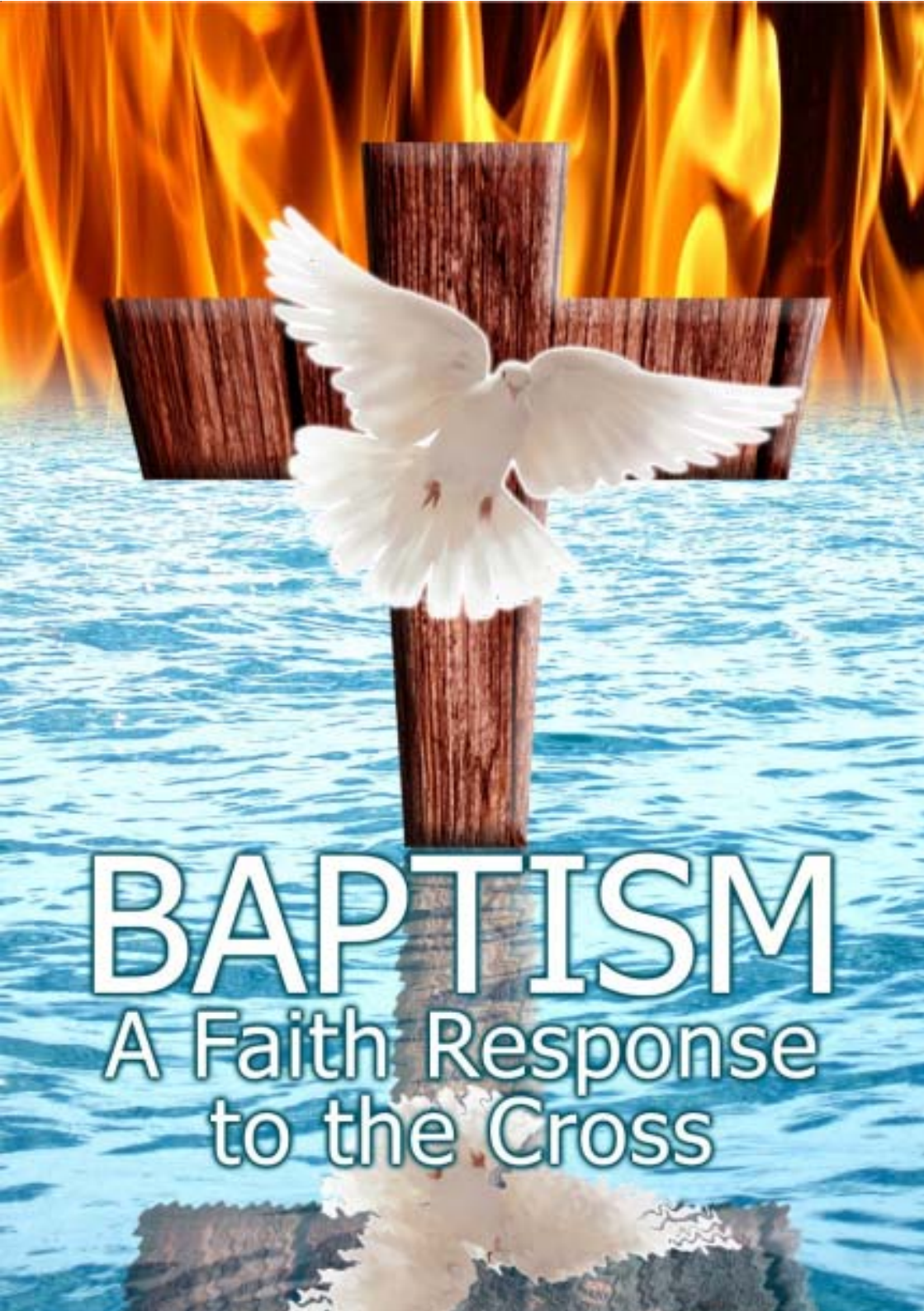
BAPTISM
A Faith Response
to the Cross

A CHALLENGE TO RESPOND TO LOVE

In the area of biblical studies, there is no greater study than a study of the sacrificial Son of God on the cross, and the response of sincere hearts to such a wonderous offering. The purpose for all that exists in our world and the universe is discovered in the cross. In order to accomplish His purpose for the creation of the world, God brought into His creation an historical event that is so wonderful that it is almost overwhelming to comprehend.

The amazing story of creation began with the creation of inhabitants of this world who were subject to mortality since the day of their creation. Upon creation, these mortal beings had to have the hope of being reconciled to their Creator. In realizing that they were only clods of dirt in whom was a life-giving spirit from their Creator, the created could never claim the status of God. They were mortal. In order to gain eternality in the presence of their Creator, the created were given a spirit that would yearn for their Creator. Inherent eternality, therefore, was never a blessing given to moral man upon his creation. It would come only at the cost of the Creator through the life-giving sacrifice of the Son of God. All the yearning and answers of the created were thus answered at the cross of Calvary.

Because the Creator is defined by love, He would never have left His creation frustrated about making an eternal connection with Him. The "Connector" came for the specific purpose of connecting the created with the Creator through the cross. The cross, therefore, is the invitation of a loving God to bring into His fellowship for eternity those whose origin was simply dirt and spirit.

The revelation of our Creator some two thousand years ago through the cross evidenced beyond question that the logic of His eternal plan was flawless. It was flawless in execution for the cross brought into harmony all that was known of God before the revelation of the mystery of the gospel. The cross connected all the dots from creation to eternity. The cross answered all our questions concerning why we are here and where we are going.

What validates the revelation of this mystery is the fact that it is centered around the very character of God that He embedded within the emotional makeup of His creation. The Creator was love, and thus, that which He would create must also be after His image of love. In order for a loving Creator to be able to lead His creation of love into His eternal presence, there could only be an awesome act of love. This is the foundational message of the cross. It was a love act of God for the sake of His creation.

We would respond through faith (trust) in the God who worked throughout millennia in order to bring His Son to the cross, the grave and the resurrection. It has been our goal in this book to take readers on a journey from eternity to the cross, and then open the Scriptures for understanding how one can connect to the Son on the cross in order to be reconciled to God. We know that Satan will turn people from the power of the cross by leading people away from doing that which would wash away sins. We write, therefore, to encourage obedience to the gospel through baptism into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through this obedience of faith, our hope is renewed. Through baptism we fulfill all the righteousness of God.

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A METAPHORICAL HYPOTHESIS

(Imagine with me for a moment. Just a moment to look into a hypothetical conversation in eternity. It could have taken place before the creation of the world between the Father, Son and Spirit. After all, something gave birth to the idea of our creation. And in trying to discover that something, be patient as we imagine an awesome conversation that possibly took place between the three eternal existences of Deity before the creation of the world.)

At the eternal planning table, the Father brought up the subject, *"We three are love. Is it not the nature of true love to express itself toward others? Must we dwell in eternity without objects on which to lovingly express ourselves? How can true love exist without expression? How can we be defined as love without having in our eternal presence those who must have our love showered upon them through our grace and mercy?"*

"It is truly our nature to be expressive," responded the Son. *"It is our nature to manifest ourselves to the existence of something other than ourselves. If we are who we say we are, then we must love. We must create something upon which we can pour out our love."*

The Spirit added, *"But if we bring into existence those who are not after our nature, then there will be problems, a lot of problems. In order to bring into existence that which can truly be an object of our love, there must be conditions. And the conditions might not justify the act of creation. Are we really willing to take this risk?"*

"I know," lamented the Father. *"But if we are who we say we are, then we have no other choice. Love must be expressed. It must have an object upon which the most profound nature of its essence can be showered. Otherwise, we do not exist as true love."*

"Therefore," replied the Son, *"We must do the act. Regardless of all the risks, we have no choice because of the nature of who we are. We are love, and love must love. True love cannot exist without the existence of that which is frail and finite."*

"But for the act to be real," interjected the Spirit, *"We cannot hold back in what we create. What we seek to create must also have volition as we. Our created creature must be able to make choices, and because of their wrong choices they will become broken. If we create, but do not give the right and freedom of our created to make choices, then they will judge us to be hard, fiendish, ... even unloving for sending into destruction those who cannot live perfect before us. In the midst of the results of their bad choices, they will question why we even created them in the first place."*

"And if we create such beings," continued the Spirit, *"most will simply rebel against us. In fact, because most will rebel they will think that we have destined many of them to a destruction concerning which they had no choice. They will then judge us to be fiendish, something that is totally contrary to who*

we really are. Is this a risk that we are willing to take? Because so many will reject our love, some will even deny that we exist because our creation will appear to have all gone wrong."

"Regardless of the risks," sighed the Father, *"we all want to bring into existence those on whom we can eternally shower our love. We cannot be loving without expressing love. It is a truth about us that we cannot ignore, and thus, we must do what must be done."*

"But I want to remind all of us," cautioned the Spirit. *"If we go through with this plan, we will bring upon ourselves all sorts of grief. We will mourn with pain as our creation goes wrong. Since in our creation there must be the freedom of the created to make choices, then we know what will happen. Those who make all the bad choices will bring great pain and suffering into the lives of those of ours who will respond to our love. We know that no individually predestined or preprogrammed robots can be created, for no robot can truly respond to us by saying, 'I love you too.' And because no robots can express a reciprocal love, most of the creation will go wrong because the majority will move away from who we really are."*

"I know. I know," replied the Son. *"But we cannot just sit here and allow love to go unexpressed ... idle in eternity. We must do something. Therefore, I am willing to make the move regardless of the consequences. I will create the object of our love and I will take ownership of what I create, including doing whatever is necessary to bring our creation into eternity with us."*

"If you do that, my Son, it will cost you dearly," grieved the Father.

"I know, but what else can we do? I know that if we truly create those who can truly respond to us with their love, there are risks, tremendous risks. In fact, most of those we create will simply deny through their behavior that we even exist. But again, what else can we do to unleash our love? It is simply not in the nature of who we are to sit idle. So because we are the true eternal existence of love, we must do what we have to do. We must create."

The Spirit again cautioned, *"Must I remind everyone here that this cannot be a one-man show? We are one, and because we are one any one existence of ourselves must act as the whole. If we go ahead with this plan, everyone will be involved. I will take the part of hovering over what we create. Since we are about to create those in whom we will invest the power to make choices, I will make sure that they are not left without direction. We simply cannot allow our creation to wander in obscurity in the environment for which we will create for them. They must know what we expect of them, and they will always need a road map back to us."*

The Father also volunteered, *"I will assume the totality of control, and thus be the occasion and object for love to be revealed to those who are created. In order for love to be illustrated, we must be as that which we desire of our creation. But Son, again, do you fully understand that if you go through with this plan the personal cost to you will be overwhelming?"*

With a tear in His eye, the Father continued to remind the Son, *"If you go through with this, you will never again*

be as we are now. We will all continue to be one, but your existence will change forever for the sake of those whom you are about to create. Can you eternally drink of this cup of sacrifice?"

"I will take ownership of what I create," the Son confidently affirmed. *"I know the sacrifice will be humiliating and eternal, but being in eternity without reflecting our love on others is worse than giving up the form I am in order to identify with our creation. The benefits far outweigh the eternal sacrifice."*

"But you know the risks," the Spirit also reminded the Son. *"If you create a being that has the right to make choices, you will be bringing into existence moral chaos that will result in untold suffering and evil. Because of so much suffering and evil they will accuse us of being both cruel or fiendish, if not deny our existence altogether because of so much suffering and evil that will result from their freedom to make choices. Are you willing to be overwhelmed with the suffering that will result from this sacrifice that you are about to make in order to bring our creation back to us into eternal dwelling?"*

"I am!" the Son confidently responded. *"What else can we do? We have no other option. We are love, and love can do nothing else. I am willing to create what will become a moral mess and I am willing to clean up the mess, regardless of the extreme sacrifice that is necessary to make it so."*

"So then," the Father sighed, *"Let it begin."*

"In the beginning God created ...."
(Genesis 1:1)

All that has existed throughout history, and into the future of mankind, centers around the atoning sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God on the cross. The destiny of the obedient in the loving eternal arms of God depends on a foreplanned offering that happened two thousand years ago outside Jerusalem. From the seed promise to Eve, through the call of Abraham, to the birth and existence of national Israel, and finally to the very foot of the cross, all of God's struggles with man in human history was to bring His Son to an atoning sacrifice on a cruel cross for our eternal existence. The community of God since the cross is the result of that event, for the cross was more than an historical event. It was the pinnacle of a preexistent "table plan" to bring those of faith into the eternal dwelling of a loving Deity. Without our focus on the centrality of the cross, we can never fully understand and appreciate the work of God throughout history. We can never understand God Himself. We would conclude, therefore, that without the Spirit explaining through revelation the six-hour cross event, we could never understand the meaning of our lives and the reason for our existence. The cross is the explanation for all things. It is the foundation upon which we discover why we are here, and God's intended destiny for us who believe.

Section I

THE CROSS

Chapter 1
NOTHING BUT THE CROSS

Have you ever wondered why the apostle Paul made this statement: *"**For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified**"* (1 Co 2:2)? If you have, then you, as we, are on our way to restoring again our focus on the cross. Now to what extent did Paul believe what he said in this statement? If what he stated is true, then it is possibly time to reconsider our legal outlines on "church" and look again at what should be the central message of our preaching. It is time to rethink our faith and regenerate our commitment to God, for we may have strayed from the very foundation upon which all history exists, and the answer to our very existence.

It was the eternal plan of the infinite God that a mediator between God and man be offered for His creation. This plan was established before the creation of those whom He sought to deliver from this world in order to bring into eternity (Rv 13:8). To accomplish this plan, there had to be a divine link between God and man. That link was the incarnate Son of God. *"For there is one God and **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**"* (1 Tm 2:5).

The message of a crucified mediator is unique with Christianity. It is contrary to the hero worship of man-made idol religions and revered icons. For this reason, the concept of a faith based on a cross does not appeal to the rich and famous. It is repulsive to the proud and arrogant. *"**For the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing**. But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God"* (1 Co 1:18). The wise men of the world will always consider "cross Christianity" a scandalous religion. But those who come to understand the awesome beauty of the Suffering Servant of God on the cross will have a life-changing experience.

Even in the early days of Christianity the warning went out to the rebellious. In the context of Acts 13:38-41 Paul quoted Habakkuk 1:5 concerning the prophesied astonishment of people at the mystery of God. It would be unbelievable by those who were consumed in their own religiosity. Paul warned the Jewish audience of Antioch of Pisidia, *"Beware therefore, lest that come on you which is spoken in the prophets"* (At 13:40). Habakkuk had prophesied, *"Behold, you despisers, and marvel and perish! **For I work a work in your days, a work that you will in no way believe, though a man declare it to you**"* (At 13:41; see Hb 1:5).

So why would the concept of the cross be so difficult to believe by most of the world? The concept of a crucified incarnate God was contrary to the nature of arrogant men and man-made religions. Men conceive of gods who

crush and punish. But the one true and living God gave out of Himself on behalf of His creation. And in this giving, there was incredible sacrifice. It all began with the lowest death the Son of God could have experienced in His incarnate flesh. When the text says, *"He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death,* ***even the death of the cross****,"* (Ph 2:8), there was no accident about the foreplanned event of the eternal God. Our Savior knowingly sought to bring on Himself shame and humiliation, even cruelty, in order to give us hope and the opportunity for eternal dwelling. It was an incredible plan of suffering. It was one that would manifest the core nature of a true God who created man, but not with predestined punishment because of man's fallibility. It was a plan of hope to come into the presence of our eternal loving Father.

The cross defines the God who is beyond the definition of any word in our dictionaries. And because it does, it was a mystery to men throughout history until its revelation two thousand years ago. In some ways, it is still a mystery as we struggle to look through the metaphors that explain the event in order to comprehend the sacrifice that took place on the "old rugged cross." If we would understand God, therefore, we must open the "dictionary" of the cross. We must step through the doors of metaphors in order to understand in some way this God who allowed Himself to be crucified by those He created. Rousseau was right when he said, "Socrates died like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ died like a God." Therefore, we seek to understand the God on the cross in order to understand the God beyond the cross.

A. The shame and humiliation of the cross:

The Greek word for "cross" is *stauros,* though the word *skolops* is used as a Greek synonym in some texts. Throughout early church history crosses were portrayed as upright beams upon which a cross beam was attached to either nail or tie the arms of the condemned. To the Romans, the cross was a cruel instrument to humiliate the criminal in order to bring about his death. It was meant to strike terror in the minds and hearts of the beholders. Throughout their early history, the Jews considered hanging on a tree a thing only the cursed should suffer (See Dt 21:23; Gl 3:13). Because of their repulsion of such a form of death, many Jews rejected the crucified Jesus as the Messiah of Israel.

Cicero, in *Pro Rabirio*, spoke of the cross in reference to Roman culture, "Let the very name of the cross be far away not only from the body of a Roman citizen, but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears." Since crucifixion was such an abhorrent form of execution in Roman culture, one can only imagine the extent to which the Jews rejected the crucifixion of the One who was truly their Messiah. But at the same time, we consider in awe those early Jews who looked past the abhorrence of the cross in order to discover the Christ of the cross, and thus, the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the Suffering Servant of God.

The cross was an ancient form of execution that was meant to terrorize any who would oppose a conquering

army or violate the law of a dominant government. Alexander the Great crucified 2,000 Tyrian captives after the fall of the city of Tyre. Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Persians and Babylonians all crucified the rebellious. Because crucifixion was considered by the Romans to be the means of death and punishment of rebellious slaves and hardened criminals, they exempted any Roman citizen from the indignity of such a death.

But when an angry mob was asked what to do with Jesus, they cried out, "**Let Him be crucified**!" (Mt 27:22). Their cry for Jesus' crucifixion was the worst possible means of death that could be brought upon the one they opposed. The Jews considered the cross a means of death for the cursed, as well as a means to subject Jesus to the most indignant manner of death possible. The religious leaders of Israel wanted Jesus to suffer the death of a common criminal, the death of one who had rebelled against their traditional religiosity (See Mk 7:1-9). And thus Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled. *"And He made His grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in His death .... **Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him**"* (Is 53:9,10).

And all this "pleased the Lord"? Isaiah's prophecy startles us! Why would God resort to the most humiliating and cruel means of death for Himself in order to redeem by sacrifice those He had created from the dust of the earth? Why would God incarnate and die for clods of dirt in which there is a spirit in order to bring them into eternity? The message of the cross is a message of shame and humiliation on our behalf. Nevertheless, it is a message that reveals the true God of heaven. There is a grandeur in the thought of a God who would come so far and go so low in order to lift so high those He had created out of the dust of the earth. It is such an incredible concept of love. It is so incredible that those of the world simply reject such as foolishness. But for those who see the cross as a manifestation of the God of love, they are overwhelmed to the extent that they are willing to sacrifice their total being in response to that love.

B. The public spectacle of the cross:

Jesus was not allowed to die a quiet death in some obscure place. He was taken outside the city of Jerusalem and put on open display before thousands of onlookers (Mt 27:27-31). Those who cried out for His blood rejoiced in His public display on a cross before all to mock and ridicule. *"Then they **spit on Him**, and took the reed and **struck Him** on the head again and again. And after they had **mocked Him, they took the robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him** away to **crucify Him**"* (Mt 27:30,31). *"Likewise the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, **were mocking Him**, saying, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe in Him"* (Mt 27:41,42).

If we were theologians in a room planning the development of a new religion, then the event of a crucified leader would certainly not be the foundation upon which we would establish our movement. The public display and picture of

a bleeding leader on a cross would not be appealing to those whom we would lead in our new faith. In fact, the concept would be repugnant, if not repulsive. Adherents would not be drawn to our new faith, but repelled. How could our new faith be built on the shame of a crucified leader? It could not unless there was something Divine about the event.

As we seek to discover the indignity of the cross, we are led to believe that God planned something that was so incredible that it would be difficult to believe. But He had a plan. And the plan was first indicated from the mouth of a man who wore animal skins and ate grasshoppers. *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?"* (Jn 1:29). That crucified "Lamb of God" would draw out of humanity all the "animal skinned clothed and grasshopper eating" believers who could identify with the Lamb Himself who was worthy to be their leader into eternity.

C. The innocent victim of the cross:

Isaiah had prepared the minds of the faithful in Israel in reference to the coming Messiah. *"He is brought as **a lamb** to the slaughter, and as **a sheep** before her shearers is dumb, so He did not open His mouth"* (Is 53:7). *"**He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth**"* (Is 53:9). If Jesus were a common criminal, He would have been justly punished under Roman law. But he was found innocent. Even the Roman official Pilate reminded the people who cried out for His crucifixion, *"**I have found no reason for death in Him**"* (Lk 23:22). If Jesus were innocent of any crime, then the cross was a scandal. It was a misnomer of justice. Would such a "misnomer of justice" be considered the foundation upon which a new faith could be founded and continued throughout history?

If Jesus were only a man, then certainly no one would be so naive as to sacrificially dedicate his life to such a victim of injustice. We are almost led to believe that God intended that the cross be so humiliating, so repulsive, and such a miscarriage of justice, that it would attract only those who would be willing to suffer the same in their own lives. It would appeal only to those who have been abused and used, exploited and unjustly spoken against, even those of society who have had to scrape a living out of their environment by wearing only animal skins and eating bugs to survive. If this is the "way of the cross," we cringe, but we are also held in awe at its appeal to the poorest of the poor. We then wonder at the God who would have conceived and planned such a lowly appeal to the lowest of humanity. What God is this in which we believe? If the "way of the cross leads home," then do we really want to be at home among the poorest of the poor, the most humble of society? We most certainly do since it will be in the presence of our Creator! So we cry out to the innocent victim on the cross, "Take us there! Take us home!"

D. Political victimization of the cross:

We must keep in mind that the Jews had no power of capital punishment since Palestine was an occupied land

by the Romans during the days of Jesus. Only the Roman government had this power, and thus, if Jesus were to be crucified, only by the authority of the Roman government could this happen. And such was the case.

The times were volatile, and thus, Pilate, the Roman representative of Palestine, sought to pacify the mob of Jews by reasoning with them concerning the innocence of Jesus (Lk 23:22). However, he had to succumb to their pleas to crucify Jesus. He did so in order to prevent what appeared to him to be a potential uprising of the Jews on this most volatile occasion of the Jewish Passover and Pentecost feasts when the most radical Jews were in town. It was the Romans, therefore, who nailed Jesus to the cross. Jesus was crucified according to the laws of Rome, but at the wishes of the angry Jewish mob. The rebellious Jews bore the guilt, but the Romans did the act.

From the viewpoint of the Romans, therefore, the cross was a result of the politics of the times. Jesus was a victim of a political struggle between Rome and the Jews. Nevertheless, Pilate's efforts were only temporarily successful as the resistance of the Jews continued to grow to the point of rebellion against Roman occupation. It grew to the point that in A.D. 70 Rome rendered a final crushing blow to Jewish nationalism by the destruction of the Jewish state and Jerusalem. In all this political turmoil in the last years of national Israel, to the Romans the crucifixion of Jesus was simply just another execution of a supposed "king" of Israel who would seek to lead the Jews in rebellion against Rome (Compare At 21:38).

But in the plan of God, the occasion for the event in history was right. *"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son ..."* (Gl 4:4). There is more in this statement than a simple fulfillment of prophecy. The prophecy was fulfilled because the time in history was right to redeem the broken. Throughout the millennia, the political landscape had been laid by God for the crucifixion of the incarnate God.

We must never assume that the cross was an accident, and thus, an unplanned work of God. Some have been so mistaken concerning the foreplanned event of the cross that they have affirmed that because the Jews rejected Jesus, God postponed a supposed earthly kingdom reign of Jesus. He postponed the kingdom reign on earth and then supposedly established the church as an after thought. Such an insidious teaching strikes directly at the heart of the eternal plan and purpose of the cross in history for the salvation of man. Such a theology nullifies all prophecy concerning the suffering servant who would give Himself in order that the people be healed. Such theologies minimize the importance of the cross in reference to God's eternal plan to bring His creation into His eternal presence. And for this reason, it is almost impossible for those who maintain such theologies to understand fully the predestined fate of the Son of God on the cross of Calvary.

E. Fulfilled destiny of the cross:

At the time of the cross, the disciples had lost all hope that Jesus would be their expected earthly king (See At

1:6). Their hopes were dashed, and subsequently, they went their way. Two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus said to Jesus, whom they did not recognize, *"But **we were hoping** that it was He who was going to redeem Israel"* (Lk 24:21). In a similar emotional state, Peter despondently said, *"I am going fishing"* (Jn 21:3). The point is that the disciples were looking for no martyrs for their faith. Death by the cross was a complete surprise. The One they thought would be a conquering leader who would lead them in the restoration of national Israel was hanged on a cross outside Jerusalem, just like the false messiahs that had previously risen in Israel.

Martyrs are the result of the hopes of followers whose faith in them motivates the continuation of a movement based on the thinking of the martyrs. But Jesus was to be no martyr. What the disciples did not understand at the time of the crucifixion, and even after the resurrection, was the fact that destiny was fulfilled in Jesus. They did not at first understand that the cross was the foreplanned mystery of God for the salvation of mankind. They did not understand this until Jesus explained all the prophecies concerning the event. He rebuked them by saying, *"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. **Was it not necessary that the Christ suffer these things** and to enter into His glory?"* (Lk 24:25,26). They needed to be taught, even though they were standing right there in the presence of the resurrected Redeemer. Jesus continued, *"And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself"* (Lk 24:27). It was as Paul later wrote, *"He made known to me the mystery"* (Ep 3:3). And now we have that mystery revealed and written for our learning. *"Therefore,"* Paul continued, *"when you read you can understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ"* (Ep 3:4). The cross was a mystery until it was revealed, and thus Jesus' death was not an accident. It was His destiny.

F. Betrayal and the cross:

If we view the cross from a strictly human standpoint, then its event was simply the result of a plan gone wrong. On the night of betrayal when Judas *"drew near to Jesus to kiss Him"* (Lk 22:47), what was in his mind was more than thirty pieces of silver. We would assume that Judas had in mind a scheme to force the earthly kingship of Jesus, for such was an erroneous hope of all the disciples (At 1:6). To the time of the Last Supper in the upper room, *"there was also a dispute among them as to which one of them should be considered the greatest"* (Lk 22:24). This was the last hour Jesus was with His disciples, and yet, they were disputing among themselves as to which one should be considered the greatest in a supposed earthly kingdom. They were looking forward to something in the future, which thing Judas possibly thought he could expedite by his betrayal actions.

But the actions of Judas all went wrong when the riotous mob in Jerusalem took control of the situation by taking control of Jesus. In remorse, Judas threw down the thirty pieces of silver and

hanged himself. Jesus went to the cross. And the disciples simply lost all hope and either went home or went fishing. This is not a planned foundation upon which to develop a new religion. And this is simply not something in which followers would take pride. Who would preach a faith that was based on a betrayal scheme that went wrong? Who would give his life to preach a message that was started by eleven disciples who sought to rewrite a betrayal scheme of their crucified leader?

The fact is that the betrayal scheme was part of God's eternal plan. And because it was, history changed by the changing of lives. The evidence of the changed lives of the disciples clearly reveals that the cross message became so deeply imbedded in their very souls that they were able to stand up before all opposition and confidently proclaim, *"Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you more than to God, you judge.* ***For we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard****"* (At 4:19,20).

G. Shame in defeat at the cross:

Now view the cross from the standpoint of all the supposed failed promises that were made by Jesus. *"And whoever lives and believes in Me will never die"* (Jn 11:26). *"... upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it"* (Mt 16:18). *"I am the door of the sheep"* (Jn 10:7). *"And I give to them eternal life. And they will never perish, neither will anyone snatch them out of My hand"* (Jn 10:28). *"And no one has ascended to heaven except He who came down from heaven, even the Son of Man"* (Jn 3:13). We could go on.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus promised victory. But at the cross, His enemies seem to have won the battle. From the viewpoint of the bystanders at the cross, therefore, Jesus would be shamed in all His false hopes and promises that He had stated throughout His ministry. There had to be more to the cross than promises. From the viewpoint of man, the cross meant shame and embarrassment. What intellectual would be drawn by such a One who reneged on all His promises?

Jesus knew that many would mock Him for all the supposed failed promises He made. *"He saved others,"* they mocked. *"Himself He cannot save. He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe in Him"* (Mt 27:42). Jesus was willing to take the risk of being mocked for His supposedly failed promises. He was willing to be mocked for the sake of those who were sincere and honest of heart. The supposed shame of the cross, therefore, actually became the occasion and opportunity for the sincere and honest to reveal themselves. Those who would accept the shame of the cross of their Savior would later declare through their faith in the cross, *"****For I am not ashamed of the gospel****, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes ..."* (Rm 1:16).

H. Failure in discipleship at the cross:

Judas was with Jesus for over three years. He listened to and sat at the feet of the Son of God. He was in the company of great men who would

go on to be world-changing personalities. And yet, Jesus seemingly failed in His efforts to truly disciple this person. But David foretold this part of the eternal plan. *"Even my own familiar friend in whom I trust, who ate my bread,* ***has lifted up his heel against me****"* (Ps 41:9).

If the encounter of Judas with Jesus was viewed simply from a human standpoint, then the cross would mean embarrassment for Jesus in that He went to death having been unsuccessful to disciple all those who were closest to Him. If we view Jesus as simply an innocent Jewish teacher who suffered execution as a common criminal, then certainly He failed. But the story never began with Jesus as simply a man and good Rabbi of Palestine. He was the incarnate Son of God who came with eternal redemption. But from the viewpoint of unbelievers, the fact that Jesus could not keep all His disciples faithful to His cause was a sign of failure. Would the cross, therefore, have any appeal to the wise of this world who value accomplishment and success? If Jesus on the cross were viewed from the eyes of the successful of worldly leadership principles, then the world at the time of the cross event viewed Jesus as a failed leader. If the story of the gospel stopped at the cross, we might come to this conclusion. But it did not. What followed was an empty tomb. The empty tomb validated the work of God on the cross, for we remember what Paul wrote, *"Now if Christ has not been raised,* ***then your faith is vain***. ***You are still in your sins****"* (1 Co 15:17). Jesus not only died for our sins, He was raised for our sins. The event of the gospel was successful, regardless of the thinking of the world.

The cross is repulsive to the wise of this world who have no concern for the eternal plan of redemption by God. Even the first disciples turned away because they did not understand the meaning of the cross. The two men on the road to Emmaus expressed it well: *"... we were hoping ..."* (Lk 24:21). The eleven disciples returned home to Galilee. Their initial understanding of the cross was simply earthly, and thus, there was at first no salvational joy in the event. Those who are wise of this world consider the cross foolishness, and therefore, they often pity those who understand that the cross is the centrality of all history and the focal point of eternal redemption for all men. However, because God revealed the eternal plan of the cross, we who believe rejoice in the marvelous work of God. And because we rejoice, *"we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks,* ***Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God****"* (1 Co 1:23,24).

Chapter 2
THE GOD REVEALED AT THE CROSS

As we venture further into our cross-centered faith, we begin to understand that the cross is the lens through which we look in order to build the world view of our faith. It is the gyroscope that keeps us level in times of turmoil, and the cornerstone in which we find a measuring rule to judge all the false phi-

losophies of misguided men. When Paul reminded the Corinthians that we "**stand**" on the event of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope, his metaphor pointed to mental and emotional stability (1 Co 15:1-4). The cross brings to our inner most soul an unmovable rock of hope that will keep us focused on Christ through the greatest turmoil that life has to offer. The Spirit said it through David. *"**The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust, my shield and the horn of my salvation and my high tower**"* (Ps 18:2). What a statement! **And David said that without any knowledge of the cross**. So when Paul said that we stand on the gospel, he meant just that. If our faith is not cross based, then it is a faith that is simply built on our own will to believe, not the power of the death, burial and resurrection of the incarnate Son of God.

A. The heart of God revealed at the cross:

*"**For whatever things were written before were written for our learning**, so that we through patience and encouragement of the Scriptures might have hope"* (Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). These were things that were written in the Old Testament. In this statement, Paul refers us back to the Old Testament Scriptures in order that we learn and understand those things upon which we can rest our hope. And in our context of inquiry, we seek to understand the longsuffering of God. In our mourning over our sin, we need a very longsuffering God, which God is revealed as He patiently worked through a rebellious people in order to bring the cross plan into reality.

In His enduring patience with Israel, we understand the hurt of God in Israel's rejection of Him. He mourned over the spiritual adultery of His people with whom He was in a covenant relationship. Of His covenanted people, God charged, *"But you were as a wife who commits adultery, who takes foreigners instead of her husband"* (Ez 16:32). The apostasy of Israel to the gods of foreign powers was extreme. And so God's hurt for His people was extreme. Jeremiah's metaphor (anthropopathism) of God is vivid. *"When I would comfort Myself against sorrow, My heart is faint in Me"* (Jr 8:18). *"For the hurt of the daughter of My people am I hurt. I am mourning. Astonishment has taken hold of Me"* (Jr 8:21).

We learn the heart of God as He patiently remained with Israel through times of rebellion, even to the foot of the cross. However, our understanding of God's loving heart was still limited until we come to the cross. Our understanding of the heart of God through the Old Testament Scriptures was based on knowledge and historical events, not on the reality of the incarnation and crucifixion of God Himself by those of His own people who were misguided. We never truly understand the loving heart of God until we find ourselves at the foot of the cross looking up to the suffering incarnate God whose blood dropped on our sin-ravaged souls. It was there that we heard the awesome heart of God speak from His lips, "Forgive." And so the crucified God did what no man is able to

do. *"**Their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more**"* (Hb 8:12).

The Israelites before the cross could never fully understand the nature of a loving God until God was on a cross outside Jerusalem. When God made Himself vulnerable to His creation, shaming Himself even unto death, yea, the death of the cross, then we begin to comprehend somewhat the nature of His loving heart we could never have imagined after our own emotional inventions. Religions that bypass the cross, therefore, are grossly inadequate in understanding the one true and living God. They are guilty of creating gods after the corrupted imaginations of men who have hidden agendas or ulterior motives. The God of heaven makes men, but religions make gods. And when we come to the cross, no religion of man has ever been able to create the God that we see there. Never!

B. The true God revealed at the cross:

Men have throughout millennia created gods after their own imagination. However, they could never have conceived of a God who would be and behave as the one true and living God that we experience on the cross. To conceive of a God who humbles Himself to weakness in order to become the victim of His creation, is simply beyond the invention of human minds. We just do not conceive of gods behaving this way. The cross, therefore, exposes the true loving heart of God for His creation. If He were not truly love, then He would never have been there in the first place.

It is for this reason that the cross is our road map to the God of heaven. Such was the message of Paul's poetry of Philippians 2:5-11. This text is not simply an outlay of historical facts. Paul is talking about our minds identifying with the mind of a humbled God. He is not giving a simple history lesson on the incarnate God. *"Let this mind be in you"* (Ph 2:5) means to *"be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind"* (Rm 12:2). The mentality into which we must be transformed was the humbling journey of the Son of God from the form of God to the form of the cross. It involves knowing that which we must sacrifice. It is knowing and willing not to live for ourselves, but for Christ Jesus (Gl 2:20). Jesus was before *"in the form of God"* (Ph 2:6). The cross, therefore, means transformation from one state of mind to another. *"He made Himself of no reputation ... being made in the likeness of men"* (Ph 2:7). The cross means humbling oneself to being vulnerable to humiliation. *"He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"* (Ph 2:8).

If we are willing to take this journey of transformation with the Son of God, then we will reign in life with Him. *"God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name"* (Ph 2:9). And for those who are willing to take this transforming journey with Christ, there is also reign. *"For if by one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more they who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness **will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ**"* (Rm 5:17). *"For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him. If we suffer, **we will also reign with Him**"* (2 Tm 2:11,12). The only way for the incarnate Son to

reign in heaven was through the death of the cross. Likewise, our only way to "reign in life" with Him is through the cross of Jesus. Jesus knew this, and thus, He was willing to lead the way for us to discover our reign with Him through the bearing of our cross. So when He said, *"And whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple"* (Lk 14:27), He meant that we must look for a cross in this life, not for crowns. And until we find the cross of Christ and take ownership of it as our means of being transformed to the mind of Christ, we will never understand the God of the cross. This is the God we can never understand if we do not go to the cross with His Son.

Now could any man in his wildest imagination come up with a "theology" as this in order to start a new religion? The one true and living God is as this. The imagined gods of men urge us to seek crowns before crosses. They encourage us from pulpits throughout Christendom to buy and wear silk-skin suits, not skins of goats. They sit us at the tables of fine cuisine, not to search around for grasshoppers to eat. They encourage us to build mansions on earth for ourselves, not to find fox holes in which to dwell. Our created gods move us to buy and lavish ourselves with gold. But those who have the mind of the One who went to the cross sends forth His disciples to say as Peter, "Silver and gold have I none." Could we have imagined the God of the cross as depicted by some unknown writer in his words below when he compared Alexander the Great of the Greek Empire with Jesus?

JESUS AND ALEXANDER

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;
One lived and died for self; one died for you and me.
The Greek died on a throne; the Jew died on a cross.
One's life a triumph seemed; the other but a loss.
One led vast armies forth; the other walked alone.
One shed a whole world's blood; the other gave His own.
One gained the world in life, and lost it in death.
The other lost his life, to win the whole world's faith.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;
One died in Babylon; the other on Calvary.
One gained all for self; and one Himself He gave.
One conquered every throne; the other every grave.
The one made himself God; the God made Himself less.
The one lived but to blast; the other but to bless.
When died the Greek, forever fell his throne of swords.
But Jesus died to live forever, to be Lord of Lords.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three.
The Greek made all men slaves; the Jew made all men free.
One built a throne on blood; the other built on love.
One was born on earth; the other from above.
One gained all the earth, to lose all earth and heaven.
The other gave up all, that all to Him be given.
The Greek forever dies; the Jew forever lives.
He loses all who gets and wins all things who gives.

C. Drawn from far away by the cross:

We can never understand how far away from God we were because of our sin until we understand how far God had to come to reconcile us again unto Himself. When Isaiah said that our sins separate us from God (Is 59:2), we can never comprehend the magnitude of that separation until we realize that the Son of God became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, in order to restore our fellowship with Him. When we begin to comprehend the God who became flesh on our behalf (Jn 1:14), then we begin to understand the tremendous ransom price the Son had to pay for us. This is the foundation of John's self-reflective statement, *"If we say that we have no sin,* ***we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us****"* (1 Jn 1:8). How can the truth be in one who is not moved to mourn over the cost of the cross? Our entire emotional being is wrapped up in the truth of the cross, for the cross reveals how far God had to send His Son from the "form of God" in order to bring us back into His fellowship. The more we understand these things, the more life-changing they become.

The cross not only reveals the God of love, it reveals ourselves to ourselves. Paul wrote, *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men"* (Ti 2:11). Paul was speaking of the revelation of the God of grace in Jesus. Through Jesus, God was reaching out for us through the cross. The apostles were privileged to experience Jesus personally. John reflected on his early experience with Jesus by explaining, *"And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"* (Jn 1:14). Jesus means more than a set of teachings, as was characteristic of the Old Testament law of Moses. *"For the law was given through Moses,* ***but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ****"* (Jn 1:17). The coming of Jesus was about Him and what He brought for our problem of sin. He brought Himself as our Deliverer in order to deliver us from that which we could not deliver ourselves. Through Him we understand what He meant in Matthew 5:4. *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."* When we understand how distant the One on the cross was from *"being in the form of God,"* then we begin to comprehend the statement, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ..."* (Jn 3:16). Who would not be driven to mourn over his sins when understanding the loving grace that was revealed on the atoning cross by the incarnate Son of God? John was right. Whoever does not confess his sins, has no truth in him because the cross does not move him to mourn over his sin.

It is hard for those with too many success stories in their lives to confess up to failure in sin. It is almost impossible for the overconfident to turn from gazing at their shelves of trophies and awards to gaze upon an old rugged cross. It is for this reason that the self-confident and earthly awarded find it difficult to confess failure to God at the foot of the cross. On the other hand, it is easy for those who have been wrecked by a cruel world to confess their fallibility. They have few success stories for which they have been awarded trophies. Their character, therefore, has not been hardened by much glory and

self-proclaimed accomplishments. To those who have been humbled by the struggles of life, the cross is an opportunity to confess their failures and claim the crown of victory. The cross appeals to those who find it easy to confess their sins.

The revelation of the extent to which God had to go in order to reconcile us unto Himself, magnifies the ugliness of our sin and its dire consequences. Self-realization of our sin should humble us to confession. The cross manifests the total inability of man to reconcile himself unto God. The cross reveals this sickness in ourselves. It humbles our arrogance, our narcissistic confidence that "we are the man." In all of our ego, arrogance, and selfishness, we are shocked by the cross. We are *"cut to the heart"* by its message (At 2:37). We are driven to our knees and cut to the very inner being of our existence. The cross digs out of our inner soul those corrupted lusts on which we have depended so much in a life of individualism, competition and awards. The cross helps us understand why "few that are in high places are called." But many do respond to the message of the suffering Savior. It is these who can write, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation ..."* (Rm 1:16). It is these who have cried out and thanked God, *"Wretched man that I am!* ***Who will deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord****"* (Rm 7:24,25).

D. A new community order of love from the cross:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ***By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another****"* (Jn 13:34,35). How else would we identify those who have responded to the loving heart of God? Since God is love, those who are His would be signaled before the world by their behavior of love. Because He "so loved" them (Jn 3:16), they show His love before the world. *"He who does not love does not know God,* ***for God is love****"* (1 Jn 4:8). Any faith, therefore, that does not manifest the heart of the loving God must be suspect. We know those who are of the way of the cross because of their love for one another. Paul wrote, *" ... for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another"* (1 Th 4:9). We are taught this love by the love of the cross. It is an ongoing teaching as the love is ongoing in the community of God.

The loving community of the cross was described by Jesus with hyperbole. *"If anyone comes to Me and does not* ***hate*** *his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also,* ***he cannot be My disciple****"* (Lk 14:26). Matthew's record of Jesus' statement serves as a commentary to Luke's hyperbole. *"He who* ***loves father or mother more than Me*** *is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me* ***is not worthy of Me****"* (Mt 10:37). Those of the community of God love as they have been loved. John stated, *"****We love because He first loved us****"* (1 Jn 4:19). But the extent of this love is not fully defined in John's brief statement. The new commandment involves the inten-

sity of the love the disciples have for one another. *"Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth in* ***sincere love*** *of the brethren,* ***love one another fervently with a pure heart****"* (1 Pt 1:22). Our love for one another is as the loving Father so fervently loved us that He gave His Son for us. The cross, therefore, is the definition of the love by which the new commandment is taught to the disciples of Jesus.

When we thus come into the community of God, we come into a community of slaves who seek to serve one another out of love (See Mk 10:42-44). We come into the ekklesia (church) wherein we are directed, *"But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return ..."* (Lk 6:35). *"You will then be the children of the Most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and to the evil. Therefore, be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful"* (Lk 6:35,36). When we lose grip of ourselves, the loving Father grabs hold of our hearts through the cross. We thus give of ourselves as He gave to us. We give our time. We give our possessions. We discipline our lives in order to bring ourselves into the subjection of one another's love. This is the direction to which our understanding of the cross will lead us. Many people, therefore, walk with caution when they come to the cross. They are fearful that the cross will call out of them more than they are willing to give. But we remember what the apostle of love said. *"Beloved, if God so loved us,* ***we ought also to love one another****"* (1 Jn 4:11). *"If we love one another,* ***God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us****"* (1 Jn 4:12). Therefore we also remember, *"There is no fear in love, but* ***perfect love casts out fear*** *..."* (1 Jn 4:18).

Chapter 3
RESTORING THE APPEAL OF THE CROSS

The world has moved into a "You Tube" generation where our emphasis has been placed on "broadcasting ourselves." We have our pockets full of smart phones in order that others can contact us at any moment. When we are in a personal conversation with another and the cell phone rings, we take the call, ignoring our personal conversation with the person before whom we are speaking. We have a generation of people who have grown up in front of their own Facebook cameras, and thus, a generation that is focused squarely on itself by inventing electronic media devices that make us feel important. Pictures of ourselves are pasted everywhere in our environment. We crave to build our "followers" list to which we can tweet ourselves. We are narcissists by training from childhood. We are a generation of people who have been awarded trophies from youth for every minor accomplishment, and thus, our self-esteem that our parents were so cautious to insure has turned us inward into ourselves. We are "winners" in every aspect of a life where there are no losers. The result has been that we have changed our religion to a narcissistic faith where we are concerned about ourselves more than our neighbor.

Our assemblies have changed from worshiping God to being concert encounters during which we seek to motivate ourselves for the coming week. We have thus conveniently brought our egocen-

tric behavior into our faith. Our faith, therefore, "is all about us." The result of this itching-ear (narcissistic) generation is that it has heaped upon itself every sort of "feel good" preachers who have long since given up preaching Bible. If the behavioral function of our faith does not make us feel good, then we move on to one that will. In all of this self-oriented religiosity, there is little appeal from a cross that means sacrifice, slavehood and self-denial. The cross is totally about others, and none of self. Those who are all about themselves create religions that make them feel that they are the center of the universe.

Nevertheless, we must not allow ourselves to believe that the appeal of the cross is hopeless to those of self-oriented cultures, for the inhabitants of such cultures often feel quite lonely in their competitive relationships with one another. When the apostle Paul stepped into a city that was not much different than a typical modern-day city of self-centered hedonistic religionists, he brought the most important message of history. *"For I delivered to you **first** of all that which I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** ..."* (1 Co 15:3). Is there room for this message today among the assortment of religionists who claim some stake in Christianity? Does the suffering servant of the cross have any appeal to a self-centered, narcissistic generation?

Let's see. We wear golden crosses around our necks, but can we say as Peter, *"Silver and gold I do not have ..."* (At 3:6). We wear a cross as a symbol of our faith, but in a culture of entitlement, we shun the call, *"And whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple"* (Lk 14:27). We take pride in our Christianity, but often confuse it with churchianity. We love the blessings of a loving social fellowship, but we revolt at the principle, *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Gl 6:2). Have we not created a "churchianity" that is convenient, one that allows us to live at a distance from the needs of humanity? Have we come to the point in our faith, or religion, that "missions" is a word that will be lost in our vocabulary. Or maybe our definitions have digressed to what *Time Magazine* referred to as "vacationaries"? We are confident to do "missions" for two weeks, but not as long as a lifetime of cross-bearing and cross-cultural sacrifice. Is the era of the "missionary" gone? Have we generated a generation of too weak missionaries who are good for only two weeks?

There is something about the message of the cross that strikes squarely at the pride of the self-oriented person who is inbred with the curse of entitlement. The cross is a message that says we are entitled to nothing but to give ourselves to others. It is a message that cannot be comprehended by the human reasoning of both materialists and the exploited. In fact, we would state that in this life where we are confined to the finiteness of our powers of human reason that we will never be able to comprehend the full meaning of the sacrificial Deity on a cross outside Jerusalem. For Deity to incarnate into the form of His creation, and then go to the cross for the salvation of dust and spirit, is somehow beyond human comprehension. If we think we have figured out this

God who would do such a thing, then we have probably come up with the wrong god. We not only worship a God who can give up His entitlement of being in the form of God in order to wash the feet of His creation (Jn 13:1-17), we worship a God of what we would conclude to be extremes, the extreme of the cross. What God would do this? Surely, no god we could create after our imagination could or would do such a thing for His creation. A totally selfless God has little appeal to a narcissist.

There would be no Christianity if there were no cross. The cross is the epitome of the revelation of the love of the God we cannot fully comprehend. He is the God who is beyond the definition of the words of our dictionary. It is the mystery of this lack of total definition and comprehension that draws us. It is a mystery that draws us to know this God who loved us so much in spite of ourselves. We seek to conceive, to understand, to experience something so wonderful as a God who existed in eternity, but was lovingly willing to incarnate for the purpose of transforming us into eternal beings in His presence. If this is not life-changing stuff, then we cannot be changed. It is a message that has awesome power in the transformation of lowly creatures who have been confined to an environment that seems to have gone wrong. However, the environment is the best of all possible environments for the habitation of truly free moral agents. The environment did not go wrong. The free-moral inhabitants of the environment did. And maybe this is the very beginning of our urge to change, for we reason that this world is not all there is. We are thus willing to make whatever changes that are necessary in our lives in order to become as the One who came to fetch us from this harsh environment of existence. We view the cross, therefore, as a means of escape.

When we begin to understand that the cross was a manifestation of love, then we are on our way. Love generates love. *"We love because He first loved us"* (1 Jn 4:19). The Son of God did not invade earth for the purpose of holding back the wrath of a God who was ready to mash us like flies. The atonement of the cross was not to fend off a God of wrath, but to reconcile a wayward, and often rebellious child of creation, back to a God of love. We thus study the cross, not to understand the Scriptures, but to understand the God of love revealed in, but beyond, the Scriptures. The objective of our search of the Scriptures, therefore, is to somehow understand this God who can affect and change our lives so much. The more we understand this God of love, the more the aroma of His love is reflected to others through us as His love was poured out on us through the cross.

In our religious heritage we may have been the result of catechisms and rituals, doctrines and commandments. The validation of our faith may have been in the correctness of an outline of statutes that were claimed to be "biblical" by a listing of "out-of-context" scriptures under every point. But is it possible that we have been sidetracked into thinking that our faith is unmovable because of our doctrinal correctness? We would suggest that our plea for restoration is not to restore a correct doctrinal outline by which we would validate our faith. Our

plea is to restore the cross to the centrality of our faith and behavior. Only when this restoration is begun can we truly begin to understand the outline of His teaching. We thus start with the man Jesus in order to understand what He said, for His teaching means little without understanding who and what He did as an atoning sacrifice.

The gospel is the historical event of the death of Jesus on the cross, His burial, and His resurrection. But our understanding of the cross must go beyond our faith in an historical event. If we cannot get beyond the event, we cannot get to the One who died there and was resurrected. The message of the cross is far more than an event of history. It is a life-changing transformation by One who eternally changed from God to us on our behalf. Most people fail to experience the life-changing experience of the cross because they fail to move beyond the facts of an historical event.

And such is the curse of legal-oriented religiosity and literalistic interpreters. The legalist is infatuated with the validation of his faith through correct facts, that is, understanding the Scriptures correctly. He thus manufactures a correct outline in order to define who we are as God's people. In struggling to create a consistent outline of interpretations, he often suffers from the same twisting of the Scriptures as the literalist. The literalist struggles to interpret the profound metaphors that take us as close as possible with human reason to the essence of the meaning of the cross. Being confined to the facts of Bible statements, however, he struggles to imagine beyond the hermeneutic "it means what it says and says what it means ... literally." And thus, the literalist often has an idol god with eyes and a nose that he is ready to carve out of a piece of wood.

The legalist is ready to argue his outline with the correct proof texts. The literalist is still trying to create a god after his own image. The literalist cannot get beyond the wood and the legalist cannot get beyond the outline in order to understand what the Spirit is trying to reveal through the metaphors of the cross. Both the legalist and literalist are held up by human deductive reasoning or childish interpretations.

One of the primary shortcomings of the legalist and literalist is that it is very difficult for both to understand the profound depth of the meaning of the cross. As a result, there is only intellectual change and not behavioral transformation. We affirm that there is information about the cross that we must intellectually perceive and understand, which things are revealed in the Scriptures. However, unless we move past an intellectual knowledge of the cross, we will never experience the life-changing profoundness of the cross. We will not be able to experience the adventure of the mystery of the cross that goes far beyond facts and figures, far beyond words and paper. We would confidently assert, therefore, that when Paul walked into town, his message was not about facts and historical events alone. What he brought to the people was life-changing. There is no other way to answer the results he had in places like Philippi when a small group of two wage-earners with their dependents continued to support him sacrificially once and

again as he carried the message of the cross to other cities (See Ph 4:10-18). There is no other way to explain why the Thessalonians broadcasted the message they received in every place only a short time after Paul left their presence. *"For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia,* ***but also in every place your faith toward God has spread abroad****, so that we do not need to speak anything"* (1 Th 1:8). What makes pagan idolaters drastically transform into being and doing things as this? When we discover what makes such a radical personality transformation, then we are on our way to understanding the life-changing message that the early evangelists took from one city to another. We can be sure that the life-changing motivation was not an outline of Scriptures.

Chapter 4
METAPHORS OF THE CROSS

There is mystery in metaphors. A metaphor is using something that is earthly and physical in order to convey a truth of something that is greater and often spiritual. When we say, "He runs like a rabbit," we are not saying that a particular person is a rabbit. Our metaphorical meaning is that the particular person about whom we are speaking is very fast. David said, *"The Lord is my rock ..."* (Ps 18:2). This does not mean that the Lord is a literal rock. It means that He is immoveable and solid as a rock. David wrote concerning the "face" and "eyes" of God (Ps 34:15,16). But God does not have a face and eyes. He is spirit (Jn 4:24). In David's use of metaphors, we are challenged to ponder what he meant. This is the mystery of metaphors, and often, one of the most difficult areas of revelation for the literalist to understand. Because it is difficult for him to conceive of a God without eyes and ears, so it is difficult for him to think beyond the wood of the cross, the iron nails, and blood dripping from the brow of Jesus. We are often so held up by our Mel-Gibson-*Passion*-movie scene of the crucified Son of God that we cannot see the Son of God beyond the cross.

The Bible is loaded with metaphors. This is why it is often difficult for the literalist to think beyond the physical or earthly figure of the metaphor of the cross in order to comprehend the spiritual significance of what the Holy Spirit is trying to convey to us through the cross. We have found it interesting that in many languages of the world there is no word for metaphor. Though the people speak daily in common language by using metaphors, their schooling is sometimes quite elementary in explaining what they are actually meaning through the use of metaphorical figures of speech. When understanding the Bible, especially the spiritual significance of those truths that are illuminated through metaphorical figures, it is sometimes challenging for some to grasp the full meaning of various important texts. For this reason, this difficulty has led many to be literalists in understanding the Bible. This is particularly true in reference to understanding the Psalms and those apocalyptic books that are saturated with metaphors. In our study of the cross, we often rob ourselves of the full significance of the cross by having a shallow understanding of the meta-

phors that are used to reveal the "atoning sacrifice"–that is a metaphor–of the cross.

Because we fail to see the beauty of metaphors that are used in reference to the cross, we restrict our understanding of what God did for us through Jesus. The cross was more than an historical event. Its significance is more than wood and blood. Because we minimize our understanding of the cross, we often relegate our response to the cross to obedience of facts only. We conclude that Jesus historically died on a cruel cross. From here the sermon progresses into explaining the gore of the cross and the tremendous physical suffering that Jesus endured while nailed to the cross. He subsequently died, was buried, and then was historically and victoriously resurrected from the dead. We then move on to encourage our audience to obey these facts. They are subsequently buried with Jesus in baptism in order to be raised with Him from the tomb of water. Our message, therefore, settles around knowing the facts and "getting baptized" as a simple act of obedience to the facts. All is conveniently outlined and charted in order for us to affirm confidently that we have obeyed the historical event of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. All the facts of the event have been learned and obeyed and we move on, forgetting that the event of the cross was an historical event around which all creation exists and its destiny will be terminated.

But the gospel cannot be reduced to precise actions in obedience to historical facts. Metaphors take our understanding of the gospel into the realm of mystery. Through the metaphors of the cross the Holy Spirit seeks to move our minds beyond what we can historically perceive. He seeks to move our thinking to a higher level of understanding in order to determine the teleology of the cross. Once He has "inspired" our thinking, then He has brought us into the reality of metaphorical mysteries by which we begin to comprehend the nature of the one true and living God whose eternal sacrifice was revealed through the cross.

Though we have connected the fact of the gospel with the fact of our baptism into Christ, the Holy Spirit wants to take our minds far beyond the events and facts of history. He seeks to do this through the richness of metaphors over which we meditate day and night in order that we be held in awe at the wonder of God who desired to reconnect us to His loving presence. We would not, therefore, cheat ourselves. We must not by relegating our understanding of His wondrous work through the cross by our resistance to step through the doors of metaphors by which the Spirit has revealed the atoning sacrifice of a loving God. We will thus take this journey to step through the doors of metaphors in order to see a greater reality. It is only when we take this step that we can appreciate the transcendent God who is seeking to break through into our cocoon of the physical. If on our part we can release our minds from the confinement of our physical environment, then we will discover in amazement the essence of a God who is truly loving. He is not a god who would arbitrarily create souls, and then predestine them to destruction. On the contrary, He is a God who seeks to lovingly reach

out from His eternal realm of existence in order to offer an invitation to all His creation to come and join Him in eternal bliss.

Since the audience of the New Testament letters was primarily a Jewish audience, our first "dictionary" to understand the metaphors that are used in reference to the crucifixion of the Messiah would naturally come from the Old Testament. The metaphors do find some of their meaning in their use in the common language of the day when the letters were written. However, **we would assume that God laid the foundation for Israel's understanding of the cross by His work with Israel throughout their history**. Our search for an understanding of the physical and literal foundation of the metaphors of the cross, therefore, must find their primary definition in God's work with Israel (See Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). The Old Testament, therefore, is our first dictionary to understand the metaphors of the cross. The following chapters explain some of the beautiful metaphors used by the Holy Spirit in order to explain from God's viewpoint what took place at the cross.

Chapter 5
THE REDEEMER OF THE CROSS

From the Old Testament, the word "redemption" is used in reference to property or people (See Lv 25:25-27; Rt 4:4-12). The one who sought to "redeem" something had to sacrifice something of his own in order to acquire that which was desired (Nm 3:51; Ne 5:8). Throughout the Old Testament, the meaning of redemption was deliverance or purchase. That which was purchased was delivered to the one who paid the redemption money. In this sense, God redeemed Israel out of Egyptian captivity (Dt 9:26; 2 Sm 7:23; 1 Ch 17:21; Is 52:3). Israel's redemption was based on the fact that His people could not redeem themselves because they were in captivity. Redemption, therefore, carries with it the meaning that the one who pays the redemption price desires that which he seeks to redeem or purchase. It also assumes that the one redeemed could not of himself pay his own redemption price.

In reference to God's deliverance of Israel from captivity, the nation of Israel belonged to God as His claimed people because they were the descendents of Abraham to whom God had made a promise that He would make a great nation of his seed (Gn 12:1-4; Dt 15:15). He had established a covenant with Abraham, and at the time of their deliverance, He desired to establish a covenant with the descendents of Abraham as a nation. And thus, God obligated Himself to redeem Israel out of captivity because of His own promises to Abraham and His desire to make a covenant with the seed of Abraham (1 Ch 17:21; Ps 25:22). Because He had created the nation He desired to covenant with the nation in order to bring the Israelites into the rest of the promised land (Compare Hb 4).

Since God had promised Abraham that through his seed all families of the earth would be blessed (the cross) (Gn 12:2,3), God's work to redeem Israel set the metaphorical stage for His redemption through the One who would come to be a blessing to all people. God's

redemption of Israel was something the Jews could not do for themselves. God had to step in and do the deed. This story of redemption was subsequently recorded for a future redemption when people would be purchased and delivered out of the captivity of sin. Israel, as we, desired to be free. But only when God came to their rescue through Moses could they, as we, be delivered to freedom (See Dt 18). God did the same through Jesus.

At the cross, Jesus obligated Himself to redeem us as His created people. *"In Him we have redemption through His blood ..."* (Ep 1:7). Since Jesus was the Creator (Cl 1:16), He obligated Himself as our Creator to deliver us from that which we could not deliver ourselves. He redeemed us from our separation from God because of our rebellion (Is 59:1,2). Since we were in the captivity of our own sins that separated us from Him, the Son of God had to come for His creation through the cross. We could not deliver ourselves through the keeping of law, for none of us could perfectly keep any law by which we could redeem ourselves, *"for by works of law no flesh will be justified"* (Gl 2:16). Therefore, *"Christ* ***redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us****, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'"* (Gl 3:13).

Zacharias was right in reference to his announcement of Jesus being the fulfillment of the promise to bless all nations through Israel. *"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and* ***redeemed His people****"* (Lk 1:68). And Paul concluded, *"****He redeemed us in order that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Christ Jesus****, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith"* (Gl 3:14). Jesus redeemed *"those who were under law,* ***so that we might receive the adoption as sons****"* (Gl 4:5). He *"gave Himself for us so that He might* ***redeem us from every lawless deed*** *and purify for Himself* ***a special people*** *who are zealous for good works"* (Ti 2:14). The payment of redemption, however, was costly. *"You were not redeemed with corruptible things ...* ***but with the precious blood of Christ*** *..."* (1 Pt 1:18,19; see Rv 5:9; 14:3,4). The church, therefore, is the family of God who is redeemed from all the nations of the world (Rv 14:4).

"All things were created through Him [Christ] *and for Him"* (Cl 1:16). Since Christ created us for Himself, then because we were created free-moral individuals, through law He could only direct our lives. No system of law could bring us into His eternal fellowship since all sin is against law (Rm 3:23). Our redemption, therefore, could only be accomplished through an incarnate offering that would atone for our inability to demand eternality based on our keeping of law. Law kept us in bondage. Grace through our Redeemer set us free. There was, therefore, only one option in reference to the salvation of those who were created. Jesus had to do something, and that something cost Him dearly, for He had to eternally sacrifice being on an equality with God and in the form of God in order to bring His creation back into the presence of God (Ph 2:5-8).

While we busy ourselves with concern over bearing our own cross, we should take another look at the eternal

sacrifice of the One who bore a cross in order that we have the privilege of bearing our crosses. Our lifetime cross bearing seems to pale in view of the cross that Jesus had to bear, and still does, for we assert, therefore, that the cost for our redemption went far beyond Jesus' death on the cross.

Chapter 6
THE RANSOM PAID AT THE CROSS

In order that something be redeemed, a ransom price had to be paid. Something was given for something. With the metaphor of redemption, therefore, there also comes the ransom payment. Ransom assumes the inability of the redeemed to deliver themselves. The Psalmist wrote that even the wealthy could not pay a ransom for their own deliverance. *"They who trust in their wealth and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means* ***redeem*** *his brother or give to God a ransom for him–****for the redemption of their soul is costly*** *and money can never suffice ..."* (Ps 49:6-8). The metaphor of ransom sometimes indicates a price that is too high to be paid. The picture of ransom that is often used in the Old Testament sometimes focuses on one's inability to settle his debt with another (See Pv 6:35). Atonement money was to be given as a ransom for souls so that they would not be touched by a plague (Ex 30:12). If one was deserving of death, however, no ransom could be paid for his deliverance (Nm 35:31). If one would flee to a city of refuge, no ransom was to be given to deliver this person from his punishment (Nm 35:32).

Isaiah was specific in identifying the foundation of the metaphor of ransom for Israel. In Isaiah 43, Isaiah focused the minds of the apostate Israelites on the day when they were created as a nation when God redeemed them from Egyptian captivity. *"But now thus says the Lord who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, 'Do not fear,* ***for I have redeemed you****."* (Is 43:1). In order to be redeemed from Egyptian captivity, the Israelites passed through the waters of the Red Sea on dry land (Is 43:2). But their deliverance from captivity came at the price of other nations. *"For I am the Lord your God, the Holy one of Israel, your Savior.* ***I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place****"* (Is 43:3). The ransom paid for the redemption of His people was **the death of the firstborn and armies of Egypt**. God took the firstborn of the Egyptians in death for a ransom payment to deliver the children of Israel from captivity.

God wanted Israel to remember that their birth as a nation did not come at a small price. Their birth cost the price of the lives of many firstborn sons and daughters of other nations, as well as the army of Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba. Isaiah then spoke of a time when the faithful remnant would remember the high ransom for Israel's redemption from Egyptian captivity. He reminded the Israelite remnant of their day of redemption. *"Was it not You who dried up the sea and the waters of the great deep, who has made the depths of the sea* ***a way for the ransomed to pass over****?"* (Is 51:10). Jeremiah added, *"For*

*the Lord has **redeemed** Jacob and **ransomed** him from the hand of him who was stronger than he"* (Jr 31:11). And then Hosea looked into the future to a day when God would pay the ultimate ransom price for His people. *"**I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death**"* (Hs 13:14).

The cross is a picture of a ransom paid, the high cost of the ransomed firstborn and only begotten Son of God. We have been ransomed by the blood of the eternally incarnate and crucified Son of God. Jesus came into the world in order to pay this high ransom. *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and **to give His life a ransom for many**"* (Mk 10:45). Jesus gave Himself as a ransom to provide all people with the opportunity to be delivered from sin (1 Tm 2:5,6). *"For He has made Him who knew no sin **to be sin on behalf of us** ..."* (2 Co 5:21).

The metaphor of ransom paid at the cross is not a picture of arrogance and selfishness. It is a picture of a lowly sacrifice of self on behalf of others who could not pay the price for their own deliverance through meritorious works of law or good deeds. And since we could not work ourselves out of captivity into which we had given ourselves through sin, God had to pay the ransom. It was an unselfish gift of grace.

The cross does not have much of an appeal to a narcissistic generation that is consumed with broadcasting itself through a collection of self-portraits on the internet. The selfish find little appeal of the selfless ransom paid at the cross. The behavior of the cross is about broadcasting a ransomed servant and exalting others before oneself, just as Jesus. To a self-centered generation of people, the Holy Spirit would say, *"For if anyone thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself"* (Gl 6:3). *"... God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble"* (1 Pt 5:5). We must be cautioned, therefore, that if we follow the ransom metaphor to the cross, we will end up as slaves.

Central to the nature of true Christianity is the example of its Founder as a ransom price on the cross for all who would respond. *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life **a ransom for many**"* (Mt 20:28). Paul goes further in explaining the sacrifice of Jesus by saying that Jesus gave *"Himself **a ransom for all**"* (1 Tm 2:6). The ransom price was not offered for a few chosen. If any teaching strikes at the heart of the false doctrine of individual predestination it is the ransom of Jesus on the cross for all people. God is not willing that any of His creation should perish (2 Pt 3:9). Therefore, Jesus was given as full payment for the sins of all who would respond to His offering from the cross.

We must always keep in mind that God ransomed the firstborn of Egypt for Israel. But this was not a guarantee that many Israelites would not later rebel at Mount Sinai. Though delivered from captivity, the ransom price did not cover the latter rebellion. Those who gave themselves over to the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram were destroyed (Nm 16). Those who lacked faith to enter immediately into the land of promise fell in the wilderness. The point is, one can be delivered by responding to the ransomed price of

Jesus, but if he does not walk in the light as Jesus is in the light, the ransomed blood of Jesus does not cleanse him of his rebellion through sin (See 1 Jn 1:7,8). If we sin willfully after being ransomed, then the blood of Jesus will not redeem us from destruction, *"for if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins"* (Hb 10:26).

Chapter 7
THE SACRIFICIAL OFFERING ON THE CROSS

Redemption necessitates sacrifice. And sacrifice necessitates death. In the Old Testament, a living animal was given as a sacrifice for the deliverance of the people. Throughout the history of Israel, all of Israel's blood sacrifices reminded them of the first blood offering of the Passover lamb whose blood was poured out to protect each household from the death of their own firstborn in their deliverance from Egyptian captivity (Ex 12:22,23). Israel's firstborn lived, but the Egyptians' firstborn were given as a sacrificial ransom for their deliverance (Is 43:1-3). A lamb of the Passover was sacrificed for the protection of Israel's firstborn, but the protection of their firstborn meant the death of the firstborn of all unbelieving Egyptian households.

Sacrifices were also used to ratify covenants. When God established His covenant with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai after they came out of captivity, life was again given in order that the people be sprinkled with a blood offering for the covenant (Ex 24:3-11). A living covenant was thus established by the death of that which was sacrificed. Moses said to the people, *"Behold* ***the blood of the covenant*** *that the Lord has made with you concerning all these words"* (Ex 24:8).

Throughout the history of Israel, once a year on the Day of Atonement, an unblemished animal gave its life on the altar as a sin offering of blood for the people (Lv 4:1-35; 16:1-34). God reminded Israel, *"****For the life of the flesh is in the blood. And I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls. For it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul****"* (Lv 17:11). In the atonement (meaning, "the covering of sins") life was sacrificed for the sins of the people. Year after year, therefore, the minds of the people of Israel were being prepared for a final blood sacrifice that was to come in their future. It would not be the sacrificial blood of animals, but the blood of life from the incarnate Son of God. It would not be a Passover offering to save the firstborn, it would be the offering of the Firstborn of God for all those who would choose to be born again. Once this blood was poured out as an offering, never again would an animal be killed as a blood offering. Such was what the Hebrew writer wanted us to know when he spoke of Jesus being our high priest *"who does not need daily as those* [Old Testament high priests]*, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's, for this* ***He did once for all when He offered up Himself****"* (Hb 7:26,27).

In establishing the foundation for the metaphor that would eventually lead to the flesh and blood sacrifice of the incarnate Son, we must keep in mind

that the animal sacrifices that were brought to be offered in Israel were eaten, both by the Levites and those who participated in the offering (Lv 6:16,18,26,29; 7:6,15). This opens the window for understanding our eating of the flesh and blood of Jesus. Jesus spoke metaphorically of such during His ministry. *"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood, has eternal life"* (See Jn 6:52-56). This was a difficult saying for the disciples to comprehend, but a simple statement that was founded on the background of their knowledge of the sacrificial offerings of Israel (Jn 6:60). At the time Jesus made the statement they did not understand the atoning sacrifice of the cross that was yet in their near future. And they knew nothing at all about the Lord's Supper that would come after the sacrifice. In John 6 Jesus was speaking metaphorically of eating His sacrificed flesh and blood in the Lord's Supper. We do not eat literally of the fleshly body of Jesus, nor drink of His literal blood. But in the institution of the Supper meal, Jesus took the bread of the Passover meal and said, *"This is My body"* (Mt 26:26). Of the cup of the fruit of the vine, He said, *"This is My blood of the covenant"* (Mt 26:28). Through the institution of the Supper on the eve of His betrayal, therefore, Jesus was preparing the minds of the disciples for His sacrificial offering, as well as their remembrance of it through the Supper until He comes again (See Lk 22:18; 1 Co 11:26).

When we venture to the cross, the minds of the people had been prepared for the concept of the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Sacrifice is the message of Philippians 2:5-8. Jesus gave in and gave up in order to give for His creation. He gave up *"being in the form of God"* in order to give into being an obedient sacrifice. He became our sacrificial sin offering. *"For He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin on behalf of us ..."* (2 Co 5:21). *"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh,* ***God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh****"* (Rm 8:3). *"Whom God has set forth to be* ***an atoning sacrifice by His blood*** *..."* (Rm 3:25). Therefore, *"****Christ our Passover was sacrificed****"* (1 Co 5:7; see Hb 9:6-14; 10:15-18).

It was impossible for the blood of that which was created out of nothing to be a sufficient sacrifice for that which would be eternal. For this reason, it was impossible for the blood of animals to be a sufficient sacrifice for those whom God would bring into eternal dwelling (Hb 10:1-4). Only that which had eternality could be a sufficient sacrifice. However, in order for this sacrifice to be sufficient, there had to be a sacrifice on the part of the One who would give Himself for us. There was the necessity, therefore, for the eternal to become as those for whom He would choose to make a sacrificial offering. And for His sacrifice to be more than a brief thirty-three years in a state of incarnation on earth, it had to be eternal. A thirty-three year sacrifice would not be a true sacrifice if the incarnation could be reversed. There is no revelation in all of Scripture that speaks of any reversal of the incarnation.

So what sacrifice did Jesus actually make that made Him worthy to be our Passover sacrifice? By the time of

Jesus' coming into the world, thousands of rebellious Jews had already been crucified on crosses throughout the Roman Empire. Numerous insurrections had been put down, resulting in the crucifixion of rebels across the Empire, specifically in Palestine. The Jews knew the horror of crucifixion. Many had personally witnessed the crucifixion of criminals. On some occasions, they had witnessed the crucifixion by Roman authorities of friends and family who had participated in various insurrection plots. They knew the agony of death on a cross. Sometimes death would not soon deliver the crucified victim, and thus, the authorities would break the legs of the crucified. It was an agonizing death that would linger on for hours. But eventually, death would release the condemned from life, and thus bring to an end hours of suffering on a cross. The Jews were not unfamiliar with crucifixions.

So we reconsider the crucifixion of Jesus. According to the timeline of Jesus on the cross, the length of time was about six hours before He gave up the life of His fleshly body (See Jn 10:17,18). We know the death was agonizing. We know the excruciating pain that must have ravaged His body. But when life on a cross would go on for hours, if not a day, we wonder if the sacrifice for eternity was only for six hours. We think not. We must consider that Jesus' sacrifice for us was more than six hours of pain on a cross outside Jerusalem two thousand years ago. We must consider the possibility, or reality, that when He humbled Himself, and was born into the likeness of men, **it was forever**.

John alerted his readers to this reality in 1 John. John was writing many years **after** the cross and resurrection. He wrote, *"And we know that the Son of God **is come** ..."* (1 Jn 5:20). He uses the Greek present tense. It was not that the Son of God had come, but "is come." The Son appeared on earth, but there was something about His coming that continued to exist by the time John wrote 1 John. In 1 John 4:2 John revealed this truth in another sentence structure. *"Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ **has come in the flesh** is from God ...."* The obvious conclusion to this statement is that Jesus had come in the flesh for His earthly ministry, but He was still in the flesh for His heavenly ministry that was taking place at the time John wrote. He was in some way **still in the flesh**.

In 2 John the apostle looks to the future in reference to the coming of Jesus. *"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess that Jesus Christ **is coming in the flesh**. This is the deceiver and the antichrist"* (2 Jn 7). John is emphatic in this statement about Jesus still being in the flesh, aligning a denial of such to mark one as antichrist. His statement refers us to the "going" of Jesus from this earth at His ascension. At the ascension, the two angels said to the apostles as they watched Jesus bodily ascend into heaven, *"You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come **in like manner** as you have watched Him go into heaven"* (At 1:11). Now relate this thought to what John revealed in 1 John 3:2. *"Beloved, now we are the*

children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we will be. But we know that when He appears, ***we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is****."* Jesus bodily ascended into heaven. He will bodily be coming again from heaven in the future.

Now consider seriously the conclusion to the above statements. When Jesus was resurrected, His body was changed, but it was the same body. His incarnation was into a natural body. But in death *"it is sown a natural body.* ***It is raised a spiritual body****. There is a natural body and* ***there is a spiritual body****"* (1 Co 15:44). Jesus' natural body was raised a spiritual body. The apostle John handled the body of Jesus after His resurrection. However, he did not understand the nature of this body (1 Jn 3:2). But it was a spiritual body that the apostles could handle, one with which Jesus ate (Lk 24:39-42). When Jesus comes again, He *"will* ***transform*** *our lowly body so that it may be fashioned according to* ***His glorious body****"* (Ph 3:21). In order for us to be fashioned according to His "glorious body," He must still have a body in which He will be revealed from heaven.

We are now beginning to somewhat comprehend the totality of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. When He gave up being on an equality with God in order to be fashioned in the body of man (Ph 2:5-8), **it was forever**. His sacrifice was not for what would be a momentary period of thirty-three years in the flesh in comparison to eternity. **His suffering for six hours on the cross was not the finality of all His sacrifice for us**. The sacrificial offering on the cross was made, but the eternal sacrifice of His existence in our likeness was forever. He gave His form as God and being on an equality with God in order to pay the ransom that was necessary in order to deliver us from sin and the bondage of this world.

When the New Testament speaks of "believing in Jesus," therefore, it is commanding more than a simplistic "sinner's prayer" of mourning. It is commanding a total life-changing obedience in response to the God who transformed to be as us in order to dwell together with us in eternity. Therefore, let us never again try to get by with a cheap "faith only" response to His eternal incarnate sacrifice. Such is a mockery of what the Son of God humbled Himself to be in order to go to the cross for our sins. It is a weak response to what the Son of God gave up in order to forever be our high priest.

We thus view the sacrifice of Jesus to be more than the cross offering. The Hebrew writer shed some light on this. *"Therefore, in all things* ***He had to be made like His brethren****, so that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people"* (Hb 2:17). The cross was a moment in time for the atoning sacrifice. However, being made "like His brethren" exemplifies the sacrifice beyond our comprehension. Could the Son of God give up forever being on an equality with God in the very form of God? He came in the flesh (Jn 1:14). He lived in the flesh (1 Jn 1:1). His flesh died on the cross, was buried, and subsequently raised to be victorious over death. His natural body was raised a spiritual, glorious body. And in this body

He ascended on high. In this same glorious body He will come again for His people, with whom He will dwell as His brethren for eternity. When we consider this awesome sacrifice of the Son of God in order to bring us into eternal dwelling, we faint to our knees … speechless. His was a sacrifice that is simply beyond our comprehension. We can never fully understand this because we can never take this journey with the Son of God. In view of this sacrifice that was to come, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah rightly described our Savior as the coming Suffering Servant.

Chapter 8
THE SUFFERING SERVANT ON THE CROSS

In order to carry out the eternal purpose of creation, that is to bring created beings into eternal dwelling with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, someone had to come from the infinite to the finite. One of Deity had to make the eternal sacrifice in order to bring into the presence of the Eternal Love those who would be gifted with eternality by being in His presence. This Mediator would not only bring reconciliation between the eternal and mortal, but would immortalize the mortal for eternal dwelling.

As human beings, we would expect a glorious entrance of God into the environment of man. We would expect a spectacular invasion with a galactic display of heavenly bodies. We would then look for angelic knights in shining armor. But such was not the case. Such a heavenly entrance into our world would not provide the opportunity to draw out of creation proper candidates who were fit for eternal dwelling in the presence of God. Only those who would follow His example of humbling Himself unto death, even the death on a wooden cross, would be qualified to eternally dwell in His presence.

As free-moral individuals who often choose ourselves first, we needed an example of someone who chose Himself last. We needed a messenger of humility, meekness, one who could show kindness and mercy to our fallibility. We needed a servant, but not only a servant. We needed a servant who in all things would be *"tempted as we are, yet without sin"* (Hb 4:15). Through such a One we could thus *"come boldly to the throne of grace, so that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"* (Hb 4:16). And so, the picture of the coming Messiah of Israel that was painted by the prophets was a picture of a suffering servant, one who would suffer just as those He sought to deliver into eternal dwelling. It was only logical that He be such.

Isaiah paints the greatest metaphorical pictures of the coming suffering servant (See Is 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13 – 53:12). He introduced the coming servant of the Lord with these words: *"Behold My **servant** whom I uphold. My elect in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him. He will bring forth judgment to the Gentiles"* (Is 42:1). *"He will not fail nor be discouraged **until** He has set judgment on the earth"* (Is 42:4). Until He would die on the cross, the suffering servant would endure great pain and suffering in order to accomplish His mission. The suffering servant would say, ***"I gave My back to those who struck Me and My cheeks to those***

who plucked off the hair. I did not hide My face from shame and spitting" (Is 50:6). Isaiah continued to paint the picture of this servant. *"Just as many were astonished at you, My people,* ***so His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men"*** (Is 52:14). We are sure Isaiah's hand became weak as he was led by inspiration of the Holy Spirit to write these words concerning the coming servant: *"****He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we did not esteem Him"*** (Is 53:3). *"****He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted"*** (Is 53:4). *"****He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. And with His stripes we are healed"*** (Is 53:5).

The inspired writers who recorded the ministry and gospel of Jesus wanted us to understand that Jesus fully realized His mission. There were no surprises as He led Himself to the cross (See Jn 10:17,18). Jesus identified Himself as the servant who was anointed by the Lord to come to His people (Compare Lk 4:16-21 with Is 61:1,2). As was pictured by the words of Isaiah, Jesus' ministry as the servant of the Lord was one of healing (Compare Mt 8:16,17 with Is 53:4). Through the records of the ministry and gospel of Jesus are revelations of Jesus knowing that He was the One who was to suffer for the people of God (See Mk 8:31; 9:12; 10:33,34; 14:21).

Contrary to the expectations of the religious elite of Israel, the servant of the Lord who would heal the spiritual wounds of the people was not the military hero they expected. He was the lowly servant of God who was despised, rejected, spat upon and crucified by those to whom He came. The suffering servant, therefore, became the opportunity for individuals to determine their own eternal destiny. *"He came to His own and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him,* ***to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in His name"*** (Jn 1:11,12). If one would accept as God the One who was crucified as a common criminal on a cross, then it would be this one who had a right to be a child of God. The picture of the Redeemer as a suffering servant on a cross exemplifies the right of any individual to make a choice to reveal whether he or she is of a character that is fit for eternal dwelling.

Jesus reminded His disciples, *"... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"* (Mt 20:28; see Mk 10:45). As the incarnate Son of God, Jesus came to serve our sin problem, and to do such, He had to suffer the cross of humiliation. Jesus was truly our servant who suffered on our behalf. Those who submit to the cross by taking up their crosses, are of a like-minded character, and thus worthy because of the cross to be considered sons of God. Paul reminded the Galatians, *"For you are all* ***sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"*** (Gl 3:26,27).

Chapter 9
RECONCILIATION AT THE CROSS

The sin offering of Israel laid the foundation for understanding the reconciliation that would come through the offering of the suffering servant. In the sin offering, the blood of the sacrificed animal was not to be eaten (Lv 6:30). When reconciliation was accomplished, animals died in order *"to make reconciliation"* for the people (Lv 8:15). For example, when Israel was reconciled again unto God, animals had to die. *"Then the priests killed them and they* ***made reconciliation with their*** [animal] ***blood*** *on the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel"* (2 Ch 29:24; see also Ez 45:15-17). Reconciliation came at a price, the price of a sacrificed life. Through the cost of the sacrifice of animals year after year in Israel the stage was being set for the coming of the One who would offer the price of His blood as the medium by which God's people could be reconciled unto Him. It was a coming sacrifice that would terminate all animal sacrifices.

The Son of God intervened in the history of humanity in order that broken souls might be able to approach unto their Creator. Reconciliation was the initiative of a loving God to reach out to His creation. The cross, therefore, was God's signal to His creation that all who would come to Him have a way home. Reconciliation at the cross was Jesus opening the door through which the broken could find their way to the One who could heal their brokenness. When Jesus was lifted up to the cross, the drawing power of reconciliation was awesome to those who mourned over their sin-ravaged souls.

If we view God from the perspective of who He is, the God of love, then reconciliation was an initiative on the part of God to bring man again into His fellowship as it was before the sin of Adam. *"God was in Christ* ***reconciling the world to Himself****, not counting their trespasses against them"* (2 Co 5:19). In order for God to bring man into His fellowship, something had to be done for man's broken soul because of sin. We would conclude this because creation was also the initiative of God. He created a free-moral individual He knew would exercise his free-moral right to rebel. But since God is love, He needed to stand as a just God by offering man an opportunity to be reconciled to His fellowship through the blood of Christ.

If God did not offer the opportunity for reconciliation, then He would not stand as a just God if He separated anyone unto eternal condemnation. But because God is a God of love and justice, He did not create with the intention of judging His creation without an opportunity for reconciliation. If He had, then He would be judged a fiendish God for creating man in the first place. And if He intentionally predestined some of His creation to eternal punishment, it would correctly be concluded that He was a fiendish and unjust judge for creating individuals who were destined to punishment.

Depending on one's version, translations use words as "atonement" and "appeasement" to render the Old Testament Hebrew words that refer to reconciliation. In atonement, or propitiation, sins are covered by the blood of

sacrifices in order that we may approach God. In appeasement, the wrath of God (judgment) is calmed in order that man be reconciled to God without being condemned because of sin. Some have viewed the foundation for reconciliation to be based on the necessity that God's "anger" or "wrath" be appeased before men could approach Him. Those of this thinking contend that in some way God's wrath had to be appeased in order to make it possible for Him to enter into a covenant relationship with man. But basing reconciliation on the concept of appeasing God's anger or wrath seems to stand against God's effort of reconciliation in the New Testament. It also seems to be contrary to the very nature of a loving God. If God is love, then He is not seeking to condemn or unleash His wrath upon His creation. He is lovingly seeking to reconcile His creation to Himself. It would be as Jesus said, *"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved"* (Jn 3:17). God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should respond to His pleas to be reconciled again to His fellowship. But in order for a loving God to justly bring those tarnished with sin into His fellowship, something had to be done about their sin-blemished souls.

We would view **Romans 5** as the dictionary to define the work of a loving God to reconcile His creation unto Himself. *"Therefore, having been justified by faith,"* Paul introduces his argument, *"**We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**"* (vs 1). It is through the cross of Jesus that we have access to God because it was our own sin that took us away from God (vs 2). Paul turns to the initiative factor that *"**because of the love of God**"* the Spirit has been poured out for the believer (vs 5). All that Paul discusses in this chapter is based on this truth: "Because of the love of God." The fact that God is love, He took the initiative to reach out to man. *"For when we were still without strength, at the right time **Christ died for the ungodly**"* (vs 6). Here is the point: *"But God demonstrates His love toward us, **in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us**"* (vs 8).

The cross did not happen because of the plea of man to be reconciled with his Creator. It happened because of God's love for His creation. God was active in reconciliation and man was passive. Now that Christ died for the undeserving, and we have responded by faith, Paul continued, *"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we will be saved from wrath* [judgment] *through Him"* (vs 9). We would understand the "wrath," not as the character of God toward man, for if such were the case, then the cross would never have happened. The wrath refers to justice, for we cannot be reconciled to God with the blemishes of our sin. Sin (rebellion) cries out for justice, judgment and punishment. Love answers with grace and mercy.

In Romans 5 Paul then brings into the picture the resurrection. *"For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we will be saved by His life"* (vs 10). Our confidence, therefore, is in the power of the cross to bring those of faith unto the throne of God. So Paul concludes our rejoicing. *"And not only this, but we also*

rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ***through whom we have now received the reconciliation****"* (vs 11). *"Therefore, as through the offense of one* [Adam's sin separated him from God]*, judgment came on all men to condemnation,* ***even so through the righteousness of one*** [Jesus did that which was just by going to the cross]*,* ***the free gift came to all men to justification of life****"* (vs 18).

The means of reconciliation with God has already been accomplished. It is past tense in that Jesus poured out His blood in order to clean us of sin. Our cleansing was for the purpose of Him presenting us without blemish before the Father. The washed are presentable to the Father because ***"they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb****"* (Rv 7:14). The blood was poured out at the cross. The Father has now sent out the invitation to all to be immersed in the blood of reconciliation. So when the Scriptures say that *"in Him we have redemption through His blood"* (Ep 1:7), then we need to search the Scriptures in order to discover how we can come into Christ wherein the blood of Christ flows freely from Calvary (See Rm 6:3,4; Gl 3:26,27). (It is now that we are beginning to understand what happens at the point of baptism into Christ. The next time you witness someone being baptized, envision them going down into a pool of the blood of Jesus in order to be "washed in the blood of the Lamb.")

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 Jn 1:5). And because there is no darkness in God, then no darkness of sin can come into His presence. Since the very purpose for the creation of man was to bring mortal beings of love into the eternal presence of love, then something had to be done for the sin of a truly free-moral individual who was blessed with the opportunity to say, "I love you too." Thus when the Scriptures speak of the wrath of God being revealed, reference is to just judgment of those who have not been qualified by obedient faith to come into the eternal light of God's love. Sin separated us from God, and thus, there needed to be a means by which sin would be washed away so that we could approach God (See At 2:38; 22:16).

Paul wrote, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness"* (Rm 1:18). The wrath of God is revealed by the revelation of the righteousness of God through Jesus. Jesus is the way, truth and the life (Jn 14:6). But for those who would rebel against His way and ignore His truth, they have no opportunity for His life. *"But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such* [evil] *things"* (Rm 2:2; see 2 Th 1:6-9). In order that men have the opportunity to escape the coming just judgment of God, the gospel was revealed, for in the gospel is *"the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, 'The just will live by faith'"* (Rm 1:17).

In order to bring His creation into eternal dwelling, those who were separated from God by their rebellion in sin had to be brought back into the fellowship of Deity. The mission of Jesus, therefore, was a mission of reconciliation. It was a mission that the suffering servant accomplished by paying the

ransom of His blood for our sin. Through the cross, He *"disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public display of them, triumphing over them in it"* (Cl 2:15). The power of sin was disabled at the cross. Through the resurrection, Jesus was exalted *"far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come"* (Ep 1:21). Through the resurrection and ascension, the Father *"put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church"* (Ep 1:22). He did so in order *"that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Ph 2:11). The cross and resurrection, therefore, changed history because the sacrificial work on the part of Jesus draws out of the hearts of men the true image in which they were created after God. And so the prophecy of Jesus of Himself was fulfilled. *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth,* ***will draw all men to Me****"* (Jn 12:32). So now, all those who have responded to the outpouring of the love of God on the cross have also assumed the responsibility of the ministry of reconciliation (Read 2 Co 5:11-21). We go forth to preach the good news of reconciliation, therefore, in order to find those who seek to be restored unto their Creator.

Chapter 10
JUSTIFICATION AT THE CROSS

The word "justify" is a legal term. It was a term used in the Roman court system to refer to the legal proceedings of judicial law. Understanding its meaning must be determined in the context of the work of an advocate (lawyer). The advocate pleaded the case of the defendant. He sought to argue the case of the defendant in order that the defendant be given mercy from the grace of the court. If mercy was granted, then the defendant was acquitted (justified) of his crime.

When we bring this metaphor into our state of condemnation in sin, the crucified Savior works as our advocate to plead our case before the eternal court of justice. He not only pleaded our case at the cross, He actually stood in to take the blame for our crime. Taking our broken soul upon Himself was so great that He cried out from the cross, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* (Mt 27:46).

John reminded his readers, *"And if anyone sin, we have a* ***Counselor*** [advocate] *with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 Jn 2:1). Not only did Jesus bring justification for all sin through the cross, John indicates that the representation before the Father in reference to our sin is continuing. *"Therefore, He is able also to save those to the uttermost who come to God through Him,* ***seeing He always lives to make intercession for them****"* (Hb 7:25). Through the resurrection and ascension, Jesus is able to do this because He has now entered *"into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God* ***for us****"* (Hb 9:24). Justification was a onetime work of God in the past, but intercession on the behalf of the justified is ongoing. It is continuing because He lives.

What exemplifies continued intercession for us is the justification for us in the past that took place at the cross. To a great extent, the religious world has

distorted the teaching of justification by focusing on man, rather than the work of Christ. This distortion has gone to the extreme in many religions because adherents are led to believe that there is no justification except that which is validated by the merit of man. They fail to see that **justification was something that God did for us, not what we do for ourselves**. It was the work of God through His Son to justify, for our sin was against Him. It is the work of the redeemed to obediently walk with Jesus because they have been justified. We walk by faith, but our faith does not minimize the justifying work of Jesus that took place on the cross. We are cleansed by His blood through obedient faith as we walk in the light as He is in the light. *"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the **blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin**"* (1 Jn 1:7). Our walk is an obedient walk because we have been justified, not in order to be justified. It is because we have been justified that the blood of His Son continues its work in our lives.

The story of justification is explained in God's covenant relationship with Israel. God established a covenant relationship with Israel at Mount Sinai. With any covenant of the Old Testament, blood was offered to ratify the covenant. But with the establishment of covenants, there were conditions for the maintenance of the covenant. God established conditions for Himself, and He established conditions for Israel to maintain their part of the covenant. Within the covenant with Israel God made promises. His keeping of these promises defined His faithfulness to the covenant. He is a righteous (just) God because He keeps His promises. The righteousness of God, therefore, moved the faithful to remain committed to keep the covenant because they desired to receive the promises of God. By faith they trusted in the righteousness (faithfulness) of God to keep His promises. It is for this reason that Israel had to walk obediently by faith in God who keeps His promises.

Israel's history is a testimony of the fact that though God is righteous (He is just by keeping His promises), Israel's walk was often rebellious. They were disobedient to the law that came as their conditions for keeping the covenant. Whenever we speak of God's righteousness in the New Testament, therefore, and our trust (faith) in Him to keep His promises, we must think of an obedient faithfulness to His will. It is not simply a "faith only" walk, but an obedient faith that moves us to keep our conditions of the covenant we have with God. However, we know we cannot keep the conditions perfectly. We sin, and thus, we need the continuing blood of Jesus in order to remain in a covenant relationship with God. But if we rebel by turning away from the covenant, then there no longer remains a fulfillment of the promises on our behalf. The Hebrew writer reminded us of this. *"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins"* (Hb 10:26).

This thought is summed up in the words of Micah 6:1-8 who pronounced judgment on Israel for their unfaithful walk in turning away from their covenant with God. Micah wrote that *"the Lord has a complaint with His people"* (vs 2).

God had fulfilled His part of the covenant by delivering the Israelites from Egyptian captivity and bringing them into the promised land. He did this so that they might *"know the righteousness* [faithfulness] *of the Lord"* (vs 5). But many centuries later when Micah prophesied to the nation, they had faulted on their responsibility to remain faithful to God. So what would God require of them in order to restore their covenant relationship with Him in view of the fact that He was faithful (righteous) to fulfill His promises of the covenant? *"He has shown you, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of you, but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God"* (vs 8). They must renew their faith by renewing their commitment to the covenant.

Any discussion in reference to the justification of God must be defined in the context of God's covenant relationship with Israel. Through His righteousness (faithfulness to keep promises), God delivered on His covenant promises. Except for the faithful remnant that He restored from captivity, the majority of Israel turned away from the covenant when they ran after idolatrous gods. Nevertheless, God fulfilled His promises to the faithful remnant. Justification at the cross did not depend on their righteousness, for they were dead in sin when the Advocate pled their case before the Judge at the cross (Rm 5:8). The righteousness of God, however, was manifested at the cross for God fulfilled all His promises concerning the Seed that would bless all mankind.

This profound subject is introduced by Paul in Romans 1:16,17, but is often misunderstood. Paul first speaks of the gospel. According to his definition of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3,4, the gospel is the justifying work of God in the death of Jesus for our sins on the cross. It is Jesus' death and resurrection. This good news event is the power of God unto salvation. In order to be this power unto salvation, two things had to take place. First, the righteousness of God must be revealed to those with whom God seeks to bring into a covenant relationship. This was accomplished through the cross. *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men"* (Ti 2:11). Second, there must be a faith response by those who seek to come into this covenant relationship with God. The faith response would be obedience to the gospel (See 2 Th 1:6-9; 1 Pt 4:17).

In reference to the gospel, Paul continues to explain that *"it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith ..."* (Rm 1:17). The sending of His Son to die for our justification was God's faithfulness to bring His creation into a covenant relationship. The cross, therefore, revealed the faithfulness of a just God to His creation that could not be saved by their own righteousness. He would not allow those who seek Him to go without a covenant. He so loved the world that the general invitation was made to all men through the cross to come into His covenant that He sought to establish with those who choose to obey the gospel. The righteousness of God was revealed by His faithfulness to His creation in order to establish a covenant that would in turn require faithfulness on the part of man (Rm 1:17).

The gospel was a manifestation of "faith to faith," (God's faithfulness con-

nected to man's faithfulness). Here is where so many have missed the point in reference to justification that is based on God's faithfulness that inspires our faithful response. This is also where many of the Protestant world have based their theology on a misunderstanding of justification that was brought out of the Reformation Movement. Experiential religionists assumed that justification relied on a meritorious experience whereby one justifies himself before God. Seeing the futility, and rightly so, of any meritorious works of law or deeds being able to justify oneself before God, "faith only" theologians have run in the opposite direction. They have concluded that since we cannot be justified by meritorious works, then justification must rest solely on our faith. Some have corrupted this theology even more. They unfortunately base their understanding of justification on the foundation of a concept that God individually predestined some to eternal destruction regardless of their choice in the matter. Since these theologians could not make everyone righteous before God through obedient faith, they assumed, therefore, that God had created some for eternal destruction regardless. They thus destroyed the free-moral obedience of all men, and subsequently created a fiendish Creator who would unjustly condemn to eternal hell those He individually predestined to such a fate.

But all these theologies of men have made something simple so complex. And in reference to the theology of some, they have created a god who is a respecter of those who were supposedly unconditionally elected to eternal salvation, and fiendish toward those who were unconditionally predestined to eternal damnation in a fiery hell.

The righteousness of God was revealed at the cross. It was there that our justification was initiated by the faithfulness of God to keep His promises to the fathers of Israel. Paul revealed this faithfulness of God in Galatians 2:16, a passage that is often obscured by some translations. The *International King James Version* has the correct reading. *"Knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but* ***by the faith of Christ Jesus****, even we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be* ***justified by the faith of Christ****, and not by works of law, for by works of law no flesh will be justified."*

At the cross, **justification resulted from the faithful work of Jesus Christ**, as opposed to the futile meritorious efforts of men to keep law perfectly in order to justify themselves. Some translations of Galatians 2:16 have unfortunately been influenced by their thinking that places justification on the shoulders of men. They translate the phrase "the faith of Christ Jesus" in Galatians 2:16 to read "by faith in Christ Jesus." But the reading in Greek is literally "faith **of** Christ." It was because of the faithfulness of Christ to accomplish the eternal plan of redemption on the cross that God was able to reconcile the world unto Himself. Through the cross, God *"has reconciled us to Himself through Christ"* (2 Co 5:18). Through His Son, the Father was justifying those who were dead in sin because of their inability to keep law perfectly in order to justify themselves.

God was faithful to fulfill His promise that He originally made to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15. He was faithful to

fulfill His promise to Abraham that in his seed all nations of the world would be blessed (Gn 12:3). God was faithful through the faith of Christ to take Himself to the cross in order to call all men to join Him in a covenant with the Father. The justification of the cross was not simply a blanket declaration that all men are now unconditionally justified. It is a call by the gospel message to all men to come with obedient faith into this covenant. Through the appeal of His righteousness revealed on the cross, God pleads to all men for *"obedience to righteousness"* (Rm 6:16). He is *"not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pt 3:9).

The gospel is power unto salvation from "faith to faith" (Rm 1:17). It was initiated and executed on the cross because of God's faithfulness to keep His promises. God now calls on those who seek to come into a covenant relationship with Him to act on their faith. If God were willing that no one should perish, but did not offer the cross, then He would not have been faithful to keep His promise that was made two thousand years before to Abraham (See Gn 12:1-4). Israel was called by God to be faithful because He was faithful to keep His promises to the fathers. But if we think we can respond to the faithful actions of God that were revealed at the cross with a simple "sinner's prayer" that does not move one to do anything in response to the faithfulness of God, then we are asking God to respond with His atoning work at the cross to an unresponsive faith.

Inactive faith was the core to James' thought when he wrote, *"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?"* (Js 2:14). James gave the example of obedient Abraham. *"Was not Abraham our father* ***justified by works*** *when* ***he offered Isaac*** *his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works,* ***and by works was faith made perfect****"* (Js 2:21,22). Now listen to James' conclusion to the actions of Abraham. *"And the scripture was fulfilled that says, '****Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness****'"* (Js 2:23). Abraham acted on his faith. It was not a dead faith. And because he had an active faith, he was credited to be righteous, that is, justified. One is not righteous (justified) before God without an active response to God's action on the cross. It was for this reason that the eunuch asked Philip, *"What hinders me from being baptized?"* (At 8:36). It was for this reason that Ananias asked Saul, *"... why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins ..."* (At 22:16). And it was for this reason that in the same hour of the night the active faith of the Philippian jailor moved him to take action in reference to his new knowledge of the saving power of the cross. *"And immediately he was baptized ..."* (At 16:33).

Therefore, when Paul made the statement, "faith to faith," he meant from God's faithfulness to take action at the cross for our justification, which faithfulness should draw the same active response out of those who come to the cross. There must be a faith response to God's faithfulness, otherwise, our faith leaves us in death at the foot of the cross until we do what Jesus said

to do in reference to our sins. *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mk 16:16). It cannot be more simple than that (See At 2:38; 22:16).

Must we remind ourselves of 1 Peter 4:17. *"What will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"* If one comes to the cross with a simple mental faith, without obedience to the gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Rm 6:3-6), he is not justified simply because his faith has not moved him to faithfulness. Salvation by the gospel is by "faith to faith." God has been faithful in the work of offering to His creation an opportunity to be justified before Him. Unless one reciprocates with faith in action, the cross will accomplish nothing in reference to one's justification that is freely offered at the cross.

The cross is the revelation of the righteousness of God toward His creation. *"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested ... even the righteousness of God that is* ***by the faith of Jesus Christ to all those who believe*** *..."* (Rm 3:21,22). Jesus was faithful in taking Himself to the cross for those He had created (See Jn 10:17,18; Cl 1:16). The cross now calls on all who would believe to respond to the cross. Because all have sinned (Rm 3:23), the call of the cross is to respond to the justification that is offered there for our sins (Rm 3:24). When one responds to the cross by obedience to the gospel, he has access to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:26,27). Through the cross, God *"has set forth* [His Son] *to be an atoning sacrifice by His blood through faith in order to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins in the past because of the forbearance of God"* (Rm 3:25). Therefore, *"as through one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of one* [Jesus] ***will many be made righteous*** [justified]*"* (Rm 5:19).

Chapter 11
CRUCIFIED WITH HIM ON THE CROSS

Paul wrote the well-known statement, *"I have been* ***crucified*** *with Christ. And it is no longer I who live, but* ***Christ lives in me****"* (Gl 2:20). "Crucified" in this statement is the Greek passive, and thus at some time in the past Paul was **acted upon** by being crucified with Christ. The tense of the verb does not indicate something that Paul personally did, **but something that was done for him**. That something was the work of Christ at the cross. Because Paul was acted upon by the work of Christ on the cross, there was power in his life to live the cross-bearing life. *"And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God ..."* (Gl 2:20). When Paul wrote to the Philippians, we now understand what he was saying when he wrote, *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"* (Ph 4:13). It was not Paul of himself who was able to lead the crucified life. It was the crucified Christ who lived within him. His "can do" was not "I can do myself." Paul wrote, *"But in all these things we are more than conquerors* ***through Him*** *who loved us"* (Rm 8:37). Our power to conquer is not within ourselves. It is "through Him" who loved us on the cross.

Paul's continued walk under the

power of the cross was maintained by his obedient faith. This would be the life-style that Jesus indicated when He stated, *"Whoever wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself and* ***take up his cross*** *and follow Me"* (Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23; 14:27). The joy of bearing our crosses for Christ, therefore, is in our knowledge of and faith in what Jesus did on the cross. This is certainly behind the statement of James when he encouraged his readers, *"My brethren,* ***count it all joy*** *when you fall into various trials ..."* (Js 1:2). Cross-bearing disciples are full of joy because they realize that it is the crucified Christ who is working in them for the glory of God.

Paul's crucifixion with Christ takes us back to the cross of Christ. Paul wants to remind us that our old man of sin was crucified with Christ at the time Jesus died on the cross. He wrote in reference to our problem of sin in Romans 6:6. *"...* ***knowing*** *this, that our old man* ***was crucified with Him*** *so that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we should no longer be bondservants to sin"* (Rm 6:6). In using the word "knowing" (Gr. *ginosko*), Paul wanted the Roman Christians to understand, grasp and comprehend something that was very important concerning their salvation. He wanted them to realize that they were who they were in Christ because of what Christ did on the cross for them. The word "crucified" in his statement is the Greek passive, that is, the object (us) was acted upon by another. In the Romans 6:6 statement the "old man of sin" was acted upon by Christ at the cross. The "old man of sin" was taken to the cross **with** Christ. So in answer to the question of when the old man was crucified, it was when Jesus was crucified.

There is no such thing as self-crucifixion. Though our crucifixion with Christ will motivate us to take up our cross and follow Jesus, we are not crucifying our old man of sin, for such would be impossible. In crucifixion, someone was always acting upon the victim to nail him to the cross. And when we are discussing the problem of sin, only the One against whom we sin has the authority to forgive that sin. While on earth, the Son of God had the authority to forgive sin directly, immediately and personally (Mt 9:6). And while He was on the cross, the Son of God was there to forgive our sins by allowing Himself to be crucified for our old man of sin. As a reminder that He had the power to forgive while on earth, in His last moments on the cross He personally forgave another by saying to the thief on the cross, *"... today you will be with Me in Paradise"* (Lk 23:43).

We could not of ourselves crucify our old man of sin. The cross was about forgiveness and crucifixion. If by faith we come to the cross, realizing that the Son of God has taken care of our old man of sin, then in thanksgiving we go to the grave with Him in order to enjoy newness of life when our sins are washed away in the waters of baptism (At 22:16). We are thus born again as a new creature in Christ. *"Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new"* (2 Co 5:17).

On the cross Jesus was active in taking our old man of sin with Him to be crucified. Through the obedient faith of Christ to go to the cross, we can have

faith that our old man of sin was crucified. But as His faith was active in taking our old man of sin to the cross for crucifixion, our faith must also be active in doing that which is necessary in order to have life. Through obedience to the gospel (baptism) our faith is active in taking the crucified old man to the grave. We were passive in Jesus' work to crucify the old man of sin. However, we must be active in burying the old dead man. Therefore, **through the power of the cross our old man of sin was crucified with Jesus**. **But by faith, we choose to have the old man buried with Christ and raised to walk in newness of life** (Rm 6:5).

We must keep in mind that though the old man of sin was crucified with Jesus when He went to the cross, we are all as dead men walking. We have no life before resurrection, as Jesus was in a tomb before life came in the resurrection. There is *"no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Rm 8:1) because those in Christ have buried the old crucified man (See Gl 3:26-29). However, outside Christ he is in condemnation. But when one is *"baptized into His* [Christ's] *death,"* that is, *"united in the likeness of His death,"* it is then that he can be raised with Him *"in the likeness of His resurrection"* in order to walk as a new creature in Christ (Rm 6:3-6; 2 Co 5:17). Once the old man of sin is buried, a new man is born who has been blessed with eternal life in Christ. John reminds us, *"And this is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life* ***and this life is in His Son****"* (1 Jn 5:11).

Paul brings out the above meaning in Ephesians 2:8. *"For by grace you are saved through faith, and that* ***not of yourselves****, it is the gift of God."* The grace of God appeared on the cross on our behalf (Ti 2:11). It was grace that brought salvation, both through the faith of Jesus and the faith of ourselves. Our salvation could not be accomplished on our own. It had to come only as a gift of God, which gift we accept through faith. This is the power of the gospel that is from "faith to faith." God did what we could not do for ourselves. Paul continues his teaching on this matter in Romans 6 by reminding the Roman disciples, *"Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you should obey the lusts of the body"* (Rm 6:12). On the contrary, he exhorted, *"present yourselves to God,* ***as those who are alive from the dead****, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God"* (Rm 6:13). Herein is the power of grace. We know that we are under grace, and not under the necessity of performing law perfectly in order to save ourselves. Therefore, *"sin will not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace"* (Rm 6:14). The power of the cross is that we know that our insufficient performance of law will not separate us from the love of God. Since God gave His only begotten Son in order to crucify the old man of sin, then there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rm 8:39).

The curse of experiential religion is that the adherents of such faiths have little faith in our total justification by Jesus on the cross. The power of the gospel is minimal in the mind of the one who questions his salvation by the grace of God. The experientialist seeks to cleanse his conscience of guilt through

the performance of emotionality, and often, meritorious good works. It is difficult for him to step aside and get out of the way of Jesus who has taken care of the old man of sin. Some fail to realize that we are *"created in Christ Jesus **for** good works"* (Ep 2:10). We are not created in Christ **by** good works. When we understand that God saved us at the cross of grace, that realization moves us into action. It is that grace that causes thanksgiving (2 Co 4:15). Paul's life was an example. *"**But by the grace of God I am what I am**. And His grace toward me **was not in vain**, but **I labored more abundantly** than they all, yet not I, **but the grace of God that was with me**"* (1 Co 15:10). That is a very powerful statement! God's grace took Paul far beyond what he could ever have accomplished by his own self-will to work meritoriously in obedience to law. When Paul said, *"for you are not under law, but under grace"* (Rm 6:14), he meant that we are not under the motivation to keep law meritoriously in order to be saved. On the contrary, we are under the motivation of grace to live for Jesus. By being motivated by faith in God's grace, we understand Romans 3:31. *"Do we then make void law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish law."* Under faith we cry out to our Father to instruct us concerning the right way.

Chapter 12
REFOCUSING ON THE CROSS

Throughout the centuries there have always been efforts to relegate the cross to a subpoint on a theological outline. The more a religion was based on the traditions of the fathers, the less emphasis there was placed on the significance of the cross in the theology of the religion. The more organized a religion focused on the authority of men on earth within the organized structure of the religion, the less adherents focused exclusively on King Jesus and His leadership through the cross. The worst scenario is a religion that sets up its own church head on earth. Add to all this religious chaos the fact that the more legalistic a church becomes in its theology, the less the mystery of the cross fits into its systematic theology.

Salvation, it was presumed by the traditionalist and the legalist, was based on faithfulness to "the church" and its established identity. It was faithfulness to the church, and subsequently, the church would get one into heaven. Regardless of one's response to the cross, "faithfulness," which meant faithfulness to the church, would determine one's destiny. The result of this obsession with traditional church structures and legal theological outlines, was that church and doctrine were highlighted, with the message of the cross being relegated to a subpoint at the conclusion of the sermon. The result was that campaigns and crusades alike were organized efforts to promote one's church in contrast to the supposed error of all other churches. Preaching church became the center of our "evangelistic" sermons, and the cross was added only at the conclusion of a theologically engineered presentation of "church doctrine."

Those who were more legally oriented in their theology viewed the cross simply as the back drop of their focus on a manufactured "plan of salvation."

Acts 2 became the center of reference to their preaching, and subsequently, they were able to bring people to baptism without even mentioning the cross. Some realized the error of this legal approach to salvation, and then ran through Jerusalem to focus exclusively on Jesus alone. They walked with Him and His disciples down the roads of Palestine, but they lost their emphasis on the incarnate God who was nailed to the cross to ransom their souls from sin. Jesus became a folk hero, good teacher, a personal friend, someone with whom we sought to identify as our personal Savior. But in our listing of the teachings of Jesus, the atonement of the cross was marginalized for a simple conversation with Jesus as a good friend. Jesus became our personal Savior, but not to the extent of being our "personal God" before whom we will be judged. The emphasis in reference to Jesus having an impact on our lives changed from what Jesus did for us to what we could do for Him. The result of this change in focus led some to a works-oriented faith whereby they sought to justify themselves before God. The result was that we never really felt good about our salvation because we never really felt good about our works, for we knew that our works were never enough to merit our intended yearning for eternal life.

And then there are those who simply gave up works altogether. In their fear of a faith that would manifest itself through an obedient response to the incarnate and crucified God of the cross, they simply affirmed that salvation was by a simple inactive faith on the part of the predestined. No works required! They forgot that the New Testament book on grace and faith (Romans) was introduced and concluded by "obedience of faith." *"We have received grace and apostleship,* ***for obedience of the faith*** *..."* (Rm 1:5). And lastly, Paul concluded, *"... the mystery ... has been made known to all nations for the* ***obedience of faith****"* (Rm 16:25,26).

Add an inactive response to the cross the doctrine of individual predestination, and some religionists have come up with a religion that appeals to the carnal nature of man. It appeals to the materialist who would consume the world upon himself. Regardless of what one did morally, or how much he consumed upon himself, he was still predestined to heaven, and thus, he could live without endangering his soul. What one preacher said to one of the young members of his group emphasizes the point. The young man confessed to the preacher that he was struggling with moral temptations in his life. The preacher reassured the young man by saying, "That's fine. As long as you understand that you have been predestined personally to eternal life, it doesn't matter." Individual predestination moves one to divert his life from the cross. If one believes that he or she is individually predestined, then there is no fear of losing one's soul. One person recently called us and stated, "I have never heard of apostasy. What does it mean?" The cross has little appeal to the "presumptuously saved." It has little motivation for those who believe they cannot fall from the grace of God. After all, who would really want to bear the cost of the cross when he believes that he is already individually predestined to eternal life? The faith of the individual predestinationist,

therefore, is not in the work of the incarnate Son of God on the cross, but in his individual predestination. Once one believes that he is individually chosen by God, then there is no need for faith in the work of the Suffering Servant on the cross.

What those who believe in individual predestination have done is make senseless the atoning sacrifice of the cross. They have negated any love response to the love act revealed on the cross. If one was individually predestined at birth to eternal glory, then what need would there be for any eternal atoning sacrifice? If certain individuals were already destined to glory, why pay any ransom? Why would God even need to incarnate in the flesh of man in order to make a redemptive offering? If predestination is true, then we would question why the Son of God even showed up at the cross. If God predestined individuals to eternal glory, then certainly He could have just taken them on to heaven without all the intervening scandal of the cross. He could have taken them without all the suffering and salvational planning throughout the centuries for the sake of a free-moral individual who really was not free in the first place to take ownership of his own eternal destiny.

The shocking reality about this theology is that a vast number of religionists throughout the world today believe in the theology of individual predestination. It is an appealing theology because it makes God a respecter of specific people, not because it draws individuals to the cross of love. We must not underestimate the theology of individual predestination to a narcissistic generation that is consumed with adding individuals to their follower list as they have presumed that God unconditionally added them to His family before they were born.

But we would base our faith on the fact that because a loving God was not willing that any of His creation should be lost, His love was revealed at the cross through His Son. We thus seek a restoration of emphasis on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus as our primary message to the world, a world in which *"**whoever believes in Him** should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (Jn 3:16). The message of the cross is "Him." God sent Him into the world as an opportunity for every person to have access to everlasting life. The reward of believing in Him is being a part of the covenanted people of God.

Jesus brought more than a set of doctrines to "establish" churches. He brought Himself, and thus our message to the lost must not be a simple set of outlined doctrines to "identify the church." Our message to the world is the atoning sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God. Our message is not only on a crucifixion event outside Jerusalem two thousand years ago. Jesus came in the flesh for the cross. He was resurrected to stay in the flesh. And He is coming again in His glorified body in order to receive His brethren with whom He will dwell in His glorified body. We thus look beyond the six hours of suffering on the cross in order to see the God who eternally gave up being on an equality with the eternal God in order to be made in the likeness of His brethren with whom He has chosen to dwell forever. Our message, therefore, is not a law of condemnation, but a message of deliverance from the

bondage of sin through the ransom that was paid for our redemption.

We must keep in mind that the message we preach is not a catechism of teachings. The gospel, the good news, is not a system of law. Law only infers duty and discouragement, for we cannot keep law perfectly in order to save ourselves. The covenant that God seeks to establish with us is more than a contract of duty. If the gospel is simply a contract that is based on obligations to keep the laws of the contact, then we have brought ourselves again into the bondage of our inability to keep law perfectly. On the contrary, the gospel is a message of joy and hope. It is a message of deliverance and freedom from the bondage of law. If our covenant with God were simply a contractual agreement, then we would be subjugated to a set of obligations that we must keep perfectly in order to preserve the contract. And we know we cannot do such in order to save ourselves.

God's covenant with us is different than a contract. God reaches out through the cross to covenant with us, though in our rebellion we seek to turn from Him. As in Israel, God continually sought to turn Israel from her wayward rebellion (See Hs 2:9-23; 8:14; 11:5-9). God's covenant with us today is a covenant of grace. He seeks to nurture us into eternity through the drawing power of His love and grace (See 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). Through the cross, He manifested Himself as a loving God who is reaching out to the wayward in order to bring them again into His eternal fellowship.

The cross is a manifestation of God's love that suffers with us through His Suffering Servant. Therefore, when one in repentance seeks to return to God, he does not come to God pleading on the basis of his works, but pleading that what he could not pay through works of law would be paid by the ransomed blood of the incarnate Son. When God grants forgiveness, which He always does, it is a grant that is given regardless of our imperfections. This is grace and mercy. This is the good news of the cross. Upon the basis of our mourning over our sins, God grants righteousness regardless of our imperfections. He considers us faithful (righteous) regardless of our inabilities. The righteousness of Jesus, therefore, becomes the imputed righteousness of the believer. It is for this reason that the believer does not have to depend on his own righteousness, for he knows that all sin, including himself. We must depend on the righteousness of Jesus at the cross, *"knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but by the faith of Christ Jesus ..."* (Gl 2:16). We need to remember the words of Paul to the Jews in the synagogue of Antioch of Perga. *"Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man* [Jesus] *is preached to you the forgiveness of sins, and* ***by Him all who believe are justified from all things of which you could not be justified by the law of Moses****"* (At 13:38,39).

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross where the Dearest and Blest,
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it some day for a crown.

Metaphorical Epilogue

"Are they all here?" the Father joyously asked the Son.

"Every last one!" the Son reassured the Father. *"I did not leave one behind."*

"Oh, this is so wonderful. They're so glorious, as white as snow," the Father added. *"Son, you have to thank yourself for this."*

"He surely does," added the Spirit. *"You wouldn't believe the mess they were in at the time He arrived to clean them up. They needed a real scrubbing. And once they were cleansed, it was sometimes a challenge to keep them drawn in the right direction by our love. The deceiver was constantly roaring in their faces. But, he is gone and it is all over."*

"Was it worth all the struggle, My Son?"

*"It was, Father. Just look at them. They are truly a loving community of people who reflect our nature. Though I gave up so much to go get them, they went through so much to follow Me here. We need to thank the Spirit for being with them in every struggle along the w*ay."

The Spirit added, *"It was easy after they responded to our grace that was poured out for them at the intervention. They were so thankful that all they needed was a little protection here and there to keep them safe. Because of their love for us, they were so willing to follow our instructions of the book."*

Then the Father concluded, *"So now, it's time to move them on into eternity. Our love has been fulfilled and forever we have those in our presence who have reciprocated our love. Their presence in our company is proof that We are Who We are."*

"Then the King will say to those on His right hand,
'Come, you blessed of My Father,
inherit the kingdom prepared for you
from the foundation of the world'."
(Matthew 25:34)

Section II

THE FAITH

God calls all men to faith in His incarnate Son on the cross. Throughout the centuries after the fall of man in the garden of Eden, God worked to bring reconciliation between Himself and man. He worked to fulfill the original purpose for which He created man, that is, that people of faith come into His eternal fellowship forever. In order that this plan be accomplished, God did His part in providing the road map into His presence through the cross. He has now handed everything over to man to respond to the map. It is now the responsibility of man to respond by obedient faith to the faithful work of God on the cross.

When studying any Bible subject there is a preliminary principle of biblical interpretation that must never be violated: **What the majority believes, or what the religious culture dictates, must never become the foundation upon which the biblical interpreter establishes his understanding of the Scriptures in reference to his religious beliefs and behavior**. If this principle is not observed, then the people are on their way to apostasy from God, if not already there.

The entire apostasy of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament is a testimony to the truth of the preceding important principle. This principle was alluded to in Paul's reference to the first apostasy of Israel when the Israelites came out of Egyptian captivity (1 Co 10:1-13). After over 400 years in Egyptian captivity, the generation of Israelites that first came out of captivity had been influenced by the religious beliefs of the Egyptian culture. This first generation had been freed from political bondage, but not from the bondage of Egyptian religiosity that had affected many Israelites. The evidence of this religious influence was revealed at the foot of Mount Sinai upon which the glory of God was revealed in their eyesight. They complained. They rebelled. They made a golden calf idol. And then, they were struck down by the Destroyer for their lack of focus on the one true and living God. Paul wrote of them, *"Nor let us complain as some of them complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer"* (1 Co 10:10). Paul admonishes us by saying, *"Now these things happened to them **as an example**, and they were **written for our admonition** ..."* (1 Co 10:11). Therefore, *"let him who thinks he stands"* against the influence of the religious culture in which he lives *"take heed lest he fall"* (1 Co 10:12). What everyone is believing, therefore, can never be the foundation upon which we approach our God through His word.

Bible study must always be founded upon the principle, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." And when anyone would speak for the Lord, *"let him speak as the oracles of God"* (1 Pt 4:11). This principle of faithfulness to the oracles

of God cannot be overemphasized more than when one is studying what God would require of man for his own salvation. In order to be saved before God, we can never allow the religious world to dictate the conditions for our salvation. We can never allow traditional theology to determine our thinking on these matters. Our thinking must be guided solely by the word of the One before whom we will be judged (See Jn 12:48).

Since people of all religions seek to devise their own systems of salvation, it is imperative that the faithful disciple make every effort to approach the word of God with an objective humility that is not encumbered with the influences of either culture or the favorite banners of the misguided religious world in which he lives. Lest one be led astray as Israel, he must approach the subject of this discussion with great caution.

We have been mandated by the Spirit to *"test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 Jn 4:1). Since it is not inherent within ourselves to test the truthfulness of what another person teaches, our **only option to avoid apostasy is to resort to the word of God**. We can test the "spirits of religion" only with our obsession with a "thus saith the Lord." If we fail to do this, we are doomed to fall away by creating a religion after the traditions of our fathers or after our own misguided desires (See Mk 7:1-9). If we would be disciples of the Lord, therefore, we have no other option but to focus specifically on what God says to us through His word.

Many years ago we made a decision not to be disciples of the religious world. Our decision was not to be disciples of the church. We would be disciples of Jesus alone. We thus refused to be disciples of a patterned structure of religiosity or theology that became the fashionable doctrine promoted by our fathers that had been passed down to us through our religious heritage. We staunchly opposed the religious heritages of any particular religious group that was not founded upon the word of God. Imbedded within many religious groups are an assortment of traditional teachings that have no biblical foundation, and yet, are bound on the consciences of men for the sake of preserving the group, not for the exaltation of the Son of God. But specifically, all teachings in the context of the salvation of men should be held suspect until we can find a "book, chapter and verse" that would support correct salvational conclusions. So today we seek to make no uncertain proclamation that our faith must never be imbedded with the doctrines and commandments of men (See Mk 7:1-9). We would be disciples solely of Jesus whom we follow through His word. Jesus said, ***"If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples"*** (Jn 8:31). Jesus could not have made it more clear that we must continue in His word in order to be His disciples. Religious heritages and traditions have no part in this discussion.

Chapter 13
RESCUING OUR FAITH OUT OF THEOLOGICAL JARGON

We never cease to be amazed at the ability of clerical religionists to create popular phrases and terminologies

that manifest twisted ideas. Because we live in a world of biblical ignorance, it is absolutely imperative that anyone who would seek to restore themselves to God must be a diligent Bible student. If we would restore our nobility before God, then we must, as the Bereans, *"receive the word with all readiness of mind"* and search *"the Scriptures daily to see whether these things"* are so (At 17:11). If there is no desire to study the Bible, then there is no hope for the religionist who would seek to please God. One can be religious without the word of God. But one cannot be a child of God and disciple of Jesus while being ignorant of the word of God.

This affirmation does not assume that we know everything in the Bible. But it does assume that we know every fundamental teaching that refers to the salvation of men. God did not make salvational teachings ambiguous and difficult to understand. From a simple reading of the text of God's word one can clearly understand what is necessary to be saved.

But because we are surrounded with so many charismatic religious leaders who hold spellbound thousands of biblically ignorant adherents, there seems to be no hope for a modern-day revival of the word of God to the centrality of faith. This situation has reached its pinnacle in reference to what is necessary for one's salvation. In a religious culture wherein there is a dearth of knowledge of the word of God, we have been inundated with biblical ignorance through the smooth and fair speech of those who have little knowledge of the Bible, but assert themselves to be spokesmen for God.

Nevertheless, we must for a moment excuse ourselves from our fatalistic views of the misguided religious world in order to make every attempt to investigate the word of God. The religious masses may be destroyed because of their lack of knowledge of the word of God (Hs 4:6), but we would "with all readiness of mind search the Scriptures" in order to discover what is necessary for our own salvation (At 17:11). If we can for a moment lay aside our religious prejudices and open the pages of the Bible, let's take another look at the subject of faith and obedience in reference to one's relationship with God.

As we study through the subject of faith and obedience, we must be sure to note that there are two groups of people of faith in the New Testament who will be held accountable for their faith. The first group are the alien sinners. Those of this group are outside Christ and lost in a state of condemnation in sin. These were the Ephesians **before** their obedience to the gospel. Paul wrote that in their former life outside Christ they *"**were dead in trespasses and sins**"* (Ep 2:1). It was to alien sinners as these that statements as the following were made: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you ... will be saved"* (At 16:31). This is the group of alien sinners outside Christ who must act on their faith in Jesus in order to do all that God commands of them to be saved. To these unbelievers, therefore, the message is to believe on Jesus as the Son of God. Once belief is established, then the one who believes must do everything that is required by God in order to come into Christ.

The second group who will be held

accountable for their faith are those who act on their faith in Jesus, and thus obeyed the gospel. These are those to whom it was written, *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead"* (Js 2:26). This is the group of those who have already acted on their faith to obey the gospel. Now they must continue to walk obediently in thanksgiving to the grace of God. They do this by working out their *"salvation with fear and trembling"* (Ph 2:12), for they will give account of their works before the Lord (2 Co 5:10).

It is imperative that when studying the subject of faith and salvation in the Bible that the context in which a particular statement is made must first be understood. It must be understood if statements concerning faith are made in reference to alien sinners or to Christians. Determining whether a statement concerning faith was made in the context of unbelievers or believers solves almost all problems in reference to discovering what is required of one to be saved.

A. What some men say.

The statements of warning in the Bible concerning apostasy cannot be overemphasized in the area of teachings concerning salvation. We must assume that in reference to this subject Satan will do his most excellent work. For this reason, we must be very cautious when studying what God would require of all men in order to be delivered from the bondage of sin. We must not doubt and rebel at the "foot of Mount Sinai" because of our present religious culture or past heritage. When studying matters that pertain to our salvation, it is a time to allow the Bible to "mean what it says, and say what it means." No interpretation is needed.

1. *A foundational principle:* When discussing salvation, we are discussing a relationship between mortal man and the One in whose presence we must dwell in order to enjoy the blessing of eternal existence (2 Th 1:9). This relationship depends on the responsible actions of ourselves, and the commands of God in whose presence we will maintain our eternality. It is at this point that some theologians become nervous. This nervousness is generated by how we understand certain words that are used in the Bible in reference to the salvation of the alien sinner. Some theologians almost cringe when words as "performance," "work," or "obedience" are used. They have no difficulty in applying these words to God in His "performance" or "work" to make available the opportunity of the cross after thousands of years of labor in order to preserve the seedline promise made to Adam and Eve. But when the same words are used in reference to man's responsibility to respond to the crucified Son, then there is almost a total abhorrence of any performance, work or obedience on the part of man to respond to God's Suffering Servant on the cross. It seems that we feel comfortable with allowing God to struggle to bring His Son to the cross, but somehow we excuse ourselves of all responsibility to respond obediently. We find this most amusing, especially in view of what the Scriptures say in reference to our responsibility to respond to the love offering of God at Calvary. In fact, it seems quite ridiculous to believe

that God had to do all the work and we need do nothing, except the work of a simple "sinner's prayer." Sometimes erroneous teachings can be revealed through the application of common sense.

2. ***A biblical principle:*** James spoke of a fundamental behavioral relationship of the Christian in reference to his continued salvation in Christ. It is a principle of faith and works that permeates the Scriptures. It involves our relationship with God from the very beginning of our realization of the crucified Savior and will continue to the time of our rest in death as a faithful servant (Rv 14:13). This principle was introduced by James with the Spirit-inspired words, *"What does it profit, my brethren,* ***if someone says he has faith but does not have works****? Can faith save him?"* (Js 2:14).

The first thing to notice concerning James' statement in James 2:14 is that it is a question. When the Holy Spirit asks a question as this, He knew that we would know the answer. And our answer would be, "Of course not." It is obvious that faith alone cannot typify the behavior of the Spirit-driven disciple of Christ. The Christian cannot be saved without works. The Spirit helps with our answer to James' question by teaching, *"****Even so faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead****"* (Js 2:17). And herein is revealed the foundational principle upon which our relationship with God must be established from the very beginning. This principle must be maintained from the very beginning of our relationship with God to the time when our body is made dead by the departure of our spirit (Js 2:26).

After elaborating on the inseparable union of faith and works in the life of the Christian, as illustrated by the faith of Abraham, James summarized, *"You see that faith was working with his works, and* ***by works was faith made perfect****"* (Js 2:22). This is a defining principle. **Acceptable faith before God is always made perfect by response**. James' conclusion is obvious. *"****You see*** *then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only"* (Js 1:24). We must be careful not to reverse the word order of this statement. It **does not** say, "You see then that a man is justified by **faith** and not by **works** only." The sentence begins with "you see." The meaning here is certainly more than "you understand." One cannot "understand" justification apart from an empirical demonstration of faith. **We can see the demonstration of works, but we cannot see faith**. Therefore, when we see the works, we can understand that one is justified by a working faith. Justification is manifested to all to see because everyone can see the demonstration of our works. They cannot see faith if it is not demonstrated. We must keep this fundamental truth in mind when we approach any teaching concerning faith in reference to the salvation of the alien sinner. In order to witness that the alien sinner has been justified, something must be seen. One can proclaim his own faith in Christ, but until his faith is manifested through action it is not an acceptable faith. It is a dead faith until it comes alive through obedience.

It is amazing that most of the religious world today cannot see (understand) this point. When faith is dis-

cussed in reference to the initial encounter of the alien sinner with God, obedience is totally repudiated by many religionists who believe that there is no demonstration of faith necessary on the part of man in reference to his salvation. But James reminds us that we cannot violate or ignore the connectivity of faith and works/obedience in any context of our relationship with God, starting from the very moment that we believe that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God. He concludes, *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so also **faith without works is dead**"* (Js 2:26). This same principle begins when one first encounters Jesus. It continues to the time when one eventually experiences the separation of body and spirit. If "faith-without-works-is-dead" is a truth in reference to the Christian life, then the same principle holds true in reference to the beginning of the Christian life. A faith that is not demonstrated by the alien sinner is dead until it is demonstrated by obedience.

The principle that permeates the Scriptures in reference to man's relationship with God is always faith and action. Whether we use the words "performance," "works," "obedience," or any action word, the fact is that acceptable faith before God must always involve some outward response on the part of man. Our personal inward feelings and commitment must always be demonstrated before man and God.

Now the novice student of the Bible often becomes confused here when he reads passages as Galatians 2:16. *"... knowing that a man is **not justified by works** of law, but by the faith of Christ Jesus ... **for by works of law no flesh will be justified**."* Those who do not rightly divide the word of God, trip over this statement by applying it to the faith of the alien sinner. The "works" in Galatians 2:16 are in a completely different context than the faith/obedience required of the alien sinner for his salvation. **Paul is discussing the life of the Christian, not the initial response of the alien sinner to the gospel**. He is discussing legal meritorious obedience to law that a Christian might seek to perform in order to earn his justification before God. Paul's argument is that it is impossible for the Christian to keep law perfectly in order to be saved, for all have sinned (Rm 3:9,10,23). For this reason, the Christian can never be justified by works of law simply because no one can keep law perfectly.

Here is a point not to be misunderstood. There is a vast difference between **meritorious works of law on the part of the believer** and **obedience to law on the part of the unbeliever**. If one confuses the two, then he will fail to understand the alien sinner's responsibility to be obedient to that which God requires of one to be saved. Meritorious works of law are the efforts of the Christian who would supposedly justify himself before God. But obedience to law refers to God's requirements on the part of the alien sinner in order to come into a saving covenant relationship with God.

The alien sinner cannot be justified before God without obedience to God's law. But the Christian does not maintain his justification before God by meritorious works of law. Therefore, we must be careful not to twist the Scriptures to the destruction of the alien sinner by misapplying the Scriptures. Doing such would be doing what some did about

whom Peter wrote. These are those who twist scriptures that apply to the Christian. They are those who are untaught and unstable, and thus the word of God they *"distort to their own destruction, as they do also the other Scriptures"* (2 Pt 3:16).

3. *"Only" strips faith.* We must keep in mind that when one uses the word "only" with faith, then he has reduced faith to a simple inactive mental assent of the mind. He has said that no response on the part of the individual is necessary to the word of God. "Only" reduces faith to only a mental awareness of God and Christ. Whether used in reference to the alien sinner or the Christian, "only" means that one's life can remain totally inert as long as one mentally believes in the right things. We are certain that no one really wants to maintain this belief, for it would infer that we could live wickedly as long as we mentally believe in Jesus. It would infer that the alien sinner could continue in a behavioral pattern of sin as long as he mentally confesses that Jesus is the Son of God.

B. What some are saying.

In the present religious environment there is probably no teaching that permeates all "Christian" groups more than the belief that "salvation is by faith only." More Scriptures are distorted and twisted concerning this teaching than most teachings of the Bible. "Faith only salvation" is a teaching of such commonality among religious groups that it many times unites the religious world. And herein is the danger. If any teaching in reference to the salvation of the alien sinner is accepted by almost all religious groups, **then this is what we would expect from Satan who seeks to deceive the masses**. We certainly would not assume that Satan would work to unite the religious world around a common doctrine in reference to the salvation of man. If a religious world commonly accepts a doctrine that refers to the salvation of the alien sinner, then obviously we should step back for a moment and take a closer look at the doctrine. We should do this simply because Satan does not work to unite Christendom over a doctrine by which lost men are saved. It is his work to lead men away from doing that which is necessary to be saved, not to unite the religious world around a doctrine in reference to the salvation of all men. For this reason, commonly accepted teachings in reference to the salvation of the alien sinner should always be suspect until there is a "book, chapter and verse" in the word of God to prove such to be correct.

"Faith only salvation" is a belief that is so embedded within the ranks of religious theology that disagreement with such brings on one harsh condemnation of being a legalist. But we must keep in mind the foundational principle with which we began this discussion. **What the majority believes, or what the religious culture dictates, must never become the foundation upon which the biblical interpreter establishes his understanding of the Scriptures, or his religious beliefs and behavior**.

The intensity by which the "faith only salvation" doctrine is accepted is revealed by the "authorities" of almost all

religious groups that would seek to fall under the umbrella of Christendom. In the Episcopal "Articles of Religion" in the *Book of Common Prayer,"* it is stated that man is "accounted righteous before God, **only** for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ **by faith**." In Hiscox's *A New Directory of the Baptist Church*, Hiscox wrote that justification and pardon from sins is "**solely through faith**" (pp. 551,552; see also *Standard Manual for Baptist Churches*, p 62). Some have stated that "**no effort however commendable** ... can in any way justify the sinner" (*Seventh-Day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, 1957). In the Methodist's *Articles of Religion* it is stated that "**justification by faith only** is a most wholesome doctrine" (Art. IX; see also the Presbyterian Westminster Confession, Ch. XI,11; the Lutheran "Augsburg Confession," Art. IV). In order to establish a salvational relationship with God, it is thus commonly believed among most religious groups that salvation is "**solely through faith** in the Redeemer's blood" (See J. M. Pendleton, *Baptist Church Manual*, 1966).

Chapter 14
FALSE STARTS AND ERRONEOUS CONCLUSIONS

In discussions concerning faith and salvation, it is always good to review the existing inconsistences of thinking concerning these subjects, as well as the apostasy that led to what we experience in Christendom today. Christendom today is burdened with some distortions of the Scriptures concerning faith and salvation that confuse people. Because we are in the midst of so much confusion in this critical area of theology, we are forced to be critical in reference to existing beliefs that we feel are sustained by a twisting of several key scriptures. We must also point out some inconsistencies in the "faith only" theology that are often overlooked by those who sustain the belief that the alien sinner need do absolutely nothing in reference to his salvation. He can simply sit in a chair and mentally perceive that he is saved without any expression or obedience of faith whatsoever.

A. Imbedded "works":

In order to promote the "faith only" teaching, various "formula statements" and salvational terminologies have been invented by all sorts of religionists. For example, the "sinner's prayer" has been promoted by some in order for the alien sinner to announce Jesus as a "personal Savior," or to make a verbal declaration of one's own salvation. But the concept of a "sinner's prayer" and the terminology "personal Savior," are found nowhere in the entire Bible. These theological linguistic terminologies often reflect the "faith only" doctrine that has so captivated the religious world. But when a term or phrase that is not in the Bible is used to reflect a particular belief, then we caution ourselves. It is not that the using of such terminologies is unblblical. The problem is that they can often reflect unbiblical concepts. Our task as Bible students is to always "search the Scriptures" in order to determine if these terminologies reflect correct biblical truths (See At 17:11).

The irony of the "faith only" theology is that there is a contradiction within

the theology itself in reference to works of faith. Adherents to the theology affirm that some confession of faith must be made by the alien sinner, whether it is a "sinner's prayer," a statement to "receive Jesus" as one's personal Savior, or simply an expression or declaration from the individual who seeks to be saved that he believes in Jesus. **But are not such expressions or confessions works within themselves**? For example, if one must proclaim some form of a "sinner's prayer," then is not this prayer a work of faith? The same people who demand some outward work or confession of faith by the alien sinner in reference to the alien sinner's salvation, even a tearful eye or outward cry, vehemently state that baptism should not be a condition for salvation since such is supposedly a "work." Sometimes, when we do not sit down and seriously consider our thinking, we will carry on with such theological inconsistencies.

B. A reflection on history:

A reflection on church history might answer some of the problems in reference to the development of the "faith only" theology. Instead of baptism being the reflection of the faith of the alien sinner, and subsequently necessary in order to wash away sins, after the first century there was a gradual separation made between baptism and salvation. As men began to emphasize special instructions before baptism in order to guarantee that one was a true disciple of Jesus, the connection between baptism and salvation began to fade. By the third century, this trend became so extreme that some groups required almost three years of instruction before they would baptize anyone. The result of the separation of salvation and baptism was that baptism became a ritualized sacrament. It became a sacrament of "the church" that was surrounded with special statements, the anointing of oil, and an assortment of other ritualistic ceremonies. The fact that baptism had anything to do with salvation was totally lost.

Baptism eventually became a sacrament that was totally disconnected from salvation. It thus became a legal ordinance of "the church." It was believed that as a legal ordinance, baptism had nothing to do with the forgiveness of sins. By the fourth century, the apostasy had progressed to the point that if one sinned after baptism, these sins were not forgiven. Because of this belief, many delayed their baptism until late in life, lest one sin after his baptism and be condemned for unforgiven sins. "Deathbed" baptism became common.

Throughout the centuries, corrupted theologies surrounding baptism lingered in religion. In the middle ages when there was a protest against the concept of baptism that was practiced by the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformation Movement leaders had to do something with the teaching since baptism was mentioned so many times in the New Testament. As a result of the Reformation of the middle ages, different groups came up with different doctrines surrounding the subject of baptism. Since baptism had already been separated from salvation, the evolution of where to place baptism in the life of the one who sought to come to Christ varied from one protestant reformer to another. Some said that one is saved by

faith alone, but is baptized into the church. Therefore, one is saved outside his membership of the church.

Those who followed after the teaching of individual predestination taught that one's confession of faith was a signal that he was individually predestined. Baptism was thus only an outward manifestation of God's predestination of the individual. The profession of one's faith was simply an announcement to others that he was one of the individually predestined. But if one is already saved by being individually predestined, then why would there be any need that one make some confession of faith? It would seem to be quite ridiculous to demand the obedient condition of a confession of faith when one is already individually predestined to eternal life.

In the digression from the original purpose of baptism in reference to the washing away of sins, religionists have come up with another theology that would supposedly place one in a saving relationship with God without being baptized. This was the theology of the truly "faith only" teaching that was developed by early Reformation leaders as Luther, Wesley and a host of others. Salvation was believed to be based **solely** on one's work of declaring his own salvation. This theology has followed the Pentecost church movement that started in the latter part of the 1800s. Today it is particularly prevalent in the independent church movement that had its beginning roots in the last of the 1900s.

In modern times, the "sinner's prayer" was first introduced by D. L. Moody. In training the evangelists that he sent out, Moody taught his trainees a "model prayer" that could be easily repeated by respondents at crusades in order that they declare their own salvation. The concept of the "sinner's prayer" gained popularity in the 1950s when Billy Graham, and organizations as the Campus Crusades, incorporated its use in their evangelistic outreaches. The "sinner's prayer" became a common work of declaring one's salvation that was convenient, especially when used in radio and television evangelistic broadcasting. Listeners were often asked to simply place their hands on a radio or television, and then repeat a formulated prayer after the radio/television speaker. The listener was then proclaimed saved.

C. Obedience to the King:

The terminology "personal Savior" was introduced and popularized by Charles Fuller when he used the phrase repeatedly in his radio sermons between 1937 and 1968. Use of the "sinner's prayer" was meant to bring Jesus into one's life as a "personal Savior." But when one considers the concept of the "personal Savior" in Jesus, such thinking can sometimes be dethroning of who Jesus really is. Paul wrote, *"Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, **yet now we know Him thus no more**"* (2 Co 5:16). The epistles move our understanding of Jesus beyond our knowledge of Him through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We now know Jesus after His ascension to the right hand of God to reign as King of kings. The thought of having Jesus as our "personal friend" must include our recognition of Jesus as *"the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords"* (1 Tm 6:15). *"We have such a high priest who is*

seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hb 8:1). The apostles knew Jesus as a personal friend on earth, but after the ascension they knew Him as the reigning God over all things before whom all humanity will stand in judgment (At 17:30,31; 2 Co 5:10).

Jesus is our Mighty God and Everlasting Father who is now reigning over all things (See Is 9:6). **He is our King, Priest, Potentate, Mighty God and Everlasting Father of all**. He is now such *"that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ..."* (Ph 2:10). We cannot claim Him for ourselves alone. Can He be our "personal" Lord? Can He be our "personal" King? Our relationship with Him is a relationship with His kingship, headship and control over all things (Ep 1:21,22). If we would claim Him as our "personal Savior," we must be careful in our thinking that we do not minimize His work as our King, Lord and High Priest.

We have a personal relationship with Jesus only as a part of His corporate body, the church. Because the church is the bride of Christ, all those who are "baptized into His body" have a joint covenant relationship with Jesus (1 Co 12:13). One can never have a relationship with Jesus unless he is a member of the body of Jesus. We may struggle with one another's use of the word "personal," but one thing is true in developing a biblical definition of the word. We must as Paul first turn away from recognizing Jesus "according to the flesh," and start recognizing Him as the blessed and only Potentate, the Lord of lords and King of kings. If one continues to use the word "personal" after throwing himself before the Lord of lords and King of kings, then we would assume that the word "personal" is appropriate. But we must keep in mind that our personal friend Jesus *"will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,* ***taking vengeance on those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel*** *....* ***These will be punished with everlasting destruction*** *away from the presence of the Lord ..."* (2 Th 1:7-9). We can claim Jesus as our friend, but He is a friend who will eventually banish from the presence of God those who do not obey Him.

Individual members of the body are friends who have all things in common. **But kings as friends demand obedience**. The problem with some is that they want a friend who makes no demands. Add to this the fact that people often rebel against a King who has laid down the law, and subsequently, demands obedience in order to be saved from the wrath to come. If we would be a friend of Jesus, then we should start searching to see what this friend demands of us in order to reap the salvation that He provides. In this search, we must always keep in mind that our "personal" Savior said to all, *"He who rejects Me and does not receive My words, has one who judges him. The word that I have spoken, the same will judge him in the last day"* (Jn 12:48). Jesus is our friend who laid down His life for us. But He said, *"You are My friends,* ***if you do whatever I command you****"* (Jn 15:14). He is a sacrificial friend. He is now our reigning God before whom we throw ourselves down prostrate before His throne (Ph 2:8-11). Abraham was called the friend of God because he did what God commanded

(Js 2:23). His faith moved Him to obey his Friend. If we would have Jesus as our friend, then we must do what He commands His friends to do.

Chapter 15
THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

In our zeal to encourage obedience to the will of God, we must not assume that our salvation is a matter of "obedience only." The Bible teaches that the foundation upon which we base all obedience is faith. This makes faith absolutely necessary for one's salvation, though Bible faith assumes obedience.

Faith does not make law obsolete, either for the alien sinner or the child of God. On the contrary, it is faith that motivates obedience to law. This is the meaning of what Paul wrote. *"Do we then make void law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary,* ***we establish law****"* (Rm 3:31). Therefore, the law of God is not established in one's life without faith. But at the same time, faith is not evident in one's life without obedience to law. We are saved by faith, therefore, as long as the faith of the sinner moves him to obey the law of God in reference to what is required for his salvation.

When discussing the matter of "Bible faith," we must understand that there is an inseparable link between faith and obedience that permeates the Holy Scriptures. When the word "faith" is used in any context wherein one is acceptable to God, we must always assume that obedience is in the action of the word "faith." **There is no acceptable faith that is void of obedience, for through faith obedience to the will of God is established in our lives**. When we read those passages that emphasize faith, we must always understand that there is a response on the part of the one who has faith. Faith alone as a simple mental recognition of Jesus as the Son of God never stands alone as "faith only" when used in any salvational context of the Scriptures. This is true both in the faith of the disciple of Jesus, as well as the faith of the alien sinner.

A. Faith is necessary to please God.

Is faith necessary in order to be a child of God? The Hebrew writer answered this question two thousand years ago. *"****But without faith it is impossible to please Him****, for he who comes to God must believe that He is ..."* (Hb 11:6). Jesus added that *"he who believes has everlasting life"* (Jn 6:47), but *"he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mk 16:16). So the conclusion would be, *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life. And he who does not believe the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him"* (Jn 3:36). The believer *"will not come into condemnation, but has passed from death into life"* (Jn 5:24). Once one has come into the life that Jesus offers, He will walk by faith (2 Co 5:7; see Jn 3:14-16; 20:30,31; At 15:9; Rm 1:16,17; 3:28; Gl 3:23,24, Ep 3:8).

The preceding thought is brought out clearly in what Jesus said in Mark 16:16. *"He who* ***believes*** *and is* ***baptized*** *will be* ***saved****. But he who* ***does not believe*** *will be* ***condemned****."* At least two conditions are here given for salvation: belief and baptism. These two conditions are inseparably connected in reference to the salvation of the alien sin-

ner. In the last phrase of what Jesus said, this point is emphasized. *"But he who does not believe will be condemned."* There is no need to discuss the response of baptism without belief. Since belief is manifested through baptism, then condemnation is manifested through a lack of belief that leads one to be baptized for remission of sins (See At 2:38; 22:16). There is no need to discuss baptism when one does not have the faith that would move him to be obedient to the law of baptism. Baptism is not established in one's life if he does not believe. The result of the "faith alone" theology is that people continue in a state of condemnation because their "faith" does not move them to do that which God says one must do in order to wash away one's sins.

Look at it from the view of how Paul states that true faith establishes God's law in our lives (Rm 3:31). We can take the liberty of inserting the word "baptism" in the text of Romans 3:31 in order to understand what Jesus said in Mark 16:16. In reference to any law of God, Paul meant, *"Do we make void* **baptism** *through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish* **baptism***."* Paul's statement of Romans 3:31 was directed to Christians, but the same principle would apply to the alien sinner who would come to the law of God. Faith establishes the law of God in one's life. It does not lead one to ignore what God would have one do in order to be saved according to the law of God.

When one goes on a journey through the Scriptures, there is no question that faith is demanded in order to be pleasing to God, for it is through faith that God's will is established in our lives. We can better understand Paul and Silas' statement to the Philippian jailor if we keep faith in the context of what is necessary to validate it as a faith that is pleasing to God. The jailor asked, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* (At 16:30). Paul and Silas responded, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your household will be saved"* (At 16:31). In reference to the salvation of his entire household, the jailor was instructed to lead in his belief in the Lord Jesus. Paul and Silas knew that his belief would move him and his household to do all that was required to comply with the law of God. As a result of his belief, the jailor would be moved to do all that was necessary to lead his family to be saved. As all those who walk by faith, the jailor had to act on his belief on the Lord Jesus Christ. He had to act in order to be delivered from a state of condemnation.

This thought was emphasized by what John wrote in John 1:12,13. *"But as many as* ***received Him****, to them He gave* ***the right*** *to become the children of God, even to those who* ***believe*** *in His name"* (vs 12). Those who received Jesus, believed in Him. **But this only gave them the right to become the children of God**. Believing and receiving did not make one a child of God. It only gives one the right to become a child. Keep in mind that John was writing the book of John as **an historical document** concerning the ministry of Jesus and the reception of Jesus by those **who after His ascension were born of the water and the Spirit** (Jn 3:3-5). Those who believed and received Him *"were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but* ***of God****"* (Jn 1:13). When one be-

lieves, receives Jesus, and is born of the water and Spirit, then this salvational work is not of man, but of God, for it is God who determines what one must do in order to become one of His children. Being born of the water and Spirit is from God, not man. And thus, when one is born again, His birth is not the invention of man, but the result of a revelation from God that one must be born again.

B. Faith moves us into action.

The principle that James set forth in James 2:14-26 is critical in understanding the definition of the faith that is necessary to please God. It is a faith that responds in obedience to the will of God. The principle applies to both the alien sinner and the Christian. In his letter to the Roman disciples, Paul referred to an "obedience of faith" (See Rm 1:5; 16:26). This is the faith that is *"working through love"* (Gl 5:6). It is the faith that moves one to *"obedience from the heart"* to do the will of God (Rm 6:17,18). And thus, it is the faith that is *"made perfect by works"* (Js 2:22). Our response to the will of God becomes a *"work of faith"* (2 Th 1:3; see 2 Th 1:11). In this way, the law of God is established in our lives (Rm 3:31).

Before the Israelites attacked the city of Jericho, God promised that He had already given them the city (Ja 6:2,3). Before they made one step in obedience to take the city, it had been given into their hands. God made the promise, but they had to act on the promise. Hebrews 11:30 says of the occasion, ***"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days."*** Though the Israelites knew that the city had been given into their hands before they started their obedient march around the city, they still had to make the march. If they had disobeyed God by not marching around the city, then the city would not have been given into their hands. Their faith in the promise of God, moved them to march.

We have the promise of salvation in Christ. However, we must "march through the waters of baptism" in order to receive the promise. If we do not "march," then our belief in the promise of God is unproductive in reference to our desire to receive the promise.

We are now beginning to understand the nature of the "saving faith" about which we read so much in the Bible. **We can be told the result of our faith before our obedience, but without our obedience, the promised result can never be realized**. This was exactly what Paul and Silas were saying to the Philippian jailor. The result of the jailor's faith would be his salvation. However, between his faith and his salvation there had to be obedience to something that would bring about the desired end. Israel was promised their conquest of Jericho, but that promise could be realized only through obedient faith. It was by their faith, therefore, that they responded to march around the city according to the will of God.

That faith which is pleasing to God is inseparably connected to obedience. It is defined by obedience. Salvational faith is never separated from a response on the part of man to obey the will of God. The principle of obedient faith is defined by James. *"But someone may say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and* ***I will show you my faith by my***

Romans 1:5:	***"OBEDIENCE ...***	***of faith"***
Galatians 5:6:	***"WORKING ...***	***through love"***
Romans 6:17:	***"OBEDIENCE ...***	***from the heart"***
James 2:22:	***"BY WORKS ...***	***faith made perfect"***
1 Thessalonians 1:3:	***"WORK ...***	***of faith"***

works*"* (Js 2:18). God wants to see our faith. The only way He can see our faith is by our works. This definition of faith is maintained throughout the Bible. It is a principle of faith that is so defined that any who would question it are not seeing the whole picture of biblically-defined faith. It is for this reason that we seriously consider this definition of faith that is clearly illustrated in some key scriptures.

1. *Hebrews 3:18,19:* In reference to the disobedient Israelites who came out of Egyptian captivity, the Hebrew writer wrote of them, *"And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, but to those who were* ***disobedient****?"* (Hb 3:18). This verse states that some Israelites were not able to enter into the rest of the promised land because of their "disobedience." The Hebrew writer repeated the same thought in Hebrews 4:6, but in different words. In Hebrews 3:18 he stated that the disobedient Israelites could not enter *"because of* ***disobedience****."* But in verse 19 of Hebrews 3 it states, *"So we see that they could not enter in because of* ***unbelief****."* There can be only one defining conclusion to the parallel use of the words "disobedience" and "unbelief." The Israelites' unbelief was manifested in their disobedience. They had received the promise of the land. However, because of their lack of faith in God they did not obey. When we seek to define belief in the Bible that is pleasing to God, we must understand that belief and obedience have parallel meanings, as disobedience and unbelief.

2. *Hebrew 11:* Hebrews 11 is the dictionary of Bible faith. Reading through this chapter is thrilling in the sense that great men and women of God acted on their faith in order to *"please Him"* (Hb 11:6). In their lives they gave testimony to the fact that *"faith is the substance of things hoped for,* ***the evidence of things not seen****"* (Hb 11:1). It is evidence of things not seen because we can see the obedient behavior of those who believed in the things that cannot be seen. In using Hebrews 11 as our dictionary to define that faith which is pleasing to God, notice below the obedience of God's people that resulted from their faith:

"By faith Abel ***offered*** *. . .* (vs 4).
"By faith Enoch . . . ***had this testimony, that he pleased God****"* (vs 5).
"By faith Noah . . . ***prepared*** *an ark. . ."* (vs 7).
"By faith Abraham . . . ***obeyed*** *. . ."* (vs 8).
"Through faith even Sarah . . . ***bore*** *a child . . ."* (vs 11).
"By faith Abraham . . . ***offered*** *up Isaac"* (vs 17).
"By faith Moses . . . ***refused*** *to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*" (vs 24).

These great people of God acted on their faith in the promises of God. We can see their faith through their obedience. They all, as Sarah, acted on their faith because they *"judged Him faithful who had promised"* (Hb 11:11). **When God makes promises, He expects those who have faith in Him to obey that which is necessary in order to receive the promises**. This definition of faith must be understood throughout the Bible when discussing faith that is pleasing to God.

There is no such thing as an inactive faith that is pleasing to God. James called inactive faith a dead faith (Js 2:26). One may have faith that God exists, but this does not mean that such a faith is pleasing to God. James commended some for at least their faith in God, *"You believe that there is one God. You do well"* (Js 2:19). But James wanted to remind these unresponsive readers, *"The demons also believe and tremble"* (Js 2:19). At least the demons respond by trembling. Any lack of response of one's faith is a mockery of the word of God. Those with an unresponsive faith must answer the question that James asked, *"But are you willing to know, O foolish man, **that faith without works is dead**?"* (Js 2:20). Those who would arrogantly declare their own salvation without responding to the will of God to fulfill all righteousness must answer this question. Would one be so presumptuous as to declare his or her own salvation without responding in obedience to the gospel of Jesus through baptism? We must not forget the principle that both the Hebrew writer and James have established, that unresponsive faith is dead, and thus, not pleasing to God.

3. *John 6:47:* John 6:47 furthers our definition of responsive faith that is acceptable to God. Jesus said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has everlasting life."* Paul made a similar statement to the Philippian jailor. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your household will be saved"* (At 16:31). It is here where one of the most common failures of correct Bible interpretation occurs. In reference to our discussion of the inseparable connection between baptism and salvation, this error of interpretation has led to a misunderstanding of more key scriptures on faith than any other misapplication of biblical interpretation. The misinterpretation here is over a very common grammatical structure of communication that we use every day.

What both Jesus and Paul used in the grammatical structure of John 6:47 and Acts 16:31 was a **synecdoche**. **A part was used for the whole**. In their statements they used the word "believe" as the part that stood for the whole of what was necessary to receive eternal life. When Jesus said that one must believe in order to have eternal life, he was including in the word "believe" **all that God required of the alien sinner in order to have eternal life**. However, He said nothing about repentance in His statement. But in Luke 13:3 He said, *"But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."* Even in this statement He used the word "repent" as a synecdoche. He did not mention belief, as He did in John 6:47. Does repentance exclude belief, or does belief exclude repentance?

Some Bible interpreters have difficulty here because they fail to see the whole context of Scripture concerning what God would have one do in response to the gospel. Use of a word as a synecdoche means that the word "believe" in reference to eternal life includes repentance. Likewise, the word "repent" includes belief. The part, "believe" or "repent," is used for the whole, or everything that is necessary to bring about the desired end, that is, our salvation and eternal life.

When Peter stood up before the Jews in Acts 3 he said, *"Repent and be converted so that your sins may be blotted out ..."* (At 3:19). But in this statement he never said anything about belief ... or baptism. One might respond by arguing that we would assume that in the word "repent" he meant that they should believe on Jesus. Right! Now we get the point. When a grammatical synecdoche is used, **one must always assume that all that is required to obtain the final stated objective is included in the use of only one word in a particular text**. In every text where either eternal life, remission of sins, or salvation is mentioned, the New Testament writer did not have to mention every required act of obedience that was necessary to obtain the desired result of that which was promised by God. One word is sufficient when we understand that we must discover in the Bible all that God requires of us to be saved.

Understanding the principle of the synecdoche is vital to our understanding of what God requires of us as a result of our faith. If our faith does not move us to do all that is necessary to be saved, then either one of two things is true. Either we have an "ignorant" faith, that is, our lack of knowledge of all that God would require of us to obey Him leads us to be disobedient. Or second, we do have a knowledge of all that God requires of us to obey Him, but because of our rebellious spirit we seek to trust alone in our inactive faith. In either case we must remind ourselves of what James reminded his readers, *"The demons also believe and tremble."* Would we seek a faith that is greater than the faith of demons?

4. *John 3:36:* Jesus' statement in this verse summarizes the focus of this chapter. *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life. And he who does not believe the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* Now connect this statement to a review of Hebrews 3:18,19. Those Israelites who were not allowed to enter into the land of promise were not allowed to enter because they were **disobedient**. They were disobedient because of their **unbelief**. When Jesus said that the one who believes has everlasting life, He meant that the one who is obedient has everlasting life. If one does not truly believe, then he will not obey. **It would be correct to state that Bible belief is obedience, and obedience is the expression of acceptable faith**. This is exactly what Jesus said in John 6:29. *"This is the **work** of God, that you **believe** in Him whom He has sent."* This is the connection that Paul made in Romans 10:16 in his quotation of Isaiah 53:1. *"However, they have not all **obeyed** the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has **believed** our report?'"*

Millions today claim to believe in

Jesus, but they have not obeyed the gospel. This is a most frightening thought. There are countless preachers standing up throughout the land proclaiming to those who are ignorant of the Bible that they should only believe in Jesus and they will be saved. But they leave out everything that God would require of one to wash away sins (See At 2:38; 22:16). We live in a world where a "demon's faith" is preached that only brings on the trembling of a "sinner's prayer," but nothing else. Eloquent and powerful preachers move people to tremble in sin, but they say nothing of what God requires of the alien sinner to take care of his problem of sin. Proclaimers are preaching the promises of God, but they are failing to tell the people how to march to victory over sin. Such misleading prognosticators are merchants of theological mischief. They take people to the cross of repentance and leave them there without assisting them to fulfill all righteousness for the remission of their sins. They ignore the cleansing waters of being buried with Jesus in order to be raised to walk in newness of life (See Rm 6:3-6). These are not the *"feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things"* (Rm 10:15). They are those who leave the city of Satan unconquered because they fail to tell the people to march. They preach a part of what is required to receive eternal life and leave out the whole. They have preached a percentage of the righteousness of God, and thus failed to preach all His righteousness.

Chapter 16
A THEOLOGY OF ELIMINATION

Any theology that is developed by emphasizing one requirement for salvation to the exclusion or minimization of other requirements becomes a theology of elimination. Those who would promote the teaching that baptism is the sole requirement for salvation have often minimized other requirements as faith and repentance. Those who would emphasize a repentant experience at a moment of emotional outpouring over a command to "repent and be baptized" have also marginalized, if not rejected what is necessary to wash away one's sins. We have also found that those who overemphasize baptism fail to emphasize that one's faith should first move one to be a disciple, and then, as Jesus said, disciples must obey the gospel in baptism (Mt 28:19,20). If there is no commitment to discipleship, then baptism often becomes a simple legal action of works. If one assumes his salvation only by faith, then baptism again becomes a legal ceremony. Sometimes the action of baptism is emphasized so much that its purpose in obedience to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus has long been forgotten. When discovering what God would have the alien sinner do in order to be saved, we must never emphasize a part of what is required by God to the exclusion of all other essential requirements for salvation. For this reason, the word "only" can never be used in reference to any part that is required for salvation. In reference to salvation, we either take all of the requirements, or we take our chances with only one part.

The religious world does not lack in the number of voices who proclaim a "faith only" condition for the salvation of

the alien sinner. However, the common acceptance of a salvational teaching among most religionists makes us suspicious. It makes us suspicious because it is Satan's work to deceive as many people as possible in reference to the salvation of the alien sinner. He seeks to deceive as many people as possible not to do that which is necessary for salvation. He simply does not want the lost to obey the gospel. Therefore, he seeks to hold the alien sinner up short of being buried with Jesus in obedience to the gospel for the remission of sins (At 2:38). This is the work of Satan. And looking at his scheme from a purely logical point of view, he has performed a brilliant deed. His greatest deception is to encourage the multitudes to follow the multitudes.

For all the preceding reasons, therefore, everyone must take a fresh look at all that is necessary to bring one into a covenant relationship with God. We must come to the word of God with the attitude that whatever is stated in Scripture concerning what is necessary for our salvation we must believe and obey. No requirement for our salvation must be minimized or rejected. We would seek to do all that God asks of us in order that we become and remain His children. And in order to remain His children, we would not minimize or eliminate any command that must be obeyed in order to be pleasing to our Father.

A. Accepting the whole:

As soon as one says that salvation is by "faith only," he has eliminated any other necessity, or obedience connected with one's salvation. This poses a problem since in the New Testament many different conditions are mentioned in reference to the salvation of the alien sinner. As illustrated in the preceding statements, Jesus said, *"But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish"* (Lk 13:3; see At 3:19; 17:30; 2 Co 7:10; 2 Pt 3:9). But if salvation is by "faith only," then we have eliminated the necessity of repentance about which Jesus made a requirement for salvation. Paul wrote that *"with the mouth confession is made to salvation"* (Rm 10:10; compare Mt 10:32; At 8:37). But if salvation is by "faith only," then there is no need to confess that Jesus is the Son of God. Peter wrote, *"The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us ..."* (1 Pt 3:21; see Mk 16:16; At 22:16). But if salvation is by "faith only," then there is no need for immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (See Rm 6:3-6). Again, as soon as one uses the word "only" in connection to any requirement for the salvation of the alien sinner, he has eliminated every other requirement. He has made the Bible contradict itself in reference to what God would require of one in order to be saved. Because the word "only" is connected to faith in reference to one's salvation, many people are confused concerning what God would require for a saved relationship with Him.

Add to the preceding the concept of the faithful Christian life. John wrote, *"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 Jn 1:7). In reference to the life of the disciple, there is no such thing as "faith only." In his address to Christians, James made this perfectly clear when he wrote, *"... faith*

without works is dead" (Js 2:26). For this reason the early evangelists exhorted the first disciples *"to continue in the faith"* (At 14:22). Their exhortation was not to simply keep believing in Jesus, but to continue obediently to follow the word of Jesus. Jesus is the author of the salvation of all those who obey Him (Hb 5:9). Therefore, we must *"continue in His goodness"* by being obedient to His word (Rm 11:22; see Cl 1:23; Hb 1:11; 3:12,13; 13:1). The point is that if the beginning of our salvation is by "faith only," and we continue to claim a relationship with Jesus by "faith only," then we have eliminated faithful obedience to the word of God.

Faithful Bible students discover all that God would require of them to have a faithful Christian walk with Jesus. They do not stop at one passage of scripture, and then claim that all that is required for salvation is found in that one favorite passage. We must challenge ourselves with the following question:

WHICH DOCTRINE IS CORRECT?
Salvation by faith only (Jn 6:47).
Salvation by repentance only (Lk 13:3).
Salvation by confession only (Rm 10:10).
Salvation by baptism only (1 Pt 3:21).

The conclusion is that salvation is not by any one particular requirement, but by a collective response of the whole. In any particular scripture a part may be mentioned for the whole. (Remember the synecdoche?) Since all the above listed scriptures teach something that refers to the alien sinner's salvation, then **it is imperative to conclude that everything that is mentioned in reference to our salvation is necessary for one's salvation**. This is what is called "rightly dividing the word of God" in order to apply everything the Bible says in reference to one's relationship with God (2 Tm 2:15). We do not want to divide out of the context of the Scriptures any one Bible requirement for salvation that we may feel is the only thing that is necessary for salvation. We seek to accept all that God stated in the entirety of His word. Therefore, faith, repentance, confession and baptism are all necessary for the salvation of the alien sinner.

If any one of the preceding points constitutes salvation in and of itself, then one can be saved without the others. If one is saved by "repentance only," then he can be saved without faith, confession and baptism. If one is saved by "baptism only," then he can be saved without faith, repentance and confession. The one who would seek to follow the direction of God will study the entirety of the word of God in order to discover everything that God would require of one in order to be saved and live a faithful Christian life.

B. Response to all that God has given:

A very important point is made in 2 Corinthians 4:15. *"For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace that is reaching many people **may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God**."* This is an evangelistic passage that refers to the response of the alien sinner to the preaching of the gospel of grace.

It is the desire of the obedient to respond with thanksgiving to all that God requires for one's salvation by His grace. As the manifestation of the grace

of God on the cross, Jesus calls on all men to obey the good news of the cross in order to walk in newness of life. It is appreciation for God's gift of grace on the cross that causes obedient thanksgiving on the part of the alien sinner.

Now consider this thought in view of the impact that Hebrews 5:8,9 should have on us. The message of this statement is overwhelming. It should shock those who think that they can bring the grace of God into their lives with a cheap faith.

> *Though He was a Son,* ***He learned obedience*** *by the things that He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation* ***to all those who obey Him****.*

Think about this statement and reason from the Son of God to yourself. If we are somewhat arrogant with our faith, it would be difficult to understand the impact of this verse. Though Jesus was the Son of God, He "learned obedience." He learned obedience through the necessity to manifest His faith through suffering on the cross (Gl 2:16). He was thus made perfect through His obedience by going to the cross for us. Therefore, He was given the right to be the "author" of eternal salvation. But this eternal salvation is reserved for those who follow after His example of obedience. Now would we deceive ourselves into thinking that we can have eternal life without the obedience of which the Son of God is the author? We need to think about this for a moment. In order to be saved, would we entertain a belief that the alien sinner can get by with a cheap inactive faith in the One who paid such an incredible price of obedience on the cross? We need to keep in mind that we will all give account of our obedience before the Son who learned obedience through the suffering of the cross (2 Co 5:10).

Paul wrote, *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men"* (Ti 2:11). If the loving grace of God on the cross does not cause an obedient response in the life of the alien sinner, then one is ungrateful. And no one can be saved with an ungrateful faith. The fallacy that is embedded in the "faith only" doctrine is that it allows an individual to believe that he or she is saved **without any thankful response to the grace of God on the cross**. True thanksgiving means that God calls for more than water from tears. He calls for the tearful to be born of the Spirit and the water with the One who went to the cross for our sins. God requires more than believing in what one must do. God requires a faith response to the One who through faith took Himself to the cross. One does not believe himself into salvation, but believes unto obedience of the gospel that brings salvation. We must remember that the faith of the alien sinner only gives him the right to become a son of God (Jn 1:12). It is the gospel that saves, not our faith. Therefore, one must connect with the gospel that saves through faith. This connection is made by being immersed with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection (See Rm 6:3-6). A "saving faith" is thus defined by a faith that moves one to do that which one must do in order to be saved.

Chapter 17
THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Any theology that discourages an obedient respond to the grace of God that was manifested on the cross, must immediately be suspect. An obedient response to God is a matter of respect. It is a matter of respecting the word of God. Our respect for God is manifested in our obedience to what He tells us to do. And unless we do what He says, then there is no respect for God or His word. The fear of the Lord that is mentioned in the Bible is defined as an obedient respect to what God tells us to do.

A. The fear of the Lord:

The phrase "fear of the Lord" saturates the Old Testament. Some unfortunately misunderstand the meaning of this phrase by minimizing its meaning to an emotional "terror" of the Lord. The meaning of "terror" is certainly within the meaning of the phrase, but the context in which the phrase is used refers to the obedience of the people out of their respect for God and His commands. In the context of its use, this respect means that the people obeyed the Lord. 1 Samuel 11:7 states, *"And the fear of the Lord fell on the people,* ***and they came*** *...."* The Israelites obediently *"****struck all the cities*** *around Gerar, for the fear of the Lord came on them"* (2 Ch 14:14). *"Now let the fear of the Lord be upon you.* ***Take heed and do it*** *..."* (2 Ch 19:7). *"Thus* ***you will do*** *in the fear of the Lord, faithfully and wholeheartedly"* (2 Ch 19:9).

The fear of the Lord is respect and obedience for what the Lord instructs. If one does not respect the word of the Lord, then he will devise some other system of salvation than that which is given by the Lord. He will declare his own salvation in order to escape his responsibility to do all the will of the Lord. **If one would declare his own salvation with little or no regard for what the word of God teaches concerning salvation, then there is no fear of the Lord in him**. There is no fear of the Lord in him because he has so little respect for what the Lord says in His word concerning all that one should do for his own salvation. Those who are ignorant of the word of God, therefore, validate their salvation on the foundation of their own emotional experience rather than what God declares in His word. Those who do not fear the Lord have little regard for the word of the Lord, and thus, they will devise other systems of salvation than what is taught in the word of God. One manifests his fear of the Lord by studying and obeying the word of the Lord. **There is absolutely no other way to validate one's fear of the Lord**.

It is for the above reason that salvation can never be based solely on the emotional experiences of man. Experiential religion is validated by the emotions of the adherents. The experientialist contends that if he has emotionally experienced something, then it must be right. The validation of his faith thus stands on himself, not on a pronouncement from the word of God. But if his reasoning is correct, then there need be no reference to what the Bible says concerning the salvation of the alien sinner. The experientialist has deceived himself into believing that he can declare his own salvation apart from the fear of the Lord, which fear refers to

one's emotional response to what the Bible says one must do in order to be saved. This is the danger of the charismatic preacher who can bring people to tears and fear, declare the salvation of the people, and then go on his way without ever reading a passage from the word of God as to when God says one is saved. He thinks he has brought people to the "fear of the Lord." But no one can bring one to the fear of the Lord without proclaiming what the Lord says in His word.

B. The fear of the Lord is manifested in obedience.

As Bible believers, there should be no need for a discussion over any system of salvation that requires **no** obedience to the commandments of God. If someone devises a doctrine concerning salvation that is void of obedience to the commandments of God, then we can be assured that such a doctrine is a doctrine of demons. But this is exactly what the doctrine of "self-declared salvation" by faith only is all about. This teaching has removed obedience by the direction of the word of God. It is an experiential doctrine that has led its adherents to scoff at any obedient response to the word of God for salvation on the part of the alien sinner. It has thus removed the fear of the Lord from the hearts of men.

Nevertheless, the fact is that **one must obey God in order to be saved**. If this statement is erroneous, then there need be no respect for anything the Bible says one must do in order to be saved. The alien sinner can experientially declare his own salvation, and then go on his way without being washed of sins. He can ignore God's declaration that one must obey the gospel by being baptized into Christ (Gl 3:26,27). But we would reject such a theology. We reject such because of our respect for the word of God, which word requires that the alien sinner must do something to manifest his fear of the Lord.

The following words of Jesus are strikingly appropriate in this discussion: *"Not every one who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of heaven,* ***but he who does the will of My Father*** *who is in heaven"* (Mt 7:21). The inconsistency of some is revealed by their quotation of this statement of Jesus. They will proclaim faith only in Jesus in order to be saved, and yet, they will quote this passage that says one must **obey** the "will of My Father" in order to be saved. If salvation is experiential by faith only, then one does not have to obey the will of the Father in reference to anything He might require to wash away the sins of the sinner.

Jesus said in another context, *"And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and* ***do not do the things that I say****?"* (Lk 6:46). Would one dare come to Jesus and say, "I believe on You and accept You as my personal Savior, **but I will not do the things You say**." This is what many are telling alien sinners who are trying to come to Jesus in order to be saved from their sins.

In the first century, those who feared the Lord, obeyed the word of God in reference to their salvation. Peter spoke of disciples who had purified their souls *"in* ***obeying*** *the truth"* (1 Pt 1:22). These are those of whom Jesus is the author of their salvation. Jesus *"became the author of eternal salvation* ***to all those***

who obey Him" (Hb 5:9). If one has not obeyed Jesus, then Jesus is not his "author." If one has obeyed the good news of His death, burial and resurrection, then this person seeks Jesus as his guide throughout his life (See 2 Th 1:7,8). In view of all the statements made in Scripture concerning what one must do in obedience to the will of God, any teaching that would negate or neglect obedience in reference to receiving Jesus as one's Savior must be questioned.

C. Works of obedience versus works of merit.

Many confuse obedience to the **commands of God** and **meritorious law keeping** in order to merit salvation. Several passages are used out of context that reveal that some do not understand the difference between these two concepts. For example, Paul wrote, *"For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast"* (Ep 2:8,9). Some have used the concept of this passage to refute the teaching that the alien sinner must be obedient to the will of God in order to be saved. Those who promote such a teaching forget the context in which Paul made this statement. **This statement was made to Christians**, not to alien sinners.

In the context of Ephesians 2 Paul was explaining that Christians are not saved by meritorious works of law, nor by good works by which one might supposedly atone for his sins. Since the Christian cannot keep law perfectly in order to save himself, then he cannot be saved by perfect law keeping or meritorious good works to atone for sins (See Rm 3:9,10,23). Therefore, the Christian is not saved by works lest he have an occasion to boast, not only before other Christians, but also before God. Paul added that if we are saved by grace, *"then it is no more by works, otherwise grace is no more grace"* (Rm 11:6).

There is an inconsistent theology taught here by some of those who teach that there is no obedience to law in reference to the salvation of the alien sinner. Some will use passages as Ephesians 2:8,9 and Galatians 2:16 in order to teach that the sinner is "saved by faith alone," and not by any works of law. But at the same time, they will teach that the Christian is saved by his good works that supposedly atone for one's sins. They eagerly argue that there is no meritorious work in reference to the salvation of the lost, but at the same time believe that the Christian's sins find atonement in good works. Interesting inconsistency, isn't it?

As in the context of Ephesians 2:8,9, Galatians 2:16 is also a statement by Paul that is made in reference to the Christian walk, not the salvation of the alien sinner. To Christians, Paul wrote *"**that a man is not justified by works of law**, but by the faith of Christ Jesus ... **for by works of law no flesh will be justified**."* In this statement to the Galatians Paul stated the same principle that he revealed in Ephesians 2:8,9. No Christian can be saved by perfect keeping of law, nor can a Christian atone for his sins with meritorious works. But keep in mind that in the statements to the Ephesians and the Galatians Paul was addressing his thoughts on meritorious law-keeping and meritorious works to Christians, not to alien sinners who

are outside Christ. These are not scriptures that should be quoted before the alien sinner in reference to his salvation. If we do use these scriptures in reference to what God would require of alien sinners, then we will "shut out of the kingdom" those who would be baptized into Christ in order to become sons of God (See Gl 3:26-29).

We must keep in mind that Christians must work in response to the grace of God. Immediately following the statements in Ephesians concerning the impossibility of the Christian to work for his salvation, Paul makes the following statement in Ephesians 2:10: *"For we are His **workmanship**, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared before that we should walk in them."* Now did Paul contradict himself by what he said in verses 8 & 9 and verse 10? We think not. In the context of Ephesians 2 Paul is writing to Christians, to those who had already obeyed the gospel in order to be saved. Though one is not saved by meritorious works of law or good works, he is saved in Christ Jesus for the purpose of doing *"good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of the faith"* (Gl 6:10).

The commentary of the statements of Ephesians 2:10 is Philippians 2:12. *"Therefore, my **beloved**, **as you have always obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**."* These people to whom Paul was writing were Christians ("beloved"). As Christians they were always doing good works in obedience to the will of God. We must remember that they were already saved. As the saved, they were to work out the salvation they already had. This is the meaning of the Ephesians 2:10 passage. We are created in Christ Jesus **for** good works. We are not created in Christ Jesus **by** good works.

Christians do not meritoriously work in order to guarantee their salvation. However, they work out their salvation because they are thankful for their salvation that they have in Christ. In his instructions to the Corinthians, Paul used his own life as an example. *"But by the grace of God I am what I am. And **His grace toward me was not in vain**, but I **labored more abundantly** than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me"* (1 Co 15:10). Paul's abundant work as a disciple was his work of obedience, not works to merit salvation. He, as all disciples of Jesus, work in appreciation for what they have received through the grace of God. They work in thanksgiving of the cross (2 Co 4:15). Such is the "obedience of faith" that characterizes the children of God (Rm 1:15; 16:26).

The alien sinner becomes a new creature when he works in obedience to the law of Christ to be baptized into Christ (Gl 3:26,27). *"In Christ he is a new creature"* (2 Co 5:17). As a new creation in Christ, he seeks to work in thanksgiving of his salvation (2 Co 4:15). His faith goes to work in response to grace. It is as Paul wrote to the Galatians, *"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, **but faith working through love**"* (Gl 5:6). Again, this statement was written to those who had already been created in Christ Jesus through their obedience to the gospel.

They were disciples who were obedient by being *"baptized into Christ"* (Gl 3:27). Our salvation in Christ is by faith in the grace of God, but it is a faith that is working through love. It is as James wrote, *"You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only"* (Js 2:24). It is an obedient faith that brings one into Christ. Once in Christ, it is an obedient response to the grace by which we have been saved that makes our faith profitable unto salvation (See Rv 14:13).

Chapter 18
LOST IN BELIEF

The fact that obedience through perfect keeping of law does not save the Christian does not excuse the alien sinner from his responsibility to obey the commandments of God concerning what is necessary for him to do in order to be saved. In rightly dividing the word of God we must not confuse ourselves by using passages of scripture that deal with the salvation of Christians to refer to the lost state of the alien sinner. Doing such has brought great confusion into the world of theology in reference to the salvation of those outside Christ. Too many theologians have committed this error of interpretation, and thus, they have failed to recognize that there are responsibilities on the part of the sinner for him to manifest his "fear of the Lord" in obedience to the gospel. The faith that one has in the Lord that begins before being baptized into Christ must move him to obey the gospel by immersion into Christ. The baptized believer must then continue in a labor of love, working out his salvation that he has in Christ. In order to begin one's lifetime of obedience, there must be an initial manifestation of obedience.

In the first century, there were many who "believed," but their belief was not manifested by obedience to what Jesus said. Many maintained an unresponsive faith in the presence of the One in whom they were to believe. If such happened during the personal ministry of Jesus, then we would expect the same today. We would expect people to believe in Jesus, but at the same time be rebellious to the word of God. If you believe that this unfortunate situation cannot exist today, then take a closer look at the following examples:

A. Jews lost in belief.

In John 8, John recorded an interesting event during the ministry of Jesus. Jesus was at the time in the presence of some who to some extent believed in Him. In verse 31 He challenged these "believers." *"Then Jesus said to* ***those Jews who believed in Him****, '****If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples****.'"* The mark of true discipleship is obedience to the word of Jesus (See Jn 12:48). Obedience to the word of Jesus is the signal to everyone that one is a disciple of Jesus. Therefore, in order to begin one's discipleship of Jesus **he must obey the word of Jesus**. If there is no obedience, then there is no discipleship.

Now in the context of Jesus' exchange with some Jews in John 8, there were those in His presence who believed, but they did not want to obey the word of Jesus. So in verse 44 Jesus said to them, *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do."* These Jews whom Jesus ad-

dressed "believed in Him" (Jn 8:31). However, their belief did not move them to obey the word of Jesus. They were thus of the faith of their father the devil, and it was his will that they desired to obey.

If one believes, but his belief does not move him to obey Jesus, **then he is still under the influence of the devil**. Jesus stated, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mk 16:16). By the Holy Spirit Peter said, *"Repent and be baptized ..."* (At 2:38). The Spirit through Ananias said, *"Arise and be baptized ..."* (At 22:16). Would we dare believe, but refuse to obey the simple command to be baptized? If we do not obey, can we declare our own salvation without obedience to the command to be baptized? Obeying God to be baptized is not a work of merit. It is a work of obedience whereby we are manifesting that we seek to be an obedient disciple of Jesus.

B. Rulers lost in belief.

During the ministry of Jesus there were also many rulers who believed on Jesus. However, they remained in their state of condemnation because they would not confess who He claimed to be. John wrote to them, *"Nevertheless, **among the chief rulers also many believed in Him**. But because of the Pharisees **they did not confess Him** lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God"* (Jn 12:42,43).

These rulers had faith. However, their faith was not strong enough to move them to confess that Jesus was the Son of God. Their love for the glory of man was stronger than their faith in Jesus. Would we consider these men saved by faith only? Did they have a saving faith? In answer to these questions, Matthew 10:32,33 gives the answer. *"Therefore, whoever will confess Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. **But whoever will deny Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven**."* The rulers were guilty of being condemned in their faith. Their faith without obedience left them spiritually dead in their faith. It is for this reason that we would question any teaching that assumes one's salvation is by faith alone. Faith alone does not manifest one's willingness to obey God. Faith alone can leave us in a state of condemnation.

C. Kings lost in belief.

In conjunction with the unresponsive faith of the Jewish rulers, there is also the case of King Agrippa who remained "lost in belief." Paul asked Agrippa, *"King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets?"* (At 26:27). Agrippa did not have to answer this question because Paul knew that he believed the prophets concerning the coming of the Messiah. So Paul gave Agrippa's answer for him. *"I know that you believe"* (At 26:27). Agrippa knew that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. Acts 26:28 is an interesting statement of Agrippa that was recorded by Luke. *"Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'In a short time you almost persuade me to become a Christian.'"* Agrippa remained spiritually dead in his faith because it did not move him to do that which would make him a Christian. He remained spiritually dead in his faith

because he was not moved to obedience.

D. Demons lost in belief.

We would be correct in believing that all demons are lost. But consider the fact that demons have faith. Of their faith, James wrote, *"You believe that there is one God. You do well.* ***The demons also believe and tremble****"* (Js 2:19). At least these demons had enough faith to tremble. They were not completely dead in their faith. They had more faith than most people who claim to be Christians. The demons tremble, but many people have so little faith that they do not tremble at the possibility of losing their souls. They trust in their inactive faith, which faith will be pronounced dead upon the coming of our Lord.

So again we ask the question, "Can one be lost in belief?" The answer is that some Jewish rulers were lost in belief. Agrippa was lost in belief. Demons are lost in belief. **The fact that one can be lost in belief should caution us about teaching any doctrine that faith only will save the alien sinner**. In every case where one was lost in belief, the belief did not spark obedience to confess Jesus as the Christ. This "confessing of Jesus" was not simply a verbal proclamation, but a living sacrifice on the part of the one who believed. Bible faith is manifested by obedience to become a child of God, as well as to remain His child in His care.

Chapter 19
FAILURE TO FULFILL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

This will not be a comfortable chapter for many evangelists to read. The following discussion will stir a great deal of guilt in the hearts of those who are sincerely trying to do their best to please God. To these we would say that you have done the best you could with what you knew. God's grace will cover our past erroneous teaching as we all study together and learn more of His will. We believe in a God of mercy, a God who knows that we continually grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus (2 Pt 3:18). What is important is to continue to grow in this knowledge, trusting that God has a lot of mercy and grace for our incomplete knowledge of His word that we have taught in the past.

Regardless of the past, however, we must take another look at the responsibility of the evangelist who seeks to preach the good news of Jesus. We have studied the responsibility of the audience that they must move beyond a simple belief in Jesus. As previously proved, the biblical definition of faith is obedience to the will of God. In reference to the alien sinner, saving faith moves one to respond to the will of God in obedience to the gospel. In reference to the Christian, saving faith moves one to work in thanksgiving for the grace of God. In both situations faith must always be understood to manifest obedience to the will of God.

The responsibility to fulfill all righteousness in reference to the will of God begins at the point of baptism. At the beginning of His ministry, *"Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him"* (Mt 3:13). But because John knew who Jesus was, he initially had some objections. As a di-

rect revelation from God, John was already baptizing people in the wilderness (Mt 3:6). He was baptizing in Aenon because there was much water there (Jn 3:23). So when Jesus came to him, John did not try to prevent Him from being baptized. He just thought that he was not spiritually suitable to baptize the Messiah. But notice carefully what Jesus said to John. *"Permit it at this time, for thus it is appropriate for **us** to fulfill all righteousness"* (Mt 3:15). Notice Jesus' use of the plural pronoun "us." In the "fulfilling of all righteousness," **baptism is not just about the one being baptized**. In this case, the baptism was not just about Jesus being baptized. **The "us" included John**. God had commissioned John to baptize for the remission of sins (Mk 1:4). Baptism was part of the righteousness of God that was revealed to John. Therefore, in obedience to God, it was necessary for Jesus to be baptized. But as part of the work of being an evangelist of the good news of Jesus, John too had to participate in the "righteousness" of God by baptizing Jesus. **When one is baptized, both the one who is baptized and the one baptizing are together fulfilling all righteousness**. Evangelists who are not baptizing those to whom they preach the gospel, therefore, **are not fulfilling all righteousness**. Their message is falling short of **all** righteousness.

We must keep in mind that Jesus used the word "all" in reference to fulfilling the righteousness of God. The use of this word means that no one part of the "all" can be emphasized to the exclusion of any other part that completes all the righteousness of God. The "all" would include faith, but it would not exclude other requirements to complete the righteousness of God. Faith is not exclusive. Faith would not exclude baptism, **for it was baptism that resulted in the fulfillment of all righteousness in the baptism of Jesus**. Therefore, unless one is baptized, all the righteousness of God has not been fulfilled in his coming to Christ.

An example of this truth is seen in the case of the eunuch from Ethiopia. In Acts 8 Philip was instructed by an angel to go to a desert and connect with an Ethiopian who was returning to his homeland in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian was a eunuch under Candace, the queen. As a religious person, he was reading from Isaiah 53 concerning a prophecy of the Messiah. Now notice what is stated in Acts 8:35. *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this scripture **he preached Jesus to him**."* All that is stated in this context is that Philip preached Jesus to him. In the following verses we discover at least one very important subject that is included in the "preaching of Jesus."

We have no idea how long Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch. But as they went on their way they came to some water. Now consider what the eunuch initiated. *"Now as they went along the road they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, **here is water**! **What hinders me from being baptized**?"* (At 8:36). Nothing was said in the text about Philip teaching the eunuch about baptism. The initiative to be baptized came from the eunuch. Therefore, **we would correctly conclude that in preaching Jesus, one as an evangelist, must speak of baptism**. Philip fulfilled all righteousness

by carrying out his responsibility to speak of baptism when he preached Jesus. When the two came to some water, both Philip and the eunuch worked together to fulfill all righteousness by the baptism of the eunuch.

How many preachers today think they are preaching Jesus but actually are not fulfilling all righteousness by failing to teach the people that they must be baptized into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus? If one does not teach on baptism, **then he is not preaching the full message of Jesus**. If one does not assist people in being baptized, **then he is not an evangelist who is fulfilling all righteousness**.

How many preachers are there who have finally realized that they left out of their message any reference to baptism? They have preached for years, but never mentioned baptism to the point that their audiences would respond as the eunuch, *"See, here is water! What hinders me from being baptized"*? We have found a host of preachers who have actually been the ones who have hindered the people from being baptized. When the members of their churches have studied the Bible to the point of realizing that one must be baptized, some preachers have said to the people that they are already saved by faith only. They then often refuse to baptize the people. These preachers have shut out of the kingdom the members of their churches. It is truly a sad situation when those who are supposed to increase the borders of the kingdom are those who supposedly preach Jesus.

We are sure there are many preachers out there who are filled with regret because they forgot to fulfill all the righteousness of God by telling the people that they needed to obey Jesus in baptism for the remission of their sins in order to fulfill all righteousness.

We can know that the kingdom of darkness hangs heavy over the people when those who supposedly preach Jesus among the people are actually not fulfilling all righteousness by failing to preach all the word of God about Jesus. These are truly dark days in Christendom. They are dark because of those whom we trust to show us the way are stopping short of preaching the complete message of the gospel. Many of the preachers among the people can never say what Paul said to the Ephesians. *"... **I kept nothing back that was profitable**, and teaching you publicly and from house to house"* (At 20:20). He reminded the Ephesians of something that most preachers today cannot say. "*Therefore, I testify to you this day that **I am innocent of the blood of all men**. **For I have not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God**"* (Ep 20:26,27). How many preachers can confidently say this to those to whom they have preached the word of God?

There are few repentant evangelists among the people as Peter who had previously denied Jesus during the final hours before the cross. But after the resurrection he boldly stood up before those to whom he had previously denied Jesus, and said, *"Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you more than to God, you judge. **For we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard**"* (At 4:19,20).

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, Peter boldly preached Jesus to the people. *"Therefore, let all the house of*

Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (At 2:36). Now notice the believing response of the people. *"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart. And they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren,* ***what will we do****?'"* (At 2:37). How would you answer this question if you believed in a "faith only" doctrine? Would you hinder the people from entering the kingdom by failing to preach the whole counsel of God? If you do not respond to this question of the people as Peter did, then you have shut up the kingdom of God to people who believe on Jesus. You have not truly preached Jesus to them. You have not fulfilled all the righteousness of God.

Peter's preaching of Jesus moved the people on the day of Pentecost to be cut to the heart because of their sins. Now the people wanted to know what to do. They were certainly mournful over crucifying Jesus. Some mourned and possibly others cried. They believed because they responded by knowing they had to do something to rectify their rebellion against Jesus. Some preachers today would have simply cried out to the people, "Accept Jesus as your personal Savior. Repeat the 'sinner's prayer' after me.'" But in this case, Peter did not tell the people to "believe on Jesus." **They already believed**. However, their belief did not relieve them of their sin against the Christ they had crucified and was now reigning as Lord (At 2:36). Their belief did not save them from their sin. Peter did not tell them to say some "sinner's prayer" in response to their grief. He did not shut them out of the kingdom by refusing to tell them to be baptized for the remission of their sins.

In verse 38 Peter assumed his responsibility to fulfill all righteousness as an evangelist by responding to the people, *"****Repent and be baptized*** *every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* If Peter had never told them to be baptized, he and the other apostles on that day would not have fulfilled all righteousness by baptizing about 3,000 people (At 2:41). The people would never have received the gift of the Holy Spirit upon their baptism.

Another example might help. Remember Paul and Silas praying and singing the gospel in prison in Philippi (At 16:25)? After the earthquake the jailor rushed before the presence of the two evangelists *"trembling with fear"* (At 16:29). He believed! He believed to the point of trembling with fear. But did trembling with fear save him? It did not according to what he asked of the two evangelists. *"Sirs,* ***what must I do to be saved****?"* (At 16:30). It was as if he were saying, "I believe, but what must I do to be saved?" The two evangelists simply responded, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your household will be saved"* (At 16:31). Now did trembling, fear **and belief** save him? Take another look at the text. Verse 32 states, *"And they* ***spoke to him the word of the Lord****, and to all who were in his house."* What does speaking *"to him* ***the word of the Lord****"* include? The two evangelists certainly spoke to him about the Lord Jesus. At least this is all that is stated in the text. But when something started to happen in the jailors' life in answer to his plea, *"what must I do to*

be saved?", verse 33 states, *"And **immediately he was baptized**, he and all his household."* Speaking the "word of the Lord," therefore, includes speaking about baptism, **for where did the jailor get the idea that he had to be baptized**? As in the "preaching of Jesus" by Philip, and in "speaking the word of the Lord" by Paul and Silas, **speaking about baptism is included**. So the obvious conclusion is that if an evangelist does not speak to the people about baptism for the remissions of sins, **then he has not preached Jesus, neither has he spoken the word of the Lord to the people**. He has been negligent in carrying out his responsibilities as an evangelist for Jesus.

And now we have a problem of guilt. When a preacher realizes that he has spent a lifetime preaching faith only salvation without fulfilling his responsibility of informing his audiences about baptism in obedience to the gospel, he often realizes that he has actually not preached Jesus to the people. He failed in his preaching to mention baptism in water for remission of sins in order that he join with people in fulfilling all righteousness. He has failed to fulfill his part as an evangelist to baptize those to whom he has preached. He has failed to preach Jesus and the whole counsel of the Lord. Guilt often sets in when one realizes that he has left many of his past audiences just short of being washed of sins in the waters of baptism. Because of this guilt, most preachers will not turn from their "faith only" message simply because they remember the masses of people to whom they preached, but never mentioned how he could join with them in fulfilling all the righteousness of God in baptism. The result is that their failure leads them to often vehemently argue against any teaching that would infer baptism as important for the remission of sins in order that one come into a covenant relationship with God. Their preaching of a "faith only" salvation has long separated salvation from the washing of sins in the waters of baptism. They thus continue to preach an "incomplete" righteousness by subtracting from the word of God (Please read Rv 22:18,19 with emphasis on the phrase "take away.")

It is our goal to call for a restoration in preaching. This restoration includes first the preaching of the whole counsel of God in order that representatives of Jesus throughout the world fulfill all righteousness by preaching a complete message of Jesus. It is our prayer that disciples of Jesus will lead alien sinners to believe in Jesus, and then participate with them in fulfilling all righteousness by assisting them to wash away their sins in the cleansing waters of baptism.

Section III

THE BAPTISM

Throughout the history of man, God has worked with man through covenant relationships. He has worked through covenants for the purpose of bringing to man a guarantee that He will fulfill His promises to those who come to Him through obedient faith. However, since He is the one who will bring about the promises that result from His covenants, it is His privilege to determine the conditions upon which His covenants are established. It is His choice to determine the conditions by which the covenant is maintained. It is man's responsibility to take the initiative through obedient faith to accept God's covenants, and subsequently, to maintain the covenant by obediently conforming to God's conditions. When men submit to a covenant relationship with God, eternal blessings are the result. It is the responsibility of all men, therefore, to seek a covenant relationship with God who will bring into eternity only those who have established a covenant with Him. The new covenant that God now offers to all men is established with God at the time of the new birth when one is born of the water and the Spirit by obedience to the gospel. The promise that comes with this covenant is the opportunity to dwell with God in His presence for eternity.

This discussion is based on the foundation of a profound need of every individual on earth. That need is deliverance from separation from our God. Since the fall of Adam, sin has separated people from God. We all live with the curse of spiritual death that is brought on by our own sins. *"Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin,* ***and so death passed to all men because all sinned****"* (Rm 5:12). Spiritual death followed sin because sin and separation from God always come together. Isaiah proclaimed, *"But your iniquities have separated you from your God"* (Is 59:2). When one is separated from God, he or she is eternally lost, eternally doomed to hopelessness in a destruction that has eternal consequences. Because of this separation from God, all people must seek reconciliation. All men must be reconciled to God if they would enjoy the promised blessing of eternal life.

Before the sin of Adam, God predetermined a plan of reconciliation. He knew that man was subject to his own fallibility. After He had created all men with the gift of free-moral choice, God knew that sooner or later men would rebel against His will. The rebellion came sooner than later, and thus, the eternal plan of redemption was activated. Man's fallibility resulted in sin. Sin resulted in separation. As a result of separation from God, spiritual death and eternal doom came into the lives of Adam and Eve. The fall of man activated the need

for reconciliation. Before the creation of the world, God had planned the way of reconciliation because He knew that sin would enter into the world.

God's plan for reconciliation was first announced to Adam and Eve. *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and Her Seed; **He will bruise your head**, and you will bruise His heel"* (Gn 3:15). This announcement of the coming Savior of the world was vague, though Adam and Eve knew that God would do something to rectify the sin problem they had introduced into the world.

Throughout the generations of man, indications of salvation were sprinkled throughout God's revelations to the prophets before the cross. Prophets were inspired to prophesy of the Seed to come, but they did not understand the significance of the prophecies of God that something was coming. Peter spoke of their anxiety of what was to come. *"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently ... searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit ... did signify when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ ..."* (1 Pt 1:10-12). The prophets knew that all men were dead in sin, and could not through keeping of law, save themselves from condemnation.

But eventually the greatest announcement of all time was repeated to some shepherds of Israel over two thousand years ago. *"Do not fear, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that will be to all people. **For to you a Savior is born this day in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord**"* (Lk 2:10,11). John proclaimed, *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (Jn 1:29). Thus Jesus came. He came to go to the cross for our sins, for our reconciliation. He *"bore our sins in His own body on the tree, so that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness ..."* (1 Pt 2:24). The Father *"made Him who knew no sin to be sin on behalf of us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Co 5:21). Atonement, justification, reconciliation, redemption, and thus, salvation, were all made possible at the cross by the suffering Servant.

Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father but through Me**"* (Jn 14:6). Peter reaffirmed, *"And there is salvation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (At 4:12). Jesus is the medium through whom repentant believers can save themselves from sin. He is the solution to man's greatest problem which is the problem of sin. Jesus is the only escape from the eternal destruction that awaits those who have not been reconciled to God.

There is, therefore, only one way to life. That way is through Jesus and His atoning blood on the cross. The most important questions for every individual to ask and answer are: How can one apply to his or her own life the saving plan of God through the blood of Jesus? How can one be saved? Jesus saves, but how can one come into contact with the saving blood of Jesus?

This brings us to the subject of this discussion. From John the Baptist to Jesus, and from Jesus to this day, baptism has played a significant part in man's salvation. The word "baptism" is mentioned over one hundred times in our

English New Testaments. The action of baptism in water is specifically mentioned in case after case in the conversions recorded in the New Testament. With such great emphasis on immersion, any serious student of God's word would conclude that there is something very significant about the action of baptism in relation to one's salvation. That significance is the subject of this discussion, for it is our belief that baptism is inseparably linked to one's salvation. God established it as such. And because He did the alien sinner must follow through with obedience to what God has commanded.

It is not that baptism is some meritorious work or a church sacrament. It is simply that God has made baptism a response of faith in Jesus and a point of reference at which He forgives us our sins. It is a point of reference to which the obedient believer can always look back and say that God saved him at that point by bringing him into a covenant relationship with Him.

With this purpose in mind we must launch into this study. If baptism is inseparably linked to our salvation, then it is absolutely necessary that we understand its significance. Traditions and "church doctrines" will not help us in this study. Our only source of information must come from God's revelation on the matter, and thus, the Bible can be our only textbook.

We must never forget that what is most important for man to do in order to be saved is where Satan will certainly do his best work to deceive men. Since the subject of baptism has been a highly controversial subject in religious circles for centuries, then we would assume that Satan is at work. If baptism is necessary for salvation, then we would assume that Satan would be doing some of his greatest deceptive work with man's understanding of this subject.

Some would question why we should devote such a lengthy discussion to this subject. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is because of the preceding work of Satan. Since Satan has worked so well in confusing religious people concerning the importance of baptism, every Christian should thoroughly understand the Bible's teaching on the subject.

Secondly, in Ephesians 4:4-6 Paul listed baptism with seven fundamental teachings that must be maintained as one. If baptism is listed as a fundamental doctrine, then certainly it is not a subject to be avoided. It seems that the Holy Spirit knew that misguided theologians would allow Satan to deceive them concerning the importance of baptism. For this reason the Holy Spirit listed it with such fundamental beliefs as "one God," "one Spirit" and "one Lord." Therefore, anyone who would assume that this subject is inconsequential to Christian belief and salvation has allowed himself to believe a deception of Satan concerning the importance of baptism.

In the year A.D. 62 it is believed that the apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians from a prison in Rome. In this letter he stated that there was at that time only **one baptism** (Ep 4:4-6). Taking into consideration the book of Acts and the history of the church after Acts 2, that one baptism was the baptism obeyed by the Ephesians (At 19:1-6), the Corinthians (At 18:8), the Samari-

tans (At 8:5-13), and thousands of others who responded to the gospel of Jesus in the first century. This one baptism was **immersion in water for remission of sins.**

Baptism for remission of sins was first mentioned in Mark 1:4 in the preaching of John the Baptist. *"John came in the wilderness baptizing and preaching the baptism of repentance* ***for the remission of sins****."* This baptism was not in the "name of Jesus," for Jesus had not yet come upon the scene preaching the coming of the kingdom of God.

The second time we encounter a baptism for the remission of sins is in Acts 2:38. Peter proclaimed to a Pentecost audience, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ* ***for the remission of sins*** *...."* By the time Peter had made the statement of Acts 2:38, Jesus had died on the cross. He had been resurrected. He had ascended into heaven. Acts 2:38 is the one baptism about which Paul wrote in Ephesians 4. This is the baptism that supersedes all other baptisms that are mentioned in the New Testament.

The mode or manner of the one baptism is by immersion. In fact, baptism is immersion. This is the true meaning of the Greek word from which we construct the transliterated word "baptize." Nevertheless, there has always been great debate in the religious world concerning the mode or manner of baptism. (In this book we will use the words "immerse" and "baptism" interchangeably. However, we do this only to accommodate present religious discussion. The word baptism is so common in religious discussion that it is difficult to ignore it when talking about the subject.)

Many religious groups have made unbiblical changes concerning the manner of baptism. Some have stated that baptism may be "performed" in any one of three ways: by sprinkling, pouring or immersion. It is claimed by some that one manner is just as good as another. As long as one has some type of a "conversion experience," it is assumed that the manner by which he or she is baptized is not relevant. It is thus affirmed that one has the right to choose the manner by which he or she will be baptized.

There are many religious leaders today who have totally rejected the practice of immersion. In the religious world there has developed the belief that baptism in any form is not linked to one's salvation. The new birth can be either a conversion experience or an emotional euphoria. If one wants to be baptized, then such is optional.

With many religious groups there is no longer any debate over either the manner of baptism or the necessity thereof. Baptism has simply dropped out of the discussions of many religious groups. Preachers have become indifferent to discussion surrounding the subject, believing that because baptism is supposedly not necessary for salvation, there is no need for debate.

There is also the host of religious groups that practice infant baptism. This practice originated out of an unfortunate belief that babies are inherent sinners because of a supposed "original sin" with which one is born as a result of the sin of Adam. It is believed that at birth babies inherit the supposed sin of Adam. They are thus in need of baptism for the

remission of sins.

We do not pretend to write a complete study of the subject on baptism. However, we do want to present some of the most important aspects of the subject as they are stated in the Scriptures. Since the word "baptism" in either a noun or verb form is mentioned over one hundred times in the New Testament, we must assume that this is a very important subject for discussion. We cannot simply pass over this subject if we claim allegiance to the Bible as a standard for faith and obedience. The movement to relegate baptism to some practice of ancient religious sacraments is not acceptable. We must deal with this subject that has been a point of confrontation in the past and present because it is mentioned so many times in the New Testament.

It will be noticed from the material of this discussion that immersion in water is necessary in order to establish a covenant relationship with God. Without this relationship, there is no salvation. It is our prayer that each reader will consider the main points of each of the following chapters with a desire to fully understand the nature and purpose of baptism.

Some wonder why we need to continually discuss the matter of baptism. The fact that they wonder about discussions on baptism is part of the problem. We live in a generation of Christendom that has gone in two directions on the subject. There is a legal oriented group that views baptism as some kind of "church sacrament." Such is evidenced in how we approach our youth. Some say, "Isn't it time, young man, that you get baptized?" The problem is that we often do not focus on commitment to Jesus. There is no call to commit one's life to Jesus. Only perform an immersion act and one is accepted. Some have digressed to the point of simply "making sure someone knows what he or she is doing" before they are baptized. So we sit down and go through the facts. As long as one knows the facts, then we assume the one is ready to be baptized. Dedicated commitment from the heart to live the sacrificial life for Jesus is only incidental. Understanding the covenant relationship one is establishing with God in baptism is secondary. Some have, therefore, encouraged people to just "get baptized" in order to fulfill a requirement, and then take one's seat in a pew. Is this the only significance we should place on baptism?

The second group that is in trouble are those who have run through Jerusalem in search of unity with anyone who would mention Jesus. This group has sacrificed baptism for fellowship with anyone who shows up at the church assembly. As long as one claims to have some kind of conversion experience and manifests some type of commitment, then he or she is accepted into fellowship. Obedience to the gospel in immersion is not important. We seriously do not believe that the New Testament teaches such universal salvation.

In this discussion we would challenge the preceding misconceptions. We believe there are too many people who are missing the point of a most important New Testament teaching. For this reason it is time for another look at the subject, always remembering that we must be willing to submit to any teaching of the word of God on the subject.

Chapter 20
DEFINITION OF *BAPTIZO*

Much of the confusion that arises out of discussions over religious matters results from a misunderstanding concerning the definition of words. In our study of the subject of baptism, much of the controversy would be eliminated if just one word in the New Testament had been properly translated in 1611 by the *King James Version*. This one word is the Greek word "*baptizo*."

There are two things to understand concerning the word *baptizo*. First, the English word "baptize" is a **transliteration** of the Greek word ***baptizo.*** Second, this Greek word was used in the first century to express the action of immersion, dipping, plunging or overwhelming. All Greek lexicons (dictionaries) and church historians agree on this definition.

A. Transliteration of *baptizo:*

Transliteration is the practice of writing in alphabetical characters the sound of the words of one language into the same sound of alphabetical characters of another language. This is what took place when the Greek word *baptizo* was transliterated in 1611 by the translators of the *King James Version*.

When the King James translators translated the *King James Version* of the New Testament in 1611, they chose to **transliterate** the Greek word *baptizo* instead of translating it. They did this because there were many religious groups of that day who were sprinkling people and calling it baptism. Therefore, by transliteration, the Greek word *baptizo* became "baptize" in the English language. We thus live today with this unfortunate action of past translators. The unfortunate transliteration has caused much confusion in the study and practice of baptism. In fact, if this word had been properly translated, there would be no need for this discussion on what the word means.

B. Lexicon definition of *baptizo:*

In studying the Greek word *baptizo* there is no misunderstanding of the actual meaning of the word as it is defined by Greek lexicons. In the Greek lexicon of Arndt and Gingrich, *baptizo* is defined as "dip," or "immerse." In Thayer's lexicon the word is defined "to dip repeatedly," "to immerse," or "submerge." The Abbott-Smith lexicon says, "to dip, immerse, sink, or to overwhelm." In his comprehensive book on New Testament words, W. E. Vine said that baptism is "the process of immersion, submersion and emergence." There are no Greek lexicons that define *baptizo* in any other way than the definition that is given by accepted Greek lexicons. Therefore, when reading the New Testament, Bible students should almost always read the word "immerse" when they see the word "baptize" in the text.

The well known church historian, Philip Schaff, wrote, "Unquestionably, immersion expresses the idea of baptism ...." The world accepted *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states, "It is noteworthy that here [Mark 7:4] *rhantizo* [the Greek word for "sprinkle"] is used in contrast with *baptizo* showing that baptize did not mean sprinkle." All church historians will agree with these statements.

Anyone who defines *baptizo* to mean

"sprinkle" or "pouring" is arguing against the best scholarship of the biblical world. All accepted Greek lexicons and church historians affirm that the primary meaning of the word *baptizo* is immersion. This fact cannot be denied. Therefore, no matter what one has been taught previously on the matter, he or she must accept this definition of the word. This is the correct definition and the one that must be understood when the word "baptize" is read in the text of the Scriptures.

The fact is that defining the word "baptism" should never have to be included in a book on the subject of baptism. If the word was translated correctly in Bibles throughout the world there would be no need to define the word. It would be like defining the word "immersion" by trying to convince people that immersion means "immersion." However, Satan has done his work well. Millions of people throughout Christendom today are confused concerning the definition of baptism. They are confused because religious leaders who know the truth on this matter are not teaching the truth that the meaning of the word *baptizo* is immersion, not sprinkling or pouring.

C. Textual definition of *baptizo:*

The final "dictionary" on determining the meaning of any word is the context in which it is used. When we turn to the pages of the New Testament, there is a very clear definition of the word *baptizo.* There are two key passages in the New Testament that clearly demonstrate that baptism is a burial, and not sprinkling or pouring.

1. *Colossians 2:12:* To the Colossians, Paul wrote that they were *"**buried** with Him in **baptism**, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead."* The action of baptism could not be stated more clearly. One is **buried** in baptism, after which he is **raised** from the grave of water just as Jesus was **raised** from the grave by the Father.

In order for one to be raised, he or she must first be buried. The phrase "raised with Him" assumes a burial. There can be no resurrection with Jesus unless there is first a burial with Him.

2. *Romans 6:3-5:* In Romans 6:3-5 Paul gives a very descriptive account of the relationship between baptism and the gospel. The gospel is the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins. It is His burial and resurrection to give us hope of a future resurrection. Baptism in water is obedience to the gospel. (More on this later.)

In Romans 6:3-5 Paul explained what happened to Jesus in His redemption for man. Jesus **died** on the cross. He was **buried** in a tomb. On the third day after His death on the cross, He was **resurrected** from the tomb. However, Paul's emphasis in Romans 6:3-5 is on what Christians have done in obedience to the gospel event.

Paul is saying that as Jesus was **buried** in the tomb, so we are **buried** by baptism in a tomb of water. As Jesus was **resurrected** from the tomb, so we are also **resurrected** from the waters of baptism. In order to be in the likeness of Jesus' burial, we must be buried in water. Jesus was not sprinkled into the tomb. Neither is one sprinkled with water for burial today. Water cannot be

sprinkled on the candidate and it be called baptism.

In conjunction with Colossians 2:12 and Romans 6:3-6, there is an important rule of Bible study to consider. This rule is, **the true meaning or synonym of a word can be put in the place of the word in the text or sentence without changing the meaning of that text or sentence in which the original word is used.** If baptism means "sprinkling" or "pouring," then these definitions can be substituted in the text where the word "baptism" is used without any change in the textual meaning. If we substitute the meaning "sprinkling" or "pouring" in the text of Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:12 for the word "baptism," then the meaning of the text **changes** because the meaning of baptism is not sprinkling or pouring. Notice how this substitution would change the meaning of the text of Romans 6:3-5.

> Or do you not know that as many of us as were [**sprinkled**] into Christ Jesus were [**sprinkled**] into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through [**sprinkling**] into death ....

The reason Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:12 sound contradictory with the above substitution is because baptism does not mean "sprinkling" or "pouring." The word means "immerse." This synonym can be substituted in the texts of Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:12 without any change in the meaning of what the inspired writer is trying to convey. And what the writer is trying to convey is that we are immersed in obedience to the gospel

D. Circumstances surrounding baptism:

The events that took place during various cases of baptism in the New Testament show that only immersion could have been the correct action of baptism.

1. *Much water is needed in order to accomplish the action of baptism.* In John 3:23 we read that John the Baptist *"was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was **much water there** ...."* Why would John be baptizing in a location where there was **much water** if baptism required only a little water? If baptism were by sprinkling or pouring, then he could have brought the water in a jug or jar to the ones who were to be baptized. But the fact that John had to take the ones who were to be baptized to a place of much water assumes that baptism was by immersion, and much water is needed for immersion.

2. *"Going down into the water" is required in order to accomplish the action of baptism.* In Acts 8:26-40 the Ethiopian eunuch was taught of Jesus and baptized by Philip, the evangelist. As he and Philip went on their way in a chariot, the eunuch *"commanded the chariot to stand still. **And they both went down into the water**, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. Now when **they came up out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away ..."* (vss 38,39). We would wonder why both Philip and the eunuch had to go down into the water in order for the eunuch to be baptized if only sprinkling was involved in the baptism. Why get completely wet when one could just

stand on the bank of a river, dip out a little water, and then sprinkle it on the subject's head? The fact that Philip had to dip or immerse the eunuch completely under water made it necessary to take the eunuch down into the water.

This same example for immersion is also seen in the baptism of Jesus. Matthew 3:16 reads, *"And Jesus, when He was baptized,* ***went up immediately out the water*** *...."* John and Jesus had gone down into the water in order that Jesus might be immersed by John in much water. The action of immersion necessitates that one go down into the water.

The historical evidence that defines *baptizo* to mean immersion is consistent and in agreement with all Greek lexicons. There is no evidence to the contrary. It would seem, therefore, that in this area of study of baptism there can be no debate. Baptism is by immersion. To ignore this fact is to become very unbiblical in one's studies because one has refused to accept the scholarship of the world with reference to the definition of the word *baptizo*.

The English words "baptize" and "baptism" have now become so accepted in the world of theology and translation that there are few publishing houses who have the courage to translate the words properly in published translations of the New Testament. We have found that the intimidation of the religious world is so strong, that book publishing houses have rejected a literal translation of *baptizo* for the sake of many religious groups who continue to sprinkle people and call it baptism. What is encouraging, however, is that the religious world to a great extent is accepting the fact that baptism is by immersion. The exception are those groups who continue to cling to their traditional practice of sprinkling. However, most of the evangelical religious groups have given up sprinkling in order to retore the original action of immersion.

Please be reminded again that what is most important for one to do in order to be saved is where Satan will do his best work. In the area surrounding baptism in obedience to the gospel, Satan has done well to confuse many people by leading them to believe that they have been baptized when they have only been sprinkled with water. There are still many religious groups throughout the world who have substituted sprinkling for the action of baptism. However, this situation is rapidly changing, and thus we welcome the discussion concerning baptism by immersion. It is a discussion that is bringing forth a great deal of fruit as people throughout the world are being immersed for the remission of sins. It has now become the exception that people are sprinkled. The general practice today among religious people is immersion.

Chapter 21
BAPTISM AND CHURCH HISTORY

There is actually little discussion in the theological world today that centers around the practice of baptism in the early church. Anyone who has studied church history has discovered at least one common fact concerning discussions on baptism by the Christian writ-

ers of the second and third centuries. That one fact is that the early church **immersed** people. There is no history of sprinkling or pouring for baptism in the first, second and third centuries, and thus, present day liberal theologians ignore the fact that their teaching that baptism is by sprinkling or pouring has no evidence of early church history. Therefore, if we are to restore the ancient order of baptism, then we must go all the way back to the first century. In doing this, the only valid book for research on this subject is the New Testament. Though the documents of ancient church historians after the writing of the New Testament are valuable resources, the New Testament must always be our final authority.

As one studies church history, those who have identified themselves with Christianity today in some form have progressed from a true emphasis on baptism in the first century to a total indifference toward it today. In many churches today the subject is not even on the agenda for discussion. This seems to be the normal drift of those religious groups who have ceased having the Bible as their standard of authority in matters of faith. The result of this lack of emphasis on the Bible as our final authority in religious matters today has led to some interesting admissions on the part of different theologians. They have researched the mode of baptism in the early church writings and have confessed that the early church practiced immersion.

The following are a few brief statements of some religious groups concerning the historical practice of baptism. These statements indicate both the change of the mode and the purpose of baptism in various religious groups.

A. Ancient religious documents affirm immersion for baptism:

Baptism was by immersion in the first century. However, many years after the first century men started the practice of baptism by sprinkling or pouring. The first recorded case of sprinkling for baptism was that of **Novatian** who was sprinkled in bed no earlier than A.D. 250. When it was certain that Mr. Novatian would soon die, his friends hastened to perform some rite over him and call it baptism. Eusebius (260 - 340) wrote concerning this case,

> Novatian, being relieved thereof by the exorcists, fell into a grievous distemper: and it being supposed that he would die immediately, he received baptism, being sprinkled with water, on the bed whereon he lay, (if that can be termed baptism).

In this first recorded case of sprinkling, it seems that Eusebius was apprehensive about calling sprinkling baptism. From this earliest recorded case or sprinkling, not only is the manner of baptism being changed, but also the approach by which some use the Bible. A religious practice was carried out on Novatian. Water was sprinkled on him. In order to make the practice “biblically” oriented, those who carried out the deed stole the Bible word “baptism” in order to justify their act. They applied a Bible word to an invented action of man.

This is still a common practice among religions today. Religious plagiarists are still stealing words from the

Bible and applying them to their religious practices that they have invented after their own desires or traditions. In an effort to make their religious practices appear to be biblical, they have used Bible names in reference to practices that have been developed by man. This is one of Satan's greatest tools to deceive and confuse people concerning the truth about baptism.

The *Didache*, an ancient document that was written in the second century, also states a time when sprinkling or pouring was substituted for immersion.

> Concerning baptism, you baptize thus, having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living [running] water. But if you cannot in cold, in warm. But if you do not have either, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

Here again is another substitution that has led to erroneous religious dogma today on the subject of baptism. In the above statement of the *Didache*, a religious act is again being called baptism. In this case, if what God requires is not convenient, then it is believed that one is justified to change God's will. This is not an uncommon practice among religious groups today. This is probably one of the greatest forces among religious people concerning the changing of immersion to sprinkling. If immersion is not convenient, it is believed that we have a right to change to sprinkling. In the book, *Faith of Our Fathers,* James Cardinal Gibbons, a Catholic Church authority admitted,

> For several centuries after the establishment of Christianity Baptism was usually conferred by immersion; but since the twelfth century the practice of baptizing by infusion has prevailed in the Catholic Church, **as this manner is attended with less inconvenience than Baptism by immersion** [emphasis mine, R.E.D.].

Do religious counsels of men have the right to change the meaning of the Greek word *baptizo?* Such seems to be what has happened with those who produce religious writings for their churches.

What has happened among some religious groups is that the word "baptism" has moved so far away from the original meaning of *baptizo* that it has assumed a different meaning. In order to solve this confusion, men have taken it upon themselves to determine their own meaning for the word. They have determined the meaning of *baptizo* by their traditional practice of sprinkling. Today, when people read their Bibles, many people understand the word "baptism" to mean sprinkling because their particular religion practices sprinkling for baptism.

Most religious leaders today and all ancient church historians agree that first century baptism was by immersion. However, after the first century, an apostasy led people to believe that sprinkling was the right manner of baptism. Recognition of this historical digression poses a challenge to those today who have been practicing either sprinkling or pouring and calling it baptism. Either they restore the New Testament practice of immersion, or they continue after the tradition of men who have counter-

feited a most sacred teaching of Jesus. *"He who believes and is baptized* [immersed]*, will be saved ..."* (Mk 16:16). What men often do in cases as this is what the Jews did. Jesus said of them, *"All too well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your own tradition"* (Mk 7:9).

B. Religious leaders agree that baptism was by immersion.

Reference is made to important religious leaders here, not as an authority to establish biblical truth, but to show that many leaders of the past have contended that the manner of baptism is by immersion. These and many other religious historians unanimously contend that baptism was by immersion in the first century.

Martin Luther said,

> The name baptism is Greek; in Latin it can be rendered immersion, ... we immerse anything in water, that it may be all covered with water. And although that custom has now grown out of use ... **yet they ought to be entirely immersed, and immediately drawn out.**

John Calvin said,

> **The very word baptize signified to immerse**; and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the primitive church.

John Wesley said,

> We are buried with Him, alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion.

The religious groups today who practice sprinkling and pouring and call such baptism, are faced with a challenge. They have no authority of the first century church, nor one Greek scholar on biblical languages to support their present practice. They must make a decision. Either they take the position that man has a right to arbitrarily change Bible teachings and practices, or they must discard those religious practices that conflict with Bible teaching.

The power of traditional thought in the minds of men is very strong. Traditional patterns of belief and behavior are strong in the realm of religion. It is so strong that men will reject God's word in order to maintain a traditional belief or practice. Again, we must remember Jesus' words to the Jewish religious leaders. *"All too well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your own tradition"* (Mk 7:9).

Men are no different today than when Jesus spoke these words. For this reason, the vast majority of people who practice sprinkling and pouring will continue to do so. They are unfortunately caught in a religious scenario that is not biblically oriented. They have created a religion after their own traditions. They are in bondage to their history and to the majority of those of their faith. Nevertheless, it is the duty of all to know the truth on the subject and to teach the truth. We do so to set men free from traditional religion that has been created after the desires of men. In reference to baptism, these traditions have now become the validation to identify particular religious groups. Once traditional teaching becomes the standard upon which a particular religious group determines its

identity, then it is very difficult to return to the word of God as our final authority in matters of faith.

Chapter 22
BAPTISM AND OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL

In the world of Christendom throughout history there has probably been more discussion concerning the purpose and importance of baptism than any other New Testament teaching. By a casual reading of the New Testament one can clearly see that the subject of baptism is very important. In many passages of the New Testament, baptism is simply mentioned as a statement of fact. No detail is usually given concerning its purpose simply because it is understood that we should gather from other contexts the full significance of baptism. And indeed, the full significance of what transpires in immersion is very important to understand from the entire New Testament teaching on the subject.

For many centuries in the religious world there have been those who have believed that remission of sins, regeneration, and consequently, salvation, **preceded** one's obedience to the gospel in immersion. It is believed by some that there is an actual and real remission of sins at the point one believes in Jesus as his personal Savior, or goes through some "conversion experience." It is affirmed that when one truly repents and believes in Jesus that he or she is born again. Baptism is only a confirmation of one's salvation. However, the New Testament clearly teaches that this belief is contrary to God's plan for man's part in his salvation.

Another doctrine that seems to be prevalent today is the "salvation experience" doctrine. In other words, as long as one has had some type of salvation experience in his or her life, such is an indication of one's acceptance by God. Baptism is only one in a selected catalog of optional experiences in which one may participate after a supposedly salvation experience. The result of this teaching is the same as all teachings that do not emphasize the importance of immersion in reference to salvation, or a consideration of all that the New Testament teaches concerning what is required for salvation. Baptism is often relegated to a simple legal work. It is claimed to have little or no importance in reference to one's salvation. For this reason, in the following material we want to emphasize the purpose of baptism in relation to the salvation of one's soul. Baptism is not a church sacrament. It is not some meritorious work for salvation. It is not an inconsequential work that follows remission of sins.

Contrary to the host of religious groups who deny the fact that baptism is essential to salvation, the New Testament clearly connects immersion in water to obedience of the gospel. If one concludes that this is true, then there can be no argument against the teaching that at the point of baptism, that is obedience to the gospel, one is saved.

What one must understand that "obedience to the gospel" is the action of immersion. But obedience to the gospel is more than a legal action of immersion in water. This thought is introduced by Paul in **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.** Paul wrote,

... rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God ***and who do not obey the gospel*** *of our Lord Jesus Christ. These will be punished with everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord and away from the glory of His power.*

This statement teaches some encouraging things if one is a believer. **Jesus is coming again.** He is coming with His angels. If one is not a Christian, however, the teaching of 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 may be quite disturbing. Jesus is coming to take vengeance on those who have not **obeyed the gospel.**

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 clearly teaches that **one must obey the gospel** in order to escape the coming judgment and destruction. This biblical concept is also stated as a question by Peter in 1 Peter 4:17. Peter asks, *"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. And if it first begins with us,* ***what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God****?"* Both Peter and Paul revealed a most important truth concerning the gospel and our obedience. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 and 1 Peter 4:17 were written in order to deliver themselves from the coming destruction. It is at the point of baptism that our deliverance from destruction was made. Our obedience of the gospel connected us with the gospel when we were immersed into the saving death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

We must ask and answer two questions that arise from 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 and 1 Peter 4:17. We must ask: "**What is the gospel?**" and "**How can one obey the gospel?**" Answering these two questions answers all questions in reference to the importance of immersion in relation to one's salvation.

All agree that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rm 1:16). We would also agree that the verb "obey" in the phrase "obey the gospel" refers to action on the part of man. The gospel is God's work in reference to our salvation. Obedience is our response to God's work. Therefore, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 and 1 Peter 4:17 connect the work of God through the gospel with the obedience of man in order to be delivered from the coming judgment. Once we determine the answers to the two preceding questions, therefore, we will determine the necessity of baptism in reference to one's salvation. Since both Paul and Peter connected God's work through the gospel and man's response through obedience, we cannot separate the gospel from our obedience in reference to our salvation. Baptism is not an option. It is a necessity in reference to salvation, for by baptism one obeys the gospel. The following points will clearly manifest that man must obey the gospel by immersion in water for remission of sins in order to be saved:

A. What is the gospel?

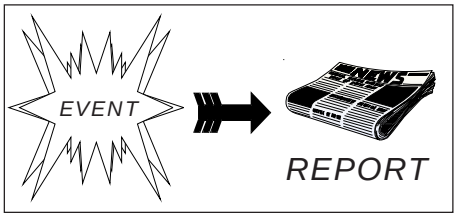
There are some very important points here to review concerning the definition of the gospel. The question is often asked concerning what the gospel is. The most common response is, "The gospel is the good news." This is partially right but partially wrong. "Good news" is actually the meaning of the New Testament Greek word that we translate

with the English word "gospel." It might be better to ask, "What is the good news?" This question will often bring mixed responses. At least, it gets us closer to understanding the gospel.

Unfortunately, many people affirm that the gospel (good news) is the teaching of Jesus or the Bible. Others affirm that Jesus is the gospel. This would be a correct answer if we understand that Jesus was more than a man, more than a good teacher, and that His coming to earth was for a salvational purpose. But we must determine how Jesus is good news in our relationship with God, with life, and with the judgment to come.

We once stood before approximately seventy-five preachers at a seminar on personal evangelism. We held up a copy of the Bible and asked, "Is this the gospel?" Almost everyone held up his hand. We then said, "This is not the gospel." The preachers uncomfortably squirmed and thought that we were certainly missing a commonly accepted truth. However, after less than ten minutes of explanation, every preacher agreed that the gospel was **an historical event** that took place over two thousand years ago.

In the first century, men and women **heard** the gospel. They **believed** the gospel. They **repented** because of the gospel. They **confessed** Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. And finally, they were **baptized** in obedience to the gospel. In order to clarify this, consider the fact that the gospel is an **event** that happened in history and is reported to us today in the inspired New Testament. We thus read the New Testament as an inspired report from the Holy Spirit concerning the gospel event.



The gospel was an event that happened in history. It happened almost two thousand years ago and was recorded as a report in the pages of the New Testament. As in any newspaper, the event happens **before** the report is written. Such is the case with the gospel and the report of its historical occurrence.

The report is not the event. We believe the events because we trust the reliability of the reporter. By affirming that the gospel is an event we are simply saying that it took place in history. People personally experienced its occurrence. Matthew personally experienced the gospel event and wrote an inspired letter about it. Luke did not personally experience the gospel event. However, he interviewed eyewitnesses who had (Lk 1:1-4), and then, he wrote a narrative of the events surrounding the gospel event. Therefore, the records we have concerning the gospel event are inspired **reports.** They are reports of the greatest news-breaking story that has happened in the history of the world. When we read the New Testament we are reading about this great historical event that has changed the lives of millions.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3,4 Paul explained, *"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, that Christ **died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that He was **buried**, and that He **rose again** the third day according to the Scriptures."* Jesus died for our sins. He was buried and rose again in order to give us hope of eternal life. **The gospel event, therefore, is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus**. This is the good news that solves the problems of both spiritual and physical death.

We must remember that the gospel is good news. But how is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus good news for us today? The answer is simple. *"**... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**"* (Rm 3:23). The result of sin against God is death. Isaiah wrote, *"But your iniquities have **separated** you from your God"* (Is 59:2). Therefore, when we think about sin, **we must think about separation from God.** And when we think about separation from God, we must think about spiritual death. Paul stated, *"**For the wages of sin is death**"* (Rm 6:23).

Sin, separation and death always go together. When we think about death, we must recognize our two greatest problems for which we need good news. Both problems involve death. The following are these two problems for which every man must find good news:

1. *Spiritual death:* Sin separates one from God, and thus, the alien sinner is spiritually dead in sin. This is what Paul meant in Romans 5:12. *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin, **and so death passed to all men because all sinned**."* When Adam personally sinned against God, he was personally separated from God by his sin. We do not inherit the **guilt** of Adam's sin. Adam was responsible for his own sin before God. However, God says that every man has sinned. Spiritual death passes to all men because *"there is none righteous, no, not one ... **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**"* (Rm 3:10,23). Without the good news of the cross one is *"dead in trespasses and sins"* (Ep 2:1). This is man's first and greatest problem! This problem means that we must be **reconciled** to God. We must be brought back to a saved relationship with our Creator. The gospel event answers this problem, **for Jesus died for our sins on the cross** (1 Co 15:3). Jesus died for the purpose of reconciling man to God. The gospel is good news, therefore, because it gives every man an opportunity to be reconciled to God through the cross.

2. *Physical death:* Physical death entered into the world when Adam was separated from the tree of life. After Adam sinned, God stated, *"Behold, the man has become as one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, he must not be allowed to put forth his hand and take of the tree of life and eat, **and live forever**." Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden"* (See Gn 3:22-24). All humanity was thus separated from the tree of life. As a result, it is appointed unto all of us that we must physically die (Hb 9:27). The Bible says, *"For as in Adam all die ..."* (1 Co 15:22). All of us suffer from the **consequences** of Adam's sin. But again, the gospel is

good news concerning this second greatest problem of man, the problem of physical death. Paul continued, *"... even so in Christ all will be made alive"* (1 Co 15:22). Therefore, **in Christ** the obedient will be made alive. They will live forever. **This is good news!**

We must remember that our first great problem is our **spiritual separation from God** that has resulted from our personal sins against God. Without Christ and the cross we are *"dead in our trespasses and sins"* (Ep 2:1). The gospel is good news because Jesus came to die for our personal sins against God. Man's second greatest problem is that each one of us will eventually physically die. We needed good news for this problem. Jesus was raised to never die again. He was raised with an eternal, incorruptible body. Those who are in Christ will also be raised when He comes again (See 1 Th 4:13-18).

Since the gospel event is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, this definition of the gospel must be applied to what Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. The application of this definition emphasizes the necessity of baptism in reference to one's salvation.

B. How can one obey the gospel?

Romans 6:3-6 answers this question. One must first believe the gospel event. Jesus came preaching, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.* ***Repent, and believe in the gospel****"* (Mk 1:15). In order to be saved by the good news one must believe in the cross, Jesus' burial and His resurrection. John came preaching that Jesus was the Savior of the world, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29). Men must believe in who Jesus is before they will respond to the work of Jesus on the cross and His hope-giving resurrection.

In Romans 6:3 Paul asked the Roman brethren a question. *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were* ***baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death****?"* We must keep in mind that the theme of Romans 6 is our **death to sin.** Read through the chapter and count how many times the words "death," "die," "died" and "dead" are used in reference to the Christian's life in relation to the past life of sin.

In the phrase "baptized into His death," the English word "into" is from the Greek word *eis*. In the context reference must be to a metaphorical use of *eis*. In Matthew 28:19 one is baptized **into** (*eis*) *"the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."* In both texts (Rm 6:3; Mt 28:19) the meaning is related by the use of the Greek word *eis*. When one is baptized, he or she is baptized into a **relationship** with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Romans 6, Paul's emphasis is on being baptized into a relationship with the death of Jesus on the cross. Herein, therefore, is the theme of Romans 6. *"How will we who died to sin live any longer therein?"* (Rm 6:2). In this chapter, Paul's argument is clear. Christians have come into a relationship with Jesus by putting to death the old man. And, *"he who has died has been freed from sin"* (Rm 6:7). But when did the old man die? When was the old man buried? When was the new man resurrected?

Jesus died in Jerusalem. He died almost two thousand years ago. Never-

theless, today one can be "baptized into His death." Paul explains this in Romans 6:4. *"Therefore **we were buried with Him through baptism into death**, that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also might walk in newness of life."* Thus the answer to the question of Romans 6:3 is verse 4.

It would be hard to miss Paul's explanation of how to be baptized into the death of Jesus in obedience to the gospel. Notice the preposition "with." By immersion in water one goes to the grave **with** Jesus.

Something great, something spiritual happens in baptism. Jesus was buried. In obedience to the gospel event, **we are also buried with Him.** In baptism, the alien sinner comes into a spiritual union with Jesus. A covenant is being formed. A relationship with God is established when one comes into contact with the cleansing blood of Jesus. Because of the seriousness of this teaching, Paul repeats the answer to the question of Romans 6:3 again in verse 5, but with different words and phrases. *"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly **we also will be in the likeness of His resurrection**."*

By immersion into Jesus one is **united together** in the likeness of Jesus' death. As Jesus went to the tomb almost two thousand years ago, so we can also go to the tomb of water together with Him today. Subsequently, we are raised with Him in order to walk in newness of life. This is great news! In Colossians 2:12 Paul stated that the Colossians were *"... **buried** with Him in baptism, in which you also were **raised** with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead."*

In immersion, therefore, one is buried with Jesus. He or she is also raised with Jesus. In baptism one obeys the gospel, which is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. However, before one goes to the grave with Jesus, he or she must also go to the cross. Paul explains this in verse 6.

> *... knowing this, that our old man was **crucified with Him** so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be the bondservants of sin.*

Here again is the preposition "with." Jesus was crucified. We must also be crucified with Him. The old man of sin died with Jesus on the cross. Our old man of greed, selfishness, drunkenness, worldliness or pride died on a cross with Jesus. Paul wrote concerning his personal crucifixion, *"I have been crucified with Christ. And it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me ..."* (Gl 2:20). Everyone must be crucified with Jesus before they can be buried with Him in the waters of baptism. Peter said it thus, *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (At 2:38). When Jesus died on the cross, He took with Him the sins of all men. Our old man of sin died with Jesus on the cross. It is dead. But in order for one to live, there must be a burial and resurrection. There is no life, therefore, without burial in water for remission of sins.

Now the second question that 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 poses has been answered. How can one obey the gospel in order to escape the coming de-

struction? The answer is simple. By immersing the old man of sin into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

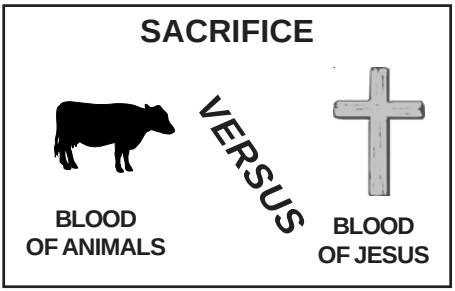
The gospel *"is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes"* and joins with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection (Rm 1:16). The gospel can be the power of God unto salvation only to those who connect with Jesus through obedience to the gospel. Obedience to the gospel by immersion explains why and how the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The gospel is the death of Jesus for our sin problem. This is great news! The gospel is the resurrection of Jesus for our physical death problem. This is great news! When one is immersed into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, then he or she has obeyed the gospel, and thus, is saved by being connected with the saving blood of Jesus. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is the power of God unto salvation to all those who are baptized. Because the gospel is the medium through which all men must come to God in order to be saved, it is imperative that we accept God's command on how to connect with the event of the cross. If we try to establish our own conditions for salvation, then certainly we are ignoring God and all that He has accomplished through His Son on the cross in order to bring us into eternity.

Chapter 23
BAPTISM AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS

God has always ordained that *"without shedding of blood there is no remission"* (Hb 9:22). He required a blood sacrifice of Abel and of all who lived before the giving of the Old Testament law on Mount Sinai (Gn 4:4,5). The Old Testament law itself was dedicated with the *"blood of calves and goats"* (Hb 9:19). God established a covenant with Israel that demanded a continual offering of blood sacrifices because *"it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins"* (Hb 10:4). The priests, therefore, had to offer animal sacrifices that could never take away sins either temporarily or on a continual basis (See Hb 10:1-4). Fortunately, these sacrifices were *"a shadow of the good things to come ..."* (Hb 10:1). They had to be offered in obedience to God's commandments and in preparation for the outpouring of the blood of Jesus that was to come (See Rm 3:25; Hb 9:15).

The "good things" of which the Old Testament sacrifices were a shadow of Jesus and the cross. The cross was a good thing because Jesus *"offered one sacrifice for sins forever"* (Hb 10:12). By that *"one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified"* (Hb 10:14). Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb of God who *"takes away the sin of the world"* (Jn 1:29). He did this act of sanctification by bearing *"our sins in His body on the tree ..."* (1 Pt 2:24). Thus, Jesus' blood was the *"blood of the new covenant"* (Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20). He made a new covenant with those who submitted to His lordship through their obedience of the gospel. Those who submitted were called the church. The church is thus sanctified and purchased by His blood which all the saints contacted upon their baptism into Christ (At 20:28).

It is essential to understand that the church, the fellowship of the submitted,



is a blood-purchased group of God's people. All those who are a part of this body have been redeemed *"**through His blood**"* (Ep 1:7). The church has been *"justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth **to be an atoning sacrifice by His blood**"* (Rm 3:24,25). Christians have *"now been justified by His blood"* (Rm 5:9). They *"have been brought near by the blood of Jesus"* (Ep 2:13).

Not only does the blood of Jesus offer a one-time cleansing when one comes into a covenant relationship with Jesus, it functions as a continual cleansing of sins as we walk in the light of God's will. John wrote, *"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another **and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin**"* (1 Jn 1:7). It is imperative to understand, therefore, that those who are **in Christ** are in a relationship with God, and thus, continually cleansed by the blood of Jesus. These are those who have *"washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"* (Rv 7:14). It is only the church that is sanctified by the blood of Jesus. Only Christians have the privilege of the continual cleansing by the blood of Jesus.

The important question to ask here is: **How does one come into the church of the sanctified, and thus, into contact with the cleansing blood of the Lamb**? It is obvious that Jesus' cleansing blood does not **unconditionally** cleanse everyone in the world of sin. If everyone were unconditionally cleansed of sin, then the entire world would not be lost. Everyone would be saved. Therefore, there must be something that people **must do** in order to contact the saving blood of Jesus. There must be something that will bring one into this relationship with Jesus whereby he or she contacts the saving and sanctifying blood of Jesus. There must also be a specific point in time at which Jesus' cleansing blood is made applicable in the regeneration of the individual's soul. The New Testament affirms here that at the point of baptism this regeneration takes place.

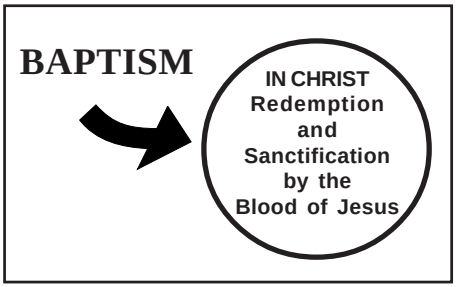
God knew that people needed a specific time to which they could refer and confidently affirm that they were saved. This point in time could not be a subjective emotional experience. Such "experiences" would occur throughout the life of the Christian. Each experience would be based on greater knowledge and spirituality than previous experiences. Therefore, with the occurrence of each "experience," the individual would question previous self-proclaimed experiences of his or her supposed salvation. For this reason, God knew that we needed an exact point in time for our salvation when He declared us saved. Concerning the Christian's salvation, that specific time is baptism. This is that time in the life of a person when he or she comes into contact with the blood of Jesus by obedience to the gospel.

A. One contacts the blood of Jesus at baptism.

Everyone would agree that contact with the blood of Christ is absolutely necessary for the forgiveness of sins. There are two points which must be considered here that introduce us to the conclusion that baptism into Christ brings one into contact with the blood of Jesus.

1. *Redemption by Jesus' blood is "in Christ."* John wrote in Revelation 5:9 that Jesus redeemed us **by His blood**. Notice in Ephesians 1:7 that it is **in Christ** that *"we have our redemption **through His blood**."* It is in Christ that *"we have redemption **through His blood**, the forgiveness of sins"* (Cl 1:14). Keep in mind that **redemption is in Christ** and that **redemption is by the blood of Christ.** One must be in Christ, therefore, in order to be redeemed by the blood of Jesus. One must establish an "in Christ" covenant relationship with Jesus in order to benefit from the sanctifying power of His blood. Without this "in Christ" relationship with our Redeemer, there can be no sanctification by the blood of Jesus.

2. *Sanctification is by Jesus' blood "in Christ."* Hebrews 13:12 reads, *"Therefore Jesus also, **that He might sanctify the people with His own blood,** suffered outside the gate."* John wrote, *"... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanses us from all sin**"* (1 Jn 1:7). Christians have *"**washed their robes** and made them white **in the blood of the Lamb**"* (Rv 7:14). We cannot question the fact that sanctification is accomplished by the blood of Jesus. It is also necessary to recognize that sanctification is in Christ. Paul wrote to the *"church of God that is at Corinth, to those that are **sanctified in Christ Jesus**"* (1 Co 1:2). These same Christians in Corinth had been washed and sanctified *"in the name of the Lord Jesus ..."* (1 Co 6:11). Can anyone question the fact that **one must be in Christ in order to be sanctified by the blood of Jesus?** Certainly not! For this reason we strongly affirm that one must be in Christ—in the body of Christ—in order to have the privilege of the sanctifying power of the blood of Jesus.



From the above two points anyone would obviously conclude that redemption is accomplished by the blood of Jesus and that **redemption is in Christ.** Sanctification is accomplished by the blood of Christ and **sanctification is in Christ.** Therefore, it is necessary to determine how one comes into Christ.

Romans 6:3 clearly answers the question concerning how one comes into a covenant relationship with Jesus and His cleansing blood. *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus** were baptized into His death?"* Paul said the same thing in Galatians 3:27. *"For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on*

Christ." **One must therefore be baptized into Christ in order to come into contact with the redemption and sanctification that is provided by the blood of Jesus in Christ.** We can conclude that sinners come into contact with the blood of Christ when they are baptized.

If one is saved by the blood of Jesus on the basis of a self-proclaimed "salvation experience," then the condition for one's salvation would be proclaimed by man, not God. However, if one is saved at the point where God says he has remission of sins through the blood of His Son, then it is God who proclaims our salvation. Therefore, one has the choice of basing his salvation on his own self-proclamation or on the fact that God has stated in Scripture that those who have obeyed the gospel for remission of sins are redeemed and sanctified.

B. Washing by the blood of Jesus takes place at baptism.

Christians have *"**washed their robes** and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"* (Rv 7:14). To the Corinthians Paul wrote, *"... you were **washed ...** you were **sanctified** ..."* (1 Co 6:11). This is the same as the *"**washing of regeneration**"* that Paul discussed in Titus 3:5. Jesus has *"washed us from our sins **in His own blood**"* (Rv 1:5). The "washing of regeneration" is the result of sanctification by the blood. When one is cleansed (sanctified) of sin, he or she is regenerated into a new life.

Acts 22:16 connects baptism with the washing of sins by the blood of Jesus. Ananias said to Paul, *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized **and wash away your sins,** calling on the name of the Lord."* It would be right to conclude that one's washing by the blood of Jesus is accomplished at the point of baptism. Past sins are washed away when one is baptized because it is at the point of baptism that the blood of Jesus comes into contact with our souls. John taught that this washing (cleansing) by the blood continues throughout the life of the faithful Christian. He said that if we walk in the light *"the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin"* (1 Jn 1:7). It is at the point of immersion that the application of this continual cleansing begins. Therefore, in order for one to have the cleansing blood of Jesus in his life, he must be immersed into Christ.

C. Baptism produces a good conscience through the blood.

The Hebrew writer contended that *"the blood of Christ"* would *"purge your conscience from dead works ..."* (Hb 9:14). We are created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ep 2:10). These works of obedience are made profitable by the blood of Jesus. One may do good works outside a covenant relationship with Jesus. However, these works are in vain; they are useless in reference to their following with us into eternal heaven. John recorded, *"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: blessed are the dead who die **in the Lord** from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'so that they may rest from their labors, and **their works follow them**"* (Rv 14:13). Compare this thought with what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:58, *"... **your labor is not in vain in the Lord**."* Our works are not dead or useless when we

are in a covenant relationship with the Lord. We can conscientiously know that our works are not useless **in the Lord**. Baptism brings one into this realm of "useful" works that will follow one into eternity, for baptism brings one **into the Lord**.

Everyone realizes that he or she must obey the Lord. We must "*keep His commandments*" (Jn 15:14). We must also *"do good to all"* (Gl 6:10). He who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin (Js 4:17). If we do not do good, our conscience hurts us. We know when we are not being obedient. And, we know we can never do enough good works in order to be justified by our good works, for by works no one can be justified before God (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). We therefore have a conscience problem. We know we must be obedient. Our conscience is disturbed when we are not obedient. We know that we cannot do enough good works in order to atone for one sin. Our conscience is thus ladened with guilt before God. Therefore, how can one deal with this conscience problem before God? The answer is in the blood of Jesus.

In obedience to Jesus we purify our souls and cleanse our conscience before God (1 Pt 1:22). Jesus commanded, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved ..."* (Mk 16:16). Baptism is an action of submission that Jesus asked all those who believe on Him to do. In conjunction with this command, Peter stated, *"The like figure whereunto even baptism now saves us, namely baptism—not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the* ***appeal of a good conscience toward God****—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"* (1 Pt 3:21).

In submitting to Jesus' command to be immersed, one cleanses his or her conscience before God, for he or she knows that baptism is commanded by God. One cannot have a good conscience toward the commandments of God unless he has submitted to the will of God. At the point of immersion one can intellectually and biblically recognize that he has completed everything that is necessary to that point in his life to have his sins washed away.

However, there is still the problem of sin the Christian will commit while struggling to live the obedient life. Good works do not atone for this sin. The blood of Jesus does. Therefore, *"if we walk in the light"* the blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing us of **all** sin (1 Jn 1:7-9). We can have a good conscience toward God through the blood of Jesus, for it is His blood that cleanses all our sins.

D. We contact the blood in the body of Christ.

We contact the blood of Jesus by being immersed into the blood-bought body of Christ. In Acts 20:28 Paul said that elders should feed *"the church of God* ***which He purchased with His own blood****."* Jesus is the *"Savior of the body,"* having given *"Himself for it, that He might* ***sanctify and cleanse it*** *..."* (Ep 5:23,24,26). He accomplished such by pouring out His blood upon the cross. But notice carefully what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:13. *"For by one Spirit we were all* ***baptized into one body*** *...."* The church is the blood-bought body of Christ. **In order to come into this body one must be baptized.** One must be baptized into Christ, into the body of Christ (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:27). Therefore, **in**

order to come into contact with the blood-bought body of Christ one must be immersed.

Because of their obedience, Christians have come into a covenant relationship with Jesus. The first covenant, the Old Testament covenant, was dedicated with blood (See Hb 9:18). By this dedication it was assumed that the second covenant, the covenant of Jesus, would also be dedicated by blood. But this dedication would be by a better sacrifice. It would be the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God (Hb 9:18-27).

Only the sacrifice of God can take away sins. Jesus used the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper to represent the **blood of His covenant** (Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20). When one is in a covenant relationship with Christ, he is sanctified by the blood of Christ. The Hebrew writer stated that the apostate Christian *"counted **the blood of the covenant** by which he was sanctified a common thing"* (Hb 10:29). Faithful Christians are in a covenant relationship with God. The blood of the covenant was made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus. To reject or turn away from this blood is to consider the divine atonement of the blood of Jesus an unholy thing.

One must purify himself in order to come into a covenant relationship with Deity. One must have his or her sins washed away by coming into contact with the blood of Christ in immersion (At 22:16). Immersion, therefore, is necessary in order to contact the blood of the covenant. It is also necessary to be continually sanctified while in the covenant relationship with Christ (1 Jn 1:7). We cannot, therefore, separate the blood of Christ from baptism.

Chapter 24
BAPTISM AND REMISSION OF SINS

One of the most important scriptures concerning baptism for remission of sins is the text of Acts 2:38. The message of this passage was stated by the apostle Peter in A.D. 30 at the conclusion of his preaching the gospel for the first time in history. It is a statement that has been discussed for many years, and rightly so, for if Peter's statement is taken for what it says, then many people have been deceived into believing many false teachings concerning baptism. It is the purpose of this chapter, therefore, to examine in some detail this statement of Peter and the concept that he wanted to convey concerning remission of sins.

> *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

One cannot be saved with the sins of his past life standing between him and God, for sin separates one from God (Is 59:1,2). One is dead to God as a result of sin (Rm 5:12). Therefore, every man must take care of his sin problem before he can be reconciled to God. Sin must be forgiven in order that the individual be brought back to a saved relationship with God. This is a clear biblical teaching that few people will reject or question.

In Acts 2:38 Peter states that one's sins are remitted (forgiven) by God at the point of immersion. This is that specific time where God says that the old

man of sin is buried and the new man comes alive (Rm 6:3-6). The conclusion is that baptism is necessary for the remission of sins. This is the concept Peter wants us to understand from his inspired statement of Acts 2:38.

However, every effort has been made to deny the fact that at the point of baptism one's sins are forgiven. For this reason, it is necessary here that we study some of the principal arguments used against the teaching that at the point of obedience to the gospel by immersion God forgives all our past sins. One of these arguments involves the interpretation of the Greek word *eis.* A misunderstanding of this word has led to some confusion on the part of those who do not believe that baptism is necessary for salvation. However, when we understand the proper meaning of the word as it is used in Acts 2:38, we understand that baptism is inseparably linked with remission of sins.

A. The Greek word *eis* means "for," "unto," "toward," or "into."

Some have argued that the Greek word *eis,* which is translated "for" (or, "unto," depending on your translation) in Acts 2:38 in the *King James Version*, actually means "because of." Hence, Peter would have been saying, "Repent and be baptized **because of** the remission of sins." But this assumption is not correct. The Greek word *eis* in this passage does not mean "because of."

All accepted Greek dictionaries (lexicons) define the Greek word *eis* as used in Acts 2:38 to mean "for, unto, towards, into, among, or, in order to." Thayer's Greek lexicon states that *eis* means "into," "to," "towards," "for," or "among." The Abbott-Smith lexicon says it means "into," "unto," "to," "upon," "towards," "for," or "among." The Arndt and Gingrich Greek lexicon states that *eis* means "in order to," or "to." In reference to Acts 2:38, Arndt and Gingrich state that *eis*, in conjunction with the forgiveness of sins in Acts 2:38, should be translated "for forgiveness of sin" or "so that sins might be forgiven." **There are no Greek lexicons or translations that use the meaning "because of" in Acts 2:38 as a translation of the Greek word *eis.*** Therefore, if one takes the position that *eis* means "because of," then he must take a position that is against all accepted translations of Acts 2:38.

B. All accepted translations correctly translate Acts 2:38.

It would be good here to note some major versions of the English New Testament and how the translators have translated Acts 2:38. All accepted translations of this passage render the Greek word *eis* according to the preceding accurate lexical definitions. Note the following examples:

Translations of Acts 2:38

1. ***King James Version:*** *"Repent and be baptized ... **for** the remission of sins."*
2. ***English Revised Version:*** *"Repent ye, and be baptized ... **unto** the remission of sins."*
3. ***American Standard Version:*** *"Repent ye, and be baptized ... **unto** the remission of sins."*
4. ***New English Bible:*** *"'Repent,' said Peter, 'repent and be baptized ... **for** the forgiveness of your sins'."*
5. ***New International Version:*** *"Repent*

and be baptized ... ***so that your sins may be forgiven****."*

6. ***International King James Version:*** *"Repent and be baptized ...* ***for*** *the remission of sins."*

One could also refer to other English versions as the *Twentieth Century New Testament, Knox's Translation, The Riverside New Testament, The American Bible Union Translation, Moffatt's Translation, Philips' New Testament, The Amplified New Testament* and a host of others. Such is a great testimony of modern-day scholarship behind the translation of *eis* to mean that one is immersed in order to reap the benefit of remission of sins.

The best Greek scholarship in the world stands behind these translations and their correct translation of Acts 2:38. This scholarship states that in Acts 2:38 *eis* means either "to," "for," "unto," or "toward." Therefore, according to Acts 2:38 one must be immersed in order to have the remission of sins. Without immersion one cannot have the remission of sins. And without the remission of sins there is no salvation. One cannot stand before God in judgment with the stain of his own sins. God has provided the sacrifice for sins, and all men must submit to the conditions of accepting His sacrifice. This means that one must be immersed in water in the name of Jesus in order to have the remission of sins.

C. Matthew 12:41 does not define *eis* to mean "because of."

In conjunction with Acts 2:38, there are two important passages that must be considered. They are Matthew 12:41 and Matthew 26:38. The context of Matthew 12:41 is often misunderstood by those who are prejudiced against the subject of baptism for remission of sins. This misunderstanding has led some to maintain an incorrect definition of the word *eis*. This incorrect meaning is then applied to Acts 2:38. The result is an incorrect interpretation of Acts 2:38.

1. ***Matthew 12:41:*** This passage is often used to prove that *eis* should, or could, be translated "because of" in Acts 2:38. Jesus said to the Jews, *"The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it, because they repented* ***unto*** *(eis) the preaching of Jonah ..."* (*International King James Version*).

The word translated "unto" here is the Greek word *eis.* A misunderstanding of this passage has led some to believe that Jesus was emphasizing that the people of Nineveh repented **because of** the preaching of Jonah. The Ninevites did truly repent because of Jonah's preaching. **However, the emphasis of Matthew 12:41 is that the Ninevites turned unto the way of life that Jonah was preaching.**

Jonah preached in Nineveh what God wanted the city to do in order to avert their coming punishment. He preached a body of truth to which they had to conform their lives. When they repented, they turned to this behavioral pattern of life that Jonah preached. In this sense, therefore, they repented **unto** *(eis)* or **at** that which Jonah preached.

2. ***Matthew 26:28:*** Compare Matthew 12:41 with what Jesus said in Matthew 26:28. Jesus said, *"For this is My blood of the new covenant that is shed*

for many ***for*** (eis) *the remission of sins."* Here is the exact phrase ("for remission of sins") that is used in Acts 2:38. The Greek word that is translated "for" in this scripture is the same Greek word that is used in Acts 2:38 and Matthew 12:41. It is the word *eis*. Was Jesus' blood poured out "because of" the remission of sins? Or, was it poured out in order that men might have the forgiveness of all sins? We believe the latter question focuses on the correct answer.

If one contends that *eis* means "because of," then we can claim that men had the remission of sins **without the death of Jesus on the cross.** If this is true, then we would naturally ask, Why did Jesus even have to die on the cross in the first place?

This is not to say that the blood of Jesus did not cover the sins of those who lived before the cross. Sins before the cross were forgiven through the offering of Jesus (Rm 3:25). However, they were forgiven in view of the coming death of Jesus on the cross. All sin has been forgiven because of Jesus' death on the cross. But Jesus had to die on the cross in order that all sin be forgiven at the cross.

The correct meaning of Matthew 26:28 is that Jesus died on the cross in order that men might have the remission of sins. Therefore, men are immersed according to Acts 2:38 in order to have remission of sins, for without remission of sins one cannot be saved. In immersion one comes into contact with that which produces the remission of sins. One comes into contact with the blood of Jesus. It is the blood of Jesus that produces the remission of sins, not the act of immersion or the water. It is at the time of immersion that God applies the blood of Jesus to one's life. It is for this reason that the blood is directly connected with baptism. And without the blood of Jesus, there is no remission of sins. And without remission of sins, there is no salvation.

Chapter 25
BAPTISM AND BEING IN CHRIST

The New Testament uses many metaphors when discussion is centered around one's relationship with God. In contexts of the Scriptures that deal with our salvation, the Spirit has used metaphors in order to exemplify the nature of the believer's covenant with God. The reason for this is simple. When discussing relationships between that which is of this world to that which is of God, there are no human words that can adequately explain these relationships. Therefore, the Holy Spirit had to use human words with human definitions in order to take our minds beyond human experiences. In metaphor, therefore, we must think beyond the literal and earthly definition of the actual words. The Spirit wants us to stretch our imagination to a realm of relationship that is beyond this world.

One of the important metaphors of the New Testament is a phrase that is commonly used by Paul. This metaphor is his use of the Greek word *en* in reference to one's relationship with Christ. The metaphor is used in the phrase "in Christ." The literal or actual meaning of the word *en* is not meant when the phrase "in Christ" is used. In other words, we are not physically in-

side the literal body of Jesus. Something **greater** than the literal and actual physical meaning is being emphasized when Paul used the phrase "in Christ." Therefore, we must look for a greater, or spiritual meaning when studying contexts in which the phrase "in Christ" is used. In other words, when Paul is talking about being "in Christ," he is not saying that we are literally and actually inside the actual physical body of Jesus, whatever that body may now be. He wants us to understand that we are in a spiritual body relationship with the Lord Jesus.

In the New Testament the phrase "in Christ" refers to a **relationship** one has with Christ. It is a Master-slave relationship, a Head-body union. Jesus is the Master. Christians are the slaves (See Rm 6:17-20). He is the controlling head (Cl 1:18). We are the controlled body (1 Co 12:27). Jesus commands; we obey. He speaks; we follow. Those who are in Christ have Jesus as the center of reference of their lives.

In this relationship with Christ, Christians have the benefit of many spiritual blessings that come from God concerning their salvation. In order for one to receive these spiritual blessings, however, he or she must come into an "in Christ" relationship with God.

A. One has access to all spiritual blessings "in Christ."

Paul wrote, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with **every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places **in Christ**"* (Ep 1:3). This passage teaches that all spiritual blessings that God has for every man concerning salvation are "in Christ." It is assumed, therefore, **that "outside" Christ one does not have these blessings**. Outside Christ there are no blessings that one would have in relation to that which is necessary for his salvation.

In order for one to reap spiritual blessings that relate to salvation, he must establish a relationship with God. Specifically, this relationship must be established with Jesus who made our salvation possible.

We must emphasize the point that for one to establish this relationship, **conditions** must be fulfilled. If spiritual blessings concerning one's salvation are unconditional, then all would be saved by the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus. However, God has determined that men must act upon His free gift of grace. Men must respond by obedience. Our obedience is the condition for our relationship with God.

Being "in Christ" focuses on a spiritual covenant relationship with Christ. We come into this relationship through our commitment to the conditions that are God-determined and given through His word. Because Jesus took our old man of sin with Him to the cross, we repent. We are then buried with him in the waters of baptism. When we have been baptized into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we come into Christ in a covenant with God. The following are spiritual blessings that result in the life of those who respond in a positive manner to the grace of God:

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST
Forgiveness of sins (Ep 1:7)
Redemption (Cl 1:14; Rm 3:24)
A new creature (2 Co 5:17)
All sons of God (Gl 3:26,27)
Eternal life (1 Jn 5:11)
The seal of the Spirit (Ep 1:13)
A state of no condemnation (Rm 8:1)
Sanctification from sin (1 Co 1:2; 6:9-11)
SALVATION (2 Tm 2:10)

All these blessings are "in Christ." Therefore, in order for one to have access to these blessings he or she must be in Christ. We must clearly understand that one cannot be saved without having these blessings of God. In fact, the summation of all these blessings is salvation. This is why Paul wrote, *"Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect,* ***so that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory****"* (2 Tm 2:10). In order to receive the blessings that are in Christ, one must be immersed into Christ.

Satan will do his best to keep people outside Christ. Since one is redeemed by the blood of Jesus when he is in Christ, then certainly we must assume that Satan will deceive people into believing that they are redeemed outside Christ. Since one is not in a state of condemnation in Christ, then we must also assume that Satan will deceive people into believing that they are not in a state of condemnation outside Christ. In order for Satan to accomplish this great deception, he must work with religious people who do not have a love of the truth (See 2 Th 2:10-12). God will allow such people to be deceived. He will allow them to be deceived because all men must be held accountable for their own conduct and unwillingness to obey the word of God.

B. One is baptized into Christ.

The questions now are, How does one come into Christ? How does one come into this spiritual relationship where he or she has all spiritual blessings? The answer to these questions is simple. Romans 6:3 answers, *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were* ***baptized into Christ Jesus*** *were baptized into His death?"* Paul also stated in Galatians 3:27, *"For as many of you as were* ***baptized into Christ*** *have put on Christ."* Therefore, if one desires to be in Christ where lie all spiritual blessings concerning his salvation, **he must obey the gospel by immersion in water**.

According to 2 Timothy 2:10, salvation, and thus all spiritual blessings, are in Christ. Galatians 3:27 and Romans 6:3 teach that one is baptized into Christ. Therefore, one is baptized into Christ in order to be saved. This one thought is true of all the spiritual blessings of the preceding point that are mentioned to be in Christ. The final conclusion would be that immersion is absolutely necessary in order to bring one into a saving relationship with Jesus.

The metaphor "in Christ" conveys a very fundamental teaching of the New Testament. One must have a spiritual relationship with Jesus in order to enjoy the spiritual blessings that result from the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. In order to come into this relationship, we must be crucified **with** Christ (Rm 6:6;

see Gl 2:20; Cl 3:3). We must die **with** Christ (Cl 3:3; 2 Tm 2:11). We must be buried **with** Christ (Rm 6:4,5; Cl 2:12). We must be raised **with** Christ (Rm 6:4,5; Cl 3:1). In other words, we must obey the gospel by immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins in order to come into a saved relationship with Jesus. In this "in Christ" relationship we are within the realm of God's saving grace.

Since all spiritual blessings are in Christ, and one is baptized into Christ, then we can understand why the New Testament places so much emphasis on immersion into Christ. We can understand why the "one baptism" is listed in Ephesians 4:4-6 among other fundamental teachings as "one God," "one Lord," "one body," "one faith," "one Spirit" and "one hope." The "one baptism" brings us into a covenant relationship with God in the body of Christ, and thus, brings to life the "one hope" of being resurrected to eternal life when Jesus comes again. Therefore, anyone who would deny the fact that baptism is essential to one's salvation has played into the hand of Satan, and thus, accomplished Satan's work to keep men and women outside Christ. The truly unfortunate thing about this is the fact that thousands of religiously sincere people are being deceived by uninformed religious leaders into believing that one does not have to join with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. We must remember that Satan is working *"with all deception of wickedness among those who perish, **because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved**"* (2 Th 2:10).

Chapter 26
BAPTISM AND DIVINE RELATIONSHIPS

There is a connection made in God's plan of salvation between Himself and the baptized. This connection will result in eternal salvation for the obedient. It is this connective relationship that is established in a covenant that must form the bond between God and man. In order to initiate this covenant relationship, immersion is God's condition that people demonstrate their faith. People must respond to God's desire to connect with all those who seek to covenant with Him. The very fact that we must respond to God negates the thought that salvation is unconditional. In order to connect with God we must take the initiative to act on what God has said we must do in order to be brought into a saving covenant relationship with Him.

God has revealed the conditions by which we establish a covenant relationship with Him. He has revealed the gospel which is His power to make this connection. Therefore, men and women must be obedient to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus in order to establish a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus responded to our sin problem through the cross. We must respond to the cross by our own death and burial **with** Him (Rm 6:3-6). Jesus brought a solution to our physical death problem. He was resurrected in order to give us hope (Hb 2:14,15). His resurrection resulted from His death and burial. Our resurrection from the grave of water is

the result of death and burial. If there is no death and burial, then there can be no resurrection to a covenant relationship with God. Subsequently, there can be no physical resurrection to life when Jesus comes again, for only those in Christ will be raised to life (1 Co 15:22).

Baptism brings us into this relationship of hope with Christ. To be "of Christ" means to belong to Him. It means to be of His heritage and to be in a relationship with Jesus as the Son of God. Those who are not "of Christ" cannot be in a saved relationship with God. In order to belong to Jesus one must obey the gospel. And one obeys the gospel by immersion into Christ.

A. We are baptized to be "of Christ."

In 1 Corinthians 1:12,13 Paul stated, *"Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I am of Apollos,' and 'I am of Cephas,' and 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided?* ***Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"*** Paul asked the Corinthians these questions in order to draw from them that which they already knew. What he was asking was that two things must happen before one can be either of Paul, Apollos, Cephas or Christ.

1. The one to whom allegiance is given must have been **crucified** on behalf of the individual who is giving the allegiance (vs 13).

2. The individual who is giving allegiance **must be baptized into the name** of the one who was crucified on his behalf (vs 13).

In reference to the first point, the New Testament teaches that Jesus is the One who has been crucified for us (Rm 5:6-8; 2 Co 5:14; 1 Th 5:10). He was crucified for all who would give allegiance to Him. Neither Paul, Apollos nor Cephas have been crucified for alien sinners. Therefore, this first act that is necessary for one to be **of Christ** (that is, "Christian") has already been accomplished. Jesus has been crucified. He has been crucified for us. This was God's part to bring us into a covenant relationship with Him. The first part of what is necessary for us to be of Christ, and thus Christian, was accomplished by God when He poured out His grace on the cross through Jesus (Ti 2:11).

The second point of 1 Corinthians 1:13 must be accomplished by those who believe on Jesus. They must respond to the cross. Alien sinners are not baptized in the name of either Paul, Apollos or Cephas. **They are baptized in the name of Jesus** (See At 2:38; 19:1-6). Therefore, in order for one to be "of Christ," **he or she must be baptized in the name of Christ.** One cannot be of the heritage of Christ without being baptized. This conclusion brings us again to an irrefutable conclusion. This conclusion is that baptism is absolutely necessary in order to be "of Christ." Without immersion in the name of Christ, one cannot be "of Christ," and thus, be considered "Christian."

B. One must be baptized in the "name of Christ."

When those on Pentecost in Acts 2, who were cut to the heart by their sinful behavior asked Peter what to do to be saved, Peter responded that they must *"... be baptized* ***in the name of***

Jesus Christ** ..."* (At 2:38). After Paul had discovered that some disciples in Ephesus had been baptized for the wrong reasons, these disciples were *"baptized **in the name of the Lord Jesus" (At 19:5).

The phrase "in the name of" refers to being associated with the authority of the one with whom one identifies himself by name. If someone sent you on a mission "in his name," then you would go by the authority of his name. If someone sent you to the bank with the endorsement of his name in order to draw money on his account, then the money comes from the account of the one whose name is on the bank account. If we are to go forth with the great commission of Jesus, then we must go forth with the authority of His name. In fact, our entire Christian life is based on our association with the name of Jesus. Paul wrote, *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all **in the name of the Lord Jesus** ..."* (Cl 3:17).

In order for one to carry the name of Jesus, he must be baptized into the name of Jesus. In order for one to identify himself with the authority of Jesus, **he or she must be baptized.** In order for one's works to be sanctioned by Christ, one must have been baptized into the name of Christ. One cannot claim the name of Jesus unless he has submitted to the gospel by immersion into the name of Jesus. All those who are claiming the name of Jesus without being baptized into his name are actually plagiarizing the name of Jesus in order to justify their own unwillingness to do what Jesus commanded concerning baptism.

At the time one is baptized in the name of Jesus, he is at the same time baptized into a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus emphasized this when He gave the great commission to the apostles in Matthew 28:19.

When the New Testament states that one is to be baptized **in** the name of Jesus, a different Greek word is used than the one that is used in Matthew 28:19 where Jesus said, *"... baptizing them **in*** (eis) *the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* The Greek word *eis* in Matthew 28:19 refers to being baptized into a **relationship** with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is what happens when people are baptized in (*eis*) the name of Jesus. However, when one is baptized in (*en*) the name of Jesus, a different Greek word is used. It is the word *en.* This word refers to one being baptized upon the authority or sanction of Jesus. When one is baptized in (*en*) the name of Jesus, reference is to **the authority of Jesus**. When one is baptized into (*eis*) the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reference is to one coming into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In either situation, **one must be baptized.** Without baptism, therefore, one cannot come into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that is sanctioned by the Son of God.

We must mention in this context that Jesus is not commanding in Matthew 28:19 that something be said at the time one is baptized. In other words, He is not saying that the one baptizing should state, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." What Jesus means in Matthew

28:19 is that **something is happening** at the time of baptism. When one is baptized, he or she is being baptized into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The one who is being baptized should know this **before** he or she is baptized. In other words, being baptized into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is something that must be taught to disciples who would be baptized. They must be taught before the point of baptism. This is not something that is pronounced immediately before one goes down into the grave of water. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus is not giving a command for some formal statement that is to be made by the one assisting in the baptizing. What he is stating is something that the one being baptized should already know by the time he or she is baptized. In fact, the one who is baptized is actually doing such because he or she seeks to be baptized into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

C. We are baptized into the body of Christ.

Being "of Christ" refers to belonging to Jesus. Those who belong to Jesus have submitted to His headship in their lives. Jesus is the head of the body, and as the head of the body, He controls the lives of men through His word (Jn 12:48; Ep 5:23; Cl 1:18).

In order to become a part of the body of Christ, one must be immersed into the body. When Jesus comes again, He will save out of the world for heaven only His body. Therefore, it is necessary that one be a part of His body at the time of His final coming.

1. *Jesus is the Savior of the body.* The New Testament teaches that Jesus is the Savior of the body, the church. He *"is the head of the church; and He is **the savior of the body**"* (Ep 5:23). He gave Himself up for His body *"that He might sanctify it ... that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing ..."* (Ep 5:26,27). Jesus purchased the church *"with His own blood"* (At 20:28). He will eternally save only this blood-bought body when He comes again.

2. *We are baptized into the body of Christ.* The New Testament teaches that the body is the church. Paul wrote, *"He* [Jesus] *is the head of the body, the church ..."* (Cl 1:18). Paul even emphasized that Jesus is the *"head over all things to the church"* (Ep 1:22). One comes into this body by immersion. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:13, *"For by one Spirit we were all **baptized into one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondservants or free, and were all made to drink of one Spirit"* (See At 2:41,47).

It must be concluded from the above two points that only those who have been immersed into the body of Christ will be delivered from this world when Jesus comes again. This corresponds with what Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:10 and Galatians 3:27. It was in these two passages that Paul said that salvation is "in Christ." Salvation is in the body. One is baptized into Christ, that is, he is baptized into the body of Christ. It is necessary, therefore, that everyone be immersed in order to come into the body of Christ that will be saved out of this

world when Jesus comes again.

In order for one to be of Christ, he or she must be baptized in the name of Jesus. Without baptism in the name of Jesus, no one can truly represent the authority of Jesus in his life. Those who are not baptized in the name of Christ are only counterfeiting the name "Christian" when they claim to be of Christ. How can one preach by the authority of Jesus if he has not first submitted to the authority of Jesus to be baptized? Religious people may do good deeds in the name of Christ, but if they have not obeyed the gospel by immersion in the name of Christ, then they fall short of what the Bible defines as being "of Christ." Some have thus stolen from the Bible the name "Christian," and gone forth to represent Christ with whom they have not been crucified, buried and resurrected through baptism. In order to claim allegiance to Jesus, and thus, represent Him in the world, one must be "of Christ." And to be "of Christ," Paul says that we must be immersed in the name of Christ who was crucified for us.

Chapter 27
BAPTISM AND OUR COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Throughout history God has maintained a covenant relationship with His people. He established a covenant with Noah after the flood of Noah's day (Gn 6:18). He established a covenant with Abraham (Gn 15:18). He established a covenant with the nation of Israel (Rm 9:4). God works through covenant relationships with man in order to bring about His eternal purpose to bring the obedient into eternal dwelling with Him.

Those with whom God establishes a covenant relationship will be saved for eternal dwelling if they maintain the conditions of the covenant. In establishing salvational covenant relationships, God has always placed conditions on the continuation of the covenant that men must keep. In other words, a covenant relationship is not unconditional. God is not a respecter of persons, and thus, He does not establish a covenant relationship apart from the faith of man. It must also be noted that He has never established a covenant relationship with an unbeliever.

Baptism in the name of Jesus for remission of sins is part of the new covenant. As a result of our faith, we indicate by immersion that we desire to join in a covenant relationship with God. All who would come into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, therefore, must be immersed in water for remission of sins as an expression of faith. Baptism washes away sins that separate one from God. It brings us into contact with the continual cleansing of sins by the blood of Jesus which is the primary blessing of our covenant with God (1 Jn 1:7).

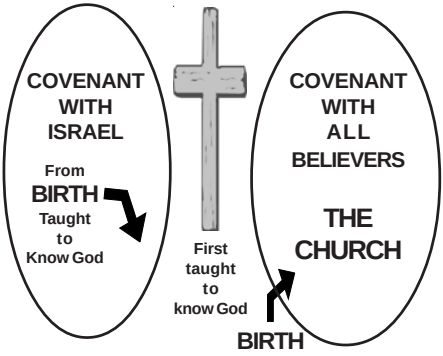
Before the cross of Jesus, God had a covenant relationship with Israel. Jews were physically born into this covenant relationship. As they grew up after birth, Jewish children were instructed concerning the covenant that God had with the nation of Israel. However, this covenant would eventually change to a new covenant that would demand a different means by which one would covenant with God.

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 God stated

that He would establish a **new covenant** with the houses of Israel and Judah, which covenant would include all nations. Conditions for entering this new covenant would be different from the old covenant. Notice carefully how Jeremiah stated the nature of this new covenant relationship between God and man.

> [31]*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord,* ***that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah***, [32]*not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they broke, although I was a husband to them, says the Lord.* [33]*But this will be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord,* ***I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts.*** *And I will be their God and they will be My people.* [34]***And they will no longer teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord.*** *For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.*

In verse 33 God explained that the new covenant would be different in the sense that God would put His law in their hearts. In other words, when one would come into a covenant relationship with God under the new covenant, the law of God would already be in one's heart in the sense that he or she would be an obedient subject. **One would already have been taught to know God before coming into a covenant relationship with God**.



Here is the point. Before one is born again, He is taught to "know God" and that which is necessary to come into a covenant relationship with God. He is taught what he must do to remain faithful to his covenant with God (See Jn 6:45). One is taught these conditions for the covenant relationship **before** he or she comes into that covenant relationship. This is what Jesus meant when He instructed the apostles to first disciple a person before baptizing them (See Mt 28:19,20).

Under the old covenant, when a Jewish baby was born, he or she was automatically in a covenant relationship with God. Physical birth of Jewish parents brought one into a covenant relationship with God because the nation of Israel as a whole was already in a covenant with God. When the small child grew up, he or she had to be taught to "know God," that is, the child had to be taught what to do in order to maintain a covenant relationship with God. However, under the new covenant, one would know God from "birth."

Under the new covenant one must

first be taught before the covenant is established with the individual. This is certainly the thought behind Jesus' statement of John 6:45. *"It is written in the prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Therefore, everyone who has* ***heard and learned*** *from the Father comes to Me."* When one is taught the lordship of Jesus and the gospel, his response should be the same as those in Acts 2 who heard, *"God has made this same Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (At 2:36). *"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart"* (At 2:37). These on Pentecost were taught of God by the inspired preaching of the apostles. They responded to what they had been taught. Peter instructed them, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you..."* (At 2:38). About three thousand people came into a covenant relationship with the Father on this day of Pentecost when they were immersed for the remission of their sins (At 2:41). Therefore, they were first taught by God, and then, they came into a covenant relationship with God through obedience to the gospel.

Both in the covenant God had with Israel before the cross and in His covenant with all believers today, there has been remission of sins. When one is in a covenant relationship with God there is always remission. Remission of sins under both the old and new covenants was accomplished through the same thing, the blood of Jesus. The Hebrew writer stated, *"And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death,* ***for the redemption of the transgressions committed under the first covenant,*** *those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance"* (Hb 9:15; see Rm 3:25). Since it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin under the old covenant, the sacrifices of the old covenant were only a shadow of the cross that was to come (Hb 10:1-4). Therefore, when Jesus offered Himself on the cross, He became the blood offering for all men who have been in a covenant relationship with God throughout all history.

With the above in mind, review again some of the following concepts that are taught in the New Testament. Understanding the nature of the covenant relationship that God's people now have with Him helps us understand New Testament teachings concerning covenant relationships:

A. Remission of sins *before* the cross of Jesus:

Before the cross, remission of sins through the sacrifices of bulls and goats did occur in the life of the obedient. However, remission took place only in view of the coming sacrifice of Jesus. The primary conditions for salvation that were established by God for man have always been the same throughout history. On God's part salvation has been grace, for no man can keep God's laws perfectly in order to save himself (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16); neither can good works atone for sin. On man's part the condition has been faith (Hb 4:2; Rm 1:17). However, this faith must be expressed in some way, for the demons also believe and tremble, and yet, they are not saved (Js 2:19). Therefore, under the Old Testament covenant God's part in man's salvation was the same as it is today. Salvation was and is by grace.

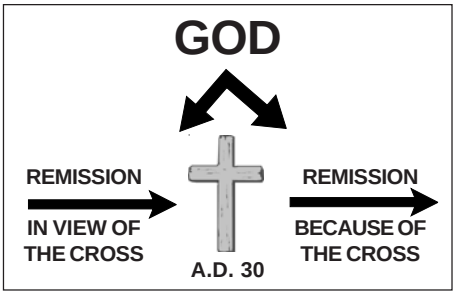
Our part is also the same. We must believe. But this belief must manifest itself in obedience to the conditions that God has established in order for one to establish and maintain a covenant relationship with Him. Our response by faith to God's conditions for remission of sins is different today than under the Old Testament law.

1. *Remission of sins came from the cross under the Old Testament law:* Under the Old Testament covenant man's response to God was obedience to His will. It was His will in relation to forgiveness that the obedient believer offered animal sacrifices. However, since the days God instituted blood sacrifices it was *"not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins"* (Hb 10:4). Animal sacrifices could not make perfect the Jews who lived under the law (Hb 10:1). Nevertheless, they had to offer the sacrifices. Such sacrifices were a shadow of the sacrifice of Jesus that was to come. Of the sacrifice of Jesus, Paul wrote in Romans 3:25, *"Whom* [Jesus] *God set forth to be an atoning sacrifice by His blood, **through faith in order to declare His righteousness for the remission of sin in the past because of the forbearance of God."*** (Rm 3:25; see Hb 9:15).

When Jesus died on the cross, therefore, He completed the Father's plan of forgiveness for those under the old covenant. Romans 3:25 is not teaching that the sins committed before the cross were "rolled forward" in order to be forgiven at the cross. **Before the cross, sins were forgiven in view of the cross.**

Because God is timeless and not confined to time as men, He sees or deals with history as a whole. The sacrifice of Jesus had to be an historical event that had to take place at a specific time in history. In other words, Jesus could not have been offered continually upon the cross throughout history. Because God entered into the confinement of time through the incarnation, a specific time in man's history had to be chosen when the one-time sacrifice would be made. That time was in A.D. 30 in Jerusalem of Palestine.

Since Jesus was incarnate Deity in the flesh of man, He was confined to man's time while on earth (Ph 2:5-8). Therefore, His crucifixion had to be an historical event according to the calendar of man. However, the sacrificial blood of the cross was not something that was confined to time. Though the cross had to happen at a specific time in history, the application of the blood of Jesus did not. For this reason, God can easily apply the blood of Jesus to those who lived before this historical event, as well as to those who live after the event. Just because the faithful in the Old Testament era did not have knowledge of the coming sacrifice of Jesus, does not mean that Jesus' blood was not working in their lives. We must remember that the forgiveness of sins through the blood of the



sacrificial Servant is God's work, not man's. And God is not confined to time. He sees and works in history on a timeless basis.

God has forgiven all sin of the faithful obedient of all history through the cross. He sees all the sins of mankind in all history through the cross. Without the cross, there would have been no forgiveness of sins before or after the cross. At the time Jesus was crucified, God saw all the sins of humanity both **before** and **after** the cross. Paul stated in Romans 1:17, *"The just will live by faith."* Romans 1:17 is a quotation from Habbakuk 2:4 in the Old Testament. Thus the justified lived by faith **before** the cross as we live by faith **after** the cross. God's response to forgive sins is conditioned upon man's faith both before and after the cross.

In some way this may help us to understand why Jesus said on the cross, *"My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?"* (Mt 27:46). Jesus took upon Himself on the cross all the sins of all humanity of all history. All the sins of those before the cross and all the sins of all those after the cross were upon Him at the cross. Could it be that it was in the nature of God in whom is no darkness (1 Jn 1:5) to turn away from such darkness of sin? Though we do not understand all that transpired in the heavenly realm at that moment on the cross, we do know that in some way Jesus took it upon Himself to accept the burden of all the sins of those who have obediently responded to God by faith.

For us today, the cross was God's manifestation of grace for sins in the past that carries forgiveness to us in the present (Ti 2:11). This is why the Hebrew writer made the following statement in Hebrews 9:15 concerning Jesus being our Mediator: *"And for this reason He* [Jesus] *is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death,* ***for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant****, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."*

The cross is God's manifestation of grace to those who would sin after Jesus died on the cross (Ep 2:6-9). All forgiveness of sins, therefore, centers around and proceeds from Calvary. Forgiveness occurs instantaneously in the life of the believer upon the believer's compliance to the conditions for forgiveness that God demands at any time in history. Before the cross, the Israelites had to keep the Old Testament law as a manifestation of faith. Today, we must submit to the law of Christ. Our submission to God's will is our condition for the application of God's grace to our lives.

We must keep in mind, however, that perfect submission to all of God's law is not a condition for salvation simply because no man can keep God's law perfectly. We are not saved by perfect law-keeping (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). And because we are not, God must save us by His grace that was revealed at the cross of Calvary (Ti 2:11).

2. *Remission of sins comes directly from Jesus:* The conditions for the remission of sins were different **before** the ascension of Jesus and establishment of the new covenant, than **after** the establishment of the new covenant. Before the new covenant, and while on this earth, Jesus could say during His personal ministry, *"Your sins*

are forgiven" (Lk 7:48,49). Jesus could forgive sin personally while on earth. He said such in Matthew 9:6. *"But that you may know that* ***the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins*** *...."*

Jesus could forgive sins personally while on this earth because He was God against whom sin was committed. Therefore, **before** His death, He could say to the thief on the cross, *"Today you will be with Me in Paradise"* (Lk 23:43). While on this earth, Jesus could forgive sins personally, and thus, He could directly save the thief on the cross. His power to forgive sins was evidence that He was God on earth, for only God can forgive sins.

One must also keep in mind that the Old Testament law was still in force during Jesus' life on earth. The New Testament law was brought into force only after the official announcement of the lordship of Jesus in Acts 2 (See Hb 9:16,17; At 2:36). Under the Old Testament law the conditions for forgiveness of sins were different from the conditions for forgiveness under the New Testament law of Christ. Jesus, as God and originator of the Old Testament law, had authority to forgive sins personally on earth while that law was in force.

3. ***Remission of sins was accomplished by John's baptism:*** During the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus, God ordained by commandment that John baptize people **for the forgiveness of sins.** He did this in order to prepare people to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus after the cross. Therefore, John baptized in the wilderness and preached the *"baptism of repentance* ***for the remission of sins***" (Mk 1:4).

John's baptism was a baptism **for the remission of sins.** The same Greek phrase that is used in Mark 1:4 is also used in Acts 2:38 where Peter told people to be baptized "*for the remission of sins."* The difference is that the baptism of Acts 2:38 was to be **in the name of Jesus,** that is, in subjection to Jesus' lordship for He had already died and ascended by the time of the pronouncement of Acts 2:38. Though John's baptism was for the forgiveness of sins, his baptism was replaced by the baptism of Acts 2:38 when the new covenant was established in Acts 2 with all those who submitted to baptism in the name of Jesus (At 2:41). If any were baptized by John's baptism after Acts 2, they needed to be rebaptized. Such happened in Acts 19 when Paul had to rebaptize about twelve disciples in Ephesus (At 19:1-7).

B. Remission of sins *after* the cross:

After His death, Jesus' new covenant was brought into force, *"for a covenant is ratified* ***upon death****..."* (Hb 9:16,17). **After** His death, therefore, when the new covenant was in force, Jesus' disciples preached **baptism for the remission of sins** (At 2:38; 8:12,13,35-39; 10:48; 22:16). Therefore, the conditions for salvation were different **before** the death of Christ and the establishment of the church than they were after the official announcement of Jesus' lordship on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. The conditions for remission before the cross differed from what is necessary for remission under the New Testament law of Christ today.

Jesus could personally forgive sins

while on earth when He was living under the Old Testament law. Those who lived before the cross were also under the Old Testament law. But that law was taken away at the cross when the new covenant came into force in Acts 2 with the first official "reading" of the testament of the Testator who was at that time reigning in heaven (See Cl 2:14). Christians are not under the Old Testament law or covenant today (Rm 7:4). They are under a law and covenant today that says everyone must be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19,20) for the remission of sins (At 2:38). In order to come into Christ (Rm 6:3), or be of Christ today (1 Co 1:12-15), we must obey the gospel by immersion. Baptism for remission of sins is necessary in order to establish a covenant with God. If anyone would be submissive to the conditions of the new covenant, he must be baptized into this covenant.

Jesus' blood has now become the *"blood of the covenant"* (Mt 26:28). His blood is the sacrificial blood of the new covenant that has now been established between God and those who are obedient to the conditions of the covenant. Those who are obedient to the things they have been taught, come into this new covenant relationship of God wherein they have forgiveness through the blood of the new covenant. The sins that would separate God's covenanted people from Him are continually washed away by the blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7).

Chapter 28
BAPTISM AND SALVATION

For years in the debate centered around baptism, argument was made that immersion stood between one's state of being lost and a state of salvation. This simple approach to emphasize the importance of immersion has not lost its force. When the New Testament is studied we cannot discount the fact that baptism is portrayed in the New Testament to stand between a condition of being lost or saved. In every case of conversion in the New Testament, immersion stands as the point of reference between being in a state of condemnation and a state of salvation. Bible students who ignore this fact have overlooked a very important fact concerning the conversion records of the Scriptures.

If baptism is not important in reference to one's salvation, then we would assume that there would be little attention paid to it in the conversion cases recorded in the New Testament. However, if it stands as a place of great importance in reference to one's salvation, **then we would assume that it would be emphasized in the records of conversion in the New Testament**. What is recorded in the cases of conversion is that all salvational blessings come after one is baptized.

A. Baptism stands between being saved and being lost.

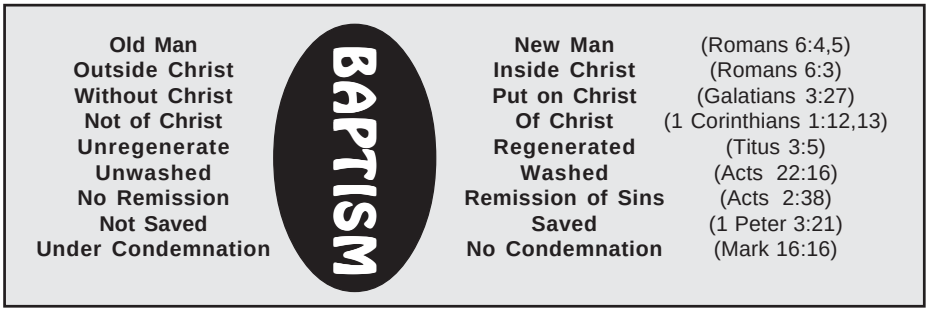
Paul wrote that *"our old man was crucified"* with Jesus and that *"we are buried with Him through baptism into death"* (Rm 6:4-6). After baptism one walks *"in newness of life"* (Rm 6:4). Jesus said that *"unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (Jn 3:3-5). Before one comes into Christ, he or she is **outside** Christ.

However, Paul wrote, *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Gl 3:27). Before baptism, one is without Christ, but after baptism one is *"of Christ"* (1 Co 1:12,13). One is baptized into Christ (Rm 6:3). Before baptism, one is in a state of unregeneration. After baptism, however, one is in a state of regeneration. Paul wrote, *"... according to His mercy, **by the washing of regeneration** and renewing of the Holy Spirit"* (Ti 3:5). **Baptism, therefore, stands between either being in a condition of salvation or in a state of condemnation in relation to God.** One cannot change this fact concerning immersion. Throughout the New Testament this concept is affirmed, and thus, in order to have a good conscience toward God concerning those things that God demands of us, one must be immersed for the remission of sins. This is the right thing to do in obedience to God.

B. Baptism saves one's soul.

Those things that result from baptism are those things that pertain to one's salvation. Peter said that one must *"**be baptized for the remission of sins**"* (At 2:38). Remission of sins is here stated to come **after** baptism. Ananias commanded Paul to *"be baptized, **and wash away your sins** ..."* (At 22:16). The washing of sins comes at the point of baptism. Peter adds that baptism *"**now saves us** ..."* (1 Pt 3:21). Peter is saying that salvation comes at the point of baptism. This is true, not because there is any power in the water, but because this is the point at which one contacts the saving blood of Jesus. Jesus stated that one is saved at the point of baptism. In Mark 16:16 He said, *"He who believes and is baptized **will be saved**; but he who does not believe will be condemned."* The *New American Standard Version* translated Mark 16:16 thus, *"He who **has believed and has been baptized will be saved**."* Salvation, therefore, comes at the point of baptism, not before. Paul reminded the Christians in Rome that *"as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized **into His death**"* (Rm 6:3; See Gl 3:27). The "into Christ" and "into His death" are things that take place at the point of baptism. One is not in Christ before he is baptized into Christ. One has not been baptized into the death of Christ until he has been baptized.

From the teachings of the passages that have been reviewed in points A and B, notice the following chart. It is obvious that immersion stands between some very important things concerning



one's salvation. If immersion stands between these very important points concerning our salvation, then we must conclude that it is necessary for our salvation.

The things mentioned above that result from immersion are not present in the life of the unbaptized person. It is because these things take place **at the point of baptism** that the eunuch rejoiced **after** he was baptized in Acts 8. The Scriptures say that Philip *"baptized him ... and the eunuch ...* ***went on his way rejoicing****"* (At 8:38,39). The eunuch could rejoice because of what happened as a result of his obedience to the gospel. There was no reason to rejoice before he was baptized because remission of sins and salvation were blessings in his life only after obedience in baptism. The same is true of us today. Only after we are baptized is there reason for rejoicing.

It may be that the simplicity of this point is what confuses people. Anyone who studies the cases of conversion in the New Testament can clearly understand the relationship newly immersed believers had with God. The contrast between their behavior before and after immersion is quite evident. It is surpising to see the lengths to which individuals will go in order to explain away this most obvious fact of the New Testament surrounding baptism. Then on the other hand, we can also understand that if one has traditionally denied the importance of immersion for years, it is hard to change in the face of clear teachings of the Bible and the intimidation of fellow workers. Again, we must not underestimate the power of traditional thought in the minds of men. After all, Jesus said, *"All too well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your own tradition"* (Mk 7:9). Most men will usually consider traditional theology more binding than the law of God.

We must remind ourselves that because baptism stands between condemnation and salvation, it is not a legal act of obedience whereby God is obligated to save the one who is baptized. In other words, one does not put God in debt by obedience to the gospel through the action of immersion. The action of immersion does not save. Immersion is not a work whereby we earn God's salvation or put God in debt to save us. We must remember that by works of law no one can be saved (Rm 3:20). This is true when alien sinners come to God simply because no one can save himself. However, one cannot be saved without an obedient faith response to the law of God. In other words, **one cannot be saved by ignoring or rejecting what God says one must do in order to wash away sins**. He cannot because obedience is the alien sinner's response to God's grace. It is by obedience that law is established (Rm 3:31).

The point of baptism is the time in the alien sinner's life where God says that He will apply the blood of Jesus to one's soul. Baptism is an action of immersion in water on earth that is visible to men. However, the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus is something that takes place in the spiritual realm in our relationship with God through Jesus. Therefore, the action of baptism is more for our benefit in the sense that we have a point of reference where we can affirm that God worked in the spiritual realm in order to forgive our sins. Baptism is our

witness before men and God that we accept the conditions of God's covenant. This would answer our questions concerning why God instituted that at the point of baptism we could be assured of our salvation.

God could forgive our sins at any time in our lives. Some have led themselves to believe that an emotional "salvation experience" or an intellectual "receiving of Jesus" is the point at which God forgives sins. However, these are man generated and man conditioned points of reference. Anything that would depend on the emotions or intellect of man would not suffice in order to activate the work of God in the heavenly realm. The work of a "sinner's prayer" is not sufficient because such originates from men and not God. Only God has the right to declare who is saved. **And we can only know His declaration by what we read in the New Testament**.

Baptism is God's declaration of our salvation. From the revelation of the Scriptures we discover that God has said He will forgive sins at the point of immersion in water. Therefore, when one is baptized, his confidence for his salvation does not originate in some personal emotional experience wherein one claims his own salvation. His confidence is in God who said in His word that He would forgive our sins if we would simply respond to the cross through immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Baptism is thus an action of trusting (faith) in God to unleash the saving blood of Jesus on our souls. It is a manifestation of our faith (trust) in the grace of God.

In concluding this point, it would be good to consider again the case wherein Philip shared the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch. Many people have presumed their own means by which they claim to be saved. In their presumption to claim salvation through a "sinner's prayer," they have not been told the whole story.

When the eunuch asked Philip concerning the meaning of the text of Isaiah 53 which he was reading, Philip began from this text and preached Jesus unto the eunuch (At 8:34,35). However, when they came to a certain water, it was the eunuch who said, *"See, here is water! What hinders me from being baptized"* (At 8:36). Since this question of the eunuch mentions the subject of baptism, then we could correctly assume that the preaching of Jesus includes the teaching of baptism. Therefore, people today who claim to be saved without immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus have assumed a presumptuous belief. They have founded their salvation on the presumption of their own feelings and inventions, and not the declaration of the word of God. They have thus stopped short of the whole teaching of Jesus.

Chapter 29
BAPTISM AND LOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

Common sense combined with simple logic is sometimes all that is needed to prove a point. When it involves biblical teachings, one's logical approach to form deductions is not the primary foundation upon which fundamental doctrine is established. That which is fundamental for salvation is al-

ways stated somewhere in the Bible in simple declarative or imperative statements. In other words, nothing that is fundamental for salvation has to be first deducted through a process of reasoning. When it comes to essential teachings that are necessary for salvation, the Bible simply says what it means and means what it says. However, that which is fundamental to salvation logically follows any deduction of thought that is related to fundamental teachings.

If a clearly stated fundamental teaching is made, then that teaching must be the premise upon which all figurative passages must be interpreted that refer to that teaching. It must be the foundation upon which all passages that refer to the fundamental teaching must be based. This is true simply because the Bible does not contradict itself. Therefore, when we study teachings concerning what God requires on man's part in order to be saved, we must first determine that which is fundamental in reference to man's obedience. What is clearly stated must be our interpretive guide to understand all passages that refer to salvation concepts.

Baptism is first established as a fundamental teaching in reference to our salvation by declarative or imperative statements. Mark 16:16 is a declarative statement that makes baptism a fundamental teaching that is necessary for salvation. Jesus said, *"He that believes and is baptized will be saved ...."* Now when we study other contexts that relate to the salvation of individuals in the first century, we must logically conclude that baptism played an important part in every case of salvation. This is the same with the fundamental teaching on salvation concerning belief and repentance. Though a particular context of a reported case of conversion does not specifically mention all necessary requirements on the part of man for salvation, we must conclude from clear statements in other texts that all that is necessary for salvation is assumed in any one case of conversion. If God had to state in every single case of conversion all that was necessary on man's part for salvation, the New Testament would be a cumbersome volume of redundancy. He has thus kept it simple, assuming that we can discover all that is necessary for salvation in all passages that deal with salvation.

Since baptism is a fundamental part of one's salvation, then we can make logical deductions from other texts that come to a common conclusion. The following points are logical thoughts which show that baptism is a necessary part of one's salvation. Under each major point there are three statements. Statements 1 and 2 are teachings from key scriptures. The third point is true because of the truth of points 1 and 2.

A. Baptism is necessary for eternal life.

It is God's eternal plan to bring obedient men into eternal dwelling in a new heavens and earth (2 Pt 3:13). In order to accomplish this, God has required of men certain conditions upon which they would be qualified as candidates for eternal life. In order for any man to come into the eternal presence of God, God requires that we submit to His conditions for eternal dwelling.

1. John states that God has given to us

eternal life *"and this life is **in His Son**"* (1 Jn 5:11). In order to have eternal life, therefore, one must be "in His Son."

2. The New Testament says that the alien sinner is baptized into Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death**?"* (Rm 6:3; see Gl 3:27).

3. Therefore, we can logically conclude that one must be **baptized into Jesus, "into His Son," in order to have eternal life.**

B. Obedience is necessary for salvation.

1. Hebrews 5:9 says that Jesus became the author of eternal salvation *"to all those who obey Him."* Thus, Jesus is the "originator" of salvation to all those who are obedient to His will.

2. Baptism is a command of Jesus. *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved ..."* (Mk 16:15,16). *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (Jn 3:3).

3. Therefore, we can conclude that one **must obey Jesus' command to be baptized** in order to have "eternal salvation."

C. Washing of sin in baptism is necessary for salvation.

1. Titus 3:5 says that Christians are saved by the mercy of God *"by the **washing of regeneration**."* In salvation, therefore, there is regeneration. In this regeneration we are washed of all sin.

2. In Acts 22:16 Ananias referred Paul to this washing action by stating to him, *"And now why are you waiting? Arise **and be baptized and wash away your sins** ...."*

3. Therefore, we can conclude that one is saved by the washing away of sins in baptism which is the point in one's life where one is regenerated. Because of this action at the point of baptism, Peter could say of baptism in 1 Peter 3:21 that it does *"**now save us** ...."* This is the washing of regeneration.

D. Baptism is necessary in order to become a new creature.

1. One can be a new creation, or creature, only in Christ. Paul wrote this in 2 Corinthians 5:17. *"Therefore, if any man is in Christ, **he is a new creature** ...."*

2. The New Testament says that we are baptized into Christ (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:27).

3. Therefore, we must be **baptized into Christ in order to become a new creation or new creature.** We must be baptized in order to *"walk in newness of life"* (Rm 6:4).

The necessity to be baptized is a logical conclusion in any New Testament context wherein salvation is discussed after the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30.

One must be immersed into Christ in order to have the blessing of eternal life. One must obey the commands of Jesus in order to be saved. Baptism is one of those commands. In immersion God washes away sin, and thus, one becomes a new creature only after baptism. Baptism is therefore essential for salvation because of logical deductions from clear statements that are made in the Scriptures.

At the risk of being redundant, we would stress again the point that since the subject of baptism is discussed by the New Testament writers in the context of so many crucial teachings on salvation, that something must be very important about it. Why is immersion discussed in the context of Romans 6 in relation to one being crucified with Christ? Why is immersion discussed in the context of 2 Corinthians 5 when Paul talks about becoming a new creature? These and a host of other salvation contexts contain the subject of baptism. If baptism does not play an important part in one's salvation, then we would wonder why the subject is so often mentioned in those contexts of the New Testament where discussion is centered around one's salvation.

Again, we must reemphasize the fact that when a requirement for salvation is mentioned in any text of the New Testament that would apply to man after the establishment of the church in A.D. 30, then we must automatically assume that God intends that we fulfill that requirement. Since repentance is mentioned as a necessity on the part of man for salvation in texts wherein neither faith nor baptism are mentioned, then we must assume that repentance is a requirement for salvation even though it is not mentioned in a specific salvation text. If immersion for remission of sins is not mentioned in any passage where repentance or faith are mentioned as requirements for salvation, then we must assume that it is a requirement for salvation because it is clearly stated to be so in other scriptures.

When a requirement for salvation is stated alone in any one passage, that does not negate the necessity of other requirements for salvation that are mentioned in other passages. God does not play guessing games with us throughout the New Testament. He does not state in one passage that repentance is necessary while negating the requirement of faith when faith is not specifically mentioned in a salvational passage. He does not negate the requirement of faith when only baptism is mentioned. The New Testament must be understood as a whole in determining all that is required by God for the salvation of our souls. No man has a right to extract only that which he likes, for that which he may extract could be that which is necessary for his salvation. And when it comes to extracting things from God's word concerning all those things that are necessary for salvation, then we are doing what Peter warned concerning those who twist the Scriptures. They do so to their own destruction (2 Pt 3:15,16).

Chapter 30
BAPTISM AND RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

If immersion is a necessary part of man's response to God in order to be saved, then it would logically follow that we could say that the New Testament connects immersion with other teachings that are fundamental to salvation. All that is necessary on man's part to be saved must be interconnected. No one essential teaching concerning salvation would stand alone. When we study the subject of baptism, therefore, we would assume that if it is necessary for salvation, then it cannot be disconnected from other essentials that are connected with salvation. We say this to emphasize the fact that baptism cannot be disconnected from the gospel event and all that is necessary to bring forgiveness of sins into one's life.

If we also contend that one can be saved without being immersed into a covenant relationship with God, then we are saying that there are some basic New Testament teachings that are not important that are connected with baptism. But if one says that these basic New Testament teachings are not important, then he is advocating some serious false conclusions. The following are some logical conclusions that manifest some unfortunate exclusions if we hold the position that baptism is not necessary for salvation:

A. Logical conclusions concerning baptism:

If one can be saved without obedience to the gospel by immersion, then the following are some conclusions that must be faced. These conclusions lead us to affirm that immersion is directly connected to salvation, and thus, a necessary part of God's plan to bring the alien sinner into a saving covenant relationship with Him.

1. If one is saved without baptism, then he or she can be saved **without obeying Jesus**, for Jesus commanded that one be baptized in order to be saved (Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5).

2. If one is saved without baptism, then one can be saved **without obeying the inspired apostles,** for they commanded that one be baptized in order to be saved (At 2:38; 10:47,48).

3. If one is saved without baptism, then one can be saved **without obeying the message of the great commission,** for in commanding His apostles to evangelize the world Jesus commanded them to baptize those who believed (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15,16).

4. If one is saved without baptism, then one can be saved **without believing or obeying one of the fundamental teachings** of Paul in Ephesians 4:4-6 that there is "one baptism."

5. If one is saved without baptism, then one can be saved **without following the example of those in the first century who responded to the preaching of the gospel by immersion** for the forgiveness of their sins (At 2:38,41).

6. If one is saved without baptism, then one can be saved **without obedience to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus**, for baptism is obedience to the gospel (Rm 6:3-5).

7. If one is saved without baptism, then

one is saved **without recognizing the importance of immersion** as a fundamental teaching of the New Testament that is mentioned over one hundred times.

Because of the emphasis that is placed on baptism in obedience to the gospel of Jesus, thousands of people in the first century were immersed into Christ. They were immersed because they knew that such was in obedience to the gospel. All men today must follow their example. If we desire to restore the faith of the early Christians, we must obey the gospel as those who were baptized into the body, the church (1 Co 12:13). This obedience would include our response to the gospel.

B. Examples of response to the gospel:

A subtle departure from emphasis on baptism has occurred in most religious circles concerning the cases of baptism as they are mentioned in the document of Acts. This subtle departure has even affected some who formerly believed that baptism was essential to salvation. One reason for this apostasy has been in understanding the New Testament teaching concerning "obedience to the gospel." The gospel is the good news of Jesus' death for our sins, His burial, and subsequent resurrection for our hope (1 Co 15:1-4). When the gospel was preached in the first century, people **responded** to this message. Their response was recorded in the book of Acts. Their baptisms were in response to the gospel message that was preached. When they heard the preaching of the gospel event, they were touched in their hearts. They responded by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

In the theology of some, an overemphasis has been placed on the response to the gospel (baptism) which often led to less emphasis placed on what caused the response, that is, the gospel itself. Some were taught that one had to go through a series of preliminary steps in order to become Christian. The steps were to hear, believe, repent, confess, and then, be baptized. But these responses are not the gospel. They were recorded in the New Testament and directly connected with obedience to the gospel and salvation. However, these" were responses to the preaching of the cross.

In the first century, multitudes of people responded to the preaching of the cross. Their faith in Jesus moved them to respond obediently to Jesus by being crucified, buried and resurrected with Him. The people heard the gospel. They believed the gospel. They were baptized in order to fulfill all righteousness. When the gospel is preached today, the same response is generated in the hearts of the people. The response is not the gospel. The gospel causes the response in the hearts of the people today just as it caused a response in the first century.

We must not overemphasize the response to the gospel to the exclusion of the gospel. One can teach others to hear, believe, repent, confess and present baptism as a legal act without ever mentioning the event of the cross of Jesus for our sins and resurrection for our hope. One can actually persuade people to hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized without ever mention-

ing the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection. In our preaching, therefore, we must continue to focus the minds of the people on the cross.

Paul said to the Corinthians, *"I delivered to you **first of all** that which I also received"* (1 Co 15:3). What he had received was that *"Christ **died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that He was **buried**, and that He **rose again** on the third day according to the Scriptures"* (1 Co 15:3,4). **This is the gospel!** In every major sermon of Acts the gospel was preached to the people. When sincere people heard of the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross for their sins and His resurrection for our hope of eternal living, they listened, they believed, they repented, and finally, they were immersed in order to be saved.

What has often happened is that we have overemphasized the response to the gospel to the point of losing our focus on the gospel itself. But we must never forget that our obsession must always be on the suffering Servant of God on the cross. The Son of God was incarnate to give us an opportunity for eternality. So we must never forget that it was the incarnate Son of God who gave up His being in the form of God in order to bring those of faith into His eternal presence (Ph 2:5-11).

Now when we come to a study of the cases of conversion that are mentioned in the document of Acts, we understand that these recorded responses are the result of men and women who recognized who Jesus was. They subsequently responded to everything that Jesus commanded in order to come into His eternal presence. The message of the cross touched their hearts. It was this gospel message that had the power to bring them into an eternal saved relationship with God.

1. *The Jews on Pentecost* (At 2:31-47): Peter preached the gospel in Acts 2. He proclaimed that the Jews, by lawless hands, crucified and put Jesus to death (At 2:23). However, God raised Him up (At 2:24). *"This Jesus God has raised up, to which we are all witnesses"* (At 2:32). God has now made Jesus Lord and Christ (At 2:36). *"Now when they heard **this**, they were cut to the heart ..."* (At 2:37). In this context, it was the gospel of the cross that caused a response of belief in the hearts of men. Peter instructed that they must obey the gospel in baptism (At 2:38). Subsequently, *"those who received his word were baptized"* (At 2:41). The point is that at the time the audience of Peter was cut to the heart, Peter had not yet said anything about hearing, believing, repenting, confessing or being baptized. This was not the message that moved the audience to respond in being cut to the heart. What moved the people was the message of the cross. The response of the people was that they heard and believed the message. They subsequently repented and were immersed in response to what Peter said they must do in verse 38.

2. *The Samaritans* (At 8:5-13): *"Philip went down to the city of Samaria and **preached Christ to them**"* (At 8:5). As Paul said, he *"determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified"* (1 Co 2:2). This was what Philip determined to know and preach among the Samaritans. As a

result, *"The people with one accord gave attention to those things that were spoken by Philip"* (At 8:6). Those who believed were *"baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus"* (At 8:12,13). Therefore, the gospel was not that the people believed. Believing was in response to what Philip preached. They believed his message concerning the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope.

3. *The Ethiopian eunuch* (At 8:26-39): The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53 when he was approached by Philip on a road from Jerusalem to Gaza. The prophecy of Isaiah 53 spoke of the crucifixion of Jesus (At 8:32,33). Beginning with Isaiah 53, Philip *"preached Jesus to him"* (At 8:35). Philip preached Jesus and His crucifixion. He began from the passage that spoke of the crucifixion and applied the prophecy to Jesus who was crucified and rose again. The result of the teaching was that the eunuch *"commanded the chariot to stand still. And both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch,* ***and he baptized him****"* (At 8:38). Therefore, immersion in water for remission of sins was the response to the message that Philip preached. Philip preached the good news of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The eunuch responded by believing and being immersed.

The message is not to believe, but Jesus Christ and the cross. Some would preach faith as the center of reference of their message. But this is not what we see in the preaching of the New Testament. The people were told to believe (At 16:31), but their believing was generated by the preaching of Jesus and the cross. Faith, therefore, was the serendipity of Jesus and the cross. Since Jesus and the cross stimulated faith, then Jesus and the cross is our primary message (See 1 Co 1:17,23; 15:3,4).

4. *Saul of Tarsus* (At 9:10-19): In Acts 9 the resurrected Jesus personally appeared to Saul (Paul). After three days of blindness in Damascus, Ananias said to Saul, *"And now why are you waiting?* ***Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins****"* (At 22:16). The fact is that at this time in Paul's conversion, he had come to believe that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God. He knew that Jesus had died, and now, he had visual confirmation through the vision that He had been raised from the dead. What Ananias called on him to do was to respond to the event of Jesus' death and resurrection. The statement of Ananias was that he respond to what he knew.

5. *Cornelius and his household* (At 10:24-48): When Peter went to the house of Cornelius he rehearsed the gospel message that had been preached throughout all Judea and Galilee (At 10:36,37). He preached that the Jews had crucified Jesus (At 10:39). However, God raised Jesus from the dead (At 10:40). *"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word"* (At 10:44). He subsequently *"commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."* (At 10:48). In other words, Cornelius and his household believed. It was not that Peter commanded them to hear and believe. This they did when the message of the cross was preached. They needed to know how to respond to that which they heard and believed.

Therefore, Peter informed them to do the same thing that was stated on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38.

6. *Lydia and her household* (At 16:13-15): Lydia had an open mind, and thus, she responded to the things that were spoken by Paul. *"She and her household were baptized ..."* (At 16:15). Paul's message that caused the response was the message of the gospel. Her receptive heart moved her to respond in obedience to the gospel.

7. *The Philippian jailor* (At 16:25-34): While in prison in Philippi, Paul and Silas were *"praying and singing hymns to God"* (At 16:25). An earthquake occurred that opened the prison doors. The jailor was evidently "shaken" by the scenario of events, and thus, proceeded to take his own life because he believed that the prisoners had escaped. However, when he was stopped from doing such by Paul, he was moved by the message of what Paul and Silas sang while in prison. He asked Paul and Silas, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* (At 16:30). Their reply was, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ..."* (At 16:31). This statement was not made in the context of establishing a conclusion to what was necessary for the jailor to do in order to be saved. It was made in the context of what the jailor must do in order to initiate his response to the gospel. The jailor was subsequently baptized in response to the gospel (At 16:33).

8. *The Corinthians* (At 18:8): When Paul went to Corinth, he preached Jesus Christ and the cross (1 Co 2:2). He first delivered to the Corinthians that which he first received, *"that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures"* (1 Co 15:3,4). We could assume that wherever Paul went, he first preached that which he first preached in Corinth. This was the gospel of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. When he preached this gospel, he had the same response as in Corinth. *"Then Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized"* (At 18:8). That which produces the response of hearing, believing and being immersed is the message of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope. When this message is preached, men and women will respond by doing that which must be done in order to come into a covenant relationship with God.

9. *The Ephesians* (At 19:1-5): When Paul arrived in Ephesus he found about twelve disciples who had been baptized into John's baptism. However, Paul said that they must believe on Jesus as John had said (At 19:4). *"When they heard this, **they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**"* (At 19:5). Therefore, their response to believing was immersion. We would conclude that anyone who has a sincere heart will do the same when hearing of the death of Jesus for our sins and resurrection for our hope.

The conversion of the Ephesians also emphasizes the fact that sometimes people can be immersed for the wrong reasons. These disciples were baptized unto John's baptism at a time when John's baptism was no longer valid.

When they heard of the baptism in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, they were immediately rebaptized for the right reasons.

Someone might ask, "How many times must one be baptized?" The answer is, "Until you get it right and for the right reasons." New Testament baptism is not New Testament baptism until it is a correct response to the right truth. In the cases of conversions that are mentioned in the book of Acts, the right reason for immersion is that it must be in response to the cross of Jesus and for the remission of sins.

It would be difficult for one to miss the emphasis of the preaching of the crucified and resurrected Jesus in Acts. It was this gospel message that moved men and women to respond by obedience to this good news. That which moved men and women to initially respond to God was not the preaching of church organization, the mission of the church, or its benevolent work. Evangelists did not argue over names and dates, future speculations or present turmoils. They simply moved the hearts of adult men and women by preaching the simple gospel. And when they did this, people were moved to obey all that God required of them to be saved.

Chapter 31
BAPTISM AND PROPER CANDIDATES

Baptism is not a "church sacrament." It is not a work or ritual one must perform in order to be rewarded with a merit of religious excellence. Somewhere throughout the years of departure from the New Testament, religious people have lost sight of the spiritual significance of immersion into Christ. With the practice of infant baptism, misguided religious people have completely lost sight of the personal response to God's will on the part of adults who are to be baptized.

The practice of infant baptism reveals this digression from the true purpose of immersion. Infant baptism manifests in those religions that practice it a loss of personal conviction on the part of the one who is baptized. In infant baptism, response to the grace of God is counted to be of no importance on the part of the candidate. When babies are baptized, they know and understand nothing concerning the grace of God that appeared on the cross (Ti 2:11). All response to God's teaching concerning salvation is placed on the shoulders of the parents, not the one being baptized. The "baptism" of the infant is simply the desires of the parents to have water sprinkled on the head of their baby according to their own desires. "Baptism," therefore is simply a church ritual of parents to have their babies dedicated to the Lord. There is certainly nothing wrong with parents dedicating their babies to the Lord. But we must be careful about wrongfully using Bible names and actions that apply specifically to the obedience of adults to the message of the cross.

There are also those just this side of infant baptism who would say to a very small child, "Isn't it about time you get baptized?" It is questionable that a five or six year old can comprehend the nature of our salvation by grace and faith.

Baptism in such cases has often been relegated to a type of legal requirement or "church sacrament" that one must perform. Such belief is evident in the statement that is often said to children that they must, "get baptized."

One must be encouraged to respond to obey the gospel from the heart, not to just "get baptized" in order to fulfill what we might perceive to be a legal work in order to earn salvation. We must understand that when we are baptized we are obeying the good news of the death of Jesus for our sins on the cross and His resurrection for our hope. We are not performing a meritorious work in order to put God in debt to save us.

There have also been those who emphasize that all one must do is simply understand what one must do in order to be baptized. This could be referred to as "intellectual baptism." When some young boy or girl wants to be immersed, our response is often to make sure that the probable candidate knows what he or she is doing. Emphasis is simply on knowledge and not commitment or response to the cross of Jesus. We often, and correctly, sit down with such prospects and proceed through a host of passages in order that the one who desires to be baptized knows all the right points. In this interview, however, commitment passages in the New Testament are generally not mentioned. Discipleship, servanthood, prayer life, spiritual commitment, and a disciplined spiritual life are generally not subjects of the discussion. The emphasis is usually on simply understanding Acts 2:38 before one can be baptized. In such cases, we have sought to make one a committed disciple of Jesus **after** he or she is baptized. But such is the reverse of Jesus' instructions in Matthew 28:19. *"... make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...."* Jesus wanted us to first disciple people to Him. Once one is committed to be a follower (a disciple) of Jesus, then he or she is ready to obey the gospel by immersion. We must not reverse the order in order to get people to the water.

We must remember that Romans 6:1-6 was written to Christians. Paul instructed the Roman Christians concerning the great spiritual relationship that they had established with God when they were immersed into the death of Jesus. We would assume, therefore, that these brethren did not know all the facts concerning their immersion when they were baptized. Nevertheless, they did know about Jesus and what He had accomplished for their sin problem. Knowledge of what one is doing in baptism is very important. However, personal commitment and a spiritual relationship with the death of Jesus is just as important. It is easy to understand that baptism is "for remission of sins." It is not so easy to understand that we are *"baptized into His death"* and that we are crucified with Jesus (Rm 6:3-6). One concept deals with something that God takes care of in the heavenly realm. However, the latter deals with one's commitment in life to no longer live in sin.

In order for one to be immersed into Christ in obedience to the gospel, therefore, he or she must be a proper candidate. By proper candidate we mean that one must respond to the gospel by faith and repentance. One must understand discipleship to the lordship of Jesus. Those in the New Testament who were

baptized were adults who heard the preaching and teaching of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. They believed on Jesus, and in submission to His lordship, they repented of sins. These were the basic prerequisites for immersion into Christ. Knowledge of what God required was involved. However, commitment to be a disciple of Jesus was a primary motivating factor.

In the religious world today there is widespread controversy and confusion concerning the proper candidates for immersion. A great number of religious groups baptize babies by sprinkling or pouring water on their heads and calling such baptism. These groups often teach that babies have "original sin," and therefore, they need to be baptized for remission of that sin. It is believed by some that baptism is parallel to the rite of circumcision in the Old Testament. Infants, therefore, should be baptized soon after birth as babies were circumcised soon after birth in the Old Testament.

We must first understand that the simple action of immersion of an individual in water does not remit sins. There is no saving power in the water. There is no remission in the act of baptism. Immersion is a God-ordained action that is required in order for one to obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. That which "causes" the remission of sins by God is the blood of Jesus that was poured out on the cross. However, it is at the point of immersion that God says He will apply the blood of Jesus to our sins. Remission of sins through the blood of Jesus takes place in the heavenly realm. On earth, the spiritual aspect of the new birth takes place in the heart of the individual who is immersed. The heart of the believer, therefore, must be spiritually acceptable through obedience in order for God to forgive.

An unbelieving or unrepentant individual will not be forgiven though he or she is immersed. In other words, there is no "spiritual power" in a legal action of immersion to remit sins. One must come to the God-commanded action of immersion with a believing and penitent heart. Upon these prerequisites, God says He will "wash away" our sins.

The New Testament, therefore, teaches that there are certain things one must do before he or she is to be immersed. The point to remember here is that infants can do none of these prerequisites in order to be immersed into Christ. Since they cannot, then they are not proper candidates for immersion.

A. Teaching is necessary before baptism.

Infants cannot be **taught**, but one must be taught the gospel before he or she can be baptized (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16; Jn 6:45; At 8:35-38). Knowing what one is doing is important. This was evidently part of the problem in the church at Rome. Some were baptized, but were still "servants of unrighteousness" (Rm 6:13). One cannot live after the flesh when he or she comes into a committed relationship with Jesus.

In way of review, consider again Jeremiah 31:31-34. Jeremiah recorded God's promise of a new covenant. God had said, *"And they will no longer teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know me"* (Jr 31:34). When one is in a covenant relationship with the Father under the new covenant, he or

she **already** knows the Lord. One is taught of the Lord **before** coming into a covenant relationship with God. This is in contrast to Jewish babies who were physically born into a covenant relationship with the Lord, but had to be taught to know the Lord as they grew up. In the new covenant one is taught to know the Lord **before** he or she responds to the gospel and comes into a covenant relationship with the Lord. Therefore, before one is born again in baptism, he or she must first know the Lord.

B. Belief is necessary before baptism.

Infants cannot **believe,** but one must believe on the Lord Jesus before he or she can be baptized. Jesus said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved ..."* (Mk 16:16). From this statement we would correctly assume that belief is inseparably linked to baptism. One must first believe on Jesus. One must believe in what he is about to commit his life. When Philip preached in Samaria, the Samaritans *"believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. They were baptized,* ***both men and women****."* (At 8:12). Men and women **believed.** This belief moved these men and women to be baptized (At 8:12). One could certainly go through the motions of baptism without belief. Such a baptism would be of no profit toward one's salvation. However, it is difficult to see how one could truly believe in Jesus as the Son of God without obedience to Jesus by immersion into a covenant relationship with God.

When the Ethiopian eunuch wanted to be baptized, Philip asked for the obvious prerequisite for him to carry out his desire. *"If you believe with all your heart,* ***you may****"* (At 8:37). What Philip was saying was that the eunuch could be immersed if he believed. Philip placed belief as a definite prerequisite for immersion.

The case of the eunuch helps us understand why Paul responded in a similar manner to the Philippian jailor in Acts 16:30-33. The jailor asked, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* (At 16:30). Paul and Silas responded, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved ..."* (At 16:31). Belief, therefore, is the foundation upon which one's response to the gospel is validated. When one truly believes, he or she will do that which is necessary to carry out belief in obedience to God.

In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."* We could illustrate this statement by saying that he who eats food and digests it, will live. He who does not eat, will die. There is no sense talking about digestion, if one does not eat. The same is true of baptism. *"He who does not believe will be condemned."* There is no sense talking about baptism if one does not believe. The emphasis of Jesus in Mark 16:16, therefore, is on belief. One must believe. Baptism without belief is useless. It is useless because one has not responded to the gospel by belief in the death, burial and resurrection of the Son of God.

On the other hand, belief without baptism is also useless. If one does not respond to God with obedient faith, then certainly his belief is as that of those rulers who believed on Jesus, but were

intimidated by the misguided religious leadership. John wrote of these rulers, *"Nevertheless, even among the chief rulers also many believed on Him.* ***But because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him****, lest they should be put out of the synagogue"* (Jn 12:42). These "believers" remained condemned because their belief would not move them to confess Jesus. Jesus said, *"... whoever will deny Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven"* (Mt 10:33). Jesus will not confess before the Father those who believe, and yet, are not baptized in obedience to the gospel. One's obedience to the gospel in baptism is a living confesson that one truly believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

C. Repentance is necessary before baptism.

Infants cannot repent of sins, but one must repent before he or she can be baptized. Peter said, *"Repent, and be baptized ..."* (At 2:38). He also stated, *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out ..."* (At 3:19). Babies are not sinners. They have no sin of which to repent. If they did, then they could not even say the words to express their repentance. Therefore, they are not proper candidates for immersion because they cannot feel or express their repentance if they had sin of which to repent.

D. Obedience to one's conscience is necessary in baptism.

In 1 Peter 3:21 Peter wrote, *"The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us—not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,* ***but the appeal of a good conscience to God*** *...."* In this statement Peter is saying that one is baptized **in answer to a good conscience.** It is not as in the case of infant baptism where the parents are working on the basis of their own conscience. It is the conscience of the one who is being baptized that must be considered. Therefore, before one is baptized, his conscience must be stirred by the word of God. He is immersed in order to satisfy his conscience concerning what he knows the Bible tells him to do in order to be obedient to the will of God. This is obviously not something infants can do. Therefore, they cannot be immersed for the purpose of cleansing their conscience before God. Infants are born with a pure conscience, not one filled with a sinful nature.

From the preceding points, we must remember some very important concepts. One must be able to be taught before he can be baptized. He must be able to believe that which he is taught. He must be able to respond with repentance to that which is taught. In answer to his good conscience to do that which is pleasing to God, he must be baptized. The prerequisites for immersion are not for infants. In fact, babies cannot be taught the word of God. They cannot believe or repent. Therefore, infants are not biblical candidates for obedience to the gospel. They are safe with God and have no need of being baptized for remission of sins.

In conjunction with this subject there are usually discussions concerning the time when one should be immersed after hearing about Jesus. Many have taught that one should be immersed "the

same hour of the night." This was certainly the response of the jailor in Acts 16:33. Those on Pentecost were baptized the **same day** (At 2:41). Therefore, if one understands the death of Jesus for his sins and that Jesus was raised for his eternal life, then certainly one must be baptized the "same hour of the night." However, this was not always the case in the New Testament.

The immediacy of one's immersion depends on the situation. The Scriptures certainly do not teach the concept of delaying one's baptism until he or she is taken through a series of lectures on discipleship or whatever. Neither do the Scriptures teach that the time one is baptized is dependent on the judgment of the one who does the teaching. The time when one is to be baptized depends solely on the one who must be baptized.

One must be a committed disciple of Jesus before he or she is immersed. This much we can clearly understand from what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19. Jesus said, *"... make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...."* Disciples are baptized. We do not baptize and then make disciples. Much of the problem in churches lies in the fact that we have **reversed** the order of what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19. We have baptized unrepentant people who have become a thorn in the flesh to the leadership of churches. Uncommitted people are often baptized, and then have to be continually exhorted to be faithful to the Lord.

Jesus emphasized that the apostles make disciples, and then, baptize the disciples. However, it is each disciple's choice concerning his obedience to the gospel, not the choice of the one who makes the disciples. It is the responsibility of the disciple to choose to serve the One he has chosen to follow. However, when one realizes that his sins must be washed away in baptism, he will be baptized as soon as possible.

We must consider that God gave Paul **three days** before he sent Ananias to him in order to baptize him. God gave Paul time to think about what he was getting himself into. And then, there is the case of the eunuch. He went to Jerusalem to worship (At 8:27). Certainly, he showed up at the temple and was encountered by Christians who were **daily in the temple** where they *"did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ"* (At 5:42). When Philip came into contact with the eunuch on the Jerusalem/Gaza road, he asked if he understood the prophecy of Isaiah 53 (At 8:30-33). The Jews had taught that Isaiah was talking about himself in Isaiah 53. However, Christians taught at the temple that Isaiah had prophesied of the crucified Christ. The eunuch seems to indicate in the frustrated question of verse 34 of Acts 8, that he had contacted Christians in the temple of Jerusalem who had taught him that Isaiah was talking about Jesus. Therefore, when Philip met the eunuch, he had already heard and learned of Jesus (See Jn 6:45). Philip only joined with the eunuch to fulfill all righteousness by baptizing the eunuch. We would conclude, therefore, that the eunuch had some time to consider what he must do with this Jesus about whom he had been taught in Jerusalem.

When should one be baptized after hearing the gospel? Again, the answer depends on the individual. The key point to consider is whether one has commit-

ted himself or herself to be a disciple of Jesus. To some this would be immediate. Others might need "three days" as God gave Paul. Whatever the case, the important thing to remember is that in obedience to the gospel one is making the most important transition in his or her life. One does not come into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit on a notion. Dying with Jesus and being buried with Him is serious business. Infants cannot do this. This is why the practice of infant baptism degrades New Testament teaching concerning the importance and meaning of baptism in the life of an adult. The practice degrades the New Testament teaching on the subject because the New Testament places much emphasis on the responsibility of those who have been taught that they sacrificially obey the gospel.

Chapter 32
BAPTISM AND HOUSEHOLD CONVERSIONS

Baptism of infants is a widespread practice among several religious groups. This has been a practice that has existed for centuries. It is a practice that has a strong emotional hold on the religious thinking of many parents concerning their newborn infants. It is important, therefore, to study this subject in relation to what the Bible teaches. Our conclusions must not be based on what we as parents may find to be comforting in our hearts, or what our religious traditions may dictate. If this practice is biblical, then certainly it should be a part of the religious belief and practice of all who seek to obey God. However, if this teaching is simply a traditional practice that has been bound on the consciences of sincere parents, then we must consider it as simply a traditional teaching of men.

A. The baptism of men and women:

In order to answer those who promote infant baptism, it is imperative to understand first who was baptized in the New Testament. When we study the New Testament cases of immersion, we discover that those who were baptized were adult **men** and **women.** The emphasis in conversion was on those who **sincerely recognized their accountability to God.** Those who recognized their accountability were those who could discern between right and wrong when they heard the word of God preached concerning their accountability before God. Luke recorded in Acts 5:14 that *"**believers** were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of **both men and women**."* In Samaria Philip preached in order to appeal to adults. Luke wrote of what took place after Philip's preaching in Samaria. *"But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, **both men and women were baptized**"* (At 8:12). When Saul persecuted the church, he imprisoned only those who were "of the Way." This included only **men and women** (At 9:2). No infants were baptized or imprisoned for being "of the Way." Those baptized in the first century were accountable individuals who had responded to the preaching of the gospel.

Both in Acts 5:14 and Acts 8:12 "men and women" are specifically men-

tioned as those who were immersed. It is significant that the inspired Scriptures make specific mention of men and women. We wonder why adults would have been stated specifically if infants were included in these cases of immersion. By simply reading the narrative, the obvious conclusion would be that no infants were included. The Holy Spirit wanted us to understand that only accountable men and women were baptized.

It was somewhat prophetic of the Holy Spirit to mention in these particular cases that only men and women were baptized. He possibly knew that the time would come when infant baptism would be introduced as a substitute for the immersion of believing adults. He thus made it perfectly clear that only men and women were baptized in the first century.

B. The cases of "household baptisms":

In the New Testament there were several "household baptisms." These were baptisms of entire families, including the servants who were included as part of a household. Those who support the practice of infant baptism today believe and teach that there were infants in these household baptisms of the book of Acts. But this is an unjustified deduction. There is no proof that there were babies in the baptisms of these households. A brief survey of what took place in the household baptisms in the New Testament clearly teaches that no infants were involved in the baptisms.

1. ***The household of Lydia*** (At 16:14,15): This "household baptism" is not justification for the baptism of infants. We cannot assume that there were infants in the household of Lydia for the following reasons:

a. No infants are mentioned.
b. Those who were baptized in this passage were those who "gave heed" or attended to the things that Paul preached. Infants cannot give attention to things that are spoken concerning their salvation.
c. To say that infants were included in this baptism we would have to assume that Lydia was married. There is no indication in the text that she was married. We would also have to assume that she had infant children. And we would have to assume that she had her children with her. (Remember, Lydia was about four hundred kilometers away from her home which was in the city of Thyatira.)

2. ***The household of the Philippian jailor*** (At 16:30-34): We cannot assume that there were infants in this household baptism for the following reasons:

a. No infants are mentioned.
b. All who were baptized in this household were able to **hear** and **understand** the "word of the Lord."
c. Those of this household were also able to **believe** on the Lord Jesus before their baptism.
d. Those who were baptized, **rejoiced** greatly after their baptism.

Infants can do none of these things. Therefore, we must rightly conclude that there were no infants in the household

of the Philippian jailor when he was baptized.

3. *The household of Cornelius* (At 10,11): We cannot assume that there were infants in this household baptism. This is true for the following reasons:

a. No infants are mentioned.
b. All of Cornelius' house **feared** God.
c. All who were baptized in Cornelius' house were able to do the following:
(1) **Hear** the word (At 10:44)
(2) **Speak** with languages (At 10:46)
(3) **Magnify** God (At 10:46)

Infants can do none of these things. Therefore, we must conclude that there were no infants baptized when the household of Cornelius was baptized.

4. *The household of Stephanas* (1 Co 1:16; 16:15): The following two points will not allow infants to be included in the baptism of the household of Stephanas:

a. No infants are mentioned.
b. 1 Corinthians 16:15 states that Stephanas' household *"dedicated themselves to the ministry of the saints."* If we assume that infants were included in the household baptism of 1 Corinthians 1:16, then we could also assume that Corinth had "ministering infants" as stated in 1 Corinthians 16:15. The church in Corinth had no "ministering infants," and thus, we must conclude that no infants were included in the household baptism of Stephanas in 1 Corinthians 1:16.

In order to make a correct inference from a passage of scripture that does not specifically identify the inference, **that which is inferred must be clearly taught by either declarative or imperative statements in other passages**. For example, Jesus made a declarative statement concerning belief in John 8:24. *"Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."*

In this declarative statement of Jesus, He said nothing concerning repentance. However, we could correctly infer that repentance is required in conjunction with the requirement of belief in order that one not die in his sins. We can make this assumption simply because repentance and baptism are clearly stated in declarative and imperative statements in other contexts. Peter stated that the Lord is *"... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pt 3:9). This declarative statement in conjunction with John 8:24 makes repentance a correct inference in Jesus' requirement that one believe.

This brings us to the practice of infant baptism in reference to the cases of household baptisms in the New Testament. **The point is that before one can correctly infer that there were infants in the preceding cases of household baptisms, in which cases there is no specific mention of infants, there must be declarative or imperative statements in other contexts that require infants to be baptized**. The difficulty facing the proponents of infant baptism is the complete silence of the Scriptures on this matter. There are absolutely no statements

throughout the entire Bible concerning the practice of infant baptism. To practice such is thus an addition to the word of God. If one binds the practice on the consciences of men, then he is adding to that which God requires of one to be saved.

C. Infant baptism is not authorized by the Bible.

It is a serious thing to add to God's word and bind on the consciences of religious people those things that God does not bind. The principle John stated in Revelation 22:18 is applicable to the subject under discussion here. John warned, *"If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book."* Infant baptism is an addition to that which God requires of man to obey in order to be saved. It is an addition simply because there is no scripture that binds such on the consciences of men. Since there is no scripture binding such on men, then we must conclude that such is not necessary for salvation, but is simply a religious tradition of men.

The fact that infant baptism is not found in the Bible is a major argument against its practice as a binding command. As in Revelation 22:18, the New Testament makes several other warnings against adding to the religious practices which God desires that man do. Paul exhorted that we should learn *"not to think above what is written ..."* (1 Co 4:6). In his letter to the Galatians, he warned the Christians not to be turned aside to another gospel. He wrote, *"But even if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed"* (Gl 1:8). The problem in the Galatian church was that there were those who were binding on the Galatian Christians things that God had not bound. They were making such unbound legal requirements for salvation (See At 15:1,2). But doing this is inventing "another gospel" after the traditions of men.

The message that was first preached two thousand years ago contained absolutely nothing concerning infant baptism. Adding this practice to Christianity as a binding religious law would be going beyond the authority of the Scriptures.

To practice infant baptism is to go beyond the teaching of the New Testament, for the New Testament says nothing about it. The entire Bible says nothing about it. Those who teach infant baptism as a religious practice have no Bible authority for doing such.

D. The testimony of religious scholarship:

Religious scholarship confirms that the practice of infant baptism originated after the first century. Concerning this thought, it is interesting to note the early comments of Origen (A.D. 185 - 254) on this subject.

> Having occasion given in this place, I will mention a thing that causes frequent inquiries among the brethren. Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? Or where have they sinned? Or how can any reason of the saved in their case hold good? But according to that sense we mention even now: None is free from pollution, though his life be but the length of one ray upon the earth. And it is for

> that reason because of the sacrament of baptism that pollution of our birth is taken away, that infants are baptized? (*Works*, Vol. 1).

The above is one of the earliest statements that was made in history on the subject of infant baptism. However, what is important to note in church history is that there is no mention of any kind of infant baptism **that dates to the first century.** Many religious leaders who practice infant baptism are honest in their admission that their practice did not originate in New Testament times. The Catholic religious leader Bertrand Conway wrote that "**there is no express mention of the baptizing of infants in the New Testament** ..." (*The Question Box,* p. 155). In the Catholic book, *Teachings of the Catholic Church,* it is stated, "**The baptism of infants is not positively directed in the Gospel**" (Quoted in *The Question Box,* p. 23). Such an admission should urge those who practice infant baptism to take another look at what is said in Galatians 1:6-9 and Revelation 22:18,19 concerning God's judgment of those who would add to the word of God.

God is serious about our not binding upon the consciences of men those things that He has not bound. If religious practices are bound upon men and claimed to have originated from God, the Scriptures pronounce harsh condemnations on those who would bind such man-made religious traditions. Unbiblical religious traditions that are bound on the consciences of men lead men to ignore the authority of God's word. When men ignore the authority of the word of God, they will create a religion after their own desires, and thus, eventually reject the commandments of God in order to keep their religious traditions (Mk 7:1-9). Once people are faithful to their traditions, they usually do not return to the authority of the word of God after they have departed from such. They have set their course to maintain their own religion, which religion is an invention of man. It is for this reason that we encourage people to reconsider their practice of infant baptism. If infant baptism cannot be found in the New Testament, then it is an invention of men. And since it is a religious invention of men, then no parents will be held accountable before God for not baptizing their infants.

Chapter 33
BAPTISM AND INFANT SALVATION

As previously emphasized, infant baptism is a major practice and belief in the religious world. Changing from this belief to the truth concerning true candidates for baptism is often quite difficult for parents. When one has been for generations in a religious group that has baptized babies, it is psychologically challenging to leave this tradition behind. For this reason, we must give some special attention to the nature of the soul of babies and their relationship to God.

An important Bible teaching is the innocence of newly born babies. They are **pure** of sin and **safe** from condemnation. However, a truly false teaching has been developed by some religious groups that centers around the theology that babies are born sinners. Because of this belief, it is affirmed that infants

must be baptized for the remission of sins. However, if we fully understand some simple truths, there will be no reason to believe in the necessity that babies should be baptized because they are supposedly sinners in the sight of God.

A. Infants are pure of sin.

In the sight of God, infants are pure of sin, and thus, do not need to be baptized for the remission of sins. Pure of sin means they have no sin. They are not born sinners, neither do they have the ability as infants to sin by voluntarily rejecting the will of God. Jesus used the innocence of little children to illustrate the nature of servanthood in the kingdom. He said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and* ***become as little children,*** *you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Mt 18:3). We wonder why Jesus would make this statement if children are of a sinful nature. Why would He illustrate the pure nature of the kingdom by that which is not pure? The answer to this question is that He would not.

Jesus also said of little children, *"... for of such is the kingdom of heaven"* (Mt 19:14; see 18:2-5; Mk 10:14,15). The point is that the kingdom originates from heaven. It is the kingdom "of heaven." Since it originates from heaven, then it is pure, for all that originates from heaven is pure. It is not of sin. If we understand this point, then we can understand what Jesus is saying about the nature of infants and children until they reach the age at which they can make a choice concerning the will of God. What He is saying is that the soul of infants is as pure as that from which their spirits originated. Since God, in whom there is no darkness (1 Jn 1:5), is the Father of our spirits (Hb 12:9), then we must conclude that there is absolutely no darkness in an infant at the time of birth.

Jesus told Nicodemus, *"... unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (Jn 3:3). Being "born again" and becoming "as little children" **refer to the same concept**. When one is born of the water (baptism), his sins are washed away (At 2:38; 22:16). One comes out of the grave of water a new creature in order to *"walk in newness of life"* (Rm 6:4-6; 2 Co 5:17). At the point of immersion one is washed of every sin and becomes **pure as a little child**. The kingdom of heaven is without sin. Jesus keeps the submitted subject of His kingdom continually cleansed of sin by His blood (1 Jn 1:7). When one continues to allow the sovereign will of Jesus to rule in his or her heart by walking in the light, the blood of Jesus continues to wash one of all sin.

The very concept that one must be "born anew" assumes that in physical birth one is pure. Why would Jesus use the statement "born anew" in His instructions to Nicodemus, if infants are with sin when they are physically born? What Jesus was saying was that one must be born anew in order to become pure as an infant when newly born.

One is cleansed of sin by immersion. He is born again to be pure as he was when first born as a baby. The kingdom is free of sin because of the continual cleansing work of the blood of Jesus. These basic New Testament teachings are illustrated by the fact that children are pure of sin. And if children are pure of sin, **they do not need to be**

baptized for remission of sins.

It is often argued that in Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:15 and Luke 18:17 Jesus was urging the little children to come to Him in order that they be baptized. But this is an unjustified assumption. It is an addition to the context. The word "baptism" is not mentioned in any of these three chapters. It is not even under consideration. In order for one to make the assumption that Jesus was urging children to come to Him for baptism, he must first find such a teaching in declarative or imperative statements in other contexts of the New Testament. The fact is that there are absolutely no other statements concerning infant baptism throughout the entire New Testament.

B. Infants are safe from condemnation.

If infants are sinless, then it follows that they are safe from condemnation. Children who die in infancy will not be condemned to hell because they have not lived in rebellion to God's laws while on earth. A baby that does not recognize his accountability to the laws of God cannot sin. Infants do not recognize God's laws, and therefore, cannot be held accountable to those laws. If a child dies, that child is safe from any condemnation. This is a most comforting teaching of the New Testament.

Sin is man's free-moral rejection of God's law. John wrote, *"Sin is lawlessness"* (1 Jn 3:4). When one voluntarily refuses to live according to God's law, then he or she sins against God. One can do this by doing that which God says not to do, or by not doing that which God says one must do. In either situation, it is the individual who is making a free-moral decision to either do good or evil. Babies cannot sin after this manner because they do not recognize God's law. They simply behave according to their needs to preserve life. They cannot sin after the Bible's definition of sin.

James adds another manner by which we sin. *"Therefore, to him who* ***knows to do good*** *and does not do it, to him it is sin"* (Js 4:17). One must be able to recognize a biblically defined principle of good before he can respond. If he recognizes the good, and refuses to respond in a positive manner, then he sins. Babies cannot respond to biblically defined principles of good. Therefore, they do not sin when they do not respond in order to do good.

Sin is defined in relation to an individual's response to law or biblically defined principles of good. Babies can do neither. Therefore, babies are not sinners. They do not need to be baptized for remission of sins.

Ezekiel said that children will not inherit the guilt of the fathers' sin (Ez 18:20). What Ezekiel was saying was that the children are not responsible for the sin of the fathers. **Everyone will give account of his own sin before God**. Paul wrote, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,* ***so that everyone*** *may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Co 5:10). To the Romans Paul stated, *"For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ... each one of us will give account* ***of himself*** *to God"* (Rm 14:10,12). We will not give account for the sin of any other person, including our fathers. Therefore, we do not inherit

the sin of Adam or our fathers. Every individual will be responsible for his or her own sin before God on the day of final judgment. Each person must give account of his own deeds before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Co 5:10). The point is that babies are not accountable for sin. They are pure.

Chapter 34
BAPTISM AND COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS

In a previous chapter we discussed the biblical teaching of remission of sins in relation to those who are in a covenant relationship with God. Only those in a covenant relationship with God have remission of sins and can benefit from the "blood of the covenant" (Lk 22:20; 1 Jn 1:7). In this chapter we must consider the conditions for coming into this covenant relationship with God in view of the practice of infant baptism. Because infant baptism is often paralleled with teachings concerning the Jews' covenant relationship with the Father, it is important here to review the principal conditions of this covenant and its nature.

We must first understand that all mankind today lives under the sovereign reign of Jesus (Ep 1:20-23). Those who would be saved must establish a covenant relationship with Jesus. Before the establishment of the new covenant of Jesus, the Jews were in a covenant relationship with the Father. God had established this covenant with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. However, the establishment of a covenant relationship with the Father under the Old Testament law was different from the New Testament covenant relationship that one must establish with God today.

A. Inclusion into the new covenant is for accountable people.

In order for one to become a part of the new covenant, he or she must be one who is able to be accountable for his or her own behavior. One must be able to respond to the law of God.

1. *One is baptized into a covenant relationship with Jesus*. One is immersed into the body (1 Co 12:13). He is born anew by baptism in order to enter the body of those who have allowed the kingdom reign of Jesus in their hearts (Jn 3:3-5; Lk 17:20,21). These are those who have come into Christ (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:27). But one is immersed only after he or she has heard the gospel message, believed on Jesus, and repented of sins. Only accountable people can do this. Therefore, only those who have grown to a mature age where they can intellectually and emotionally respond to the gospel can come into a covenant relationship with Jesus.

2. *Jewish babies were physically born into a covenant relationship with God in the Old Testament.* Under the Old Testament law one was born a Jew. He did not choose to be a Jew. A male Jew was circumcised the eighth day after birth and that circumcision was a sign of his covenant relationship that he had with God as a citizen of the nation of Israel (Gn 17:9-14).

Jeremiah 31:31-34 explains the difference between the old and new covenants. In verses 31 through 33 God promised, *"Behold, the days are com-*

*ing says the Lord, when **I will make a new covenant** ...."* Under this new covenant, God said, *"**I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts**...."* This meant that they would know God and His laws **before** they established a covenant relationship with Him.

Under the old covenant, the one who was born into a covenant relationship with God as a child of Jewish parents, **had to be taught to know God and His laws after he was physically born a Jew.** Under the new covenant, however, people are **already taught** of God and His laws **before** they are spiritually born again through immersion into a covenant relationship with God (Jr 31:34; Jn 6:45). This fact is emphasized in Hebrews 8:11 when the Hebrew writer quotes Jeremiah 31 in order to apply this thought to the Christian age and Jesus' new covenant. **The point here is that only those who can be taught to know God and His laws can be brought into a covenant relationship with God in the new covenant** (See Jn 6:45).

The new covenant of the Son is in force today. Therefore, only accountable people can be taught to know God and brought into this new covenant. One can come into a covenant relationship with God only when he or she reaches the age of accountability at which time one can be taught. But until that time, infants are **pure of sin and safe from condemnation**. They are not subject to the law of the new covenant of Christ in the sense that they must recognize the law and obey it. They cannot, therefore, come into a covenant relationship with the Father according to the requirements set forth in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

B. Circumcision and baptism are not parallel conditions.

Some have taught that baptism replaced circumcision under the new covenant. Therefore, children must be baptized today as children were circumcised under the Old Testament covenant. The Bible, however, does not teach that the *"circumcision of the heart"* in the New Testament is parallel to the act of circumcision in the Old Testament. In Romans 2:29 Paul stated, *"But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and **circumcision is that of the heart**, in the spirit ...."* In Colossians 2:11 he also stated, *"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."* In these passages Paul is not making the spiritual circumcision of the Christian's heart a replacement of the physical circumcision of the Jewish males on the eighth day after birth. **He is talking about cutting off the old man of sin when one comes into a relationship with Jesus**.

The Bible does not state or teach that baptism took the place of circumcision. Nowhere does the New Testament make a direct comparison between baptism and circumcision. The fact is that here is a difference between the **purpose** and **function** of baptism and circumcision. This difference clearly manifests that baptism did not take the place of circumcision.

1. *The age of the subjects is different.* Circumcision of the Old Testament took place on the eighth day after birth (Gn 17:12; Lv 12:3). But under the new covenant, candidates for baptism

must be old enough to understand, believe and obey the gospel in baptism. There is no set date or age for being baptized. There was a set day for circumcision under the old covenant law, but not for baptism under the new covenant.

2. *Baptism is obedience to the gospel, but circumcision was a token.* Circumcision was a token, or sign, of a covenant between God and Abraham (Gn 17:9-14). It later became a sign of the covenant between God and the nation of Israel. Baptism, however, is an obedience to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Rm 6:3-5). Therefore, the purposes of baptism and circumcision are completely different.

3. *The candidates for baptism and circumcision are different.* Circumcision was a religious rite under the old Jewish law. It was administered to **males only** (Gn 17:10). But since the establishment of the new covenant, baptism is required of both males and females (At 8:12). Circumcision was never administered to females under the Old Testament law. If baptism is to be administered to the same persons as was circumcision in the Old Testament, then females should not be baptized today because females were not circumcised under the Old Testament law. This truth clearly manifests the fact that baptism did not take the place of circumcision.

4. *Candidates for circumcision had no choice, whereas candidates for baptism choose.* On the eighth day after birth, the small Jewish infant had no choice as to whether he would be circumcised. He was circumcised because God had commanded that all Jewish males be circumcised. However, under the new covenant, individuals have a choice as to whether they want to come into a covenant relationship with God. They can choose to either accept or reject the gospel.

In Colossians 2:11-14 Paul metaphorically uses the Jewish circumcision of the flesh to refer to a circumcision that is not made with hands. His reference is to what the individual does in his or her own life in making a personal choice to turn from the sins of the flesh (See Ep 2:1-3). The repentant believer in this "circumcision" chooses to cut off the old man of sin (See Rm 6:6; Gl 2:20). This takes place **before** one is "*buried with Him in baptism ...*" (Cl 2:12). Verse 13 of Colossians 2 is a parallel passage of Romans 6:6-8. One is dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of the flesh while the old man still lives (See Ep 2:1-3). However, one is *"made alive together with"* Christ when he comes forth from the grave of baptism (Rm 6:8). In Colossians 2, therefore, Paul is using the Jewish practice of circumcision (the cutting off of the foreskin) as a **metaphorical figure** to represent the cutting off of the old man of sin when one is immersed for the remission of sins.

Religious people must be careful about allowing traditional teachings to direct their religious behavior. Several religious traditions concerning baptism have been handed down from generation to generation in religious groups throughout the world. It is the responsibility of every generation to reexamine the Scriptures in order to reaffirm their stand upon

what the Bible teaches. It is the responsibility of this generation to restore New Testament teachings concerning that truth which is most important to do in order to be saved.

We must urge every Bible student to study thoroughly God's word on this matter. Sometimes, these most fundamental teachings are the teachings that are neglected the most in our studies. We too often take for granted simple fundamental teachings. However, we need to continue in every generation to re-study those fundamentals upon which our faith is built. If we do not, then our children will forget those essential teachings that identify the church to be different from the man-made religions of the world. It is important to re-affirm our beliefs lest the religious culture in which we live influences or intimidates us to accept teachings that are foreign to the Bible. One must keep in mind that the intimidation of one's religious culture is very strong, and often stronger than loyalty to the Bible. But the mark of a good disciple of Jesus is that he will hold to the word of God regardless of traditional teachings.

Chapter 35
BAPTISM AND COMMON OBJECTIONS

Tradition is a tremendous mental force. It is a mental force that is so strong that it nailed the Son of God to the cross, for those religious leaders who rejected Jesus had already done what Jesus said to them in Mark 7:9, ***"All too well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your own tradition."*** The religious leaders of Israel were so bound by their traditional beliefs that they would not accept even the Son of God who came to them in person. Since they had already rejected the commandments of God, it was easy for them to reject the Son of God. Since they had already substituted their traditions for the will of God, it was easy for them to add any religious practice they so chose to their religious system. Traditional thought still binds people today from accepting the truth of the gospel. Men are still binding on the consciences of men those things God has not bound.

The result of traditional thinking concerning man-made concepts concerning baptism has led to many twisted concepts of the subject of baptism. Some of these twisted objections have already been considered in this book. Further study of these objections will help us better understand and clarify the necessity of immersion in relation to one's salvation. Each point below is a common objection that has been made against the teaching that immersion into Christ is essential for remission of sins. Here is what people often say:

A. *"Baptism is only a symbol of salvation."*

Some have affirmed that baptism is an "outward manifestation of an inward grace." In other words, baptism is a manifestation of salvation that one has already received after he has made a self-proclaimed emotional declaration of his own salvation. When one simply "accepts the Lord as his or her Savior," or utters a "sinner's prayer," then he or she is supposedly saved. Immersion, therefore, is only an option. Baptism to some

becomes a "symbol" of something that has already taken place in the life of the one who has accepted Jesus as his or her Savior.

In arguing the above position, some have used Colossians 2:11 as a supporting passage. *"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands, in the removal of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ."* As circumcision was a "sign" of the covenant that one had with God when he was born a Jew, it is stated that in like manner baptism is a "sign" of salvation that he has before he is baptized.

Though Colossians 2:11 has already been discussed, we must emphasize the context of what Paul is stating. Colossians 2:13 explains the context of Colossians 2:11. Paul stated, *"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses."* Paul is metaphorically discussing the "cutting off" of the old man of sin. His context here is the exact same context as Romans 6 where he stated in relation to baptism, *"Knowing this, that our old man* ***was crucified*** *with Him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we should no longer be bondservants to sin"* (Rm 6:6). Paul's argument is this: *"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin,* ***yet you have obeyed from the heart that form of teaching that was delivered to you."*** (Rm 6:17).

At the point of immersion, the old man of sin was buried in a tomb of water. The old man, according to the metaphorical phraseology of Colossians 2:11, was "cut off" by being buried with Christ. This was done "**by the circumcision of Christ**," not the individual who is baptized. In other words, when one is baptized, **it is Christ who cuts off the old man of sin**. At the cross, Christ accomplished the spiritual action of "cutting off" that is mentioned in the context of Colossians 2, but the old man of sin is buried at the time of baptism in order to be raised a new man in Christ.

The old man of sin is "circumcised" at the point of baptism. This is where the remission of sins is activated in the life of the repentant. Paul metaphorically uses the term "circumcision" in Colossians 2:11 in reference to this cutting off of the old man of sin. It is not used to refer to something that has already taken place in the personal life of the individual who is baptized. Therefore, baptism is not a symbol of salvation that has already taken place in the life of an individual. Baptism is a time when an old man of sin is buried. It is a time when Jesus' crucifixion of the old man with Him on the cross is finally buried in a grave in order to be raised a new creation (Rm 6:6; 2 Co 5:17).

In immersion there is both a physical and spiritual action that takes place. There is the physical action of immersion in water. There is also the spiritual action of burying the old man of sin that was crucified with Him at the cross. The two actions are combined together at the point of baptism when the old man of sin is buried. The repentant believer voluntarily partakes of the physical action of immersion in water. Jesus took care of the spiritual part at the cross. The old man of sin is finally buried; all sins are washed away. Once one believes, Jesus is ready to take care of the spiritual death problem with a spiritual new-

ness of life (Rm 6:6). For this reason, Ananias said to Saul, *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (At 22:16).

Though Paul believed, he had to arise and be baptized in order to receive forgiveness of sins. Ananias did not ask Paul to say some sinner's prayer in order to declare his own washing away of sins. His emphasis was on what God would declare, that at the point of baptism one's sins would be washed away, and thus be declared a new creature in Christ. Acts 22:16 is an inspired declaration of God. That declaration is that one must arise and be baptized in order to wash one's sins away.

B. *"Baptism is a meritorious work on the part of man."*

James stated a very important principle concerning the relationship between faith and works with reference to the life of a Christian. The same principle would apply to the alien sinner in becoming a Christian. *"Even so faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead"* (Js 2:17). This is an inescapable principle that permeates the Bible. Faith must be manifested by obedient works. When one recognizes the grace of God that is revealed for the salvation of man, his faith must move him to respond by obedience. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, *"... through whom* [Jesus] *we have received grace and apostleship, for* ***obedience of faith*** *among all nations for His name"* (Rm 1:5; see also Rm 16:26).

Neither the Christian nor alien sinner is saved by meritorious works. That is, one cannot meritoriously work in order to save himself. This principle applies to the keeping of law, as well as the performance of meritorious works. Paul stated this clearly in Galatians 2:16. *"Knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but by the faith of Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus ...."* (See Rm 3:20). However, in the same book and in the same context, Paul wrote, *"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision,* ***but faith working through love****"* (Gl 5:6). Does Paul contradict himself? Certainly not! His point is simple. Legalistic Jews were teaching that through meritorious law-keeping one was justified before God. Paul's argument against this belief is that no one can keep law perfectly in order to be saved. Neither can one do meritorious works in order to atone for a single sin. Therefore, one must trust in the grace of God for salvation. However, Paul agrees with James when it comes to responding to the grace of God. Simple, inactive faith will not do. Love of and faith in God must respond. Individuals must respond to the grace of God that was manifested on the cross. That response is obedience. It is not meritorious obedience. It is obedience in response to the grace of God. This brings us to why one is baptized.

Baptism is an obedient response to one's faith in the grace of God to save him. One is baptized, not to perform a meritorious work in order to be justified before God. One is baptized in response to the plan of grace that God revealed from heaven through Jesus Christ. It is after the principle Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 15:10 concerning the labor of his life. "*But by the grace of God I am what*

I am. And His grace toward me was not in vain, ***but I labored more abundantly*** *than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."*

If the principle of 1 Corinthians 15:10 can be clearly understood, then we have answered the argument that some use to say that baptism is a meritorious work. The same principle is in 2 Corinthians 4:15. *"For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace that is reaching many people* ***may cause thanksgiving*** *to abound to the glory of God."* When the grace of God is preached and understood, **it causes people to respond in thanksgiving for the good news of the cross and resurrection**. If there is no response, then there is either no understanding of the grace of God or appreciation. Whatever the case in an individual's life, if one does not obediently respond in thanksgiving to the grace of God, then he is not manifesting an appreciation for the cross.

Paul stated that as a disciple he "labored more abundantly" in response to the grace of God. Was he stating that his labors were works of merit in an effort to save himself? If one obediently responds in thanksgiving to the grace of God, does this mean that one is working meritoriously in order to earn his salvation? Certainly not! Notice carefully to what Paul said. God's grace toward him was **not in vain**. That is, God's grace was not useless, or unprofitable. The grace was not in vain because of Paul's labors of thanksgiving. Paul responded to the grace of God in his life; he worked in thanksgiving to what he had, that is, his salvation in Christ. This is why he said, *"... yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."* When Paul saw his salvation because of the grace of God, he responded. His work was by faith in the grace of God that saved him. His work, therefore, was a response, a response of his faith in God's grace by which he was saved. For this reason, he gives credit to God for his work. And so it is with baptism. Baptism is the alien sinner's response to the grace of God that appeared on a cross outside Jerusalem (Ti 2:11).

One is baptized because of faith. Baptism is a response of faith to God's grace that was manifested on the cross. It is not that one has already been justified by grace before he is baptized, for where there is grace, there is the forgiveness of sins. Faith must precede the application of God's grace in order to forgive our sins. If one expresses no obedience of faith, then certainly God cannot respond with grace. Therefore, one must respond by faith through baptism in order to receive the forgiveness of sins by the grace of God (At 2:38; 22:16). Forgiveness comes from grace, and thus, one is baptized when he recognizes that God, through grace, will forgive him.

Our faith responds through baptism. God responds to our faith by grace. This is exactly what Paul said in Romans 5:1,2.

> *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,* ***through whom also we have access by faith into this grace*** *wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

We have access to the grace of God through our faith. But this must be an

obedient faith. James was clear. "Faith without works is dead." Our faith, therefore, must respond; it must be obedient. Obedient faith is the door through which we must enter in order to receive the grace of God. In conversion, obedient faith in baptism is the access door through which all must pass in order to receive the forgiving grace of God. Thus baptism can never be a meritorious work. **It is a work of thanksgiving in response to one's faith in the saving grace of God**. Those who teach that baptism is not necessary are actually saying that the grace of God is insufficient to move one to respond with thanksgiving to the gospel. In other words, if one does not faithfully respond to the grace of God in obedience by immersion, then God's grace is useless in reference to one's salvation.

C. *"Paul said we are not sent to baptize."*

In 1 Corinthians 1:17 Paul said, *"For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel."* Because people misunderstand the context of this statement, they unfortunately contend that baptism is not necessary for salvation. However, in the very context in which this statement is made, Paul affirmed that one is "of Christ" only if he has been baptized in the name of Christ (1 Co 1:13). He also testified concerning the first converts of Corinth whom he had personally baptized (1 Co 1:14-16).

What Paul is affirming in 1 Corinthians 1:17 is the principle of the preceding point. He preached the gospel of God's grace. As Philip preached the same to the eunuch, the response was the same. The eunuch responded by requesting that he be baptized (At 8:36). Crispus, Gaius and the household of Stephanas in Corinth responded in the same manner. They manifested their response to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus by being immersed for the remission of their sins. The fact that they responded by immersion emphasizes the fact that Paul preached what men and women must do in order to respond to the gospel. What they must do in response to the gospel is obey the gospel by immersion into Christ (Rm 6:3-6; see 2 Th 1:7-9).

The message of Paul's preaching was Jesus Christ and His crucifixion (1 Co 1:23). We must read the entirety of 1 Corinthians 1:17. *"For Christ did not send me to baptize, but **to preach the gospel**, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void."* The gospel was the first thing that Paul preached in Corinth (1 Co 15:3,4). When the good news of the cross is preached, men and women naturally want to connect with Jesus. They want to connect at the cross, and then join with Jesus in burial and resurrection. Therefore, when we preach the cross, the burial and resurrection naturally follow. The cross is the motivation. Baptism and resurrection are the response. One has not fully responded to the message of the cross unless he manifests his response by joining with Jesus in burial and resurrection (See Rm 6:3-6).

D. *"The thief on the cross was saved without baptism."*

In Luke 23:43 Jesus said to the thief on the cross, *"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."* From this statement some have affirmed the

teaching that baptism is not necessary for salvation simply because the thief on the cross was not baptized, and yet, he was saved by Jesus.

The above argument manifests at least three critical misunderstandings concerning biblical interpretation. First, those who make this argument do not understand the New Testament concerning the baptism to which we today are to submit in order to be saved. Second, this argument also manifests both a misunderstanding concerning the covenants of God, as well as, God's requirements on the part of man for his salvation under the New Testament covenant. And third, those who make this unfortunate argument against baptism truly do not understand who Jesus was and is. Now consider the following answers to the objections to baptism because Jesus personally saved the thief who lived under the Old Testament covenant:

1. *The thief could have been baptized unto John's baptism.* John came baptizing **for the remission of sins** (Mk 1:4). As a result of his preaching, many went out to the wilderness where he was preaching. They heard and were baptized (See Lk 3:21; 7:29; Mt 3:5,6; 21:32). Since the thief on the cross showed repentance and knowledge of who Jesus was, it is not unlikely that he had been a student of John. The man feared God for he said to the other thief, *"Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?"* (Lk 23:40). The thief also knew that Jesus was a man who had done nothing wrong (Lk 23:41). Would it be too much to assume that he had contact with both John and Jesus during their ministries? Who is to say that he was not baptized for the remission of sins unto John's baptism? Simply because the text does not say that he was not baptized does not mean that he was not.

2. *The thief lived under the Old Testament covenant*. The new covenant of Jesus did not come into force until the death of the testator, Jesus, and its official announcement in Acts 2. A testament is in force when the testator is dead (Hb 9:16,17). *"For a covenant is ratified upon death, since it has no force while the one who made it lives."* (Hb 9:17). When Jesus was still alive on the cross, His testament had not yet been brought into effect. Even when the death of the testator occurs, his testament is not brought into force until its official announcement.

Under the Old Testament covenant, **baptism in the name of Jesus for remission of sins was not a condition for salvation**. This baptism was not announced as a part of the new covenant until the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. **The thief lived under the old covenant**, not the new. He was not subject to the new, but the old. Therefore, he was not subject to immersion for remission of sins in the name of Jesus. Only those who lived after the official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus in Acts 2 were subject to baptism in the name of Jesus (See At 2:38).

3. *The thief could personally be saved by Jesus.* It is certainly not a good illustration to use Jesus' saving of the thief as a model for our salvation today. Those who would use the thief to argue against the necessity of baptism

prove too much. If the thief is a model for how one should be saved today, then we would have to have the **personal presence** of Jesus in His incarnate state in order to be saved, for Jesus was there in the presence of the thief. Jesus on the cross was the conclusion of His earthly ministry. This event took place before His death and resurrection. On this occasion Jesus personally spoke the words of salvation to the thief. Must we have Jesus today personally speaking words of salvation to each alien sinner in order that they be saved?

We must remember that while on earth, Jesus as the Son of God, had the authority to personally forgive sins since He was the incarnation of God on earth. In the healing of a paralytic, Jesus said to the scribes who questioned His authority, *"**But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins** ..."* (Mt 9:6). While Jesus was on earth, and during His personal ministry, He as the Son of God could personally forgive sins. He could because sin that was committed was sin against God who Jesus was. This was Jesus' argument against the religious leaders who accused Him in the context of Matthew 9. Jesus' forgiving of the thief on the cross was His last effort to prove to us that He was the Son of God on earth with the authority to forgive sin. While on earth Jesus could grant forgiveness of sins because sin was against God. Today, forgiveness is through His blood. And one comes into contact with Jesus' blood through obedience to the gospel in immersion.

4. *The thief could not obey the gospel.* In order for one to be saved today, he or she must obey the gospel which is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (1 Co 15:3,4; see 2 Th 1:7-9). One obeys the gospel by immersion (Rm 6:4,5). One is baptized into the death of Jesus and resurrected from the tomb of water.

The thief lived before Jesus had died and was resurrected. How could he have been baptized in obedience to the gospel when the gospel event had not yet taken place? He could have been baptized unto John's baptism. However, John's baptism was not in obedience to the gospel. It was a baptism "unto repentance" (Mk 1:4). The baptism of the new covenant is in the name of Jesus into His death, burial and resurrection.

Those who were baptized unto John's baptism after the establishment of the new covenant in Acts 2, had to be rebaptized in the name of Jesus. This was the situation with some disciples in Ephesus who had been baptized with John's baptism (At 19:1-6). When Paul learned that they had been so baptized, he rebaptized these disciples in the name of Jesus (At 19:4,5).

E. *"One is saved by faith when there is no water."*

In Matthew 12 the Pharisees unjustly accused Jesus and His disciples of working on the Sabbath by plucking ears of maise from the fields and eating the grain in the fields. They accused, *"Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath"* (vs 2). Jesus' response to their accusation can be applied to answer the argument that salvation is by faith only because there are cases where people believed, but could

not be baptized for lack of water.

Consider closely Jesus' response to the Pharisees. *"Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him."* (vs 3). David had entered into the tabernacle and eaten the showbread that legally could be eaten **only by the priests** (vs 4). The law said that this bread was reserved only for the priests (Ex 29:32). But when David was fleeing from Saul for his life, he and his men broke this law in order to live. A higher law was in place in this case that the Pharisees knew. The higher law was that God's anointed, David, should be preserved as the future king of Israel. For this reason, when David ate of the showbread, he did not break the written law of Exodus 29:32 because there was a higher principle of law that came into force.

Because the higher principle of law of the preservation of the future king of Isarel, David's breaking of the law by eating the showbread **did not make him a lawbreaker, nor did his actions change the law**. The occasion was unusual, and thus, the higher law of his preservation was greater at the time than the law that only the priests eat the showbread. **But his breaking of the law did not change the law**.

Now some have asserted that if one is in the middle of the desert and hears the gospel and believes, then he is saved at that point, for there is no water into which the believer can be immersed. Therefore, he is saved by "faith only." And because he is saved without immersion in water, everyone is similarly saved by "faith only."

There are two things to consider in reference to this argument. First, hypothetical situations **do not change the law**. By hypothetical we mean circumstances that are dreamed up in order to establish a foundation upon which one interprets the Scriptures, and thus, establishes a law by the hypothetical circumstance. We would also add that unusual circumstances as David's eating of the maise **does not change the law**.

If one is saved by faith until he finds sufficient water into which he can be immersed, then we would assume that God knows the heart of this person as He knew the heart of David. When Jesus was preached to the eunuch, we understand that baptism for remission of sins was also taught. And thus, the traveler would do what he was taught to do as soon as he came upon some water. We would also assume that because God knew his heart between the time he believed and the time when he was baptized, that God's mercy and grace would save him if he somehow died before he reached sufficient water at his soonest opportunity. We have never heard of such a circumstance where one believed and died before he was baptized. Nevertheless, we would trust in God's grace in such cases, for God would know that the believing traveler would be baptized as soon as he arrived at some water and was able to say, *"See, here is water! What hinders me from being baptized"* (At 8:36). We would assume that he was saved before he went down into the water, **but this exception does not change the law that one is to be baptized to wash away his sins**. If the traveler knowingly passed up the water on his way to his destination, then would we conclude that his refusal to be bap-

tized in the water changed the law of baptism?

Second, please keep in mind that we are not in the business of establishing law through either hypothetical or real circumstances as in the case of David. David's eating of the showbread that was to be eaten only by the priests did not change the law. If it did, then every Jew could scratch from their Bibles the law of Exodus 29:32. **Neither hypothetical nor real circumstances where the law cannot be obeyed change the law**. Rahab the harlot lied, but was *"justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way"* (Js 2:25). Because she lied to preserve Israel's conquest of the land of promise did not forever change the law that it is sinful to lie (see Rv 21:8).

Those who live in this dispensation of time will be judged by the word of Christ. Jesus said, *"He who rejects Me and does not receive My words, has one who judges him. The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day"* (Jn 12:48). The word of Jesus will be the standard by which we will be judged. *"For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ,** so that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Co 5:10). Preachers and teachers of the word of Christ must communicate to others those things Jesus commanded in His word, for it will be by this word that all will be judged. Baptism in obedience to the gospel is a part of the word of Jesus, for He said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mk 16:16). Simply because Jesus made this statement necessitates that those who proclaim the word of Jesus, must also proclaim this teaching of Jesus. Those who do not, are not proclaiming the complete word of Jesus that will be the standard by which people will be judged. They are not proclaiming an essential for salvation that all men must hear and obey.

The arguments presented in this book will not convince some concerning the proposition that has been maintained and proved. The reason they will not be convinced is because of an erroneous religious world view. This world view is based on the idea that man is saved regardless of any obedience he may do in reference to his faith in God. The historical foundation for this belief came out of a religious movement wherein it was taught that men were individually predestined to either heaven or hell, regardless of the free-moral choice of the individual. Since one could not do anything to change his destiny, then it was concluded that salvation could never be based on any voluntary obedience the individual did to save himself (See At 3:19). Salvation, or condemnation, was already predestined by God. No one could change his or her destiny.

From this erroneous belief evolved the concept that no person who was not predestined to be saved could free-morally respond to the grace of God in order to be saved. Though one recognized the grace of God on the cross, he could not respond in any manner in order to save himself unless God had already individually predestined that person to be saved. In relation to the subject of this book, no one could of his own will respond in baptism for remission of sins in order to gain

access to the saving grace of God.

The above world view permeates many religious groups today. Though some groups have changed in their teaching concerning individual predestination, they have yet to accept the fact that one has the privilege of free-morally responding to the grace of God by immersion in the name of Jesus for remission of sins. And without this individual and voluntary response, one cannot be saved.

We would conclude that man is a free-moral agent and that he will be held accountable for his sin against God. And because he will be held accountable, then he must do something about his problem of sin. The New Testament is clear on what one must do. The most important thing one must do is to believe and obey the gospel by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The apostles called on men to do such. The New Testament writers called on men to do such. And now we call on men to do such today simply because the New Testament so instructs us. No one can say that baptism for remission of sins is not important. Because so much emphasis is placed on baptism in the New Testament, all those who believe the Bible to be the revelation of God must also emphasize the importance of baptism for remission of sins.

God's grace is made active in the life of repentant believers at the point of baptism. It is this grace that saves. There is no magic in the water or saving power in the action of immersion. However, at the point of immersion God declares that all our sins are washed away. They are washed away by the blood of Jesus that flows from the cross of grace. Therefore, we are sent forth to preach the grace of God, the gospel of Jesus. Those who respond today will respond in the same manner as those in the first century. Both men and women will be immersed for the remission of their sins.

We have completed a very extensive study of the subject of baptism. More could be said on the matter. Unfortunately, we live in a world of Christendom where there is great controversy over this subject which should be so easy to understand. The existence of the controversy is striking because the New Testament says so much about people being baptized. One would think that if there is so much teaching on the subject, then there would be little controversy over the matter. But Satan would not be idle in his attack against that which is so important in reference to one's eternal salvation.

We must never underestimate the hold tradition has on the minds of people. This is especially true in the area of religious tradition. Traditional churches have for centuries established various erroneous views concerning baptism. All sorts of beliefs surround this subject that is so clearly explained in the New Testament. For men to give up misguided beliefs in view of clear teachings in the Bible seems somewhat ridiculous. But we must always keep in mind that the desire of men to create religious beliefs after their own desires and traditions is often stronger than their desire to study objectively and submit to the word of God. Israel is a historical lesson that men seek to go their own way, regardless of the word of God (See Hb 2:1-3; 10:39).

At the end of all arguments concerning the necessity of obeying the gospel by immersion in water for remission of one's sins, the final argument is simply, "**He who believes and is baptized will be saved**" (Mk 16:16). Nothing could be more clear. If one truly wants to do what Jesus has told us to do, then he will simply obey Jesus' statement that he be baptized and follow His example. *"Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John,* ***to be baptized by him****"* (Mt 3:13). This puzzled John, not that Jesus wanted to be baptized, but to be baptized by him (Mt 3:14). But Jesus responded, *"Permit it at this time, for thus* ***it is appropriate for us to fullfill all righteousness****"* (Mt 3:15). If one would seek to follow the example of Jesus, then as an adult he or she must be baptized.

One must forget his traditional teachings in reference to this matter. Our salvation is not about the tradition of our fathers. It is not about us. It is totally about Jesus in His efforts to bring us into eternal dwelling with Him. And if one seeks to make Jesus the Lord of his life, then certainly he will seek out water in order to obey the death, burial and resurrection of the One who gave Himself on a cross for our reconciliation to God.