

Christianity: An Introduction

Wayne Barrier

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Publisher's Statement

Betty Burton Choate

It has been our privilege to work with the World Evangelism team, including the Wayne Barrier family, for many exciting and fulfilling years in India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, the Philippines, and other countries of the world.

A great part of our emphasis has been outreach through mass media: radio and TV. The first natural follow-up tool was printed materials, sent in response to requests for further study. We continue to believe in the effectiveness of those tools, which is the reason for printing this **Introduction to Christianity** — a brief but comprehensive coverage of what the religion of Christ is all about. Many American Christians might not see the need for such a book, but much of our work is among people with Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and animist backgrounds. Many of them have never seen a Bible, and they know nothing of the transforming life offered to those who come to a faith in Jesus Christ as being the only begotten Son of God.

We offer this introduction with the prayer that it will lead to further study and conviction that will result in the birth into God's family, the church for which Christ died.

Background and Our Work Today

Wayne and Janet Barrier

My wife, Janet, and I have been involved in foreign missions for over 30 years, beginning with my service as a deacon assigned to monitor and evaluate mission reports from individuals supported by the Pine Hill congregation in Florence, Alabama. From Pine Hill, we moved to the Bevis congregation in Tennessee, then to the Stewartsville congregation near Florence, Alabama. During this time, we were part-time students at International Bible College (now Heritage Christian University). We started an association with J.C. and Betty Choate in 1982, and Janet and I travelled in Asia with the Choates until J.C.'s death in 2008.

The Double Springs, Alabama congregation became our sponsor in 1996, and our work reached a "full-time" level in 1997. Over the past 15 years, efforts to follow-up World Evangelism radio and literature programs were expanded to include extensive campaign efforts that involved local evangelists from Asian countries, with guidance and assistance from our team. This resulted in the need for more local preachers, teachers and leaders. We responded by forming Bible schools and colleges in seven countries. These schools train and educate over 500 students per year to serve in growing and newly formed congregations.

We are blessed to be assisted by an American team of 14 coworkers that include our four children (Jenny, Jamie, Joey and Jeremy) and their families. In that number also are six men from the Double Springs congregation and several other preachers who help us carry out a program of preaching, teaching, and training that integrates mass evangelism, campaigns, Gospel meetings, Bible teaching seminars, and Bible college teaching. Our team also includes over 30 foreign brethren who serve as leaders of evangelism and teaching teams in the countries where we work across Asia. Mass evangelism efforts are conducted in cooperation with the Choate ministry (World Evangelism) from Winona, Mississippi and World Missions Radio Network in Dickson, Tennessee.

For many years now, we have been encouraged each year as our coworkers in Asia hear from several hundred thousand people who listen to our radio broadcasts and write us for help with further Bible study. Literature is sent to each person who writes. Campaigns and Gospel meetings follow, and each year several thousand are baptized to complete their first steps of obedience to the Gospel. These efforts are primarily conducted by foreign brethren with our support, encouragement, and assistance.

Newly planted congregations are helped to be self-sufficient and sustainable by teachers, preachers, and leaders trained and educated in our Bible schools. Each school operates on a schedule and class format that accommodates local needs. As noted above,

several hundred receive training and complete structured educational programs each year.

We believe this evangelism model patterns the model used in the first century as the apostle Paul and others took the Gospel to all the world, as commanded by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20.

We are blessed to have the privilege to be a part of this effort. We are thankful for the many partners, congregations, and individuals who support us with prayer, encouragement, personal labor, and funds. We thank God for these blessings.

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Chapter 1:

Christianity

Christianity is one of several major religions of the world. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism each claim hundreds of millions of loyal followers, and collectively they represent most of the world's population of over 7 billion people. About one-third of the people of the world claim to be Christians. Each religion has a system of worship and beliefs, sacred texts, prophets, contemporary provision for leadership, and teaching, as well as impact on value systems and cultural effects. Each major religion claims to answer fundamental questions about the source and purpose of life. Each deals to some degree with the concept of life after death.

All of the major world's religions provide teaching that ultimately provides some guidelines and principles for everyday life and behavior. From each religion, a simplified code of ethics can be defined. All major religions have persuasive leaders and teachers that result in preservation and perpetuation of their doctrines, leading to the conversion of their youth and non-believers.

Some religious scholars believe that the world's major religions are all variations of a single religious doctrine. This doctrine encourages belief in a Supreme Being, purpose, or force that results in respect and reverential followings. These scholars believe a common

or universal code of ethics could be developed, and life after death can result in either a better or a worse afterlife, depending on one's compliance with the code of ethics.

Other religious scholars believe the opposite of a universal code inclusive of all religions. They promote acceptance of their particular religion, and require exclusion of all others. Often, acceptance of the religion of others is viewed as being absolutely unacceptable and in violation of the religion's fundamental behavioral requirements.

What should one believe? The stakes are high, if we believe in an afterlife. (Actually, the stakes are high irrespective whether one believes in life after death.) Choosing a religion that is not true could cause one to fail in preparation for an acceptable afterlife. In addition, can one's religion result in help with life on earth today? Selecting the true religion will make a difference in our day-to-day well-being.

A key word to consider in answering these questions is the word "truth." One's religion should be based on truth. Are there proof, evidence, and truth to support the doctrine, system of belief, worship, and claims of our religion? The proof is available to establish that the demands of Christianity are based on unquestionable truths. **When everything is considered, Christianity provides a powerful basis of belief for living one's life and for preparing for life after death.**

Christians believe that Jesus Christ lived about 2,000 years ago in Israel. They follow His teachings. Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God. God is

believed to be the Supreme Being Who created the universe, including man and all life. The text of Christianity is the Bible. Can the Bible be believed and trusted? Facts can be considered to answer this question. Since the Bible is the single, concise, complete, and the original text revealing Christianity, it should be evaluated before anything else that discusses Christianity is considered. Everything else written about Christianity has some basis or root in the Bible. This book must be understood first.

Chapter 2:

The Bible

Part One

The entire basis of Christianity is found in the Bible. If one does not believe the Bible, it is impossible to define and understand Christianity. If one believes the Bible, then he can accurately define and determine the requirements of Christianity. What do we need to know to believe this Book? There are several proofs of the Bible's authenticity as "the book of books", provided through supernatural means for the benefit of mankind.

First, upon study of the Bible one will learn that even though it was written by about 40 men over a period of about 1,600 years, there is perfect unity of thought and agreement throughout its 66 books. The writers spoke several different languages, lived in different places, and came from different social and cultural backgrounds, yet they wrote nothing that was inconsistent with the writings of all the others. When a detailed study of the Bible is conducted, one finds a single theme and purpose that runs from Genesis to Revelation. Every book contributes to this theme.

Man was created by God when He created everything, and God desires for us to dwell with Him in His eternal domain (heaven) when our life on earth is over. **The provision for man's eternal life with God is the dominating subject of the Bible.** God wants us to

submit in obedience to His sovereign power and authority as our maker and sustainer. The Bible reveals God's will for man's existence. The plan for saving us from our own failings and weakness is unveiled from the beginning of the Bible to the end. There is perfect unity of thought and purpose. Without the guidance and superior intellect of a Supreme Being, such unity is not possible.

Second, the Bible is filled with accurate predictions of future events that deal with both physical and spiritual matters. The Bible is not a history book, but any reference to historical events is always accurate. Numerous predictions were made about future societies, cities, and nations, events that were sometimes several thousand years into the future. Archeologists continue to uncover evidence of the accuracy of these predictions. Not one has been found to be in error.

Predictions regarding the coming of a Savior for man, named Jesus, are found throughout the Bible. There is not one credible argument that Jesus did not live in Palestine about 2,000 years ago. Scripture describes Jesus as the Son of God, sent to this world by God to save man from sin and its consequences. Hundreds of prophecies about Him were fulfilled. The circumstances, place, people, and time of His birth were foretold accurately in the Bible. The purpose of His coming to earth as the Son of God was referenced repeatedly throughout Scripture. The time and detailed circumstances of His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead were foretold by prophets living hundred of years before Christ. These

predictions were fulfilled in every detail.

The Bible provides the only logical explanation for the existence of everything. It states that God, Who is said to be all-powerful and of superior intelligence, created the heavens, earth, and every living thing. Man has proposed numerous theories about the existence of the world and man. Even if these statistically impossible theories were true, where and when did matter and energy originate? *Something cannot come from nothing.* The Bible says that God has always existed and that for Him there was no beginning. He created everything. If there was proof of life somewhere else in space, where did this life begin? The Bible's explanation of the beginning is the only logical answer.

Next, the Bible, although not a science book, is always accurate when referring to anything of a scientific nature. We can read numerous references to scientific principles or facts. Often the Bible disagrees with modern science, but it is always found to be true. This has been proven over the centuries.

Man's scientific knowledge base is constantly changing. Scientists once believed the earth was flat and that the sun revolved around the earth. The knowledge of how the human body functions has been an evolving science. References in the Bible to the earth and man, although thousands of years old, are always accurate. Scripture refers to the place of earth in space, to its shape and rotation, to the systems of the human body, and to numerous other specific pieces of scientific information. Every detail is accurate. Man has not and cannot write a

book in any area of science that is totally accurate.

The Bible provides teaching, guidance, and instructions that relate to a moral standard for man. This information has proven time after time to be superior to anything man can produce. The principles encouraging honesty, truthfulness, personal responsibility, love and compassion, hard work, etc. have never failed. Man fails when he departs from the moral, behavioral, and social guidelines of the Bible.

A final proof or evidence of the Bible's authenticity as the work of a Supreme Being is its survival throughout the ages. The Bible declares that man cannot destroy it. He has tried to destroy it many times over the centuries. Entire nations and empires have dedicated themselves to this task. All have failed, and we have the Bible today, both in currently spoken languages and in preserved copies of ancient languages from thousands of years ago.

Man cannot guarantee the preservation of the Bible. Only a Supreme Being can perform such a task. The very existence of the Bible is proof of its divine purpose and authenticity.

The Bible reveals Christianity. Every evaluation confirms the believability and authenticity of the Bible. This God-inspired Book gives sound, accurate, logical answers to life's most important questions, questions about the way for man to live the best possible life on earth and how he can prepare to live forever after life here is over. Mere humans cannot make any meaningful promises about life after death.

Chapter 3:

The Bible

Part Two

External evidences alone can provide sufficient proof that the Bible is of divine origin and inspiration. Evidence not directly based on proclamations in the Bible about its inspiration include (1) the unity and agreement from book to book, writer to writer, country to country, and language to language, (2) accuracy of medical, scientific, historical, and archaeological information, (3) fulfillment of prophecy, and (4) durability and indestructibility. These proofs are external and require no prior belief or trust that a divine source is involved in the writing of the Bible.

Internal evidences are also available to support the conclusion of external evaluation that the Bible is the product of a Supreme Being.

The Bible *claims* to be the inspired Word of God. Consider the following passages:

- **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
- **2 Peter 1:20-21**, “...knowing this first that no prophecy of scripture is of any private

interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

- **John 17:17**, “...Your word is truth.”
- **Hebrews 4:12**, “...the word of God is living and powerful...”

The Word of God provides credible, believable, and logical answers to some of life’s most difficult questions. From where did we and everything that exists come? Why are we here? Where are we going? These important questions should be answered. First, from the opening verse of the Bible in Genesis 1:1 we can read, **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** This straight forward, easy-to-understand, statement answers the most basic question.

Next, in Ecclesiastes 12:13 the Bible states, **“Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”** Finally, we know what to expect when our life in this world is over by considering Hebrews 9:27, which reads, **“...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”**

After judgment, one can expect to live forever in one of two places. Those who have been faithful to obey God will be rewarded with an eternal home in a place of peace, happiness, and rest called **heaven**. Read what the Bible says in John 14:1-3, Philippians 3:20, and Revelation 21:3-5. The second place of eternal abode is called **hell**. Read of this place of pain, sorrow, and suffering for those who refuse to obey God in Matthew 25:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 21:8.

The Bible provides the guidance and instruction needed to prepare for eternal life. We cannot find our way without God's Word. We read in Jeremiah 10:23, **“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”**

Man needs the Bible to know how to live on earth and to prepare for judgment and eternity. John 12:48 says, **“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”**

The Bible is not just one book, but 66 books. These can be divided into two primary groups. The first group, called the **Old Testament**, first written in the Hebrew language, includes 39 books, and covers God's dealings with man from the beginning (Genesis 1:1) until the coming of Christ. The last book in the Old Testament is Malachi.

The next major division is called the **New Testament**, which includes 27 books. The New Testament was first written in Greek. It begins with four books that tell the story of Jesus, and it closes with the Book of Revelation.

Each book when studied in detail fits into a story of man, from his beginning until his departure from life on earth to his eternal place of existence. There is a historical timeline that can be followed, but the main theme and message of the Bible deals with the expectations of God for man. The Bible, again, provides a believable, logical, and credible explanation of man's reason for existence and for his future.

Chapter 4:

The Bible

Part Three

The Bible is described by its writers as “inspired of God” in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. This means that God was involved in the writing, in order to provide His perfect message to man regarding His will for us. In the past, according to 2 Peter 1:21, God spoke through prophets who were guided by the Holy Spirit. They were inspired, which means that the words they wrote were given to them by God. The writer of the Book of Hebrews says in 1:1-2 that God “...has in these last days spoken to us by His son...” Jesus reveals God’s will to us as we live in the last days. He empowered the apostles to write the message that man is to obey throughout the ages. In John 14:26, we can read, “... **The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**”

Upon examination and detailed study, one can understand the structure, organization, and overall message of the Bible and its 66 books. The two general divisions of the Bible are the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament, with 39 books, begins with the creation of the world and all life. It closes with the writings of the prophet Malachi. The Old Testament covers a period of about 4,000 to 5,000 years.

The New Testament’s 27 books begin with the

birth and life of Christ in the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It ends with the Book of Revelation, written less than 70 years after the death of Christ.

The 39 books of the Old Testament were penned by several men in the Hebrew language. These writings can be divided into four major groups. The first contains the first five books, all written by Moses. **Genesis** is the first book, and it begins with the creation of man and the world. It closes with the death of Jacob, the father of the sons and grandsons who would become the heads of Israel's 12 tribes. Genesis covers a period of time often called the **Patriarchal Age**, because of the way God dealt with father-figures of the period. These men, beginning with Adam, continuing through others such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, were given instructions regarding worship and the direction for life. The Patriarchal Age can be divided into 6 periods:

1. The creation period (Genesis 1-5)
2. The flood period (Genesis 6-9)
3. The tower of Babel period (Genesis 10-11)
4. Abraham and the Promise period (Genesis 12-23)
5. Isaac and Jacob's period (Genesis 24-36)
6. Joseph and the captivity period (Genesis 37-50)

The Book of Job is also from this first age.

The next section of Bible history, called the **Mosaic Age**, is recorded in the next four books of the Old Testament, beginning with Exodus and continuing

through Deuteronomy. They tell about the nation of Israel (descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob). Exodus begins the history of Israel, with Moses being chosen to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity. The Book of Deuteronomy closes with the death of Moses as Israel occupied the “Promised Land.” The first major covenant or law for God’s people was given to Israel in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy with portions in the Book of Numbers. This law is commonly called the **Law of Moses** and was the rule of life for these people until the coming of Christ.

The next major section of the Old Testament is a group of **twelve books that cover the History of the Nation of Israel** from Joshua, their leader after Moses, until they were overcome and became captives of Babylon. These books are Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Leaders of distinction during this period begin with Joshua and continue through the judges, including Ruth, Samuel and the first kings, Saul, David, and Solomon.

The group of books often called **Hebrew Poetry or Wisdom Literature** was written during the time of David and Solomon, except for Job, which was written during the Patriarchal Age. These books are Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

The last two groups of books are called the Major and Minor Prophets. The **Major Prophets**, being longer than the other books of Old Testament prophecy, include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations,

Ezekiel, and Daniel. They were written at various times during Israel's history. These books provide scores of predictions of the future and are filled with warnings for those disobedient to God.

The other group of 12 prophetic books called the **Minor Prophets** include Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. These messages were penned through the final period covering Israel's history.

The prophets were men who were guided to speak for God, and their writings were filled with warnings for Israel; they also contain prophecies of future events, with much emphasis on the coming of the Savior and King called Christ.

Saul, David, and Solomon each reigned for 40 years. After this 120 years, the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the northern kingdom (often referred to as Israel) and the southern kingdom (referred to as Judah). The Old Testament must be read and studied to understand (1) God and His nature, (2) the purpose of Israel, (3) the kingdom (church) of Christ, and (4) the hope of salvation for all men in Christ.

The 27 books of the New Testament cover the third major period of biblical time division. This period, which follows the Patriarchal and the Mosaic Ages, is called the **Christian Age**. It began with the ending of the Mosaic Age, when Christ established His kingdom to begin an era for all men to follow God under a common covenant called Christianity.

The first books of the New Testament are

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which deal with the **birth, life, death, and teachings of Christ**. The next book is Acts, which is the only **history book** in the New Testament. It begins with Christ's return to heaven following His resurrection. Shortly afterwards (Acts 2), the kingdom of Christ was established, and a history of its first century existence follows.

The next books of the New Testament consist of **the letters of early church leaders** to various individuals and churches. These include Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude. The last book of the New Testament is Revelation, **a book of prophecy**.

Chapter 5:

The God of the Bible

The Bible can be accepted and believed to be truthful and accurate. The evidence of this book's credibility has been reviewed and sufficient reason to believe its teaching has been well established. What does the Bible say to us? First, it reveals God as the Supreme Being Who created and sustains everything. In the very first verse of the Bible, Moses states, **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** If we believe the Bible, then we can believe in God. From a study of the Bible, we can learn that God is:

- **Spirit** – John 4:24, **“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”**
- **All Powerful** – Acts 17:24, **“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.”**
- **All Knowing** – Hebrews 4:13, **“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”**
- **Everywhere** – Psalm 139:7-12, **“Where**

can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.”

- **Just** – Psalm 89:14, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face.”
- **Holy** – 1 Peter 1:16, “...Be holy, for I am holy.”
- **Unchangeable** – Ecclesiastes 3:14, “I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him.”
- **Loving** – John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”
- **Good** – Psalm 145:9, “The Lord is good to

all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.”

- **Merciful** – Ephesians 2:4, **“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us...”**
- **Perfect** – Matthew 5:48, **“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”**

God created the world and put man on earth with the capacity to live, experience love, know his purpose, and choose to believe and trust his Maker. Man, from the beginning, has struggled with temptation to transgress the will of God. God, because of His love for man, has always provided humanity with a way to be reconciled to Him, even though we violate God’s will.

The Bible states in Psalm 19:1 that, **“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.”** Another writer states in Romans 1:20, **“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”** **The existence of a visible, tangible world proves the existence of God.**

Man’s existence is dependent upon God. The writer states in Acts 17:28, **“for in Him we live and move and have our being...”** God desires that man know and understand Him. The writer of Psalm 14:1

states, **“The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.”**

God is described in the Scriptures as “three persons” in nature, yet one in purpose. The Bible reveals God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. We refer to these three as the Godhead. In John 20:17, Jesus speaks of **God the Father**, **“Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.”** In Genesis 1:26, God says, **“Let Us make man in Our image.”** The plurality of Creators refers to the Godhead, Who was present at the creation.

The second person of the Godhead is Jesus, **the Son of God**. In Matthew 16:16 we read, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** In John 1:1-2 He is described as follows, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”** In John 1:14 we read further, **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”** Jesus was sent to earth and lived, died, and was resurrected from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Hebrews 1:1-2).

Finally, the third person of the Godhead is **the Spirit** (or **Holy Spirit**). In John 14:16-17 Jesus says, **“And I will pray the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth...”** Also, read Jesus’ words in

John 16:13-14, “...when He, the Spirit of Truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

All three members of the Godhead are referred to in Matthew 28:18-19 when Jesus commanded His followers saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”

God is the Creator of the world and “the Supreme Being.” He is our Heavenly Father and demands that we recognize His superior being. Jesus is the Son of God, present in the beginning, and born of woman to live on earth for a short period of time to compensate for man’s inability to justify himself to God the Father. The Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus to guide His early followers to understand “all truth” regarding man’s submission to God. The wisest man of all time, Solomon, stated in Ecclesiastes 12:13, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

Chapter 6:

God and Man

The Bible states that man is the creation of God, and is accountable to Him. The account of the creation of everything, including man, is provided in the Book of Genesis. **“Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”** (Genesis 1:26-27).

From the beginning, man was different from other living beings. He was made in God’s image. He has the capacity to know, to understand, to comprehend, and to make decisions. These are things that none of God’s other creations can do. Man has the freedom to choose between alternatives in every aspect of life. God wants him to respect, love, honor, and obey Him. Man can choose to do as God desires, or he can choose to do otherwise. Unfortunately, the very first man and woman – Adam and Eve – chose to disobey God. The third chapter of Genesis gives the account of their disobedience.

God continued to love Adam and Eve, and He provided a way for them to be reconciled to Him. They were punished and suffered the consequence of their disobedience the remainder of their lives, but they were

provided a way to renew their relationship with God.

Man has always been provided a means to maintain a relationship of favor with God. This is possible if we are willing to submit to His will and conditions. We continue in our favored relationship with God in spite of our weakness and failure. Some important Bible passages that deal with God and man's relationship are summarized below.

- **John 3:16**, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”
- **Romans 12:1-2**, “I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of you mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
- **Romans 8:28**, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”
- **Romans 8:38-39**, “I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor

depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- **John 14:15**, “If you love Me, keep my commandments.”
- **2 Timothy 4:18**, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly Kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever.”
- **Jeremiah 10:23**, “...I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”
- **Matthew 10:28**, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”
- **Mark 10:27**, “...with God all things are possible.”
- **Deuteronomy 4:24**, “For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”
- **Psalms 46:1**, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”
- **Psalms 116:5**, “...our God is merciful.”
- **John 4:24**, “God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”
- **Psalms 68:20**, “God is the God of salvation.”

- **Romans 8:31**, “...If God is for us, who can be against us?”
- **1 John 4:8**, “...God is love.”

God loves man, wants him to be saved, and has provided a way for salvation to occur. Salvation is necessary because of man’s inability to be sinless. The Bible states in Romans 3:23, “**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**” The writer further states in Romans 6:23, “**The wages of sin is death.**” Our sin condemns us. We need help to escape from this condemnation. If we fail to deal with sin, we face God in a final judgment with our sins. The Bible says that we are all certain to die and, after death, we will face judgment (Hebrew 9:27).

The soul is described in the Bible as the part of man that will continue to live after physical death. The soul has the capacity to think, reason, experience joy or pain, experience consciousness, and remember life in the physical realm (Luke 16:19-31). **Salvation of the soul for everlasting life after God’s final judgment is the most important matter for one to achieve in this life.** We read in Matthew 16:26, “**For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul...**” God has specific expectations of us (Matthew 7:21), and being religious alone is not adequate to please Him. God provides a way for man to obey Him and to be ready for judgment when life is over.

Chapter 7:

God's Plan to Save Man

The theme of the Bible from beginning to end is that God loves us and desires every man's respect and obedience, which will result in our being able to go to be with Him when life ends on this earth. Experience reveals that man is subject to failure as a result of transgressing the will of God, which is sin, as shown in the Bible. Man cannot save himself. Sin causes one to be condemned, without God, and lost. Some key Scriptures that support the need for a Savior are as follows:

- **Jeremiah 10:23**, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps."
- **Psalms 119:105**, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
- **Romans 3:23**, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
- **Romans 6:23**, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- **Isaiah 59:1-2**, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your

God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”

God is willing to help man. He has provided a way for us to be made acceptable to Him. This was planned from the beginning. In Deuteronomy 18:15,18, thousands of years before the beginning of Christianity, Moses was inspired by God to say, **“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like Me from your midst...”** and, **“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”**

Even before Moses, a promise was recorded in Genesis 22:17-18 regarding a Savior and Leader when God said to Abraham, **“Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”**

The Old Testament contains hundreds of prophecies about the Savior that God would send to redeem man. Many provide graphic details about events in the life of the Lord. Consider passages from Isaiah 53:

“Who has believed our report... For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness... 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. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted. Yet he opened not His mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked – But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth...

“Because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

The prophet Isaiah was writing hundreds of years before Christ. He foretold the life and death of the One

approved of God to “bear the sins of man” and to make intercession with God on our behalf. His description of Jesus’ death and burial was accurate in every detail. God’s plan was for the Lord to be the Savior of man. Jeremiah predicted Christ in Jeremiah 23:5 as follows, **“Behold the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will raise up to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.”**

Jesus is God’s gift to man. John 3:16 states, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”** The writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 1:1-2, **“God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds...”**

Man, with his own offerings and efforts, cannot please God and be saved from sin. He can be saved only by accepting God’s terms of salvation. These terms are provided by Jesus, the Son of God. Salvation is through Christ. When the Lord was born, the writer of the Book of Luke stated in 2:10-11, **“...Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”**

Chapter 8:

Jesus, the Son of God

The greatest truth of the entire Bible is that Jesus, the Christ, is the Son of God. Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of a Savior for man. Jesus was the fulfillment of these prophecies. He was sent to earth by the Father to be offered as the sacrifice for man's sin (Ephesians 5:2). He lived a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15), making Him the only man born of woman to be acceptable to God as a perfect sacrifice for humanity's transgressions. He willingly gave Himself to save man (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). The Bible describes Jesus as **the Savior of the world** (Luke 19:10), **the Son of God** (John 9:35-37), **man's Advocate** (1 John 2:1), Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:1), **High Priest** (Hebrews 3:1), **Anointed of God** (Matthew 3:17), **the Beginning and the End** (Revelation 1:8,11), **King** (John 18:37), **the Christ** (Acts 2:30), **the Author of our faith** (Hebrews 12:2), and **Teacher from God** (John 3:2).

The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament provide accounts of the life of Christ. His birth in Bethlehem is described (Matthew 1:22-23). His genealogy is provided by Matthew and Luke, with both showing His link to men and women of prophecy.

The life of Jesus is an amazing story. He had supernatural powers. He stilled the winds and waves.

He healed the sick of all types of diseases and infirmities. He cast out demons. He brought the dead back to life.

Jesus foretold His own death and circumstances leading up to the end. Masses followed Him and believed His teachings. He clearly taught the doctrine that all men can follow and please God. Jesus promised to return from the grave and He did so as He had foretold. He demonstrated His supreme being and His willingness to use His place with God for our benefit.

Jesus is alive today and reigns over His kingdom, called the church. His throne is at the side of God, His Father. He taught and prepared His apostles for the beginning of a new era of relationship between man and God. Forty days after His Ascension from the earth and return to heaven (Acts 1-2), the Holy Spirit came to the apostles as Jesus had promised them (John 14:17; 16:13). With the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of Christ was begun in Jerusalem. Those who believed the teachings of Jesus and yielded their will and way of life to His will were added to His church.

The first 40-60 years that followed the beginning of Christ's kingdom were filled with continued proof of His power as His apostles performed miracles in His name. During those years, the Holy Spirit was guiding men to write accounts of the events that were taking place, the story of Jesus' life, and letters of instruction and prophecy to establish the church and its doctrine.

The church belongs to Christ. The relationship of a husband with his wife is compared to the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church, in Ephesians

5:22-33. The church wears the name of her Lord: **“The churches of Christ greet you”** (Romans 16:16). It is described as, **“... the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”**

Members of the Lord’s church also wear His name: **“... the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”** (Acts 11:26). All men are free to belong to the church established by Jesus, which He promised He will someday return to redeem (John 14:1-5). He will fulfill that promise to reward those who have been faithful until death and also those dedicated Christians who are alive at His coming: **“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. and thus we shall always be with the Lord”** (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

Judgment of all men that have ever lived will follow the Second Coming of Jesus. The faithful will be rewarded, and those who reject Christ will be punished. The eternal home of God, Jesus, and the faithful of mankind will be heaven.

Chapter 9:

Christ and Salvation

The Bible says that all men sin and transgress the will of God (Romans 3:23). Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). We need Jesus to save us from our sin. The blood that Jesus shed as He died on the cross is the cleansing agent for man's sin (Hebrews 9:22; 1 John 1:7-9). How is one saved, having full assurance of being ready to die in a state that will be judged favorably at the Second Coming of Christ?

The first people to be told the answer to this question was the crowd gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish holiday, Pentecost (Acts 1-2). The apostles preached to this crowd. Their message reminded the people of the prophecies concerning a Savior. They were told that Jesus was the Savior, just as the prophets foretold. Upon realizing that they had put to death the very One Who could save them, the Jerusalem crowd asked the apostles what they should do.

They were told, **“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2:38). They wanted to remedy their situation as lost sinners. As they were baptized, the Lord added them to the church (Acts 2:41,47).

This simple plan is all that is required for one to become a saved believer and a follower of Jesus.

This trust and willingness to obey the teaching of Jesus is the faith that we must have to be saved. Saving faith involves putting one's trust in the unseen (Hebrews 16:15-16), in the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 9:22), in the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-11), and in the authority of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20).

The New Testament provides numerous examples and accounts of men going through the process of becoming a Christian. These accounts all have the common elements of (1) **becoming aware of one's lost state and the need of salvation** (Romans 10:17), (2) **belief that Jesus is the risen Son of God** (Hebrews 11:6), (3) **willingness to confess Christ** (Matthew 10:32-33), (4) **turning from man's way to the way of Christ in repentance** (Acts 17:30), and (5) **baptism (immersion in water)** to complete the process of entering the church (Acts 2:38; Colossians 2:12). This is why God gave His Son (John 3:16).

When one obeys these teachings, he is added to the church: "... **the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved**" (Acts 2:47), burdens are lifted (Matthew 11:28-30), and one can then enjoy forgiveness of sins (Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9), and the blessings (Ephesians 1:3) of God. All our past sins are removed at baptism, and one can begin a new life in Christ (Ephesians 2:13). As we live for Him according to His will (the Bible), He will forgive our sins from day to day (1 John 1:17).

Chapter 10:

Christ and the Church

The Bible, as already stated, is the only authoritative source of information one can use to learn about Christianity. In previous lessons, the plan of God to make it possible for man to be suitable for eternal life in heaven has been discussed. The way to God and heaven is through Christ. We read our Lord's own words in Matthew 28:18 saying, **“All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth.”** The writer of Hebrews wrote of Jesus in Hebrews 5:9, **“And having been perfected He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”**

God planned the way of salvation and sent Jesus to establish the church (Matthew 16:18) to be made up of the saved. Christ is the answer to man's needs today. Consider Hebrews 1:1-7, which states:

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things through whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at

the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

The writer of Acts stated in Acts 4:12, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Christ is the Head of all things. Ephesians 1:22 states, “...He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body...” Man’s hope is in Him. The power, place, and authority of Christ are described in Colossians 1:13-18, which states:

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His Love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

How can one be saved? What is the role and place of “church” in being saved or pleasing God? **Salvation is in Christ.** From Romans 1:16 we read, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it**

is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth...” Gospel means “good news.” From 1 Corinthians 15:1-7, we learn:

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. 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, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.”

We can be saved *because of* the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. We are saved *by obeying the teaching of Christ*. He has all authority over all things.

What do we do to obey Jesus and to be saved? The Bible provides the answer to this question. During the life of Christ, He prepared the apostles to teach His plan of salvation. Shortly before ascending back to heaven after His resurrection, Jesus commanded the apostles (Mark 16:15-16), **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who**

believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Matthew’s account of this command in Matthew 28:19-26 reads, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always even to the end of the age.”**

A few days later, the apostles preached to the people gathered from across the world in Jerusalem to observe the Jewish day of Pentecost.

Chapter II:

Christian Worship

Almost all religions involve worship, which involves acts of respect, acknowledgment of sovereignty, and love. The Bible provides guidance for Christian worship. One may find a range of traditions, doctrines, and acts in the practices of Christian worship. Care must be given to doing what God wants His people to do in their worship, rather than the ceremonies and traditions developed by men.

The Bible teaching on worship is fully adequate and the only authoritative guide. Consider Romans 12:1-2, **“I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

What constitutes Christian worship? **First**, we need to understand the state of mind for worship. Simply following rituals and traditions of man’s design are not pleasing to God (Matthew 15:9; 2 John 9-11). Our hearts must be filled with love and respect for God as our Creator, source of being, and Savior.

We must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

Christians in the early church, as is seen by studying the New Testament, met to worship on **the first day of the week** (Acts 20:7). They participated in **five acts of worship**, in no particular order. **Only these five acts should be practiced today.**

One involves eating the **Lord's Supper**. Jesus taught concerning this act of worship before His betrayal, arrest, and death (Matthew 26:26-30). The Supper is a remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ as Christians eat unleavened bread which represents His body, and drink the fruit of the vine which represents His blood (1 Corinthians 11:23-34). The Lord's Supper is a memorial feast, to reflect on our Savior and His sacrifice for us, rather than a common meal to feed our bodies.

A second act of worship is **prayer**. Early Christians prayed together (Acts 2:42), and prayed without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer should involve giving thanks, acknowledgment of God's power, mercy, grace and forgiveness, petitions for forgiveness, guidance, and help.

Christians in the first century **sang hymns** during their meetings on the first day of the week. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He and the apostles sang hymns (Matthew 26:30). Paul's letters to the Ephesians (5:19-20) and Colossians (3:16) gave instructions for the church to teach and to encourage one another as they worshiped God through **singing**. Singing provides an opportunity to express our feelings about God, Jesus, our brethren, the church,

the Bible, the Spirit, heaven, grace, mercy, and a host of other relevant subjects. God wants us to sing as worship to Him. **Other forms of musical expression are not mentioned or authorized.**

Another act of worship is **study and meditation**. God's Word is to be known and understood by Christians (2 Timothy 2:15). Worship includes preaching, teaching, and study of the Bible (2 Timothy 4:1-9). God's will is revealed in His Word. We cannot be saved without doing the will of God (Matthew 7:21). Preaching as worship is a common means of communicating the message of the cross, salvation, and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:17-21).

A fifth act of worship authorized by the Bible is the **giving** of one's means to the church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Christians give out of an understanding of what God has given us. Instructions for giving include, **(1)** giving feely and cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:17), **(2)** as we have prospered (2 Corinthians 9:6-8), and **(3)** on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:12). God promises to bless the giver when gifts are from a heart of love and understanding. Being able to give to God is a privilege.

Chapter 12:

Christian Living and Christian Character

Christian Living

The Bible not only provides the instruction and teaching needed for one to become a Christian, but it also gives guidance concerning one's life. The Christian is living a new life (Colossians 3:1-9), in Christ (John 3:3-5) as a citizen of the kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13-14). **The Christian life involves a commitment to become the kind of person that pleases God.** The Bible provides instructions regarding the social, moral, and behavioral code for Christians. We are called ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). The Christian is characterized by love, compassion, self-control, moral purity, modesty, humility, honesty, integrity, concern for others, acceptance of responsibility, maturity, attitude, and faithfulness to Bible teachings. Christians are to be leaders in doing good.

Christians worship God. They follow the guidance of the Bible in worship. Christians know, respect, and study God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17). Prayer is a continuous act of this new life

(1 Thessalonians 5:17). **Unreserved commitment** to doing the will of God (Luke 9:23-27, 57-62) is also paramount in every aspect of life for the obedient believer (Matthew 6:33-34).

As faithful Christians, one can enjoy the care and blessings of God. He promises, **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”** (Romans 8:28). All spiritual blessings are provided for God’s children (Ephesians 1:3) and He will give wisdom to the faithful who ask Him (James 1:5). Christians are more than conquerors through Christ and cannot be separated from God and His love and care (Romans 8:31-39).

Christian Character

Christian character is developed as one follows the teachings of Christ and the Bible. **The new birth that results in one becoming a Christian is the beginning of a lifetime process of transforming one’s character to be more like Christ.** Consider the teaching of Romans 12:1-2, which reads, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

What characterizes the transformed person? Many passages define the Christian.

Love is the dominant trait of a true follower of Christ. The apostle Matthew records this conversation in Matthew 22:36-40,

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.””

John emphasized the requirement that one practice and possess Christian love in numerous passages. Some of these include:

- **John 14:15**, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”
- **John 15:12**, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”
- **1 John 3:16**, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”
- **1 John 3:18**, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”
- **1 John 4:7-8**, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone

who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

- **1 John 4:19**, “We love Him because He first loved us.”
- **1 John 5:3**, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

The application and incorporation of love into one’s life results in numerous character traits. Consider Peter’s teaching in 2 Peter 1:5-10:

“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble...”

Another passage that helps define the character of Christians is Galatians 5:22-23, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”**

Paul encouraged the Ephesian brethren to be of Christian character as he wrote to them in 4:1-3, **“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”** In addition, consider Ephesians 4:32, **“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.”**

Other traits encouraged in Scripture include: **(1)** honesty and truthfulness (Colossians 3:9), **(2)** wisdom (James 3:17), **(3)** an obedient heart (Romans 6:17), **(4)** the ability to sacrifice for others (Philippians 2:4-5), **(5)** the wise use of time and talents (Colossians 4:5), **(6)** compassion and a benevolent attitude (1 Peter 3:8), **(7)** to be dependable (1 Corinthians 15:58), **(8)** respect for others (Philippians 2:3), **(9)** humility (2 Corinthians 3:5; 1 Peter 5:5), **(10)** prayerfulness (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Philippians 4:6), **(11)** soberness (1 Peter 5:8; Romans 12:3), **(12)** to be responsible (Acts 9:10), **(13)** to be reverent (Hebrews 12:28), **(14)** to be knowledgeable of God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15), and **(15)** to be morally pure (1 Timothy 5:22).

Everyone has the opportunity to grow continuously in Christian character. Study God’s Word, and the application of its teaching fuels the growth process.

Chapter 13:

Christian Work and Christian Hope

Christian Work

The Christian is provided biblical guidance for worship, personal development, and work. What is the work of Christians? Jesus instructed all Christians in Matthew 28:18-20 to teach the Gospel to every person in the world. **The mission of the church is to provide teaching to every person, enabling them to decide whether or not to obey the Gospel of Christ. Teaching should be persuasive and serious.** The example of the apostles and the first century church in spreading the Gospel to all the world is described in the New Testament Book of Acts.

Every Christian should use his personal talents and blessings to perform a unique and personal ministry to spread the Gospel. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:7, 11-12 as follows, **“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ...And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the**

work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Also, read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26.

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

“For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

“But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which we think to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow

greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need.

“But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part that lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

Christians work together to accomplish this most demanding and important mission. **To teach others, one must (1) know the Bible, (2) be active in teaching every day, (3) be edified and strengthened by brethren, (4) plan and set goals, (5) know one’s personal characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses, and (6) love one’s neighbor as he loves himself.**

Christian Hope

The Christian hope any person can have is to live forever in heaven. The description of the **“new heaven and the new earth”** provided by John in Revelation 22 is of a beautiful place of perfection, everlasting life, the absence of pain, death, disappointment, fear, or hurt of any kind. There is no sin in heaven. Christians have hope because of the powerful resurrection of Jesus from the dead (2 Corinthians 15:17-19). We are saved by hope (Romans 8:24) because Christ is our hope (1 Timothy 1:1). The full assurance of hope

(Hebrews 6:21) comes through diligently obeying until the end. The end is either death or the return of Christ (John 14:1-3).

There is no hope without Christ (Ephesians 2:12), and with no hope one faces eternal punishment (1 Thessalonians 4:13). God's mercy, love, and grace cannot be fully understood, but we can know that God does keep His promises, and we can carry in our souls the hope of heaven if we are obedient to Him.

Jesus promised to return (John 14:2-3), and His return will be the greatest event of all time. **The greatest hope of any person is that he can be ready for Christ's return, and then be carried by the Lord to his eternal home in heaven.**

Bonus Chapter:

Christian Government

The Christian is one who has been added to the church upon acceptance of Christ and obedience to His conditions for salvation (Acts 2:38-42). All Christians are in the same church, simply the collective group of those added by Christ to His body. How is the church governed?

First, **Christ is the Head of the church** (Ephesians 1:22-23). There is no organizational structure given or authorized by the Bible for the universal church. **The only authorized organizational and church governance instructions are for individual congregations or groups of Christians who regularly meet and work together on a weekly basis.**

Congregations are to be autonomous, meaning that they are fully independent of any oversight or reporting relationship to any other congregation or person outside of their own membership. The oversight of an individual congregation is the responsibility of **elders** (1 Timothy 3:1-2; Acts 20:28). These men must meet qualifications to serve the church in their role as provided in Scripture (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-13).

The work of an eldership (meaning a plurality,

and only a plurality of elders) is to feed the church (Acts 20:28), teach (Titus 1:9), provide examples of faith (1 Peter 5:3), rule (Romans 12:8), protect the church (Acts 20:29-31), watch and tend the flock (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2), and preside over its operation (1 Timothy 5:1). Elders are also called bishops (1 Timothy 5:1), pastors (Ephesians 4:11), overseers (Acts 20:28), rulers (Hebrews 13:17), shepherds (1 Peter 5:2), and presbyters (1 Timothy 5:1). These leaders are responsible for the overall work and welfare of their respective congregations. Congregations can work together on projects, provided that a subordinate relationship is not developed.

Another special servant authorized for the local congregation of the church is the **deacon**. These men must meet qualifications provided by Scripture (1 Timothy 3:8-13). They serve the congregation and are overseen by the elders. Their duties vary, and include a full range of ministries to help the congregation as it functions to worship, edify its members, encourage personal ministry, and attend to benevolent needs of members and their community.

Evangelists are under the oversight of local congregations in their efforts of preaching the Gospel. The work of an evangelist is described in the Book of 2 Timothy. These men are given the task of advancing the Gospel to every place in the world where people have not heard the message of God concerning salvation. They are to “**preach the word,**” everywhere and all the time (2 Timothy 4:2).

Matthew 28.18-19 Examples of Conversion Mark 16.15-16

Preaching	Believed	Repented	Confessed	Baptized	Saved
Pentecost Acts 2.14-41	Believed Acts 2.36	Repented Acts 2.37-38	Confessed Acts 2.47	Baptized Acts 2.38-41	Remission of Sins Acts 2.38-47
Samaritans Acts 8.5-13	Believed Acts 8.12	Repented Acts 8.9-10	Confessed Acts 8.10, 12	Baptized Acts 8.12-13	Remission of Sins Acts 8.16 (2.38)
Eunuch Acts 8.35-39	Believed Acts 8.36-37	Repented Acts 8.36	Confessed Acts 8.37	Baptized Acts 8.38	Rejoiced Acts 8.39
Saul Acts 9.17-18	Believed Acts 22.10	Repented Acts 9.9	Confessed Rom 10.9-10	Baptized Acts 9.18	Sins Washed Away Acts 22.16
Cornelius Acts 10.34-48	Believed Acts 10.43	Repented Acts 11.18	Confessed Acts 10.46	Baptized Acts 10.48	Remission of Sins Acts 10.43, 48
Lydia Acts 16.13-15	Believed Acts 16.14			Baptized Acts 16.15	Faithful Acts 16.15
The Jailer Acts 16.30-34	Believed Acts 16.31, 34	Repented Acts 16.33		Baptized Acts 16.33	Rejoiced Acts 16.34
Corinthians Acts 18.1-8	Believed Acts 18.8	Repented 1 Cor. 6.9-11		Baptized Acts 18.8	Sanctified 1 Cor. 6.11
Ephesians Acts 19.1-7ff	Believed Ep 1.13; Ac. 19.5, 18	Repented Acts 19.18; 20.21		Baptized Acts 19.5 (2.38)	Saved Eph. 2.8-9
Preaching Romans 10.14	+ Faith John 8.24	+ Repentance Luke 13.3	+ Confession Romans 10.9-10	+ Baptism Galatians 3.26-27	= Salvation 2 Timothy 2.10

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Courtesy: Undenominational Christianity

WHEN ARE WE SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH?

Ephesians 2:4-6

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **even when we were dead in our transgressions made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), **and raised us up with Him** and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus”

Colossians 2:12-14

“having been buried with Him **in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him** through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. **When you were dead in your transgressions** and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **He made you alive together with Him**, having forgiven us all our transgressions”

Courtesy: Undenominational Christianity

Have you died with Christ?



Spiritually Dead
Ephesians 2:1, 5

New Life, Born Again
2 Corinthians 5:17
John 3:5

Sanctified (Romans 6:22)



**Buried With
Jesus**

Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12

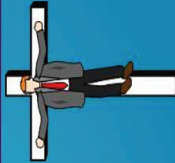


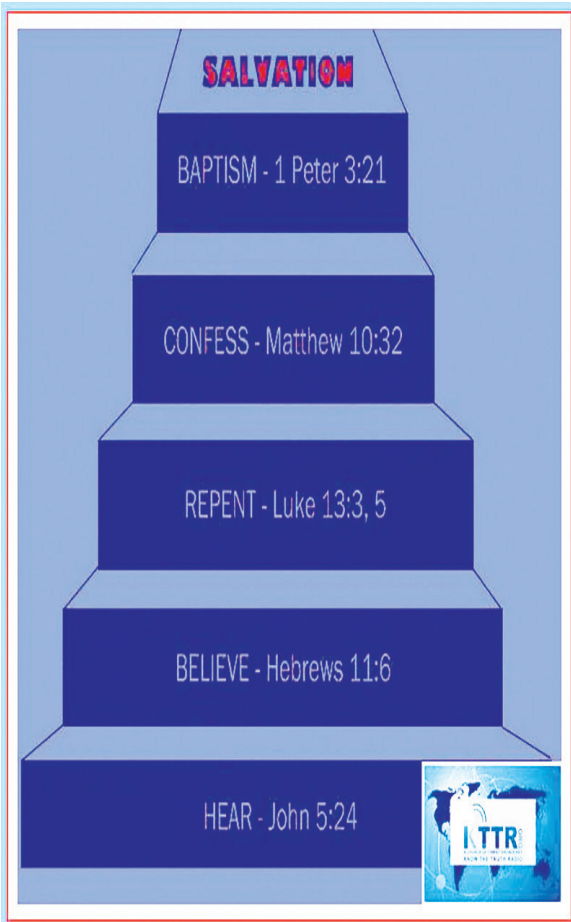
**United with Jesus
in His Death**

Romans 6:5

**Raised into New
Life**

By our faith (Col 2:12)





Courtesy: KTTR Radio

God's Plan of Salvation

Hear God's Word

- “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17 NKJV).

Believe or Have Faith

- “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” (John 8:24).

Repent

- “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Profess Belief in Jesus as Lord

- “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

Be Immersed (Baptized) in Water

- “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16; compare Colossians 2:12).

Live Faithfully

- “...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

To inquire further regarding God's plan for the redemption of humanity, contact the church of Christ in your community. **Let's go to heaven together!**

