savior told His church to baptize those who had been taught the gospel, and promised that He would be with His congregations of Biblically baptized believers “always, *even* unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:18-20). Scripture also declares that the church would show forth Christ’s death in the Lord’s Supper “till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:26). These promises demonstrate that the congregation of Christ would maintain the true practice of the two ordinances until the return of the Lord Jesus. Religious organizations that have corrupted these important practices cannot be churches of Christ. Let us, then, carefully study what God’s Word says about them!

not accused of riot or unruly. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; 8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

We should first consider that baptism and the Supper are not *sacraments*, but *ordinances*. An ordinance is a religious act commanded by Christ. A sacrament is a religious ritual that (supposedly) contributes to receiving salvation. Some “Christian” religions call baptism and communion sacraments. Others say that there are seven sacraments, adding confirmation, the Mass, penance, extreme unction, matrimony, and ordination to baptism and the Supper. (It is amazing that anyone would claim that these seven sacraments are from God, when nothing like the “sacraments” of confirmation, the Mass, penance, or extreme unction is mentioned even once in the Bible! Nor does matrimony, getting married, help save someone from his sin. Finally, if someone is still unsaved, and so needs sacraments to help him get into God’s favor, what business does he have receiving the “sacrament” of ordination and taking the office of pastor?) Actually, the Bible never calls anything a sacrament; there are not seven sacraments, or two sacraments. There are zero sacraments. Neither baptism nor communion removes sin.³⁰ We will see that one actually needs to have his sin washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ before he can properly participate in either ordinance.

A. Baptism

Baptism is mentioned close to 100 times in the New Testament—it is important! There are four essential aspects to a Biblical baptism. A valid baptism requires a Scriptural candidate, a Scriptural mode, a Scriptural purpose, and a Scriptural authority. Let us look at each of these.

A believer is the only Scriptural candidate for baptism. The ordinance is for those who have repented and believed the gospel, are consequently born again, and therefore show their regeneration in their changed lives. Baptism is the “answer of a good conscience before God” (1 Peter 3:21). Lost people, therefore, cannot be Scripturally baptized. Infants, since they cannot repent or believe (Jonah 4:11; Deuteronomy 1:39), cannot be Biblically baptized. The Bible contains no examples, or even the slightest hint, of infant baptism. The Lord Jesus Christ taught that the proper order is “believeth and is baptized” (Mark 16:16). The apostle Peter preached “Repent, and be baptized” (Acts 2:38). John the Baptist required people to confess their sins before he would baptize them (Matthew 3:6)—obviously no infants were receiving baptism! In Acts 8:12, when people “when [people] _____ Philip [the evangelist] preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were _____, both _____ and _____.” Men and women who believed were

³⁰ For a detailed study of passages that allegedly prove that baptism takes away sin, please request a free copy of *Heaven Only For The Baptized? The Gospel of Christ vs. Pardon through Baptism*, by Thomas Ross. The book can be downloaded from the Internet at <http://faithalonesaves.googlepages.com/salvation>.

baptized, but babies were not. In Acts 8:36-38, when a new believer, a man who was a eunuch, asked Philip, “See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? [Then] Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And [the eunuch] answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. . . . [so] they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” People may call the application of water to adults who are still not saved, or to infants, “baptism,” but the Word of God does nothing of the kind.

The Scriptural mode of baptism is dipping or immersion. The Greek verb translated “baptize,” *baptidzo*, means “to dip . . . to immerse, to submerge.”³¹ To *baptize* and to *immerse* are synonymous terms. The Greek words for *pour* or *sprinkle* are never used for baptism.³² Many verses of Scripture prove that immersion is the way God’s church practices this ordinance. Colossians 2:12 reads, “ with him [Christ] in baptism, wherein also ye are with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Baptism is a picture of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (something we will speak of again when we look at the meaning of baptism). When people are buried, they are put all the way under the ground—they do not just have a little bit of dirt poured or sprinkled on their heads! Only if someone is placed completely under water, and then brought up again, can baptism picture the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The examples of the baptism of Christ and of others also show that immersion was practiced. “Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water” (Matthew 3:16). “Jesus . . . was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him” (Mark 1:9-10). “John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there [do sprinkling or pouring require “much water”?]: and they came, and were baptized” (John 3:23). “they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38-39). Interestingly, the founders and leaders of the modern denominations which practice sprinkling or pouring instead of dipping knew that the churches of the Bible practiced immersion—but they decided to do it their own way instead!³³ We, however, dare not reject God’s pattern for us. We must do things the Bible way, and baptize only by immersion.

³¹ *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Henry Thayer. The *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, ed. William Danker (3rd ed.—BDAG) states that *baptidzo* is “in Greek literature generally to put or go under water.” See also *baptidzo*, pg. 529-530, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964).

³² The word for “sprinkle” is *rantidzo* (cf. Hebrews 9:21), and “pour” is *keo* (cf. Acts 2:17, *ekkeo*, “pour out,” Job 29:6 LXX, “pour,” *keo*). Neither word is used for baptism.

³³ Roman Catholicism practiced immersion widely for over a thousand years before switching, several centuries ago, to pouring. The Eastern Orthodox denominations still practice immersion (on infants, however).

Baptism has a Scriptural purpose. It is to picture the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism also pictures our death to our old way of life and resurrection to a new life in Christ, based on our union with the risen Savior. When we believed in the Lord and were born again, we died to our old sinful ways and were raised again to spiritual life in Christ. Romans 6:3-6 reads, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into ____? Therefore we are ____ with him by baptism into ____: that like as Christ was ____ from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should ____ in ____ of _____. For if we have been planted together in the ____ of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should ____ sin.” Galatians 3:27 also tells us that “as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have ____ Christ.” When someone joins the army, he puts on a uniform. The uniform identifies the man with his new position as a soldier in the military. Baptism is the “uniform” one puts on after joining the army of the Lord Jesus Christ. It publicly identifies you with the Savior. It lets the world know that you are on His side. It tells everyone that you believe that He died, was buried, and rose again, and that this work of love He did for you has taken away your sins. It is a declaration that you have been given a new heart, are dead to your old ungodly ways, and have determined that you will serve the Son of God. What a beautiful emblem of the work of Christ, and of His salvation of sinners, is seen in baptism!

The church of Christ is the only Biblical administrator of baptism today. If you want to get baptized, you cannot just go with a friend of yours to a pool and have him dip you in the water. In Matthew 28:18-20, the Lord Jesus spoke to His church, “saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ____ therefore, and ____ all nations, ____ them in the name of the ____, and of the ____, and of the ____: ____ them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am ____ always, *even* unto the end of the world.” Christ commanded His church to go out preaching, teach people to be saved, baptize them in the

Martin Luther, the founder of the Lutheran denomination, stated in a sermon on baptism in 1518, that “baptism is . . . when we dip anything wholly in water, that it is completely covered over. . . . it should be thus, and would be right . . . [for] the child or any one who is to be baptized, [to] be completely sunk down into the water, and dipt again and drawn out” (*Opera Lutheri*, I. 319, folio ed., quoted on pg. 108, Christian, J. T., *A History of the Baptists*, vol. 1, Texarkana, TX: Bogard Press, 1922.) John Calvin, who is essentially the founder of the Reformed and Presbyterian denominations, stated that “it is evident that the term *baptize* means to immerse, and that this was the form used by the primitive Church” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4:15:19, trans. Henry Beveridge). John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist denomination, commenting on Romans 6:4, stated that the “ancient manner of baptizing [was] by immersion” (*John Wesley's Notes on the Old and New Testaments*, 1767).

name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and then teach them all things whatsoever are commanded in the Bible. Our Lord's command in Matthew 28 helps us understand why baptism adds us to the membership of the church that authorizes the ordinance; "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body [the body of Christ, the church]" (1 Corinthians 12:13; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27; 1:2). In Acts 2:41-42, those that "gladly received [Peter's] word [the gospel message] were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." What were these three thousand new converts "added" to? Acts 2:47 tells us, "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." After you are born again, baptism is the means through which you join the church. This also shows us why baptism cannot be performed by just anybody. If your friend dunked you in a pool, what church would you have just become a member of?

The ordinance of baptism began when God gave John the Baptist direct authority from Him (Matthew 21:23-26; John 1:33) to begin to immerse believers. John was to preach the gospel (John 1:29) and prepare people for the ministry of Christ (Luke 1:17). The Lord Jesus, as an example for His people to follow, submitted to John's baptism (Matthew 3:13-17). The apostles also were immersed by John (Acts 1:20-22). The Baptist preached the gospel, people repented and believed, and John baptized these converts. When the Lord Jesus began His ministry, John the Baptist directed his converts to follow Christ, telling them that He was the promised Messiah and Savior (John 1:29-37; 3:26-30). The Lord Jesus started His church (Matthew 16:18; 18:17) from the people who were saved and baptized through the ministry of John. The Lord Himself and those first church members also preached the gospel, so that people were born again and added to the church through baptism (John 4:1-2; Matthew 4:17; Mark 3:14). After Christ died and rose again, He commanded His church, "Go ye into all the world, and _____ the _____ to _____ creature" (Mark 16:15). The resurrected Lord who has "all power . . . in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:17) told His congregations to "Go . . . teach all nations [the way of salvation, so that people would receive Christ and be born again] . . . baptiz[e] [the new disciples] in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, [and] . . . teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded" (Matthew 28:18-20). He gave His church authority to baptize. The first church, which the Lord Jesus had started while on earth, after being empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), faithfully preached the gospel, baptized converts, and started new assemblies, as is recorded throughout the book of Acts. The true churches of today are the spiritual children of that first church. (We will look at the historical succession of the Lord Jesus' assemblies later in this Bible study.) Authority to baptize was given to John the Baptist, then to the first church, which started new churches, which themselves started churches, and so on, all the way until we come to

the Biblical congregations of today. Since John the Baptist died and went to heaven some two thousand years ago, only the church of the Lord Jesus has the right to baptize people today. No individual person, or religious organization other than the church founded by Christ in the first century, can administer a Scriptural baptism.

We have learned that there are four requirements for a Biblical baptism. Baptism requires a Scriptural candidate—a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than people who have not been transformed by the new birth, including infants. It requires a Scriptural mode—immersion, not sprinkling or pouring. It requires a Scriptural purpose—to picture Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, as well as the saint’s death to his old life and resurrection to new life in Christ. Someone who was “baptized” in order to be saved, or for some other unbiblical reason, has not genuinely participated in the ordinance. Baptism also requires a Scriptural authority—the church Jesus started, not any other religious organization within what is called Christianity, or some individual on his own. If you have been born again, it is very important for you to receive Biblical baptism as soon as possible. The ungodly “rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized” (Luke 7:30), but Acts 2:41-42 tells us that “they that gladly received [the gospel message] were _____: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they _____ in the apostles’ doctrine and _____, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” When these three thousand people believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and were saved, they all submitted to baptism, and then faithfully continued in the fellowship of the church (Acts 2:47). This is the pattern throughout the entire New Testament. The Bible gives us no examples of people who received Christ but then stubbornly refused to be baptized. Baptism does not forgive your sins—they must be forgiven before you can be Biblically immersed—but if they have been forgiven, your new heart and new life will direct you to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, on the authority of one of God’s churches. Jesus Christ is Lord—if you are His child, you need to follow His command to be baptized!

B. The Lord’s Supper

The second ordinance that the church is to observe is the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20), also known as *communion* (1 Corinthians 10:16). The Lord Jesus gave this ordinance to His church the night He was betrayed and given to His enemies to be crucified (1 Corinthians 11:23). Matthew 26:26-28 records the events that took place: “And as they were eating, Jesus took _____, and _____ *it*, and _____ *it*, and _____ *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for

many for the remission of sins.” In 1 Corinthians 11:23-27, the apostle Paul comments on this institution: “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, __ __ __ __, __ __ __: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ of me. After the same manner also *he took* the __ __ __, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ in my __ __ __ __ __: __ __ __ __ __ ye, as __ __ __ as ye drink *it*, in __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do __ __ __ __ [proclaim] the Lord’s death __ __ __ __ he __ __ __ __.” We can see from this what the Lord did when He instituted communion, and what His church is, therefore, to do. The Lord took the “bread,” gave thanks for it, “brake” the bread, distributed or “gave” it to those assembled, and explained that it represented His body, which was to be broken in the death of the cross. He then did the same thing with the “fruit of the vine” (Matthew 26:29), giving thanks for it, distributing its contents to “all” the assembly to drink (Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23), and explaining that it symbolized the blood He would shed on the cross. When the Lord’s churches celebrate the Supper, they follow this procedure set up by their Savior and recorded for them in the Bible.

The two elements of the Supper are bread and the fruit of the vine. Since the bread is a picture of the sinless body of the Lord Jesus, it should be unleavened. Leaven is a picture of sin in the Bible (Matthew 16:6, 11, 12; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; Galatians 5:9), so using leavened bread would teach the blasphemy that Christ was a sinner! Furthermore, the Redeemer instituted communion in conjunction with the Passover meal (Matthew 26:17-19), which used unleavened bread (Exodus 12:8), so we know what type of bread He used at that time. Grape juice is the other element. Alcoholic wine must not be used in the Lord’s Supper. First, as we saw in Bible study #3, drinking alcohol is a sin (Proverbs 20:1). God curses those who give others alcoholic beverages (Habakkuk 2:15)—the Lord Jesus would never have sinned by distributing alcohol to others, especially as a holy reminder of His sacrificial death! Second, the poison of alcohol would be a terrible picture of the precious, perfect, sinless blood of Christ. Unfermented juice is the pure product of the grape vine (Deuteronomy 32:14; 29:6; Genesis 49:11). Third, while the word *wine* in the Bible often does not refer to an alcoholic beverage at all,³⁴ the beverage in the Supper is called the “cup” or the “fruit of the vine,”—Scripture never even uses the word *wine* for it! Only unleavened bread and nonalcoholic grape juice are the proper elements in the Lord’s Supper.

³⁴ The Greek and Hebrew words for *wine* can refer to either a fermented or unfermented beverage; context will make it clear which is meant. Verses like Proverbs 23:29-31 clearly refer to alcoholic wine, while verses like Isaiah 65:8, where the juice inside grapes still on the grapevine is called “wine,” clearly do not involve fermentation.

While someone who just read the Bible would never get this idea, many “Christian” groups teach that something magical happens to the bread and wine³⁵ in the “sacrament” of communion, so that the elements change into something else. A common false doctrine is that the elements change in substance when a priest says certain words, so that the bread and wine are gone. The bread (supposedly) miraculously changes into the actual flesh of the Lord Jesus, and the alcohol becomes His actual blood. The bread is then worshipped as if it were actually Jesus Christ Himself, and the sacrifice on the cross is said to be repeated by the priest offering the body of “Jesus” again. People who take communion are told that they are actually eating human flesh and drinking blood the priest has created by a miracle—even though what they eat and drink looks, feels, smells, and tastes no different than it did before the priest spoke the magic words over it! Other false teachers claim that Jesus is in, with, and under the bread and wine, so that although the elements are still there, those who take communion still eat and drink the actual body and blood of Christ. Others think that those who trust the “sacrament” of the Supper to help forgive their sins consume Christ’s body and blood in a spiritual way when they eat the bread and drink from the cup. All these ideas may sound blasphemous and absurd to you—and so they should, for they are. Yet, amazingly, the large majority of people within Christendom are in denominations that teach one of these three ideas! What does the Bible say? Does a miracle happen to the bread and juice in communion, so that people really eat flesh and drink blood?

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11:26-27, tells us twice that people “eat this ____” in the Supper. They do not eat human flesh, but bread. In Matthew 26:29, the Lord Jesus said that what He had given thanks for and given the disciples to drink (Matthew 26:27) was “this fruit of the vine.” It was still juice, not human blood. Nothing happens to the bread or the juice—it remains exactly the same.³⁶ The idea that a priest calls Christ down out of heaven, changes

³⁵ The groups that believe in sacraments almost always use alcoholic wine instead of grape juice in communion.

³⁶ Those who defend the false doctrine that the bread and the fruit of the vine change in their substance argue that since Christ said, “This is my body” (Matthew 26:26), not “This represents/symbolizes my body,” at that moment He made the bread and juice disappear, changing them into His actual body and blood. However, the Lord is obviously speaking metaphorically to make a spiritual point, just like when He said “I am the door” (John 10:9), “I am the light” (John 8:12), and “I am the vine” (John 15:5). Is the Savior a literal door, or a light ray, or a plant? Of course not! He was using symbolic language to make a point. The same thing is true of when Christ said “This is my body.” Besides, when He spoke those words while instituting communion, He was right there, in His human body, in front of the disciples; nothing changed in His humanity so that He was gone and the bread was now His body. Furthermore, in the next verse, He said, “this cup is the new testament in my blood,” which cannot possibly be literal, since everyone agrees that the Lord Jesus spoke of the juice in the cup, and not the cup itself. Besides, two sentences after Christ spoke the words “this is my body,” supposedly changing the elements into His flesh and blood, He called the contents of the cup the “fruit of the vine” (Matthew 26:29)—so either the juice had never changed into blood at all, or the elements changed from human flesh and blood back into bread and juice within two sentences!

bread and alcohol into His body and blood, worships the bread, and sacrifices the Lord all over again, is abominable idolatry. The Lord Jesus Christ died only one time (Hebrews 9:26-28). He “offered one sacrifice for sins for ever” (Hebrews 10:12), and cannot be resacrificed. His work on the cross was perfect, and must never be added to (Hebrews 10:10, 14). His body is not on earth in a piece of bread, nor on earth anywhere else—He has gone away (John 16:7) into heaven, and is at the right hand of God the Father (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-35; 7:55-56; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 12:2). When the church celebrates the Lord’s Supper, the bread and juice are reminders, memorials, of the work of salvation the Savior completed through His cross. He said, “this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in _____ of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew [show forth, declare, proclaim—not repeat!] the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:25-26; cf. Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24). The elements in communion remain bread and juice. They are wonderful symbols of Christ’s body broken for us on the cross, and His blood shed for us there, but they are nothing more.

When a congregation gathers to observe the ordinance of communion, it should practice what Paul told the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 11:27-33: “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, _____, shall be _____ of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man _____, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation³⁷ to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many *are* _____ and _____ among you, and many _____ [are dead]. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are _____ of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, _____ one for another.” Everyone who takes the bread and the cup must examine himself to make sure that he is in

False teachers also use John 6:53 as “proof” that the bread and juice are changed in the Supper—despite the fact that the Lord made it clear that He spoke spiritually (John 6:63) and He repeatedly stated that the eating and drinking metaphor of 6:53 referred to believing in Him, not the Lord’s Supper (John 6:29, 30, 35, 36, 40, 47, 64, 69). Those who make John 6 into a discussion about the “sacrament” of communion would make Christ say that everyone would go to hell who did not, from that day forward, take that “sacrament” (John 6:53). Since communion did not even exist yet, and would not until the last week of the Savior’s earthly life, everyone in the world who died between the time of John 6 and the institution of the “sacrament,” along with all infants for the last two thousand years who died without taking the Lord’s Supper, are eternally damned, according to this misinterpretation of Scripture, for dying at the wrong time!

³⁷ The word *damnation* in Scripture means the same thing as *judgment* or *condemnation*. All three of these English words translate the same Greek word, *krima*, which sometimes refer to someone being eternally lost (Hebrews 6:2), but sometimes refer to other kinds of judgment (such as physical death, Luke 24:20). The damnation/condemnation/judgment in 1 Corinthians 11:29 is the physical sickness and death referred to in v. 30. Verse 32 shows that physical punishment, not loss of salvation (which is impossible) and eternal torment, is in view.

fellowship with God, not holding on to any unconfessed sin. If a disobedient Christian participates in the Lord's Supper, he risks God punishing him with sickness or even death. "Many" in the church at Corinth had suffered in this way! And if the Lord corrects His erring children with this sort of severity, how much the more does an unsaved person who presumes to participate in the Supper bring the greater eternal condemnation on his head? We can also see from these judgments why it is very important for a church to celebrate communion in the way God has ordained in the Bible—messing around with this holy ordinance is very dangerous. Finally, note that the church should partake of the elements at the same time; they are to "tarry one for another," not do whatever they want on their own, eating the bread and drinking the juice whenever they want. The practice of some "Christian" denominations of having a religious leader take the bread and cup to people in the hospital or other places, where that one person takes the elements without the presence of the church, is here shown to be unbiblical. The Supper is a church ordinance, for members of the congregation who are right with God.

How often should a congregation celebrate communion? The Bible does not require any certain frequency. It simply says that "as oft as" or "as often as" (1 Corinthians 11:25-26) it is done, it is a remembrance and a proclamation of Christ's death (1 Corinthians 11:26). We must not add to the Bible and require a particular frequency when God does not do so. The main thing is that, however often a church practices the Supper, it follows all the requirements that God has revealed.

Since the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance, like baptism, it should be celebrated only by the members of a particular congregation. In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Paul is always talking to the particular church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2). Since the Supper is the "communion of the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:16), and every individual congregation is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), the Lord's Supper is for members of the particular assembly only. This means that non-members who may be present when a congregation celebrates communion are not to take the elements with them. People who are unsaved, or people who are not members of a true church of Christ, even if they belong to other religious organizations, are excluded. People who regularly attend the church that is celebrating the Supper, but have not received Biblical baptism and are not members, cannot participate. People who are members of other true churches, but happen to be visiting the services of a different church of God when that congregation is celebrating the Supper, cannot join in with them; they are to celebrate the ordinance with the church they belong to. The fact that only members of a particular congregation celebrate the Supper together does not mean that they think that they are better than others who are members of other churches, or people who have not obeyed Christ's command to be baptized; they simply want to follow the Bible way in practicing their Savior's holy ordinance.

We have learned that the Lord's Supper, or communion, is a memorial of the Lord Jesus' death and shed blood. Two elements are involved: unleavened bread and grape juice. These elements do not change into anything else in the Supper, nor do they convey salvation to those who partake of them. The Supper is for those who, having been baptized, are members of the particular assembly celebrating the ordinance. Those who participate must examine themselves and be sure that they are in fellowship with their Lord before they participate. Then they can joyfully remember the broken body and shed blood of their Redeemer through this glorious celebration He has ordained.

The fact that communion is for the Lord's congregation gives us another reason to be church members—non-members miss out on the wonderful ability to have fellowship or communion with the Redeemer and His people in the Supper. As soon as someone has been saved, he should seek for baptism and membership in a church of Christ, so that he can join that assembly in celebrating the blessed and holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Only in this way can he obey the command, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24).

IV. Faithfulness to Bible doctrine

Christ's churches will seek to believe every truth found in the Word of God. The church of God will believe the doctrines we have covered in Bible studies #1-6, including: the Bible as the inspired (2 Timothy 3:16) and preserved (Psalm 12:6-7) Word of God; the recognition of only one God, who has eternally existed in three distinct Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:7); the sinfulness and ruin of the human race on account of the sin of Adam (Romans 5:19), of man's sinful nature (Jeremiah 17:9), and the many personal violations of God's Law by all people (Romans 3:23). Christ's churches believe that the saved will be forever with the Lord in the glory of His presence (1 Thessalonians 4:17), while the lost will suffer eternally in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15); that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man, one Person with two natures (1 Timothy 3:16); that He is the only Redeemer of mankind, so that there is salvation in no other name (Acts 4:12); that the death and blood of Christ are the complete and sufficient payment for the sins of the world (Romans 5:8-10; Hebrews 10:10-14); that the Lord Jesus, having died for our sins, was buried, rose again bodily the third day (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), and then ascended to heaven to the right hand of God the Father (Mark 16:19); that salvation is based only on the work of the Son of God on the cross, not on any works, religious rituals, or any other act or goodness within mankind (Ephesians 2:8-9); that once one is born again, he is eternally saved and secure (Romans 8:28-39) and irrevocably changed (2 Corinthians 5:17); and that this salvation is received through repentant faith alone (Mark 1:15; Romans 4:5).

A faithful church will also believe correctly about the future, as recorded in Bible prophecy. It will believe that the Lord Jesus could return at any moment to raise the saved dead and catch up all living believers to be with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 3:10). After the saved are taken to heaven, the unsaved people who were left behind on earth will endure a seven-year period of horrible Divine judgment and tribulation over the earth (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:21; Revelation 6-19). After this seven-year period, Christ will return with His saints, destroy all the wicked who survived the years of tribulation, and reign over a renewed earth for a thousand years (Revelation 19-20; Isaiah 2; Zechariah 14). Following His thousand-year earthly reign, the unsaved dead will be judged and cast into the lake of fire, while the people of God will live forever in the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, God having created a new heaven and earth (Revelation 20:7-22:16). The Lord expects His church to also believe the other truths covered in this seventh Bible study—and everything else that is found in the Scriptures!

While the Savior’s congregations are made up of people who are still sinners, so church members will fall short and not be perfect, they will nevertheless take everything that the Word of God says to believe and to do very seriously. The church is to “teach no other doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:3) than that of Christ and the apostles. It is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3), and “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12). The common idea that there is some tiny body of “essentials” of Christianity, and these are the only doctrines that we are to worry about, while everything else in the Scriptures does not matter, is false. The Lord Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these _____ commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the _____ in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall _____ and _____ *them*, the same shall be called _____ in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19). Both adding human traditions to the Bible and taking away anything from what God commands us to believe are great evils (Deuteronomy 4:2). A congregation that turns away from true doctrine and practice ceases to be a church of Christ (Revelation 1:20; 2:5). The apostle Paul commanded the preacher Timothy to “Take heed unto _____, and unto the _____; _____ in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). Timothy was to carefully guard himself, to make sure that he was right with God, and carefully guard true doctrine. By doing so, he would save or deliver himself and those who heard him preach from the terrible consequences of falling into error. This attitude is what we expect from one of the Lord Jesus’ true churches.

V. Faithfulness to Bible practice

In John 13:17, the Lord Jesus said, “If ye _____ these things, happy are ye if ye _____ them.” God does want us to know what true doctrine is, certainly—but we are not to just know it, but to put it into practice. This is what the Lord’s churches characteristically do. What sorts of actions has the Lord commanded His church to observe?

John 4:23-24 tells us that “the hour cometh, and now is, when the _____ shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father _____ such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in _____ and in _____.” The Father sought for us and saved us to make us His “true worshippers.” Since, as we saw earlier in this study, the church is His spiritual temple for this age (Ephesians 2:21; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17), and our Lord drew us to Himself “that we should be to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:12), one of the important reasons why God redeemed us is so that we could worship Him in His church! We are certainly to worship God as individuals, but we must do so together in the assembly as well. What does it mean to worship God? It is to give Him the honor and reverence He deserves (Hebrews 12:28). God commands us to worship Him in accordance with His explicit commandment—this is part of worshipping in “truth” (John 4:24). We do not get to offer God whatever we want, but must look at the commandments and examples in Scripture and follow them, without adding or taking away anything. The Lord is pleased with our worship only when we offer Him what He has commanded. This principle can be seen in Leviticus 10:1-2: “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and _____ before the LORD, which he _____ them _____. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and _____ before the LORD.” Nadab and Abihu were the sons of the high priest, Aaron. They had just seen the tremendous blessing of God revealed in the nation of Israel as worship in the tabernacle went on in the way Jehovah had commanded (Leviticus 9). Excited, they thought that the Lord would accept worship of their own devising, and they brought an offering to Him. Their offering is called “strange fire” because it was what Jehovah “commanded them not.” Did God accept it? No—He immediately burned them up, and they died! How serious of a sin it is to offer God what we make up instead of only what He has told us! The Lord Jesus Christ repeated this important principle in worship in Matthew 15:9: “In _____ they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the _____ of _____.” We cannot worship God in church with something that we have instituted ourselves. This is “making the word of God of none effect through [man’s] tradition” (Mark 7:13) and “will worship” (Colossians 2:23). God has said, “What thing soever _____ you, observe to _____: thou shalt _____ thereto, nor _____ from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32). Violation of this principle is the root of idolatry and false

religion (Deuteronomy 12:31-32; Jeremiah 19:5; Colossians 2:20-23); in fact, since it sets up false views of God and what He wants from us, it violates the second commandment (Exodus 20:4-6). Today many “Christian” groups do not practice this teaching of the Bible; they seek to worship God in their “churches” using things that Christ never commanded His congregation, from incense, holy water, and priests with special garments, to festivals not found in Scripture, from Lent to special healing meetings to rock concerts. Unbiblical “churches” add all sorts of ceremonies, rituals, and human traditions to what the Bible commands in church worship. While God does not usually kill people in these congregations immediately for sinning in this way, as He did Nadab and Abihu, their “worship” is rejected. It still makes the Holy One very angry instead of pleasing Him. In contrast, Christ’s true churches take worship very seriously. They have reverence for God and His holy commandments. They want to worship Him just like He has told them to in the Bible (Matthew 28:20).

The Bible shows us that God wants His church to assemble for worship on the first day of the week, Sunday. If churches want to have services on other days as well, or have special meetings sometimes every day of the week, that is just fine (Acts 2:46)—but they must meet on Sunday, the Lord’s Day (Revelation 1:10). Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Sunday (Mark 16:9), and appeared to His assembled disciples (Matthew 28:8-10; Luke 24:34; John 20:19-23; etc.), His congregation or church. The church met on Sunday on the day of Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-16; Pentecost was fifty days after a Saturday Sabbath, and so was always on Sunday), and saw Christ’s tremendous blessings (Acts 2:1-41). Church offerings were held, and so the church was obviously meeting, “Upon the first *day* of the week” (1 Corinthians 16:2). In Acts 20:7, “upon the _____ *day* of the _____, when the disciples _____ to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” The evidence of the New Testament is uniformly for church assemblies on Sunday.

There are no New Testament examples of churches assembling to keep the Jewish Sabbath, Saturday. The sabbath was not for all people in all times: it was a sign specifically for the nation of Israel, rather than for the church of Christ (Exodus 31:12-17; Ezekiel 20:10-12). The fact that the sabbath was not enforced from the time of creation until Israel left Egypt demonstrates its special relevance to the Jewish nation (Nehemiah 9:13-14). In Colossians 2:16-17, Paul commanded the church in the city of Colossae, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the _____ *days*: Which are a _____ of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.” The members of the church were not keeping the sabbath, or the other Jewish festivals, and Paul commanded them not to allow anyone to judge them for this and order them to do so. The sabbath and the other Jewish holy days were a “shadow” of Jesus Christ and the salvation that He brought in.

Since the Lord Jesus has now come, the picture of salvation, the “shadow” of the sabbath, has been fulfilled (Hebrews 4). Religious organizations that forsake worship on the first day of the week to observe the Jewish sabbath are not following the Bible.

A church of Christ will place great importance upon the Lord’s command to “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2). It will not teach its own opinions or ideas, but boldly preach the Word of God. The preacher will “reprove, rebuke, and exhort” (2 Timothy 4:2). He will not back down or be afraid to teach certain parts of the Bible that many people do not like. A “pastor” who leaves people feeling comfortable about their sin, and seeks to please the ungodly rather than pleasing God and proclaiming “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) is a false teacher (2 Timothy 4:3-4). God also says, “My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer” (Mark 11:17; Isaiah 56:7), so the church of Christ, as the Savior’s spiritual temple, practices prayer. Just like individual, private prayer, group prayer in the congregation, where Christ is present in a special way (Revelation 1:13, 20), is very important. Hebrews 10:24-25 commands the church, “And let us consider _____ to _____ unto _____ and to _____: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but _____ *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” The members of the Lord’s congregations help each other grow in grace and in the knowledge of the great Head of the church (cf. Hebrews 10:25). They encourage each other to be ever closer to their Redeemer. They hold each other accountable to do what is right, and seek to “warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*” and “see that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15). The church will also practice, as already described, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Music should also be sung to God in the church; Scripture commands, “Let the _____ of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in _____ and _____ and spiritual _____, singing with grace in your hearts _____ the _____” (Colossians 3:16). Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs should be sung to the Lord. Hymns and spiritual songs should be based on the “word of Christ,” teaching and admonishing sound doctrine and practice. They should be rich in content, like the songs in the book of Psalms. (Of course, when singing psalms, rather than hymns, one does not need to worry about the soundness, richness, or accuracy of the content, because the psalms are perfect, having been inspired by God.) The tunes to the songs should not be worldly, fleshly, or sensual. The believer is to “make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*” (Romans 13:14), and to “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). Worship is not fleshly, but spiritual (John 4:24), so the rhythms of the music should not dominate and appeal to

the body. Nor will godly music be worldly (1 John 2:15-17). Rock, jazz, blues, country-western, pop, and rap songs glorify the devil, lust, and ungodly, worldly evils.³⁸ Replacing the wicked words of evil music with “Christian” content does not make such songs acceptable to God—He still finds them loathsome and detestable (Deuteronomy 12:30-32). The old, evil song is gone for the child of God. He can say, “[The Lord] hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto our God” (Psalm 40:3). Ungodly music has no place in God’s church—or in the life of the believer the rest of the week.

Indeed, acceptable praise in the Lord’s church requires that the members are living holy lives when they are not assembled for public worship. The worship of people living in sin is “an

³⁸ Musicians, marketers, and students of these types of music know that their songs are ungodly and against Jesus Christ and the Bible. Rock stars and those who study such music openly declare that its goal is “to change one set of values to another ... free minds ... free dope ... free bodies ... free music” (*The Rolling Stone Interviews*, 1971). “Rock music ... is anti-religious, anti-nationalistic and anti-morality” (John Lennon). “‘Rock-and-roll,’ itself a blues-music term for sex, suggested rebellion and abandon as much as it did a new style of music when it first jarred adult sensibilities in the 1950s” (*U.S. News & World Report*, October 28, 1985). “If any music has been guilty by association, it is rock music. It would be impossible to make a complete list, but here are a few of the ‘associates’ of rock: drug addicts, revolutionaries, rioters, Satan worshippers, drop-outs, draft-dodgers, homosexuals and other sex deviates, rebels, juvenile criminals, Black Panthers and White Panthers, motorcycle gangs, blasphemers, suicides, heathenism, voodooism, phallixism, Communism in the United States (Communist Russia outlawed rock music around 1960), paganism, lesbianism, immorality, demonology, promiscuity, free love, free sex, disobedience (civil and uncivil), sodomy, venereal disease, discotheques, brothels, orgies of all kinds, night clubs, dives, strip joints, filthy musicals such as ‘Hair’ and ‘Uncle Meat’; and on and on the list could go almost indefinitely” (Frank Garlock, *The Big Beat*). “Sex, violence, rebellion—it’s all part of rock ‘n’ roll” (John Mellencamp, *Larson’s Book of Rock*). “Rock ‘n’ Roll ... is ... demonic. ... A lot of the beats in music today are taken from voodoo, from the voodoo drums. If you study music in rhythms, like I have, you’ll see that is true ... I believe that kind of music is driving people from Christ. It is contagious” (Little Richard). “[T]he sudden mingling of so many different tribes produced new variations [of music] like candomble, santeria, and vodun [demonic religion] ... and out of this severing came jazz, the blues, the backbeat, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll—some of the most powerful rhythms on the planet. ... It is hard to pinpoint the exact moment when I awoke to the fact that my tradition—rock and roll—did have a spirit side, that there was a branch of the family that had maintained the ancient connection between the drum and the gods [demons]” (Mickey Hart, drummer for *The Grateful Dead*). “Pop music revolves around sexuality. I believe that if there is anarchy, let’s make it sexual anarchy rather than political” (Adam Ant, *From Rock to Rock*). “Many rock performers grew up with country and western music, and its characteristic forms and sounds are close to the ensemble sound of rock—instrumental combinations and techniques are closely parallel. ... The division between country-and-western and urban pop has now blurred almost to vanishing” (William J. Schafer, *Rock Music*). “As a country artist, I’m not proud of a lot of things in my field. There is no doubt in my mind that we are contributing to the moral decline in America” (Jacob Aranza, *More Rock Country*). “The overwhelming theme of country music is triangle relationships. In addition, lost loves, broken homes, and the glorification of liquor frequently pervade the lyrics of the songs” (David Cloud). “The origin of the word ‘jazz’ is most often traced back to a vulgar term used for sexual acts. Some of the early sounds of jazz were associated with whore houses and ‘ladies of ill repute’” (<http://www.jazzhistory/introduction>). “‘Jazz’ (also called ‘jass’ in its early days), like ‘rock and roll’ a couple of generations later, had its origins as a slang term for sex; the word’s risqué roots no doubt boosted its popularity in that age-old search by hormonal, rebellious young people looking for edgy, exciting new ways to express themselves and, if at all possible, worry their parents as well” (Larry Nager, *Memphis Beat*). For more information, and original sources for these quotations, see “The Character of Rock and Roll Music,” “Country Music,” “Is There a Connection Between Rock Music and Voodoo or African Paganism?” “Jazz,” and other articles on music in the database at <http://wayoflife.org>, published by Way of Life Literature. Quotes above are taken from the *Fundamental Baptist CD-ROM Library*, ed. David Cloud. London, Ontario: Bethel Baptist Church/Way of Life Literature, 2003).

abomination . . . iniquity . . . [an action Jehovah's] soul hateth . . . a trouble unto [him, so that he is] weary to bear [it]" (Isaiah 1:13-15). God wants His people to live (Titus 3:8), talk (Ephesians 4:29), dress (Deuteronomy 22:5; Zephaniah 1:8; 1 Timothy 2:9; Isaiah 47:1-3), think (Philippians 4:8), look (1 Corinthians 11:14-15), and be (1 Corinthians 3:17) holy. When unholy people pray, Jehovah says, "I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear" (Isaiah 1:13-15). Paul writes, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye _____ your _____ a _____, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable _____. And be not _____ to this world: but be ye _____ by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). This is what the child of God should do continually—his entire life should be one of holiness, of worship, as he offers himself continually as a spiritual sacrifice to his Father. The fact that worship in church requires a life characterized by holiness is one of the reasons why, as was discussed earlier, the churches of God do not allow people who are not born again and are wicked to become members, and they remove from their membership roll people who turn from God to live in unrepentant sin. Of course, this does not mean that nobody can worship the Lord who has not reached sinless perfection—nobody has that until he is glorified at the return of Christ or at death (1 John 1:8-10). The Spirit often convicts saints of sin in some area of their lives as they listen to preaching, read and meditate upon the Bible, and talk about spiritual things with others. When thus convicted, the new nature God has given believers makes them want to confess and forsake the sin they now realize they have committed.

Churches also worship God through evangelism. Paul said that he was "the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the _____ of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:16). Proclaiming the gospel is part of worshipping God. The Bible commands all Christians to "be filled [controlled by] the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). The Holy Spirit will both produce godly character qualities in believers as they follow His leading and surrender to Him (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:9) and give them boldness in giving out the gospel. When the disciples "were all _____ with the Holy Ghost, [then] they _____ the _____ of God with _____" (Acts 4:31; cf. Acts 1:8). Church members are supposed to testify of Christ with their words and their lives to their family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and other acquaintances (Matthew 5:14-16). They are also supposed to be involved in "go[ing] . . . into all the world" to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The churches in the Bible were filled with Christians who were good examples to people they knew personally, but they did not stop there—they sought to reach everybody. "Daily in the temple [in Jerusalem], and in every house, [the apostles] ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42). The

apostles were involved in preaching the gospel in public forums, like the temple, synagogues (Acts 13:5), and marketplaces (Acts 17:17)—they sought to get the gospel out to great groups of people at one time. They also preached “in every house” (Acts 5:42). They went house to house trying to reach, one at a time, every single person in their area with the gospel. The apostle Paul taught others how to “publicly [mass evangelism of groups], and from house to house [one-on-one evangelism reaching every household]” preach “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:20-21). Evangelism is by no means the responsibility only of church leadership. Acts 8:1, 4 mentions that the membership of the church at Jerusalem, “except the apostles” (v. 1), was scattered on account of persecution. As they “were scattered abroad,” they “went every where preaching the word” (v. 4). The normal church members were proclaiming the message of salvation—in Acts 8:1, 4, the apostles, that is, the church leaders, are specifically not in view! A faithful church of Jesus Christ will obey its Lord’s command to “Go . . . into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). It will follow the pattern in the Bible and try to reach every single person in the local community using methods like systematic house-to-house evangelism. It will look for and make opportunities to reach groups of people at once, using methods like distributing gospel literature, teaching and offering Bible study courses, and preaching on the streets, in nursing homes, in jails, or wherever else one can find a crowd. It will strive to fill its community with the message of salvation (Acts 5:28), and support church planters to evangelize and establish new churches in other parts of the country and around the world, even “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47).

Refusing to evangelize is a great sin. God declares, “When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou _____ him not _____, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to _____ his _____; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his _____ will I _____ at _____ hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast _____ thy soul” (Ezekiel 3:18-19; cf. Acts 20:26; 18:6). If a church fails to fulfill its role in getting out the gospel to the world, God holds it accountable for the blood of the lost souls it failed to evangelize. If you are not faithful to do your part in evangelizing the world, you are likewise guilty of soul-manslaughter—your hands are filled with the blood of lost souls! On the other hand, if you are faithful in spreading the gospel and doing your part to see people are taught the way of salvation, you will receive great eternal reward. “The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life; and he that winneth souls *is* wise” (Proverbs 11:30), and “they that be wise shall _____ as the brightness of the firmament; and they that _____ to _____ as the _____ for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3). The Lord Jesus commanded His churches to “_____

ye therefore, and _____ nations [how to be saved; make them disciples], _____ them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: _____ them to _____ all things whatsoever I have _____ you” (Matthew 28:19-20). The fact that a faithful congregation will take these orders very seriously is another reason why it is so important to join one of the Lord’s churches. Not only is it impossible for a believer who is not a church member to fulfill his role properly in proclaiming the gospel locally and, through church-planters, to “all nations,” but he cannot be involved in seeing converts baptized and taught “all things whatsoever” that are in the Bible. Proper evangelism and discipleship is only possible through Christ’s church. The Lord Jesus gave His congregations the commission to multiply disciples of His, baptize them, establish them in the faith, and start new assemblies throughout the world. A “church” that is not involved in this work is not one someone who loves the Lord Jesus Christ should be associated with. It is not possible to properly worship God, do His work on earth, or be free from the blood of lost souls, without being part of one of the Lord’s faithful churches and diligently working with that congregation to evangelize the world.

A faithful church will not be in religious union with false religious organizations, unbelievers, or even disobedient, compromising Christians. Titus 3:10 commands, “A man that is an _____ after the first and second admonition _____.” Scripture commands concerning false teachers, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this [true] doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed [wish them well, greet them, etc.]: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 9-11). Believers are not to support false teachers and false doctrine in any way, but “from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:1-5). The Lord wants His church to be “holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27), but congregations become defiled and impure (cf. Revelation 17:1-6) when they band together in religious organizations and denominations with those who believe damnable heresies, such as denying the true God, the resurrection of Christ, or the inspiration of Scripture. Those who preach a false “gospel” are “accursed” (Galatians 1:6-9), but many disobedient churches will band together with those under God’s wrath and curse! In fact, an obedient church of the Lord will not have fellowship with other congregations or people who are rejecting teachings of Scripture, even if the true gospel is being preached and the disobedient people are born again. 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15 states, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye _____ yourselves from every _____ that walketh _____, and not after the tradition which he received of us. . . . And if any man _____ our word by this epistle, _____ that man, and have _____ with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but _____ *him* as a _____.” People who

are not God's enemies, but are brethren in Christ, and churches that teach a true gospel, must still be separated from if they are unwilling to be obedient to things that the Bible teaches. Faithful churches and Christians are to withdraw from and admonish them about their error. "No other doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:3) than what is in the Bible must be allowed in an obedient church.

We have now looked at a number of practices that characterize true and obedient churches. Christ's faithful congregations will serve God in spirit and in truth, worshipping Him in accordance with His commandments, instead of using their own ideas and following traditions not found in the Bible. They praise God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, using music in worship that is not worldly, fleshly, or devilish, but such as is suitable to His holy character. They follow the New Testament pattern and gather for worship on the first day of the week, Sunday, instead of on the Jewish Sabbath. They treasure bold preaching of all the truths in the Bible. They highly value prayer. They practice baptism and the Lord's Supper the Bible way. Members of faithful churches seek to build each other up in the faith. They seek to always follow Christ, rather than hypocritically putting on a show for Sunday while they serve Satan the rest of the week. They testify of Christ with their words and lifestyle to their friends and acquaintances, work to reach every single person in their local area with the gospel, and support church-planting efforts to evangelize the rest of the world. Obedient churches do not join hands with false religion, the lost, or disobedient brethren, but strive to be pure and faithful to Christ in their religious fellowship. They remember that the Lord Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15), and they look forward joyfully to the time when they are together with their Lord, for then He will tell each of His faithful children, "Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

We have studied five distinguishing marks of the Lord Jesus Christ's true and faithful churches. They have the Bible as their only authority for faith and practice. They are self-governing, independent congregations, rejecting all forms of unbiblical hierarchy. They conform to Scripture in their practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper. They believe the doctrines in the Word of God, and they follow Bible practices. Having studied the importance of, definition of, and marks of the church, we now turn to an examination of church history. Have Bible-believing congregations existed since the Lord Jesus Christ started His church in the first century? If so, where were they—and where are they now? Among all the religious organizations that now fill the world, can we identify the true church today?

The Church: Its History

I. The History of True Churches

The Lord Jesus gave His church many precious promises of continued existence or perpetuity from the first century until the second coming. In Matthew 16:18, Christ promised, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” He told His church, “lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). This is why Ephesians 3:21 reads, “Unto him [God] *be* glory in the _____ by Christ Jesus _____, world without end. Amen.” These churches would be doing God’s will until the Savior returned for them. If there ever was a time between the first century and the present day that Biblical churches vanished from the earth, Christ’s promise would have failed—which, of course, can never happen!

While Scripture guarantees a continued succession of true churches, it also predicted a great falling away, an apostasy, from the truth. We would therefore expect that most of “Christianity” would not represent the true religion: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall _____ from the _____, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of _____; Speaking _____ in hypocrisy; having their conscience _____ with a hot iron; _____ to _____, *and commanding* to _____ from _____, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (1 Timothy 4:1-3; cf. Acts 20:28-31). What the Bible predicted was fulfilled historically.

Christ’s churches endured a period of severe persecution from the first century to the early fourth century. After the last of the apostles died around A. D. 100, false teaching began to rapidly grow among many, so that great numbers of congregations went into apostasy and fell into errors such as salvation by means of baptism and other works. This false “Christianity” united with the Roman empire during the days of the emperor Constantine, who reigned from A. D. 306-337. The union of “church” and State, which was entirely contrary to Scripture (Matthew 22:21), greatly accelerated the moral and spiritual decline of most of Christendom, as pagan Roman practices and beliefs saturated the new Roman State-church. This “Christian” religious organization rejected the Biblical teaching that every congregation is independent and self-governing to adopt a hierarchical form of “church” government modeled after the Roman government. It gradually developed into the medieval Roman Catholic church, which dominated Europe until the sixteenth-century Reformation. (The Roman Catholic church, Protestant groups which attempted to reform it, and other sects within modern Christendom will be examined below in the section “What About Other Churches?”) However, the apostasy was not by any means universal. Bible-believing churches and Christians continued to exist, in accordance with Christ’s promise. The heretical “Christian” majority persecuted, tortured, and martyred true

believers by the millions. Christ's churches during the dark days of the dominance of Catholicism in the medieval era were given many different names, such as Waldenses, Donatists, Paulicians, Albigenses, and Cathari. However, they were most commonly designated *Anabaptists* ("re-baptizers"), because their Catholic opponents charged that they "re-baptized" those who, having come to genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, left Catholicism to join true churches. Since the Roman State-church was a false religion, and the infant "baptism" which gradually became universal in the Middle Ages was not the true ordinance instituted by the Lord Jesus and confirmed by His apostles, the Anabaptist practice of immersing Catholics who truly received Christ and joined their congregations was not a "re" baptism at all. A false "church" cannot truly administer the church ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and infant "baptism" is really not baptism. During the time of the Reformation and in the following centuries, the prefix *ana* gradually dropped off, and the true churches were simply called *Baptist*. Congregations that believed and practiced like modern Bible-believing Baptist churches have existed since the days of their Founder and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, until today.

Non-Baptist historians, both Catholic and Protestant, have admitted that Baptists by no means originated at the time of the Reformation, but have existed from antiquity:

The Catholic cardinal Hosius, writing at the time of the Reformation, stated that "were it not for the fact that the Anabaptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past 1200 years, they would swarm greater than all the Reformers" (Hosius, *Letters Apud Opera*, pgs. 112-113).

The Dutch Reformed historians A. Ypeij and J. J. Dermount wrote, "We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists . . . were the original Waldenses, and have long in history received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community which has stood since the days of the Apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the Gospel through all ages" (*Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk*, I, pg. 148).

The Methodist scholar John Clark Ridpath wrote, "I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as 100 AD, though without doubt there were Baptists then, as all Christians were then Baptists" (W. A. Jarrell, *Baptist Church Perpetuity*, pg. 59).

The Lutheran J. L. von Mosheim wrote, "the origin of . . . the Anabaptists . . . is lost in the remote depths of antiquity. . . . Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe, persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the modern Dutch Baptists" (*Institute of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 2, pgs. 119-120).

The Quaker historian Robert Barclay wrote, "the rise of the Anabaptists took place prior to the Reformation of the Church of England, and there are also reasons for believing that on the Continent of Europe small hidden Christian societies, who have held many of the opinions of the

Anabaptists, have existed from the time of the Apostles” (*Inner Life of the Societies of the Commonwealth*, pgs. 11-12).

The founder of the “Christian Church,” “Disciples of Christ,” and “Church of Christ” denominations, Alexander Campbell, stated, “From the apostolic age to the present time, the sentiments of Baptists have had a continued chain of advocates, and public documents of their existence in every century can be produced” (*McCalla-Campbell Debate*, pgs. 378-379).

Naturally, Baptists also affirm their own succession. The famous Baptist, Charles H. Spurgeon, stated, “We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the Reformation, we were reformers before Luther or Calvin were born; we never came from the Church of Rome, for we were never in it, but we have an unbroken line up to the Apostles themselves” (*Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1861, pg. 225).³⁹

God has kept His promise! True churches, ones that believe the doctrines and follow the practices we have learned about from the Scriptures in these seven Bible studies, have indeed existed in every generation from the first century until now. They are found today among those churches called *Baptist*. Baptist churches are the true churches of Jesus Christ.⁴⁰

II. What About Other Churches?

Baptist churches fulfill all the qualifications given in Scripture for the congregations of the Lord. They teach Biblical doctrine and follow Biblical practice. They match the promise of Christ to have preserved His church from the time that He founded it to the end of the world. No other religious group fulfills the requirements of Scripture for true churches. All other groups hold to a variety of false teachings. All other groups originated after the first century.

³⁹ These quotes are taken from *The History of Baptists*, Douglas Hammett, Emmaus, PA: Challenge Press, 2004, pg. 9-10. For more information on the history of Christ’s churches, please ask us for a free copy of *The Trail of Blood: Following the Christians Down Through the Centuries, or The History of Baptist Churches from the Time of Christ, their Founder, to the Present Day*, J. M. Carroll. This excellent resource also provides extensive sources for those who wish to do even further study.

⁴⁰ While Christ’s churches are Baptist churches, not every church that has the name “Baptist” on its sign really follows the Bible and practices the one true religion. Just as the Scriptures repeatedly warn of false prophets and teachers (1 John 4:1; 2 Peter 2:1; Matthew 7:15), so today false teachers control some churches that attempt to deceive people and call themselves Baptist, although they have nothing to do with the teachings of the Bible. Generally, Bible-believing Baptist churches are styled “Independent, Fundamental” Baptists, while compromising or false “Baptist” churches are found within various groups that have given up church independence and joined denominational conventions, such as the Southern Baptist Convention (“Southern Baptists,”), the American Baptist Convention, National Baptist Convention, etc. You can have confidence that the Baptist church that gave you this Bible study is a true church of Christ, and, if you are born again, you can happily join yourself to it and serve the Lord in it. If you are too far away from the congregation that has provided you this study to worship there, please indicate in the appropriate section at the end of this Bible study that you wish to attend a true church in your area, and we will help you find one.

We will now state the founder, and sample the false teachings, of many of the religious divisions, sects, and cults within Christendom.⁴¹ It will not be possible to cover every single religious group, nor will the heresies of the sects covered be studied comprehensively. Furthermore, varying degrees of divergent belief are tolerated in these groups; within some, the variation is very great. We welcome questions about any of the material covered here and will gladly provide further information about these religions to all who request it.

Roman Catholicism. Founder: The emperor Constantine united “church” and State, A. D. 325; first real Pope, Leo I (A. D. 440-461). Heresies: Tradition is equal to the Bible; the Apocrypha is added to the Bible; the “infallible” decrees of the Pope are added to the Bible; idolatry is committed by worshipping Mary, other dead people, and images; idolatry is committed by worshipping bread in the Mass; salvation is received by following the seven sacraments and doing good works; infant “baptism” is practiced; “baptism” by sprinkling or pouring is practiced; the Lord’s Supper is supposedly eating Christ’s human flesh and drinking His literal blood; the new birth and holiness are not required for church membership; the eternal security of the believer’s salvation is rejected; a hierarchy of priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, popes, etc. is created; most believers allegedly do not go to heaven right away but go to an imaginary place called purgatory where they get tortured; numerous other heresies are accepted, which have gradually increased in number over time.⁴²

Eastern Orthodoxy (Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, etc.). Founder: Michael Cerularius, A. D. 1054. Heresies: Very similar to those of Roman Catholicism, but without an “infallible” Pope.

Lutheranism. Founder: Martin Luther, A. D. 1517. Heresies: idolatry is committed by teaching that Christ’s human body fills the universe; salvation is received by means of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper; the eternal security of the believer is denied; infant “baptism” is practiced; “baptism” by sprinkling or pouring is practiced; in the Lord’s Supper Christ’s human body and blood are supposedly literally consumed; the new birth and holiness are not required for church membership; a hierarchy in church government is created.

⁴¹ The dates mentioned below are sometimes approximate, because some denominations emerged over a period of time. Also, human founders listed were often associated with other prominent individuals in the development of new groups.

⁴² Dates for the origination of various Catholic heresies: Priests began to wear special clothing, A. D. 500/ Prayers offered to Mary, dead saints, and angels, A. D. 600/ Bishop of Rome assumed the title of Pope, A. D. 607/ Power of Popes over civil government, A. D. 750/ Worship of the cross, images, and relics, A. D. 788/ Marriage of Priests forbidden, A. D. 1079/ Rosary beads invented, A. D. 1090/ Sale of Indulgences, A. D. 1190/ Sacrifice of Mass, A. D. 1215/ Auricular confession of sins to a priest, A. D. 1215/ Worship of the bread used in the Mass, A. D. 1220/ Purgatory proclaimed, A. D. 1439/ Tradition held equal to Bible, A. D. 1545/ Apocryphal books added to the Bible, A. D. 1546/ Mary said to be completely sinless, A. D. 1854/ Infallibility of the Pope, A. D. 1870/ Bodily assumption of Mary to heaven, A. D. 1950/ Mary proclaimed the “Mother of the Church,” A. D. 1965.

Anglicanism/Episcopalianism. Founder: Henry VIII, A. D. 1534. Heresies: salvation is received by means of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; salvation is by works; infant "baptism" is practiced; "baptism" by sprinkling or pouring is practiced; the new birth and holiness are not required for church membership; an episcopal form of hierarchy in church government is created.

Presbyterian/Reformed. Founder: John Calvin, A. D. 1534. Heresies: salvation is by means of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; infant "baptism" is practiced; "baptism" by sprinkling or pouring is practiced; the new birth and holiness are not required for church membership; A Presbyterian form of hierarchy in church government is created.

Methodism. Founder: John Wesley, A. D. 1740. Heresies: salvation is by means of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; eternal security is denied; infant "baptism" is practiced; "baptism" by sprinkling or pouring is practiced; the new birth and holiness are not required for church membership; A hierarchy in church government is created.

Christian Church/Disciples of Christ/Church of Christ. Founder: Alexander Campbell, A. D. 1830. Heresies: salvation is by baptism and by good works; the imputation of Adam's sin and the full sinfulness of man is denied; eternal security is denied.

Charismatic churches/Pentecostalism.⁴³ Founder: Charles Parham, A. D. 1901. Heresies: The sole authority of Scripture is denied or undermined by adding new so-called prophecies, visions, etc.; the devil is worshipped through so-called tongues speaking and other demonic miracles; some Pentecostals commit idolatry by denying the Trinity (Oneness Pentecostalism); eternal security is denied; worldly, fleshly "worship" is practiced.

Bible Church/"Non-denominational" Church/Community Church. Founder: William McCarrell, A. D. 1930. Heresies: The diversity of belief among these churches is so great that they cannot be generally classified. However, if one went through these Bible studies with any particular one of them, they would deviate from Scripture in some way. They also were started some 1,900 years after Christ's church was.

Seventh Day Adventism. Founder: Ellen G. White, A. D. 1844. Heresies: The sole authority of Scripture is denied by adding the "inspired" visions of Ellen White; salvation by works based on Christ's coming to a "heavenly sanctuary" in A. D. 1844 is taught; eternal security is denied; the Lord's day for worship is rejected for the Jewish Sabbath; hell is denied.

Watchtower Society ("Jehovah's Witnesses"). Founder: Charles Taze Russell, A. D. 1884. Heresies: The sole authority of Scripture is denied by ascribing a "prophetic" role to the

⁴³ These denominations include the Assemblies of God, Church of God in Christ, Pentecostal Apostolic Church, Vineyard Church, United Pentecostal Church, etc. For more information on the errors of the charismatic and Pentecostal movements, please request a free copy of the tract, "A Scriptural Analysis of the Charismatic Movement," by Kent Brandenburg.

Governing Body in New York City, and by making up its own corrupt version of the Bible (the *New World Translation*); idolatry is committed by teaching that God the Father is not omnipresent, but has a body; idolatry is committed by teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ is not Jehovah but Michael the Archangel, a second and lesser god; idolatry is committed by teaching that the Holy Spirit is not God, but an impersonal force like electricity; the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is denied; salvation by works is taught; the eternal security of the believer is rejected; the fact that saved dead are in heaven is rejected; eternal punishment in hell is rejected; the myth that Jesus Christ came back to earth in A. D. 1914 is taught; many other heresies are affirmed.

Mormonism. Founder: Joseph Smith, A. D. 1820. Heresies: The sole authority of Scripture is denied by claiming that the *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *Pearl of Great Price* are also the Word of God; the doctrine is advocated that outside of their “church,” which is led by a “prophet” who still receives new revelation, there is no salvation; salvation by baptism and good works is taught; the one true God is denied by teaching that there are many gods, and that a faithful male Mormon and his wife can become a god and goddess and rule their own planet; the blasphemy is taught that God the Father was once a man who became a god like Mormons can today; the blasphemy is taught that Jesus Christ and Satan are brothers; the lie that God the Father has a body of flesh and bones is advocated; the vile notion that Jesus Christ was conceived by the sexual union of their “God the Father” and Mary is advanced; many other sick and abominable blasphemies and heresies are advocated.

The fact is that only true Baptist churches meet the Biblical requirements set out for the church of Christ. No other religious group teaches everything in the Bible. Also, all non-Baptist “churches” were started after the first century, when Christ started His church. The Catholic denomination split from true churches in the early centuries as it went off into apostasy. Eastern Orthodoxy and the various Protestant denominations split from Roman Catholicism. Numerous cult groups and new denominations have sprung up after the time of the Reformation. All of these groups show by their disobedience to Bible doctrine and practice, and their origin centuries after the life of Christ, that they are not His church. They are all guilty of schism, of separating themselves from the one church the Lord Jesus founded. People who are members of these religious organizations are not members of the church of Christ. They do not enjoy the wonderful benefits and blessings the Savior promised those in His congregations. Their members are unable to offer God the worship that He has willed to receive in His church. They are unable to Biblically baptize or practice the Lord’s Supper. The existence and religious rituals of such false “churches” offend God, rather than pleasing Him. Christians should have nothing to do with these organizations.

The Church: God's Will for My Life

Over the course of this Bible study, we have learned many things about the Lord's church. We learned it is extremely important—Christ has a special love for His church; not worshipping in it is disobedience to plain commands of Scripture; characteristic non-attendance is a mark of the unconverted; it is the place where we can grow under God-ordained leadership and be protected from false teaching; and it is the place of the Savior's special presence, for Christ's congregation is His body, temple, and bride. A believer cannot be obedient to His Redeemer without serving faithfully in His church. In addition to all the benefits already mentioned, the Christian is not able to strengthen and be strengthened by his companions in the assembly, receive Biblical baptism, participate in the Lord's Supper, and properly fulfill his role in the work of evangelism and discipleship, without joining the church of God.

We also learned that the word *church* means *assembly* or *congregation*. The church of Christ is an assembly of baptized believers, organized to carry out the Lord's work. A church is not a building where people meet for worship, or a religious denomination. The church is not made up of all believers everywhere all together—that is the family of God. Christ's church is a particular, local, visible congregation, not something universal or invisible. Recognizing that a *church* is an *assembly*, we were ready to look at the marks that distinguish Christ's assembly from other types of assemblies.

We then studied five marks of the Lord's church: the Bible is its sole authority, it is a self-governing, independent congregation, it properly practices baptism and communion, it is faithful to other Biblical doctrine, and it conforms to other Biblical practices. The Bible is the church's only authority for faith and practice because every word of Scripture was inspired and perfectly preserved by God. Since the traditional Hebrew and Greek texts, which are faithfully translated into English in the King James Bible, represent the perfectly preserved text of the inspired Scriptures, faithful churches use the King James Bible instead of the many modern "Bible" versions that are filled with Satanic corruptions. Because Scripture teaches that, in submission to Christ's headship, the members of the assembly have ultimate decision-making authority, true churches are self-governing, independent congregations. The only two offices in the congregation are pastors—who are also called elders, bishops, or overseers—and deacons. Pastors and deacons must meet specific and strict spiritual qualifications. Church membership is only for those who have been born again and are living a life consistent with the new birth. Believers join congregations by baptism. This ordinance is performed properly when a church immerses a Christian in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Baptism pictures the Lord Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection and the saint's identification with Him in dying to his old

life of sin and rising to new life in Christ. Neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper is a sacrament that takes away sin—one's sins must be paid for before he can properly participate in either ordinance. The Lord's Supper is celebrated when the members of a church, having examined themselves to make sure they are right with God, partake of unleavened bread and grape juice in remembrance of Christ. Nothing happens to the bread and the fruit of the vine—they do not change into anything else in the ordinance. Christ's congregations are also faithful to other Biblical doctrines. They take everything taught in the Bible, from the nature of God to the way of salvation to the details of Christ's return, very seriously. They earnestly contend for truth and fight against error.

Obedient churches are also faithful to Biblical practice. They assemble the first day of the week to worship God in spirit and in truth, in accord with His explicit commandment, and not adding the traditions of men. They boldly preach the Bible, are faithful in prayer, and encourage their members in righteousness, recognizing that a righteous life is central to acceptable worship. They praise the Lord in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, using holy tunes and rejecting worldly, fleshly, and devilish music. They also serve their Savior by faithful and consistent evangelism, seeking to reach every single person in their area with the gospel and to establish new churches in their country and around the world. They strive to maintain their purity by avoiding religious affiliations with false teachers, unbelievers, and disobedient and compromising Christians. The sole authority of Scripture, church independence, proper practice of baptism and communion, and faithfulness to Bible doctrine and practice are clear marks which distinguish Christ's church from "Christian" groups founded by man.

Finally, we examined the history of the church of God. We learned that the Savior promised His church a continued existence from the time of its founding until the end of the age, despite the fact that many would fall away into error. The apostasy associated with the union of the pagan Roman government with the "church" of the fourth century developed into the medieval Roman Catholic denomination, while true churches rejected the union of "church" and State and the heresies of Catholicism. They Scripturally baptized those that truly believed the gospel and came to be known as *Anabaptists* because of their stand for the truth on baptism and other Biblical doctrine. Despite terrible persecution by the "Christian" majority, their assemblies continued to exist through the centuries to the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, when the prefix *ana* was gradually dropped and the true churches were simply called *Baptist*. Non-Baptist historians confirm the truth of the Baptist claim that their churches have existed since the first century. All other religious groups—Catholics, Protestants, and modern cults—fail to believe and practice everything in the Bible. These religious denominations also all started many, many years after the Lord Jesus founded His church in the first century. History

confirms the teaching of Scripture—modern Bible-believing Baptist churches are the true churches of Jesus Christ, practicing the one true religion.

In John 14:23, the Lord Jesus said, “If a man _____ me, he will _____ my words: and my Father will love him, and _____ will _____ unto _____, and make our _____ with him.” Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? You do not, and cannot, love Him unless you have been born again. Have you come to Him as a helpless sinner, in repentance trusting in His blood and righteousness alone for mercy, as explained in Bible study #5? If you have not, then the truths about the church you have learned in this Bible study, while certainly helpful to you, as is every teaching of Scripture, will not keep you from eternal damnation. You should receive Christ as your Lord and Savior immediately.

If you have been born again, God has given you a new heart (Hebrews 8:10; Ezekiel 36:26-27), and you do love the Lord Jesus Christ. This love will lead you to “keep [Christ’s] words” (John 14:23), and you will consequently enjoy fellowship with your loving heavenly Father, your Savior, and the Holy Spirit, as God dwells within you and abides with you. He who has given you eternal life, and who has given His very Son to die for and redeem you from your awful, despicable, damnation-deserving sins, commands you to join His church and serve Him there. This is what the Bible teaches Christians do (Acts 2:41, 47). If you wish to be obedient to Christ, you must attend, be baptized into, and serve in His true church. While church membership definitely cannot take away your sin—you must be born again before you can join the Lord’s church—Scripture provides no grounds for assurance of salvation to those who reject baptism and church membership (1 John 2:19). If you have not been going to any sort of church, you should find out where a good Baptist church is, be baptized, and begin to wholeheartedly serve the Lord there. Contact us, and we will help you find one. If you have been going to worship at some other kind of “Christian” religious organization, or are a member of any other kind of “church” than a Bible-believing Baptist church, one that teaches and practices everything we have learned in these Bible studies, you should immediately forsake your man-made religion and unite with the type of church Jesus Christ started. God must come first—before your own desires, before the traditional way you have done things, before your family, before everyone and everything. “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:37-39). You agreed unconditionally to follow Christ when you repented—now it is time to put the truth into practice. 2 Timothy 2:5 reads, “And if a man also strive for masteries, *yet* is he _____, except he _____.” You do not get to serve the Lord Jesus any way you want—you lose out on eternal reward unless you serve Him “lawfully,” in the way that He has

commanded. Consider the blessing promised to obedience, and the judgment promised to disobedience, stated in Matthew 10:32-33: “Whosoever therefore shall ____ before ____, him will ____ confess ____ before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall ____ before men, him will ____ before my Father which is in heaven.” Unite yourself with Christ’s church immediately!

Review Quiz For Bible Study #7

- 1.) God does not care if we go to church, as long as we are saved and on our way to heaven.
True False
- 2.) The word *church* means *congregation* or *assembly*. The church of Christ is an assembly of baptized believers, organized to carry out the Lord’s work. True False
- 3.) All believers in the whole world are the one universal and invisible church. True False
- 4.) All English Bible versions are basically the same; we can use whichever one we want, for they are all equally accurate and faithful translations of the original writings. True False
- 5.) In Bible times, every congregation was independent of every other one, and each church had the authority to run its own affairs. True False
- 6.) Bishops are the highest rank office in the church; elders are the second highest, and pastors are the third rank. The three are definitely not the same. True False
- 7.) Baptism must be by immersion, and it is only for those who have believed in Christ, not for infants. True False
- 8.) The bread and fruit of the vine in the Lord’s Supper become the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ. True False
- 9.) Church membership is restricted to obedient saved people. True False
- 10.) Jesus Christ will rule over the earth for a thousand years after He returns. True False

11.) We can add our own ideas to what Scripture commands us to offer God in worship, and He will be pleased by whatever we decide to offer Him, as long as we are sincere. True False

12.) Christians and churches should always be united with fellow believers, even if these believers are disobeying Scripture. Separation from anyone who is born again is wrong. True False

13.) Because of the power of the devil, the churches of Christ ceased to exist after several centuries. After a period of time when there were no true churches on earth, a godly man restarted the church, and these restored churches exist even to this very day. True False

14.) Only Bible-believing Baptist churches have all the marks of true churches today. Churches that believe like current, Bible-believing Baptist churches have existed ever since the days of Christ and the apostles. True False

Request for Further Material

___ I have returned the seventh Bible study to you with the answer blanks filled in and answered the review quiz questions. Please send me my certificate of completion for the Bible study course.

___ I would like to continue to study the Bible. Please enroll me in the Bible study course, *Disciplines for Disciples of Christ*.

___ I would like more information on the history of true churches from Christ's day to the present. Please send me a free copy of *The Trail of Blood: Following the Christians Down Through the Centuries, or The History of Baptist Churches from the Time of Christ, their Founder, to the Present Day*, by J. M. Carroll.

___ I have questions about the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. Please send me a free copy of the tract, "A Scriptural Analysis of the Charismatic Movement."

___ I have questions about the teaching that one must be baptized in order to be forgiven of sin. Please send me a free copy of the book *Heaven Only For The Baptized? The Gospel of Christ vs. Pardon through Baptism*, by Thomas Ross.

____ I have questions about the _____ religious denomination within Christendom; please provide me with more information about it.

____ I would like more information about the issue of Bible texts and versions and the superiority of the King James Bible to modern translations of Scripture.

____ Please send me _____, a work mentioned as available in a previous Bible study.

____ I would like to meet with or talk to someone in person. I have put information in the spaces below (phone number, times available, etc.) to contact me.

____ I would like to become a member of a Bible-believing Baptist church. Please help me to find one in my area. I have provided my address below.

Please use the space below to tell us if you go to church. If you do not, please let us know if you plan to start regularly attending the services of a good Baptist church. If you already attend some kind of assembly, please tell us the name and the religious denomination connected with this church, how long you have been affiliated with it, and how regularly you attend its services. If it is not a Bible-believing Baptist church, please tell us if you intend to leave it and join one of Christ's churches. If you do not, please state the reasons why. Also, if you are not saved, please tell us why you still have not repented and believed the gospel. If you have been born again but have not already explained the way you were converted at the end of a previous Bible study, please also explain in the space below when and how you came to receive Christ. You can also ask any other question related to the Bible. Please record in addition any changes of address, as well as the names and addresses of people you know who might also like to do this Bible study. Congratulations on completing all seven Bible studies! We are so glad to have been able to study the Bible with you.

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