

# BAPTISM:

## The Washing Away of Our Sins -- *Harold Camping*

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### Introduction

The Bible is an utterly fascinating book. This is so because it is the Word of God. It is the Word that Almighty God who created the universe has given us. Therefore, it is the ultimate and final authority on any subject which it teaches. It is the fountainhead of truth. It is absolutely trustworthy and dependable.

No other book can stand in the shadow of the Bible. It is infinitely superior to all others.

And the Bible is available to us to read and study. Moreover, as we study it we can pray for God to give us understanding concerning that which we read. How good and wonderful can it be!

Having said all this, we must realize that those who study the Bible very frequently come to conclusions that are incorrect and quite contrary to truth. This is because God wrote the Bible so that it must be searched out very carefully and very prayerfully. Each question must be researched to make sure that the answer that is found harmonizes with everything the Bible teaches. Let the reader of the Bible be warned. Almost any doctrinal position, however wrong it may be, can be supported by many verses in the Bible. God purposefully wrote the Bible so that it is often difficult to find truth. Only by examining doctrines in the light of the whole Bible will truth be found. When truth is found, there will be a very harmonious relationship with all that the Bible teaches in the Gospel message.

In other words, when a true Biblical doctrine is found, any verse of the Bible can be **scrutinized without the risk that that doctrine will be found to be in error.**

This is the goal of the Bible student, and in this study we will endeavor to find the truth concerning the Bible's usage of the word "baptism." In the process of seeking an understanding of the word "baptism," we will also learn much more about the wonderful salvation plan which God has provided. In fact, while this study was initiated in order to learn more precisely all we can about baptism, it provided a setting to look more searchingly into many aspects of the tremendous salvation plan that God has established for this world.

One additional warning should be given before we begin this study. Many theologians and Bible students occasionally struggle in an attempt to discover the meaning of a verse. Because the original Hebrew of the Old Testament or the original Greek of the New Testament in that verse may appear to be difficult to understand, they are tempted to decide that a scribe might have made an error when he made new additional copies from the older worn and unusable copies. **Thus, they are tempted to change a letter or even a word of the original language to make the verse more understandable.**

**This is an action that should never be taken.** We must realize that each word and each letter of each word in the original autographs is God-breathed. We can challenge the work of the translators, but never the original language. It is God's Word regardless of how difficult it appears to be understood.

In the process of making this study, one very encouraging fact stands out. It is the fact that the Reformers, who hundreds of years ago had come to a much more accurate understanding of the doctrines of salvation than the doctrines that were widely taught in their day, had done their work very well. We might recall that to sum up the doctrines of grace, they utilized the acronym **TULIP**:

- Total depravity
- Unconditional election
- Limited atonement
- Irresistible grace
- Perseverance of the saints

This study not only agrees precisely with these five principles but gives further details as to why they are correct.

An additional comment should be made before we commence this study. While it should be fairly apparent that the Bible is a very legal document, this fact is frequently missed. Yet it is only by recognizing this fact that we can come to an adequate understanding of the atonement.

That the Bible is a book of law is amply demonstrated by words and phrases such as the law of God, book of the law, guilty, guiltless, just, justification, condemnation, judgment throne, payment, prison, pardon, seal, wages of sin, etc. All of these words and phrases have a very legal connotation or definition. When we realize this, it is far easier to understand what happened at the cross. Throughout our study, we will see the reality of the fact that the Bible is a book of law.

May this study be an encouragement concerning the wonderful salvation that God has for us.

## Chapter 1

There are many words in the Bible which are often misunderstood by theologians and Bible students. Words and phrases like Israel, covenant, born again, election, shedding of blood, etc., are amongst those that are frequently misunderstood by many. One word that is as misunderstood as any other is the word **baptism**. Unfortunately, the misunderstanding of the word baptism has often lead to seriously wrong teaching concerning the nature of salvation. Therefore, it is very necessary that we clearly understand the Biblical teaching concerning the matter of baptism.

### ***How Do We Understand the Word "Baptism"?***

As we examine how the Bible speaks of baptism, we can readily understand why there is so much controversy and misunderstanding concerning the subject of baptism.

John the Baptist baptized unto the remission of sins (Mark 1:4). Jesus was to baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). He, Himself, was baptized by John the Baptist even though He had no sin (Matthew 3:16). Jesus also was to experience a baptism relating to the cross which was to be shared by the disciples (Mark 10:39). Believers are to be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). They were baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3), into the name of Christ (Acts 2:38), in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:5), and in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:48). In Mark 16:16 and in Acts 2:38 the Bible appears to teach that baptism is a requirement for salvation.

Indeed, the subject of baptism is confusing. Therefore, in this study each and every reference to baptism will be examined so that we might discover harmony between all of them.

In the process of understanding the word "baptism," we will also learn much more about this wonderful salvation God has so lovingly and compassionately bestowed on those who have become saved. We will learn much about what happened at the cross and what happens to the individual who does become saved.

As we try to harmonize each and every Biblical reference to baptism, it is most important that we first discover the Biblical meaning of the word "baptism." Once we clearly know the meaning of this word, we will be greatly helped in understanding all of the Biblical references to it. And wonderfully, as we understand the meaning of the Biblical references to it, we will also receive a much clearer understanding of God's magnificent salvation plan.

We must follow a fundamental principle as we seek to understand the meaning of the word "baptism." That principle is that the Bible is its own interpreter. Indeed, it is its own dictionary. Therefore, our study will be altogether within the pages of the Bible.

In the Greek language, the words that identify with baptism are *baptizo*, translated baptize; *baptismos*, translated baptism; and *baptisma*, translated baptism. John the Baptist is John the "*Baptistes*."

### ***What about the Greek Word "Bapto"?***

Before we look at these Greek words, we should look at a similar Greek word, *bapto*. The reason we should look at this word is because many Bible students are convinced that the word "baptize" means to immerse. One of their arguments is that the root word from which "baptism" is derived is the word *bapto*, and it is always translated "dip" in the Bible.

The fact is, when we carefully study the Bible's usage of the word "baptism," we will discover that it is never used to signify immersion. Moreover, we will find that the word "baptism," if it has any spiritual application, **always** has to do with the washing away of our sins. These two principles will be clearly seen as we go along in our study.

On the other hand, the Greek word *bapto* or a similar word, *embapto*, is always translated "dip." But when

we look at every place in the Bible where either *bapto* or *embapto* is found, we will find that they are never used as synonyms for the washing away of our sins. That is, in no way do they signify or relate to salvation. Therefore, even though in some ways they may be a cousin word to "baptism," actually, they are different words as God uses them in the Bible.

To make sure this is so, let us take time to examine every place in the Bible where the words *bapto* and *embapto* are found

In John 13:26, we read:

*Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped [bapto] it. And when he had dipped [bapto] the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.*

Similarly, in Matthew 26:23, Mark 14:20, and Luke 16:24 we read:

*Matthew 26:23: And he answered and said, He that dippeth [embapto] his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.*

*Mark 14:20: And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth [embapto menos: an active participle] with me in the dish.*

*Luke 16:24: And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip [bapto] the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*

It can be seen that the words *bapto* and *embapto menos* in these verses have nothing to do with washing away of sins. Whatever God is teaching in this action of dipping the sop and giving it to the betrayer Judas, it has nothing to do with the salvation of Judas. Nor does the dipping of the finger of Lazarus provide salvation for Lazarus or the rich man.

One other Bible verse employs a derivative of the word *bapto*, and that is Revelation 19:13, which declares:

*And he was clothed with a vesture dipped [bapto] in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.*

Actually, the word *bapto* is the Greek word *bebammenon* which is a neutral participle perfect middle which literally translates "having been dipped."

This verse is speaking of Christ as the Savior who bore the wrath of God for our sins. The question is, in whose blood was his vesture dipped. If it were in **His** blood then in this passage the word "*bapto*" or *bebammenon* would relate to salvation. But if the blood in which His vesture was dipped was **our** blood, then we would know that the word "*bapto*" is not identifying with salvation because our blood cannot bring salvation.

We will discover that the blood that was on his garments was the blood of those He had come to save. A Bible citation that helps us understand this is Isaiah 63:2-3:

*Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and **their blood\*** shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.*

### **What Does the Word "Baptism" Mean?**

Returning to our study of the Greek words *baptizo*, *baptismos*, and *baptisma*, we find that usually they are translated as "baptize" or "baptism." But in a few instances, the context does not allow that translation.

We should examine each place in the Bible where these words are translated other than "baptize" or "baptism." This will help us to obtain the meaning of these Greek words.

First, we will look at Mark 7:4, where we read:

*And when they come from the market, except they **wash**, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the **washing** of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.*

The word "wash" employed here is from the root of the Greek word *baptizo* which ordinarily is translated as "baptize." The word "washing" is *baptismos* which ordinarily is translated as "baptism."

Moreover, in Luke 11:38 we read:

*And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first **washed** before dinner.*

In this passage, the word "wash" is the Greek word *baptizo* which also ordinarily is translated as "baptize."

Likewise, in Hebrews 9:10 we read:

*Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers **washings**, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.*

The word "washings" is the Greek word *baptismos* which also is usually translated "baptism." Note that in all these passages the English words wash and washing are the same words as the Greek words which can be transliterated "baptize" or "baptism." The context of each of these verses clearly shows that the word "washing" is a correct translation. Furthermore, there is no implication of dipping or immersion. For example, "tables" (Mark 7:4) are not dipped or immersed to clean them. These passages, therefore, show us that in the Bible the word "baptize" means to wash or cleanse or purify.

These washings of the pharisees before dinner and the washing of cups, pots, brazen vessels, and tables are all related to the ceremonial cleansings of the Old Testament. This is intimated by the language of Luke 11:39-40, which immediately follows the verse dealing with pharisees washing before dinner. Jesus says:

*And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?*

This agrees with what we read in Hebrews 9:10, which declares that these Old Testament washings (and the Pharisees were attempting to keep as perfectly as possible the Old Testament ceremonial laws), stood only as carnal ordinances. We will look into these Old Testament ceremonial washings in greater detail later in this study.

We will discover that these Old Testament washings were signs pointing to the washing away of our sins by Christ's atonement. Thus, we can see why references to them in the New Testament Greek language are called *baptizo* or *baptismos* as we have seen in the above verses.

It might also be noted that the Greek words *baptizo* or *baptismos* are never translated "dip" or "immerse." This is in complete harmony with the principle that the idea of immersion is never used as a synonym for salvation. But as we will learn, washing or cleansing or purifying are repeatedly used to describe salvation. We will see this in verses such as Ezekiel 36:25 and Acts 22:16.

*Ezekiel 36:25: Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.*

*Acts 22:16: And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

Remember, too, that earlier in our study, we looked at Revelation 1:5 and I John 1:7, where we read about the blood of Jesus washing and cleansing us from our sins.

We may thus be assured that *baptizo* means to wash or cleanse. As we continue this study, we shall see to a much greater degree how true this is.

### **Old Testament Shadows of Cleansing from Sin**

To understand and appreciate the significance of baptism we must begin in the Old Testament, where the foundation was laid to prepare us for the New Testament baptism in any of its usages.

In the Old Testament, God employs a number of signs or figures that point toward forgiveness of sins. The first of these was the shedding of blood. God laid down a rule that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission or cleansing from sin (Hebrews 9:22).

### **Shedding of Blood Equals Giving of Life**

Throughout the Bible we find the emphasis that our sins are washed away by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. For example we read:

*Colossians 1:14: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*

*Hebrews 9:14: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge you conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

*1 John 1:7: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

These verses together with many like them clearly associate Christ's blood with our salvation.

This introduces us to a very significant problem: when we look carefully at Christ as He is paying for our sins, we do not see Him literally shedding His blood. We see Christ as He endures the agony of God's wrath for our sins, doing so without shedding His blood. After He declares, "It is finished" He still retains His blood. Later in our study we will learn that when He cried, "It is finished" the penalty for sin had been fully paid. All that followed: His physical death, His burial, and His resurrection, were the evidence that He

had fully paid for our sins. But when He said "*It is finished*" he still was physically alive, He still retained most of His blood. It is true that He lost some blood as he experienced the lashes by which He was beaten and as they placed a crown of thorns on His head and as they nailed Him to the cross.

In spite of all of these traumatic events, He still retained enough blood so that physically He was very much alive when He said "*It is finished.*"

Moreover, after He was physically dead, the soldier thrust the spear into His side and water and blood flowed from Him. Therefore, we wonder why God insists that Christ shed His blood for our salvation.

The key to solving this difficulty is the phrase that is found in Deuteronomy 12:23:

*Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the **blood is the life**; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.*

Furthermore, Leviticus 17:11 declares:

*For the **life of the flesh is in the blood**: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.*

In these verses God is teaching that life and blood are virtually synonymous. This is readily understood if we realize that any man or animal whose blood has been removed is dead. It is imperative that our blood be within us if we are to be alive.

Therefore, we can understand that when the Bible speaks of the blood of Christ it is speaking of the life of Christ. All of the verses which speak about the blood of Christ have in view the life of Christ.

For example, when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane and the sweat was pouring from His body like great drops of blood, it is speaking about Him giving His life as God was punishing Him for our sins. The Bible speaks of "sweat" and sweat comes from labor or work. Jesus was working to save us as God was punishing Him with the second death on account of our sins. "*Like great drops of blood*" means He was giving His life. It means He was enduring the second death, eternal damnation for our sins.

This is why in John 6 God insists we are to drink the blood of Christ. God is teaching by this that we are to receive eternal life because Christ gave His blood. That is, Christ gave His life so that we can have life.

John 6:54-57 declares:

*Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*

In this passage Jesus is emphasizing that we receive our life (eternal life) because Christ gave His life by experiencing the second death on our behalf.

Therefore, we are not to look at the physical blood of Jesus as being the instrument of salvation. Salvation is possible because Jesus experienced the second death, eternal damnation. That is, He gave His life in the ultimate eternal sense. The giving of His life is expressed by the phrase "He shed His blood." Thus, the Bible uses this phrase as God declares "*without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.*"

We know that the term **shedding His blood** is equivalent to **giving His life**. Christ gave His life in the ultimate sense because He experienced the second death, eternal damnation, on behalf of all those He came to save.

During the days of the Israelites, the priests repeatedly offered blood sacrifices of birds and animals as they sought forgiveness for their own sins as well as for the sins of the people. None of their sacrifices was sufficient for a permanent, eternal cleansing so they were required to sacrifice repeatedly. Whatever forgiveness was derived from these sacrifices was only because they were types or shadows looking forward to the shed blood of Christ on Calvary. That is, they looked forward to the time when Christ would become sin for those He came to save. Because He took upon Himself the sins of those he planned to save, He had to experience the second death, which was the eternal wrath of God which is God's just penalty for sin.

When Christ shed His blood for our sins, that is, when He gave His life, He brought an end to the blood sacrifices. The fact that He endured the second death, eternal damnation (He shed His blood), was sufficient to provide eternal cleansing for those who have believed on Him as the sacrifice for their sins.

It might be noted that God wants us to remember the great sacrifice of Christ's shed blood by means of the Lord's supper. By partaking of the elements of this wonderful supper, we remember the Lord's death until He comes (I Corinthians 11:26). We remember that He cleansed us from our sins by His shed blood,

that is, by giving His life.

Moreover, after we have partaken, and the bread and the fruit of the vine become part of our body, we are reminded that if we have been saved, we are completely identified with Christ in His death and in His resurrection, so that it is as if each one of us who believe on Him had hung on that cross and suffered the eternal punishment of hell for our sins. Moreover, the elements of which we partake represent the fact that we receive our life (eternal life) because He gave His life.

This grand truth is emphasized by two verses we have already examined, Revelation 1:5 declares that Jesus, "*washed us from our sins in his own blood,*" and I John 1:7 reiterates, "*the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*"

### **Offerings by Fire**

A second Old Testament figure or type employed by God in relationship to cleansing was that of an offering by fire. Ordinarily, the offering by fire was an act that was done simultaneously with the shedding of blood. The animal was killed and then offered as a burnt offering by fire. It was also sometimes performed without the shedding of blood, for instance, when a cereal offering was made (Leviticus 6:14-17). We see this also in Leviticus 5. If a sin had been committed by someone, he was to offer a lamb or a goat as a sin offering (Leviticus 5:1-6). If he could not afford an animal, he was to offer two turtledoves or two pigeons (Leviticus 5:7-10). If he could not afford these, he was to offer flour as a sin offering. Leviticus 5:11-12:

*But if he be not able to bring two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, then he that sinned shall bring for his offering the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall put no oil upon it, neither shall he put any frankincense thereon: for it is a sin offering. Then shall he bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it, even a memorial thereof, and burn it on the altar, according to the offerings made by fire unto the LORD: it is a sin offering.*

It might be noted that normally the priests were to eat of the burnt offering and whoever touched it became holy (Leviticus 6:16-29). This offering, which looked to Christ's atonement, reminds us of Jesus' words in John 6:53-56:

*Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.*

Even as the priests ate of the burnt offering, which pointed to the spiritual blessing that would come from Christ as the burnt offering, so we are partakers of the body of Christ as He offered Himself as a burnt offering, an offering by fire for our sins.

This beautiful truth is emphasized in the Lord's supper. As we partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper, we are symbolically partaking of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. That is, this is a sign that points to the marvelous truth that if we have become saved we have been given eternal life because Christ gave His life for us. He endured the equivalent wrath of God demanded by the law of God as payment for our sins.

### **Coals of Fire**

Returning to the offering by fire, we see another aspect of this in the burning of incense. Incense laid on the coals from the altar of burnt offering pointed to the atonement to be provided by Jesus. We see this in the experience of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. When these three men offered strange fire to the Lord, God killed them and 250 others (Numbers 16:1-35). When the Israelites murmured about this, God sent a plague among them, which killed 14,700 (Numbers 16:41-49). To stop the plague, Moses told Aaron in Numbers 16:46-48:

*. . . Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.*

Of course, it was not the physical offering of incense that produced atonement. The physical act was a shadow that pointed to the spiritual reality of Christ enduring the wrath of God for our sins.

The same figure for cleansing was used by God in preparing Isaiah for his ministry. Isaiah 6:5-7 declares:



*Then said I, 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. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.*

The live coal represents Christ who endured the fires of hell on behalf of those He came to save. By His enduring the wrath of God, our sin is purged. That is, we are cleansed of our sins.

Incidentally, this is why Romans 12:20 teaches:

*Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

The enemy is anyone who is not saved. The food and drink we give him is the Gospel. The coals of fire represent the salvation provided by Christ because He endured the fires of hell.

Thus, we see that in addition to the shedding of blood, God used the offering by fire as a symbol of cleansing from sin.

### **Washing or Bathing**

A third figure or type employed by God in relationship to cleansing from sin is that of washing or bathing in water.

Let us consider the Old Testament high priest as he was about to offer sacrifice. Outside of the most holy place wherein the ark was placed was a laver filled with water. Exodus 30:17-21 indicates:

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.*

This washing of the priests' hands and feet was necessary because the priest had guilt. He himself was a sinner. By this washing, he was ceremonially cleansed so that he could come into the presence of the Lord and offer the sacrifice.

The fact that washing with water was related to cleansing from sin can be seen additionally in a number of other Old Testament references. The leper who was healed was clean after he had washed his clothes and bathed his body (Leviticus 14:9). A discharge from a person's body made that person unclean before God (Leviticus 15:2). When his discharge had cleared up, "then he shall number to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean" (Leviticus 15:13). This washing was to be followed by a burnt offering (Leviticus 15:15).

To eat an animal that had died of itself was a sin (Leviticus 22:8), but the guilty person could be cleansed by washing. Leviticus 17:15-16:

*And every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean. But if he wash them not, nor bathe his flesh; then he shall bear his iniquity.*

A final example of the Old Testament use of water for cleansing is given in Numbers 8:6-7:

*Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.*

This cleansing by water was followed by a burnt offering and a sin offering (Numbers 8:8-13). Thus, we see that God used the shedding of blood, the offering by fire, and cleansing by water as means to signify spiritual cleanness.

Unfortunately, there was a serious problem connected with these Old Testament symbols of cleansing. While the believer could wash in water, offer a blood sacrifice, and make an offering by fire, and be ceremonially cleansed of his sin, he never had the permanent cleansing which identifies with eternal life. He had to offer the same sacrifices again and again. The high priest had "to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's" (Hebrews 7:27). We read in Hebrews 10:1-3:

*For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.*

Gifts and sacrifices were offered, as we read in Hebrews 9:9-10:

*Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.*

Therefore, the Bible clearly shows the need for a more permanent cleansing. Jesus provided the permanent cleansing by His death on the cross.

Thus far then we have learned that ceremonial acts of the Old Testament congregation, which looked forward to the washing away of sin by the coming Messiah, include the blood offerings, the burnt offerings, and washing with water. Washing with water could include sprinkling, washing the hands and feet, and even washing the whole body.

Having reviewed these Old Testament washings, the next question we must face is: How does John the Baptist fit into the picture? Was the baptism he performed part of the Old Testament washings or is something new being introduced?

We will look carefully at his activity as we continue this study.

### ***The Baptism of John the Baptist***

Early in the Gospels, the strange figure of John, who was called the Baptist, is seen by the River Jordan, calling the Jews to repentance and baptizing them in the river. What baptism was this? Was it related to the water baptism of believers which followed after Pentecost? Or did it bear a closer relationship to the washings of the Old Testament which we have seen were a part of the Old Testament ceremonial laws. Since it was called "baptism," we know that it had to be related to cleansing or washing.

We can find the answer to these questions if we consider for a moment the timing of John's baptizing. Let us carefully look at John baptizing Jesus.

The time had almost arrived for ending the ceremonial laws, the Aaronic priesthood, and the temple as the place where God came down to man. The great high priest, Jesus, who was to offer Himself as the sacrificial Lamb, was to appear at any moment. He was to be the fulfillment of all the Old Testament laws which looked forward to His coming.

The Aaronic priesthood was fast becoming obsolete. Hebrews 8:13 declares:

*In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*

Thus, God writes to us in the Book of Hebrews regarding the end of the Aaronic priesthood and the related covenant. A new priesthood was being established.

But the new high priest had to be ceremonially cleansed. We will develop this point as we continue this study.

Let us recall that a laver or basin was located in the temple. The high priest was required to wash his hands and his feet with water from the laver before he ministered at the altar. Exodus 30:17-21:

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.*

By having his hands and his feet washed the high priest was ceremonially cleansed and could proceed with his priestly duties.

### ***The Baptism of Jesus***

But Jesus was the sinless one. What does the washing of priests who were sinners before God have to do with Jesus? Much, if we will recall the roles Jesus was to play in the salvation drama that was

unfolding.

First, He had to come as the high priest who was to offer the sacrifice. Second, He was to be the Lamb that was to be sacrificed. This is seen so beautifully in the words of John the Baptist in John 1:29, *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."*

He had come to save mankind, and in order to do this, He had to completely identify with sinful man. While He, Himself, was without sin, He became sin for us. He was laden with every dirty, rotten sin that those whom He had come to save had done. He stood, therefore, guilty before God. He became as one who needed cleansing for sins.

We must remember, of course, that His priesthood was in a real sense altogether different from the Aaronic priesthood in that His was an eternal priesthood after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6, Hebrews 7). In another sense it was patterned after the Aaronic priesthood (Hebrews 9:24, Hebrews 10:1). Therefore, He had to be ceremonially washed before He could offer the sacrificial Lamb.

How could He be washed? He could not go into the temple and use the laver located there because it could be used only by the Levites. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. Moreover, the laver in the temple was related to the altar in the temple and the holy places. Jesus' altar was to be the cross and the holy place was to be heaven itself (Hebrews 8:1-2, Hebrews 9:24). Therefore, something quite different from the temple laver was required for His ceremonial washing.

And so God introduced us to John the Baptist who was a transition character raised up to be a bridge between the Old Testament law on the one hand, and on the other hand, the new covenant which was to be established by Jesus. John's father, Zechariah, was a priest of the seed of Aaron and his mother, Elizabeth, was a descendant of Aaron. John, therefore, was of priestly rank. He was inherently qualified to administer the ceremonially cleansing water. Moreover, he was specifically mandated by God to baptize with water. Matthew 3:13-15:

*Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.*

The focal point of the priestly office of John the Baptist was distinctly related to the Aaronic priesthood which was almost ended. The task of John the Baptist was to be the one who prepared the way for Jesus by ceremonially washing Him and by announcing Him as the Messiah. However, since Jesus' priesthood was not of the tribe of Levi, John had to perform his tasks elsewhere, not in the temple.

So John was at the River Jordan, baptizing and calling for repentance. The baptismal rite he offered could have no less signification than that of the ceremonial washings outlined in Old Testament law and was surely adequate for the ceremonial washing of a priest.

The Old Testament washings and sacrifices were dim shadows of the cleansing to be provided by Christ's atonement and which pointed to salvation to be provided by the coming Messiah. The baptism by John was also pointing to the cleansing to be provided by Christ's atonement.

### ***Jesus Is Baptized***

Now the high priest, the Lord Jesus, has arrived on the scene. But before He can officially begin to perform His work as high priest as we have already learned, to fulfill all righteousness He has to be ceremonially cleansed, even as Aaron was ceremonially cleansed before he began his work as high priest. John the Baptist has arrived to apply the ceremonial cleansing water to Jesus. The cleansing anticipated by the shadows of ceremonial washings is about to become a fact of history.

It would become a fact of history as God poured out His wrath upon Jesus when He went to the cross. The shadow, that is, the washing or baptism provided by John the Baptist is sharply and intensely focused. It is still a shadow, however. The water baptism of John had no cleansing value in itself even as the shadow of a tree has no substance in itself. The tree can exist without the shadow, but the shadow is nothing without the tree. The closer the shadow is to the tree, the more clearly the shadow reflects the true substance of the tree.

So John cries out for repentance; he speaks of baptism or washing for the forgiveness of sins. Mark 1:4, *"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."* It almost sounds like the cross has already happened.

John's baptism, together with the baptism by the apostles before the time of the cross, was, therefore, of the same nature as the Old Testament washings in that they were a shadow of a future event, but they were far more intense and vibrant with meaning. These baptisms were pointing to the requirement that

we must have our sins washed away. Both repentance and the washing away of sins could be accomplished only by the action of God in applying the washing provided by Jesus to our lives.

So the drama unfolds. The sacrificial Lamb (Jesus) is on the scene. The high priest (also Jesus) who is to offer the sacrifice has arrived.

Perhaps John the Baptist chose the Jordan River because it is the river where Naaman was cured of his leprosy. Do you recall when Naaman, the Syrian leper, came to Elisha for healing? Elisha told him to wash seven times in the Jordan River and he would be clean. II Kings 5:9-10:

*So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.*

God used leprosy as a type for sin. The healing of Naaman, by washing in the River Jordan, was a type or shadow pointing to cleansing from sin.

### ***Jordan River: A Picture of Hell***

Another cogent reason why John the Baptist may have been baptizing in the Jordan River is because the Jordan River at times is used by God as a picture of hell. Remember when Israel went into the land of Canaan, the river was at flood stage and yet Israel went through the river on dry ground. The priests with the ark were in the bottom of the river when Israel crossed over. The ark represented Jesus who endured hell for us, thus permitting us to pass, as it were, through hell without being touched by the wrath of God.

When Jesus was baptized (washed) in the Jordan River, it emphasized that He must endure the wrath of God, symbolized by the Jordan River, in order that He might be washed of our sins which had been laid upon Him.

Likewise, the people who were baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist and by the apostles were being reminded that because of their sins, they were under the wrath of God. And only after they had endured the eternal wrath of God (symbolized by the Jordan River), could they have become washed or cleansed of their sins. This washing or baptism in the Jordan River signified their need for someone to bear their sins for them. It pointed to the fact that they needed a Savior to pay for their sins.

Returning to John the Baptist, Jesus was appearing on the scene. Even as the priest had to wash so that he would be holy before the Lord, Jesus, as we have learned, had to be ceremonially washed. Jesus' ceremonial cleansing was accomplished by being baptized by John the Baptist. Through the act of baptism, He was ceremonially cleansed: He was ceremonially washed; He was purified so that He could go on to offer the sacrifice for sins.

If He had not been baptized, He would not have been qualified to continue as high priest to offer the sacrificial Lamb. There were no short cuts in Jesus' work as eternal high priest. To "*fulfil all righteousness*" (Matthew 3:15), He needed to wash before offering the sacrifice, just as the Old Testament priest was to wash his hands and his feet before offering the sacrifice. This baptism was a necessary ceremony because it pointed to the fact that Jesus was laden with the sins of all those He had come to save. Somehow He had to be washed of these sins.

### ***Jesus Is Anointed***

Jesus now has been washed, but He cannot yet offer the sacrifice. One other action must take place. In the Old Testament, the priests were anointed with oil after they had washed. Thus, they would be consecrated to serve as priests (Exodus 30:22-31). The oil was symbolical of the Holy Spirit coming upon the priest to qualify him for the sacred task he must perform.

But Jesus was God. And as God, He was completely identified with the Holy Spirit. Colossians 2:9 declares, "*For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*" Why, then, must He be anointed with the Holy Spirit?

Let us remember that He had become sin for us. He had completely identified Himself with sinful humanity. He must follow the path of the Old Testament priest. Because He was the eternal high priest, the anointing was not to be with the oil which was just a symbol of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit Himself in the presence of the onlookers. The heavens opened as He went up from the water. We read in Matthew 3:16:

*And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.*

He was anointed for His task. Peter said in Acts 10:38, "*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy*

*Ghost and with power."* He was washed and He was anointed. He was ready to offer the sacrifice for sins.

Thus far, we have discovered that washing with water was one means of becoming ceremonially cleansed of sin in accordance with Old Testament law. We have determined, too, that baptism means washing or cleansing. The baptism of John the Baptist was very similar to, but of far greater intensity than, the Old Testament ceremonial washings and was used by God to ceremonially prepare Jesus for His work as our eternal high priest.

### **Jesus Is Cleansed of Our Sins**

To continue our study of the meaning of New Testament baptism, we must look again to Jesus. He had become, as we have seen, sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21). It was as if He had taken on the sins and was guilty of the sins of every sinner who ever lived who was to believe on Him. He had to deal with an enormous, a staggering load of sin. To satisfy God's infinitely perfect holiness and justice, He had to pay the penalty that was equal to or equivalent to eternal death for every sinner whom He had come to save.

How was Christ to be cleansed from this load of sin? One basic requirement was that there must be the shedding of blood for without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins. His blood, therefore, must be shed. That is, He must give His life in the ultimate sense of suffering the punishment deserved by all those He had come to save. That punishment had to be equal to eternal damnation on behalf of each and every believer. His death was required and as we learned earlier, it was the second death, eternal damnation, that was required.

He had to suffer the torments of hell on an equivalent basis to that required by all those He had elected to salvation spending eternity in hell. He had to offer Himself as the one upon whom God's wrath was to be poured.

Hell is called a furnace of fire. Jesus says in Matthew 13:42: "*And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*" Thus, the Old Testament shadows of the atonement, which were the shedding of blood and an offering by fire, were completely fulfilled by Christ as He shed His blood and gave Himself as a burnt offering to be punished by the fires of hell. It is not surprising, then, that Jesus says in Luke 12:49-50:

*I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!*

The fire that was to be kindled was that which He would endure in offering Himself as the sacrificial Lamb. Because He had taken our sins upon Himself, He had to be cleansed. Therefore, He rightly calls the sacrifice for sin a baptism, that is, a cleansing or purification.

Remember that the Bible teaches that the sins of the elect were placed on Him. Isaiah 53:5-6 declares:

*But he was wounded for **our** transgressions, he was bruised for **our** iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity **of us all.***

Thus, Christ, upon taking on a human nature, was laden with a tremendous load of sin even though He Himself remained sinless. II Corinthians 5:21 teaches:

*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

### **How was Jesus to be Cleansed?**

How was Jesus to have these sins removed? These sins had to be washed away. But how? Could God by His own divine decree just remove all of the sins and guilt from Him? The answer is an emphatic No! Such an action would be a terrible violation of the

perfect justice of God. The only way the sins could be removed was by Jesus bearing the full and total wrath of God which was demanded by the law of God as payment for the sins. Only if the penalty demanded by God's law was fully paid could Jesus again enter into God's holy heaven.

Jesus speaks of this in Luke 12:49-50. Verse 49 declares that Jesus came to send fire upon the earth. The word "fire" in the Bible invariably points to God's judgment on sin. Christ had to experience God's judgment in order to be set free of the huge load of sin that had been laid upon Him. In this verse, He declares that the act of experiencing God's judgment should soon begin. Therefore, as we have just learned, He emphasizes in verse 50 that He has a baptism (remember the word "baptism" always signifies washing), to be baptized with (washed with) and that He is straitened (pressed or pressured) till it is accomplished.

Let it be emphasized, the only way that Jesus could have all of the sins washed away which were laid on Him was by enduring

God's wrath demanded by God's law as payment for those sins. This is the washing (the baptism) that He desires. Only if those sins are washed away could He return to heaven.

Now we can understand what Jesus is saying to James and John in Mark 10:38-39:

*But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized.*

Jesus is saying to these two disciples, who represent all believers, that they are to drink of the cup that Jesus drank and that they would be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized.

How are we to understand this? We know that the cup that Jesus must drink was the full wrath of God poured out upon Jesus as payment for all the sins laden upon Him. But do the believers experience the wrath of God? It would appear that this is the case for Jesus says, "*Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of.*"

The answer to these questions can be understood when we realize that Jesus suffered the wrath of God as our substitute, as our stand-in. When God poured out His righteous wrath on Jesus, it was as though He were pouring out His wrath upon every individual whose sins were placed upon Jesus. Thus, when Jesus had fully suffered the wrath of God, it means that those whose sins were laid on Him had also fully suffered the wrath of God for their sins.

When Jesus paid for those sins, those sins were washed away from Jesus, Himself. They were also washed away from those He came to save because it was their sins from which Jesus was cleansed. That is why the Bible can say, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Romans 8:1).

Now we can understand the phrase in Mark 10:39, "*and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized.*" With the washing away of the sins that had been laid upon Jesus, we have been washed of our sins. This is so because Jesus fully paid for those sins. We who believe on Him have had our sins washed (baptized) away.

### **We Are Baptized Into His Death**

Now we can understand Romans 6:3-6:

*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

The baptism referred to in these verses **does not** refer to water baptism as is commonly believed. This baptism refers to the washing Jesus experienced as He endured the penalty of God's wrath for our sins.

We were baptized (washed) into Jesus Christ. This is into His death because the sins that were laid upon Him included my sins. He was cleansed or washed of them by enduring the second death, eternal damnation. Thus, since these were my sins it was I who was baptized (washed) or cleansed of those sins.

### **Burial: Proof that Death Has Occurred**

Verse 4 declares, "*we are buried with him by baptism into death.*" What is the significance of the word "burial"? Let us examine this question.

When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, they were told that in the day that they ate of the forbidden fruit, they would surely die (Genesis 2:17). The day they ate of the fruit, they did not die physically because after that Adam had several children and died at the age of 930 years.

However, in the day they ate of the forbidden fruit, they did die spiritually. At that moment, they became subject to the curse of God. Because they became cursed by God, they became subject to physical death. In fact, the whole creation was placed under the curse of God so that physical death is experienced by animals as well as man.

Because man was created in the image of God, and therefore, is accountable to God for his actions, the curse brought God's wrath upon mankind. The curse and wrath of God included the provision that if, after being justly tried and found guilty, he would be punished by being forever damned in hell, which is called the second death in Revelation 20:14, and is the penalty that mankind faces because of his sins.

Thus, we know that physical death is not payment for sin. Rather, physical death is the evidence or proof that man had come under the curse of God. The curse of God includes the fact that mankind is under the wrath of God. Because man came under the curse of God, his physical body suffers some decay while he still lives and becomes totally corrupted when he dies. The corruption is so obnoxious that his dead body must be buried or otherwise destroyed. Therefore, the burial is the evidence that the individual has died, which in turn is the evidence or proof that he was under the curse of God, and must be tried at a future date, before the judgment throne of God, when the sentence of eternal damnation will officially be placed on him.

### ***Physical Death Is Not Payment for Sin***

Is it true that man's physical death and burial are not part of the payment for sin? The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27:

*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

The appointment to die cannot have physical death in view. The death that mankind is appointed to experience is the death experienced by Adam when he sinned. In 1 Corinthians 15:22, we read, "For as in Adam all die" As we have learned, Adam experienced spiritual death when he came under the curse of God.

The fact that physical death cannot be in view in Hebrews 9:27, and that it cannot part of the payment for sin, can be seen for at least three very important reasons.

The first reason is the fact that billions of people will never experience physical death. When Christ comes on the last day, and every eye shall see Him, the billions of people who will be living at that moment will be brought before the Judgment Throne of God to answer for their sins. They will not have experienced physical death and yet their punishment will be full payment for their sins; they will spend eternity in hell.

The second reason we know that physical death is not part of our payment for sins can be seen when we examine the salvation of an individual. God insists that all of the work of redemption was performed by Christ. We read in II Corinthians 5:21:

*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

The Bible declares in Ephesians 2:8-10:

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Based on these verses as well as many others, we know that when we become saved, the penalty that God's righteous law demands has been fully paid. There is nothing we can do to assist in making the payment.

If physical death were part of the payment for sin, then believers could not die physically. God's perfect justice would be grossly violated if those whose sins had been covered by Christ must still endure even the smallest part of that payment for sin.

What happens to the believer after he is saved? For 13,000 years, believers have died physically. Since the payment for their sins was fully paid before they died, it should be obvious that their physical death had nothing to do with payment for their sin. Rather, their physical death is the evidence or proof that they had been under the curse of God, and, therefore, had been under His wrath.

In fact, while judicially payment for their sins is 100% complete, the application to their lives is only partial. They were given eternal life in their brand new resurrected souls. They must continue to live out their life in a body that still bears the evidence of the curse of God. This is proven because they die physically, and their decaying bodies must be buried.

When we consider the atonement, we see a third reason why physical death cannot be a part of the payment for sin. We will discover that the payment for sin was fully paid **before** Jesus died physically. This is a very important truth, and, therefore, we should examine it very carefully.

### **Jesus' Physical Death: Not a Payment for Sin**

A great many Bible students may be startled and even offended at the idea that the physical death of Jesus was not a part of the payment for sin. However, when we look carefully at the cross, we will see conclusively that it was not His physical death that paid for our sins. Instead, the payment was made because he endured a death infinitely greater than physical death: the second death, eternal damnation.

To understand the truth of this matter, we must look most carefully at the cross. A supremely important cry came from Jesus shortly before He died physically. The words He cried were, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30).

What was finished? He was still physically alive. He still retained most of His blood. The answer is that the penalty placed upon Him because of our sins, which He bore, had been fully paid. He had finished making payment for sin. As we learned earlier, His physical death could not have been part of the payment. If His physical death had been part of the payment, then those whom He came to save could not experience physical death.

How then are we to understand all of the events that followed His cry, "*It is finished*"?

Prior to Jesus' cry, "*It is finished*," Christ had been suffering intensely as God poured His wrath upon Him. In the Garden of Gethsemane, before any man had laid a hand on Him, in His agony, sweat poured from His body like great drops of blood (Luke 22:44). We read in Matthew 26:38, that He cried, "*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.*" Matthew 26:39 tells us:

*And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Jesus was drinking the bitter cup of the eternal wrath of God that we, those whom He came to save, should have drunk.

His suffering reached a climax when He cried from the cross, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46). All of these verses tell us that Jesus was experiencing the full wrath of God that would have been experienced by those He came to save.

When Jesus cried, "*It is finished*," God's justice had been satisfied. There was no more penalty to be paid.

How, then, are we to look at His physical death and His burial? We read in Matthew 12:40, "*so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" Is the phrase, "*the heart of the earth*," like the phrase "*the lower parts of the earth*" in Ephesians 4:9, a synonym for hell? Is it true that the three days and three nights include the whole period of time from Thursday evening in Garden of Gethsemane until Sunday morning when Jesus arose?

These are true statements. Yet when Jesus said, "*It is finished*," it was late on Friday afternoon, less than twenty-four hours after He had begun His suffering for our sins. How can these apparently contradictory facts be harmonized?

### **Two Parts to the Atonement**

They can be harmonized if we understand that there were two parts included in the atonement. The first part was the actual suffering of the torments of hell when Christ experienced the awful wrath of God. This part began in the Garden of Gethsemane and ended when Christ cried, "*It is finished*." The second part was the time during which Christ gave evidence or proof that He had indeed fully paid the penalty for our sins. This part began at the time He cried, "*It is finished*," and ended with His resurrection.

These two parts were an integral part of the atonement and, therefore, identify with the three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Let us carefully examine all that occurred immediately following His cry, "*It is finished*." We will be given a number of proofs that the payment for sin had been fully paid at the moment he cried, "*It is finished*."

The first proof that the payment for sin had been fully paid at the moment He cried, "*It is finished*," is that immediately after this, in His spirit, He left His body, that is, He physically died. We read in Luke 24:46:

*And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.*

As we ponder this information, we must keep in mind that Jesus came as the Son of God and took on a human nature so that as the Son of God and Son of Man, He would bear our sins. When God was punishing Him for our sins, He had to be punished as the God-man. In His perfect divinity as well as in His human nature, He was punished for our sins.

When He declared, "*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*" (Luke 23:46), He was no longer a complete



personality hanging on the cross. Earlier, He had promised the thief next to Him, which we read in Luke 23:43, "*And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*" Therefore, when the thief died, his body was still on the cross, but in his soul or spirit essence, he had gone to heaven because that is paradise. That is the experience of every true believer; at the moment of death, our soul leaves our body and goes to reign with Christ in heaven.

Therefore, it should be obvious that when Jesus commended His spirit into the hands of His Father, He no longer was a complete personality while His body still hung on the cross. Some part of His personality had left His body and went to heaven. Significantly, we read the word "body" in Matthew 27:58-59, Mark 15:43 and 45, Luke 23:52 and 55, Luke 24:3, and John 19:38 and 40. God is surely underscoring the importance of the word "body." John 19:38 is typical of these verses:

*And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the **body** of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the **body** of Jesus.*

In His spirit, He went to heaven. His **body** was placed in the tomb. Thus, from that moment, He was no longer a complete personality. Therefore, He could not have been making payment for sin.

Instead, His physical death was evidence or proof that He had been under the curse of God, as Galatians 3:13 declares, "*Christ hath redeemed 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.*" We learned earlier that the physical death of Adam was the proof that he and all mankind had come under the curse of God.

Furthermore, when Jesus commended His spirit into the hands of His Father, it was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 16, which is quoted in Acts 2:27, where we read:

*Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell,*

Until Jesus cried, "*It is finished,*" as a whole personality, He was in hell. That is, He was being punished as God's wrath came upon Him. When He cried, "*It is finished,*" He had received the full penalty of God's wrath. As the Son of God and as the Son of Man, He had suffered the totality of God's awful wrath which should have been poured out upon those whom Jesus came to save.

Thus, He was no longer under the wrath of God, and in His Spirit, He left His body on the cross and went to heaven. This proved that He had finished His work of paying for the sins of the elect. Acts 2:31 uses language that speaks of this truth:

*He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, . . . .*

Effectively, God is declaring that the proof that Christ could be resurrected is that He, in His Spirit or soul, had gone to be with the Father.

### **Blood and Water Flow from Jesus' Body**

The second evidence or proof that the penalty for sin had been fully paid is seen in the action of the soldier when he thrust his spear into the side of Jesus' dead body. John 19:34 declares:

*But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.*

In this action, God demonstrates that the payment for sin had been fully paid. The spear in the hands of the soldier represents the law of God that judicially found Jesus guilty. All of the sins that were laid on Him were violations of the law of God. When Jesus comes at the end of the world to bring judgment upon the wicked, we read in Revelation 19:15 that, "*out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations.*" According to Ephesians 6:17, that Sword is the Word of God.

So, too, Jesus was smitten for our sins. The Word of God established His guilt.

Wonderfully, because He was pierced for our sins, blood and water flowed from Him. The blood showed that He had indeed given His life for our sins. The water represented the Gospel. Jesus says in John 7:37-38:

*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

The Gospel flows from the atonement, from the fact that Christ had fully paid for the sins of all whom He had come to save.

Thus, the event of the thrust spear is a second dramatic proof that the payment for sin had been fully paid.

The third evidence or proof that the penalty had been fully paid when He cried, "*It is finished,*" is seen in

His burial. After his death, man is buried, which is evidence or proof that physical death has occurred; and Christ, in His body, was buried as proof that He had physically died and which, in turn, was proof that He had been under the curse of God and, therefore, the wrath of God.

### **Jesus' Body Did Not Corrupt**

The fourth evidence or proof that the penalty had been fully paid when He cried, "*It is finished*," is seen in the fact that His body did not corrupt. As we learned earlier, the bodies of believers are completely subject to corruption because the final impact of the atonement is not applied to our personalities until we receive our glorified spiritual bodies, which will happen in the resurrection on the last day.

But, Christ's body did not see corruption. We read in Acts 13:35:

*Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

Before he cried, "*It is finished*," Jesus was under the curse of God; He was being punished for our sins, which had been laid upon Him. Once the payment had been fully made, there was no more curse, no more wrath of God, no more payment to be made. The evidence of this is seen in the fact that His body did not corrupt.

Moreover, the fact that His body did not decay in the tomb proved that no more work had to be done in His mission to save us. In the Garden of Gethsemane, sweat was pouring from His body. Sweat is produced by work being done. In the atonement, Christ was doing all the work that was required to save us. In the tomb, His body rested. No work was being done because the atonement had all been completed when Jesus said, "*It is finished*."

The fifth and final proof or evidence that the payment had been fully paid is seen in the resurrection of Christ. His resurrection proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the payment for sin had been fully paid.

It is wonderful to note that God says in Acts 1:3:

*To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*

Even as God gave many proofs that Jesus had risen, so, too, He gave many proofs before the resurrection that the penalty for sin had been fully paid. These proofs are so important that God speaks of Jesus' experience from the Garden of Gethsemane until the resurrection as His being in the heart of the earth.

Returning to Romans 6:4, we read, "*we are buried with him by baptism into death*." Even as the burial of Christ following His physical death was the evidence that He had been under the wrath of God, so, too, we have been baptized (washed) of our sins and were identified with Him in His burial as evidence that we had been under the wrath of God.

Likewise, we read in Romans 6:5:

*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.*

That is, our sins were completely washed away by Christ as He experienced the second death, the eternal wrath of God. That He had fully paid for these sins is evidenced by Christ's resurrection. Therefore, we who have become saved experience the resurrection from spiritual death into eternal life as evidence that all of our sins have been paid for.

Even so, the fact that we, at the time of salvation, were given brand new resurrected souls in which we have eternal life, is **proof** that we have had our sins completely washed away. Later in our study, we will further develop this point.

Thus, we can understand Colossians 2:11-12:

*In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

When Jesus was baptized (washed) of our sins, our sins were washed away. This is so because those sins of which He was washed were my sins and the sins of all who believe on Him. And so, even as He was buried and rose again as evidence that He had endured the second death, so we are buried with Him and are risen with Him. Or, to say it in a slightly different way, our sins were cut off (circumcised) when Christ had the sins cut off by paying for them. We identify in His washing (baptism) when He experienced the second death which was proven by His physical death and by His burial.

We can now understand Romans 6:6, where we read, "*our old man is crucified with him*." Our old man

includes both our body and our soul. Judicially, in our whole personality, our sins have been washed away. Thus, we stand guiltless before God because we have been robed with Christ's righteousness. This is so even though we are still troubled by sin because in this life, we have not yet received our resurrected bodies.

How then are we to understand I Corinthians 15:29, where we read:

*Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?*

The baptism spoken of in this verse is the washing Jesus experienced as He paid for our sins, but the baptism or washing is on behalf of our whole personality, not just on behalf of our souls, which are eternally renewed at the moment of salvation. That washing (baptism) is also on behalf of our spiritually dead bodies. The proof that our dead bodies are included in this washing is seen in the fact that on the last day, they will be resurrected as glorified bodies, which I Corinthians 15 emphasizes so well.

### ***We Must Be Baptized***

Now we can understand why Jesus states in Mark 16:16:

*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

Obviously, baptism is a condition which must be met in order that we might be saved. Of course, this cannot be speaking of water baptism for no amount of physical water will wash away our sins. It has to refer to the washing (baptism) that Jesus experienced when He paid for our sins. If a person's sins had not been laid upon the Lord Jesus, so that Jesus endured the wrath of God for that person's and his sins were washed away, that person could not become saved. But all who do become saved are saved because their sins were laid upon Jesus. By enduring the wrath of God as payment for those sins, Jesus had the sins washed away. Thus, the condition of baptism (washing) has been met for that individual, and when the Holy Spirit applies God's salvation to the life of that individual, he is saved. The evidence of salvation is the presence of faith in the believer's life. This faith is a result of God having saved us.

Likewise, the baptism spoken of in Acts 2:38 is exactly the same as that of Mark 16:16. Acts 2:38 records:

*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Again, we must understand that water baptism is not in view. It can only be the baptism (the washing) which we experienced as Jesus had our sins, which had been placed on Him, washed away. Only when God applies this washing to our lives are we saved.

The command to repent and be baptized is equivalent to the command Paul gave to the Philippian jailer when he was told he must believe.

Those who were spoken to in Acts 2:38 as well as the jailer were spiritually dead. To be washed of their sins or to come into a condition of believing on Christ was something of which they were totally incapable. Likewise, there was the command to repent. It is true that an unsaved person can turn away from this or that sin, but the repentance that is a result of salvation is that we must be altogether turned to go in the opposite direction from which we had been going. A spiritually dead person cannot do this.

To believe, to be baptized (washed of all sins), to repent, therefore, are all things that must be performed by God. He must wash away our sins; He must give us a new resurrected soul so that our life will be turned around from serving self to serving God; He must give us faith so that henceforth we will altogether believe God, that is, as it were, we hang our whole life on God, trusting that all that the Bible declares is true and authoritative.

In like manner, we can now understand the command given to Saul of Tarsus after he had been blind for three days, following his encounter with Jesus. We read that Ananias said to Paul in Acts 22:16:

*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

Some might conclude that this verse is a proof text that water baptism is a condition for salvation. But as we have already learned, that is not possible. In fact, water is not mentioned in this verse nor in its context any more than water is mentioned in Acts 2:38. The fact is that the devout Ananias by God's authority commanded Paul to rise (to become spiritually resurrected) and to be baptized (to have his sins washed away). Saul, of course, could not do these things. Only God can, and so we can understand that this is the moment of salvation for him. But it was not because he had made any contribution to his salvation. God must perform all of the work of raising him up and washing away his sins.

The proof that this was the moment when God saved Him is seen in the language of Acts 9:18:

*And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.*

The scales that fell from his eyes remind us of the language of II Corinthians 3:14-16:

*But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.*

In other words, the falling of the scales from the eyes of Paul means his spiritual eyes have become opened. He has become saved. His sins have been washed away.

### ***The Israelites Were Baptized into Moses***

Another reference to baptism is found in I Corinthians 10:1-5. There we read of the Israelites being baptized into Moses by the cloud and the sea. I Corinthians 10:1-5:

*Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*

This passage indicates that in a physical way all of the Israelites were under the same cloud with Moses and, therefore, were facing God as the judge even as Moses did. The cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that stayed with Israel throughout their forty years in the wilderness was a constant reminder that they had to answer to God for their sins. The overshadowing presence of God as the judge was revealed by the presence of the cloud. In this passage, Moses is a picture of Christ Who because of our sins was under the judgment of God. Israel, who represents all believers in this passage, is in principle also under the judgment of God because we are identified with Christ as He bore the wrath of God for our sins. Therefore, we are washed (baptized) in Christ even as Israel was identified with Moses in the cloud.

Likewise, all of the Israelites passed through the Red Sea with Moses. The Red Sea was a picture of hell. Moses, in this account, is also a picture of Christ. Moses passed through the Red Sea and so did Israel with Moses. That is, Christ endured the wrath of God for our sins (went through the Red Sea), and, therefore, we who are saved (typified by Israel), have also been washed or cleansed in Christ (Moses) because in Him we, too, have passed through the Red Sea (hell).

Thus, both Moses (Christ) and the Israelites (those who are saved) have gone through hell and come out of hell (Christ rose again) because Christ fully paid the penalty demanded by God for our sins.

The Egyptians who typified the unsaved were drowned in the Red Sea, thus typifying the second death, eternal damnation. But Israel was baptized (washed) into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (I Corinthians 10:2). They were not destroyed by God the judge nor by the Red Sea as were the Egyptians because Christ was with them and actually bearing the wrath of God.

Even so, when we have been cleansed of our sins, we become identified with Christ as He faced God as judge and as He successfully came out from eternal damnation because He had paid the full penalty demanded by God's law in payment for our sins. Therefore, as the Israelites were baptized into Moses, the believer who has been cleansed of his sin is baptized into Christ.

The third picture set forth in these verses is that of Christ as the rock from which flowed the water of the Gospel. Israel again is used as a portrait of all who become saved because they receive eternal life from Christ. They drank of the water of the Gospel and, therefore, will never thirst again (John 4:14).

The closing statement of this passage emphasizes that even though Israel was a portrait of all believers, they themselves remained under the wrath of God because they never became saved.

### ***Summary of What We Have Learned***

Let us summarize what we have learned. Thus far, we have discovered the following truths:

- The word baptism is used to connote "cleansing" or "washing" in the New Testament. The word baptism is used also to address the Old Testament washings which were done to obtain spiritual cleansing. Baptism never signifies dipping nor immersion.
- In the Old Testament, as part of the ceremonial law, three methods were employed to indicate spiritual cleansing.
- The shedding of blood.

- An offering by fire.
- Burnt offering.
- Touching coals on altar.
- Incense burned on coals from altar.
- Washing or bathing.
- None of these acts in themselves could provide spiritual cleansing. They received their value as shadows pointing to the cleansing which would be provided by Jesus' death and resurrection.
- Jesus came on the scene to provide the eternal cleansing foreshadowed in the Old Testament law. He came with two roles to fulfill:
- Although He Himself was without sin, He so identified Himself with sinful man that it was as if He, too, needed cleansing. He became sin for us. Therefore, He became the Lamb that was to be killed and offered as a burnt offering to expiate the sins of the world.
- He came as the high priest who was to offer the Lamb.
- Because Christ's priesthood was foreshadowed by the Aaronic priesthood, He had to be ceremonially cleansed and anointed before He could carry out His duties as high priest.
- Because Christ was not of the tribe of Levi, the cleansing and anointing could not be accomplished in the temple. Rather, it took place when He was baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist.
- His anointing was followed by the Holy Spirit descending upon Him.
- John's baptism, as well as the baptism offered by the disciples of his time before the time of the cross, was of the same nature as the Old Testament ceremonial washings although they were far more vibrant in meaning inasmuch as the cross had come so close. All of the Old Testament washings, together with the baptisms performed by John the Baptist and by the apostles, were shadows pointing to the cleansing which would be provided by Christ on the cross.
- When Jesus went to the cross, He was cleansed or purged of all the sins He had taken upon Himself. Thus, He provided eternal cleansing for all who have placed their trust in Him as their sin-bearer. Moreover, He fulfilled all of the Old Testament shadows which were pointing to the cleansing action of the cross.
- The term "the shedding of blood" is a figure or speech used to emphasize the enduring of the second death, eternal damnation.
- Those who become saved are baptized (washed) into Christ's death. That is, when Christ paid for their sins by enduring hell on their behalf, it was as if these individuals were enduring hell.
- The physical death of Jesus, the sword thrust in His side, His burial, and His resurrection are evidences or proofs that He had indeed fully paid for our sins.
- All of the references which we have thus far studied in which the Greek word *baptizo* or *baptismos* are translated "baptism" or "baptize" have in view spiritual baptism, the washing performed by God saving us.

There is another aspect of baptism we must examine. That is, the subject of "baptism in the Holy Spirit." Among the last words Jesus spoke before He went back to heaven are found in Acts 1:5, where He declares:

*For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*

We will carefully examine the significance of this phrase in the next chapter.

## Chapter 2

Way back in the days of Isaiah, God made a mysterious promise to the Israelites. He declared in Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." In Isaiah 32:14-18, He uses

almost identical language:

*Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgement shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.*

In both of these passages, God promises that the time will come when the Holy Spirit would be poured out.

The prophet Joel reiterated this promise when he declared in Joel 2:28:

*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.*

These Old Testament promises appear to envision a time when God, the Holy Spirit, would have a relationship to believers decidedly different from that of Old Testament days.

### ***The Baptism with the Holy Spirit***

When Jesus appeared on the scene, John the Baptist announced Him and declared that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:11:

*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.*

Is John's statement here related to the Old Testament promises of pouring out of the Holy Spirit? We will learn that this is so. Jesus Himself also spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit. He did not use the phrase "pour out" as did the prophets, but He did say that the Holy Spirit would come from the Father. John 14:26:

*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

The Old Testament prophets had declared that God would pour out the Spirit. Thus, the baptism with the Holy Spirit, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the sending of the Holy Spirit surely are speaking of one and the same event.

When was this event that was to occur? Jesus spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit, and He declared that He was not to come until Jesus' humiliation was ended. That is, the Holy Spirit was not to come until after the cross. He says that those who believed on Him were to receive the Holy Spirit. We read in John 7:39:

*But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*

Jesus further emphasized that the Holy Spirit would not come until He had gone from this earth. John 16:7:

*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

The Counselor or Comforter is clearly identified as the Holy Spirit whom the Father would send in Jesus' name. John 14:26:

*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

To make the question a bit more complicated, Jesus declares in John 14:17, as He speaks of the Spirit of Truth:

*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

How are we to understand all of these references to the Holy Spirit?

It would surely appear that the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies that God would pour out the Holy Spirit, the baptism with the Holy Spirit by Jesus, and the sending of the Comforter to the believers all focus on one event that was to take place after Christ had returned to heaven.

Therefore, when Jesus had finished His cleansing work on the cross, and He was ready to ascend into heaven, the time was almost ripe for the fulfillment of these promises. Jesus at that time declared to the

disciples, "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5).

### **Pentecost**

Then the great event known as Pentecost occurred. Many of the believers and disciples were gathered together. Suddenly, there was a sound like the rush of a mighty wind, tongues as of fire rested upon each of them, and the disciples began to speak in foreign languages.

Was this a fulfillment of Jesus' promise of Acts 1:5 that before many days they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit? This event occurred a few days after Jesus left the disciples. It occurred in Jerusalem where the disciples had been told to wait for the baptism.

Peter clearly identified the events of Acts 2 with Jesus' promise concerning the Holy Spirit. Peter said in Acts 2:33:

*Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.*

Remember that Acts 1:4-5 indicates that the promise from the Father was the baptism with the Holy Spirit. We know, therefore, that Pentecost was the fulfillment of the promise that Jesus would baptize with the Spirit.

Peter also identified the tremendous event of Pentecost with the promise of Joel. We read in Acts 2:16-17:

*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.*

Thus, it can be seen that the Old Testament promises concerning the pouring out of the Holy Spirit were fulfilled at Pentecost. Likewise, the promises of John the Baptist and Jesus that believers would be baptized with the Holy Spirit were also fulfilled by the same event at Pentecost. Without question, this, too, was the fulfillment of Jesus' promise that the Comforter would come after Jesus had returned to heaven. Therefore, we must conclude that the language that speaks of the gift of the Holy Spirit is speaking of the identical event which is spoken of as the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

### **The Experience of Cornelius in Acts 10**

How do the events of Pentecost relate to believers who were saved after Pentecost? Since our study thus far has shown that the language which speaks of the gift of the Holy Spirit has reference to the same event as the language which speaks of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, we would logically conclude that believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit when they are given the Spirit. Or, to put it another way, when we say that the believer has been given the Holy Spirit, we could say that he was baptized with the Spirit or cleansed by the Spirit.

In fact, Peter specifically relates the gift of the Holy Spirit, as given to Cornelius and his friends, to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Peter said in Acts 11:15-17:

*And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?*

Surely we can know for a certainty that the gift of the Holy Spirit is in the giving of eternal life to the believer and that it is the identical experience as that which is spoken of as the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

### **When Does the Believer Receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?**

When does the phenomenon of receiving the Holy Spirit or baptism with or by the Holy Spirit occur in the believer's life? The apostles and the believers who were with them appear to have experienced it some time after they were saved. Can this be a possible situation with a believer today? Can he become a born again child of God and then at some later date receive the gift of the Holy Spirit which is also termed the baptism with the Holy Spirit?

Peter declared in Acts 2:38-39 that those who repent and are baptized for the forgiveness of sins shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the*

*remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

This matches the language of John 7:39, where Jesus promises that those who believe in Him are to receive the Holy Spirit:

*But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*

This would appear to suggest that all believers are given the Holy Spirit now that the Comforter has come. If this is true, then the baptism with the Holy Spirit must be synonymous with being saved. Otherwise, some believers would be saved without having the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The experience of Cornelius recorded in Acts 10 and 11 surely places receiving the Holy Spirit as an event which is synonymous with salvation. Peter spoke of his experiences with Cornelius in Acts 11:13-15:

*And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.*

Notice how clearly the moment of salvation and the giving of the Holy Spirit are made identical in this passage. This truth is further emphasized by a description of salvation which is recorded in Titus 3:5-6:

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

Notice that in this description the reference to the Holy Spirit is "shed on us abundantly." In the New Testament, the baptism with the Holy Spirit is identical to salvation; this is reinforced in other passages. Romans 8:9 declares:

*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

In other words, if we have not been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, we cannot have been saved.

### ***Baptism with the Holy Spirit Is Synonymous with Salvation***

We can readily see that baptism with the Holy Spirit and salvation must be synonymous. To be saved means to be cleansed of our sins. Note the following passages which speak of washing or cleansing in connection with salvation.

Acts 22:16: *And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

I Corinthians 6:11: *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Revelation 1:5: *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*

Titus 3:5: *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

In all of these passages, God has focused on cleansing or washing. As we have seen, baptism is synonymous with washing or cleansing.

We can now see why Jesus was to baptize with the Holy Spirit. The cleansing made possible by Jesus' shed blood is applied to our lives by God the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell within us. When He comes into our lives, we are made clean of all our sins because of Christ's atonement on the cross where He took our sins and expiated them by shedding His blood. To be baptized with or by the Holy Spirit is to be cleansed from our sins.

John the Baptist said of Jesus, "one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Luke 3:16). The fire, that is, the burnt offering that Jesus was to become as He endured the wrath of God on our behalf, would provide the cleansing. The Holy Spirit would apply the cleansing to the lives of those who believe in Jesus.

Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:5:

*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*



The water refers to the cleansing accomplished by Jesus on the cross which is the Gospel. The Holy Spirit indicates the cleansing is to be applied to our lives by the Holy Spirit. Both of these actions are required in order for a man to be saved.

Ezekiel prophetically used language similar to Jesus in John 3. We read in Ezekiel 36:25-27:

*Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

Notice how beautifully God ties the gift of the Holy Spirit, the cleansing from sins, and the sprinkling with water together as one great promise. Jesus cleansed us. The Holy Spirit applied the cleansing by giving us a new heart, by making us born again.

Thus, we are baptized into one body by the action of the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 12:13:

*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

Therefore, to be baptized with the Holy Spirit is to have the cleansing provided by the atonement applied and made an integral part of our lives by the Holy Spirit at the moment we are regenerated, at the time we become born again or born from above.

### **Were Believers Before Pentecost Baptized with the Holy Spirit?**

That leaves us with another big question. If baptism with the Holy Spirit is synonymous with salvation, what about the believers who became saved before the events that took place at Pentecost in A.D. 33? Was their salvation in some way defective? Is this not suggested by the assertion of Jesus, recorded in John 14:16-17:

*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

Do not these verses imply that God is anticipating a substantial change in His salvation program beginning with Pentecost?

In fact, there was a substantial change, but it was not in regard to the **nature** of salvation. It had to do with the **extent** of God's salvation program.

Before Pentecost, only a few people believed and only a few people were qualified to be prophets, to declare God's Word. But beginning at Pentecost, it was God's plan that there was to be an explosion of believers and each believer was to be mandated and qualified to bring the Gospel. **That qualification is included in the phrase "baptized with the Holy Spirit."** Because this change in God's divine economy did not take place until Pentecost, it could be said that the apostles prior to Pentecost must still be baptized with the Holy Spirit as a future event.

Actually, the great event of Pentecost which officially began God's magnificent plan to save people all over the world was attended to by a change in the role of the believer so that he became a part of this plan. Not only was the believer the recipient of the mercy of God as God baptized (washed) him with the Holy Spirit, but he also became an integral part of the furtherance of that plan.

Remember we learned earlier that at Pentecost God poured out His Holy Spirit. That language reminds us of pouring out water from a bucket. And that is exactly the picture that God is giving us. God declares in Isaiah 35:1:

*The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.*

God continues in verses 6-10:

*Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing*

*shall flee away.*

The teaching is that before the Gospel came to the world, it was a spiritual wilderness. It was a spiritual desert. When water is poured on the desert sand, plants begin to grow. The water is the Gospel as it is applied by the Holy Spirit to the lives of those Christ came to save. The plants that spring forth are those who become saved as they hear the Gospel.

How is the Gospel to be brought to a world that is a spiritual desert? God, of course, could have used angels or He could have saved all whom He wished to save without the help of anyone else.

### ***Believers Become the Means by which the Gospel Goes into All the World***

In God's divine economy, He chose to use believers as the means of bringing the Gospel to the world. The Holy Spirit was poured out like water into the lives of the believers so that they could be the little buckets, as it were, to carry the Gospel to the world. God spoke of this fact by using the language of being filled with the Spirit. The believers are filled with the Holy Spirit so that they are being used by God to carry out His task of evangelizing the world.

Before Pentecost, very few believers were called prophets. Abraham, Noah, David, and Jeremiah, etc., were called prophets. Prophets were mandated to prophecy, and the word they were to prophecy was the Word given to them by God. Because it was not God's plan to evangelize the world until after the time of the cross, the average believer was not mandated or qualified to be a prophet.

God spoke of the qualification to be a prophet as being filled with the Spirit. It is true, as we learned earlier in this study, that every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, he would not be a true believer, but we do not read of every Old Testament believer being a prophet or being filled with the Spirit.

At Pentecost, every believer received the mandate to be a prophet. We read in Acts 2:17-18:

*And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.*

Thus, beginning at Pentecost, every believer became filled with the Spirit, that is, he became qualified and mandated to be a prophet. This is in sharp contrast to the few who before Pentecost were filled with the Spirit so that they could declare a message from God. Examples are John the Baptist who was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15), because he was to announce the Messiah who would come. We read that his mother Elizabeth *"was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out..."* (Luke 1:41-42). Also, we read that his father, *"Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel"* (Luke 1:67-68). These together with a few others were the exceptions.

Significantly we do not read of the apostles being filled with the Holy Spirit prior to the time of Pentecost. They were being trained to evangelize, as Jesus taught them, and they were sent out two by two, but they could not officially begin the task assigned to all believers until Pentecost. On that day, *"they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak . . . "* (Acts 2:4).

In John 20:22-23, Jesus commissioned ten of the disciples to be the beginning of the New Testament church:

*And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

But God would not officially begin the New Testament church until Pentecost at which time the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Thus, we may conclude that the language of the Bible that declares that we are to be baptized in the Holy Spirit incorporates two aspects of God's salvation plan. First, it means the believers' sins are washed away. Second, it means that we are qualified and mandated to proclaim the Gospel to the world. The disciples had had their sins washed away prior to Pentecost but they were not mandated nor qualified to bring the Gospel until they were filled with the Holy Spirit on that day of Pentecost.

Therefore, we can be assured that we are not to seek some kind of second blessing after we are saved. At the moment of salvation, our sins are washed away; we are born from above; we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit; we are given faith; we are given repentance; and we are filled with the Spirit. Because we are filled with the Spirit at the moment of salvation, we are also qualified and mandated by God to bring the Gospel to the world.

As we continue our study, other questions should be addressed. What does the Bible say about water baptism? Is it commanded of God? Who is to be baptized with water? What is the Biblical way to apply water baptism? Is there a spiritual blessing inherent in the act of water baptism? These are some of the questions we will address in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3

We have learned that the word "baptize" means to wash, to cleanse, to purify. It is entirely synonymous with many Biblical statements that associate washing or cleansing with the washing away of our sins when we become saved. Ezekiel 36:25 says it so well:

*Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.*

We have also learned that ordinarily when we see the word "baptize" in the Bible, it is pointing to the washing away of our sins. It is normally not speaking of water baptism. Only if the context clearly points to water baptism are we to understand that the shadow which is water baptism is in view.

There are other questions that we must face. What about water baptism? What does the Bible have to say about water baptism? Who should be baptized? Is baptism a condition for salvation? Does water baptism initiate or guarantee salvation?

### **Is Water Baptism a Requirement for Salvation?**

The first question we should address is: Is water baptism in any way a condition for salvation? This question is very valid because Mark 16:16 teaches:

*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

And in Acts 2:38, God declares:

*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

We read in John 3:5:

*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

There appears to be plenty of evidence that water baptism must be experienced as part of the salvation process.

But water baptism is a work that we do. And the Bible warns that salvation is solely the work of God. Ephesians 2:8-10:

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

### **There is One Baptism**

The solution to the question comes when we go back to first principles. The Bible insists that there is one baptism (Ephesians 4:5). How are we to understand this?

We can understand this when we realize that there can be something that is substantive and actual, but it also may cast a shadow. Earlier we used the analogy of a tree. A tree is substantive and actual. A tree may cast a shadow that is altogether identified with the tree but has no substance at all in itself. So, too, the baptism (washing away of sins) performed by God is substantive and actual. But water baptism is only a shadow of the action performed by God. Water baptism is identified with baptism (washing) with the Spirit so that there is one baptism. Water baptism is the shadow so it has no substance in itself.

Earlier in our study, we learned that the ceremonial washings of the Old Testament were shadows of the washing away of sins that would be accomplished by the coming Messiah. So, too, the baptism with water is a shadow of the washing away of our sins which is accomplished by Christ's payment for our sins. The shadow, water baptism, is, therefore, a sign that points to the washing away of the sins of the one who became saved; or it points to the hope that some time in the future the individual baptized may become saved. There is no substance in the act of water baptism.

Therefore, when the New Testament uses the word "baptism" it ordinarily must be understood to mean the act of God washing away our sins. Thus, Mark 16:16 is declaring that there are two conditions which give evidence of salvation: God has given us a faith whereby we have come to trust God as our Lord and Savior; and our sins have been washed away; that is, we have been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

An interesting usage of the word "baptism" is found in I Peter 3:21, where the Bible records:

*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

Actually, the baptism that is in view must be spiritual baptism because we know that water baptism can never save. This verse is explaining that spiritual baptism does not put away the filth of the flesh, as the shadow water baptism does. Rather, it gives us the answer of a good conscience toward God; that is, our conscience can no longer accuse us of being under the wrath of God because our sins have been washed away. The proof of this washing away of our sins is that Christ was resurrected which in turn proves that He had fully paid for the sins of those whose sins were washed away.

Likewise, Acts 2:38 indicates that we are to repent and be baptized. Repentance is a gift of God (Acts 5:31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins"). Baptism for the remission of our sins is God's act as He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit; that is, He cleanses us of our sins.

In John 3, Jesus declares that we are to be born again (the better translation is "born from above"). He states that we are to be born of water and the Spirit. The water cannot be a reference to the physical water of baptism since there is no salvation substance in that act. The Bible shows us that it is the water of the Gospel. Jesus told the Samaritan woman in John 4:14:

*But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

And in John 7:37-38:

*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

That water of which we are to drink and which flows from the believer is the Gospel as it is applied by the Holy Spirit to the life of the individual He is saving. Remember that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). The Word of God is the Gospel which we must hear as a prerequisite for salvation.

In other words, God is declaring in John 3:5 that we will become saved when we have heard the Gospel and it is applied to our hearts by the action of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, under no circumstances are we to countenance the idea that water baptism is in any way a condition for salvation. In Acts 10 we read of the conversion of Cornelius. **After** he had been converted, he was baptized in water.

### **Saul of Tarsus is Baptized**

Earlier in our study reference was made to the salvation of Saul of Tarsus who became Paul. After he had been arrested by God, as he journeyed to Damascus, he was without sight for three days during which time he was praying. A devout believer named Ananias was sent to him and declared in Acts 9:16-18:

*For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.*

Do these verses insist that we are to be baptized to wash away our sins? Indeed, they do, but water baptism cannot wash away sins. Only the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the spiritual washing performed by God, can wash away sins. Saul, therefore, is being told that he must be baptized by the Holy Spirit so that his sins might be washed away. In Titus 3:5, we read:

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

In Ephesians 5:26-27, God declares:

*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to*

*himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Only God can wash away sins, and He does so as He applies the water of the Word to our lives.

This emphasizes the principle that when we read the word "baptize" in the Bible, we ordinarily must first think of it as a word that identifies with the action of God in washing away our sins. This principle is quite contrary to what we commonly think. Usually, when we see the word "baptize" in the Bible, we think of water baptism.

Indeed, there are many references to physical water baptism. We read of John the Baptist and the disciples baptizing, of the Ethiopian eunuch being baptized by Philip, the family of Cornelius by Peter, the Samaritans of Acts 8 by Philip, the jailer of Philippi and all his by Paul, Lydia and her household by Paul, the twelve Ephesians of Acts 19 by Paul, Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanus by Paul.

However, when God commands the unbeliever to be baptized, as He does in Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38, the command becomes synonymous with the command to become saved, and only God can save. Only He can wash away our sins. The command to be baptized in the Spirit is an action which only God can do.

Likewise, we can understand I Corinthians 12:13:

*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

We are baptized, that is, washed of our sins when we become saved. The cleansing of our sins places us into the body of believers which God also speaks of as the body of Christ.

### ***Baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit***

The command of Matthew 28:19 is especially interesting because in it God commands all believers to teach and to baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The verse declares:

*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in ["into" is the correct translation] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

Is water baptism in view or baptism in the Spirit? The parallel passage of Mark 16:15-16 helps us to know:

*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

The teaching and the preaching are to take place worldwide so that as many as possible will hear the Gospel. Of those who hear, there will be some who will believe and be baptized. The fact that they have believed and the fact that they were baptized (their sins were washed away), are the result of the action of God working in their lives. Therefore, the command of Matthew 28:19 effectively declares that we are to teach the Word of God so that through the Word there will be those who will be baptized (that is, their sins will be washed away).

Additionally, this very significant verse teaches that those who become saved are washed (baptized) into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. God is teaching that salvation brings us into a most intimate union with God in every aspect of His being. Only when we get to heaven will we understand the full glorious meaning of this verse.

Therefore, we must understand that water baptism is not in view except as a shadow of the action that God has performed or hopefully will perform. It should be easy to understand that no physical act such as water baptism can ever bring anyone into an intimate union with our triune God.

### ***How Are We to Apply Water Baptism?***

The next question we should face is in regards to the mode of baptism. Should baptism be by sprinkling, by immersion, or by water being poured on?

One would think, given the popular practice of immersion which is utilized by so many churches, that the Bible must clearly teach that immersion is the Biblical mode. But when we search the Bible carefully, we find nothing that speaks of immersion. Nor do we find any examples of believers being immersed. Nor do we find the idea of immersion associated with salvation and the washing away of our sins.

What then in the Bible is so suggestive of immersion that many believe the Bible is teaching immersion? You may remember that in Chapter 1, we showed that the Greek word *bapto* in no way teaches that

baptism means immersion (page 2). Two citations are especially used to teach immersion. The first is concerned with the baptism of Jesus. Was He immersed in the Jordan River? Did not John the Baptist baptize in the Jordan River because there was much water there? The Bible speaks of the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16:

*And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.*

Does this verse teach without question that Jesus went up out of the water, and, therefore, He must have been immersed?

This verse does not speak of immersion. This verse says He went up out of the water. How must we understand this phrase? The Biblical rule is that we are to seek help from the Bible. Doing so, we come to Acts 8:38-39, where the Bible describes the water baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. We read there:

*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. 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.*

Notice that verse 39 speaks of coming up out of the water which is the very same phrase that describes Jesus going up out of the water. What does verse 38 say? It says, "*they went down both into the water, **both Philip and the eunuch.***" Whatever action the eunuch took was an exact duplicate of that which Philip took. They **both** went down into the water. To make sure that we have not misunderstood, the emphasis is added, **both** Philip and the eunuch. Therefore, if going down into the water implies immersion, then we must conclude that Philip immersed himself at the same time he immersed the eunuch. Such a conclusion, of course, makes no sense. God is simply teaching that there was a body of water, and that Philip and the eunuch both went down the bank into the water. There they stood ankle deep or knee deep (how deep is altogether unimportant), and Philip baptized the eunuch. Later in our study, we will see that the Bible suggests the mode of baptism, and it will not be immersion.

To further reinforce the teaching that going down into the water does not imply immersion, the next phrase of Acts 8:39 declares, "*And when **they** were come up out of the water.*" God frequently uses the number three to symbolically emphasize God's purpose. The threefold emphasis, **both** into the water, **both** Philip and the eunuch, **and they** were coming up out of the water, underscores that it is God's purpose that we are not to understand that immersion was the mode of baptism in this historical event. Clearly the language coming up out of the water cannot imply baptism by immersion. Since Jesus also came up out of the water after He was baptized, we must not see an implication of immersion in His baptism.

You may remember that earlier in our study we learned that Jesus had to be ceremonially washed before He could do the work of the High Priest. He was not only the Lamb that was offered, but He was also the High Priest. Do you recall that the priests were ceremonially washed before they ministered at the altar. Exodus 30:18-21:

*Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.*

The priests hands and feet were washed. That was the washing Jesus had to experience before ministering at the altar of sacrifice. Thus, we would not in any way expect that Jesus was immersed when He was baptized.

### **Does Romans 6 Teach Immersion?**

Another Bible verse that appears to imply immersion is Romans 6:3-4:

*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Many preachers emphasize that when someone is immersed into the water, he is immersed with all his sins. Then, when he is brought out of the water, his sins are left behind, and he is now free from his sins. This verse is frequently used to support such a teaching.

But, as we learned earlier in this study, these verses are not speaking of water baptism. They are speaking of the washing away of our sins that occurs when we become saved. Burial does not identify with immersion. Burial identifies with death. It is the evidence that death has occurred. We were washed of our sins because Christ in His death took our sins upon Himself. To free Himself from these sins, He had to pay the penalty demanded by the law for the sins. That penalty was not immersion. It was the second death, eternal damnation. The penalty had to be the equivalent of or equal to the punishment for all the sins of everyone for whom He came as Savior. Therefore, it was as if those of us whom He came to save were actually experiencing the second death. We were washed of our sins because we, in principle (Christ was our substitute, our stand-in), experienced the death that Christ endured. Thus, the phrase "*buried with him by baptism into death*," teaches that we are washed of our sins because we were completely and perfectly identified with Jesus as He suffered the second death, eternal damnation, on our behalf. The idea of going down into the water with our sins and coming up out of the water without our sins is foreign to the Bible. When God uses the word baptism to signify cleansing from our sins, it is always expressing the idea of washing.

Thus, Romans 6:3-4 is not teaching immersion in any sense. In fact, immersion is never used in the Bible as a synonym for salvation. On the other hand, the word baptism, which means washing, has many synonyms in the Bible which describe salvation. Cleansing, purifying, purging, and washing are some of the synonyms that frequently are used to describe salvation.

### ***What is the Biblical Method of Water Baptism?***

If immersion is not taught as the Biblical method of baptism, what else does the Bible offer concerning the Biblical method of baptism? It is true, as we saw earlier, that the Old Testament ceremonial washings included the washing of hands and feet, the washing of clothes, the bathing of the body, and the sprinkling with water. All of these were Old Testament ceremonies that pointed to the washing away of our sins by the shed blood of the coming Messiah. Is there anything in the Bible that points specifically to New Testament baptism? We have already learned that the baptism of Jesus and the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch give us no clues concerning the mode of baptism.

But the baptism of the eunuch **does** give a clue. It is not found in the language describing his physical baptism, but rather, it is found in the verses in the Bible that he was reading. Acts 8:32-33 clearly show that he was reading Isaiah 53, which describes the Messiah who was to come. Philip was brought to explain this passage to the eunuch.

The introduction to Isaiah 53 is in Isaiah 52, particularly beginning with verse 7 and continuing with the language of verses 13-15, which are an integral part of the description of the Messiah who was to come. Note the language of Isaiah 52:13-15:

*Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he **sprinkle** many nations; the kings 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.*

These verses give the clue as to why the eunuch desired to be baptized and the method by which he was baptized. Verse 15 declares, "*So shall he **sprinkle** many nations . . .*" We can imagine the eunuch's questions concerning this phrase. We can also imagine how Philip answered him using the Scriptures. He would surely have used the same Scriptures that we use as we compare Scripture with Scripture. Ezekiel 36:24-27 promises:

*For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I **sprinkle** clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

Notice God's usage of the word "sprinkle." "*Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you.*" The clean water is the Gospel that He applies to our lives when our sins are washed away. When our sins are washed away, God gives us a new spirit. This agrees with Jesus' statement, "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3:7). When we become saved, our sins are washed away, and we are given a brand new resurrected soul or spirit. Additionally, Ezekiel 36, verse 27, teaches that God's Spirit indwells us, "*I will put my spirit within you.*"

Therefore, the salvation plan which was to involve all the nations of the world is spoken of in Isaiah 52:15 as sprinkling many nations because it means that people from many nations have been sprinkled

(washed) with the Gospel so that they would be washed clean of their sins. Because many nations are being spoken of, it definitely is related to the New Testament era after the explosion of the Gospel as recorded in Acts.

When Philip explained this to the Ethiopian eunuch, he, too, wanted the outward sign of salvation which is water baptism. The sign Philip and he had been discussing was sprinkling. Therefore, the implication is very strong that after Philip and the eunuch had both gone into the pool of water, Philip sprinkled water on the eunuch as the baptismal shadow of that which hopefully had occurred in the heart of the eunuch.

A significant passage that relates sprinkling to salvation is Numbers 8, verses 5-7:

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.*

Verse 11 continues with:

*And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD.*

Verses 14-18 state:

*Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel.*

This passage beautifully points to Christ who was typified by the Levites. We who become saved are typified by the firstborn.

Jesus, who was typified by the Levites, was given as an offering on behalf of the firstborn (those whom He came to save). We who are believers have had our sins washed away by Christ giving His life for us. He was washed (sprinkled) by enduring the wrath of God.

Significantly, the ceremony which pointed to spiritual cleansing was sprinkling with water (Numbers 8:7).

Thus, we are definitely directed by God to sprinkling as the New Testament mode of water baptism.

### **Summarizing What We Have Learned**

Summarizing what we have learned about the method by which water baptism is to be performed, the following principles are in view:

- Immersion (going down into the water so that the water covers) or emmersion (coming up from under the water), is never used in a way that is related to baptism.
- Washing, cleansing, or purifying is the focus of salvation and, therefore, should be the focus of the ceremonial act of water baptism. This accords with the meaning of the word "baptism" which is washing.
- The Old Testament symbols of cleansing were sprinkling or washing. Washing could include parts of a person's body or his whole body.
- Sprinkling particularly points to New Testament ceremonial cleansing both in Ezekiel 36:25 and Isaiah 52. Therefore, it is the most desirable method of water baptism.

Now we should be ready to examine some remaining questions concerning water baptism. Who is to be baptized in water? Are we absolutely sure that there is no spiritual grace in the act of water baptism? We will examine these and other questions in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Who Is To Be Baptized with Water?**

Now we should examine the question: Who is to be baptized with water? Some churches baptize infants.



Other churches will baptize only those who make profession of salvation. What can we learn from the Bible concerning this question?

To bring forth a solution to this question, we should review God's salvation plan. A great many theologians teach that God had one plan of salvation for ancient Israel and another plan for the New Testament which continues today. They teach that Old Testament people were under the law whereas we are under grace. Therefore, citing the examples of the Ethiopian eunuch, the family of Cornelius, and the twelve Ephesians of Acts 19, they believe that water baptism is to be experienced as a public testimony at the time a profession of faith is made. They contend that the baptism of infants has no Biblical warrant.

### **One Salvation Plan**

What these people do not understand is the fact that God has only one salvation plan. Those who lived before the flood were saved just as the New Testament believer is saved. For example, we read of Noah that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8). Noah was a sinner under the law before he was saved just as we are sinners under the law before we are saved. To be under the law is to be subject to the penalty the law prescribes for sin. That penalty is eternal damnation. Only by God's grace can we be freed from that penalty. Those experiencing God's grace are freed because Christ as their substitute paid the penalty in their place.

God bestowed His grace upon Noah just as He bestows His grace upon us at the time we become saved. Before salvation Noah like all of us are under the law because the law declares that the wages of sin is death. Beginning with Adam and Eve, this Biblical principle was set forth and it will continue until Judgment Day. The only way to come from under the law is to be given the grace of God. The grace of God is the wonderful fact that Jesus took upon Himself the sins of those He chose to become saved. These chosen ones, therefore, include every person who lived at any time during the 13,000-year history of the world and who was included in the remnant chosen by grace.

Thus, those who lived in ancient Israel were saved by the blood of Christ as we today are saved by the same shed blood of Christ. Because Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), salvation was possible at any time after our first parents Adam and Eve fell into sin.

### **One Call to Perfection**

The Old Testament person was commanded to keep the law perfectly or he would be under the curse of the law. The New Testament believer is told to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48) for the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

Thus, there is one salvation plan that has existed throughout time. The only slight difference is that the Old Testament believer looked forward to the coming Savior whereas we look back upon Him as our Savior. Because Christ is the great I AM, the ever-present one, Christ is effectively the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. Therefore, the efficacy of the atonement is available in equal fashion to the Old Testament and the New Testament believers.

Not only is the salvation of the Old Testament believer identical to that of the New Testament believer, but in both situations, the believer is indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. That is why David cried out in his sin, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). That is why Romans 8:9 declares:

*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

Now it is true that Jesus says in John 14:16-17:

*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

This reference is not speaking about a different salvation program for the New Testament believer as compared with the Old Testament believer. Rather, as we learned earlier in our study about the phrase "baptized with the Holy Spirit," it is speaking about God's plan to begin to evangelize the world once Christ went back to heaven.

Remember before Pentecost of A.D. 33, believers were only occasionally qualified and mandated to be prophets. Men like Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, and John the Baptist were given such a task. While all believers were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, only those filled with the Spirit were considered to be prophets.

As we learned earlier, beginning at Pentecost, every believer was mandated and qualified to be a prophet. Like a bucket of water poured out so was the Holy Spirit poured out so that every believer became filled with the Spirit. Whereas every believer from the beginning of time was indwelt by the Holy Spirit, he was not filled with (that is, mandated and qualified to bring the Gospel) the Holy Spirit until Pentecost when the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, was poured out.

Thus, Jesus said He, the Holy Spirit, will be in you, as He prophesied that the Comforter will come. This indeed stresses one difference between the salvation plan of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Before the time of the crucifixion of Christ, it was fairly rare that anyone became saved. The Israelites perished in the wilderness because of unbelief. Whole nations existed without ever hearing the Gospel. Even after Jesus, the perfect preacher, had preached for three and a half years, there were only 120 in the upper room and 500 in Galilee.

God's plan was to have the Gospel sent into all the world as a testimony but this plan of worldwide evangelism was not to begin until Christ returned to heaven after the cross. Thus, at Pentecost, about 3,000 were saved and ever since then, God has been saving people in every nation. To accomplish this, God mandated and qualified every believer to be a prophet. He did so by making each one a vehicle to bring the Gospel to the world. In that sense, the Holy Spirit was not in the typical believer of the Old Testament. They were indwelt by the Holy Spirit but were not mandated by the Holy Spirit to bring the Gospel.

### ***The Old and New Covenants***

Another apparent difference that is stressed in the Bible is the fact that God speaks of an Old Covenant and a New Testament or Covenant. That is precisely the way that the Bible is divided. Does this imply that God has two salvation plans? That is not possible, as we have already seen. The significance of the Old Covenant versus the New Covenant is that, even as we have just learned, prior to the time Jesus went to the cross, very few people became saved. Even though God set some apart for His service, as He did ancient national Israel, very few actually became saved. However, it is true that God commanded them to faithfully serve Him. God gave them many illustrations as examples of salvation, for instance, when He brought Israel out of Egypt, when He brought them through the Red Sea, and when they crossed the Jordan River.

Not only did He give them many examples of salvation, He also gave them signs that pointed to a coming Messiah who alone could save them from their sins. This was the focus of the seventh-day Sabbath, the burnt offerings, the sacrifices, the feast days, and many other commands which we call ceremonial laws.

One important ingredient that was required for salvation was seldom experienced. No matter how diligently individuals kept all of the laws set forth in the Bible, this could in no way bring about their salvation. The missing ingredient was the fact that God had to apply the Gospel to the hearts of those whom He planned to save. We read in Jeremiah 31:33:

*But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

Those like David, Abraham, and Rahab the Harlot who did become saved, were saved only because God opened their spiritual ears, broke their sin-hardened hearts, and performed a work of grace within them. These were fairly rare exceptions. As we saw when we examined the matter of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, most of Israel at any time before Jesus went to the cross remained in unbelief.

When God spoke about a New Covenant, He was not describing a different salvation plan that would be experienced by those who would become saved during the New Testament era. Rather, He was indicating that after Jesus went to the cross, there would be an explosion of individuals who were witnessed to concerning salvation and who would become saved. They would become saved because God would apply His Word to their hearts, giving them a new spirit or soul. They would become born from above which was necessary for salvation at any time in the history of the world.

The impact of the New Covenant after Jesus went to the cross is seen in the fact that on Pentecost Day in A.D. 33, about 3,000 individuals were saved. And ever since that time, many people in every nation who were given the witness of the Gospel have become saved.

Therefore, the New Covenant did not in any way change God's salvation plan for any individual. The New Covenant simply completed God's salvation plan to save people from all over the world. Those who became saved became the true Israel (Romans 2:28-29), the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), the true seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:29). That is why when God speaks of the New Covenant in Hebrews 8:10

He declares:

*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.*

We have seen thus far that God has had one salvation plan throughout the history of the world. God's salvation plan is anchored in the fact that Christ is the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. It was absolutely necessary that the sins of any individual whom God intended to save must be laid on the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, guilty with the sins of each and every one of these whom God had chosen to salvation, Jesus endured the wrath of God; He endured God's wrath on behalf of those whose sins He had taken upon Himself.

We have seen that the only difference that could be noted between the Old Testament and the New Testament is the scope of the application of God's salvation plan. Before Pentecost in A.D. 33, very few people became saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Of these, very few were given the task of serving as a prophet of God.

Beginning with Pentecost of A.D. 33, people began to be saved from every nation. And each and every one who became saved was qualified and mandated to be a prophet. Each and every one was filled with the Spirit, a technical phrase that they were to carry out God's program of evangelizing the whole world. That is why Jesus declares in John 14:17:

*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

All believers beginning with Pentecost in A.D. 33 are immediately qualified and mandated to be prophets to bring the Gospel. They have been baptized with the Holy Spirit not only because their sins have been washed away, but also they have been filled with the Spirit in the sense that they have work to do as prophets of God. And that work is to bring the Gospel to the world.

### ***The Promises of Both Covenants Are Identical***

As we compare God's Old Testament salvation plan with that of the New Testament, we see that the promises to the believers were the same. In the Old Testament, we read in Genesis 17:7:

*And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*

In the New Testament, we read in Acts 2:39:

*For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

Moreover, the command to the believing parents to instruct their children was identical in the Old Testament and the New Testament. We read in Deuteronomy 6:6-7:

*And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

In Ephesians 6:4 we read:

*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

Having said all of this, we now must look at one situation that was distinctly different for the Old Testament believer and his family compared to the New Testament believer and his family. This has to do with the sign which was to be placed on the New Testament believer and his family as compared with that which was to be placed on the Old Testament believer and his family.

### ***The Sign of Salvation was Changed***

When an Old Testament man appeared to have become saved, an outward sign pointing to the nature of salvation was to be placed upon him and all the males eight days old or older who were in his household. That sign was circumcision. Circumcision involved the shedding of blood because the foreskin of the reproductive organ was cut off. When Abraham was physically circumcised, all the males in his household were to be circumcised whether they were elect of God or not. This principle is reiterated in Exodus 12:48:

*And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males*

*be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.*

Why would God want the sign of circumcision to be placed on children in the household of the father who appeared to have become a believer? These children may not have been elect of God. Like Ishmael, if they were not elect of God they would never want salvation on God's terms, and God would never do a work of saving in their lives.

The answer to this question surprisingly is in the New Testament. In I Corinthians 7:14, God declares:

*For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.*

In this verse, the words "sanctify" and "holy" are the same word. It is a word that means being set apart for the service of God. The true believer is eternally sanctified or made holy because he is forever set apart for the service of God.

In the family where one parent has become saved, God is stating that every member of that family, in some way, has been set apart for the service of God. This includes individuals like Ishmael who obviously are not elect and, therefore, would never become saved.

In the family where one parent has become saved, God is stating that every member of that family, in some way, has been set apart for the service of God.

Every individual in that family has been brought into a relationship with God that is different from the family next door where no individuals give any evidence of having come into a saving relationship with Christ. The family with the believing parent is mandated by God to teach the children about the God of the Bible (Deuteronomy 6:7, Ephesians 6:4). Moreover, the parent who has become saved will have an intense desire for the salvation of his family members and, therefore, will be interceding through prayer to God on behalf of each member of his family, that they, too, might become saved.

Thus, every member of the family with a believing parent has come into a relationship with God that is different from the members of the family next door, where no one is teaching the Bible or praying for salvation. This is why God speaks of the family members living in a home where a parent has become saved as being holy or sanctified. That home has become a Gospel home, a covenant home. To emphasize this in the Old Testament, God commanded that all the males, beginning with children eight days of age, were to be circumcised. In referring to the necessity of salvation, God commanded in Deuteronomy 10:16:

*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.*

However, given the fact that each and every individual who is not saved is spiritually dead, he does not want to obey this command. Moreover, because he is spiritually a corpse, he cannot obey this command. Therefore, the Bible declares that God will accomplish salvation in the lives of the unsaved whom He wishes to save; this is, He will do all the work of saving their soul. We read in Deuteronomy 30:6:

*And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*

Thus, it is clear that physical circumcision was a sign or a shadow pointing to the salvation the individual had already experienced or hoped to experience. This sign or shadow was so intimately identified with salvation that the command given to Abraham in Genesis 17:10 almost sounds like the physical circumcision was in itself the condition that must be met in order to guarantee salvation for the person who was circumcised. (Later, pages 114-118, we will look at the language of Genesis 17 very carefully.)

In fact, this was the conclusion of many in ancient Israel. It was such a dominant idea that God warns in Galatians 5:3-4:

*For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

### **Physical Circumcision Never Guaranteed Salvation**

We are absolutely certain that in itself, circumcision was not an act of initiating or guaranteeing salvation for at least three reasons.

The first reason is the declaration of Ephesians 2:8-10:

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

These verses agree totally with Deuteronomy 30:6 where God declares that He will circumcise the hearts of those whom He will save.

Secondly, no women were physically circumcised. If physical circumcision were a requirement for salvation, no Old Testament women could have become saved. The sign of circumcision was placed on males because the shedding of blood and the cutting away of flesh occurred. The cutting away of flesh signified that our sins must be cut away, that our sinful nature must be removed.

Moreover, it involved the reproductive organ which pointed to the seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, who must come to shed His blood, that is, give His life in payment for our sins.

The third reason that physical circumcision could not initiate or guarantee salvation is the fact that at the time Abraham was circumcised, all the males in his house were circumcised. This included his son Ishmael who was not saved nor would he ever become saved. And yet three times in Genesis 17 God emphasizes that Ishmael was circumcised. We read in verses 23, 25, and 26:

*And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.*

*And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.*

We will develop this fact of the non-elect condition of Ishmael later in our study.

We have seen that salvation throughout history has not changed. The promises to the children of believing parents have not changed and the mandate that believing parents are to teach their children the Gospel has not changed. Now the question arises: What about the sign of physical circumcision? That certainly was not commanded for the New Testament church.

We do know that after Jesus arose from the grave, circumcision was no longer to be used as a sign in relationship to a believing family. Circumcision, like ceremonies such as burnt offerings and blood sacrifices had been completed in Christ, and, therefore, were no longer to be observed.

### ***The New Testament Sign of Salvation***

God did give a New Testament sign to be placed upon a believing family at the time a parent became a believer. We read in Acts 16:14-15:

*And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.*

Please notice that the sign of baptism was placed upon Lydia's household and not only upon Lydia whose heart the Lord had opened (that is, she truly had become saved). God does not require a description of those within her household because God had already taught that when Abraham received the sign of salvation (which was physical circumcision at that time), all of the males in his household were to receive the same sign.

God is teaching that after the cross, the women believers (typified by Lydia), were also to receive the sign of salvation which had been changed from circumcision to water baptism.

In this very instructive passage, God is teaching that after the cross, the women believers (typified by Lydia), were also to receive the sign of salvation which had been changed from circumcision to water baptism. Thus, even as all of the males in the household were to receive the Old Testament sign of salvation at the time the father was saved, in the New Testament, every member of the family, both male and female, was to receive the sign of salvation when the mother or the father came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Significantly, in the same chapter of the Book of Acts, we read of a father who became a believer. He was the jailer at Philippi. Again, when he was baptized, all of his family was baptized. Acts 16:33 assures us of this.

*And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.*

God further declares this principle in I Corinthians 1:16, where we read that the Apostle Paul baptized the household of Stephanus:

*And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.*

We see, therefore, the perfect harmony of the whole Bible. The Gospel sign was placed on the family of the Old Testament father when he became a believer. Likewise, the Gospel sign is placed on the New Testament family when either parent becomes a believer.

Thus, in the Old Testament, a sign (physical circumcision) was placed on the family of a believing father and in the New Testament, a sign (water baptism) is placed on the family of a believing parent. Remember, in both the Old and in the New Testament the fathers were to teach their children in the way of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6).

We see the emphasis upon God's purpose through use of the number three. Three examples of water baptism of the families of a believing parent are given, Lydia, the Philippian jailer, and the family of Stephanas. I do not believe it was coincidental that God tells us of three different families that were baptized at the time a parent was saved. The number three signifies God's purpose. It was God's purpose that when a New Testament parent became saved, their children were also to receive the sign pointing to salvation which is water baptism.

It is interesting that even in most churches where they do not understand that the children in the family are to be baptized when the parent is baptized, they do sense that something ought to be done in relationship to the children of believers. Therefore, they frequently establish a "Cradle Roll," or they institute a ceremony in which they dedicate their children to the Lord. Neither one of these ideas is called for in the Bible. God has given the rules. The young child of a believing parent is to be baptized. This is not to be an act of dedicating the child to the Lord. The act of baptism signifies that the child is a holy child and is to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We have learned that God has only one salvation plan for this world. The Old Testament believers looked forward to the coming Messiah who in principle was slain from the foundation of the world. The New Testament believers look back to the Messiah who did come. In both instances, the salvation that was realized was the same.

The Old Testament sign or shadow of the Gospel in the family was circumcision. The New Testament sign is water baptism.

Thus, we see very clearly the Biblical mandate that children of a believing parent are to be baptized. Sprinkling as a mode of baptism accords perfectly with this principle.

Now we should face another serious question. Many parents believe or have been taught that water baptism initiates or guarantees salvation for the one baptized. We will look at this issue and a few others in our next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### ***Baptism of Children***

We must face one other important subject related especially to the baptism of children. Many parents believe or have been taught that the baptism of an infant initiates or guarantees salvation for that infant. For example, many Lutheran churches teach that the baptism of their young children guarantees that that child has been placed into the Kingdom of God.

Unfortunately, they have fallen into the same snare that the Old Testament church fell into. The Old Testament church, to a high degree, believed that if a Jew was circumcised in the flesh, he was guaranteed a secure place in God's kingdom.

But, as we learned earlier, no physical act on our part can ever give substance to our salvation. The whole action of salvation is entirely God's action. Water baptism can never be more than a shadow or type, because it is an act that we perform. This is such a significant principle that we must examine it a bit longer..

There is one verse in the Bible that many who practice infant baptism stumble upon. It is Romans 4:11, which discusses the salvation of Abraham. It is worded in such a way that it is very easy to come to an unbiblical conclusion concerning the nature of baptism. This verse declares:

*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.*

As we read this verse, it appears to clearly state that the physical act of circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith which Abraham manifested. Since the rite of circumcision in the Old Testament was replaced by water baptism in the New, many churches teach, therefore, that baptism is a sign and a seal of salvation. Consequently, the idea is strongly conveyed that water baptism is more than a sign or shadow of salvation; it is also a seal that relates to salvation. This conclusion has very serious consequences and thus it is a question we must examine very thoroughly. Does this verse teach that water baptism is a seal?

God's usage of the word "seal" is very clearly related to a guarantee as we shall discover as we continue this study. And any guarantee of our salvation has to be entirely God's work. Physical baptism is a work that we do, and therefore it cannot be substantive in any way in connection with our salvation.

Having incorrectly understood the guaranteeing nature of the "seal," many believers, therefore, truly believe that even though salvation is by grace alone without any of man's work, yet water baptism somehow does become a guarantee of future salvation for their children.

Thus, even though they will loudly protest that works have no part in the salvation of their children, they very much like the phrase that water baptism is a sign and a seal.

This matter then becomes of utmost importance.

### ***Does Infant Baptism Initiate or Guarantee Salvation?***

As we study this question, we should look at Romans 4:11 very carefully. It is speaking of circumcision which, as we have seen, is the Old Testament equivalent of New Testament baptism.

When we read Romans 4:11 more carefully, we should note that it is not teaching that physical circumcision of Abraham was a seal of any kind any more than water baptism is a seal. Let us see why this is so.

We learned earlier that whenever we read the word "baptism" in the Bible, we can not know from that word alone whether water baptism (physical baptism) or baptism with the Holy Spirit (spiritual baptism) is in view. Only by carefully examining the context in which the word "baptism" is used can we know if physical or spiritual baptism is in view.

Furthermore, we learned that if the word "baptism" is used as a condition for salvation, or as a part of salvation, we **always** know that spiritual baptism is in view. This is so because physical baptism can never be more than a sign or shadow pointing to or representing spiritual baptism which is totally the work of God.

Moreover, we learned that a great many theologians see the word "baptism" and immediately think of water baptism. Thus, they arrive at wrong conclusions concerning the nature of salvation. They frequently end up with doctrines that emphasize that the work of baptizing in water is either a condition for salvation, or it guarantees salvation, or somehow is a part of the salvation process.

The same rules and warnings that apply to the word "baptism" also precisely apply to the word "circumcision." In fact, ancient Israel always applied the word circumcision to physical circumcision, and thus, arrived at the completely wrong doctrine that physical circumcision guaranteed salvation.

Unfortunately, in our day, the same error is frequently made by theologians. They read Romans 4:11, "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith." They believe the word "circumcision" in this phrase is physical circumcision. They, therefore, believe that physical circumcision was the seal of the faith of Abraham. And since the rite of circumcision has been replaced by the rite of baptism in the New Testament, they conclude that physical baptism must, likewise, be understood to be a seal of the righteousness of faith in the life of the one who is baptized.

The conclusion that physical baptism (water baptism) is a seal is an impossible conclusion. This is so because the word "seal" applies to a completed fact. We read in Ephesians 1:13-14:

*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 sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

The word "seal" is used here to indicate that our inheritance is guaranteed if we have become saved. At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit gives the believer a new resurrected soul in which he has eternal life. This wonderful fact, together with the fact that the Holy Spirit begins to indwell that person, is a seal or guarantee that God will complete the salvation of that individual.

In these verses, God declares that to be sealed with the Holy Spirit is an earnest or guarantee that we will receive the inheritance. In similar fashion, we read in Ephesians 4:30:

*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

What a great promise and guarantee these are! In similar fashion, in John 6:27 we read that Christ was sealed by God the Father indicating that our salvation is guaranteed in Him. In Matthew 27:66, the sepulcher was sealed indicating that all the power and authority of the Roman government would make certain that no one could open the grave in which Jesus was buried.

These few examples are given to show that the word "seal" has great substance. Therefore, physical circumcision can never be looked upon as a seal inasmuch as it has no salvation substance. Only spiritual circumcision has salvation substance.

Then how are we to understand Romans 4:11? The solution is to remember that the word "circumcision" like the word "baptism" normally refers to spiritual circumcision unless the context clearly dictates physical circumcision. When we examine Romans 4:11 very carefully, we will see that only spiritual circumcision can be in view.

Therefore, when we look again at Romans 4:11, we must understand the verse to effectively say, "And Abraham received the sign of circumcision (that is, the sign of spiritual circumcision), which (spiritual) circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had when he was uncircumcised (that is, which he had before he was physically circumcised in the flesh)." Thus, this verse is teaching that before Abraham experienced physical circumcision, he already had become spiritually circumcised (that is, his sins had already been cut off, indicating that he had already become saved). This spiritual circumcision was a seal or guarantee that he had become righteous before God; he had become saved.

The verse then teaches that after he had become saved, he received the sign of spiritual circumcision by becoming physically circumcised. Physical circumcision was a sign pointing to spiritual circumcision, the spiritual circumcision being the seal of the righteousness of faith.

In fact, in Romans 4:8-12, God uses the word "circumcision" or "uncircumcision" eleven times without indicating whether physical circumcision or spiritual circumcision is in view. When we read these verses carefully in the light of the rest of the Bible, we can know that we are to understand them as follows:

*Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision [physical] only, or upon the uncircumcision [physical] also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision [physical], or in uncircumcision [physical]? Not in circumcision [physical], but in uncircumcision [physical]. And he received the sign of circumcision [spiritual], a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised [physical]: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised [physical]; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: And the father of circumcision [spiritual] to them who are not of the circumcision [physical] only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised [physical].*

We might paraphrase these verses as follows:

"Cometh this blessedness of salvation upon the Jews only who had been physically circumcised, or upon the Gentiles also, who had not been physically circumcised? For we say that faith (the faith of Christ in saving him) was counted to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then counted? When he had become a Jew as attested to by the fact that he had become physically circumcised, or when he was still a Gentile and had not yet received physical circumcision? Not as a Jew who had received physical circumcision but as a Gentile who had not yet received physical circumcision. He received physical circumcision as a sign of his spiritual circumcision (salvation), his salvation or spiritual circumcision being a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had when he was still a Gentile and had not been physically circumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe though they be Gentiles and not having received physical circumcision as had the Jews; that righteousness might be imputed to the Gentiles also, and the father of salvation which is spiritual circumcision to them who are Gentiles who have not been physically circumcised and are not of the Jews who have been physically circumcised only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had when he was a Gentile who had not been physically circumcised."

Thus, even as it is the spiritual circumcision (the salvation) of Abraham that was the seal or guarantee of his righteousness, so, too, it is our salvation (baptism or washing away of our sins), that is the guarantee of our righteousness. Physical or water baptism can never be a seal. Surely it is a sign or shadow of our salvation but never a seal of our salvation.

### **Baptism Has No Salvation Substance**

The matter of water baptism being a sign or shadow and not having salvation substance is so important



that we should develop this principle a bit further. First of all, what do we mean when we say that baptism has no salvation substance? To understand this, we must think again of the basic facts concerning the unsaved. We must clearly recognize that before we are saved, we are spiritually dead. We are just as spiritually dead as Lazarus of John 11 was physically dead. He was a stinking corpse with no possibility of any physical life within him.

Yet when Jesus commanded, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43), Lazarus did come out of the tomb, physically alive. What contribution did Lazarus make to regaining his physical life so that he could obey Christ's command? The answer, of course, is completely obvious. He absolutely could make no contribution. Not even the slightest contribution. Therefore, when Jesus commanded this stinking corpse to come out of the tomb, He also had to give this corpse physical life, and hearing, and a will, and strength to respond to His command. Lazarus could take no credit whatsoever for the fact that he came out of the tomb alive in response to Jesus' command.

The raising of Lazarus is a dramatic picture of our salvation. Before we are saved, we are as spiritually dead as Lazarus was physically dead. Lazarus was commanded to come out of the tomb. We who are spiritually dead are commanded to believe in Christ, to repent, and to become saved.

But even as Lazarus in himself could never come to physical life, so we in ourselves can never obey the command to become

saved. Even as Jesus did all the work in raising Lazarus, so God must do all the work to give us salvation. We read in Ephesians 2:1-4:

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.*

It, too, lucidly underscores that all of the work of saving was done by Christ.

This passage very plainly parallels the account of the physical raising of Lazarus. Thus, we can know there is no work of any kind that we can do to get ourselves saved. We must rely entirely on God to do the saving. He must provide for every aspect of our salvation. He must make us aware of our sinful condition. He must make us aware of the certainty of eternal damnation as the penalty for our sins. He must give us faith that He alone can save us. He alone must accomplish the miracle of salvation within us by washing away our sins and giving us a new resurrected soul.

In other words, we can say that every aspect of our salvation that has substance is only and altogether the work of God. We can never boast that we did this or that and thus became prepared to become saved. We can never boast that it was this or that action that we performed which caused God to save us. Every aspect of our salvation is that performed by God as He saved us.

### ***The Seventh-Day Sabbath***

To underscore this exceedingly important truth, at the very beginning of time, God introduced a command that was a sign pointing to this eternally important truth. The sign was the seventh-day Sabbath. After God worked six days to create the universe, He rested the seventh day. He then gave much further information concerning this Sabbath rest when He gave Moses the law on Mount Sinai. So important was this ceremonial command that God made it a part of the ten commandments.

In Exodus 20, God gave the reason for remembering the seventh day in which no work of any kind was to be done. It was because God rested from His work of creation on the seventh day. But in Deuteronomy 5, where God gave the second account of the ten commandments, God gave another reason why no work was to be done on the seventh day. God declares in Deuteronomy 5:15:

*And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.*

What is the meaning of this? We must recall that the enslavement of Israel in Egypt under the tyranny of pharaoh is a portrait of our spiritual condition before we become saved. Being in Egypt is a picture of being under the bondage of sin and being enslaved to Satan who is typified by pharaoh. That is why in both accounts (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5), God addresses the ten commandments to those whom God has brought out of the house of Egypt, from the house of bondage (Deuteronomy 5:6). That is, it is addressed to those who believe they have been saved.

In other words, God expects the ten commandments to be obeyed in the lives of those whom He has saved. This principle is further emphasized by the fourth commandment wherein God underscores the truth that it was God who brought Israel out of Egypt by His mighty hand and stretched-out arm. It was entirely the work of God in saving Israel from Egypt. It was entirely by His strength; Israel could take no credit whatsoever for the physical salvation from enslavement in Egypt. Thus, God is teaching that the work of saving us is entirely the work of God. We can make no contribution. The same truth shines through exactly as we learned from the account of the raising of Lazarus.

To underscore the teaching of the fourth commandment, God further declares in Exodus 31:13-17:

*13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. 14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. 16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. 17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.*

Notice verse 13, where God declares, "that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you." Then note verse 14, where God says that the Sabbath is holy and that anyone who defiles it "shall surely be put to death." This solemn warning is underscored as it is repeated in verse 15.

In verses 16 and 17, God makes the point that the seventh-day sign between God and man is to be observed perpetually, that is, forever. It is an everlasting sign.

In these verses, God is emphasizing an **exceedingly important law**. The law is that it is God alone who has provided for our salvation. We are not to countenance for even a moment the idea that our work or our effort has helped to save us. Throughout eternity future (forever), we will know that the work of saving us was entirely God's work.

### ***The Seventh-Day Sabbath: A Ceremonial Law***

So important is this principle that God placed the ceremonial law concerning the seventh-day Sabbath within the decalogue.

The seventh-day Sabbath was an Old Testament sign or ceremonial law that pointed to the fact that we are not to attempt any work to become saved. Rather, we are to trust entirely on the work Christ did to save us.

Like all the other ceremonial laws that God gave in the Old Testament, which pointed to various aspects of salvation, the seventh-day Sabbath is no longer to be physically observed even as we are not to observe burnt offerings, blood sacrifices, or the Passover. God assures us of this by His statement of Colossians 2:16-17:

*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 sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come;*

Please note that despite the tremendous emphasis on keeping these Old Testament laws, God calls them shadows. That is, they are signs pointing to that which is very substantive, which is the work Christ did in saving us. The signs themselves, which were to be strictly observed before the time of the cross, were shadows. Therefore, they in themselves made no contribution to our salvation. They in themselves had no salvation or spiritual substance. However, throughout the New Testament era, we are to be reminded constantly of the seventh-day Sabbath sign as it warns that our salvation is completely the work of Christ, and we are not to think for a moment that any work we do or any effort we expend can be credited toward our salvation.

This is the reason why it is so spiritually healthy to repeatedly read the ten commandments. When we read the fourth commandment, we are not receiving an instruction as to how we are to observe God's holy day, the New Testament Sabbath. On the day Christ arose from the grave, He indicated the era of physically observing the seventh-day Sabbath had come to an end, but that Sunday was the beginning of a new era of Sabbaths. Those Sunday Sabbaths are not signs or shadows; God explains in Isaiah 58:13 that they are God's Holy Day and are not to be used in any way to pursue our will or our pleasure. (See the booklet, "Sunday: The Sabbath," which can be obtained from Family Radio). Rather, as we read about the seventh-day Sabbath we are receiving the insistent reminder that no work we do can ever be part of the salvation process. The good works we do after we are saved are simply the evidence that God

has done the work in saving us.

### **Picking Up Sticks**

The extreme importance of the law of God concerning the seventh-day Sabbath observance is highlighted by an incident recorded in Numbers 15. From that account, we learn that there was an Israelite who gathered sticks on the Sabbath day. This was indeed a very minor infraction of the law that decreed that there was to be no work done on the Sabbath. He picked up some sticks. He did not make a fire. He did not build anything. In every other way this man kept the Sabbath. Surely the energy he expended in gathering sticks was probably very minor. Perhaps he was afraid someone else might get those sticks before he claimed them. We do not know why he did this.

Then Moses asked God what penalty should be assessed against this man who so slightly violated the Sabbath day command. God gave specific judgment. Numbers 15:35 records:

*And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.*

The command of God was so insistent that we read in verse 36:

*And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.*

Why would God record this traumatic incident? Surely it is to underscore the spiritual truth. If we try in any way to add our work to the work which Christ did to save us, we are still subject to the judgment of God. It is a tremendous warning that we are saved by grace alone. We must never countenance any doctrine that makes our effort or work, however small it may be, something that assisted with our salvation.

With these solemn warnings in our ears, people who believe that they became saved because they accepted Jesus should tremble with fear. And so should those who believe that water baptism is a condition that had to be met to become saved, and those who believe that they had to become worthy or good enough to become saved. Any and all of these doctrines or practices put these people in the same danger as the man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath. The people who hold these ideas are still subject to the wrath of God.

### **The Old Testament Signs That Were Observed Were Never Called Seals**

That brings us back to the question of water baptism and the Lord's Supper being seals as well as signs. Significantly, the tremendously important laws concerning the seventh-day Sabbath were never called a seal. We should be impressed by the many references that teach the importance of not doing any work on that day. Yet repeatedly they were called a sign and in the New Testament a shadow. **They were never called a seal.**

Likewise, all of the other important laws concerning things such as feast days, sacrifices, the Passover, etc., are never called seals, but they are called a shadow in Colossians 2:17. Indeed, we read in Hebrews 10:1:

*For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.*

This passage again emphasizes that these important ceremonial laws are shadows.

Why were none of these ever called a seal? Because, as we saw earlier, a seal indicates substance. Ephesians 1:13 says the believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit, which means that an integral part of the work God has done in saving us is that He has sealed us with the indwelling Holy Spirit who already has given the believer eternal life and a new resurrected soul. This is a guarantee that He will complete our salvation. But it is God who does all the work to save us. We have not made any contribution.

Thus, we can understand that God never calls water baptism or the Lord's Supper a seal. These are activities that we do which in themselves are shadows or signs that point to glorious aspects of salvation in which God has done all the work.

Some would agree that water baptism cannot be any kind of seal or guarantee of the salvation of the person baptized. But they argue that water baptism is a seal or guarantee that God will carry out His promises of salvation for the elect of God. Let us examine this assertion.

The word seal as it is commonly used in connection with agreements is a very legal instrument placed on an agreement by the maker of the agreement. It effectively authenticates the signature of the signer of the agreement, thus guaranteeing that the terms of the agreement will be carried out.

The agreement that identifies with salvation is the Covenant of Grace. The only signer of that agreement is God Himself, and He authenticates His signature by applying His seal to it. He alone can seal the Covenant because He alone is the maker of the Covenant. No human being can seal that Covenant because humans in no way are the makers of the Covenant.

Water baptism is an action that we perform; therefore, it in no sense whatsoever can be a seal to any aspect of our salvation.

I am afraid that those who try so hard to retain the idea that water baptism is a seal are influenced partly because the reformed confessions, such as the Westminster Confession and the Belgic Confession, are held in such high regard. For example, Article 33 of the Belgic Confession declares that the Sacraments (water baptism and the Holy Supper), "are visible signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing, by means whereof God works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit."

While these Confessions as a whole are accurate declarations of many important truths of the Bible, and have served the church very well for many hundreds of years, we must remember that they are not infallible. They are not inspired by God as is the Bible.

Therefore, we must never forget that they are subject to the authority of the Bible. And the Bible will not countenance the idea that any ceremonial sign or shadow which points to some aspect of salvation can be a seal or guarantee. Never in the Bible is any Old Testament ceremony nor any New Testament ceremony ever called a seal or guarantee. This is because the ceremony is performed by our action, by our work, which is true of burnt offerings, physical circumcision, blood sacrifices, ceremonial washings, the keeping of the Passover and other feast days, water baptism, and the Lord's Supper. All of these are commanded by God but not one is ever spoken of a seal or guarantee. It appears that the authors of the Belgic Confession and the Westminster Confession misunderstood the meaning of Romans 4:11 which we looked at earlier in this study. While they certainly understood very clearly that our work can never contribute to our salvation, they apparently failed to realize that by calling the sacraments seals as well as signs they were making an aspect of our work a contribution to our salvation.

Those who hold these very fine Confessions to be accurate and authoritative demonstrate a definite reluctance to admit that the Confessions may be in error in any point. I am afraid that part of this reluctance is because they definitely do not want the language concerning the Sacraments to be changed in any way. That is, if any article of the Confession should be changed because it is not as accurate as it should be, then it is possible that the language concerning the sacraments being called signs and seals may be subject to change. Though many often loudly protest that works have no part in the salvation of their children, they very much like the teaching that water baptism is a sign and a seal. They like very much that the Sacraments are called signs and seals because that implies that the act of water baptism somehow is more than a shadow or sign. Somehow it guarantees something spiritually valuable in the life of the one baptized. Many believers who hold to these Confessions and who have a wayward son or daughter trust in the fact that their child has been baptized as an infant. After all, they reason, doesn't the Confession state that the physical act of water baptism is a seal? And isn't a seal some kind of guarantee? Without realizing it, they have moved to the same conclusion as ancient Israel who put their trust in physical circumcision. God warns in Galatians 5:3-4:

*For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

God further explains in Galatians 5:6:

*For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

Even as no work of any kind was to be done on the seventh-day Sabbath, so we are not to do work of any kind to try to be saved. We are to rest entirely in the finished work of Christ. The man who picked up a few sticks is like someone who trusts almost completely in the work of Christ to pay for his sins. But he also believes that his action, slight as it may be, has also made a contribution toward his salvation. He was stoned to death, which means that if we believe any work that we have done has contributed toward our salvation, we are still subject to damnation.

To use the language of Galatians 5:3-4, we have fallen from grace. We are making an action of ours (however small) a condition for salvation.

This emphasizes the seriousness of calling the sacraments a seal. We do the work of keeping the sacraments. It is effort we have expended. And therefore, we must be super careful that we put no substance within them. The substance is strictly in the aspect of salvation to which they point. Water baptism points to the need for our sins to be washed away. And that washing is strictly, only, and entirely

God's work. Likewise, the Lord's Supper is a shadow or sign that points us to the glorious truth that we have life because we have received it by the death and resurrection of Christ. Moreover, it points to the completion of our salvation when the marriage of the bride and the Lamb will be completed in every way.

Were the Old Testament signs such as the Passover and the seventh-day Sabbath of no consequence? After all, a shadow has no substance. In fact, they were of great importance because they were commanded by God. They were visible reminders of great and wonderful truths concerning salvation.

Likewise, the New Testament Sacraments are commanded by God as visible reminders of great and wonderful truths that relate to salvation.

They absolutely must not be regarded as seals because seals have substance. Any substance inherent in salvation is always the work of God. Therefore, we should not be surprised that in the Bible, these sacraments are never called a seal. We should be unafraid to take issue with a longstanding Confession of the church wherever it may be in error even though this might bring great criticism from those who insist that we should not change any part of these historic documents.

Before we leave the subject of the Sacraments not being seals, we must look at one other chapter of the Bible that appears to give aid and comfort to those who like the idea of the Sacraments being seals.

### ***The Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision***

In regards to circumcision, one of the most easily misunderstood chapters in the Bible is Genesis 17. In this chapter, God sets forth the account of the circumcision of Abraham. The language God has used in this chapter is such that it appears to almost certainly prove that physical circumcision is a requirement for salvation. This can be seen readily when two verses are examined. Verse 10 declares:

*This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.*

Verse 14 says:

*And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.*

The covenant spoken of is the marvelous covenant of grace as it is called by many theologians. And the covenant of grace is the Gospel.

In verses 7 and 8, we can see this very clearly.

*And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.*

When the Bible speaks about an everlasting covenant, and the giving of land as an everlasting possession, it can be speaking only of the Gospel and the salvation the Gospel brings.

Verses 10 and 14 identify the covenant with physical circumcision. In fact, verse 13 adds even more credence to the apparent necessity of physical circumcision as an integral part of the covenant.

*Genesis 17:13: He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.*

Indeed, on the basis of these verses, to a high degree the nation of Israel became convinced that because they were physically circumcised, their eternal relationship with God became secure. The verses in this chapter thus became a very severe test for Israel.

As we shall see, these verses are a severe test for believers of our day also. When this chapter is tied to Romans 4:11, which appears to teach that physical circumcision is a seal, great assurance is given that the statements in the Confessions that the Sacraments are a seal as well as a sign are altogether true.

However, as we have already learned, physical circumcision or water baptism or the Passover or the Lord's Supper cannot be seals. This is so because there can be no spiritual substance in any work that we do to try to become saved. God must do all the work.

What are we to do with these verses in Genesis 17? They appear to teach so clearly that physical circumcision is a requirement for those who wish to be included in the covenant.

As we try to understand Genesis 17, the first principle we must keep in mind is that this is the Word of God. Therefore, despite the difficulty we may experience in trying to understand it, it is what God wants us to hear.

Secondly, we must remember that God wrote the Bible so that those who want to have their own kind of

salvation program can find verses in the Bible that please them. Thus, the Bible becomes a testing arena for them.

The third principle we must keep in mind is that whatever we learn from this chapter, it cannot include the idea that any work that we do will assist in our salvation. Thus, we instantly know that the conclusion that physical circumcision is a requirement for or initiates salvation is completely unbiblical.

How then are we to understand these verses? Let us very carefully look at them. God declares to us in Genesis 17:9-11:

*And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*

The all-important information provided by these verses is that physical circumcision is "*a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*" Immediately, we are set at ease. God has defined physical circumcision as a token or a sign of the Gospel. It is a sign that points to God's salvation plan just as burnt offerings, feast days, and Sabbaths are signs or shadows that point to some aspect of God's salvation plan.

### **A Very Important Preposition**

With this knowledge, we can now begin to understand verse 13:

*He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.*

The crucial phrase in this verse is "*for an everlasting covenant.*" How must we understand the preposition "for"? In this context, it can be only understood to mean "pointing to." This is entirely permitted because in the Hebrew language which is the original language of the Old Testament, the preposition translated "for" in this verse has as a primary meaning of direction or turning towards. Thus, the phrase "pointing to" is entirely proper.

Genesis 17:13 is teaching that physical circumcision is a sign that is performed which **points** to the everlasting covenant by which God gives salvation. It is reiterating the truth of verse 11 that physical circumcision is a token or sign.

Thus, the verse is translated more accurately if the final phrase declares "*and my covenant shall be in your flesh pointing to an everlasting covenant.*" We could paraphrase the verse to say, "He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be physically circumcised and this circumcision of their flesh is a covenant sign pointing to the everlasting covenant which comes with salvation."

Genesis 17:14 is still a problem. It says:

*And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.*

This verse appears to clearly teach that a man or child who is not physically circumcised has broken the covenant. To break the covenant means to be under the wrath of God. That is, it means such a person is not saved. Thus, the implication is set forth that the one who has been circumcised is saved.

### **Ishmael Circumcised**

God helps us to solve this problem by giving us considerable evidence concerning Ishmael who as the son of Abraham was circumcised the same day that Abraham was circumcised. Three times in this chapter it is stated that Ishmael, the son of Abraham, was physically circumcised. We read in verse 23:

*And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.*

Verse 25 says:

*And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.*

Verse 26 concludes:

*In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.*

Obviously, God wants us to understand very clearly that Ishmael was physically circumcised. God also shows very clearly that Ishmael was not elect of God. He would never become saved. This fact demonstrates that physical circumcision absolutely does not initiate or guarantee salvation. In Genesis 17:18-21, God declares to us:

*And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.*

Moreover, Genesis 21:9-10 declares:

*And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.*

The above verses definitely state that he was not an heir with Isaac. Thus, he could not have become saved. The Bible clearly teaches that all believers are joint heirs with Christ who is the seed of Isaac.

Returning to Genesis 17:14, we know, therefore, that this verse is not indicating in any way that physical circumcision initiates or guarantees salvation. In fact, a very important truth is taught by this verse. Physical circumcision was a sign or shadow that pointed to spiritual circumcision. A person who was not physically circumcised is a picture of someone who was not saved; his sins had not been cut off. It is a portrait of someone who is still under the wrath of God. Such a one is a covenant breaker and a covenant breaker is anyone who is not saved; he is still under the wrath of God.

God commands in Deuteronomy 10:16:

*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.*

The command is that mankind is to cut away his sins. But he cannot do this because he is dead in his sins. Therefore, God promises in Deuteronomy 30:6:

*And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*

Returning to Genesis 17, we see that God is not and cannot be teaching that physical circumcision has any spiritual grace within this act. It can only be a sign or a shadow. And yet God wrote this chapter in such a way that **apparently** God is teaching that physical circumcision has some spiritual merit or substance. This is why Genesis 17 is such a severe test for those who call themselves believers. Ancient Israel and many believers today like very much the teaching that physical circumcision has some spiritual substance. That is why they like the conclusion of the Confessions that the Sacraments are a sign and a seal. According to this doctrine, I can take an action (physical circumcision of the Old Testament and the Sacraments of the New Testament), that I wrongly believe has spiritual substance within it, and that it somehow gives me a running start, as it were, toward salvation.

It is no wonder that God rails against this idea. We read in Romans 2:25-29:

*For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

In Galatians 5:3-6, God declares:

*For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

The result of ancient national Israel's faulty trust in keeping the signs for the purpose of achieving a right relationship with God is spoken of in Romans 9:31-32:

*But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone.*

Indeed, let us see the bankruptcy of the idea that the sacraments are any kind of seal. Such faulty thinking puts us in great danger of following a works-grace gospel. If we have difficulty in putting away this wrong teaching, we should ask ourselves very honestly why we are so reluctant to do so. It is possible that we and ancient Israel have fallen into the same snare? How terrible that would be!

### **How Important Is Water Baptism?**

Before we leave the subject of circumcision and water baptism, one other question should be addressed. If water baptism is a sign or a shadow and has no spiritual substance within it, how important is it? Is it not sufficient that God has done all the work of saving us? Why even bother with water baptism?

The fact is that we could ask similar questions concerning many things that we do after we are saved. Why go to church? Why bring our offerings? Why witness to others? Why pray? Why read the Bible? After all, once we are truly saved and have received eternal life, why engage in any or all of these activities? By doing so, we are not becoming more saved.

The reason that we enthusiastically and joyfully engage in all of these activities is because God has commanded us to do so. A major evidence of salvation is an ongoing and earnest desire to obey any and all commands that God gives us. God commands the act of water baptism.

In the Old Testament, the sign that was to be placed on the family in which the father was saved was physical circumcision. Remember that we read in Exodus 12:48:

*And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.*

By God's command, the sign of circumcision was to be placed on all of the males to indicate that this had become a Gospel family. Placing the sign of circumcision on the males was not optional. It had to be done. We read in Genesis 17:10-14:

*This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.*

As we saw earlier, the Old Testament sign of circumcision was replaced in the New Testament era with water baptism. Therefore, we are not surprised to read in Acts 10:47-48 in connection with the Roman Cornelius and those who were saved with him:

*Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*

Peter was speaking under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the command to baptize is from God Himself.

Of course, since water baptism is not a condition for salvation, if circumstances make water baptism impossible for the time being, the salvation of the person who should be baptized is not imperilled. But as soon as the circumstances change, so that water baptism is possible, by all means, baptism should be administered.

### **What Is Valid Water Baptism?**

We should now consider a few additional questions. The first is: What constitutes valid Biblical water baptism? Is water baptism, because it is a shadow and has no substance in itself, so incidental that anyone can perform it? For example, suppose parents belong to a church that does not understand infant baptism and consequently will not perform it. But these parents want their child baptized. Can the parents baptize this child? The answer has to be, "No." Why is this?

If we examine every instance of water baptism reported in the Bible, we will find that it was always performed by someone who had been appointed a spiritual overseer of the church. In the Jordan River, John the Baptist and the apostles baptized some people. Philip, who was most likely one of the seven who assisted the early church and possibly was one of the apostles, baptized with water the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:38) and the Samaritan (Acts 8:12). The Apostle Paul baptized the families of Stephanus (I Corinthians 1:16), Lydia and her household (Acts 16:15), the jailer of Philippi and all his (Acts 16:33), and the approximately twelve Ephesians (Acts 19:5). Peter baptized the family of Cornelius (Acts 10:48). In each instance, the record is very clear that water baptism is the responsibility of the spiritual rulers in the church. They have the task of ascertaining as well as they are able if one of the parents is truly saved.



Thus, if a parent does not belong to a church that baptizes infants, the parent must patiently wait until the child is grown and upon his profession of salvation, then he can be baptized. Or the family might join a church that practices infant baptism, and at the time they join this church, their children can be baptized.

### **Should Re-Baptism Ever Be Done?**

Another question that is frequently raised is whether a person baptized as an infant must be baptized again when he makes profession of faith. The answer is found when we look at the sign of circumcision. A person who was circumcised as a baby did not receive another sign when he grew to adulthood, at the time he actually became saved. Likewise, the person baptized as an infant should not be baptized again when he makes profession of faith.

When we look at the experience of the Samaritans in Acts 8, we find that when Philip thought they had become saved, he administered water baptism. Later, when Peter and John came to investigate the wonderful truth that salvation had come to the Samaritans, we read in Acts 8:14-16:

*Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)*

Since they had not yet received the Holy Spirit even though they appeared to be saved and even though they had received water baptism, it is very clear that they had not yet become saved. We know this is so because Romans 8:9 declares that:

*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

When Peter and John ministered to them, they did become saved. Significantly, however, when they did become saved, they did not again receive water baptism. This accords with the experience of many Christians. They were baptized as infants or they were baptized at a time when they thought they had become saved, but later in their life, there was great evidence that they had not been saved at that time. Much later, they did come into a saved relationship with Christ. Following the example of the Samaritans, we know that they should not receive water baptism a second time.

However, a caution must be set forth. There are those who were baptized in a church that did not have the true Gospel. A Roman Catholic baptism, for example, has no standing whatsoever because it is a church that has an authority which is different from the Bible alone and in its entirety. Such a person should receive water baptism at the time profession of faith is made.

### **Baptizing in the Name of Jesus**

Another question frequently asked is: Why does Matthew 28 use the language, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"? But in the Book of Acts, the language is always similar to Acts 8:16, where God speaks of the Samaritans who had received water baptism having been "baptized" in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The answer to this question is found when we carefully look at the baptism of the twelve Ephesians as it is recorded in Acts 19:2-6:

*He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.*

This instructive passage indicates that someone (perhaps Apollos), had ministered to these Ephesians. It appeared that they had become saved so they were baptized with water. But when the Apostle Paul checked on them, he found two truths: (1) they had not yet become saved (the Holy Spirit had not come upon them); and (2) they had been baptized with John's baptism.

As we learned from the experience of the Samaritans as recorded in Acts 8, if they had been properly baptized in water before they were saved, another baptism in water would not be required after they were saved. But their water baptism was not valid. They were baptized with John's baptism. Remember we learned earlier that the baptisms performed by John the Baptist were Old Testament washings pointing to

the coming Savior. Therefore, even as none of the Old Testament signs which pointed to the atonement are to be observed since Christ went to the cross, so, too, John's baptism is not to be observed.

Therefore, these Ephesians were baptized more correctly in the name of Christ. The truth that shines through is that the Book of Acts insists that baptism in the name of Christ is post-Pentecost baptism. To be baptized in the name of Christ signifies that the washing of salvation is on the authority of Christ's completed work on the cross. It is not in opposition to the language of Matthew 28 where baptizing is to be in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Rather, it provides further teaching concerning the nature of the washing away of our sins. Our sins are washed away **on the authority** of Christ having paid for them. We, therefore, are baptized **in the name** of the Lord Jesus. When our sins are washed away, we are washed (baptized) **into the name** of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That is, we enter in the most intimate fashion **into a relationship** with the triune God.

Consequently, if someone is looking for a language to use in water baptism, it would be altogether valid to speak of baptizing **in the name** of the Lord Jesus **into the name** of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Returning to the Acts 19 account of the Ephesians, we read that they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus before they were saved. Thus, their experience was much like that of the Samaritans of Acts 8. Some might, therefore, use this fact to attempt to prove that water baptism is a requirement for salvation.

This idea is immediately nullified when we recall that the family of Cornelius received water baptism after they were saved. Acts 10:47-48:

*Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*

Moreover, as we learned earlier, water baptism is a work that we do and therefore can never be a condition for salvation.

### **Summary**

We will now summarize some of the principles we have learned about baptism.

1. The Greek words *baptizo* and *baptismos* which are normally translated "baptism," always mean washing or cleansing from sin.
2. There is one baptism even though the Bible speaks of baptism in the Spirit and water baptism. Water baptism is a shadow of baptism in the Spirit and has no substance in itself.
3. Therefore, water baptism is never a condition for salvation nor can it initiate or guarantee salvation.
4. Whenever the Bible employs the word "baptism," we must conclude that baptism or washing away of sins is in view. Only if the context clearly indicates water baptism is in view is water baptism to be understood.
5. The only word used in the Bible to suggest the mode of baptism is the word "sprinkle."
6. When one parent in a family becomes saved, then the sign or shadow of salvation (water baptism) is to be placed on all the members of the family.
7. Only a qualified spiritual overseer of the congregation may administer water baptism.
8. Previous baptism as a child or an adult by a church that is not true to the Gospel of the Bible has no validity and, therefore, is not to be looked upon as valid water baptism.
9. Water baptism is a sign or shadow but should never be regarded as a seal.

## **Chapter 6**

As we go on with our study, a number of questions may have surfaced in the reader's mind. We should look at a few of them as we continue.

We have been learning much about Christ's suffering for sin. But how does this agree with some doctrines that are widely taught?

### **Did Christ Die for Every Human Being?**

For example, does the Bible teach that Christ died for every person in the world? We read that Christ gave His life a ransom for all (I Timothy 2:6). I Timothy 2:4 declares:

*Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*

I Timothy 4:10 teaches:

*For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.*

What about I John 2:2, which declares:

*And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

If we are to come to truth, each and every verse that relates to the subject being studied must be faced. As we seek an understanding of these verses we must come to a conclusion that is harmonious with everything else that the Bible teaches on the subject being studied.

To begin to understand these verses, we first must look at the cross. When Christ went through the atonement experience He came to the cross with an enormous load of sin laid upon Him. Whose sins were they? Let us suppose that the sins laid on Him included all the sins of every human being throughout time and throughout the whole world. As He stood to be judged, He would have been found guilty of all of these sins. Therefore, when God poured out His wrath upon Him it would have meant that the full penalty for all of these sins had been paid. Thus, when Jesus arose on Sunday morning, it would have meant that every sin that would be or had been committed anywhere in the world had been paid for. Thus, there would be universal atonement and no one could end up in hell.

But wait a minute. The Bible teaches in Matthew 12:36:

*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

And the Bible declares in Revelation 20:12:

*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

Romans 2:5-6 God warns:

*But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds:*

Indeed, the Bible teaches in Matthew 7:13-14:

*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

These verses as well as many others teach that hell will be very heavily populated.

Moreover, how can it be that someone must be judged for his sins when payment had already been made. Does that idea agree with the righteous justice of God? We quickly see that the notion that Christ had paid for the sins of every person who has ever lived on earth is an impossible idea.

### **What About the Sin of Rejecting Christ?**

Some will argue that Christ paid for every sin except that of rejecting Christ. They read John 3:18 which teaches that "*he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*"

They forget that to reject God is a sin. God commands all men to repent. We read in Acts 17:30 where God admonishes "*but now [God] commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*" To repent means we are to become saved, that is, we are to believe in Christ. To reject Christ is to be guilty of serious sin. In James 2:10 we read:

*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

Thus, if someone is to become saved the sin of rejecting Christ must also have been covered by Christ's blood. In fact, every human by nature is guilty of that sin. We read in Romans 3:10-12:

*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

## **Universal Atonement: An Impossible Idea**

Indeed the idea that Christ paid for the sins of every human being is altogether impossible. We read in Matthew 1:21:

*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save **his** people from their sins.*

Who are **His** people whom Jesus came to save? Jesus explains in John 6:37, and in John 17:2.

*John 6:37: **All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.***

*John 17:2: **As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.***

Jesus came to save only those who had been given to Him by the Father.

Elsewhere in the Bible they are spoken of as the elect of God. They are the ones who before the foundation of the world were written in the Lamb's book of life to receive the inheritance.

That is why Jesus declares in John 17:9, "*I pray not for the world but for them which thou hast given me for they are thine.*"

Furthermore, in Revelation 13:8 and in Revelation 17:8 God speaks of those whom God never intended to save. These verses teach:

*Revelation 13:8: **And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.***

*Revelation 17:8: **The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.***

Having said all this, what are we to do with I Timothy 2:4, I Timothy 4:10, and I John 2:2? The solution can be found by understanding God's usage of the words "all" or "every" or "any." For example, in Luke 2:1 we read, "*that all the world should be taxed.*" Did this include China and the Indians of North America?

The context shows us that all the world that was to be taxed was that part of the world that was subject to taxation. The world that was subject to taxation was the Roman world as the context plainly teaches.

Likewise, in I Corinthians 15:22 we read:

*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Who are they who all die in Adam? The rest of the Bible plainly teaches that every human being is subject to death because we all came from the loins of Adam. What about the next phrase, "*so in Christ shall all be made alive*"? Is that also an all inclusive **all** that includes every human being? That cannot be. If that were so it would mean that every human being would have been given eternal life in Christ. If that is so, there would be no one in hell forevermore. That cannot be because the Bible is very clear that hell will be filled with people.

We, therefore, must realize that the **all** of "*so in Christ shall **all** be made alive*" has in view all those who are to be made alive. They will become alive through Christ. The **all** therefore refers to the elect whom God has promised to save.

Likewise, I Timothy 4:10 declares that Christ is the Savior of all men and then defines who these all are by the next phrase "*especially of those that believe.*" The **all** again identifies with the elect.

In similar fashion, I John 2:2 teaches that Christ "*is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*" That is, in the whole world there is only one covering for sin. Only through Him can salvation be found. This is so even as Acts 4:12 teaches:

*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

I Timothy 2:4 and II Peter 3:9 are similar to each other.

*I Timothy 2:4: **Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.***

*II Peter 3:9: **The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.***

The "all men" of I Timothy 2:4 and the **any** and **all** of II Peter 3:9 can refer to the whole human race in the sense of Ezekiel 33:11:

*Say unto them, 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, O house of Israel?*

While God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, He does not act to save them. This is God's Sovereign right. He was not under any obligation to save anyone. That is, anyone except those whom God elected to salvation. These who were chosen to salvation are the **all** in Christ who will be made alive (I Corinthians 15:22). These are the **all men** whom God wills to be become saved. These are those whom God is not willing that they perish (II Peter 3:9). They are the **all** whom He wills that they come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). In other words, God will not end this world until each and every one He has elected to salvation has become saved.

Thus, we know that the idea of universal payment for sin is without any Biblical support whatsoever. It is a man-made doctrine which has been developed as a basis for the so-called "free will" teaching. The free-will idea is that since every man's sins have already been paid for, the only action left to make that salvation effective in the life of any individual is for him to reach out and accept this salvation.

The free-will doctrine is, of course, very acceptable to unsaved mankind. It means that I am the guarantor of my salvation. Christ has made the payment; His work to save me has been done, and now it is up to me to complete the action by accepting Him. Thus, I can become saved when I want to become saved. I can make a decision for Christ tonight. I am the final decision maker.

That is why many other unbiblical doctrines are taught alongside this kind of a salvation plan. For example, it is taught that babies are innocent until they reach the age of accountability. Also, it is taught that God loves each and every person whether He plans to save them or not. It should be obvious that once we begin to develop our own salvation plan we can design it in any way we wish.

The free-will salvation plan is not the salvation of the Bible. It is a plan that man loves because he has placed himself in control of his salvation. It is a works-grace Gospel. As we shall increasingly see in this study, anytime we add even the tiniest bit of effort on our part to God's work in saving us, we are no longer under the grace of God. How terrible it is to contemplate the future of all of these dear people who are blindly trusting their works-grace Gospel.

### ***Is Christ's Death Sufficient for the Whole Human Race?***

Another attempt to get as close as possible to universal atonement and yet keep a bit of distance from it is based on another non-Biblical doctrine.

There are those who teach that Christ's death was sufficient for each and every individual in the whole human race but efficient only for those who do become saved. Is this statement true? The answer must be, **No way!** Jesus in the atonement did not die in some generic way, thus paying for all the sins of the whole human race. As we have seen the atonement was a very judicial process in which specific sins were in view and the payment that was made was for those sins.

Those sins were all of the sins that would ever be committed by those whom God chose to bring to salvation. If His death had paid for more sins than the elect, it would mean that there would exist additional people other than God's elect whose sins had been placed upon Him. Thus, God's perfect justice would not make possible the sentencing to eternal damnation of any of those whose sins were already paid. Anything less than this would be a flagrant violation of God's perfect justice. How could just God send people to hell forevermore if in any sense their sins had already caused Jesus to suffer hell on behalf of their sins?

This is why we read in Matthew 12:36 and in Revelation 20:12:

*Matthew 12:36: But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

*Revelation 20:12: And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

The sins of those standing before the Judgment throne of Christ on the last day in no sense had been taken or atoned for by Christ. His death paid for only the sins of those whom God elected to salvation.

### ***Man Is Accountable Before God For His Sins***

It should be noted that because God has created mankind in His image, God holds man completely accountable. Therefore, at the Judgment Throne no one can argue with God. They cannot plead "we were spiritually a corpse. How can a righteous God hold us accountable for our sins." We must

understand that every sin of which we are guilty is **our** sin. God created man as perfect beings. He created man in His own image, in His own likeness.

God then warned them that as His sons, they are entirely responsible for their actions. If you sin, you must pay the penalty demanded by God's righteous law. That penalty is eternal damnation.

Thus, when Jesus the Son of God became guilty with the sins of all whom He came to save, He came under the penalty of eternal damnation. Only because He is infinite God could God so intensify the punishment upon Him that in the timetable of the cross experience could the penalty be fully paid.

Likewise, those whose sins were not laid upon Jesus must also give an account of their sins. They, too, will be found guilty even as Christ was found guilty. They, too, must pay the penalty demanded by God's perfect righteousness and justice, and that penalty is also eternal damnation. They will be cast into hell because of their sins. There is no other solution to the perfect justice of God.

### ***What about Man's Responsibility?***

Sometimes the question is raised, "How can we reconcile God's sovereignty and man's responsibility insofar as salvation is concerned?" The answer is very simple. While God commands us to repent, to believe, to be washed (baptized) of our sins, mankind in himself can do none of these things. But because we were created in the image of God, we are entirely **accountable** to God. Yet we are totally unable to respond to any of these commands. Therefore, in the face of our total inability to respond to His commands, God sovereignly saves those whom He wishes to save. In so doing, Christ has taken the place of those whom He has saved by being accountable to God on their behalf.

We do not have to solve the dilemma of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. God has done it all. We who have become saved are the beneficiaries of the grace and mercy of God without any contribution whatsoever on our part.

### ***Does God Love the Sinner but Hate the Sin?***

A common doctrine taught in many churches is that God loves the sinner but hates the sin. This is not what the Bible teaches. Let us read Psalm 5:5, Psalm 11:5, and in Hosea 9:15.

*Psalm 5:5: The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*

*Psalm 11:5: The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.*

*Hosea 9:15: All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers.*

Because of their sin the whole human race is under the wrath of God. God's fury is upon them because after creating man in His image and placing him in this beautiful world, man has rebelled against God and has come under the hatred of God.

Where then is God's love? John 3:16 declares, "*For God so [in this manner] loved the world.*" It goes on to tell us how His love is seen in the world in that "*He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish [that is, should not remain under the wrath and hatred of God] but have everlasting life.*"

In this revealing verse, God is teaching that His love is wrapped up in His salvation program. As we have learned, His salvation program relates only to those whose sins have been paid for. The Bible teaches that this applies only to those who were elected to salvation. Thus, we understand Romans 9:13 where God declares, "*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*" Esau was not saved and, therefore, remained under the hatred of God.

Does not the Bible disclose to us that Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of their unbelief? In fact, the Bible teaches that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. In Ezekiel 18:23 and in Ezekiel 33:11 God declares the following.

*Ezekiel 18:23: Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?*

*Ezekiel 33:11: Say unto them, 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, O house of Israel?*

How terrible it is that God must send so many of those who were created in His likeness to hell forevermore. They must be sent there because the perfect justice of God demands that this dreadful penalty must be placed upon them.

### **God's Well-Meant Offer of Salvation**

A similar question is sometimes raised. Theologians speak about the "well-meant offer of salvation." The real question is, "Can a righteous God give a command that is impossible to obey?" The implication is that mankind apart from God must retain some ability, however small that might be, to obey God's commands to become saved.

This, too, is a question that finds its answer not in some tiny ability of natural man to respond to the command. Mankind cannot respond because spiritually we are a corpse.

God can give the command because He created man in His image. Mankind was created to love God and to live in complete obedience to Him. Thus, even though mankind absolutely cannot and will not obey the command to become saved, God can still make that demand.

The only reason anyone obeys that command is because God is doing all the work of salvation for and within that person.

### **Will Believers Be Judged on the Last Day?**

In this study, we have been probing into the very essence of salvation. This is because in understanding baptism, we have had to look intently at what really occurred when Jesus went to the cross. We have learned that at the cross our Lord paid for each and every sin that any one of God's elect would ever commit. Thus, judicially at the moment an individual becomes saved, he stands completely righteous before God. Does that mean that consequently he will never again have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Let us examine this question.

Because man was created in the image of God, he is completely accountable to God for his actions. Therefore, God in His perfect justice demands that each and every human must stand before Christ as the judge and be examined as to his rebellion (his sins) against God. God declares in II Corinthians 5:10:

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

This solemn declaration indicates the terrible situation every human being is in. Not one is without sin. Anyone who stands before the Judgment Throne will be found guilty. The penalty for sin has been thoroughly set forth in the Bible. The guilty one is to be cast away in hell to endure the wrath of God forevermore.

This is why we pray "*and forgive us our sins*" (Luke 11:4). This is a prayer for salvation. Only those who have become saved will have had their sins forgiven. In the next petition, God further instructs us to pray for salvation by the language "*and lead us not into trial*" (temptation in the King James Bible). The Greek word translated temptation is *pierasmos* which is translated as trial, or testing, or temptation. In fact, every temptation is a trial, testing, or trying of the one who is being tempted to determine if he will stand or fall.

The trial from which our Lord instructed us to pray that we might be delivered is that great trial of the last day. That great trial is at the Judgment Throne of Christ. We can understand this very readily if we see what happens to a man suspected of committing a crime. He is brought to trial. If he is found guilty, sentence is passed and the man must pay the penalty demanded by the judge who sentenced him. Likewise, every human is to stand for trial to determine if he is guilty of sin.

Jesus instructed us in the Lord's prayer to pray that we might not be brought to trial. He adds "*but deliver us from evil*" (Luke 11:4). The evil from which we are to pray to be delivered is the evil of the tyranny of Satan, together with the evil of our sins. We are to pray that we are to be delivered from the evil of the wrath of God which we so rightly deserve.

These three petitions of the Lord's prayer are therefore effectively a prayer for salvation. When we have become saved, we know that these three petitions have been answered affirmatively. This is beautifully promised in the statement of Revelation 3:10 where God declares:

*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

In this verse, the Greek word translated as "temptation" is again the word *pierasmos* just as the word "try" in this verse is *pierasmos*. Thus, God is saying, "I will keep thee from the hour of trial." We will see that the hour of trial is that of standing before the Judgment Throne of God to answer for our sins.

How can this be? Does II Corinthians 5:10 teach that we must stand before the Judgment Throne of Christ? We can know the answer to this question if we realize that all of those who have become saved have already stood before the Judgment Seat of Christ. They already have met the demands of II Corinthians 5:10.

Do you remember we learned that in the atonement we were completely identified with Christ? When He was judged and found guilty and endured the wrath of God as a consequence of that guilt, we in principle were there with Him. It is as if those whom He came to save were personally there with our Savior.

Thus, each and every true believer has already met the condition imposed upon the whole human race by II Corinthians 5:10. In Christ we have already stood before the Judgment Throne of God, and we never again will be judged.

That is why Jesus says in John 5:24:

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

The Greek word *krisis*, translated "condemnation" in this citation, is found more than forty times in the Bible. In every instance except five it is translated "judgment." Therefore, John 5:24 clearly agrees with Revelation 3:10 that the believer will not be brought to judgment.

In fact, if we look at the events that will occur when Christ comes on the last day, we will discover that there is no room for the possibility of the saved ones standing before the Judgment Throne. Let us see why this is so.

I Corinthians 15:51-52 declares:

*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

In I Thessalonians 4:16-17, we are taught:

*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Please note the closing phrase of these verses, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Does the above language allow the possibility of believers standing before the Judgment Throne of Christ? No! We have already been there when Christ as our stand in, our substitute, stood there.

In fact, we will be with Christ and judging with Him. I Corinthians 6:2-3 assures us of this:

*Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?*

We are assured by the language of Jeremiah 31:34 "I will forgive their iniquity, I will remember their sins no more" that once we are saved, we will never again be reminded of our sins.

Thus, we learn that the first great blessing of salvation is the fact that our sins have all been paid for, and we will never have to stand before the Judgment Throne of Christ. Judicially we have been made just. We have become robed with Christ's righteousness. This blessedness is bestowed upon us at the moment we became saved.

### **A New Creature in Christ**

There is more blessedness that comes to us at the moment of salvation. At the moment of salvation, a great miracle occurred in the life of the one who became saved. He became a new creature in Christ. He experienced the resurrection, and he was given eternal life. We should carefully examine the Bible references that help us understand these changes in the life and personality of the one who became saved.

First of all, we should recognize that we as humans are made of two parts; a body and a soul, or we might use the phrase, a body and a spirit. I Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12 speak of soul and spirit. However, throughout the Bible unless the word soul is speaking of a person as a whole personality, as "eight souls were saved by water" (I Peter 3:20), it appears that the words soul and spirit both speak of the spirit essence of man, that part of him that leaves the body when the person dies. Jesus speaks of these two parts of our personality in Matthew 10:28:

*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

During the time we live on this earth as physically alive persons, we are totally integrated beings consisting of a soul and a body. We cannot see our soul, but we know it is an essential part of our being.



At death, the soul is separated from the body. In the case of the death of a believer, in his soul existence or spirit essence he leaves his body and begins to reign with Christ in heaven. In II Corinthians 5:8 we read:

*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

This explains why we read in I Thessalonians 3:13 about the coming of the Lord with all his saints.

*To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*

We read in I Thessalonians 4:14:

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

From the moment of a believer's death until the end of time, in his soul existence, he is reigning with Christ in heaven. When Jesus comes with all His saints, with the exception of a few who are already in heaven with their bodies, they will come with Him in their soul existence because their bodies are in the grave. Revelation 20:4 describes those who are in heaven living as souls without a body.

*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

The thousand years spiritually signifies the completeness of time from the moment of a believer's death until he returns with Christ at the end of the world.

How can he enter heaven in his soul existence at the moment of death? We know that in his body, he can be with Christ only after his body experiences the resurrection of the last day. It will be a totally new body in which no sin will ever again be found. How can he in his soul or spirit essence go into heaven at the moment of death?

We will find that at the moment of salvation, a glorious transformation took place in a person's soul. He became born again or born from above.

In John 3:3 Jesus told Nicodemus:

*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

The phrase "born again" literally means "born from above." When he was born physically he was born a completed person even though he was a little baby. Likewise, to be born from above has to refer to a completed person.

How can this be? We know that to be born again cannot refer to our body. Upon physical death the believer's body is placed in the grave and corrupts even as does the body of the unsaved. Therefore, the believer did not become a new creature in his body at the time of salvation. II Corinthians 5:8 declares:

*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

The part of us that leaves our body at death is our soul or spirit essence. In his soul at death the believer can instantly go into God's holy heaven. Why is this? Because at the moment of salvation he was given his brand new resurrected soul. No further change is required to permit us to enter into heaven in our soul. Even if physical death occurred ten minutes after a person had become saved, he is fully prepared, without any other change, to go into heaven in his new resurrected soul. On the other hand, our spiritually and physically dead body has to experience the resurrection of the last day before it can come into the presence of Christ.

This agrees with Ezekiel 36:26, "a new spirit will I put within you." That new spirit is our new soul or our spirit essence. II Corinthians 5:17:

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

It is in our new resurrected soul that we are a new creature. Our old soul has been recreated, as it were, as a totally new soul. In our new resurrected soul we are given eternal life. John 5:24 emphasizes the present reality of eternal life as the possession of the believer.

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

In I Peter 1:23 God speaks of this spiritual transformation in the life of the believer:

*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

Literally the phrase "*being born again, not of corruptible seed*" would be better translated "having been regenerated not out of corruptible seed." The incorruptible seed out of whom the believer has been regenerated can be only the Lord Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:16 emphasizes this:

*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

Indeed, a wonderful transformation has taken place in our lives when we are given, at the moment of salvation, our new resurrected souls.

### **The Impact of Our New Soul on Our Life**

There is a great change in the life of a person who has become saved. Because the saved person has been given a brand new resurrected soul at the moment of salvation, great conflict arises in his personality when he sins. Let us read I John 3:9 and I John 5:18.

*I John 3:9: Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

*I John 5:18: We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

In our new resurrected soul we never want to sin again. But we still live in a body that has not been saved. Therefore, in the life of the believer there is a constant "tug-of-war." We read of this in Galatians 5:17 and Romans 7:22-23.

*Galatians 5:17: For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

*Romans 7:22-23: For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

In our unsaved body we still love sin. In our new resurrected soul in which we already have eternal life, we never want to sin.

The Bible uses phrases such as "*old man*," "*new man*," "*outward man*," and "*inward man*" to speak of the change in our personality after we are saved. In Romans 6:6 we read:

*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

The term "*old man*" in this reference, in one sense, relates to the condition we were in as a complete personality before we were saved. When we became saved, judicially as a whole personality, body and soul, we were crucified with Christ, so that all of our sins were judged and the penalty demanded by God's law for these sins was paid.

In another sense, the term "*old man*" is speaking of the condition of our soul existence when in our whole personality we served sin. This is emphasized by the term "*old man*" as used in Ephesians 4:22 and Colossians 3:9.

*Ephesians 4:22: That ye put off concerning the former conversation (conduct or behavior) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.*

*Colossians 3:9: Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.*

On the other hand, in contrast to the term "*old man*," God speaks of the "*new man*" in Ephesians 4:23-24 and in Colossians 3:10.

*Ephesians 4:23-24: And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

*Colossians 3:10: And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.*

In these verses the term "*new man*" refers to the part of our personality that has been created in righteousness and holiness. That part is our brand new soul in which we will never again want to sin.

The contrast between the body and soul of the true believer is also emphasized by the terms "*outward man*" and "*inward man*." In II Corinthians 4:16 we read:

*For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day*

by day.

The "outward man" must refer to our body which will be brought to the tomb and return to the dust. The "inward man" like the new man is our soul existence in which we have been given eternal life. In Romans 7:22 God focuses on the inward man:

*For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.*

In this passage, God contrasts the inward man which is our new resurrected soul with our "members," the word "members" being a reference to our body. He speaks of the "law of sin which is in my members" and then indicates in the next verses, Romans 7:23-24:

*But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

Thus, the longing of the saved person is for the resurrection of his body which wonderfully will take place when our Lord returns on the last day. Then there no longer will exist a tug-of-war within the personality of the believer. He will be a new man both in body and in soul.

### **A Constant Desire to do the Will of God**

Given the fact that at the moment of salvation we were given a new resurrected soul in which we never want to sin again, we can understand why God declares in I John 2:3-6:

*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

The great evidence of salvation is the fact that we have an ongoing desire to do the will of God. That desire will always be present if we are truly saved. This is so because when we have become saved, we always will have as an integral part of our personality our new soul in which we never again want to sin.

To say it a little differently, the true child of God will always feel badly when he sins. This is because sin causes him to violate his new resurrected soul in which he never wants to sin.

We now can understand what God is commanding in Romans 12:1 and in Romans 6:12-13.

*Romans 12:1: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

*Romans 6:12-13: Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

God is teaching us that we are to reign over our bodies. In the body of the true believer, there still exists a "want to" to sin. In our new soul we never want to sin again. Because our sinful bodies remain an integral part of our personality, evidence is provided of our salvation as we put down sin which continually wants to flow from our spiritually dead body.

It should be noted, of course, that not only does the fact of a new resurrected soul give evidence or proof that we have been washed of our sins, but God Himself indwells us as a guarantee of our salvation. Ephesians 1:13-14 teaches this grand truth:

*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 sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

Incidentally, verse 13 contains the words "after that ye believed," conveying the idea that the sealing by the Holy Spirit comes sometime after salvation. The correct translation should be "in whom also believing ye were sealed." The sealing with the Holy Spirit occurs at the moment of salvation.

This is also promised in Ezekiel 36:27, where we read:

*And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

In Revelation 20:5-6 we read of the first resurrection. Five characteristics are emphasized as indicators of those who have experienced the first resurrection. These are (1) they are blessed, (2) they are holy, (3) on such the second death has no power, (4) they are priests of God, and (5) they reign with Christ. All five of these characteristics apply to any believer who is truly saved. That is why Colossians 3:1 and similar

passages declare we have been risen with Christ.

Since Christ was raised bodily never to die again, that means that the believer who was raised with Him also was raised never to die again. That is, in the soul or spirit essence of the believer, he has been given eternal life.

A first resurrection implies a second resurrection, which is the resurrection of the believer's body on the last day. Then in our whole personality we will be a new creature in Christ.

Because in the first resurrection, in our soul existence which is as real a part of our personality as our body, we have eternal life and never want again to sin, we can understand why a true believer will not fall away. He can never be included with those typified by the seed that fell on rocky soil, or those typified by the seed that fell on stony places. Neither can such a person identify with the backsliders of Jeremiah 3:12-23. Nor can he identify with those who are spoken of in Hebrews 6:4-8 or in Hebrews 10:26-29.

Instead, a saved person is identified with those spoken of in John 10:27-29:

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

Please note the reference to eternal life.

Other passages such as Romans 8:38-39, Philippians 1:6, and Hebrews 12:2 are true for a saved person.

*Romans 8:38-39: For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*Philippians 1:6: Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

*Hebrews 12:2: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Therefore, we understand that when we have become saved we are given a brand new resurrected soul in which we will never again want to sin, but we must still live in our sin-cursed body. This situation becomes a continuous testing arena. If the one who claims to be a believer falls away, if he backslides into his old life, if he does not have a delight for everything in the Bible, there is evidence he is still not saved. I John 2:4-5 declares:

*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

Wonderfully, it is still the day of salvation and if a person becomes worried about his salvation, he can cry to God for mercy. The promise of Jeremiah 29:13 is still true:

*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

Of course, we should remember that we will not seek Him with all our heart unless God Himself is drawing us. He is the only one who can raise up a spiritually dead person.

### **Jesus The Only Begotten Son**

Down through the ages, theologians have been puzzled concerning the meaning of the phrase "only begotten Son." It is found five times in the New Testament as the Bible speaks of Jesus. The verses are:

*John 1:14: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

*John 1:18: No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

*John 3:16: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

*John 3:18: He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

*I John 4:9: 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.*

The phrase "only begotten" is the Greek word *monogenes*. It is a word that has to do with a beginning, and that makes it a very strange word when applied to the Lord Jesus. After all, the Lord Jesus Christ is from

everlasting. He has no beginning. The word *mono*, which is part of the word *monogenes*, is not the problem. Christ is the only Son of God. It is the word *genes* that is the problem. The word "begotten" signifies a beginning as when a child is begotten or born to parents.

Wonderfully, the Bible is its own dictionary and commentary. God has given us sufficient information so that we can know why Jesus is repeatedly called "*the only begotten Son*."

Searching the Bible, we find the word *monogenes* used four additional times in the Scriptures. In every one of these four usages, the following characteristics are in evidence.

1. An only child is being featured.
2. The child has died.
3. The child was raised from the dead.

Let us look briefly at these four instances. The first has to do with the raising of the son of the widow of Nain. We read in Luke 7:12:

*Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only [monogenes] son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.*

We read in the next two verses that Jesus raised him to life. In this account, we see three elements: an only child, death, and resurrection.

The second usage is in connection with the raising of the only daughter of Jairus. We read in Luke 8:42:

*For he had one only [monogenes] daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.*

In verse 49 the daughter of Jairus is declared dead; but in verses 54 and 55 we read that Jesus raised her from the dead. Again, the three elements: an only child, death, and resurrection are in view.

The third usage of the word *monogenes* is in connection with the only son who was grievously filled with an evil spirit. We read in Luke 9:38:

*And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only [monogenes] child.*

We do not read of this only child physically dying. However, God very carefully chooses language to convey the idea of death. In Mark 9:26, the Bible records:

*And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.*

Mark 9:27 concludes this healing with the language of resurrection:

*But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.*

Therefore, we must understand that in principle all three characteristics an only child, death, and resurrection are in view.

The fourth and final place where God uses the word *monogenes* is in Hebrews 11:17, where we read:

*By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten [monogenes] son.*

Isaac, of course, did not actually die here. Nevertheless, God insists that in principle Isaac did die and was raised again for we read in verse 19:

*Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

Again, we see an only child, death, and resurrection. Therefore, when God uses "only begotten" (*monogenes*) in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, we know for a certainty that it has nothing to do with His eternity past. It has nothing to do with Him taking on a human nature and being born of Mary. Instead, it has everything to do with the fact that these three elements an only child, death, and resurrection must be in view. Indeed, that is precisely what happened to Christ. In the Godhead, He is the only Son. He died, that is, He endured the most horrible death, the second death. And He arose again.

We could, therefore, paraphrase John 3:16 to read: "*For God so [in this manner] loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son [the only Son of God who endured the second death, eternal damnation, and who arose again], that whosoever believeth on Him,*" etc.

Significantly, Christ is also called the "first born." In Matthew 1:25 and Luke 2:7, He is spoken of as the first born of Mary. In both instances, the word for "first born" is the Greek word *prototukus*.

In Romans 8:29, He is declared to be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, in Colossians 1:15,

He is spoken of as the first born of every creature; but in Colossians 1:18, God finally clearly defines the usage of first born as it relates to Jesus in His death and resurrection. We read:

*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

Please note the phrase "*the firstborn from the dead.*" This statement harmonizes perfectly with our conclusion that the word *monogenes* identifies with the fact that Jesus arose from the second death, the eternal wrath of God.

This, too, is the reason why all believers are called "first born." Because Christ was our substitute in enduring hell for us, we, also, have experienced the resurrection.

### **What about Christian Liberty?**

We sometimes hear the statement, "once we are saved, we are no longer under the law but are under grace." This statement is true; God teaches it in Romans 6:14. Unfortunately, there are those who want this principle to be true in their lives so that they can use it as an excuse to violate God's commands. They teach that somehow or in some way we have been liberated from God's commands. Therefore, the term "Christian liberty" is frequently used.

It is true, of course, that the Bible speaks of the liberty a believer enjoys when he has become saved. This is set forth in passages such as Romans 8:21, I Corinthians 10:29, II Corinthians 3:17, and Galatians 5:1.

*Romans 8:21: Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

*I Corinthians 10:29: Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?*

*II Corinthians 3:17: Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

*Galatians 5:1: Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

The question is: What laws are we are no longer under and therefore at liberty to disregard? In this study we have seen very clearly that the one who has been saved has an intense desire to obey all of the commands of the Bible. Thus, because he has been freed from the enslavement to sin which was his condition before he was saved, he is at liberty to live in obedience to God in a way he had never been able to do before he experienced the grace of God.

Moreover, he is no longer under the wrath of God because of his sins. All of the laws that call for God's righteous judgment to fall upon him have fallen upon Christ his Savior. He is not under judgment, but is under the grace of God.

Furthermore, as a New Testament believer he is not to perform any of the Old Testament ceremonial laws such as those concerning the seventh-day Sabbath, the sacrifices or feast days, or the Passover. While we read about them and analyze them to understand how they relate to the atonement, we are not to physically observe them.

With the above exceptions and clarifications, the whole Bible is the rule book of the kingdom of God. As we have learned, the one who has been saved will have a desire to obey these rules because he has come to love Christ. We read in I John 5:3:

*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

Thus, we will not use the liberty we enjoy to violate the laws concerning the Sunday Sabbath, which God calls "My holy day." Isaiah 58:13 declares:

*If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:*

The child of God will not use his newfound liberty as an excuse to use alcohol, tobacco, or other substances injurious to his health. He will not practice gluttony or sexual perversion. In his endeavor to reduce temptation he will be deeply concerned about the books he reads or television programs he watches. The Bible admonishes in Romans 6:14-18:

*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye*

*have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*

God declares in I Peter 2:15-16 and in Galatians 5:13.

*I Peter 2:15-16: For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and **not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness**, but as the servants of God.*

*Galatians 5:13: For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only **use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh**, but by love serve one another.*

Thus, we have learned that we are never to think of "Christian liberty" as a device or excuse to live other than completely righteously before God.

### **The Soul of the Unsaved**

What about the soul of the unsaved at death? His body, like the body of the saved one, is placed in the grave. But what about his soul? In his soul he cannot go into heaven because in no sense does he have any righteousness.

On the other hand, Judgment Day, when he will be brought to trial to officially learn of his guilt, is not until the last day. So where is his soul during the time interval between his death and Judgment Day? The Bible indicates his soul goes to a place of silence. Psalm 115:17 declares:

*The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.*

In Revelation 20:5, God teaches that the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. In this sentence, the thousand years spiritually signifies the completeness of time from the death of the person to the moment when he will be resurrected to stand for judgment. The phrase "*lived not again*" effectively declares that he will not have conscious existence until the resurrection of the last day.

On the last day, he will be resurrected both in body and soul and be tried as a whole personality, just as the unsaved who are living when Jesus comes again will be tried as a whole personality. As a whole personality, he will be found guilty and cast into hell to experience the wrath of God forevermore. Jesus declares in Matthew 10:28, "*fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*"

Incidentally, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus recorded in Luke 16 is not giving a chronology of the steps that leads into hell. If this were so, it would be a passage with many errors. For example, verse 22 says the rich man died and was buried, yet in hell he lifted up his eyes and asked for a drop of water to cool his tongue. How did these parts of his body appear in hell when they were part of his buried body?

This parable teaches many spiritual principles, but it does not teach us when we physically go to a place called hell.

### **What Does the Word "Hell" Mean?**

While we are speaking of hell we should determine the meaning of the word "hell." When we carefully study the Bible, we find that in the first instance, hell is a condition rather than a place. We will learn that it is the condition of being under the wrath of God. Let us learn about this from the Bible.

In II Peter 2:4 God gives us a very revealing statement. There we read:

*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;*

Who are those angels that sinned? They are all of the rebellious angels which are called demons, evil spirits, or devils in the Bible. Satan, the chief of those angels, is their head.

This verse says they are in hell. Yet we read in I Peter 5:8:

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

How can Satan and his evil spirits trouble us if they were cast into hell? The answer is that the essence of hell is to be under the wrath of God. They were cast into hell because of Christ's victory over sin and Satan. Because of Christ's victory over Satan at the cross, Satan was cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9). This guarantees that Satan and all the fallen angels are under the wrath of God, that is, they were cast down to hell. The fact that hell in the first instance is a condition rather than a place is also taught when we review the language describing the atonement. In Acts 2:27 God declares concerning Christ:

*Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

Was Christ ever literally in a place called hell? The answer has to be completely in the negative. Until He died physically, He was always in view as a whole personality. When He died physically, in His soul or spirit essence, He went to heaven to be with His father. At the same time His body was in the grave.

Yet Acts 2:27 teaches He was in hell, it says, "thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." When was His soul in hell? The answer is that as long as God was pouring His wrath upon Him, He was in hell. In the Garden of Gethsemane, as sweat was pouring from His body like drops of blood, He was in hell. When He was on the cross He was in hell. No, He was not in a place called hell, but He was in hell because God was pouring His wrath upon Him.

That is why we read in Ephesians 4:8-9:

*Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?)*

The phrase "lower parts" is a synonym for hell. When He was under the wrath of God spiritually, He was enduring hell. When He was enduring hell, we whom He came to save were with Him in principle. When we were under the wrath of God, that is, when we were in hell before we were saved (as are all humans who are not saved), we were captives or slaves of sin and Satan. When our Savior endured the wrath of God (He spiritually was in hell) in His victory over sin, He led us out of hell as His captives or bond servants. That is, He brought us out from being under the wrath of God.

Thus, we see clearly that hell is the condition of being under the wrath of God. At the end of the world, all those who are tried and found guilty will be officially condemned to be under the wrath of God forever.

At that time, God will destroy the present universe with fire and recreate it a new heaven and earth wherein there is no sin, and those who are to be eternally under the wrath of God must be brought by God to a place which will be called hell. Then the teaching of Revelation 20:13-14 will be fulfilled:

*And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

Death and hell delivered up the dead in them. The dead are the spiritually dead, all those who had not become saved. They are either in the grave because they have physically died or they are still living but are under the wrath of God. Those in the grave identify with the word "death." Those who are living identify with the word "hell" because they are under the wrath of God, that is, they are spiritually in hell. Both kinds of people must be judged.

After they are judged, they will be cast into the lake of fire, which is another name for the place where they will be under the wrath of God forever. That is, **death** (those who had died) and **hell** (those living under the wrath of God) are cast into the lake of fire.

### ***Is the Church the Pillar and Ground of Truth?***

Many theologians read I Timothy 3:15-16 and conclude that the visible, corporate, external congregation or denomination is the final authority concerning the teaching of the Bible. These verses state:

*But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God 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.*

Immediately, we know that their conclusion is altogether invalid. In I Corinthians 3:11, God has given us the divine principle:

*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Since Christ is the only foundation, we can be certain that the phrase in I Timothy 3:15, "*the pillar and ground of the truth,*" cannot be modifying the word church. Instead, this phrase must be linked to the words that are the closest to it, which are, "the living God." **The living God who is the Lord Jesus Christ is the pillar and ground of truth.** We should never countenance an idea that places the visible church in a place where it is the basis or foundation of the Gospel. It must be kept crystal clear that the Bible, which is the Word of God, is always the final and ultimate authority in all matters in which the Bible speaks.

Therefore, for example, every conclusion in this study, however rational and reasonable it may appear to be, **must** be subject to the intense scrutiny of the Bible. So, too, Confessions, Catechisms, Creeds, and any other explanation of the Bible, regardless of how ancient or carefully developed or widely accepted it may be, must be subject to the intense scrutiny of the Bible.

We read that the house of God is built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles in Ephesians



2:19-20:

*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*

We must understand that in this citation, the foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ who is additionally spoken of as the chief corner stone.

In I Corinthians 3:10, the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, asserts:

*According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

The prophets and apostles lay the foundation which is Jesus Christ. How are we to understand this? We might recall that every true believer (those who have become citizens of the invisible eternal church), is qualified and mandated to bring the Gospel. The Gospel has as its foundation the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "prophet" and the word "apostle" both identify with those who bring the Gospel.

The Bible declares in Acts 2:18:

*And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.*

It is a prophet who prophesies. What does he prophesy? The Gospel. Thus, as any true believer declares the Gospel to anyone, he or she is a prophet.

What about the word "apostle"? There were the twelve apostles who were personally called by Jesus, and this included the Apostle Paul.<sup>1</sup> The marks of these apostles had to include the fact that they were personally called by Christ; they saw the resurrected Jesus; and God did signs and wonders through them (II Corinthians 12:12). They were called the twelve (I Corinthians 15:5).

Additionally, however, every true believer who is qualified and mandated to bring the Gospel is called an apostle. In Acts 14:14, we read that Barnabas and Paul were called apostles. In Philippians 2:25, we read of Epaphroditus being called a messenger. The Greek word for "messenger" in this verse is the word "apostle". Likewise, in II Corinthians 8:23, Titus is called a messenger, and in this instance also the word is "apostle".

We can understand these men being called apostles because the word apostle means "to be sent". Jesus declares in John 13:16:

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent [apostle] greater than he that sent him."*

In fact, the Greek word *apostolos* (apostle) is derived from the Greek word *apostello*, which is commonly translated as being sent to bring the Gospel. That is why Jesus, who was sent to bring the Gospel (John 3:17, 3:34, 17:3, 17:21, etc.), is called in Hebrews 3:1, "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

We must understand that every true believer is a prophet and an apostle. We are to declare (prophesy) the Word of God, and we are sent (apostle) into the world with the Gospel. We are ambassadors of Christ who has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Thus, we are laying the foundation, which is Jesus Christ, upon whom the whole kingdom of God is built.

Returning to Ephesians 2:20, we can understand that the prophets and apostles whose foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ includes each and every one who has become saved. They, together with those who become saved as they send out the Gospel, are built into the house of God.

The Bible has something very interesting to say about believers in the new heavens and the new earth. Ordinarily, when the Bible speaks of a door or a gate, if it is to be understood spiritually, it frequently is speaking of Jesus who declares in John 10:9, "I am the door." Jesus is the door or the gate into the kingdom of God. This is so even as He is the foundation of the temple of God; the temple identifies also with the kingdom of God.

However, in Revelation 21, God speaks of the holy city, the New Jerusalem, having twelve gates, each having the name of one of the twelve tribes. The New Jerusalem, which is pictured as a cube with each edge 12,000 furlongs in length, is actually the complete fullness (signified by the number 12,000), of all the believers, who have been given everlasting life and who inherit with the Lord Jesus the new heavens

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<sup>1</sup> The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that there were twelve tribes of Israel, and yet there were actually thirteen tribes because Joseph's was split into two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. Likewise, God emphasizes that there were twelve apostles although when Paul was named an apostle, they numbered thirteen.

and the new earth. The twelve tribes also represent the fullness of all believers. They are so intimately identified with Christ in glory that they, too, are spoken of gates.

Likewise, the twelve foundations of the city have the names of the twelve apostles. Since the number twelve signifies fullness and the word "apostle" points to those who have been sent out with the Gospel, and this includes all those who have become saved, the foundations are identified with the fullness of all believers. In Revelation 21, the believers are in glory and have become perfect in every way. God assures us, by the beautiful language of the gates and the foundations, of the strikingly intimate relationship that will exist between Christ and the believer in eternity. It is no wonder that the Bible declares in I John 3:2:

*Beloved, now are 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.*

We have one additional question we should face as we go on in this study. Because of its great significance, we will examine it in the last chapter of this book.

## Chapter 7

In this study, we have learned the enormous importance of making certain that we understand our salvation is altogether the work of God. We must know that we can not make even the slightest contribution to our salvation.

Having learned this, we are still in a quandary. There is one emphasis of the Bible that appears to link an effort on our part to the work that Christ did in saving us. That is the language of the Bible that speaks of **our faith**.

An outstanding example of this is given in Luke 7:36-50. The incident is Jesus' visit to the home of a Pharisee named Simon. While there, a very sinful woman washed Jesus' feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and anointed them with ointment. Simon remonstrated with Jesus for allowing this. Jesus then said in Luke 7:47-48:

*Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.*

His declaration that her sins were forgiven was a declaration that she had become saved. The result of having become saved is that her sins had been paid for and, therefore, they are forgiven. It is the next statement, however, that causes great trouble. In Luke 7:50 we read:

*And he said to the woman, **Thy faith** hath saved thee; go in peace.*

### **Faith Is a Work**

*"Thy faith hath saved thee!"* How can this be? The problem we are facing is made very serious because as we continue our study we will discover that the Bible teaches that faith is a work. We might be surprised at the truth that faith is a work but it is a most important truth. Only when we understand this can we come to an understanding concerning the subject of faith as it relates to salvation.

The word "faith" or the word "believe" which simply means to "have faith" is understood in many different ways. In fact, to have faith or to believe is a very common characteristic of mankind. In the evening, we have faith that in a few hours we shall again see daylight. We may have faith that if we exercise or take vitamins our health will improve. We have faith that summertime will come after winter and spring. We have faith in those who teach that the gospel or the religion we are a part of is spiritually good for us. Every action we take involves an exercise of faith. We believe because past experience has shown that the things we believe in have held true in the past and, therefore, logically should hold true for the future.

In this study, we are not interested in philosophizing about the nature or meaning of faith as it is constantly being demonstrated in our lives. Our interest is in the Biblical understanding of the word "faith" or "believing." We are immensely interested in these words for they are at the very heart of God's salvation plan. When the Bible uses such words as "faith" or "believe" we must know what God means by these words if we are to further understand the atonement and how that applies to those who have become saved.

## Four Passages that Define Faith

When we search the Bible, we find three very significant passages that help us define faith. The first is found in Hebrews 11:1, where we read:

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

This is a startling verse for it tells us that faith has **substance**. Thus far in our study we have seen that there is a great difference between that which is substantive and that which is a sign or a shadow. A sign or a shadow points to and is a reflection of that which is substantive. In relation to our salvation the only activity that was substantive was the activity God performed through the Lord Jesus Christ. Any activity that we did such as being baptized in water had no substance. It was a shadow that pointed hopefully to the fact that the one baptized has already had his sins washed away or that at sometime in the future he might have his sins washed away.

Therefore, when the Bible declares that faith is the substance of things hoped for, it means that it must be something that cannot be identified with any effort on our part to become saved.

Secondly, this verse indicates that faith is **evidence**. That is, it is **proof** of something we cannot see.

That which we cannot see is our salvation. We cannot see God the Holy Spirit who indwells us when we have become saved. We cannot see the work of God in drawing us to salvation. We cannot see our new resurrected souls. We cannot see the reality of the fact that all of our sins have been paid for. We cannot see the wonderful fact that we have eternal life.

When faith shows up in our life, that faith is evidence or proof that these things are happening or have happened in our life. Thus, by means of Hebrews 11:1 we should begin to see that any faith seen in our life is not in any way causing, or serving as a means or basis for, our salvation.

Additionally, there is a second startling declaration concerning faith given in the Bible. In John 6:28-29 we read:

*Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is **the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.***

The Pharisees were asking what work they can do to do the work of God. Jesus gives them an astounding answer which in turn further defines the meaning and nature of faith as God speaks of it in the Bible. Jesus declares that the work of God is to believe (that is, have faith) in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, God is teaching that faith is a work. First of all, it is a work that God performs as He makes us come to faith in Him. Later we will develop this principle in some detail.

It is also a work that we do when we become a believer. A parallel verse that can help us understand this is Philippians 2:13:

*For it is God which worketh in you both **to will and to do of his good pleasure.***

Please note the parallelism:

John 6:28-29

*the work of God that ye*

*believe on [the Lord Jesus Christ]*

Philippians 2:13

*For it is God who worketh in you*

*to will and to do of his [God's] good pleasure*

The work that we do is that which is produced in our life by God working within us. As we believe in Christ, we do so because God is working in our life to will and to do of His good pleasure, but what we do is work. Therefore, **faith is a work** that is seen in our life as **evidence** of God working within us. We have seen that faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen.

We should also examine a third principle that helps us to understand the nature of faith. In James 2:17-18, we read:

*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

The phrase "*faith, if it hath not works, is dead,*" is so important it is repeated in James 2:17, James 2:20, and in James 2:26. These verses indicate a remarkable intimacy between faith and works. They are so tightly bound together that faith cannot exist without works. Thus, we cannot separate faith from works. This agrees entirely with John 6:28-29 which indicates that having faith or believing is a work.

In fact, James 2:22 makes it even more clear that faith is a work:

*Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*

The word "wrought" is the word "worketh." Thus, this verse is clearly stating that **faith worketh**. Thus, we know without question that we have correctly understood that the Bible defines faith as a work.

A fourth statement that declares faith is a work is seen in the clear statement of I Thessalonians 1:3, where we read:

*Remembering without ceasing your **work of faith**, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.*

Without question we must understand that faith is a work.

This underscores the fact that any faith or belief in Christ that develops in our life cannot be a ground or basis or means or instrument by which or because of which or through which we are saved. In our study, we have seen repeatedly that we should never countenance the idea that any effort on our part made even the tiniest contribution to our salvation.

### **Those Who Believe in Christ Shall be Saved**

Having learned how God defines the word "faith" or the word "believe," which is the equivalent to "having faith," what are we to do with the multitude of verses which appear to teach that our belief in Christ is the means by which God works to save us? The following are some of the verses that seemingly support this idea.

*Mark 16:16: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

*John 3:16: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

*John 3:18: He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

*John 3:36: He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

*John 6:40: And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

*John 11:25: Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:*

*Acts 13:39: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

*Acts 16:31: And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

*Romans 10:9: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

*I Corinthians 1:21: For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

As we examine these verses, let us list again the principles we have learned which relate to God's salvation plan.

1. The most important principle is the fact that under no circumstance are we to countenance even the tiniest idea that anything that we have done, however small and insignificant it appears to be, contributed in any way to our salvation. Even as the dead Lazarus of John 11 was raised from physical death to physical life without even the slightest contribution on his part, so we are raised from spiritual death to spiritual life without the slightest contribution on our part. There is absolutely no pre-condition that must first exist in the life of someone God plans to save.
2. Faith or believing in Christ somehow is intimately a part of our salvation.
3. Our faith or believing in Christ is, by the Bible's definition, a work that we do and, therefore, can never in any sense be the grounds or means or instrument that helps to accomplish our salvation or through which our salvation is accomplished.
4. When our heavenly Father begins to draw a person to Christ as Savior, faith together with other good works will be produced in the life of the one being drawn.
5. When a person has become saved, the Holy Spirit produces the work of faith together with other good works in the life of the one saved.

Having set forth these principles, how can we understand John 3:16 "*that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*"? We can readily understand this if we realize that God gives the desire to do good works, the fear of God, and trust in God to those whom He is planning to save as well as to those who have become saved.

However, God utilizes none of these characteristics, which increasingly identify with salvation, as part of the action He requires in saving us. The action of God in saving us is entirely His action. When Jesus commanded, "*Lazarus, come forth*" (John 11:43), Lazarus did come forth. It is not possible that he made the slightest contribution in going from a dead stinking corpse to a live man obediently coming out of the tomb. When Jesus commanded Lazarus to come forth, Jesus had to do everything to enable him to obey that command. This included giving him physical life, ears to hear, and the will and ability to obey. There was absolutely no contribution that Lazarus could offer.

Similarly, when the Bible declares that we are to believe so that we might be saved or so that we might be justified, four things must be realized. The first is that any believing that becomes present in a person's life is placed there entirely by God's action. Secondly, believing makes no contribution towards salvation. Thirdly, the act of saving is entirely the work of God, completely apart from whatever believing may have been given by God. Thus, a baby can become saved at birth or a person with a mind of a baby can become saved. There are absolutely no pre-conditions which must be in evidence before God can save us. Fourthly, if a person has become saved, believing will be evident in his life if he has the mental and physical faculties to show his belief. The work of faith that can be seen in the life of the one saved is just as certain as all of the other good works that will be seen in his life.

It might be noted that as the Bible speaks about works, it is speaking about any activity that is an attempt to do the will of God. This work may be an individual's attempt to obey God or get right with God strictly by his own efforts. Or, work can be the work that is produced and is present in a person's life by the action of God. When we use the phrase "good works," we are speaking about the activity of obedience produced in the life of an individual by the action of God as God works in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. Therefore, we can clearly understand that believing in Christ is never to be considered the basis, cause, or means by which we become saved.

Having said this, we are faced with an apparent great contradiction in the Bible. On the one hand, God insists that faith is a work, and on the other hand, He insists that our salvation is not of works (Ephesians 2:9). Yet in Luke 7:50, the Bible teaches that "*thy faith has saved thee.*" How can this impasse be resolved?

### **Christ Is Our Faith**

A beautiful solution can be found, which we will now develop. Jesus gave Himself many names in the Bible. He calls Himself Jesus, Word of God, David, Jacob, Israel, Wonderful, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, etc. Each of these names helps us to understand something about the character and work of Christ. One name that Jesus has given Himself is the name Faithful. We read in Revelation 19:11:

*And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called **Faithful** and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

The word faithful, like the word true is an adjective. The word faith like the word truth are nouns. Whether a word is an adjective or a noun, it is the same word. Thus, Jesus called His name true (an adjective) and reinforced it by declaring in John 14:6, "*I am the Truth*" (a noun).

While the Bible does not give us the statement, "I am the faith," it does give us His name as "faithful." This is seen in II Thessalonians 3:3 where we read "*the Lord is **faithful.***" The Bible gives us numerous examples that can be more fully understood only when we realize that **Christ's name Faithful means that He is in view when faith is spoken of in connection with salvation.**

Hebrews 11:1 declares that "*faith is the substance of things hoped for.*" It is Christ who is the substance, the reality, the evidence of everything we hope for in connection with salvation. He is the substance to which all the signs and shadows of the Old Testament pointed. Remember we learned that faith is a work that cannot be separated from any other work that was done. Christ by His faithfulness has done all of the work required to save us and therefore He is the evidence of the reality of our salvation for which we are hoping.

It is Christ's faith, and He is the very essence of faith, that has provided for our salvation. That is why we read in Galatians 2:16 of the faith of Christ; that is, faith that is Christ's faith.

*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the **faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the **faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

In almost all of the translations, the prepositions in this verse have been modified so that the verse is no longer faithful to the original Greek. Wonderfully, in the King James translation the prepositions have been faithfully translated.

The phrase "*even we have believed in Jesus Christ,*" effectively states "even we have been saved." One who

believes in Christ is one who has become saved. To have become saved means we have been justified. Therefore, this verse is teaching that we have been saved by the faith of Jesus Christ.

The truth concerning the faith of Christ is also underscored in Galatians 2:20:

*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by **the faith of the Son of God**, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Furthermore, in Habakkuk 2:4 we read:

*Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live **by his faith**.*

The faith we live by is Christ's faith. It is not our faith. It is His faith. When God quotes Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38, "*the just shall live by faith*" we can obtain more understanding if we realize the word faith is a synonym or name for Christ. It is a name of Christ even as the words truth or the Word of God are synonyms or names of Christ. Thus, by this phrase we can understand "*the just shall live by*" the faith of Christ or by Christ since He is the very essence of faith.

Romans 1:17 more fully declares:

*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from **faith to faith**: as it is written, *The just shall live by **faith**.**

The righteousness of God is revealed **from faith** (Christ and His faithfulness) **into faith** (our faith) which is produced by salvation. The evidence of our salvation is the work of faith together with the other good works that are seen in our life. Remember faith is a work and good works (obedience to the commandments) are the evidence of salvation. Thus, faith or the fact that we have come to believe is expected to be a characteristic of the one who has been saved. It is a work together with all of the good works that will be seen in the life of anyone and everyone who has become saved, but it cannot be our faith that saves us. It can be only the faith of Christ.

How are we to understand the phrase "*the faith of Christ*"? We readily speak of a believer's faith, but how does the Bible speak of the faith of Christ? In fact, this is a grand and wonderful teaching of the Bible. We can begin to understand this when we reflect on the enormous task Jesus had to perform in order to save us. From before the foundations of the world, God had determined to save a people for Himself. While God had created man as a perfect being in His likeness, God knew that man would rebel and become subject to eternal damnation. Thus, the only way God could have a people for His own required that the penalty for sin imposed upon mankind be paid. Unless that penalty had been fully paid no human could come into heaven.

Therefore, God appointed Jesus to be the one who would pay for the sins of all those whom God desired to have for Himself. This meant that Jesus had to humiliate Himself by taking on a human nature, He had to be laden with the sins of all those He came to save, and He had to suffer the equivalent of eternal damnation on behalf of each one He had come to save.

In some of the Messianic Psalms we see the faith of Christ as He relates to the awesome task assigned to Him as our Savior. We do not find the phrase "the faith of Christ," but we do discover Him crying to God that His trust was altogether in God. The Hebrew word that is translated "trust" in our English Bible is the word *chasah*. That it is truly a synonym for the word "faith" is seen in its usage in Psalm 37:39-40, where we read:

*But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, **because they trust (chasah) in him.***

This passage, like many New Testament statements, is clearly speaking of salvation. Thus, the phrase "*because they trust in him*" can equally be written "because they had faith in Him."

The same word, *chasah*, is used in the Messianic Psalm 31, which anticipates the suffering of Christ. It speaks of the agony of Christ as He endured the wrath of God for our sins. Verse 5 quotes the cry of Jesus on the cross, "*Into thine hand I commit my spirit.*" In verse 1 of this psalm, Jesus declares, "*In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust (chasah).*" Surely the Bible is teaching that Christ had faith in God that the atonement would be accomplished.

In similar fashion, we read in the Messianic Psalm 16:10:

*For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

This psalm begins with the words, "*Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust (chasah).*" Again, the Bible teaches us that Christ has faith that He would not remain under the wrath of God once He had fully paid for our sins. He also had faith that His body would not see corruption. As we learned earlier in this study, the fact that His body did not corrupt is the evidence that the penalty had been fully paid.

In this awesome task, Jesus was faithful. Because He is the very essence of faith, the quintessence of one who is faithful to the assignment given Him, salvation becomes a reality for all of those He came to save. Thus, the Bible reiterates repeatedly that the basis, the cause, the instrument, the everything of our salvation is Christ and His wonderful faith that the great task assigned to Him, that of being our Savior, would be successfully completed. It is no wonder, then, that in Revelation 19 He is given the name Faithful.

With this in mind we can now more fully understand many verses that speak of faith in connection with Christ and the salvation He would faithfully provide. As we continue our study let us briefly examine many of these verses.

God's faith which is the basis of our salvation is expressed in Romans 3:3

*For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make **the faith of God** without effect?*

In Romans 3:22 we read:

*Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*

Those who believe, that is, who have faith, are saved by or because of the faith of Christ which in turn is evidenced by the good works which includes the faith seen in the life of the one who was saved.

Romans 3:26 further addresses this subject by stating:

*To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

This verse has been improperly translated in our King James Bible. More correctly it declares "*that we might be just, and justifying **out of the faith of Jesus.***" This verse is also clearly showing that the faith that saved us and, therefore, made us just is not our faith. It can be only Christ's faith.

Thus, we can understand more clearly Romans 3:28 and 3:30

*Romans 3:28: Therefore we conclude that a man is justified **by faith** without the deeds of the law.*

*Romans 3:30: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision **by faith**, and uncircumcision **through faith.***

The faith by which both Jews and Gentiles were saved or justified was **the faith of Christ** or, we could say, by **Christ Himself**.

We now understand Romans 4:3:

*For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

Abraham believed (he had faith because of God) but it was not his faith that was counted for righteousness. That would mean that he had performed a work to get himself saved. Instead when it says "*it was counted unto him (Abraham) for righteousness,*" we understand that God was counted or the faith of Christ was counted unto Abraham for righteousness.

Romans 4:5 continues:

*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

This verse, therefore, is teaching that for the one who believes (has faith) on him (Christ) that justifies the ungodly, that is, who has become saved, his faith (Christ's faith) is counted for righteousness.

We read in Romans 4:13:

*For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

The righteousness of faith is the righteousness of Christ. That is why verse 16 goes on to say:

*Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,*

Because Christ and His faith is completely identified as the faith that alone can produce salvation we could paraphrase this verse to say, "Therefore it is of faith (Christ or the faith of Christ) that it might be of grace . . . but to that also which is of the faith (Christ) of Abraham."

Romans 4:20 continues:

*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;.*

Abraham was strong in faith. Literally this phrase is "but was made strong by the faith." The faith that

made him strong was Christ's faith or Christ Himself. Verse 22 underscores this:

*And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*

As we have already learned, we must understand that the faith of Christ or Christ Himself was imputed to Abraham for righteousness. Verses 23 and 24 continue:

*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.*

We could paraphrase these verses as follows: "Now the promises of God were not written for his (Abraham's) sake alone that the faith of Christ was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom the faith of Christ shall be imputed, if we have been given faith, (as a result of our salvation) to trust God who raised up Jesus from the dead."

We can see more clearly the rich statement of Romans 5:1-2, which tells us:

*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

We are justified by the faith of Christ or by Christ Himself and by Him we have access through Christ or the faith of Christ into this grace wherein we stand.

Moreover, Galatians 3:1-2 declares:

*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

The phrase "*the hearing of faith*" can be correctly understood when we substitute the word Christ for the word faith. Verse 1 teaches that Jesus Christ has been set before them. He, therefore, is in full view. He can be heard only by those who have been given spiritual ears. If someone has been given spiritual ears, then God works through their hearing to accomplish the salvation of that person.

Thus, verse 2 indicates that we are saved by the hearing of Christ. That is, God has given spiritual ears to those he is saving so that they hear that Christ is the only way to salvation.

Galatians 3:5 reinforces this principle:

*He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

Does God save us by works of the law that we perform? That is impossible. Our salvation does not come by works of the law but by Christ whom we have heard because God has given us spiritual ears to hear Him. In other words, Christ whose name is Faithful because He is the very essence of faith is the only basis or cause of our salvation. Thus, Galatians 3:6 goes on to say:

*Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*

As we learned earlier, it was God or the faith of Christ that was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. Thus, we understand the accuracy of our understanding of Galatians 3:2 and 3:5. Only as we hear of Christ because we have been given spiritual ears by God can righteousness or salvation be accounted for us. Romans 10:17 declares that "*faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*" Christ is the one who has come into our life resulting in our salvation, and we have heard of Him as He gave us spiritual ears to hear the declaration of Christ which is the Word of God.

Galatians 3:7-9 continues to use faith as a synonym or name for Christ as it declares:

*Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

*And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

When we are saved we are of **faith**, that is, we are of **Christ**. The heathen are justified by faith, that is, by Christ. Those who are blessed with faithful Abraham are those who are of faith; that is, they are of Christ. Abraham is called "faithful Abraham" because faith is a work produced in the life of anyone and everyone whom God has saved.

Galatians 3:11-12 continues:

*But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.*

Earlier in this study we learned that the just shall live by Christ or by the faith of Christ. It is true that after we are saved, faith will be a good work seen in the life of the one who has become saved. But Christ



Jesus is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). Further, God declares in Philippians 2:13:

*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Thus, we know that even the work of faith in the believer that is a result of his salvation is entirely a product of God's action in our lives. Thus, the phrase that the "*just shall live by faith*" is teaching that it is Christ who has saved us, thus giving us eternal life, and it is Christ who is to receive all the credit for the good works of faith that are manifested in the life of the one saved. That is so because He holds us fast and will never leave us or forsake us. We live out our Christian life (which has become eternal life) by the faithfulness of Christ.

Galatians 3:12 declares:

*And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.*

That is, if we try to become saved by keeping the law, we are not of Christ. This is so even as Galatians 5:4 warns that those who try to keep any part of the law, that is, try to make any contribution to their salvation, are not under the grace of God.

*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

Galatians 3:14:

*That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles **through Jesus Christ**; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit **through faith**.*

Notice that the focus in this verse is directly on Jesus Christ. It is through Christ, or through the faith of Christ, that we receive the promise.

In Galatians 3:22 God describes the faith of Jesus Christ that provides the reality of the promises (which is salvation) to those who give evidence of that salvation because they have come to believe God. This verse states:

*But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

Galatians 3:23 says:

*But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up **unto the faith** which should afterwards be revealed.*

Before Christ came as a gift to the one who became saved, that person was still under the law. He was still subject to the judgment of God. Galatians 3:19 helps us understand verse 23. In Galatians 3:19, God declares:

*Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*

In this verse the seed who was to come was Christ. He was the beneficiary of all the promises inherent within salvation. Through Him we who become saved receive the promises. Galatians 3:16 assures us that the seed is Christ by the statement "*And to thy seed, which is Christ.*"

Thus, even as the law was present until the seed came (Galatians 3:16, 19) so verse 23 teaches the same principle by the language that we are "kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." This passage can only apply to the elect because only the elect experience the revelation of Christ in their lives.

Thus, we can understand Galatians 3:24:

*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us **unto Christ**, that we might be justified by **faith**.*

Please note again the substitution of the word Christ for the word faith. Verse 23 states we (who do become saved) are shut up **unto the faith** that would be revealed. In very parallel language verse 24 declares we were under the law as a schoolmaster **unto Christ**. It is Christ who justifies or saves us by His faith.

Verse 25 reiterates this principle:

*But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

When faith (Christ) has come and has saved us we are no longer under the law. That is, the law can no longer condemn us for our sins because Christ has paid for all of them.

Verses 26 and 27 go on to say:

*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

Again we must remember whenever the word faith is used in connection with our salvation, the faith of Jesus or Jesus Himself (Who is the very essence of faith) is in view. Moreover, verse 27 teaches that the result of our salvation is that we have been baptized (washed) in Christ and have been completely identified with Him because we have put on Christ.

Thus, verse 26 is teaching that the one saved is a child of God through faith (Christ) and is now in Christ. He has been baptized into Christ and has put on Christ. Remember that to be baptized into Christ means that when Christ was cleansed of our sins by being punished because of them, it was as if we were there with Him being cleansed of our sins. This same teaching is set forth in the language of II Timothy 3:15 which declares:

*And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

We are wise unto salvation through the faith of Jesus which is found in Christ Jesus. The principle that every aspect of our salvation comes from Christ and Christ's faith is also emphasized in Philippians 3:9

*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:*

This principle gives us further understanding of the succinct statement given in Ephesians 2:8:

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*

The work of faith that produced saving grace can be only the faith of Christ which is personified by Christ Himself. He Himself, His salvation, is a gift given to us because Christ was faithful. That agrees perfectly with the following two verses.

*Ephesians 2:9-10: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Colossians 1:23 speaks of faith using the language:

*If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;*

Again, we can understand this verse much more easily if we understand the word faith to be the faith of Christ or Christ Himself.

This is also true of I Timothy 3:9 which speaks of "*holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*" The "*mystery of the faith*" is the mystery of the Christ who is the very personification of all that the Gospel is; many aspects of the Gospel are a mystery to the unbelievers.

On the other hand, I Timothy 3:13 speaks of having "*great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*" This faith is the Gospel which is personified by Christ. Thus, effectively this verse can be saying "*great boldness in the Gospel which is in Christ Jesus.*" Additionally, it can be a reference to the faith we receive as a result of having become saved.

We have looked at all of these verses so that we are able to understand that any faith we possess cannot assist in any way in our salvation. Any faith that relates to our becoming saved must always be understood to be related to the faith of Christ or to Christ Himself. Any **faith** the believer possesses is always a **result** or product of the fact that he has been **saved** because of the **faith of Christ**.

### ***Whose Faith is "Thy Faith"***

We will now return to the initial question raised at the beginning of this chapter. Do you remember the sinful woman of Luke 7 who anointed the feet of Jesus in the house of the pharisee? In Luke 7:48 Jesus said to her, "*Thy sins are forgiven.*" At that moment, Jesus saved her. Then immediately following this, Jesus said to her, "*Thy faith hath saved thee.*"

Since we have learned that the word faith completely identifies with the faith of Christ or with Christ Himself, we can understand this statement. When we become saved we are totally identified with Christ. We have become His body (I Corinthians 12:13) and He has come to indwell us in the person of the Holy Spirit. We are His and He is ours.

Therefore, the words "*thy faith*" (literally, the faith of thee) can only be a reference to Christ. "The Christ of thee hast saved thee." Actually the verb "hast saved" is in the past perfect tense so that even more correctly this phrase should be translated, "The faith (Christ) of thee having saved thee." Now we are in complete harmony with the principle that our efforts or work cannot make the slightest contribution to our salvation. It is altogether Christ and Christ alone who has done everything in saving us.

While we are looking at the phrase "*thy faith hath saved thee*," it is significant that in each of the following references the exact same phrase, the faith (Christ) of thee having saved thee, is used even though our English translation does not show this. These references are as follows:

Matthew 9:22 and Mark 5:34. Woman healed with issue of blood. Translated "*thy faith hath made thee whole*."

Mark 10:52. Healing of blind Bartimaeus. Translated "*thy faith hath made thee whole*."

Luke 7:50. Salvation of weeping sinful woman. Translated "*Thy faith has saved thee*."

Luke 17:19. Healing of leper who was one of ten healed. Translated "*Thy faith has made thee whole*."

Luke 18:42. Healing of blind man (probably same man as noted in Mark 10:52). Translated "*thy faith hath saved thee*."

In all of these instances the phrase "*the faith of thee having saved thee*" is used because the healing of the woman with the issue of blood, the healing of the leper, and the blind man are all beautiful illustrations or portraits of salvation. Christ did all the work in healing the physical diseases of these individuals, and Christ has done all the work to heal us of the terrible spiritual disease of sin.

Thus, we are absolutely secure with the principle that there exists no work or effort of any kind that a person can offer to contribute in any way to his salvation. Christ has done all of the work.

### **Abraham Was Justified by Works**

Before we leave the matter of faith, we should take a moment and look briefly at a few verses in James that have been troublesome to some Bible students.

In James 2:20-22 we read:

*But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*

Abraham was justified by works. How can this be when the Bible says clearly that our works cannot make the slightest contribution to our salvation? The answer is readily found if we understand that the works that made Abraham just was not **his** work. It was the work that Christ did in providing for his salvation. Christ was faithful so that His faith provided salvation, and the faith of Christ was work that He performed. Christ's faith wrought with Christ's works, and by His works was His faith made perfect. All of the action was that of the Lord Jesus as He endured the wrath of God to save Abraham.

The proof of this is the faith and works demonstrated in the life of Abraham as he obeyed God by offering his son Isaac upon an altar. In other words, the faith of Abraham was a result, not in any way a cause, for his salvation. That is why verse 23 goes on to say:

*And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.*

Remember, we learned that we are to read this "Abraham believed God (that is, Abraham became saved) and (God or the faith of Christ) was imputed unto him for righteousness."

Verses 24-26 continue:

*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?*

We are justified by the faith and work of Christ in saving us. Rahab was also justified by the work of Christ in saving her. The proof that she had indeed become saved was seen in her action of receiving and protecting the two Israelite spies who shared the Gospel with her. This demonstration or evidence of her faith and good works is the result of the fact that God had saved her.

Thus, we have learned that whenever the Bible speaks of faith in connection with becoming saved, we must realize that it is **Christ Himself** or **the faith of Christ** that is in view. When God commands the unbeliever to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, no unbeliever of himself can believe. The unbeliever is spiritually a corpse and he of himself will not and cannot believe. The only way he will manifest faith in Christ is if God gives him faith.

This is directly parallel to the command, "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3:7). Nobody can make himself born again. God must do all the work in making us born again. Likewise, no one can of himself obey the command to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God must do all the work through Jesus Christ and His faith in saving us. Thus, our having come to believe in Christ is entirely a result of having become saved.

In similar fashion the unsaved were commanded in the Old Testament to "*circumcise the foreskin of your*

heart, and be no more stiffnecked" (Deuteronomy 10:16). Because of the total inability of man to obey this command, God declares in Deuteronomy 30:6:

*And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*

Indeed we can know we have come to truth as we clearly understand the principle that every aspect of the fact of becoming saved is the work of Christ. Therefore, gladly we give Him all the praise and glory.

### **What about Faith Before Salvation?**

There is still a problem that must be resolved. We have learned that the only faith that will save us is Christ's faith. We also have come to understand that the faith that is found in the life of a believer is altogether a result of the fact that he has experienced salvation.

What about the faith that is seen in the life of someone not yet saved. This is a very important question and, therefore, as we continue this study we will examine it carefully.

Salvation is a very mysterious and wonderful event. How can it be that at the moment of salvation God gives the one saved a brand new resurrected soul in which he is also given eternal life. At that moment the one saved has all his sins washed away so he will never again be threatened by hell. At that moment is guaranteed the resurrection of his body on the last day and the receiving of the inheritance as a joint-heir with Christ. It is also at that moment and forevermore he will have an earnest on-going desire to do the will of God and there will be an on-going trust in God that is spoken of as faith or believing in God.

The fact that God gives the faith and the desire to obey God to the person before he is saved makes salvation even more mysterious. In fact, it makes the whole business of salvation very confusing. As we puzzle about this, two principles must be emphasized and re-emphasized. The first is that faith is a work. It has substance as Hebrews 11:1 teaches. The second principle flows from the first principle. That is, because faith is a work, any faith, whether faith before salvation or faith after salvation, makes absolutely no contribution to that person's salvation. As we have learned, the only faith that is operational in bringing us to salvation is the faith of Christ. Any faith that is seen in the life of either the unsaved person or the saved person is a gift of God but is never the cause for salvation.

### **No Man Can Come to Me Except the Father Draw Him**

What is going on when the Bible speaks of unsaved people having faith? Does the Bible give any clues as to what is happening when faith is seen in the life of an unsaved person? Two verses speak very impressively to these questions. The first is John 6:44, "No one can come to me except... the Father draw him." The second is Philippians 2:13, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Every person is spiritually dead before being born again, and therefore, he is subject to eternal damnation. Yet these verses teach us that God may have been working in the life of the one whom He will save long before He actually gives that person His new resurrected soul. This drawing by the Father may occur during a period of a few minutes ending with salvation or it may continue as long as weeks or many months before salvation actually occurs..

God has given us an example of each situation.

When Jesus was crucified, there were two thieves crucified with Him who reviled Him (Matthew 27:44). Shortly before the thieves died, one of them said to Jesus, in Luke 23:39-42:

*And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*

Jesus answered him with the comforting words, "Today thou shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Thus, in the space of a few hours we witness a man going from total unbelief, to a trust in Christ, and into the reality of salvation.

On the other hand, God also tells us about Cornelius a Roman centurion. In Acts 10:2 God speaks of him as:

*A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.*

As the account in Acts 10 continues, we see that when God commanded him to send for Peter he obeyed. In fact, his servant said of him that he was "a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nations of the Jews." Surely he gave every evidence of having become a saved man.

But he was not saved. The proof of this is Acts 11:13-15. After Cornelius was saved, Peter reported to the church in Jerusalem concerning the salvation of Cornelius. Peter reported of Cornelius, in Acts 11:13-15:

*And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.*

The language "*who shall tell thee words, whereby **thou and all thy house shall be saved,***" and the fact that at the time Peter spoke these words of Cornelius, the Holy Ghost fell on them, prove that he was not saved until he came into Peter's house. Romans 8:9 teaches, "*if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*"

From this account, we see Cornelius as a man who displayed a serious trust in the God of the Bible and who was ready to be obedient to the command of God. **But he still was not saved.** He could have been in this condition many months, or even years.

This is not an unusual situation, as suggested by the words of Acts 10:34-35:

*Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*

Of course, the basis for God accepting a man who fears God and works righteousness cannot be that man's works of righteousness. The fear of God and the works of righteousness are in that person's life because God is drawing him and working within him to will and to do of His good pleasure. They are not in any way the basis or the cause or instrument for his salvation. The only basis that exists is the fact that God has placed upon Jesus the sins of the individual God plans to save, and the faith of Christ has brought salvation to fruition.

This means that an individual can display faith and good works in his life and still be unsaved. It also means that if he is not saved, he does not have eternal life. Does it also mean that he might not become saved? This appears to be taught by the parable of the sower. God tells us in Luke 8:13:

*They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*

We know that if a person displays faith but afterward falls away, the faith he displayed cannot be faith given to him by God. God is the "*author and finisher of our faith*" (Hebrews 12:2). In Philippians 1:6, we have the faithful promise:

*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

Perhaps we now have a better understanding of Hebrews 6:4-9:

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*

While these verses appear to be speaking of someone who has become saved and who has fallen away, the words of verse 9, "*we are persuaded better things of you, and things that **accompany salvation,** though we thus speak,*" assure us they are not speaking of a saved person. We also know that they cannot be speaking of a saved person because a saved person has been given **eternal** life, so he could never lose his salvation.

Thus, this account is speaking of those who appear to give much evidence of salvation but then they fall away. This indicates they had never become saved. It indicates that whatever faith or good works were seen in their life, they were not the work of God but the work of the individual who is trying to live like he had become saved.

### ***These Principles Are Seen in the Salvation of the Samaritans***

When we read of the salvation of the Samaritans in Acts 8, we see faith in people's lives that illustrate both principles, God's work in their lives and man's faith developed without the action of God before they became saved. Acts 8:12 declares:

*But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

In Acts 8:17, we read that after Peter and John ministered to them they received the Holy Spirit; that is, they became saved. This would indicate that the faith displayed in their life before salvation was in all likelihood faith given to them by God.

Significantly, however, one of their number, Simon the sorcerer, also believed and was baptized (verse 13), but he did not become saved (verses 18-23). Therefore, we know that Simon's faith was **not** of God.

Other Biblical illustrations could be cited. God has given ample evidence that it is not uncommon that for a period of time before the moment of salvation, faith and obedience can be seen in the lives of those who became saved.

We are learning that this activity of God in the life of one of God's elect can begin some time before he is saved. Of course, it will continue the rest of that person's life once he has become saved.

On the other hand, it should be very clear to us that God can save a newborn baby or a person who is completely mentally incapacitated without even a moment of faith having been seen in their lives.

Also, we are given examples of those like Simon the sorcerer or like those on the rock of Luke 8:13 who display faith for a while but who do not become saved.

As we have learned, the people who display faith for a while and then fall away have not received faith from God. Philippians 2:13 does not apply to them.

All men by nature display faith. Mankind has faith that each night-time will be followed by day-time. He has faith that his expectant wife will in time give birth to a child. Almost everything man does exists in a matrix of faith.

Even in religion, faith is very much seen. The Buddhist believes his god Buddha will bring certain blessings to him. This is true of all religions. Thus, the individual who is not being drawn to Christ by the Father, God is not working in him to will and to do of God's purpose, may still display faith. It is a faith that comes from within himself but definitely it is not of God. The proof that it is not of God is that eventually he will fall away from any identification he had with the true Gospel. He may end up with no Gospel or he may end up in a false gospel.

Did not God through the Apostle Paul in Acts 16 instruct the jailor to believe, that is, have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved? Indeed, this is so. But remember, any faith seen in the jailor's life could not in any way cause his salvation or be a means or instrument to save him. Only the faith of Christ can save. The faith in Christ that will be seen in his life will either be the evidence that God is drawing him and working in him to will and to do of God's good pleasure, or it will be the evidence that God through Christ's faithfulness has saved him.

Indeed, salvation becomes very complex. When an individual begins to trust in God and experiences an increasing desire to do the will of God, one of three things is happening in that person's life. It is impossible to easily know which is correct insofar as that person is concerned. The three possibilities are:

1. The faith and obedience being displayed is altogether the action of a person trying, through his own effort, to do what he believes identifies with salvation. In actuality there is no action of God in his life.
2. The faith and obedience being displayed is prompted by God working in that spiritually dead person and finally salvation does result.
3. The faith and obedience being displayed is there because God has already saved that person.

This underscores one immediate fact: It is almost impossible to know **when** the moment of salvation occurred in the life of the one who did become saved. This identifies with the teaching of John 3:7-8

*Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

Most of those who claim to know the day of their salvation are simply recalling the day they accepted Christ. When someone accepts Christ, that act has nothing to do with true salvation. Salvation requires that at the time he became saved, he experienced the resurrection, and he received his brand new resurrected soul.

Indeed, if they are trusting in the act of **accepting** Christ as proof they have become saved, it may be an indication that they have altogether another salvation program than that of the Bible. Earlier in this study we learned the ominous truth that if we depend even the slightest bit upon our effort in becoming saved, then we are trusting in a grace-works gospel. Such a gospel will leave us, for certain, under the wrath of God.

We can now understand why God tells us "to give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (II Peter 1:10). This agrees with the admonishment of II Corinthians 13:5:

*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?*

### **How Then Can We Know that We Are Saved?**

This brings us to the all-important question: How then can anyone know he has truly become saved? How can he know that his interest and trust in the Bible is not of himself but is the evidence that God is working within him? The **evidence** that it is God working in him is that eventually, in God's own time table, he will **know** he has become saved. On the other hand, if it is faith that is produced by his own actions, eventually he will end up in a false gospel or he will turn away from any gospel.

How can one know he is truly saved? No question is more important. Without a correct Biblical assurance of our salvation we are risking eternity in hell. How dreadful that would be! Therefore, we should test ourselves very carefully and honestly concerning our salvation. There is absolutely no value in deceiving ourselves or others about this matter.

The Bible teaches in Romans 8:16:

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

How can we know that the Holy Spirit is witnessing with our spirit the glad news that indeed we are saved?

The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17), that is, the Holy Spirit uses the Bible to bring about salvation. Therefore, one **evidence** of salvation is a delight in the teachings of the **Bible** so that there is a strong, on-going desire to do the will of God, that is, to be obedient to the Bible both in doctrine and in practice. God repeatedly speaks of this throughout Psalm 119. Illustrative of the whole psalm (176 verses), are verses 10, 11, 15, 16, and 18.

*Psalm 119:10: With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.*

*Psalm 119:11: Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

*Psalm 119:15: I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.*

*Psalm 119:16: I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*

*Psalm 119:18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

When we remember that a saved person has become a citizen of God's kingdom, has become indwelt by God the Holy Spirit, has received a new resurrected soul in which he never wants to sin again, then we would expect that such a person would have a great preoccupation with the Bible, which tells of his salvation, of His Savior, and is the rule book of the kingdom he has entered. That is why the verses of Psalm 119 are so pertinent to the question of knowing whether we are saved.

We read in I John 2:3-6:

*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

We surely should know that self-examination concerning salvation must never be a time of looking at ourselves with rose-colored glasses. It is the moment of truth wherein we look at ourselves absolutely honestly. If we do not find in our life an earnest ongoing desire to be **obedient** to the Word of God both in practice and in doctrine, then we are not saved. It is far better to discover this sad fact now, while we can still implore God for His mercy, than to wake up at the Judgment Throne when it will be too late for salvation.

What must I do? Suppose I believe I am trusting God and have an ongoing desire to do the will of God so that I find increasing happiness as I do what the Bible tells me to do. And yet at times I am not sure I am saved. The wonderful fact is that at any time I can go to God and plead for His mercy. Wonderfully, if I am truly saved, nothing I can do can endanger my salvation. I have been given eternal life. We read in John 10:27-29:

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

Moreover, God promises the true believer in Romans 8:38-39:

*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Keeping these beautiful promises in view when we beseech God for His mercy, because our faith is weak, can never harm us. Actually, our weak faith may indicate we are not yet saved. It is always right to pray to God for His mercy when we have not yet become saved. It is also equally right to pray to God for His mercy even though we have already become saved.

## **Conclusion**

We began this study with a desire to look into the meaning of the word "baptism." As a consequence, we have been able to learn much about the wonderful salvation plan which God has provided for the peoples of this world.

We learned the supreme importance of the fact that we must realize our salvation is totally the work of God. We were reminded that we cannot make the slightest contribution toward our salvation. In fact, we were solemnly warned that if we have even the slightest trust that an action of ours can provide or satisfy even the slightest requirement for our salvation, by that action we prove that we are not under the grace of God.

We learned that the essence of the suffering of Christ was the fact that He took upon Himself every sin of each and every person He planned to save. Moreover, He stood before the Judgment Throne of God guilty with all of those sins. God poured out His wrath upon Him so that it was equivalent to all of us He came to save spending eternity in hell.

It was as if each one of us He came to save stood there and received that terrible punishment. We learned that it was not the physical shedding of His blood that brought about salvation. Rather the phrase, the shedding of blood, was a figure of speech that points to the enduring of the second death, eternal damnation.

We learned that the physical death of Jesus was not payment for sin. Rather it was the evidence that He had experienced the equivalent of eternal damnation on behalf of those He came to save.

So, too, His burial and above all His resurrection were evidences or proofs that He had completely paid the penalty for the sins He bore on our behalf.

We learned that hell is in the first instance the condition of being under the wrath of God. After the end of the world it will also be the place where all of the unsaved must spend eternity under the wrath of God.

We also learned that at the moment we become saved we are given a brand new resurrected soul. In this new soul we never again want to sin. Together with the fact that at the moment of salvation God Himself indwells us to seal or guarantee the completion of our salvation, this means that there will always exist in the life of the believer an earnest desire to do the will of God.

We learned that the word baptism always means washing or cleansing or purifying. It is never to be understood as immersion. We also learned that whenever we see the word "baptism," unless the context clearly teaches water baptism is in view, we are to think of the washing that God does. That is the washing away of our sins which is also called baptism with the Holy Spirit.

We also learned that water baptism, like physical circumcision, is a sign or a shadow, and there is no divine grace in the act itself. The grace is the washing that God performs when an individual becomes saved. Water baptism and physical circumcision are signs or shadows that point to the action of God as He saves him.

We learned that there is one salvation program throughout the Bible. The Old Testament believers were saved exactly the same as New Testament believers. The only difference is the fact that at the moment of salvation, New Testament believers are qualified and mandated to bring the Gospel to the world. The use of the New Testament phrase "baptized with the Holy Spirit" thus not only speaks of an individual having his sins washed away but also that he is to enter into the work of the Holy Spirit by being a witness to the world.

We also learned that in the Old Testament, physical circumcision was a sign to be placed upon all the males of a family wherein a father appeared to have become saved, and the sign of water baptism was to be placed on all the members of a New Testament family when a parent appears to have become saved. The mode of baptism is sprinkling.



Concluding our study, we learned that faith is a work. We learned that a name of Christ is Faithful, that is, He is the very essence of faith. Therefore, any reference in the Bible to faith having saved us always must be understood as a reference to the faith of Christ or to Christ Himself.

Any faith that is found in our life before we are saved or after we have become saved must always be understood to be a result of or product of Christ's work in our life. Under no circumstance did that faith serve as a means or cause or instrument to bring about our salvation. We must understand that God absolutely requires no pre-conditions in our life before He can save us.

Could it be that this study will help us to glorify God for His tremendous gift, a gift which not one person deserves. To Christ be given all the praise and the glory!

## **Background information**

### **Family Radio**

*The following information was copied from the Family Radio Web site:*

#### **The Ministry of Family Radio Broadcasting Christ-centered programs to the United States & around the world! Committed to the Person and Work of Jesus Christ**

Family Radio is committed to the Person and salvation work of Jesus Christ as revealed in God's divine Word, the Bible. We are a nonprofit, nondenominational, educational organization dedicated to obeying our Lord's command to preach the Gospel to every creature ( Mark 16:15 ). Family Radio programs include no commercial advertisements. Air time for other Christian broadcasters on Family Radio is free of charge. The ministry relies solely upon God working through listeners for the financial support of day-to-day operations. We as a ministry desire to be entirely faithful to God's divine, infallible Word, the Bible. Every effort is made to accurately present the Gospel of the Bible. In purpose and belief, we stand out from other radio and TV ministries in our faithful reliance on the Bible as the ONLY infallible authority.

#### **First Broadcast in 1959**

Family Radio was organized in 1958 under our official name, Family Stations, Inc., and began to broadcast February 4, 1959, over KEAR FM in San Francisco. Since then, God has enabled the ministry to purchase a number of powerful AM and FM stations and several smaller educational facilities and translators around the country. Our domestic broadcasts reach metropolitan areas such as Birmingham, Charleston, Chicago, Cleveland, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York, Omaha, Philadelphia, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.

#### **International Broadcasts**

An important addition came in 1973 with the purchase of an international shortwave station, which we called WYFR, in Scituate, Massachusetts. With the use of many transmitters and antennas, the Gospel is proclaimed in ten languages from thy WYFR facility, now located in Okeechobee, Florida. In 1982, our international outreach was expanded to India and the Far East with the use of powerful transmitters in Taiwan. Family Radio has become a worldwide ministry; our broadcasts now span the globe so "That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else" (1 Kings8:60).

#### **A Diversified Outreach**

In addition to the broadcasts, Family Radio offers Bible-based pamphlets and tracts to teach and exhort and other diverse means of spreading the Gospel, including the following.

#### **Family Radio School of the Bible**

Primarily a correspondence school, Family Radio School of the Bible courses are designed to help laymen and professionals to minister in the church, on the job, and at home through he study of various subjects and certificate and degree programs. The school operates on the principle of Matthew 10:8, "freely ye have received, freely give." In accordance with this principle, the FRSB does not charge tuition; it is dependent upon the generosity of students and friends.

### **Missionary Tours**

Family Radio sponsors "Missionary Tours" which provide opportunities for staff members and listeners (at their own expense) to help spread the Gospel through tract distribution. Our ambassadors for Christ have visited cities in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia (every continent except Antarctica).

### **On the Internet**

Our Christ-centered programs are now available worldwide, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on the Internet. Access to the Internet may be via computer or television (with the proper equipment). In addition to the programs on the Internet, Bible studies such as "The Glorious Garden of Eden" and "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9" are on our Homepage. Downloadable books include "What God Hath Joined Together" and "God's Magnificent Salvation Plan." The Internet also has our program guide, shortwave schedule, and The Bible. Tell your friends and family that they can find Family Radio on the Internet at: <http://www.familyradio.com>

### **Supporting Family Radio**

If you believe God would have you financially support Family Radio you can send your tax-deductible gift to:

**Family Radio**

**Oakland, CA 94621 USA**

Or use our "Secure Internet Check Form!"

### *End of Web site information*

For biblically based answers to your questions, you can listen to the **Open Forum** on Family Radio stations in many locations in the USA on Monday through Friday evenings at 8:30-10:00 p.m. Eastern Time (5:30-7:00 p.m. Pacific Time) or call 1-800-322-5385 during the program to ask a question or make a comment. You can also listen to live broadcasts on Family Radio's Web site at <http://www.familyradio.com/> during those hours. There are also recordings of past programs available on this Web site.

The Open Forum is translated from English into nine other languages and broadcast by short-wave radio around the world. You can write to Family Radio, Oakland, California 94621 USA to obtain a short-wave broadcasting schedule for your area. You can also listen to prerecorded short-wave broadcasts on Family Radio's Web site.

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**This Book (v1021, 4/30/2001)**

This book was formatted from material on the Family Radio web site. This was done by two Family Radio listeners who have grown in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior over the years with help from the questions and answers about the Bible as heard on the Open Forum program, and who desire the same for others.

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