

IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS - BOOK ONE

The story of God's Creation,
the Fall of Man,
Salvation and Eternal Life through **Jesus Christ**
Also a Christian Doctrinal Statement

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PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to discuss God's plan for His creation. The most important part of God's plan is redemption of mankind through His Son Jesus Christ. When creation strayed from God's design, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as a man to redeem mankind - in this role Jesus calls Himself the Son of Man.

This author is thoroughly convinced of the authenticity of the Bible and the truth of the statement that Jesus Christ is God and Man. There is only one true God, and there is salvation only through Jesus Christ.

Not only is this authenticity of God's Word, the Bible, and Jesus Christ's resurrection sufficient to merit my utmost attention, but my desire is that others should come to a saving belief in Jesus Christ.

As an added bonus is the fact that Jesus' teachings and parables (a form used often by Jesus) are absolutely brilliant and fascinating. Following these teachings make my life much more enjoyable and worthwhile. They lend a purpose to my existence on this earth.

Actually, a believer is saved from the moment of being "*born again*", that is accepting God as his or her spiritual father, into eternity. From then on, on this earth, Jesus' teachings show us how to live for Him. That is, to spread His gospel of salvation into all the world.

Now let us proceed to study Jesus' most amazing teachings so that we may become more like Him.

With that preface let us go on to Book One, about God's creation of the world, and about our Lord Jesus Christ and His redemptive work for our benefit. Praise the Lord!

John 3:3
INTRODUCTION

This book is divided into five books. The first focuses on the history of the world, which is the creation story, God's creation of the world for mankind, the fall of

mankind in the Garden of Eden, the prophesy of Jesus Christ's coming, and the provision of salvation for us through Jesus Christ. Included is how to receive salvation and live through and for Jesus Christ.

The second book is about the teachings of Jesus Christ, which help us to lead our lives in a god-pleasing fashion. Topics range from Jesus' teaching over and against the world's teaching, the uniqueness of Jesus, the exclusivity of Jesus and His teachings, Christian stewardship, and plain talk.

The third book is about Jesus' teachings of the literal type. These are non-parabolic types. The most important one of these is the Sermon on the Mount. That and related Scriptures are the focus of this book. The Sermon on the Mount contains the Beatitudes, which is the essence of the Christian religion, which emphasizes conditions of the heart.

The fourth book focuses on the parables of Jesus. These parables are some of the most powerful of Jesus' teachings. More of Jesus' teachings are in the form of parables than any other form.

The fifth book is entitled Marriage and No Divorce. This is all about Christian marriage. It is entitled "...No Divorce" because the focus is on what Christian marriage should be, what God's word says about marriage and how to achieve a god-pleasing marriage. This book is designed around the positive aspects of how to have a god-pleasing marriage, not how to repair a broken marriage.

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IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS - Chapter A

This document is all about Jesus. He is the most important person in this life, and in eternity. Who could be more important than the one Creator of mankind and the Universe? Jesus is our Savior into eternity and our Sustainer on this earth. What could be more important than knowing about eternity and how we are to live our daily lives on this earth?

We want to know why we are here and how we got into our present condition. We know intuitively that we have a Creator, that we are not self-sufficient, that we are not our own gods. We know that there is more to life than just existence on this earth. This is not just a dead-end street.

God has provided us with His history book, the Bible. It is a book substantiated by written history, and archeological findings. Fulfilled prophecies of written Biblical history are more than adequate proofs of the authenticity of God's Word.

It is not the purpose of this study to defend the Bible. The Bible is God's truth. The purpose is to learn more about Jesus. We have stated that Jesus is our Savior and has the power of God. He is God. As such, His sayings are brilliant and His teachings will help us on the way to eternal life.

The first paper in this study is "CREATION IS GOD'S WITNESS" and the second paper is "THE REDEMPTION OF FALLEN CREATION THROUGH THE SON OF GOD, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST". The remaining papers are about Jesus being the only way to eternal life with God, how to obtain this eternal life, and a Christian Doctrinal Statement.

It is the sincerest desire of this writer that if the reader does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he or she will be persuaded to search the Holy Scriptures (the Bible) and believe and obey the Lord Jesus Christ and go on to spend eternal life with Him.

It is also the desire of this writer that if the reader is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ that this study will be helpful in living out his or her life for Jesus Christ.

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CREATION IS GOD'S WITNESS - Chapter B

In Acts 14:17 it is written that *"Nevertheless He (God) did not leave himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."* Also, creation speaks of God. (Romans 1:18-32). Saint Paul writes that in spite of the fact that God's creation is visible, people choose not to believe. They would rather live in wickedness, and practice evil. But they have no excuse, because God is seen in all creation.

GOD'S CREATION

God created a perfect world. God created man and woman to be perfect like Him. God was pleased with His creation. Then sin came into the world. What was this sin? How did this happen? Read Genesis 1:1 through 3:13.

Important verses in this creation account are:

Genesis 1:27: *"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He them, male and female created He them."*

Genesis 1:31: *"Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good."*

Genesis 3:1-6: It is told in these verses how Adam and Eve believed the devil's lie, instead of God's word. This is like saying that they could get along without God.

MAN IS SINFUL

Now man was sinful, as Saint Paul writes in Romans 3:12: *They have all turned aside, they have together become unprofitable, there is none who does good, no, not one.* Also, it says in Romans 3:23: *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* It says in Romans 6:23: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

JESUS CHRIST PROVIDES SALVATION

Saint Paul talks about our salvation in Romans 5:21: *"...so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. Here St. Paul tells the whole Gospel message of salvation, saying that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again on the third day. And most importantly, Jesus was seen after the resurrection by over 500 people. Salvation was accomplished through Jesus' death and resurrection.

A SAVIOR IS PROPHESED

Let us read the first prophecy about Jesus Christ in Genesis 3:14,15. Verse 15 is the key verse here, because approximately 4,000 years before Christ God tells of

Christ. And this prophecy was recorded over 2,000 years before Christ. This verse refers to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *“He shall bruise your head,”* refers to the resurrection when Christ’s victory over sin and death is likened to stepping on the devil’s head and *“you shall bruise His heel”* refers to the crucifixion of Christ. The devil could bruise Him, but not permanently damage Him. Praise the Lord!

In the book of Isaiah there are many prophecies about Jesus Christ. These prophecies may not have been understood at the time they were written, but they serve as a proof to us of the truth of the Bible. These prophecies occurred over 500 years before Jesus was born. Read Isaiah 42:1-9, 52:13-15 and 53:1-12.

In chapter 42, *“My Servant”* is Jesus. Jesus would not cry out against His crucifixion. Jesus would proclaim truth. Jesus would be a light to the Gentiles. He would open the eyes of the blind. He would set the prisoners free. In Isaiah 52 and 53, *“My servant”* will be exalted and extolled. He will teach people (52:15). He was despised and rejected by his people, and they crucified Him. In verse 53:12 it says that He was treated as a transgressor as He bore the sins of many.

SALVATION THROUGH BELIEF

Now we have read how sin came into the world through man’s lack of faith in God and disobedience to God in the garden of Eden, and how God sent his Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins. How is this salvation imparted to us? Read John 1:1-14. Jesus is described as the Word. He tells of God through His teachings and actions. Jesus never sinned. Jesus never screamed at anyone. He never harbored an evil thought. His ministry was a ministry of love and healing. Jesus taught amazing things that the world had never heard before. He is the perfect pattern for our lives. But, we can never earn salvation, because of our sin. We cannot become perfect by doing good works. But, in verse 12, we are told that we can become children of God through believing in Jesus Christ and receiving Him to ourselves. This belief is not just saying that we know there is a Christ, but it includes submission and enduring loyalty to Him. Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”*, and in Matthew 24:12,13, *“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”*

THE SECOND BIRTH

A further discussion of salvation is found in John chapter 3. Jesus had an interesting discussion with a leading Jewish teacher, Nicodemus. Read John 3:1-

21.

Jesus says in John 3:3 that a person must be born again to see the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is heaven, or eternal life with God. Man in his sinful state is separated from God. Man can get into God's kingdom by being born again, acknowledging God as his Father. Jesus said in Matthew 23:9. "*Do not call anyone on earth your Father, for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.*" Jesus was talking about eternal things, and Jesus says there is only one Father, just as He said, in Matthew 6:24, "*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*" Jesus also says in John 14:15, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*"

When a person is born, a new life comes into being. Just so for the "born again" believer. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, St. Paul says, "*therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.*" This is a result of being in Christ, and obedience to His commandments.

GRACE AND MERCY

Mercy is treating an offender with less severity than he deserves. God could have sent the whole human race to hell. But God didn't. It says in John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" God had mercy on us. God wants us to have mercy on others. Jesus said in Matthew 5:7, "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*" God sent Jesus to die for us. God had Jesus pay a debt we could never pay. It is only for us to believe and obey. What could be better!

Grace is unmerited love, or a free gift. We do not deserve salvation from God. We could never earn it. Saint Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-10: "*For by grace you have been 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 Jesus Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*"

OUR WITNESS

We are to tell others about God's love for us. This is a love so great that God sent his Son to die for us on a Roman cross. In John 3:16 it says, "*For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" We are to tell others of Jesus and this salvation message. This is recorded in Matthew 28:18-20. And Jesus came and

spoke to them, saying, *“All authority has been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.”* Jesus said that he has the power. Therefore, we need only spread the Word. We need not worry if other men accept it. God will see that it grows in men’s hearts. Saint Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:7 *“So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.”*

We are also to have a witness to other believers. We are to help and support each other, so that we may remain strong in Christ. Saint Paul says in Hebrews 10:23-25, *“Let us hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching.”* What is this Day that is approaching? It is the day when we will meet Jesus Christ. That will be a wonderful day for those who believe.

BIBLE VERSES

Romans 3:23 - *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Romans 6:23 - *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 5:8 - *But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Rev 3:20 - *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

Eph 2:8,9 - *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.*

John 1:12 - *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.*

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All direct quotes from Scripture are in *italics* and from the New King James Version (NKJV).

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THE REDEMPTION OF FALLEN CREATION THROUGH THE SON OF GOD, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST - Chapter C

God created a perfect world in the first five days of creation. Furthermore, according to God's Word, on the sixth day, God created a perfect couple, Adam and Eve, and turned this perfect creation over to them.

In Genesis 1:31 and 2:1 it says:

Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth and all the host of them, were finished.

God put together this magnificent universe for the benefit of Adam and Eve and their descendants, not primarily for His own glorification. Thus God showed even at creation that He is a loving God who wishes to share what He created with those whom He has created.

THE AUTHENTICITY OR TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE

We must be absolutely certain of the truth of Scripture before relying on Scripture for our eternal life, and eternal life for those to whom we preach. And we must be certain of the truth of Jesus Christ being the Way, the Truth and the Life, and salvation being only through Him.

Rather than mix a discussion of God's truthfulness and perfection in with the discussion of God's salvation plan, this paper will be limited to creation, the fall of man and redemption through Jesus Christ.

For a detailed discussion of the authenticity of the Christian religion, the reader is referred to the paper "CHRISTIANITY - THE ONLY TRUE RELIGION" in the volume "JESUS, BOOK TWO".

Let it be firmly stated that if Christianity can be shown to be thoroughly unique from other beliefs, that will be sufficient to show that Christianity is from the only true Creator. because all other religions are the product of man's imagination.

The creation history as written in the Holy Scriptures already has gone a long way to demonstrate the uniqueness of our God in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis (or Book of Beginnings). Here God speaks to His creation with absolute authority, not in the sense of trying to persuade man that maybe it might be a good idea to believe this.

God showed His love for His creation immediately after He had given His all for the benefit of that creation, mankind included. Rather than devise plans for punishing mankind (Adam and Eve) and beating them into submission, God provided a plan in which He, God, pays the price for mankind's errors. Man must

only accept God's generosity. God has not taken the opportunity for eternal life from man, but has provided a plan to get man back on-track for eternity.

Are these actions of God the Creator in Genesis the actions of an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Divine entity, or are they the actions of a man-created entity? We may say with certainty here that God's plan for salvation for His fallen creation by his paying the price with the crucifixion of His only begotten Son, could not come from the mind of fallen man. The plan is so perfect and brilliant, as to take it out of the realm of man's thought into the realm of the Creator's thinking.

THE FALL OF MAN

Even though God created this perfect universe for them, it wasn't long after that, that Adam and Eve turned their backs on their Creator and severed themselves from dependence on their benefactor's (God's) advice and protection. by choosing to listen to Satan.

Adam and Eve then lost their perfection, and the earth lost its perfection. The earth would not be as productive, and they would now have to live by the sweat of their brow, and their physical bodies would someday incur death.

So mankind struggled on his own after that, wallowing in the despair of sin and sorrow. While some people looked to the Lord God for freedom from the bondage of sin and suffering, others proceeded onward without the blessings of God.

REDEMPTION THROUGH JESUS

The condition of mankind became so bad (man continued to go his own selfish way) that God sent his only Son to earth as a man to show mankind how to return to His fold and receive the full benefits of His salvation.

This is the story we wish to outline here, showing, from God's Word, how to achieve this blessed condition of salvation in eternity with our Lord God. That is, going back to the Lordship of God, by full belief and full acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ. In some circles this is described as being "born again". In others simply as submission to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. These two expressions can be shown to be equivalent ways of saying the same thing.

In His great wisdom and mercy and love, God, the Creator, provided a way for mankind to receive salvation, which is life in eternity. God sent Jesus Christ, His Son, to this earth, to be a sacrifice in our place, for our sins, taking a physical beating as He was crucified; and the mental and spiritual torture of being separated from God the Father as He hung dying on the cross. Now, by accepting Jesus Christ, we can live in eternity as God the Father planned for us at the time of

creation.

Note that this plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, starting when Jesus came to this earth to rescue mankind for his sin and rebellion, has the same conditions that God imposed on Adam and Eve for maintaining their position with God the Creator in His heavenly family. That is complete and total trust and dependence on Him.

HOW DID THESE THINGS HAPPEN?

How did Adam and Eve violate God's trust and bring sin into the world? It is important for each individual to understand the dire situation that they would be in, if God hadn't provided for their salvation through Jesus Christ. Salvation is spending eternity with God, the Creator; rather than eternity in hell. Heaven and hell are very real places. Jesus talked of hell in Matthew 10 and 23.

Matthew 10:28: *“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

Matthew 11:23: *“And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.”*

The creation history as it is written in the Bible is true. Sometimes, creation is treated like a fable. In fact, some people are led to believe that it is figurative. So we have a large number of people who dismiss the idea of sin and the essential need for a Savior, who is Jesus Christ. Satan loves it when people are side-tracked from belief in Jesus Christ and from salvation.

To say that Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden through disobedience to God, does not completely explain the severity of their actions, although it is sufficient. The word sin is often used in a casual way. Some people may say: what is so bad about a little mistake, like eating of the forbidden apple? God must be a bad God to relegate mankind to a dismal eternity for such a small thing. Was it a small thing? Just how serious was that first sin in the Garden of Eden?

THE FIRST SIN IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

The creation story found in Genesis 1-3 may be summarized as follows: God created a perfect earth in six days and rested on the seventh. It was so perfect that God was pleased. God created man and called him Adam. It was after God created Adam that the Lord made Eden, a garden beautiful beyond compare and placed him in it. God placed beautiful trees, including fruit trees, there. God also placed four rivers in Eden. It was a veritable paradise, a heaven on earth. Man was the first and foremost thing on God's infinitely wise mind. God did not

want man to be lonely, so He created Eve. He created Eve from Adam's body, so that they would be compatible partners.

Then Eve was in the garden one day, and the devil was out there also. That was no accident. We must remember that Satan has his evil purposes. Satan does not look to make trouble for unbelievers. He wishes to seduce God's people into not paying attention to God. And that includes going our own way, and showing ingratitude to God for his benefits and protection.

In John 1 Jesus was described as the light that shines in the darkness. That is, Jesus is our spiritual light, so that we do not stumble. Satan knows that, and seeks to imitate that light, so that he may deceive us. And so it was in the Garden of Eden. Satan, speaking through a snake, deceived Eve. What was the deception? It was not only getting Eve to eat the apple, but it was the way he did it. He appealed to Eve's desire to usurp God's position. Even believers can sometimes fall prey to that desire.

Satan said to Eve, essentially (Genesis 3:4,5): didn't you know that you would be like God, knowing good and evil, if you eat of the forbidden fruit? Didn't God tell you that? According to Satan, God knew something that Eve didn't, that she could be as wise as God. And worse yet, according to Satan, God withheld it from Eve. Satan's ambition was to get Eve to not only disobey God, but to desire to be as wise as God. So here was the crux of the matter. Eve listened to and believed Satan because she wanted to think for herself and be independent of God. This was the most extreme form of ingratitude to her Creator. And Adam was just as bad, because he went along with Eve.

At this point in the creation story, we must stop and think about this. We probably can't imagine how nice it would be if there were no imperfections in this world. No weeds in the garden or on the farm. No degradation or sickness in our bodies to limit our lives, nothing would break, or rust. There would be no moths, and no thieves to break in and steal. Can you imagine the magnitude of the ungratefulness of Adam and Eve to disobey God after God provided so much for them.

Mankind, in his natural, imperfect state, that is, unredeemed by Jesus Christ, leads his life without any thought of God. Even believers fall into this kind of sin, sometimes leaving God, the Creator, out of the picture. Are we ever ungrateful to God? Sometimes we behave in our everyday lives just as Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. We forget about God and go our own way. It is important to remember the creation story, so we can avoid this behavior and the anger of our Creator. We should want to please God and rely on Him at all times.

WHAT IS SIN?

Sin in its broadest sense is living without God. It is living a lifestyle that displeases God. And that includes violating certain specific rules God has laid down for mankind, including, but not limited to, the Ten Commandments. Sin means falling short of being as God wants us to be, not obeying God, and not trying to please God.

So we can see that Adam and Eve fell short of God's expectations in the worst possible way, that is, turning their backs on God. What is the lesson for us? Unless we look up to God at all times, we are following in the footsteps of Adam and Eve, putting God in second, third, or last place in our lives. This is a serious matter.

But sin is a word that people don't like to hear. If they are living without Christ, it makes them feel like imperfect people, and they don't like that. Even believers sometimes don't like to hear it. But as people mature in the ways of the Lord, they will readily confess their sins and look to God for forgiveness, and receive it. I believe that those people who are believing parents, who sacrifice for their children so that the children have the best they can provide, would understand in a small way how God felt about his children deserting Him to listen and be persuaded to disobedience by Satan.

After Adam and Eve turned their back on God, He banished them from the garden of Eden. But just prior to that, God prophesied a Savior. (Genesis 3:14-19). In this prophesy, God also told Adam and Eve what life would be like now that sin had entered the world. Life would be difficult and there would be physical death. Genesis 3:17-19: (The Lord God speaking to Adam) *"Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."*

Genesis 3:15: (The Lord God speaking to Satan) *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."*

"He shall bruise your head" refers to Christ's victory on the cross over Satan and sin, and *"you shall bruise His heel"* refers to the suffering and bodily harm Jesus suffered on the cross. The prophesy about Jesus Christ was not understood at the time. But we now know the authenticity of God's Word, because Jesus came and fulfilled this prophesy.

JESUS CHRIST PROVIDED SALVATION FOR MANKIND

In His great wisdom and mercy, God provided a way for man to receive salvation,

which is life in eternity; with our Creator. How did God do this?

God sent Jesus Christ, His Son, to this earth, to be a sacrifice in our place, for our sins, taking a physical beating as He was crucified; and the mental and spiritual torture of being separated from God the Father as He hung dying on the cross. He also sent Jesus Christ to this earth to explain God to mankind. Jesus Christ was the perfect picture of God. He was perfect not only in deeds, but in thoughts. He taught the people about God and performed miracles. Many of these Jesus performed, not by himself, but through his faith in the power of God. So, mankind received not only Jesus' teachings, but a demonstration of faith that "can move mountains." If we had this faith, we could also "move mountains".

What must we do to receive this salvation, which God so freely provided?

It says in John 1:12, *"But as many as received Him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name."*

There is nothing we can do, we only must open up our hearts to Jesus. This phrase *"received Him"* means not just "lip service", but a sincere desire to please the Lord, this includes obedience.

Jesus says in Matthew 7:21: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."*

During his stay here on earth, Jesus showed us by example how to be obedient. He was obedient unto death on the cross, a marvelous example. But, in addition, Jesus showed us how to be God's people here on earth.

He expanded God's kingdom, just as he exhorted us to do, in Matthew 28:19: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

In John 3:3 Jesus expresses salvation as: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

That is, we must become part of God's family by accepting Jesus as our Lord and our Savior.

In John 3:16 Jesus says: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."*

This is a powerful promise, but does not mean that everyone who claims to be a believer will spend eternity with God. True belief is a genuine acceptance of Jesus Christ, not just a knowledge of His existence.

In John 3:17,18 Jesus says: *"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of*

God..”. In other words if we reject Jesus Christ, it is our fault, because the witness of Jesus Christ is here. God’s Word and historical evidence witness to the existence of Jesus Christ. We have to make an effort to learn about Jesus, but the evidence is here.

Jesus makes us this marvelous promise in Matthew 7:7,8: *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”*

Salvation will not be denied to any who sincerely try to find it.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW THAT WE ARE SAVED?

Now that we have this precious salvation, what are we to do with it? Just as God the creator wished to share all the good things He had created with us, so we must wish to share salvation with others. Jesus tells us how to do that.

Jesus said, in Matthew 22:37-39: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Jesus also said, in Matthew 5:44,45: *“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.”*

By doing these things we will be the “salt and light” that Jesus wants us to be, and will be acting to enlarge the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus speaks about this in Matthew 5:13-16: *“You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand., and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

WHY DID GOD CHOOSE BELIEVERS TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL?

God’s salvation plan is brilliant. Who can spread the salvation message now that Jesus is gone to His heavenly home? No one should be able to do it better than someone who has tasted of God’s generosity and great gifts. We even say in our modern day language, “the best advertisement is a satisfied customer”. Let us pray to God that we continue to show appreciation for what He has done for us, and

have a desire to share His grace with others. Amen!

APPENDIX - HOW TO AVOID TEMPTATION

Satan approached Eve in the garden of Eden. He succeeded in getting Eve to rebel against her Lord and Creator. Satan convinced Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, against the command of her Lord. How did this happen? Can we learn from this encounter between Eve and Satan? Can we avoid similar situations? Jesus has some words of advice. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus applies a figure of speech of that day to the situation of lust. Avoidance is the key. Let us look at this figure of speech found in Matthew 5:29,30.

Matthew 5:29,30

verse 29: *“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you: for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”*

vs 30: *“And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”*

In these two verses Jesus discusses a shocking truth. He discusses what we have to do in order to eliminate things that get us into trouble. Jesus says radical “surgery” may be needed. Sometimes we play games with the Lord and keep temptation around, only to get in trouble. Maybe we haven’t quite deserted the world’s ways yet. Or maybe we think there’s some pleasure in sin. Maybe we hope against hope that we can enjoy a bit of the world and a bit of heaven, too.

Jesus says if your right eye is the problem, poke it out. If your right hand is the problem, cut it off. That would be better than the whole body going to hell. Does Jesus mean it? Our Lord didn’t ever say anything He didn’t mean. However, this is a figure of speech. It means that we must do everything necessary to remove what causes us to sin, no matter how difficult. No matter how difficult the measures, the measures would be better than being cast into hell.

The main topic of this discourse is the importance of eliminating sin from our lives. Because marriage is so important to God, Jesus used it as an example. However, this same message of Jesus can be applied to any temptation to sin or any temptation presented by Satan. Again, these are sins that originate in the heart. Looking where we shouldn’t look, thinking thoughts we shouldn’t think, and being where we shouldn’t be, can get us in trouble. Is it too much to ask a believer to remove himself or herself from a place of temptation? Is it worth it to tarry with temptation and suffer in eternity?

Now that we have Jesus teachings, what should Eve have done! Eve should have refused to have a dialogue with Satan. This would have been the idea of doing everything necessary to avoid trouble at all costs, this would be the idea of avoiding temptation at all costs. This is the idea conveyed in Matthew 5:29,30. When Satan questioned Eve in Genesis 3:1, she should have turned her back on Satan and refused to answer. She should have recognized Satan's effort to inflate her ego. How many of us would have fallen prey to the same approach? Remember when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph. Joseph fled, leaving his garment in her hand. This was a difficult thing to do, by worldly standards. But God blessed Joseph infinitely more than the pleasures of the moment which Joseph forfeited.

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World, or better yet universe, that is everything that exists.

God's Word, or the Scriptures, or the Bible

This creation process took the Lord God 6 days. God rested on the seventh day.

All quotes from Scripture are in *italics* and are from the New King James Version (NKJV).

Generosity, or better yet, GRACE. GRACE implies freely given with no purchase price.

Genesis 1-3

Some people have objected to this plan, further alienating themselves from God and His mercy.

Can you imagine a drowning person rejecting a life-jacket? This rejection is probably because these people have allowed themselves to be blinded by Satan and the world.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Our relationship to God is most important. After all, God created us and gave us everything we have, our food, our clothing, our very being.

Sodom was an evil place, but because the people of Capernaum would not listen to Jesus they were worse off, having rejected God.

"For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light." 2 Corinthians 11:14

Because of this, snakes are considered evil.

How can believers avoid temptation by Satan? Our Lord Jesus Christ has some excellent advice on this subject. It is found in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:29,30 where it is applied to the temptation to lust. A detailed discussion is found in the APPENDIX, pg. C9.

Jesus says in Matthew 6:19: *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal."*

God has provided redemption for all people, but there are still those who reject that redemption.

Genesis 3:23,24

Some people have objected to this plan, further alienating themselves from God and His mercy.

Can you imagine a drowning person rejecting a life-jacket? This rejection is probably because

these people have allowed themselves to be blinded by Satan and the world.

John 11:38-44. Jesus prays to the Father to raise Lazarus from the dead, and the Father does.

Two examples come to mind. First, man rebuffed God in the Garden of Eden after God made such magnificent provision for his well being, and God still provided a Savior. Second, Christ was cruelly tortured and his body ripped to shreds on the cross, and still He said, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*" (Luke 23:34)

Matthew 5:13-16

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JESUS, THE ONLY WAY - Chapter D

Introduction

Jesus taught a number of lessons about who He was. Jesus said He was and is the only Way. (John 14:6) Jesus was very definite about this. We have to take this seriously, because there are so many evil forces, the devil, the world, and man's sinful flesh, that would like us to think that there are many ways to eternal life - like "all roads lead to Rome". This is a foolish idea. How could a person think that the all-powerful God, who created the universe and the people on this earth, would tolerate the suggestion that there were other gods. God has said, "...*For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God...*". (Exodus 20:5) God is jealous for our allegiance.

The Fallibility of Man's Thinking about Jesus' Claims

This is the beginning of a theme which will be touched on often in these writings. The theme is this, that Jesus Christ is God and was also Man as he trod this earth, teaching and spreading the Good News of the Gospel. As such he was and is infallible.

This Gospel is that belief in Jesus Christ is the only way, or road, to salvation for eternity. Many people at Jesus time reacted negatively to Jesus' preaching and teaching. Many people still do today. These negative reactions and the refusal of many people to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior only proves and reinforces the idea that Jesus is genuine. Even today many people reject what is best for them.

Many people say that it is narrow-minded to believe that Jesus is the only way to salvation. How dare Jesus be so narrow-minded. And, in addition, Christians who hold to the ideas of Jesus are mean, unloving people. They are unloving to say that Jesus is the only way.

How can this be? Believers have love in their hearts for all the unsaved. If believers did not try to spread the Gospel, they would have no compassion.

Believers are trying to throw life jackets to people who are drowning.

Why would people who appreciate help in earthly matters, reject help from God?

These same people often try to help themselves to heaven, by trying to work their way to heaven. They listen to people who appeal to their intellects, people who have self-help programs, feel-good programs. These are difficult programs. These programs are hard work, impossible work, because people have intuitive feelings that tell them they have never done enough. They are fighting an overwhelming force.

The reason for this rejection is at least a two-part answer. First, as related in Scripture, there is a devil (going back in time to before the Garden of Eden). This devil in the form of a serpent, seduced Adam and Eve to sin against their Creator. And that very same devil is working today to keep mankind from salvation. Also, that very same devil in the form of a false god, the god of mammon, or materialism, has told people that following Jesus will inhibit their pleasure. This is a proof of the biblical truth that “...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” (Matthew 19:24) Simple observation of the thinking and actions of unbelieving people (against Jesus Christ) is proof that Jesus Christ is genuine. If unbelievers knew that Jesus Christ wasn't who he said He was, they wouldn't care. But because they realize down deep inside that Jesus Christ is real, but won't admit it; it has become a touchy subject with them. Then after a period of rejection, the heart is hardened and there is no hope for the unbeliever, since he doesn't care anymore. We could say that the unbeliever has lost his conscience.

THE EXCLUSIVITY OF JESUS - or - JESUS IS THE ONLY ONE

“*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*” (John 14:6) Jesus is the only one who ever said that. Others have made statements like: I will show you the way, or I will show you the truth, or I will show you the life.

Do you want to believe someone who tries to teach you how to achieve salvation yourself, or do you want to believe someone who is the real way to salvation. Jesus is saying that He is “*the way, the truth, and the life*”. That is, you must be like Him. He is the living way, the living truth and an example of the life we must lead. He is our guide, in everything.

Jesus knew who He was, that he was the Son of God, and that he had come to this earth to save those who believed on Him. Jesus was on a mission!

Jesus' Mission Statement

Jesus states His mission in John 3:17: *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.* This was and is Jesus' mission - to provide for a way for the world to be saved.

We must emulate Jesus. This means that we must not emulate the world, or any other entity or person. We must emulate Jesus, that is, to be “*salt and light*”, so that we can be a witness to Jesus and help to spread the salvation message.

(Matthew 5:13-16)

JESUS FINDS THE NARROW GATE TO ETERNITY FOR US

Jesus said, in Matthew 7:13,14: *“Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many that go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

The important idea is summarized thus:

The gate to destruction is wide...and broad is the way. Many go in there.

The gate to life is narrow...and difficult is the way. Few find it.

This verse expands on the previously noted verse, John 14:6, where Jesus says that, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”* This is the narrow gate. Jesus shows us how to find the narrow gate. And how to follow the hard road.

Aren't believers fortunate that they don't have to find this narrow gate or follow this hard road unassisted? No one could do that. From the time of Adam and Eve people have lost their way, and keep getting side-tracked onto the road to destruction and following that easy road.

Why is the gate to life and the narrow road to salvation hard to follow? God has not made it difficult for man. Man has only to believe. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16) If people do not believe, it is because they have made the conscious decision to take the broad road to destruction

The Consistency of Jesus' Teachings

All of Jesus' teachings are consistent. No teaching violates another teaching, regardless of the application. This is further proof of the fact that Jesus is God and Lord, and that the Bible is God's Word.

Flattery

In Luke 6:26 Jesus is discoursing on the subject of flattery: *“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”* But we may also apply these verses to peoples' journeys along the broad road to destruction.

The people on the road to destruction are people who follow the vain philosophies of the world. People of the world love to flatter others to get into their good graces, to obtain what they want. They wish to “worm” themselves into our confidence. They praise us so that we will praise them. Jesus says there is no gain for us to participate in this sort of thing. Also, we may be in the wrong crowd if we get too much praise. It may put us on the road to destruction.

Tribulation

In other Scriptures Jesus said it is better if we are criticized and endure tribulation because of what men say about us. In Matthew 5:10-12, *Jesus says: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* This is similar to Jesus' discourses about money or material things. You cannot get in the race for the wealth of this world, and keep your focus on heaven. Jesus said, *"You cannot serve God and mammon."*

It doesn't make any difference if it's material wealth or praise, or anything else that distracts us from our worship and dependence on the living God. These things are all violations of the first commandment which God gave in Exodus 20:3, *"You shall have no other gods before Me"*. If we receive criticism, or tribulation, for following the Lord Jesus we should be happy, because we are on the narrow road to heaven. We will know that we are citizens of heaven. (Philippians 3:20)

Jesus wants us to Ask, Seek and Knock

Jesus also says in Matthew 7:7,8: *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."*

This doesn't sound like God is making it difficult for man to believe or follow Jesus, does it? The problem is man's perception. Man thinks it is difficult to follow Jesus when he compares following Jesus with the ideas of this world.

The gate is narrow because of a number of reasons, primarily because people are their own worst enemy. People are lazy. It is easier to go with "the flow". Jesus offers some very insightful teachings connected with this thought. There is the parable of the Sower where the Gospel is sown in the hearts of men and they will not avail themselves of the opportunity to grasp it. Then Satan snatches the seed away. This is because they do not want it. (Matthew 13:1-9,18-23)

Another common problem is "putting off to tomorrow what must be done now." In the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), five virgins showed up at the wedding feast with their lamps full of oil. The wedding feast represents eternity with Jesus. These five virgins having oil in their lamps represent people who have come to grips with commitment to or belief in Jesus. But there were five other virgins who had neglected to have oil in their lamps. They were "in the dark", that is, without salvation. They knew about the gospel message, they had lamps. But they did not act on it. Let us pray that we try to spread the gospel to give people, and particularly our families and friends, the opportunity to commit themselves to Jesus.

These concepts are also applicable to many other things in life, not just salvation. Practical applications to this life follow along with the spiritual. Don't people say, "just take the easy way out". People do this in human relations. People do this in raising their children. This is a problem-avoidance technique. Taking the easy way out often exhibits itself in procrastination. Don't do today what you can do tomorrow. Don't push yourself, there's plenty of time.

Jesus has something to say about the concept that there is plenty of time. In Matthew 24:43,44 Jesus says: "*But know this, if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*" Here the thief is death. After we die there is no more chance to decide to follow Jesus Christ. Just as in the previously discussed parable of the Ten Virgins, whose who didn't have "oil in their lamps" at the end of their life, were not allowed into the wedding feast. The wedding feast is symbolic of spending eternity with the Lord.

Man's Thinking is not like God's Thoughts

Man's mind also conjures up feeble-minded gods, because that is what man wants. Like, "my god is big enough to accept anyone and everything". Then man deludes himself into thinking that he can do as he pleases. But God says, "No". Praise the Lord that the Holy Spirit has shown believers that Jesus isn't an "either/or" belief. It's **only** Jesus and Jesus **alone**. Praise God.

YOU MUST BE ON JESUS' SIDE

Jesus says in Matthew 12:30, "*He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with me scatters abroad.*" And to reinforce this idea, Jesus says in Matthew 7:21, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*" To be on Jesus side, we must be obedient. This is not an option. How could the Gospel be spread if people did not see dedication and obedience in His followers?

Jesus is also emphatic about sin. In John 8:34 Jesus says, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, whosoever commits sin is a slave of sin*". You cannot be a slave of sin and a servant of Jesus. These strong words of Jesus do not endear Jesus to many people. These are difficult words to people who are a slave to a particular sin, such as adultery, lust, covetousness, greed, and anger. Many people do not like to think about some of Jesus' words. But all Jesus' teachings are about making certain elections in life. In our everyday language "it's all about choices". Jesus wants us to make a choice, to do the will of the Father, or to follow the world. The rewards

of following Jesus are great. They are eternal life. But we must give up our allegiance to worldly pleasures and desires. Jesus wants us to serve Him and Him only, not just in eternity, but right here in this world.

THE DISTRACTIONS OF MATERIALISM, ALSO CALLED MAMMON

Obedience and dedication are applied to the areas of materialism and worldliness. This is about the false god mammon (or materialism). It is easy to enjoy the so-called “good things of this life”. In Matthew 6:24 Jesus says: *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”*

The word servant in that day had a different meaning that it has today. Today a servant can work for two masters, like a hired cleaning service. Not so in Jesus’ day. A servant was invariably owned by the master and was dedicated to the master’s service. In Luke 17:7-10 Jesus explains vividly who a servant was in that day and age. *“And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, and will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten, and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’?”*

So, you cannot serve God and mammon. The world knows this. To be successful in the ways of the world, you are taught to keep your focus on success. Don’t be distracted. The world admires single-minded worldly-minded people. Satan likes it when people have only time for the success and riches of this world. These people have no time for the spreading of the Gospel. Believers must train their children to put Jesus first, otherwise the children may lose Jesus.

The Parable of the Rich Fool

Jesus tells a parable, called the Parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:15-21. In this parable a very rich man is so dedicated to his riches that he totally serves these riches. They are his master. He builds greater barns, just so he can store his crops, and *“eat, drink, and be merry”*. This rich man has lost his dependence on God. His crops or goods are now his god. He should have been caring for the poor and destitute. He had lost the purpose God had for him in this life.

Jesus doesn’t think that you can serve two masters. The Parable of the Rich Fool proves this. You will be dedicated to one or the other. We see that every day. People would like to think they can “straddle the fence.” This is human nature. By human is meant peoples’ sinful nature with which they are born. But once you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (or are *“born again”* - John 3:3), you must make a

commitment, and “take a stand”.

JESUS SAYS TO TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW HIM.

Jesus says, in Matthew 10:38, “*And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me*”. and, also, in Matthew 16:24, “*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*”

These two statements of Jesus do not leave any room for serving two masters.

Taking up the cross was the culmination of Jesus’ work here on this earth.

However, many people think they can serve two masters. We must warn them and ourselves of Jesus’ words.

Jesus wants us to be “*Salt and Light*”

In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus said we should be “*salt and light*”. Or, from other Scriptures, our way of life should glorify God. We must try to live our life so it glorifies God. We should try to live our lives so the Gospel will be spread to others. I believe that using this as a guideline, and rejecting the “do” and the “do not” approach, is better. Also, we should apply God’s Word wherever possible. As an example, applying this principle to giving, St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:7: “*So let each one of you give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.*” Here, “*as he purposes in his heart*” implies that we have thought about it and talked to the Lord about it.

“*Make Disciples of all Nations*”

Jesus also says in Matthew 28:18-20, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*” We are to continue the work that Jesus started when he was on this earth.

We are the Lord’s representatives here on this earth. There is no one else to do it. We do not wish to disappoint our Lord.

What do we deny Ourselves?

This discussion of Jesus’ about mammon and serving two masters leads to a lot of questions, such as, do we have to give everything to the Lord and live in abject poverty. Must we drive an old “clunker” or can we drive a high-priced luxury car? In other words, how much luxury are we entitled to? These are fair questions. Different people have different opinions. I do not think it is a good idea for people

to try to set rules for others. I believe that each person should take these matters to the Lord in prayer. In other words, it's between you and the Lord.

Maybe the above question and others like it can be answered in this way. If we say that we are followers of the Lord Jesus, our actions in everyday living should show that we are worshipping Jesus, not the god of mammon. Are we being "*salt and light*". Are we spreading the Gospel as in the Great Commission, in Matthew 28:18-20. Of are we engaging in pursuing riches? Or do riches control us instead of us controlling riches? Remember that often actions speak louder than words. Do our actions betray the Lord Jesus? Let us pray that the Lord will enable us to maintain our focus!

Appendix - Bible verses used in this Paper

Matthew 5:10-12 Matthew 13:1-9,18-23 Luke 17:7-10

Matthew 5:13-16 Matthew 16:24 John 3:16,17

Matthew 6:24 Matthew 19:24 John 8:34

Matthew 7:7,8 Matthew 24:43,44 John 14:6

Matthew 7:13,14 Matthew 25:1-13 Exodus 20:3,5

Matthew 7:21 Matthew 28:18-20 2 Corinthians 9:7

Matthew 10:24 Luke 6:26 Philippians 3:20

Matthew 12:30 Luke 12:15-21

D

The universe shows the hand of One Creator. The uniformity of the laws that govern the universe are the proof of the One Creator statement. The universe could not hang together if different laws were in effect in different areas.

Biblical quotes are in *italics* and from the New King James Version (NKJV).

A better translation of the original language is "*pass judgement on*" instead of *condemn*..

Just as Jesus did not "*condemn the world*", but spread the Gospel, so believers ought to do the same.

Mammon is materialism or money.

The Gospel is spread, when people see believers as "*salt and light*". (Matthew 5:13-16)

SOME OF JESUS' TEACHINGS ABOUT SALVATION AND ETERNITY Chapter E

Introduction

In the study "The Redemption of Fallen Creation through the Son of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ", it was shown how God made a perfect, wonderful creation for the human race. After this creation, Adam and Eve strayed from God and sin entered the world. Then God provided man with an opportunity for redemption and eternal life through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, was crucified for the sins of all mankind on a cruel cross. He endured that for all, only we must believe.

Jesus spent a three-year ministry of teaching and healing prior to his death and resurrection. He taught us about what true belief is, and how to live for Him. It is the purpose of this study to present some of Jesus' teachings about what true belief really is, and how to put this belief into His service.

GOD'S DESIRE THAT ALL SHOULD BE SAVED

After Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden with man's consequent loss of God's perfection, God could have sentenced man to hell, which is eternal separation from God. Jesus describes it as "weeping and gnashing of teeth". But, God did not do that, he provided a way for man to return to him.

Jesus says, in 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. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."

The inspired apostle Peter also says, in 2 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".

Repentance is not just a sorrow for sins, but a change of mind, with a desire to change the way of life that led to these sins, and a desire to sin no more.

It is apparent that God did not wish to punish, but rather wanted mankind to come back to Him.

HOW TO RETURN TO GOD

God provided the way back to himself. Man must only believe. Jesus says in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

This is a key teaching of Christianity, the followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus didn't say: I know the way. Jesus didn't say: I can show you the way. But Jesus said: "I am the way,..." Why did Jesus say it in this manner? There are a number of possible reasons. First, and very important, the way to eternal life isn't following a set of instructions, or good works. It is total immersion in Jesus Christ. We are not only to believe in Him, but to emulate Him, with the goal to be like Him. We are to think like Him, act like Him, and to have emotions like Him, that is to love and have compassion like Him.

Jesus allows for no other possibilities for salvation or eternal life. He is the only way! Some say there is another way, some say there are many ways, some say there are an infinity of ways. And some even say: make up your own way, whoever God is, he will honor it. Like: "my god is big enough for everyone". If God wasn't so sad about some of the aberrations of men, he would

probably smile.

Why is it that people can accept so many absolutes, like gravity (would there be exceptions for anyone jumping off a tall building because they didn't believe in gravity?)? But they are reluctant to accept the innate truth that there must be one and only one Creator. Is it possible that Satan has blinded so many people? Some have made good works their God. They believe that they can earn their way to heaven, or that they are nice people. But Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." Jesus doesn't argue or attempt to persuade. Jesus states the facts. We can learn from this. Just state the facts, but don't argue. Pray for the unbeliever.

Jesus says 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."

This teaching of Jesus may help to explain why so few people find Jesus, the way to the Father. Sin makes some people lazy. They want a road that is easy to follow. The world has told them to take the easy way out.

This has an application for believers, too. Sometimes we think that the battle is too tough. Sometimes we think we need a rest. Even though a rest may not put us on the path to destruction, it would certainly displease Jesus. Jesus didn't rest. Jesus was always about the work of the Father.

REDEMPTION THROUGH JESUS

The condition of mankind became so bad (people continued to go their own selfish ways) that God sent his only Son to earth as a man to show mankind how to return to His fold and receive the full benefits of His salvation.

This is the story we wish to outline here, showing, from God's Word, how to achieve this blessed condition of salvation in eternity with our Lord God. That is, going back to the Lordship of God, by full belief and full acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ. In some circles this is described as being "born again". In others, simply as submission to Jesus Christ as Lord and Master. These two expressions can be shown to be equivalent ways of saying the same thing.

In His great wisdom and mercy and love, God, the Creator, provided a way for mankind to receive salvation, which is life in eternity. God sent Jesus Christ, His son, to this earth, to be a sacrifice in our place, for our sins, taking a physical beating as He was crucified; and the mental and spiritual torture of being separated from God the Father as He hung dying on the cross. Now, by accepting Jesus Christ, we can live in eternity as God the Father planned for us at the time of creation.

Note that this plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, starting when Jesus came to this earth to rescue mankind for his sin and rebellion, has the same conditions that God imposed on Adam and Eve for maintaining their position with God the Creator in His heavenly family. That is complete and total trust and dependence on Him.

JESUS CHRIST PROVIDED SALVATION FOR MANKIND

In His great wisdom and mercy, God provided a way for man to receive salvation, which is life in eternity; with our Creator. How did God do this?

As stated previously, God sent Jesus Christ, His son, to this earth, to be a sacrifice in our place,

for our sins, taking a physical beating as He was crucified; and the mental and spiritual torture of being separated from God the Father as He hung dying on the cross.

But God also sent Jesus Christ to this earth to explain God to mankind. Jesus Christ was the perfect picture of God. He was perfect not only in deeds, but in thoughts. He taught the people about God and performed miracles. Many of these Jesus performed, not by himself, but through his faith in the power of God. So, mankind received not only Jesus' teachings, but a demonstration of faith that "can move mountains." If we had this faith, we could also "move mountains".

What must we do to receive this salvation, which God so freely provided. It says in John 1:12: But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

There is nothing we can do, we only must open up our hearts to Jesus. This phrase "received Him" means not just "lip service", but a sincere desire to please the Lord, this includes obedience. Jesus says in Matthew 7:21:

"Not everyone that saith unto Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father Which is in heaven."

During his stay here on earth, Jesus showed us by example how to be obedient. He was obedient unto death on the cross, a marvelous example. But, in addition, Jesus showed us how to be God's people here on earth. He expanded God's kingdom, just as he exhorted us to do, in Matthew 28:19:

"Go ye therefore and teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

In John 3:3 Jesus expresses salvation as:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, He cannot see the kingdom of God." That is, you must become part of God's family by accepting Jesus as your Lord and your Savior.

In John 3:16 Jesus says:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

This is a powerful promise, but does not mean that everyone who claims to be a believer will spend eternity with God. True belief is a genuine acceptance of Jesus Christ, not just a knowledge of His existence.

In John 3:17,18 Jesus says:

"For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. 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."

In other words if we reject Jesus Christ, it is our fault, because the witness of Jesus Christ is here. God's Word and historical evidence witness to the existence of Jesus Christ. We have to make an effort to learn about Jesus, but the evidence is there.

Jesus makes us this marvelous promise in Matthew 7:7,8:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Salvation will not be denied to any who sincerely try to find it.

8/2009 E

Matthew 25:30

Quotes from Scripture are in italics and from the King James Version (KJV).

Inspired - directed by the Holy Spirit

Some people have objected to this plan, further alienating themselves from God and His mercy. Can you imagine a drowning person rejecting a life-jacket? This rejection is probably because these people have allowed themselves to be blinded by Satan and the world.

“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 3:16)

Luke 11:38-44. Jesus prays to the Father to raise Lazarus from the dead, and the Father does.

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ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS - Chapter F

Introduction

In a previously written paper, “JESUS, THE ONLY WAY”, the subject of the exclusivity of Jesus was discussed; that is, that Jesus is the **only** way. There is no either/or. It is Jesus **only**, and only **Jesus**. There is salvation in no other name. The apostle and disciple Peter says in Acts 4:12: “*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*”

Why is there salvation in none other than Jesus? Because Jesus Christ, part of the Triune God who created the universe, paid the price for mankind’s sin of deserting his Creator in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve deserted God by listening to Satan (the first mistake) and then disobeying God’s order not to eat “...of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...”. (Genesis 2:17) So Adam and Eve thought more of the devil’s persuasion than of God’s order. To put it bluntly, this was rebellion against their Creator. We must beware that we do not rebel against our Creator and Lord. After all, the Lord has created us, sustains us, and has provided a glorious eternity for us. This is the ultimate in grace and love.

Mankind fell into disobedience and into thinking they could do without God. Jesus paid an indescribable price in pain and suffering during His pre-crucifixion, and crucifixion torture. And Jesus Christ proved through His resurrection from death, and ascension into heaven that we also could be resurrected and could live into eternity with our Creator.

It was also emphatically noted that Jesus’ resurrection from the grave and ascension into heaven were and are historically authenticated facts. So, why do people fight facts? Why do people deliberately choose hell over heaven? Those factors were also discussed in the paper “JESUS, THE ONLY WAY”. Some of the factors are pursuit of pleasure (mammon, the god of materialism), laziness, peer pressure and trust in self. Since these things were previously discussed, we will go on to talk about how to obtain this eternal life with our Creator.

Salvation - a free Gift from God.

This salvation is a free gift from God. This is often described as the Grace of God. Grace is a free gift, “no strings attached”. Only we must accept this gift and acknowledge our Creator with thanks. We cannot take any credit for this gift, otherwise we are not giving God the credit.

We did not, nor can we, do one iota of work to obtain salvation. It must be accepted, we dare not reject it, lest we spend eternity in hell. We will attempt to

explain, from God's Word, what is necessary to receive this gift of salvation.

Jesus - the Word of God - recorded in the Bible

God's Word is first of all Jesus Christ. He is described as the Word, or perfect description of **God**. It says in John 1:1,2, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.* Jesus was this Word. This "Word" is the translation of the Greek word "Logos". Logos is not just a group of words. It is an expression of thought. So Jesus is an expression or description of God the Father. Jesus says in John 14:6,7: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me. If you had known Me you would have known My Father also, and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."* Also, Jesus says in John 10:30, *"I and My Father are one."*

This is all recorded in God's written Word, the Bible. It is also emphatically noted here that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. No error has ever been found in Biblical history. Studies of Archaeology and other written histories have never shown an error in Biblical history.

Now that we have established the fact that Jesus is the only *"way, the truth and the life."*, we want to know what is required for entrance into the way to eternal life. We will do this by using Jesus' own words. There is no other authority.

The Way to Heaven - John 6:26-58

To begin with, we will use Jesus' own words to establish the complete, detailed way to heaven on the narrow road (Matthew 7:13,14). I believe Jesus' discourse found in John 6:26-58 is one of the best, if not the best all-inclusive discussion of how to obtain life with Jesus and be like Jesus starting right here on this earth and on into eternity. It is a figurative discussion of how to partake of Jesus and be like Jesus in the vivid, graphic language of the day.

In a certain sense this figurative discussion of Jesus is similar to Jesus' discussion of the Beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (SOM). In the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) Jesus discusses heart conditions, such as dependence on God, mourning, humbleness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, mercy, pureness of heart, and peacemaking. Later in the SOM Jesus discusses specific problems such as anger, lust, and clean speech, and many others. But before we can cure many overt sins, we must have that all-important change of heart!

Just so, to obtain eternal life we must have an internal change. We must give up on good works and trying to obtain eternal life on our own. We must become more like Jesus. We must eat the *"bread of life"* and drink the *"living water"*. We must

have a spiritual transformation. We must try to be like Jesus. Without this transformation, we will be like the people of this world, trying to work out our own problems without God or Jesus, and failing.

The figurative approach is often used in Scripture. Jesus describes Himself as the “*living water*” (John 4:10), to the woman at the well at Samaria. Then she asks for this living water. And Jesus offers it to her. Here in John 6 Jesus calls Himself the “*bread of God*” and “*the bread of life*”.

In this study of John 6, we will again use Jesus’ words to look at specific cases. These cases will explain problems people have with entering the kingdom of God, or spending eternal life with Him. Included will be the obstacles people find in following Jesus right here on this earth.

HOW TO OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE

Jesus frequently uses figurative speech to get His point across. In the great discourse of John 6:26-58 Jesus gives one of the great figurative explanations about how to obtain eternal life. This teaching is so brilliant, beautiful, deep, and yet so simple that everyone could understand, if only they opened their minds to what the Lord Jesus was saying. This teaching was chosen as the basis for this study. We will amplify and expand on this teaching with other verses after we get the foundational teaching from these verses.

vs 26: “*Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.*”

vs 27: “*Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for **the food which endures to everlasting life**, which the Son of Man will give you, because the Father has set his seal on Him.*”

Jesus starts right from the beginning of the story. The story begins with what not to do. Often a person will learn better what to do, if he or she is shown the folly of their ways. Jesus uses this method in other teachings such as the Parable of the Rich Fool. (Luke 12:15-21) The Rich fool does everything wrong. He cares neither for God or his fellowman. He hoards his riches and crops in bigger and better barns. And the Lord takes his life away from him.

In many ways, this parable of the Rich Fool is like the people seeking after the food in the feeding of the five thousand. The peoples’ focus on the bread and fishes was similar to the Rich Fool’s focus on his full barns. These things in both cases were distractions from the ways of the Lord and helping others. So we say that we must control our wealth and material things and not let them control us. In vs 26 Jesus reminds them that they were following Him because of the “free lunch”. Then in vs 27 Jesus tells them that instead they should labor, not for

perishable food, but for “*the food which endures to everlasting life*”. Later, in the study of vv 35,40 and 51, we will find out that this “*food which endures to eternal life*” is Jesus. This is figurative language just as in Matthew 7:13,14 where Jesus describes the way to eternal life as a “*narrow gate*” and the road to eternal life as a “*difficult*” way.

In vs 35 Jesus says, “*I am the bread of life*”. Those who come to Him will never hunger and those who believe in Him shall never thirst. Those are lasting values, not things that perish. In vs 40 it says that the will of the Father who sent Jesus to this earth to rescue us, is that all who see and believe on the Son will have everlasting life. That also sounds like permanence for the believer. And in vs 41 Jesus says, “*I am the bread that came down from heaven.*” *From heaven* implies that the bread has been guaranteed by the Father, as by the use of the word seal in vs 27.

The signs Jesus refers to in vs 26 are the miracles He performed. The author calls them signs, because these miracles pointed to the fact that Jesus was someone special, in this case a person from God who had God’s approval. That is the meaning of “*seal*” in vs 27.

We must not lose sight of what is important. The cares of the day, the worries of the world, and the multiple distractions that the world and the devil put in front of us; we must reject these things. Jesus’ teachings touch on these subjects constantly. As examples, Jesus talks about “*the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches*” choking God’s Word out of the human heart. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus talks about storing up “*treasures in heaven*” where they cannot be destroyed; do not store up treasures on earth where “*moth and rust destroy*”. Also Jesus talks about keeping your moral focus by using the clear eye as an analogy, in the sense of keeping focused on a goal.

Jesus had just finished miraculously feeding five thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fish. And people crowded around Jesus because of the signs (miracles) Jesus had performed. They all appreciated these miracles, some because they were hungry and appreciated the food, some appreciated the miracles for their significance in showing that Jesus was the Son of God (making Him God), and some of them may have appreciated both the food and the fact that Jesus was deity. We don’t really know how many of each type there were. But Jesus’ teachings, parables and figurative teachings were so brilliant that they applied to all types of people.

In this case, to those who only felt physically hungry, Jesus had the message of the previous paragraph, to be aware of that which was important in this life, the eternal values. And to those who understood who Jesus really was, the message was not

to let down your guard, but keep your guard up, against distractions of the devil and the world.

So Jesus, in his brilliance, took the occasion to remind them of what was important. The important thing was what would endure to eternity. We need this reminder at times, when we get caught up in the cares of the world, or the cares of daily living. And Jesus also reminds them of His authority. His authority comes from God the Father. We would say the “seal of approval”. We can rely on Jesus! vs 28: *Then they said to Him (Jesus), “what shall we do that we may work the works of God?”*

vs 29: *Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you **believe** in Him whom He sent.”*

The people asked Jesus, “*what shall we do that we may work...*” Notice the emphasis on “we”. Works are good works if these works are performed in the name and to the glory of God. If a usually good work is performed with the motive of accruing glory to the person who performs it, it is useless for eternity. Not that it might not be helpful to the recipient. But it will not be on the “plus” side of the ledger for the performer.

Jesus has a pointed discussion of credit for good works in Matthew 6:1-18. It has to do with the works of charitable giving, prayer and fasting. See especially vv 5 and 16, “*Assuredly, I say to you they have their reward.*” To use the vernacular, we might say “you can only cash the check once”. If you do something for your own glory or that people may admire you, the reward is only here on earth. There will be no reward in heaven for that. But if you hide your good work on earth, you will receive a reward in heaven. You may ask, what good is it here on earth if no one knows about it? The answer is that the Lord in heaven will reveal these things if and when He wants them revealed.

Jesus replies to the question in vs 28 about working *the works of God*, with a statement in vs 29 that the work of God is *believe in Him whom he sent* (Jesus). Note that in vs 28 his questioners have the popular notion, which is inherent in mankind’s thinking, that they have to, or can work their way to heaven. This working for their own salvation gives people a sense of their own importance, a feeling that they’ve really done something. But, when the “chips are down”, they are let down, because they never know when they’ve worked enough. Nor can they ever work enough!

Jesus doesn’t tell them outright that they’re wrong. But Jesus tells them first things first. This is defined in vs 29. To paraphrase it, “Before you can do good works (for eternal value), you must believe in Me, whom God has sent.” There is no such thing as a good work without **belief** in Jesus.

Belief in Jesus

But now, what does **belief** in Jesus mean? Let us look at vv 30-33:

vv 30,31: *Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will you perform then, that we may see it and **believe** You? What work will you do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”*

vv 32,33: *Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*

Jesus had just fed the 5,000, but people then were just like people are today. They are skeptical and forgetful. So they asked Jesus to show them a sign, a proof that he could accomplish miracles. Then they cite the fact that God sent them manna from heaven when they were between Egypt and the promised land of Canaan. The people are still enamored with the idea of a free meal. They said, “*He gave them bread from heaven to eat*”. They do not yet understand the difference between manna being bread from heaven for the physical body, and Jesus being the “bread of God.” also from heaven, but for the eternal soul.

But Jesus is so gentle. Instead of chiding them for forgetting the feeding of the 5,000, He seizes upon the opportunity to tell them the difference. Moses gave them physical bread from Heaven, but not the true bread which gives eternal life. Jesus is the *bread of God* from heaven and *gives life to the world*. This is the necessary belief in Jesus for eternal life.

vs 34: *Then they said to Him, “Lord give us this bread always.”*

They still don't realize that Jesus is the bread of God, and ask Jesus again (vs 31) for this bread. They probably want Jesus to feed them earthly bread for the rest of their lives. We see this in our modern society - is there anything new? Many people who have tasted of the welfare program become permanent takers.

Vv 35: ***“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”***

Then Jesus tells them who He is, and promises eternity for those who believe in Him. Jesus says He is the bread of life.

But what does belief in Jesus require. Is this belief only a knowledge that Jesus is Lord and Savior? Or is it knowledge that Jesus is Lord and Savior plus obedience? And if it is obedience, what is obedience? Jesus elaborates on these topics in the following verses.

Jesus says, in vs 36: *“But I have said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.”*

Jesus tells them that they have seen Him (the signs), but they don't believe in Him. This is largely due to them looking at the earthly aspects of free food, rather than the heavenly aspects of the bread of life.

Vs 37: *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."*

First, *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me."* We must come to Jesus. We cannot just stand on the sidelines and be neutral. We must stand up for Jesus. God will not force us, neither will He reject us. This is part of belief, not just an idle knowledge, but a coming to Him.

vv 38: *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."*

Here we have a very important part of belief in Jesus. It is obedience! Obedience in doing the will of the Father. But what is the will of the Father?

vs 39: *"This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all he has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."*

vs 40: *"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day."*

In vs 39 Jesus states that it is the will of the Father that He, Jesus, should lose no one that the Father has given Him. They should be saved for eternity. This verse attests to the love of God for all mankind. Some people would preach a stern God who is "mad at humanity" for their sins. This verse says rather that God is a God of love. To reinforce that idea, at another place and time, Jesus tells the very direct and simple parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. (Luke 15:3-10) In Luke 15:7 Jesus said: *"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."* And, in vs 10: *"Likewise, I say to you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

In vs 40 Jesus gives a comprehensive statement defining the will of the Father. The will of the Father is that all who believe in the Son should have eternal life. In other words, receive the Gospel.

He is emphatically stating that He is *"the way, the truth and the life"*, as stated in John 14:6. And God the Father is the guarantee!

Jesus is about to tell the Jews of his day more, but there is a break in the text telling about the complaints of the Jews. There is interesting information in this text that is applicable to people today. Some people today say that if only they were there in person at Jesus' time and heard Jesus talk, and saw Jesus' miracles, they would believe. Even though we have authenticated history to back up Jesus' claims, they

persist in unbelief. But the people of Jesus' day were no better. They saw and heard in person, and yet persisted in unbelief.

vs 41: *The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven."*

The Jews don't think Jesus is God and believe Jesus is making a false claim. Or they are jealous of Jesus because He grew up with them. It is part of the human nature that persists in us, that we should be important. We are jealous of friends sometimes who achieve a higher position than us.

vs 42: *And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?"*

How can Jesus claim to be God when He is the son of Joseph and Mary? Jealousy rears its ugly head. We see it in our everyday life. People are often more prone to believe outsiders than someone in their own circles. Hence the saying, "A man is never a hero in his own home."

vs 43: *Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves."* Jesus tells them not to complain or criticize. "*Do not murmur among yourselves*" implies that they did not have the courage to debate or discuss the matter with Jesus directly. Have people changed? Emphatically not. People are often more willing to talk behind someone's back than have an honest discussion to find out the truth of the matter. It is so interesting that the Bible has such an accurate description of people's behavior. The Bible is **true!**

vs 44: *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day."*

No one comes to Jesus unless he or she are gently pulled by the Father. We are not capable of coming to the Lord without this assist. We cannot come to the Father on our own. Yet the Father gently draws all men. He forces no one.

vs 45: *"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.'*

Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."

True learning comes only from God. "All" implies that God draws all men. God teaches all people. And if they hear and learn from the Father, they will have eternal life. But hear and learn! They can hear the Father, but they must learn. They have the option of rejecting the golden words of life.

vs 46: *"Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God, He has seen the Father."*

No one has ever seen God, that is why we need Jesus to teach us, he has seen God. That is where we have to make the leap of faith. We have to believe Jesus. That is why Jesus performed miracles. He does not ask us to act on blind or unsubstantiated faith.

vs 47: *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”*
This is the key, Jesus saves, only believe. But what does belief in Jesus imply, is it only knowledge? Jesus explains.

vs 48: *“I am the bread of life.”*

This is how Jesus saves. Jesus will explain the bread of life.

Jesus tells us who He is. He gives eternal life. In other parts of Scripture Jesus describes Himself as both the *“bread of life”* and the *“living water”*. The analogy that Jesus gives is beautiful. Bread we understand gives life to our physical bodies through the act of eating. But Jesus, calling Himself the bread of life, says we must eat His flesh. This eating is taking Jesus into our spiritual bodies, so that we may become more like Him.

As the song goes: **“Oh, to be more like Jesus.”**

vs 49: *“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.”* Their fathers ate manna in the wilderness. Why did they die? Manna kept the children of Israel from starving on this earth, but was only symbolic of the heavenly bread which would save them forever.

vs 50: *“This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.”*

Jesus is the bread from heaven, manna was not.

vs 51: *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”*

This is the key about belief. Jesus is that heavenly bread which would save them forever. Only they must eat this bread. That is, they must become one with Jesus. They must share his life, that is they must live as Jesus lives. They must share Jesus’ mission. This is eating the heavenly bread, which is available for the whole world.

To use modern language, they must be part of the “team”. Does this seem frivolous, to describe believers as being on the same team with Jesus?

Emphatically not. All the successful causes of this world, be they good or evil, are “pushed” by active members of a team. Bystanders don’t do the job. I know that I am guilty often of being a bystander. Lord, I pray that you will motivate me to work on your team.

vs 52: *The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?”*

There would be some confusion among the Jews. Some would not understand the figurative nature of Jesus’ discourse, probably because they did not want to.

Jesus Powerful Statement about the Essence of Salvation

vs 53: *Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you."*

Now Jesus repeats the substance of His previous speech (vv 26-52) in a most powerful manner. Jesus has told his listeners to put their focus on things of eternal value, not on things that perish. Then He tells them that first they must believe in Him. That is the work of God. That is the only thing that counts for eternity.

Then His listeners bring up Moses and wish Jesus would emulate Moses with some more miracles or signs. Then Jesus tells them that He is the true bread of Life.

(This is so much better than manna from Moses, which was only earthly bread.)

And those who avail themselves of Jesus will never hunger or thirst.

Then Jesus gives His listeners a warning. They have heard Him and seen His signs, but yet they don't want to believe. He tells them the good news that the Father wants all to be saved. And also Jesus says that the Father has given Him the job of saving all those who He (the Father) has given to Jesus. And Jesus does the will of God.

Then Jesus describes Himself as the bread from heaven. Then Jesus senses that the crowd is not happy with His message, when He says He is the bread of life. But Jesus says they are being taught by God and if they learn from God they will come to Him. Then Jesus explains that no one but Him has ever seen God. Therefore, those that believe in Jesus have everlasting life. Then to get back to Moses, Jesus says that the bread in the wilderness was only earthly bread and didn't stop people from dying. But Jesus is the living bread from heaven that stops death if they only eat it. Eating the flesh of Jesus will make them as Jesus, pure in thought, word and deed.

Then Jesus delivers a powerful summary in vv 54-58, which contains everything they need to know for eternal life. This summary will not only help us to eternal life, but will guide us on this earth. Of course this is true, because eternal life starts for us just as soon as we accept Jesus as the *Bread of Life*. As St. Paul says in Philippians 3:20: *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."*

vs 54: *"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."*

Without unity with Jesus, they will have no life, that is, no eternal life. And Jesus explains it in plain language.

vs 55: *"For my flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed."*

Jesus explains that being in unity with Him, that is, eating His flesh and drinking his blood, is the way to eternal life. To eat Jesus' flesh and drink Jesus' blood

means to become as one with Him. We admire Him, we love Him, we obey Him. And to do these things we pray to the Lord that He will enable us to think like Him. As an example: spreading the gospel, or as we say obeying the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20) is eating Jesus' flesh and drinking Jesus' blood. Training our children and other dependents in the ways of the Lord is also being like Jesus (which is eating and drinking our Lord Jesus' flesh and blood). As Jesus said in Matthew 22:37: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*" And in vs 39: "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*" In general, it could be said that being "salt and light" (Matthew 5:13-16) is being part of Jesus and promoting Jesus' work (the Gospel). vs 56: "*He who eats my flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.*" Jesus assures believers of an eternal bond with Him. We must not break that bond. We must remain in Jesus, otherwise we lose our support and drift away.. vs 57: "*As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.*" We can have the same relationship with Jesus that Jesus has with the Father, and consequently we can also have this relationship with the Father. This is a very good way of describing belief, "...*he who feeds on Me will live because of Me*". vs 58: "*This is the bread which came down from heaven-not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead, He who eats this bread will live forever.*" These words of Jesus are some of the most powerful in Scripture. These words are both literal and figurative. In other parts of Scripture Jesus describes Himself as both the "*bread of life*" and the "*living water*". In other words, Jesus gives life! Jesus compares Himself with the manna that God sent to the children of Israel in the Sinai desert. They understood that God sent the manna. So Jesus is saying that God sent Him as living bread just as He, God, sent the children of Israel bread to sustain their life on earth. Only Jesus will sustain them into eternity. They should have understood Jesus' words. However, now that Jesus has come to earth, sacrificed Himself on the cruel Roman cross, do we understand this? Some people have made the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ literal, in the sense that it is eating the bread and "product of the vine" at the Lord's table. But they are confusing the symbol with the substance. To "*eat my flesh*" and "*drink my blood*" is to participate with Jesus in the work that He does, that of giving of Himself to spread the Gospel. Isn't that what Jesus came to earth for? Jesus mission was to save mankind from it's sins. "*He who eats my flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.*" This is a most wonderful promise of eternal salvation by Jesus! Praise the Lord!

APPENDIX 1 - The First Mistake

Genesis 2:16,17 says: *And the Lord God commanded the man saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

It was man's responsibility to listen to this message of God and make every effort to fulfill it. In Genesis 3:1-5 it is related that Satan "pulled out all the stops" and made every effort to persuade Eve to disobey God's order. And it was an order, since the word used in Genesis 2:16 was "*commanded*". But Eve and also Adam violated this command of the Lord.

It is not the purpose of this study to condemn Adam or Eve. We must not do that. Judgement is God's domain. We must ask ourselves the question: would we have done better?

I believe that one of the purposes of Scripture is for our learning and strengthening us in the ways of the Lord, so that we can do better for the Lord. From this encounter of Eve and Adam with Satan we learn that we must beware of dialoguing with Satan. We must turn our backs on the devil. And we must beware of listening to the advice of unbelievers, because they can be used by Satan in a way to sidetrack believers into the ways of sin.

Jesus taught some powerful messages about "avoidance" of sin. In Matthew 5, 27-32 Jesus says that not only should you not commit adultery, but you shouldn't lust. Jesus says that not only should you not commit murder, but you shouldn't get angry (Matthew 5:21-26). There are also great teachings about our speech (vv 33-37) and keeping our focus on the right goal (Matthew 7:22,23).

But an important point is that there are precursors to sin, which can lead to sin. Some of these are looking where we shouldn't look, being places where we shouldn't be, saying things we shouldn't say, thinking things we shouldn't think and talking to people to whom we shouldn't talk. Eve's talking to Satan falls in this latter category.

There is also a powerful parable of Jesus in which He talks about planning. It has been named "The Cost of Commitment". It also deals with planning. We have to plan the cost of anything that deals with Commitment to the Lord. By planning we can recognize and be ready for the wiles of Satan and the World.

This history of man's fall in the Garden of Eden, and the teachings of Jesus about avoidance of situations in which we might sin, and planning for these situations should enable us to better avoid breaking God's commandments.

If Peter had planned for a confrontation with the adversaries of Jesus Christ he wouldn't have been "blind-sided" by the servant girl who surprised him with the accusation that he, Peter, was with Jesus of Galilee" the night Jesus was arrested in

the garden of Gethsemane. Then it was that Peter denied Jesus three times. How many times have we kept silent or said the wrong thing because we were surprised by the circumstances. We must think about and plan for these crucial times when we are tested for the Lord. And pray regularly to the Lord that He would give us the right words and testimony when these are required of us. We do not want to let our Lord down, do we?

APPENDIX 2 - Modern Language Expressions

A few modern language expressions have been used in this paper. I have tried to use these where I felt they lent a special impact, of more vivid meaning than a more run-of-the-mill expression. I hope nobody is offended by these choices. I list these expressions here with other acceptable alternatives.

pg 1 - no strings attached - free, no exceptions, no payback

pg 6 - the chips are down - there is a crisis

pg 10 - pulled out all the stops - used every trick at his disposal

pg 10 - blind-sided - had no idea, or didn't see it coming

APPENDIX 3 - John 6:43-58 - From the CEV:

vv 43,44: *Jesus told them: Stop grumbling. No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me makes them want to come. But if they do come, I will raise them to life on the last day.*

vs 45: *One of the prophets wrote, "God will teach all of them." And so everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him will come to Me.*

vv 46,47: *The only one who has seen the Father is the one who has come from Him. No one else has ever seen the Father. I tell you for certain that everyone who has faith in Me has eternal life.*

vv 48,49: *I am the bread that gives life. Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, and later they died.*

vv 50-52: *But the bread from heaven has come down, so that no one who eats it shall ever die. I am that bread from heaven! Everyone who eats it will live forever. My flesh is the life-giving bread that I give to the people of this world. They started arguing with each other and asked, "How can he give us His flesh to eat?"*

vv 53,54: *Jesus answered: I tell you for certain that you won't live unless you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man. But if you do eat My flesh and drink My blood, you will have eternal life, and I will raise you to life on the last day.*

vv 55,56: *My flesh is the true food, and My blood is the true drink. If you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you are one with Me, and I am one with you.*

vs 57: *The Living Father sent me and I have life because of Him. Now everyone who eats My flesh will live because of Me.*

vs 58: *The bread that comes down from heaven isn't like what your ancestors ate. They died, but whoever eats this bread will live forever.*

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Direct quotes from Scripture are in *italics* and from the New King James Version (NKJV), unless otherwise noted.

Jesus Christ has many important teachings about the “first mistake”. See Appendix 1.

See Appendix 2 - Modern Language Expressions

Histories from all over the world authenticate the fact that there was a universal flood at the time of Noah. Also, the archaeological findings at Jericho establish that the walls of Jericho did come tumbling down”.

John 14:6

John 6:35

John 4:10

John 6:33

John 6:35

Matthew 13:22

Matthew 6:19-21

Matthew 6:22,23

Jesus shows us that confrontation is not the way to spread the Gospel. In dealing with people one-on-one Jesus is so very gentle. Jesus is only “severe” with hypocrites and hypocrisy.

Another parallel expression is “familiarity breeds contempt”. People were the same at Jesus’ time as they are today.

John 6:43-58 as recorded in the CEV (Contemporary English Version) is found in Appendix 3.

The Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew 5:1-8:4. It has some powerful teachings, including the necessity for a change of heart. It is worthy of our study.

Luke 14:26-33, also called the Parable of the Tower

We do not know for certain if the servant girl was an avowed adversary of Jesus Christ, but we do know that she was used, knowingly or unknowingly by the devil in the testing of Peter. See Luke 22:31-34 and Luke 22:54-65.

Matthew 26:69-75

WHAT MUST I DO TO HAVE ETERNAL LIFE? - Chapter G

The title of this paper is a question that Jesus was asked twice. One time is recorded in Luke 10:25-28. This led to Jesus relating the parable commonly called the Good Samaritan, recorded in Luke 10:29-37. The other time was during an encounter Jesus had with a rich young man, recorded in the three Gospels, Matthew 19:16-21, Mark 10:17-22, and Luke 18:18-22. These three accounts are almost identical. The account in Matthew will be used here, it loses none of the importance of the message Jesus is conveying.

The question: Luke 10:25-37

vv. 25-28: *An expert in the Law of Moses stood up and asked Jesus a question to see what He would say. "Teacher," he asked, "What must I do to have eternal life?"*

Jesus answered, "What is written in the Scriptures? How do you understand them?" The man replied, "The Scriptures say, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind.' They also say, 'Love your neighbors as much as you love yourself.'"

Jesus said, "You have given the right answer. If you do this, you will have eternal life."

vs. 29: *But the man wanted to show that he knew what he was talking about. So he asked Jesus, "Who are my neighbors?"*

The answer: The parable of the Good Samaritan

vv. 30-37: *Jesus replied: As a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, robbers attacked him and took everything he had. They beat him up and ran off, leaving him half dead.*

A priest happened to be going down the same road. But when he saw the man, he walked by on the other side. Later a temple helper came to the same place. But when he saw the man who had been beaten up, he also went by on the other side. A man from Samaria then came traveling along that road. When he saw the man, he felt sorry for him and went over to him. He treated his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put him on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next morning he gave the innkeeper two silver coins and said, "Please take care of the man. If you spend more than this on him, I will pay you when I return."

Then Jesus asked, "Which one of these three people was a real neighbor to the man who was beaten up by robbers?"

The teacher answered, "The man who showed pity."

Jesus said, "Go and do the same."

The title question, “*what must I do to have eternal life?*” might seem odd to us. We all know that eternal life is obtained through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. According to John 1:12:...*some people accepted him and put their faith in him. So He gave them the right to be the children of God.* But even in our day and age, just as in the time of Jesus, some people do not understand what words like “belief” and “faith” imply. The words are mere shallow concepts to some. Jesus clarifies these words in Matthew 7:21: “*Not everyone who calls me their Lord will get into the kingdom of heaven. Only those who obey my Father in heaven will get in.*” Belief and faith are accompanied by obedience. Then, Jesus gave the two great commandments in Matthew 22.

Matthew 22:37-39: *Jesus answered: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is, “Love others as much as you love yourself.” All the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets are based on these two commandments.*

In Jesus time, God’s people did not understand the concept of Jesus’ redeeming work on the cross. The plan of salvation at that time was to believe that God would provide a Messiah for them, and this faith would save them. This faith was to be demonstrated by obeying the commands of God. The sacrificial system that God gave them in the Books of Moses was to be obeyed as an outward symbol of their faith in this promise of salvation by God.

The big problem was that the Jewish people, not understanding the promise of God, took it upon themselves to define it - as freedom from the tyranny of the hated Romans. They also defined God’s Laws to suit themselves, changing necessary conditions of the heart to rules and rituals (good works). For instance, innumerable rules about what one could and could not do on the Sabbath. Also, how one might honor parents without providing for them. And who was their neighbor, who they had to love as themselves? By disobeying their God, their faith became of no avail. Can that happen to us?

So, the expert in the Law of Moses, in trying to showoff his knowledge, left an opening for Jesus to teach him. And Jesus does just that, in a most graphic way. We all know the lessons of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The very people who were suppose to know and practice God’s laws did not. They probably thought they would become unclean if they touched this poor man. So a law that was given to God’s people to protect their health was used to absolve them from helping their neighbor. Do we ever twist things to suit ourselves?

Jesus knew this man’s heart, but he didn’t try to teach him a lesson in theology; or how belief, or faith in God leads to obedience to God’s commands. Instead Jesus

uses a practical example to show how this works out in everyday life. We cannot convert the world by talking about our love for God, if we do not love our fellowman. And it is doubtful that we love God if we do not love and help our fellowman.

Another example of Jesus' answer to this eternal life question is found in Matthew 19.

Matthew 19:16-21:

A man came to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?"

Jesus said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? Only God is good. If you want to have eternal life, you must obey His commandments."

"Which ones?" the man asked.

Jesus answered, "Do not murder. Be faithful in marriage. Do not steal. Do not tell lies about others. Respect your father and mother. And love others as much as you love yourself." The young man said, "I have obeyed all of these. What else must I do?"

Jesus replied, "If you want to be perfect, go sell everything you own! Give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven. Then come and be my follower." When the young man heard this, he was sad, because he was very rich.

Jesus does not quote all the commandments which God gave Moses on Mount Sinai, as recorded in the book of Exodus. People have broken up the commandments into two tables. The first table contains commandments about our relationship to God, and the second table our relationship to others. Artists have shown Moses holding two pieces of stone, called tablets, naming one the first table and the other the second table. This is strictly a human concept, just as is the breakdown of the books of the Bible into chapters and verses. The first table corresponds to Jesus first great Law, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind.*" The second table corresponds to Jesus second great Law, "*Love others as much as you love yourself.*"

Notice that this incident, just as the incident involving the parable of the Good Samaritan, centers around the Laws of the second table or Jesus' second great commandment. Why is this? Maybe it is that the Jews of that day, such as some Christians of today, thought they had a wonderful relationship with God. Many of the Jews of Jesus' day thought that just because they were descendants of Abraham, that they were "in" with God. Rather than argue with them about their relationship to God, Jesus talks about their relationship to their fellow man. And isn't it true that often we think that we're in tune with God. We pride ourselves with such a good relationship (often fooling ourselves). But when it comes to our

relationship to our fellow man, that's another matter. We can't understand how our fellow man, or neighbor, can't get along with us, when we have such a "perfect" relationship with God.

This young man, who was rich, replied to Jesus that he had obeyed all these commandments, and Mark and Luke add, "*since I was a young man*". But, we know that this wasn't true. No one can obey these commandments perfectly. Maybe he meant as much as possible or most of the time. Just as we say we are obedient to God, when we mean we try. So Jesus tells him to sell everything he owns and come and follow him, to achieve perfection. Give the proceeds to the poor so he can have treasures in heaven.

Some people say that this is a command for all Christians to sell everything they have and follow Jesus. There are a number of problems with this line of thinking. First, the word "follow" that Jesus uses here is a physical following like "come along with". Secondly, if all Christians did this, who would feed and clothe and house them. And, third, the last general command that Jesus gave, was the great commission found in the last chapter of Matthew.

Matthew 28:18-20:

Jesus came to them and said: I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.

The sense of the word "go" used here is "as you are going". In other words, it isn't just pick up and go to another country or continent and tell about Jesus and the Gospel, but to do it as we are going about our daily activities right here where we are at. Jesus said nothing about selling everything and going some other place to spread the Gospel. That is all right, too. But how many of us are spreading the Gospel everywhere we go? I know that I fail in this task. Another thing, this great commission of Jesus makes it highly unlikely that selling everything and then isolating oneself from the rest of humanity, like in a monastery, is a good way to spread the Gospel. As far as wealth being an evil substance to get rid of, I believe careful examination of the Bible supports the idea that if a person controls his wealth and doesn't let wealth control him, then it's all right.

Now getting back to the rich young man, I believe that what's happening here is that the rich young man wants approval from the Lord Jesus for his obeying the commandments. He is thinking he is pretty good for his perfection. He really doesn't want to know about what good thing he must do for eternal life. He wants Jesus' stamp of approval. He wants Jesus to say that he has arrived and needs to do

nothing more.

But, Jesus won't let him revel in his goodness or perfection. It's just as if Jesus is saying to him: if you're so perfect, you need to advance to another higher level. Perform the ultimate work, get rid of your baggage and follow me. Here, I believe, is a lesson to be learned: we must be careful about trying to look good in front of the Lord on the basis of some perceived good works that we do. We must recognize our sinful nature, be repentant and rely on the Lord Jesus for our salvation.

12/2005

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All direct quotes from Scripture are in *italics* and from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) from the American Bible Society.

The "teacher" in this verse is the expert in the Law of Moses.

I do not propose to proclaim that the interpretations in these last two paragraphs are "Gospel truth". It is the author's opinion only. But it does offer a possible explanation for stating that "sell everything" is not a command for all Christians.

REQUEST FOR A PREFERRED POSITION IN HEAVEN or THE REQUEST OF THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE - Mark 10:35-45, Matthew 20:20-28 - Chapter H

Introduction

Jesus is asked to give James and John, two of His disciples, a special place in heaven. These special places are at the right and left hand of Jesus. We will use the text found in Mark 10:35-45. The text in Mark says that James and John did the asking, the text in Matthew says that their mother did the asking. Both texts are undoubtedly correct. I'm sure James and John and their mother all asked. It makes no difference to the main teachings of the text. That the mother also asked shows the interest of a devoted mother. It is too bad in our day and age that more mothers aren't interested in their children, particularly in affairs of eternal life. We will look at other related Scriptures. The Christian religion, as expounded and lived out by Jesus, is made up of basic truths, and not a code of myriad rituals and rote. Because Jesus is so brilliant, many of His teachings touch on several of these basic truths. In this teaching, service to others preempts dominance over others. But another teaching of Jesus, "*And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.*", (Mark 10:44) is touched on here and occurs often in Scripture. It is expressed in a more detailed way in other places, such as "*So the last will be first, and the first last.*" (Matthew 20:16) and "*For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*" (Luke 14:11) These verses and other similar verses will be listed in the Appendix with the situations in which they are used.

The Text

Mark 10:35-45:

(35) *Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."*

(38) *But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared."*

(41) *And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those*

who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

This text has been broken up into three sections.

The first section is the request of James and John that Jesus should give them a preferred position in heaven.

The second section records Jesus answering their request, not with a “yes” or “no”, but with a question which is designed to get their thinking on what is necessary to be worthy of that position.

The third section is how to lead a life like Jesus which makes them worthy of that position.

There is a similarity of structure to the second section of the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:15-21), in which Jesus redirects the brother, who is seeking redress from another brother about inherited wealth, to thinking about the subject of Greed.

In the third section Jesus makes the statement, *“And whoever of you desires to be first shall be a slave of all.”* This is similar to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 19:20 that *“...many who are first will be last, and the last first.”* This will be discussed later.

JAME’S AND JOHN’S REQUEST

James and John request to sit on Jesus’ right and left hand (vs. 37). While a perfectly natural request for people thinking the world’s way, this is not the way God thinks. Before answering their question, Jesus let’s them know that He isn’t going to answer the question the way it was asked. In this case, I’m sure that Jesus knew the answer, but He wants to ask some questions first, to teach James and John, or redirect their thinking.

James and John go right to the objective, without asking Jesus the means.

Apparently, James and John felt confident that they would have eternal life, only they also wanted a great place in heaven. In the encounter with the rich young man (Mark 10:17-23), the rich young man asked Jesus, *“Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”* In this case, the rich young man was interested in the means.

Just as James and John, sometimes, believers want to boil Christianity down to one thing, that is, how to get to heaven. When they believe and are convinced that they have salvation, they think that is all there is to it. But, Jesus said in Matthew 7:21,

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

Here Jesus is acting as the Son of Man. As the Son of Man Jesus showed people how to obey the two greatest commandments, found in Matthew 22:37-40. *Jesus said to Him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the Prophets.”*

As the Son of Man Jesus didn’t come to earth to judge mankind. He came to save people from their sins. *“For God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”* (John 3:17) So Jesus will not decide on James’ and John’s request. Jesus tells James and John (vs. 38) that, *“You do not know what you ask.”*

Jesus replied by asking about their ability to share the “cup” and “baptism” of Jesus. (vs. 38) They said they were able. Then Jesus replied that the requested position in heaven was not His to give. Jesus does not just leave with a negative reply, but He gives them positive direction about “service”, and refers to Himself as an example. Then, Jesus starts at the beginning of the story.

In summary Jesus tells James and John that He does not have the authority to give them positions at his right or left hand. But Jesus will tell them how to be worthy for positions in heaven.

JESUS ANSWER TO JAMES’ AND JOHN’S REQUEST

Jesus asks them (verse 38): *“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”* This is a verse full of meaning, but usually the writers simply say that Jesus is asking if they are willing to suffer with Him as He goes to the cross. This is like our expression “accepting Jesus”. But I believe that Jesus’ question covers much more than that.

I believe, in the phrase “drink the cup” that Jesus is asking them if they can live the way Jesus lives, and perform the ministry that Jesus performs. Remember that Jesus’ ministry was one of not only atoning for the sins of mankind, but to serve everyone. Jesus lorded it over no one. This makes sense in the context of Jesus’ words which are found in vv. 42-45. In other words, vv. 42-45 explain what the cup is, from which Jesus drank. It is true that the cup includes the tribulation and suffering on the cross, but it also includes everything Jesus was born (as the son of Man) to do which was to serve mankind by being the perfect picture of God.

Then what is the baptism that Jesus was baptized with? Remember that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. If you read about that baptism in Matthew 3:13-17,

Jesus had to persuade John the Baptist to baptize Him. John didn't understand why Jesus had to be baptized. But Jesus said in vs. 15, "...to fulfill all righteousness", which is to say do what God wants. Reading the rest of this text, Matthew 3:16,17, it is like an initiation ceremony, that of starting Jesus' ministry. And it starts by Jesus showing His focus on obedience to God.

In summary it could be said that Jesus asked James and John if they would be willing to begin a ministry like Jesus, that of preaching the Gospel, serving people, and suffering tribulation to help people. In other words, doing God's will.

But as far as James' and John's position in heaven, that is already determined.

Jesus does not go beyond that. I believe that is Jesus' kindly, subtle way of saying that they should leave this up to God, a position in heaven should not be their focus. Their focus should be on what God wants them to do. And Jesus proceeds to tell them about this. This is discussed in the next section.

JESUS DISCOURSE ON WHAT BELIEVERS MUST DO

Then in vv. 42-45 Jesus outlines what the believer must do. This outline is the "heart and soul" of Christianity. It is the equivalent to the most learned theological statement of scholars. It defines the role of the believer in terms of service. The believer is to serve, not be served. Jesus uses Himself as the pattern. Jesus took nothing for Himself, He took no glory, but instead the suffering and humility of the cross. And he healed, helped, and encouraged people. What better example could you find?

THE FIRST SHALL BE LAST, AND THE LAST FIRST

Jesus teachings are completely the opposite of the world's teachings. There is a common expression used in the Gospel to the effect that, "the last shall be first, and the first shall be last". Another expression is to the effect that, "people who have their reward on this earth will not have a reward in heaven, and vice versa".

In this text we have, in vs.44, a similar verse: "*And whoever of you desires to be first, shall be the slave of all.*" So, Jesus is telling James and John that if they aspire to a certain position in heaven, they must serve others here on earth.

What a tremendous verse! But sometimes, because of our sinful human nature that we were born with, we find that in practice this is difficult to do. Rather than excelling for the Lord, we forget and try to excel for ourselves. We must pray to God to help us overcome our old sin nature. The difference is that if we excel for God, He gets the glory, if we excel for ourselves, we are taking away God's glory. As an excellent example of excelling for the Lord, there are some physicians who have gone to difficult countries and worked for what we would call starvation

wages. They have forfeited a materially rich life in their home country. These people are last on earth, but shall be first in heaven. Maybe we cannot be physicians, or cannot go to these difficult places, but we can help right in our own “backyard”. And if that seems difficult, we can pray to God to make known to us how we can help promote the Gospel.

APPENDIX

“But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” Matthew 19:16-30. Jesus discusses the rewards for those who support the spreading of the Gospel, and the lack of rewards for the rich young man who couldn’t part with things to help the poor. Those who can’t part with their earthly “treasures” will be first on this earth, but last in heaven. But those who support the spreading of the Gospel give up much on this earth. In other words, on this earth they will be last, but the Lord will reward them in heaven, so they will be first in heaven. We can’t describe the terms “first” and “last” , but to be sure “first” in heaven will be beyond our wildest expectations.

“So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.” Matthew 20:1-16. This is from the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, Jesus’ story about people who think salvation is dependent on their works or length of service, or when they came into the church. This is works religion. Those who think, because they worked harder or longer in the church, they somehow deserve more than others, are first on earth, but will be last in heaven. Or maybe they won’t make it to heaven. Jesus doesn’t tell us.

“If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” Mark 9:33-35. The disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest. So Jesus used a little child as an example, and said later in Mark 10:15, *“Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”* Since a little child has not yet developed a veneer of greatness, Jesus is saying that you cannot receive the kingdom of heaven if you think you’re really great. So we may say that if someone wants to get into heaven, he must be humble or last on this earth.

“...but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.” Mark 10:35-45, 43,44. This verse was discussed in the main text. But here we wish to discuss a possible reason that Jesus used servant in vs. 43 and slave in vs. 44. I do not know what the theological experts say about this. So this is only an opinion. And, remember that Jesus words may mean different things to different people where Jesus doesn’t specifically explain these words. Also, the derived opinion must be consistent with

Scripture. That is why the Parables of Jesus have so many interpretations, and a number of these may be right.

I believe that Jesus used “servant” (the Greek word for servant, diakonos, implies a free servant, not a slave - deacon is derived from diakonos) in vs. 43, because Jesus was talking about becoming great among “you“, where “you” referred to His followers. Jesus followers were not supposed to treat each other as abject slaves, but only as servants. Slaves could receive abuse, but that was prohibited among the Jewish people since the days of the Exodus.

But I believe that Jesus used “slave” (the Greek word for slave, doulos, is a slave) in vs. 44, because when the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ are called upon to witness to unbelievers, even of the most abusive or obnoxious types, they are called upon to “take it on the chin” as the common expression goes. Just as a slave would be expected to do. Two Scriptures may be used to support this argument.

One is Jesus explanation with a story of what a slave is, found in Luke 17:7-10. In this story the word servant is the Greek “doulos”, which is in reality a slave, totally serving and obeying one master. The “doulos” takes orders, not requests. The other is the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about carrying a burden two miles instead of one mile, found in Matthew 5:39-41. The real life situation referred to here is that in those days, a Roman soldier could lay hold of a subject, here a Jewish person, and force him to carry his pack for only one mile. That was the law, but Jesus said that you must subject yourself voluntarily to that soldier and offer to carry his pack an extra mile. That would be abhorrent to a Jew of that day.

“And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.” Luke 13:24-30. In this parable Jesus talks about the urgency of entering through the narrow gate, now. He talks about those who wait too long, and then plead with the Lord that they were always “on His side”. Then He speaks vs. 30, with, I believe, the idea that those who thought they were the “in” crowd, that is the “first”, on this earth, will be the “out” crowd in heaven, that is last. Possibly there is a connection here between those that delay getting serious with the Lord, because they were “born” into the church.

DOES GOD DELIBERATELY REVERSE MAN’S POSITION FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN?

In the INTRODUCTION we saw the verse, *“For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* (Luke 14:11) This means that the high and mighty on this earth will be put down in heaven. And the humble on this earth will be exalted in heaven. Sometimes in certain situations it means that the high and mighty on this earth will go to hell, and the lowly on this earth

will go to heaven. Does God do this deliberately? No! Man is the problem. To understand this concept, we will bring in another principle. It is that God's logic is the complete opposite of man's logic. For instance, man says "be independent, stand on your own two feet, do what you want, push the other fellow around". But, God says depend on Me, don't depend on yourself, don't do what you want, serve the other fellow. So, people who follow man's ideas to become great, will naturally be last in heaven, or in some cases go to hell. Let us look at another example.

Matthew 19:30: "*But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*" Here a rich young man will not give up his possessions for the poor. He is compared with people who give up family members or lands for Jesus' sake. The world would say that you're crazy if you give up anything to go to a foreign country instead of enjoying yourself where you are. The world says don't be last, think of yourself first.

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Direct quotes from Scripture are in *italics* and from the New King James Version (NKJV).

We are not talking about getting into heaven. We are talking about doing what Jesus wants us to do to follow His footsteps while on this earth on the way to heaven.

"First" and "last" are figurative as used in these verses.

The text of the complete story is listed. The underlined verse number is that just quoted.

A free servant

A bondsman

Unfortunately, the translators of various translations have not been careful to translate the Greek words diakonos and doulos carefully and consistently. Diakonos is a free servant, such as our hired help or deacons. Doulos is a slave, completely devoted and owned by one master.

The Greek text uses the words "diakonos" and "doulos", respectively in vv. 43 and 44. The NKJV translates these as "servant" and "slave", and the KJV translates these as "minister" and "servant". The NKJV is the more accurate if we understand "servant" as a free person.

SIX PROPOSED DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS - Chapter I

DS1: God loved mankind so much that He created a perfect universe for mankind to rule over and enjoy. Mankind's only instruction from God was to acknowledge Him by being obedient.

DS2: Sin came into the world when Adam and Eve listened to the devil and disobeyed their Creator, thereby putting their desires ahead of God's plan for their welfare. As a consequence, sin, suffering, and death came into the world.

DS3: After sin entered the world, God still showed His love for the human race by not destroying it, but revealing that He had a plan for its redemption. From the time of Adam and Eve until Jesus entered the world as the Son of Man, Jesus' coming was prophesied. This authenticated to mankind the truth of the Word of God.

DS4: God's plan for mankind's salvation was for people to believe in Him, repent of their sinful ways, and be "born again" into God's family. Being "born again" is having a change of heart, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and following (obeying) Him. Following Jesus Christ is having faith in Him, and making an effort to be like Him.

DS5: Jesus, through His Resurrection from death and His Ascension into Heaven to be with the Father, gives us a guarantee that, if we are "born again" we, also, will spend eternity with God. Praise the Lord.

DS6: Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ receive Salvation beginning on this Earth into Eternity, with their Lord.

These are the six proposed doctrinal statements which are discussed in greater detail in the next document "CHRISTIANITY, THE ONLY TRUE RELIGION, THE BIBLE, AND A CHRISTIAN DOCTRINAL STATEMENT" - Chapter J.

I

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CHRISTIANITY, THE ONLY TRUE RELIGION, THE BIBLE, AND A CHRISTIAN DOCTRINAL STATEMENT - Chapter J

Introduction

We believe that the Christian religion is the only true religion, and the Christian God is the only true God, and belief in Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life (the Salvation Story). Jesus said: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6) We have staked our lives on this, our life on this earth and in eternity.

A Doctrinal Statement is a short-form statement of religious belief. A Christian Doctrinal Statement centered on the Salvation Story is presented in this paper.

God's Word as found in the Bible is the Foundation for the Christian Doctrinal Statement

The Christian Doctrinal Statement must have its foundation in the Word of God. God inspired His prophets to set down His Word. We call it the Bible. We dare not go to the ideas or words of fallible men or women, or else this writing would be in vain.

The Bible would be the best doctrinal statement for Christianity, were it not so long. The Bible is so long because, besides the Salvation Story, it also includes a history of His chosen people from the time of Creation until the time of Jesus Christ and the founding and expansion of the Christian church during the Apostolic Age. The accuracy of this Biblical history has been verified and importantly, authenticates the fact that the Christian religion is the only true religion. God does not ask us to take everything in "blind" faith. He has left evidences of the truth of His Word, evidences such as the Creation of the universe, the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ and His Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven.

God is eminently fair, leaving us his written word and sending us Jesus Christ to pay for our sins and to show us how to receive eternal life. God has also put in our hearts evidences of His creation and our need for redemption. Praise the Lord, He has left no excuse for mankind's unbelief. He has provided mankind with every chance to come back to Him.

The Word of God, the Bible, explains to us what we need to know about the Creation and the universe, in terms that we can understand. We do not wish, in this paper, to go into details we cannot understand. Consequently, we will only say that God created the earth, the universe and everything in it.

God has also left us evidence of this: we can see the universe! There is ample evidence also that Jesus Christ came to this earth, that He did miracles, taught about God and mankind, was crucified, arose on the third day thereafter, and ascended into heaven.

Christianity - The only true Religion

Before writing more specifically about Christian doctrine, we wish to point out the following facts. We do this because it would be fruitless to write a Doctrinal Statement that does not address eternal life and how God has made it possible that we may possess it. Obviously, we do not wish to go to a false god.

So, we present the following facts about the Christian religion.

Christianity is the only religion where God seeks to save mankind by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind (John 3:16) and to show mankind how

to live in God-pleasing manner for eternity. In man-made religions, man seeks to save himself by good works or deeds. Since the Christian salvation plan is the only one like it, and is at variance with all the man-made plans, it must be (the true) God's plan.

Since all man-made religions, although differing widely, have the similarity of salvation through good works, that identifies these religions as creations of peoples' minds, and therefore must be flawed. Who would trust their eternal destiny to the intellect of people who can not create anything but flawed structures; people who are so full of sin, that they have brought the world to the moral state it is in today?

Christianity teaches that a person receives salvation by being "born again" by the Holy Spirit of God, that is, the person is changed from the inside out, becoming a believer and follower of Jesus Christ. This may be stated as a person having a spiritual renewal, that is a change of heart (John 3:3-6). All other religions, because they are man-made, emphasize changing yourself through self-accomplishment.

Christianity teaches that a person must be completely dependent on his or her Creator. He or she must be as a vine growing out of a root. (John chapter 15) Man-made religions teach that you must depend on yourself. Anyone who depends on himself has placed himself ahead of God. There has been, is, and always will be, a unique antagonism to Christianity, because the devil seeks to destroy the only true religion. Not only that, mankind resents being told that they are sinful and need to repent and return to God. They are resentful because they know deep down inside, that they need help. If mankind really thought they were so good and were on the road to eternity, would they bristle at the Words of Jesus? Absolutely not!

Not only that, systems such as communism and other dictatorships, know that Christianity isn't a fable. They know that they are at enmity against God. Hence they try to eliminate anything or anyone who tries to remind them of the only true God (like Christianity and Christians).

Man-made religions are not subject to this antagonism, in fact, the devil likes them, and would have them flourish. Christians the world over are persecuted for actions that are tolerated in other religions. Jesus Christ is a prime example, He taught love and tolerance, and healed people. Yet He was hung on a cross to die.

A Doctrinal Statement- the Salvation Story of the Bible

We have already shown that Christianity is the only true religion and that the Christian God is the only true God. It would be fruitless to propose a doctrinal statement for a manmade, non-existent or non-saving God.

We will endeavor to write a doctrinal statement for Christianity which is an accurate summarization of the Salvation Story of the Bible.

As noted earlier this doctrinal statement will present the broad ideas which God explains in the Bible, and not go into details beyond our understanding.

In fact, a part of this statement could well be that mankind's intellect is essentially zero compared to the Creator's, and consequently we are not capable of defining our Creator, beyond what He tells us in His Word, the Bible.

The Purpose of a Doctrinal Statement

The purpose of this doctrinal statement is to distill from God's Word, the Bible, the answers to questions about eternal life. We have an innate (inborn) knowledge that existence on this earth is

only the beginning. We also have an innate knowledge that everything was created and that there is a Creator. In addition, we know that we are falling short and that we are not able to provide for our destiny ourselves. So, to be useful, the doctrinal statement must answer questions about who God is, and His powers. We also want answers about good and evil, and how to receive salvation for eternity from our Creator.

Since this is a Christian theological statement, it will deal with God's creation of the earth (also the universe), God's creation of man and woman, the introduction of sin into the human race, God's plan to rescue mankind through Jesus Christ (which includes a definition of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ). This statement will also deal with the assurances we have about eternal life.

The Content of this Christian Doctrinal Statement

This paper will attempt to explain, based on God's Word, how the earth and people got here (the Creation Story), how they strayed from God (the Fall in the Garden of Eden), and how God is trying to bring people back to Him (the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross), so people can spend eternity with Him. In other words, the Christian religion is the Salvation Story. It is God's rehabilitation plan for eternity for the human race which rejected its Creator within days after it was created.

People are born with an innate (inborn) knowledge that there is a God and that there is a Creator. People are also born with a feeling that something here in this life on earth is missing, or going wrong. They want to know how to establish a relationship with their Creator and where they are going to spend eternity. The Word of God, the Bible, answers these questions. The doctrinal statement should, also.

In God's word, the Bible, Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me." (John 14:6) This is the foundation of Christianity.

The Focus of the Doctrinal Statement

The Christian doctrinal statement must focus on God's gracious love for His creation and the people in it, and His efforts to bring them back to Himself. (John 3:16). The doctrinal statement should answer mankind's inborn questions about their relationship to God, their purpose here on this earth, their questions about eternity, and the way back to God.

A Christian doctrinal statement emphasizing God's love for people, would never leave them in doubt. The Bible is very specific about the way to eternity. Praise the Lord! The Christian religion as laid out in the Bible, God's Word, is a story of God's attempt to bring people back to Him. People's attempt to find God by themselves, is irrelevant and useless - they cannot.

This proposed doctrinal statement states that a change of heart is a necessity for returning to God. Jesus said, "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) Jesus Christ showed us in a fantastic way how to have that change of heart. "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:37-40.

In some religions overt sin must be eliminated. But in Christianity sins of the heart must be eliminated. Overt sin cannot be done away with, unless the heart condition is cleaned up. After all, Jesus said that all things originate in the heart. (Matthew 12:35 and Matthew 5:8)

Problems in some Doctrinal Statements

Other doctrinal statements use the term “belief in Jesus Christ”, without explaining the meaning of the word belief. This is a pitfall in Christian circles, because some people believe that this is an idle belief, just a bit of head-knowledge, but they don’t put into practice the teachings and actions of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many have been deceived over this.

Mankind’s Effort to remake Religion into Rules, Rote, and Ritual

People would like to be able to condense the Bible into a series of rules, ritual, and rote (3Rs). That is because all other religions are manmade, and mankind proposes to earn its way to heaven. This is called “works religion”. This won’t work. People would never know if they’ve done enough (not that they ever can). “Works Religion” often is used to enable people to control other people, thus elevating some above the others. Of course, mankind’s sinful desire is to be greater than his or her peers.

The 3Rs have even crept into Christianity. Many doctrinal statements of Christian congregations are an assemblage of “do”s and “don’t”s (3Rs), which hide the real purpose of Christianity, which is entry into eternal life, or bringing back people to God. Examples are including in doctrinal statements the way to hold the “Lord’s table”, or how baptism is to be performed. These are not salvation issues (some people would like to think they are!). These types of doctrinal statements lead unbelievers to think that there are many Christian religions, leaving them in a state of confusion. And unbelievers (and also some believers) think Christianity is a works religion.

On an individual level there should be no statements like: “no more cards, no more drinking, no more smoking, no more movies.” Each person should arrive at their own conclusions, as he or she studies God’s Word and prays to the Lord about it.

Thus we may conclude that religion is not ritual, rules, or rote. As Christians, we must display the love of God to all. If we perform, or live, our religion without thinking, it will lose its value in God’s plan for spreading the Gospel.

THE DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

(1) God’s Love for Mankind demonstrated in His Creation

God’s Word, the Bible, explains that God loved mankind so much that He created the earth and mankind, and gave mankind the earth to rule over. God did His work of Creation in six days and rested on the seventh. (Genesis 1:1 to 2:25). God only required that Adam and Eve obey Him. (Genesis chapters 2:16,17)

The important point here is that God used His supreme power for the benefit of His supreme creation, the human race. We can see the evidence all around us. The seas, the mountains, and all other natural creations. The evidence of the Creator’s work is there. Our inability to understand His abilities and powers is no bar to our belief. This complexity of the universe and our inability to understand it is all the more reason to worship (praise, admire and fear).

God created Man and Woman (Adam and Eve) on the sixth day of Creation. God created them as equal partners in the sight of God, that is equal in importance, dignity, and worth. (Genesis 2:18) God valued his human creations so much that he gave them possession and supervision over the earth. (Genesis 1:26) The differing physical, mental and emotional differences of man and woman would make them a perfect match and they would become a team living for God. This is

the one flesh concept. (Genesis 2:24)

The Creation of Adam and Eve, intelligent, reasoning human beings with the ability to reproduce and have dominion over the earth is another proof of the existence and supreme power of God.

DS1: God loved mankind so much that He created a perfect universe for mankind to rule over and enjoy. Mankind's only instruction from God was to acknowledge Him by being obedient.

(2) People Reject God's Generosity - The Introduction of Sin into the Human Race

The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, rejected God's generosity toward them, by disobeying God. They listened to the devil and ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden.

In this way, they put themselves ahead of God. This is called sin. (Genesis chapter 3)

This sin was an act of basest ingratitude. God had created this wonderful earth and universe for Adam and Eve's enjoyment and supervision. This was an act of generosity and confidence on God's part. But the devil convinced Adam and Eve to disobey God with the promise that they could be like God. (Genesis 3:5)

This should be enough to convince open-minded people of the truth of God's word, the Bible.

This is the root cause of all sin, people setting up their own intellect over God's, and thereby setting themselves up as their god. This should be obvious by observing the condition of people all around us.

DS2: Sin came into the world when Adam and Eve listened to the devil and disobeyed their Creator, thereby putting their desires ahead of God's plan for their welfare. As a consequence, sin, suffering, and death came into the world.

(3) God still loves Mankind and reveals His Plan in Prophecy until the Birth of Jesus Christ.

God, rather than destroying mankind, showed His great love for mankind and His creation, by creating a redemption plan.

God promised the Savior to Adam and Eve right after they fell to the wiles of the devil. In Genesis 3:15 God speaks a veiled prophecy predicting the battle for men's souls between Jesus and the devil. That God so quickly set in motion a way for mankind to come back into his kingdom shows his great love for mankind.

From this time to the time of Jesus about two thousand years later, God records the history of His chosen people, so that this history will be proof of the truth of the Scriptures. Jesus was prophesied many times in this history, along with specific things that He would accomplish.

Thus people will know after Jesus' coming to earth that he was real, just as predicted in God's Word. What a wonderful proof of the truth of the Scriptures. What a blessed assurance!

These prophecies were recorded in the Bible, so that people would know when they were fulfilled that they were true. These prophecies provided hope for mankind and assurance that mankind could be freed from the guilt of their sin.

DS3: After sin entered the world, God still showed His love for the human race by not destroying it, but revealing that He had a plan for its redemption. From the time of Adam and Eve until Jesus entered the world as the Son of Man, Jesus' coming was prophesied. This authenticated to mankind the truth of the Word of God.

4) God Still loves Mankind and sends Jesus, His Son, to Earth

God loved His creation, people included, so much so that He evolved a plan to rescue people from their sins, so that they could spend eternity with Him, rather than in hell under condemnation. Only, they must believe. Praise the Lord, that He made it possible that we could be with Him eternally!

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, born of a woman, to this earth to rescue mankind by dying on a cross as an atonement for their sins, and also showing mankind how to live in obedience to God. (Matthew 7:21) By coming back to God (belief and obedience) people could spend eternity with Him. (John 3:16)

God's plan for mankind to return to Him, was for mankind to admit that they had sinned, needed help, and were willing to change (repentance) by trusting God for their salvation. This would consist in faith that Jesus Christ, whom God the Father sent to this earth, was really God's Son, really had God's power, and paid the price for our sin. This price was the agony Jesus went through during crucifixion on a Roman cross, when He suffered cruelly both physically and mentally while enduring God's wrath in our place, on that cross. This faith must be real, and have the characteristics of repentance (Matthew 4:17), obedience (Matthew 7:21) and permanence (Matthew 10:22).

And, in addition, Jesus showed us how to live the way God wants us to, a way of life that was a result of that belief. A way of life that would please God. This way of life is called in the Bible, "salt and light". (Matthew 5:13-16) It is the primary way God uses to spread his Gospel message over all the earth, now that Jesus Christ has gone to heaven to be with God the Father. To be able to live a life of "salt and light" we have to follow the same rules that Jesus followed on this earth. Love God with all your heart, soul, and love all mankind (love your neighbor as yourself).

DS4: God's plan for mankind's salvation was for people to believe in Him, repent of their sinful ways, and be "born again" into God's family (John 3:3). Being born again was believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and following (obeying) Him. Following Jesus Christ is having faith in Him, and making an effort to be like Him.

(5) The Revelation and Culmination of God's Salvation Plan with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead and His Ascension into Heaven

God did not ask mankind to have "blind faith". Jesus performed an abundance of authenticated miracles. The people of His time believed that. Even the Roman authorities believed that. Today God shows us that He has the power to heal us for eternity by healing us right here on this earth.

In addition. Jesus ascended into heaven forty days after His resurrection, so that we would know once again that He is God. These assurances drove the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ to spread the Christian faith throughout the Roman Empire, and to accept cruel martyrdom, for the joy of spreading the good news of God's salvation plan.

DS5: Jesus, through His Resurrection from Death and His Ascension into Heaven to be with the Father, gives us a guarantee that, if we are "born again" we, also, will spend eternity with God. Praise the Lord.

(6) The Status of "born again" Christians (Believers) here and in Eternity

God is eminently fair. He does not play games with believers. He does not hold them out at

arm's length. In fact, God is anxious to see that all people receive salvation. It says in God's Word, the Bible, in John 3:17: "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Jesus said also in Matthew 7:7,8: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened unto you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks it will be opened." Some people think they will have to wait for the judgement day to find out the verdict in their case. A number of indications in Scripture indicate that we will know right here on this earth, and that we will have an assurance of our salvation. Here is a partial list: Matthew 5:3,8-10, the kingdom of heaven is where God reigns; John 3:3, you must be "born again" into God's family right here on this earth; Romans 8:16,17, the Holy Spirit assures us that we are children of God; Philippians 3:20, we are citizens of heaven right now.

DS6: Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ receive Salvation beginning on this Earth into Eternity with their Lord

Appendix 1

Naval Doctrine

Many doctrinal statements for manmade systems are primarily do's and don'ts derived from experience. They are designed to keep people from getting in trouble. One example of this type could be "don't work on electrical wiring without turning the power off" or "don't light a match if there is a nearby gas leak".

A doctrinal statement of a systems type is this naval doctrine for aircraft carriers: Don't leave bombs on deck if enemy planes are sighted in the area. Violation of this doctrine cost the Japanese four aircraft carriers at the Battle of Midway in WWII. The Japanese left bombs on deck during their shore bombardment of Midway island even though they had sighted US aircraft in the area. When our aircraft attacked their carriers, the on-deck bombs exploded in an inferno, and the carriers were demolished in a blazing inferno. The Japanese who had limited industrial capacity were not able to replace these carriers.

A theological doctrine statement similar to this would be the Ten Commandments. But this would be insufficient, since a complete theological statement would have to include the road to salvation, since people have an inborn knowledge that they are under the wrath of God because of their sins, and that their eternity is in jeopardy.

A theological doctrinal statement of do's and don'ts such as the Ten Commandments would not show the road to salvation because man is driven by a sinful mind and cannot keep God's commandments. God's commandments only show people that they are falling short and need a Savior.

Appendix 2

Who is God? Who is Jesus Christ? Who is the Holy Spirit?

God is the entity that created all things. God is all-powerful (omnipotent; all-knowing (omniscient); and all-present (omnipresent). He is called the triune God, because even though He is one entity, He has the character of three persons. These three persons are called God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This we cannot understand, at least not fully.

In Genesis 1:1 it says "...God created the heavens and the earth.", but in verse 26 God says, "Let

Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, ..." this verse demonstrates the mystery that God is three persons, but also one entity.

Jesus Christ is one of the trinity. Even though Jesus is God, he came down to earth in the form of a man, with the attributes of a man. There are evidences in the Bible that Jesus was God and Man at the same time. Which part, God or Man predominated, is a mystery about which much has been written, but probably will never be understood in this life.

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A fair question is this: how can the author of this paper make seemingly arbitrary statements about the accuracy of the Bible and the genuineness of the God of the Bible? It would take a huge document to discuss all the proofs. These documents have been written, but by-and-large have been rejected by mankind. Honest examination of these rejections show that they are not objective. The devil, riches and the lust of the flesh has put the objectors at enmity with God even before they have read or heard the claims of God to mankind. For example, how can anyone claim there is no Creator, when they can see His wondrous Creations (mountains, seas, rain, thunder, lightning). Their minds are already made up!

God with a capital letter G is the Christian God of the Bible. False or man-made gods begin with a small letter g.

All Scriptural quotes are in italics, and, unless otherwise noted, from the New King James Version (NKJV)

Doctrine stems from the root word for teaching. Other organizations have operational statements, usually called "Doctrines". These are usually a series of "do's" and "don'ts". See Appendix 1 for a short discussion of "Naval Doctrine".

His chosen people - believers in the one true God.

We will not try to explain the details, such as the sub-atomic particles! Leave the details to God! See footnote 2, pg. J1

One example is a popular TV show where the hostess has millions of followers because she is preaching a religion which makes people feel good. She receives no "flak" from the same media which deride Christianity.

The wording of a doctrinal statement is not unique. The important thing is that the key ideas are presented, such as the Attributes of God and the Salvation Story, and are in harmony with the rest of God's Word, the Bible.

How can people understand their Creator? The Lord says through the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 45:9): "Woe to him who strives with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'?" This passage explains the futility of the creation trying to understand its Creator. The Creator has to have superior intelligence to the creation.

See Appendix 2, "Who is God? Who is Jesus Christ? Who is the Holy Spirit?"

Jesus preaches about this in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), and particularly in the Beatitudes, found in Mathew 5:3-12.

Why do people give themselves over totally to earthly endeavors, but think mere statements of belief in God are sufficient? Think of the Nazis of World War II. They believed in Hitler with a dedication that almost exceeded comprehension. Thus they almost conquered the world. Their

belief was backed up by total dedication. Think what Christians could do if they displayed the same dedication.

This is the type of fear associated with awe.

DS1 - Doctrinal statement No. 1

The author will testify that God has healed his body after a number of serious accidents. The author is firmly convinced that God can and will give him a perfect resurrection body for eternity.