

WHAT IS A PRIMITIVE BAPTIST?

By: Elder David Wise

Pastor of Macedonia Primitive Baptist Church (2020)

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Preface

Over the last few years, I've had the privilege to interact with people from Africa, England, Canada, and other places around the world and the United States who were intrigued by Primitive Baptist doctrine and were seeking further teaching in the word of God. It became evident to me throughout those interactions that there was no comprehensive but yet concise teaching on the core points of Primitive Baptist doctrine and practice that was publicly available to anyone, particularly on the internet. Many gifted ministers have written books and various articles and sermons that are publicly available but not collectively in one place and volume. When I was asked by a brother from Canada for reading material on the distinctive points of what Primitive Baptists believe, I found myself suggesting a hodge podge of buying quite a few books, listening to various sermons, and reading other articles. It's also not practical for many impoverished people in other countries to buy a book from America to be able to know what Primitive Baptists believe.

In light of that experience, I felt a burden to produce, to the best of my ability, an "Introduction to Primitive Baptists" work that could be provided in a broad manner to anyone who requested further teaching from us. This has been written with an intent to not just teach those from an international perspective of what Primitive Baptists believe, but also to be useful to distinguish our beliefs and practices from the general teachings of Christianity in America as well.

This entire work is available online at Macedonia Primitive Baptist Church's website, along with sermons (about 20 minutes each in length) that give additional teaching on each chapter. The free PDF of this work and applicable sermons are available online at macedonia-pbc.org/what-is-a-pb/

I hope this work, and the corresponding sermons as well, that are now publicly available online will be useful in teaching God's word to those who are seeking the truth of the scriptures from the Primitive Baptists.

– David Wise, May 2020

What Is A Primitive Baptist?

Introduction

When I tell others that I pastor and attend a Primitive Baptist Church, it's very common for their immediate question to be "What is a Primitive Baptist?" Well, I hope to be able to answer that question for you during these writings.

There are quite a few aspects of the doctrine and worship of the Primitive Baptist Church that are considerably different than the general teachings in Christianity today. We hope to consider those identifying marks of the church in light of the word of God. Here are a few identifying marks of the Primitive Baptist Church that we hope to elaborate on more in-depth through these writings.

We attempt to adhere strictly to the scriptures of the King James Version of the Bible as the only authority for our doctrine and practice in the church.

We believe that the scriptures teach that man is saved solely by the grace of God alone. Eternal salvation is not caused or initiated by any work of man – neither acceptance, belief, baptism, nor a lifetime of good works – but the cause of our eternal salvation is solely by the sovereignty and grace of God.

We believe the scriptures teach that all of mankind is dead in sins with no ability to recover ourselves from that fallen, dead state and thus salvation must be by grace alone or no one would ever be saved at all.

We believe that before the foundation of the world God loved and elected an innumerable host of people to save and predestinated for them to be in heaven with God for all of eternity. God made a covenant before the world began to call his people in the new birth by the Holy Spirit, for Jesus to become a man and die for their sins on the cross, and for their bodies to be finally glorified.

We believe that Jesus finished all the requirements for eternal salvation upon the cross apart from any work of man or even our knowledge of his finished work and that all the elect for whom Christ died will be in heaven with him without the loss of one.

We believe that men are born again by the sovereign, immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of a dead sinner with no intermediary or condition that is required to be met by the recipient (such as belief, acceptance, or baptism) but men are born again solely by the direct, immediate, sovereign work of the Holy Spirit on their heart.

We believe the gospel is to inform the elect of their salvation, not to offer eternal salvation, so that they may believe the gospel and have peace and assurance of eternal salvation by faith in Jesus Christ as their hope of eternal life. Furthermore, we believe there is a salvation here in time, separate and distinct from eternal salvation, that we experience by obedience to God in our lives.

We believe the New Testament scriptures give us all the requirements for the practice, worship, government, and structure of the Lord's church and thus we administer worship and church practice in accordance with what we find explicitly prescribed in the New Testament. Therefore, we worship in a very simple manner – singing, praying, and preaching in the church. We do not utilize Sunday schools or other church activities that we do not see prescribed in the New Testament scriptures.

You may have the same question as many of my acquaintances, “What is a Primitive Baptist? I’ve never heard of them.” First of all, you need to know that “Primitive” simply means “Original”. We are not primitive or archaic in our church buildings or facilities, but we do maintain a primitive doctrine and practice. We believe to be holding to the same doctrine and practice that we see in the New Testament scriptures of the Original Church, and thus we believe that we can trace our church ancestry in an unbroken line back to the original apostles and the Original (“Primitive”) Baptist Church that was set up by Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry. Those, who have held to the same doctrine and practice of the Original Baptist Church have been called by many different names over the years. The Original Baptist Church were first called Christians at Antioch, but those who have held staunchly to the New Testament doctrine and practice of the church have been known by Donatists, Waldenses, Albigenses, Ana-Baptists, and other names over the years in various countries. Historical references to this small remnant of the original church can be found throughout the Middle East, Europe, and Northern Africa for all the centuries dating back to the first century church.

Primitive Baptists are not “Protestants”. Since we were never a part of the Roman Catholic Church, we never left the Catholic Church “in protest” of their doctrine and practice. Our Primitive Baptist ancestors of the Donatists, Waldenses, Albigenses and Anabaptists were always separate and distinct from the Roman Catholic Church and thus we did not leave the Catholic Church “in protest” or leave as Protestants. We did not come into existence during the Reformation in the 16th century with the historical Protestants, but rather we believe we can trace our church ancestry back to the Original Baptist Church established by Christ and the apostles in the first century, never with any connection or fellowship with the Roman Catholic Church.

After migrating to America, the church was known as simply Baptists from the 17th century till the early 19th century. Culminating in 1832, there was a group who splintered off from the historical Baptist church who adopted an unscriptural purpose of the gospel to save souls to heaven and correspondingly added unscriptural additions to the church such as mission boards and Sunday schools to accomplish this end. Those who desired to adopt these unscriptural doctrines and practices took the name of Missionary Baptists or New School Baptists. Those who remained committed to the original doctrine and practice of the church as historically believed by Baptists and by the Original Baptist Church that we see in the New Testament Scriptures were given the name by their detractors of Primitive Baptists or Old School Baptists, since we held to the original or old school teachings of the church. Thus, those who believe in salvation by grace alone and the simple manner of worship that we see prescribed in the New Testament scriptures have taken the name in America of Primitive Baptists, just as the original church has been called by many names in other countries over the centuries. In summary, since we view the scriptures as our only rule of faith and practice, we believe that our doctrine and practice and worship is the same as the Original Baptist Church that we see expressed in the New Testament scriptures and we believe we can trace our primitive church ancestry back to the first century and the establishment of the original church by Jesus Christ and the apostles.

We hope to consider throughout the rest of these writings the distinctive beliefs and marks of the Primitive Baptist Church. We hope you can see that these beliefs are supported by scripture and the word of God and thus you will be compelled to believe these truths of God’s word along with the Primitive Baptist Church.

For His Glory,
David Wise

One God and The Trinity

“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me...” (Isaiah 45:5)

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” (1 John 5:7)

One God, There is None Else

There were multiple ideas during Jesus’ life as to who he actually was. Some thought he was John the Baptist, or Elijah resurrected, or one of the other prophets. Peter correctly affirmed that Jesus was *“the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matt. 16:13-18). Just like there were – and still are – a multitude of false assumptions over who Jesus was, there are also many opinions over “Who is God?” Which one of the many supposed gods that are currently worshipped and have previously been worshipped in this world has the rightful claim to be “the one, true, and living God”?

This is the foundational principle of all of Christianity: that there is one God, the God of the Bible, and that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ to save his people from their sins. All that we believe about God is in the Bible, the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, but other gods have other books and attempt to claim their own divinity (Allah has the Koran that claims he is god, for example). What makes the Bible the sole authority on who God really is and what he expects from his people? It’s because the God of the Christian Bible claims total authority as God of the universe: *“I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me”* (Isaiah 45:5).

It’s been common in religious history that most false religions tend to believe in “polytheism” – “poly” (many) and “theism” (belief in God). They have believed in “many gods” for every area of their life – the sun god, the moon god, the harvest god, the rain god, etc. Therefore, it’s quite radical in religious history for Christianity to ascribe to “monotheism” – “mono” (one) and “theism” (belief in God). We don’t believe there are many gods who each have segmented authority over individual parts of our life and creation, but Christians believe there is one God who has sovereign authority over every area of our life and creation. The Bible affirms that Jehovah God is the only true God and that Jesus Christ as God became a man, sent from God the Father. *“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”* (John 17:3) *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.”* (1 Tim. 2:5) See also: Isaiah 46:9; Deut. 4:35,39; 1 Kings 8:60; 1 Chron. 17:20; Jer. 10:10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Mark 12:29-32; James 2:19; 1 Tim. 1:17.

The Eternal God

God is not like an earthly king that assumed authority upon the death of another god or has gained control since another god vacated his dominion. No, God is eternal and everlasting and God has eternally been the sovereign authority over the earth and the affairs of man. Since God is eternal that means that he has no beginning and he has no end. God was not born, did not have a beginning point, God is just the eternal *“I AM THAT I AM”* (Exod. 3:14; John 8:58). God has been the only God from everlasting and will be the only God to everlasting. God’s existence and authority predates the creation of this world. *“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”* (Psalm 90:2).

There is no God before or after the Lord. God is the eternal authority of all of this world and all of his creation. *“...before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.”* (Isaiah 43:10-11) See also: Ps. 93:2, 102:27; Isaiah 40:28; Hab. 1:12; Gen. 21:33; Jer. 10:10; Deut. 33:27; Ps. 18:31; Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, 44:8, 45:5; 1 Sam. 2:2, 7:22.

One God and The Trinity

The Trinity

Even more radical than the claim that there is only “one God” is the uniquely Christian doctrine that our one God exists in three distinct persons – God the Father, God the Son (the Word), and God the Holy Ghost. *“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”* (1 John 5:7) God is not three different individual gods, but he’s one unified God in three persons. God is also not one God who just chooses to manifest himself sometimes in three different modes (that’s the heresy of modalism). Also, God is not one God who just performs different roles on occasion – like I am a son, pastor, and employee. I’m one person just fulfilling different functions that have different titles associated with those functions. God does not just take on one role or title depending on his actions like I would at different times. No, simply put, God is “one God in three persons” and those three are still one. Just like God is the “I AM”, God is also the “one-in-three and three-in-one”.

In Deuteronomy 6:4, God describes his Trinitarian essence: *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.”* The Hebrew here reads – *“The Yehovah (proper name of God, singular person) our elohiym (God, plural form) is one Yehovah (singular person)”*. This shows that even though there is more than one “person” in the God head (evidenced by the plural noun *elohiym*), they are still only one LORD (*Yehovah*).

In Ephesians 4:3-6, the “unity” of the Godhead is mentioned in verse 3, and then the three unified members of the Godhead are all mentioned in the successive three verses: a) *“one Spirit”* (v.4) – Holy Spirit; b) *“One Lord”* (v.5) – Jesus Christ; c) *“One God and Father of all”* (v.6) – God the Father.

Multiple times in scripture, as God speaks, he speaks interchangeably in both the singular and plural tense: *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”* (Gen. 1:26)
“And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil...” (Gen. 3:22)
“And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” (Isaiah 6:8)

Many have tried to denounce 1 John 5:7 as being the only place in scripture that the Trinity is taught. That is why that verse has been targeted for exclusion by those who have maliciously altered the word of God in other Bible versions and manuscripts. Those who seek to denounce the Trinitarian essence of God have attempted to remove that verse from current day Bibles in hopes this doctrine would be abandoned. In truth, the three persons of the Trinity are replete throughout scripture. We are commanded to baptize in name of all three persons of the Trinity. *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”* (Matt. 28:19) Paul gives this Trinitarian blessing to the Corinthian church in closing his epistle. *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”* (2 Cor. 13:14) See also: Matt. 3:16-17; John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26; Rom. 8:9; Eph. 2:18; Heb. 9:14

I confess I cannot understand or perfectly explain how God is distinctly three persons and still one God and how God is also one unified God and yet three persons. God is God and that is how he has chosen to exist. Since I’m not God and only have a finite, frail, earthly mind I cannot perfectly understand the doctrine of the Trinity. It is a mystery to me. I also cannot really understand or grasp eternity – how something never came into existence and never shall cease or die. Everything we know in this life has a beginning point and ending point, but God does not. I cannot understand it, but I still believe the scriptures’ teaching that God is eternal and Trinitarian. It shouldn’t surprise me that a God so big that even *“the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee”* (1 Kings 8:27) that my little mind can’t contain him either. Personally, I’m thankful that God is bigger than my mind can comprehend because that compels me to worship God. Truly “how great is our God” and “how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out”!

One God and The Trinity

Eternal Divinity of Jesus Christ

It's also vitally important to understand that the Son of God, the Word, became a man to pay for the sins of people. The Son of God was made a man, born of a virgin, conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Ghost and named Jesus at his birth (Isaiah 7:14, Matt. 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38). This child that was the Son of God was born and named Jesus because he would save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). When the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was born in this world, he was created at that time or born into this world in a different manner than the Word has existed in eternity. The 100% divine God also assumed the nature to be 100% man as well for the purpose of redemption of his people.

In 1 John 5:7, the second person of the Godhead is called "*the Word*". That same Word was God from before the world began. "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" (John 1:1). That same Word was made flesh and dwelt among men: "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*" (John 1:14) Just as the entire Godhead is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 90:2), the Word, the Son of God, Jesus Christ is also "*without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life*" (Heb. 7:3).

Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh. "*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*" (1 Tim. 3:16) It is a great mystery how an eternal God who is a Spirit by nature could become a man – no doubt "great is the mystery of godliness". Even though it is a great mystery as to how that occurred, at the same time, it is still "without controversy". It's not open for debate or controversy; Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh. In the human body of Jesus Christ, there was the full power of the Godhead dwelling in the body of a man. "*For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*" (Col. 2:9)

Even as a man, Jesus was in perfect unity and fully equal with the other persons of the Godhead. "*11) Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are... 21) That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22) And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; 23) I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*" (John 17:11-23) Jesus succinctly declared that as a man, and as he always had been, he was perfectly one with God the Father. "*I and my Father are one.*" (John 10:30) See also: John 5:17-18, John 14:1,7,9; John 15:23-24; John 16:3; 1 John 2:22-23.

Creator of All Things

We believe in the literal creation account in scripture – that God created all the heavens and earth in 144 hours, 6 days and 24 hours in each day, and rested on the seventh day, as we clearly read in Genesis 1. The account in Genesis clearly denotes that "*the evening and the morning were the first day*" (Gen. 1:5). The Jewish day began in the evening, so it was evident to the readers that this is referring to a consecutive 144-hour period, in 6 normal days as also affirmed in Exod. 20:11. "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.*" (John 1:1-3) Everything in both the heavens and earth were created by the Lord. "*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*" (Col. 1:16-17)

One God and The Trinity

We reject the false theory of evolution – that man has evolved over billions of years to the state we are in today. The creation account in Genesis clearly affirms that all the heavens and earth were created by the power and voice of God in 6 days. Every plant, animal, fowl, and ultimately man was created to bring forth offspring “after his kind”. There is no evolution from one kind (primate) to another kind (mankind). As unmistakably declared in Genesis, man was created by God in the image of God, and the Lord breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Evolution is not true science but is the scriptural definition of “*oppositions of science falsely so called*” (1 Tim. 6:20). Science is observable, repeatable, and verifiable. Therefore, anyone can perform a scientific experiment and reach the same conclusion as you reached and test and validate your scientific theory. Evolution is not observable, repeatable, or verifiable. It is not science. Instead, true science always affirms the Bible and especially affirms the creation account in Genesis.

Also, we reject all false theories that all of the universe was created by anything other than the power and voice of God as we see in Genesis 1-2. There was no random “big bang” that created all matter. This world clearly bears the identifying marks of an intelligent Creator, and even common sense cannot affirm that the intricacy of this world just happened by random chance. “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to end of the world.*” (Ps. 19:1-4) There is not a day or night, not a speech or language where all creation does not testify of the glory of God. All of creation glorifies its Creator. That’s why it’s abjectly “foolish” to look at creation and say there is no God. “*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*” (Ps. 14:1) All of the heavens and earth were created by God and manifest the glory of our Creator. See also: Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11; Rom. 1:19-20; Ps. 50:6, 97:6; Isaiah 40:21; Jer. 31:35.

Purpose of Man – To Glorify His Creator

As we have seen, the purpose of all creation is to glorify its Creator. One of the most profound questions that every person asks is: What is my purpose in life? Well, just like all aspects of our lives, the Bible answers that question for you. “*Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*” (Isaiah 43:7) We were formed to praise God. “*This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.*” (Isaiah 43:21). God chose (elected) and predestinated a people to save “*To the praise of the glory of his grace...*” (Eph. 1:6). See also: 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jer. 13:11; Rom. 9:23; Phil. 2:11.

Attributes of God – The Holy God

God is perfectly holy. God’s trinitarian holiness is conveyed in shouts of praise in heaven: “*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts*” (Isaiah 6:3, Rev. 4:8). Since God is holy and without any sin, God demands holiness in all his creation as well – “*Be ye holy; for I am holy*” (1 Pet. 1:16). That’s why man was condemned to death for his sin because God is so holy, he cannot even look upon sin (Hab. 1:13). God was so committed to maintaining his holiness to not absolve sin that he required his only begotten Son to die for the sins of his people. God could not, and would not, compromise his holiness, and therefore Jesus Christ became a man, lived a perfect holy life in our stead, and died to pay the penalty of our sins before God. The holiness and perfect life of Jesus Christ was then credited to our account before God, and we should thus live holy in our lives because of the sacrifice of Jesus and his holiness on our behalf. See also: Isaiah 57:15; Rev. 15:4; Mark 1:24; Lev. 19:2; 1 Sam. 2:2; Exod. 15:11; Ps. 22:3, 71:22, 97:12; Luke 1:49

One God and The Trinity

Attributes of God – The Immutable God

God does not change. God is eternal and thus for all eternity, God has been the same in all his character and essence. *“For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”* (Mal. 3:16). It’s because of God’s “immutable” (unchangeable) nature that we can have a confidence and hope of salvation. It’s because God does not change that we are not consumed by his wrath and judgment. God will not love you today, and hate you tomorrow. No, his love is an “everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3). The sacrifice of Christ’s death for your eternal salvation is not sufficient today, but more will be required of you tomorrow because God changed his mind and decided more is required for your redemption. No, it’s because God’s nature prevents him from changing that his love, grace, and salvation towards his people is secure. God is *“in one mind, who can turn him?”* (Job 23:13) Since God cannot change, then God also cannot lie. He cannot say one thing and do another. *“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”* (Titus 1:2) The reason we can have a hope of eternal life paid for by Jesus Christ, is because God will not change his covenant, oath, and promise of salvation that he made to the elect from before the foundation of the world. See also: Num. 23:19; Ps. 33:11,102:25-27; Isaiah 43:10,46:10.

Attributes of God – The Sovereign God

God affirms to the “one true and living God”, and thus God has total sovereignty over his creation. No one has the ability to overrule the will, commands, and decrees of God. *“(24) The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: 27) For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”* (Isaiah 14:24,27) *“(10) Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11) Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”* (Isaiah 46:10-11)

God rules omnipotently and sovereignly in all the affairs of man, as king Nebuchadnezzar learned firsthand. *“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”* (Dan. 4:35) Despite any earthly ruler (like Nebuchadnezzar) who might be given temporal power for a brief time, the ultimate sovereign of the universe is God, not an earthly man. *“Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.”* (1 Tim. 6:15) God does perfectly as he pleases in this world and no one can overrule his sovereign will. *“But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”* (Ps. 115:3)

Since God is totally sovereign and no one can overrule his will or his decrees, the will of God to save his people from their sins cannot be stopped by any man, any devil, or any creature. *“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:”* (Eph. 1:11) God saw fit to predestinate a people to heaven because it was his own sovereign will to do so, and thus God will execute that purpose of salvation because he works all things after the counsel of his own will. God does not have to consult your opinion if you agree with anything he does. As the only Sovereign, only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords, God works according to the counsel of his own will in this world as he sees fit. See also: Matt. 28:18; Rev. 17:14, 19:6; Ps. 136:2-3; Dan. 2:47, 7:13-14; Isaiah 37:16, 40:15-17, 45:9-10; Deut. 10:17; Job 9:12, 23:13; Rom. 9:19-22; Ps. 33:11, 103:19, 135:6; 2 Chron. 20:6; 1 Chron. 29:12

One God and The Trinity

Sovereignty of God and Authority of the Scriptures

Since God is the only true and living God, he is therefore fully Sovereign and Omnipotent in all matters of His creation – meaning God has absolute power and is the final authority in all things, with no other person, entity, or being having authority to overrule his power. Jesus affirmed that “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*” (Matt. 28:18) God did not relinquish that power but still holds all power in heaven and in earth today. Therefore, the word of God inspired by the one true and living God sets the standard for the truth of everything about God and this world, and also commands us for how we are to live in our lives.

Just as God commands total authority, dominion, and sovereignty over his creation, God’s inspired word of the scriptures now dictates total authority and dominion over the lives of God’s people as well. The reason why the truth of the scriptures is the source of absolute truth (John 17:17) is because they are his own God-breathed words (2 Tim. 3:16). The word of God is the mind and will of God inspired onto paper in this world. Jesus affirmed “thy word is truth” and it’s by that truthful word that God’s people are to be sanctified (John 17:17). The authority of God’s absolute truth in the scriptures does not have an expiration date – “*the truth of the Lord endureth for ever*” (Ps. 117:2). Simply put, the word of God in the inspired scriptures is the only source of absolute truth of the one true and living God in this world. Therefore, that gives the scriptures the authority to be our only rule of faith and practice in the church, in the world, and in the lives of all of God’s people. See also: 1 Tim. 6:15; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 1 Pet. 1:3; Ps. 119:128; Isaiah 14:24-27, 46:10-11; 1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 2:13; Matt. 24:35; John 10:35

The Scriptures

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Tim. 3:16)

“89) For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven...144) The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting...160) Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.” (Ps. 119:89,144,160)

Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures

God is the one true and living God, and he is the source of all absolute truth. Therefore, the word of God that was divinely inspired by God is the source of all truth in this world and is the only true standard for right and wrong in our lives. God sets his inspired and preserved word in the scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice in the church and for God’s children.

God miraculously used mortal men – some 40-45 men, over 1,500 years, across 3 continents, from all different ethnic, social, and career backgrounds – to pen down the words of God in written form to be preserved for all of God’s children until the Lord’s second coming. *“16) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17) That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)* The original Greek word that we receive translated in our English King James Bibles as “by inspiration of God” in this verse literally means “God breathed”. God moved upon these mortal men to not just pen good moral lessons for men to follow, but God moved these men to pen the literal “God breathed words” onto paper to be preserved for all of God’s people.

That is what distinguishes the scriptures from all other good moral writings. The words of the scriptures are not just good practical suggestions to live a good life. Instead, the scriptures are literally the words of God, God speaking to his people through the written word. We must esteem the scriptures as something more than the regular writings of men, but we must affirm and accept that the scriptures are the literal “God breathed words” of the one true and living God. We must *“acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” (1 Cor. 14:37)* We must receive the scriptures *“not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (1 Thess. 2:13)* These are not the words of men, but the words of God.

The scriptures are not of any “private interpretation” (private or human origin) but instead men were “moved by the Holy Ghost” to pen the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. *“20) Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21) For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Pet. 1:20-21)* Even though in times past (in the Old Testament) prophets spoke unto God’s people that are penned for us in the scriptures, it was not the prophets speaking themselves but God was speaking to the fathers through these prophets. *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,” (Heb. 1:1)* When the Apostle John was moved to write to the seven churches of Asia, it was not John speaking to the churches, but it was the God the Holy Spirit speaking to the churches through John. *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches...” (Rev. 2:7)*

When David wrote many of the psalms, that was not just a musically inclined man writing a new song with lyrics he liked. That was David speaking (singing the psalm) by the Holy Ghost. Jesus himself affirms that David spoke by the Holy Ghost in penning Psalm 110:1, not just by his own musical or song-writing preferences but by the Holy Ghost. *“For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.” (Mark 12:36)* David knew he was being

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moved upon by the Lord to pen these psalms; he did not pretend to take credit for it. *“The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.”* (2 Sam. 23:2) The Holy Ghost spoke by the mouth of David. *“Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.”* (Acts 1:16) God spoke “in David” when Psalm 95:7-8 was penned, as quoted in Hebrews. *“Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”* (Heb. 4:7) David viewed his tongue as simply “the pen of a ready writer”. *“My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.”* (Ps. 45:1)

The New Testament scriptures also affirm the Old Testament divine inspiration by the Holy Ghost of Isaiah. Isaiah the prophet “spake by the Holy Ghost” unto the Jewish fathers. *“(25) And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26) Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand.”* (Acts 28:25-26) For all of these Old Testament prophecies, the prophets spoke God’s words, not their own words, to the people of the Lord. *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.”* (Heb. 1:1)

Not just the Old Testament scriptures but the New Testament scriptures as well were divinely inspired by God. The apostles were supernaturally able to recall, even after multiple years had passed, the exact events and the exact words that Jesus said through the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit because the gospels were not penned until years after the events actually occurred. *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”* (John 14:26)

The four gospels were penned by eyewitness accounts who actually saw and heard the things that Jesus did and said. They were not just popular stories or folklore but affirmed by eyewitness accounts. *“(1) Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2) Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and minister of the word; 3) It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4) That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”* (Luke 1:1-4)

Particularly the Apostle John saw and handled Jesus, the Son of God himself and he testified to that truth in his epistle. *“(1) That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2) (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us...5) This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”* (1 John 1:1-5)

The scriptures of both the Old and New Testament are “God’s breathed words” penned and preserved for us. All the scriptures testify of Jesus Christ. *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”* (John 5:39) The scriptures testify of God because God is truth and God’s word is truth. *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”* (John 17:17)

Divine Preservation of the Scriptures

God made it abundantly clear that he inspired his holy word to be penned down by men. That is true of the original autographs, the original copies of the texts that were written by these godly men. However, that

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doesn't do us much good today unless God has "preserved" his word on to our generation. If the original autographs were inspired, but those penning men are dead and those original pieces of papyrus are gone, then we could be left without an accurate representation of God's word in our generation today. Thankfully, God has promised to perfectly preserve his word, and we still hold today an authentic representation of the divinely inspired word of God. In the Primitive Baptist church, we affirm that the best translation in the English language of God's divinely inspired and preserved word is the King James Version of the Bible. We will consider that in the next chapter individually to defend that position.

The truth of the scriptures does not fluctuate or vary with the culture or change from one generation to another generation. Instead, the truth of the word of God is a static absolute truth and is perfectly settled and will not change. "*For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*" (Ps. 119:89) That corresponds to the immutable (unchangeable) nature of God. Since God cannot and will not change, it's evident that God's truth and God's word will not change or evolve over time. The truth of God's word will endure forever. "*Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.*" (Ps. 119:160) "*The truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the Lord.*" (Ps. 117:2) "*The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting.*" (Ps. 119:144)

God's truth in his word does not change with the tides of public opinion. What's right for one generation is not different for the next generation. Truth in our day is not different from truth in my grandparents' day and generation. Truth in Abraham's day, in David's day, in Jesus and the apostles' day is not different from truth in our lives here today. God's absolute truth revealed in his word endures and remains the same throughout all generations and will remain true forever. "*For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.*" (Ps. 100:5) "*The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*" (Ps. 33:11)

It's also vitally important to understand that the "individual words" of the Bible are preserved forever, not just the general principles of truth in God's word. The "words of the Lord" are pure and have been tested and tried repeatedly just like silver in a furnace for all generations. These words of God's truth have been proven pure and trustworthy, and God will continue to preserve them for all generations forever. "*6) The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. 7) Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever.*" (Ps. 12:6-7) "*Every word of God is pure...*" (Prov. 30:5) Jesus himself affirmed that even though heaven and earth shall pass away, even after this world is burned up at his second coming, God's words shall not pass away or cease from their authority or truth. "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*" (Matt. 24:35) The word of God cannot be broken or corrupted. "*The scripture cannot be broken.*" (John 10:35)

God's word has been divinely inspired and preserved for us, but that period of inspiration for the scriptures has been closed and completed. God inspired his word with everything we need to know this side of heaven in the canon of scripture and that inspiration of the scriptures has now ceased. What has already been inspired is preserved for us even to this generation. The scriptures teach us about "*the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*" (Jude 3) God's word was "once delivered to the saints", and therefore, we are now sternly commanded to not add to or take away from the word of God. "*18) For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19) And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of the prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*" (Rev. 22:18-19)

If we add to or take away from the divinely inspired word of God, the Lord promises swift and severe judgment upon those offenders. The scriptures consistently affirm that after the death of the apostles in the first century, the canon of the scriptures is now closed, and any addition, subtraction, or diminishing from

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the word of God shall receive significant judgment from the Lord. “5) Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. 6) Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” (Prov. 30:5-6) “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.” (Deut. 4:2) “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish it.” (Deut. 12:32)

Authority of the Scriptures

God is the sole standard of truth in this world. The entire Trinity is identified by truth: the God of truth (Deut. 32:4, Ps. 31:5, Isaiah 65:16), Jesus is the truth (John 14:6, John 1:14-17, John 5:33), and the Spirit of truth (John 14:17, John 15:26, John 16:13). Therefore, God’s divinely inspired and preserved word is the sole authority for absolute truth in this world. “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17) Jesus unquestionably affirmed here in John 17:17 that God’s word is the truth. This claim of the scriptures to absolute truth is consistent throughout the entire word of God. “142) Thy law is the truth... 151) All thy commandments are truth... 160) Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.” (Ps. 119:142,151,160)

Now that we have God’s truth in this world preserved for us, what do we do with it? The church is commanded to be the “pillar and ground of the truth”. “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” (1 Tim. 3:15) God has divinely appointed for his church – the called-out assembly of his people – to be the custodian of truth in this world, the pillar and ground of the truth. God’s people are to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3) We do not add to or take away from God’s word, we just simply follow Jesus’ command to the apostles to observe exactly what God has commanded us in the scriptures. “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matt. 28:20)

The truth of God’s word permeates and dictates everything we do in the church. The church is commanded to worship the Lord “in spirit and in truth”, and the scriptures dictate what that true worship looks like. “23) But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24) God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23-24) The scriptures teach us how we ought “to behave thyself in the house of God.” (1 Tim. 3:15) Furthermore, God has provided everything the church needs in the scriptures. God “hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Everything, we need to know for how are to live our lives honorably and acceptably before God was inspired and preserved by the Lord in the scriptures.

Therefore, one of the hallmarks of the Primitive Baptist church is that we accept and submit to the scriptures as “our only rule of faith and practice”. The church must accept the scriptures for what they truly are – the words of Almighty God. Even though these words may have been written by men, just as Paul instructed the early churches, we do not accept these words as simply mortal men’s words, but we accept the scriptures as the commandments and words of God himself. “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” (1 Cor. 14:37) We do not read the scriptures as just the “word of men” and man’s good moral teachings for our lives, but we accept the scriptures “as it is in truth, the word of God”. “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (1 Thess. 2:13)

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If we choose to reject the teachings of scripture, it's not just that we don't agree with the opinions of men. Jesus equated acceptance or rejection of him with acceptance or rejection of his words, so if we reject the word of God, we reject Jesus Christ himself. *"47) And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48) He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day..."* (John 12:47-50)

Therefore, as a member of the Lord's church, we must make a personal commitment for God's word to the sole standard for "our truth". God's word is truth whether we accept it or submit to it or not. For us individually in our lives, we must each make a personal commitment to accept and affirm that God's word is the perfect and supreme standard for truth in our lives. This must be our personal commitment in submission to the authority of the scriptures. *"Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way."* (Ps. 119:128) We must esteem all of God's precepts, all of God's ways, to be right and submit to their authority in our lives. Even if we might not understand or even somewhat disagree, nevertheless, we affirm that God's truth is right, regardless of our personal opinions.

Audience and Purpose of the Scriptures

The scriptures are God's words to God's people. Just like any letter is addressed and written to an intended recipient, anyone other than that intended recipient will not understand the letter's meaning. The scriptures are not written for the world at large but for God's people. The world at large cannot understand the scriptures because they are reading the mail of God's people. *"16) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. 17) That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."* (2 Tim. 3:16-17) The scriptures were given that the man (and woman) of God would grow in maturity (perfection) and be throughly furnished with all they need to know for good works in this life to serve and glorify God. It takes spiritual understanding after the new birth for the God's child to be able to understand the scriptures (1 Cor. 2:9-16).

We also see here four purposes why God's inspired his word for his people, for: a) doctrine, b) reproof, c) correction, and d) instruction in righteousness. The scriptures teach us "the doctrine" of the faith once delivered to the saints that we are to uphold and earnestly contend to defend. The word of God teaches us what the truth is, and then the scriptures apply that truth to our lives. The scriptures "reprove" and "correct" us when we are not living in accordance with God's standard of truth. The word of God convicts and reproves us to realign ourselves with God's commandments and truth in our lives. If we are living righteously, the scriptures also encourage us to continue that truthful and honorable walk by "instructing us in righteousness". All of these purposes are that we might be "throughly furnished unto all good works" to the honor and glory of God. Jesus intended for us to be sanctified (set apart for a holy use) by the truth of God's word. *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."* (John 17:17) We are sanctified and throughly furnished when we are molded and shaped by the truth of God's word. Just as the word of God has been made pure like silver in a furnace (Ps. 12:6-7), God's people as well are made pure and more throughly sanctified when we submit ourselves to the "sanctifying truth of God's word". The profitably and purpose of the scriptures in an inexhaustible subject because they give us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). For God's people, the Lord has given us his word that we may know the standard of God's truth, and let that truth mold us in sanctification to be a vessel more meet for the Master's use.

How to Study the Scriptures

God's word in the scriptures is a consistent canon of truth. There are no contradictions in the teachings of God's word. *"The scripture cannot be broken."* (John 10:35) If it appears to us there might be a

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contradiction in the word of God, we have to study to rightly divide the word of truth and reconcile that verse within the full canon of truth in the scriptures. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* (2 Tim. 2:15) It’s takes diligent study, hard work (a workman), to “rightly divide the word of truth”. The word for “rightly dividing” in this verse literally means “to cut straight”. Paul, the inspired writer of this passage to Timothy, was a tent maker by trade. He knew in cutting the various pieces of a tent, if each piece individually was not cut exactly straight, then when you tried to sew all the pieces of the tent together, it would not fit together properly. If we do not rightly divide and cut straight one piece of the tent of God’s word, then it will not fit with the rest of the pieces and cause our tent to ultimately collapse.

Operating under the truth that scripture cannot be broken, we attempt to cut straight each verse, then compare it with other scriptures to find the harmony of God’s truth. *“10) For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little... 13) But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.”* (Isaiah 28:10-13) We compare each precept and line of God’s word with other precepts and lines in the scriptures. By those comparisons, we see the consistent teaching of the scriptures and can understand the truth of God’s word. If one piece does not fit right because it might not be cut exactly straight in our mind, we compare it with other scriptures and can gain clarity on the true meaning of that verse. The best commentary on the Bible is always the Bible, so we compare scripture with scripture.

When we study the scriptures, we have to look at each verse “in context”. There are multiple ingredients that all make up the context of a writing. The classic who, what, when, and where components: the writer, the immediate audience, the culture and background of the recipients, the writer’s relationship with the audience, and the time period of the writing. We have to look at every verse in the context of the immediate verses surrounding it, the immediate chapters surrounding it, the book it is written in, and then in the context of the entire Bible as a whole. We cannot look at one verse in isolation by itself, but it’s always good practice to read at least 2 verses before and after that verse, and if time permits, 2 chapters before and after that verse. More in depth study will lend to understanding the full context of that writing, the writer, the audience, their relationship, the culture, the time, and other factors we have already noted. Then, after considering that verse in the proper context and attempting to rightly divide and cut straight its meaning, we then compare it with other lines and precepts in scripture to understand how it harmonizes and fits perfectly into the consistent standard of perfect truth given to us in the word of God.

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“The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.” (Ps. 33:11)

“6) The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

7) Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever.” (Ps. 12:6-7)

The King James Version of the Bible

The scriptures clearly affirm the divine inspiration and also the divine preservation of the Bible. However, in our culture here today, there are multitudes of Bible versions that clearly say different things. If God promised to preserve his word, then what version of the Bible is the true representation of the preserved word of God? We cannot say that it doesn't matter what Bible we read because the different versions clearly say different things. The scriptures affirm to be the authority of absolute truth, but there cannot be two versions of truth that say contradictory things. Therefore, we have to ask here in our day, in which translation of the Bible is the truth of God's inspired word still preserved for us, particularly in the English language?

The Primitive Baptist church holds that the Authorized King James Translation of the Bible is the only version of the scripture in the English language today that is still preserved to uphold and teach the doctrine and truth of the original autographs that God inspired men to write for the benefit of the church. The rejection of other versions of the Bible as acceptable in the church is not simply that they are new, updated versions but rather because most other modern versions have been translated from corrupt manuscripts and no longer accurately present the true scriptures that were inspired by God.

We affirm that the King James Translation of the Bible is the best and most accurate translation of the word of God in the English language because it was translated from the Textus Receptus or Traditional Text of scripture that still maintains the true doctrine and teaching of the original autographs as preserved by Almighty God.

Two Different Sets of Manuscripts – Traditional Text

There are essentially two different sets (or families) of manuscripts from which all modern Bibles are translated from: 1) the Traditional Text or 2) the Alexandrian Text.

The Traditional Text is also known as the Majority Text, and the Byzantine or Syrian or Antiochan Text, which was ultimately compiled into the Textus Receptus (or the Received Text). This family of manuscripts of the scriptures is commonly known as the Traditional Text because these texts have traditionally been accepted by the church as the authentic representation of the scriptures from the Italic Church, Gallic Church, the Waldensians, and the churches of the Reformation.

These manuscripts are also known as the Majority Text because these texts comprise an overwhelming majority of all manuscripts still in existence. Actually 85-90%, or almost 5,500 of about 5,800 remaining manuscripts that are still in existence today are texts from the historical Byzantine region near Syria. Those Traditional and Majority Text manuscripts agree with each other in 97% of the content. Compare that consistent agreement of the Traditional Text to the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus of the Alexandrian Text that disagree over 3,000 times in the gospels alone. When we note that there are only 3,779 verses in the gospels, it's clear that almost every single verse in the gospels have a discrepancy between these two primary Alexandrian codices.

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These original majority manuscripts are also known as the Byzantine or Syrian or Antiochan Text. This family of manuscripts originated from the Byzantine Empire in Syria and were copied and maintained over the years by Byzantine monks; therefore, they were termed as the Byzantine Manuscripts or Texts. It's important to note that Antioch of Syria was the center hub of the New Testament church in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 11:26), so these would have been the manuscripts used by the church in Antioch of Syria.

Textus Receptus (Received Text) and the King James Bible

In 1516 AD, Desiderius Erasmus compiled a Greek New Testament from the most reliable manuscripts available at the time; Erasmus' Greek New Testament was compiled entirely from the Traditional or Majority Text manuscripts. The Codex Vaticanus (that was used to create the Westcott-Hort Greek Text) was available to Erasmus, but he completely ignored that manuscript because it was incomplete, unreliable, and corrupted. This Greek New Testament was called "*the text, now received by all, in which nothing corrupt*". The Latin terms for text ("*textum*") and received ("*receptum*") were used to refer to the work as the "Textus Receptus" or the "Received Text". Therefore, the Textus Receptus was a standard compilation of all the Traditional or Majority Text manuscripts into one Greek New Testament volume.

The Masoretic Text is the Hebrew version of the Jewish Bible, which we know as the Old Testament. The Jewish Hebrew Bible was maintained by Jewish scribes and Rabbis since its original authorship up until the 6th century AD. Then, from the 7th to 11th centuries the manuscripts of the Jewish Bible (or the Torah) were maintained by a group called the Masoretes (which were a special school of scribes and scholars of the Torah) that took control of the care and copying of the Jewish Bible.

In 1611 AD, the New Testament of the King James Translation was translated from the 1598 edition of the Textus Receptus Greek New Testament that had been edited by Theodore Beza, and the Old Testament was translated from the 1525 Masoretic Text that had been compiled and edited by Jacob ben Hayyim ibn Abdonijah.

Two Families of Manuscripts – Alexandrian Text

The other significant family of manuscripts is known as the Alexandrian Text. This family of manuscripts originated from Alexandria, Egypt, so they were termed as the Alexandrian Manuscripts or Texts. Note that Egypt is almost exclusively condemned in the Bible and is used as a strong type of bondage, sin, and even Satan and the Antichrist in the scriptures. These manuscripts are also known as the Minority Text because a very small minority (about 5-15%) of all manuscripts that are still in existence today are of the Alexandrian Text origin and composition. Actually, only 5-15% of the about 5,800 remaining manuscripts that are still in existence today are actually Alexandrian Text manuscripts. In 380 AD, the Latin Vulgate was composed by Jerome (a Catholic monk) at the request of Pope Damasus I, and the Vulgate was translated from the Alexandrian Text manuscripts. The Vulgate has been the basis for all Catholic accepted Bibles and is still the principle text recognized by the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1886 AD, Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort composed their own New Testament text – entitled the Westcott-Hort Greek Text (also known as the Critical Text) – translated from the Alexandrian texts and translated primarily from two Alexandrian codices: 1) the Codex Vaticanus and 2) the Codex Sinaiticus.

The Codex Vaticanus manuscript was found and submitted to the Vatican Library in 1481 AD. The actual manuscript was written on vellum (tanned animal skins) and was determined to date back and to have been actually composed in the 4th century (around 350 AD). This manuscript omits significant portions of both

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the Old and New Testament, missing so much it's obvious to be an incomplete text of the scriptures. This manuscript was rejected by Erasmus in his translation of the Greek New Testament; with all of its omissions and errors, it's very obvious why a scholar such as Erasmus totally ignored this manuscript.

The Codex Sinaiticus was found in 1844 AD in a trash pile that had been designated to be burned in the Saint Catherine's Monastery near Mount Sinai in the eastern Egyptian Sinai Peninsula. The actual manuscript was written on vellum and determined to date back and to have been actually composed in the 4th century (around 350 AD). It contained nearly all of the New Testament but still was missing crucial omissions; the manuscripts also contained other books that have historically been rejected from the canon of scripture. It should also not be overlooked that the Codex Sinaiticus was found in a trash pile set to be burned by Byzantine monks who were fluent in Greek and well versed in the authentic Byzantine manuscripts. This should clearly denote how deficient that codex was for the Byzantine monks to render it good for nothing other than kindling of a fire.

Fredrick Henry Scrivener (who edited the Textus Receptus in 1891 AD) reported 15,000 alterations in the text of the Codex Sinaiticus. The New Testament only has 7,956 verses in total. Both the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus are presumed to come from the same source. Even though the Codex Vaticanus and Sinaiticus supposedly were composed from the same original texts, the two manuscripts still disagree over 3,000 times in the gospels alone. When we consider that there are only 3,779 verses in the gospels, it's clear that almost every single verse in the gospels have a discrepancy between these two codices.

The personal heretical beliefs of Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort were blatantly imposed onto the Greek New Testament that they produced in 1886. Brooke Westcott believed that David was a spiritual figure, not a literal person; he believed the Genesis account was allegorical, not literal; he did not believe in the literal Biblical account of miracles; he did not believe in the physical second coming of Jesus Christ; he did not believe that heaven was a literal place. Fenton Hort did not believe in the existence of a devil; he did not believe in a literal, eternal hell; he did believe in the heretical Catholic ideology of "purgatory"; he did not believe in limited atonement of sins by Christ; he did believe in "baptismal regeneration"; he believed in the political ideology of Communism.

The heretical false teachings that Westcott and Hort held to are found all throughout their version of the Greek New Testament and their manipulation of the text is very obvious from the blatant errors on foundational doctrines that they rejected. The omissions in the Westcott-Hort Greek Text affect many essential Bible doctrines and the deity of Jesus Christ. To highlight a few of these errors, the Westcott-Hort Critical Greek text: a) removes the name "Jesus" 70 times and "Christ" 29 times from the text, b) removes reference to the virgin birth of Jesus in Luke 2:33, c) removes reference to the deity of Jesus Christ in 1 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 14:10 and 12, d) removed reference to the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ in Colossians 1:14, and e) incorrectly attributes the authorship of the book of Malachi to Isaiah in Mark 1:2.

The Westcott-Hort Greek Text is also known as "The Critical Text". The Critical Text differs from the Textus Receptus text 5,337 times, according to one calculation (there are only 7,956 verses in the New Testament). Compared to the Textus Receptus, the Codex Vaticanus omits 2,877 words in the gospels, and the Codex Sinaiticus omits 3,455 words in the gospels. There are 64,766 words in the gospels. Therefore, the Codex Vaticanus leaves out 4.4% of all the words, and the Codex Sinaiticus leaves out 5.3% of all the words in the gospels.

The Westcott-Hort Greek Text (based on Alexandrian manuscripts) and the Textus Receptus (based on Byzantine manuscripts) disagree in so many areas that only one of these two texts can be the true and preserved record of the scriptures and the other must be deemed a blatant falsehood. While the Alexandrian texts are more ancient that does not mean they are more authentic; older does not equal more accurate.

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The Westcott-Hort Greek Text claims its superiority from being translated from “older manuscripts”. This particular claim is true because the Codex Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are dated back to the 4th century, and the Textus Receptus that was compiled by Erasmus in 1516 was based on Byzantine manuscripts from probably the 10th to the 12th century. However, older does not always mean better. The Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus were penned on vellum, so they lasted longer due to their medium, while many of the original autographs and parchments (2 Tim. 4:13) were penned on papyrus that was not made to last the test of time and subsequently deteriorated from perpetual use.

Also, the more frequently those manuscripts are actively used, the more quickly they will fade and deteriorate. A book left unused on the shelf will certainly last the test of time because it is not used. Due to the severe deficiencies of the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, those Alexandrian texts were clearly not actively used by the early church and have remained in good condition for over 1650 years while many of the true, authentic Traditional Text manuscripts had deteriorated from repeated use by the church.

It should also not be overlooked that the Codex Sinaiticus was found in a trash pile set to be burned by Byzantine monks who were fluent in Greek and well versed in the authentic Byzantine manuscripts. This should clearly denote how deficient that codex was for the Byzantine monks to render it good for nothing other than kindling of a fire.

Essentially every “new, updated” version of the Bible has either been translated from or influenced by the Westcott-Hort Greek Text or a later revision of the text. The New American Standard Bible (NASB), New International Version (NIV), English Standard Version (ESV), Revised Version (RV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), and almost all other prominent modern-day Bibles have originated from the Alexandrian Text and the Westcott-Hort Critical Text. Essentially, all modern versions have been translated from or influenced by the corrupted Alexandrian Text and Westcott-Hort Greek Text, and therefore must be disregarded in the search for the true scriptures inspired by God.

Even though some other Bible versions claim to be translated from the Textus Receptus (most prominently the New King James Version), there are glaring scriptural variances between these and the King James Version to where both cannot be accepted. We believe that the Authorized King James Version of 1611 is the most accurate and scripturally precise of all other translations of the Textus Receptus, and is still the preferred translation of the Bible for the English language over and beyond the other versions who claim the Textus Receptus as their source text. These other Textus Receptus versions are not an acceptable alternative to the KJV 1611.

Superiority of the King James Version – Scholarship of the Translators

In 1604, King James I of England commissioned 54 of the best Greek and Hebrew scholars living at the time to translate the Bible into English. The work was completed in 1611, with 47 of the original men finishing the work. The men that were chosen for the translation were exceptionally knowledgeable of the underlying original languages of Greek, Hebrew, and some Aramaic. They all had formal doctrinal and linguistic training in the leading religious universities of the day, primarily Oxford or Cambridge University in England. A comparable group with the comprehensive knowledge of the original languages would be very difficult, if not impossible, to reproduce, even in the current day. All of the KJV translators were believers in Jesus Christ and believers in the divine inspiration, preservation, and inerrancy of the scriptures. In contrast, many contributors to the modern Bible translations are Jewish or secular academics, who neither believe in Jesus Christ nor believe in the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the scriptures.

The translators worked in six committees, with each committee translating a specific section of scripture. The KJV was translated with a “formal equivalence” which promotes a word-for-word translation to keep

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the same words and grammatical structure of the original text, as opposed to “dynamic equivalence” which leads to paraphrasing and is susceptible to alteration by the translators. Each man of a committee translated every word of his committee’s assigned section of scripture. Then, these individual translations were collectively compared with those of other team members, and discrepancies between the individual translations were voted on. Then, the collective translation of the original committee was passed on to each of the other committees for their scrutiny and approval. Thus, each scripture was examined at least fourteen times during the process. Due to the precision and intensity with which each scripture was examined, the translation project took seven years and was finally completed in 1611.

Superiority of the King James Version – Integrity of the Translation

The translators of the KJV took great care to maintain the integrity of the original text as it was translated into English. When translating from one language into another, the original wording of the text cannot always be exactly replicated in the other language. The meaning of a word in Greek may not be exactly conveyed in the meaning of an equivalent word in English. Therefore, words that were implied in the original language but did not have an exact English equivalent were included to make the sentences complete and understandable in our English language. When the KJV translators included an implied word from the original text to make a complete sentence in English, they denoted those words in italics in the King James Bible. No such distinction is made in any of the modern versions.

When a person is speaking, the English language presents quotation marks to allow the reader to note when their speech begins and ends. The original Greek and Hebrew text do not indicate exactly where a certain speech begins and ends with quotations marks. There is no equivalent punctuation mark corresponding to quotation marks in those languages. Therefore, the King James translators left off any quotation marks in the English translation and did not assume where those punctuation marks should be placed since they were not presented in the original text. The other modern versions independently determine and assume where quotations marks should be placed even though they are not at all presented in the original Greek and Hebrew text.

The name of Jehovah God in His covenant name and relationship of the nation of Israel is presented in the Old Testament by what’s known as “the Tetragrammaton” spelled in the Hebrew as “YHWH”. By Jewish tradition, Jews are not allowed to actually speak this term aloud or read it aloud, so the exact pronunciation of this word is not actually known. Therefore, instead of making an assumption about the correct spelling of this word, the King James translators translated the Tetragrammaton as LORD in all caps every time it occurred in the Old Testament.

Superiority of the King James Version – Precision of the Translation

While some of the words in the King James Bible are not used regularly in the English language anymore, we might assume that replacing them with modern words would be beneficial. However, the words used in the KJV are actually more precise than the modern equivalents that we use today, and we can lose the proper understanding of a text by “dumbing down” or generalizing the original language. For example, the use of “est” and “eth” on the end of words in the KJV seems peculiar, but the purpose is very simple. A singular 2nd person noun would have a corresponding verb ending in “est” – “thou lovest” – and a singular 3rd person noun would have a verb ending in “eth” – “he loveth”.

The Greek and Hebrew language both use unique words that distinguish between the singular and plural usage of 2nd person pronouns, using different words for both singular and plural form of each pronoun. In contrast, our American English blends the second person pronoun into just one word – “you” – that does

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not distinguish between a singular or plural audience. To maintain the precision of the original Greek and Hebrew text, the King James translators used words that maintained the distinction between the singular and plural pronouns even though those words and the same applicable distinction had already been dropped from the language used at that time. You will note that there are no uses of “thee” and “thou” in the Translators to the Readers introduction to the KJV because they did not commonly use that speech in the English of that day either. However, to maintain the closest possible representation to the original text of the Greek and Hebrew, the King James translators used these precise singular and plural pronouns to accurately convey the distinctions that were made in the original text. Note the distinction between the singular and plural pronouns of the second person:

- 2nd person singular pronouns – “thou”, “thee”, “thy”, “thine”
- 2nd person plural pronoun – “ye”, “you”, “your”, “yours”
- Examples of the necessity of these singular and plural 2nd person pronoun distinctions can be noted in these verses: Matt. 26:64, John 3:7, Luke 22:31-32, 1 Cor. 8:9-12, Gal. 6:1, 2 Tim. 4:22, Titus 3:15, Philemon 21-25, Exod. 4:15, Exod. 29:42, 2 Sam. 7:23

Superiority of the King James Version – Readability

The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Indicator is a readability test that is designed to measure how difficult a reading passage in English is to understand. This measurement takes into account the number of words per sentence and number of syllables per word to determine how difficult for the reader that a certain passage is to understand. The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Indicator scores for certain Bible versions were (per *New Age Bible Versions*, by Gail Riplinger, pg. 196):

- KJV: 5.8 grade reading level (the grade reading level for the New Testament only is 4.32)
 - Furthermore, according to the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Indicator:
 - 74% of the books in the KJV are on or below the 6th grade reading level
 - 94% of the books are on or below the 7th grade reading level.
 - 97% of the books in the KJV were rated as “Fairly Easy” or “Easy” to read by The Flesch Reading Ease index
 - All of these readability scores were better than every other Bible version.
- NIV: 8.4 grade reading level
- NASB: 6.1 grade reading level
- NKJV: 6.9 grade reading level

Dr. Rudolf Flesch, co-originator of the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Indicator and the leading authority on readability studies said (quoted from his book *The Art of Plain Talk*, pg. 43): “The best example of very easy prose (about 20 affixes per 100 words) is the King James Version of the Bible.”

The King James Version of the Bible has consistently scored lower on these readability tests because it has less syllables per word, less letters per word, less words per sentence, smaller percentage of long words, and a larger percentage of short words than all the other modern Bible versions.

According to the readability statistics generated by *Pro-Scribe*, the KJV is easier to read than *USA Today*, *People Magazine*, and most children’s books (per *The Language of the King James Bible*, by Gail Riplinger, pg.159):

- KJV Bible: Grade–7, Syllables per word–1.3, Words over nine letters–3%
- Children’s books: Grade–7, Syllables per word–1.3, Words over nine letters–8%
- *People Magazine*: Grade–8, Syllables per word–1.5, Words over nine letters–10%
- *USA Today*: Grade–9, Syllables per word–1.5, Words over nine letters–10%

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It should be noted that the King James Version is not written in Old English but actually is written in the Modern English style. Old English was from 450-1150, Middle English was from 1150-1485, and Modern English began in 1485. However, the King James language sounds different than our Americanized Modern English because the lexicon (or the commonly used vocabulary) has changed over the years. Despite the changing of the lexicon, the form and structure of the English language has not changed since the KJV was translated. In addition, the language used in the King James Bible exhibits a unique cadence and style that easily lends itself to memorization, benefiting the Bible study of the reader.

Superiority of the King James Version – Copyright

The King James Bible is in the public domain in essentially all of the world, except in England where certain royal printers are the only publishers of this Bible. Therefore, no person, business, or organization profits from the sale of the King James Bible. This stands in stark contrast to the monetization of the copyright and publication of the modern-day versions.

The New International Version's (NIV) exclusive publishing rights in the United States is owned by Zondervan, which is a subsidiary of HarperCollins, which is owned by News Corp, and the chairman of News Corp is Rupert Murdoch. The New King James Version (NKJV) is also published by HarperCollins. HarperCollins also is the publisher of "The Satanic Bible".

A minimum number of changes must be made to any existing Bible version currently in print for a new Bible to receive a copyright. Therefore, for any new Bible versions to be produced, they have to change, add, or leave out a minimum amount of words, etc. before they are eligible for a copyright, whether those changes destroy the integrity of the scriptures or not.

Superiority of the King James Version – Summary

Essentially all the prominent "new, updated" Bible versions are based on minority texts that comprise less than 5% of all manuscripts (only about 100 of the 5,800 total existing manuscripts are Alexandrian manuscripts) and those disagree over 5,300 times with the Traditional or Majority Text (which comprise about 5,500 of the 5,800 total manuscripts). Furthermore, the Minority Text (less than 5%) that they are based upon, the underlying manuscripts disagree between each other over 3,000 times in the gospels alone.

The new versions are translated from the Westcott-Hort Greek Text that was contaminated by the heretical beliefs of its composers. In addition, the two primary Greek manuscripts that their translation was based upon – the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus – actually omits large portions of the Old Testament and New Testament.

Not only are the new versions based on an isolated, minority number of the overall manuscripts that contradict the overwhelming majority of all the texts, but the manuscripts that actually were used are incomplete, inconsistent, and wholly unreliable.

The differences and discrepancies in the modern Bible versions are not nominal or insignificant, but they severely undermine many crucial biblical doctrines, such as the deity of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth, and the finished atonement of Jesus Christ.

The King James Bible is far superior to any of the modern version as well. The knowledge and scholarship of the King James translators would be unequaled today in their understanding of the Greek and Hebrew languages in which the original texts were penned.

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The King James translators used language that accurately reflected the original texts, maintaining the singular and plural distinction of pronouns in the usage of “thee” and “thou”, etc. They included implied words as italics, did not add or assume quotation marks, and distinguished the Tetragrammaton by LORD in all caps.

Despite that sometimes unfamiliar words that are used, the KJV is actually written in a manner that any person with a 5th grade education can understand the entire Bible. It is written in the language of the common man and uses a very unique cadence and style that make memorization come very easily.

The KJV has also been preserved from monetization and the greedy motives of men, since it is readily available in the public domain.

Therefore, the Authorized King James Version of 1611, which was translated from the Textus Receptus that was based solely on the Traditional and Majority Text, is by far the purest, most accurate translation in the English language of the scriptures that were inspired by God for His church.

Note: The information in this chapter was primarily derived from the following sources, unless otherwise noted: *Crowned with Glory* (by Dr. Thomas Holland), *One Book Stands Alone* (by Dr. Douglas Stauffer), *The King James Version of 1611. The Myth of Early Revisions* (by Dr. David F. Reagan), *New Age Bible Versions* (by Gail Riplinger), and various articles from the www.tbsbibles.org (Trinitarian Bible Society) and www.kjvtoday.com.

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“10) As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: 11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one... 23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:10-23)

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for all have sinned.” (Rom. 5:12)

Fall of Man in the Garden

Before we can understand or fully appreciate salvation by God’s sovereign grace, we have to correctly see how wretched and filthy man is in his nature and how unworthy we are of God’s love and grace. The base line for properly understanding not just eternal salvation in Christ, but also why this world is so naturally evil, is to understand the fall of Adam and the subsequent total depravity of man. Due to Adam’s sin, all of mankind is totally depraved (radically corrupt), spiritually dead, evil in our nature, with no ability to recover ourselves from our fallen, dead condition. Therefore, if anyone is saved, if there is any good in this world, it only comes from God not from man, and good only comes down from above, from the good and righteous Father of lights in heaven (James 1:17).

God made Adam in his own holy image. The first man, Adam, was literally made in the image of God. *“26) And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... 27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”* (Gen. 1:26-27) Man was made upright and good in the image of God and given a garden eastward in Eden to keep and tend. God only gave Adam one law, one command that he had to follow: *“16) And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17) But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* (Gen. 2:16-17) The penalty for breaking the one commandment of God was death.

In Genesis 3, we have the account where man and woman chose to break the commandment of God. They were tempted of the serpent Satan and succumbed to his deception and both Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They now had knowledge of both good and evil in a way they did not previously have, and their eyes were opened and were ashamed and afraid of Almighty God. The Lord confronted Adam and Eve for their sin and cast them out of the garden of Eden.

Sin had now entered into the world through Adam and Eve’s disobeying of God’s commandment. Sin is defined as being *“the transgression of the law”* (1 John 3:4). Adam and Eve had now transgressed the law of God, and the penalty for that sin and transgression was death. The just payment for their actions (their earned wages) was death – *“for the wages of sin is death”* (Rom. 6:23). The end result of sin will always be death. *“Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”* (James 1:15) Due to Adam’s sin, his own soul was under the condemnation of death, a separation from life and a separation from God. *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”* (Ezek. 18:4)

Adam did not die physically on the day he ate the forbidden fruit. He lived for 930 years before his body finally succumbed to the effects of sin and he died physically (Gen. 5:5). However, Adam experienced a death, a separation from life with God, on the day of his original sin, and his body finally caught up to that death 930 years later. Adam was now spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, separated from life and communion and fellowship with God for all eternity due to his sin. Adam was now a sinner, but God is so holy and his eyes so pure he cannot even look upon iniquity (Hab. 1:13). Adam had no ability to remedy his fallen position because as a sinner he could not approach unto God; the Lord could not even look upon

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him in iniquity and being dead he had no ability to come to God either. Man is now in a dead, fallen, condemned state and *“having no hope, and without God in the world”* (Eph. 2:12).

In the midst of this bleak picture of sin and death in the garden, God gives us the first token of the hope of the gospel. Man cannot come unto God, cannot improve his condition, cannot conquer sin, but God who understood man’s frailty and helplessness had already covenanted before the foundation of the world to become a man to crush death and save his people from their sins. Man has been conquered and slain by sin, eternally banished to death and separation from a holy God. In the midst of that hopeless situation, we have the first prophecy of the future redeeming Messiah. *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* (Gen. 3:15) The seed of the woman (Jesus Christ, born of a virgin) would come and “crush” the head of the enemies of death and the devil, pay the penalty of sin by his death, and save his people to the uttermost. Man has no ability to save himself. If salvation depends upon man to do something for salvation, man will always fail. Therefore, God had to become a man to pay the penalty of sin and die for our sins on the tree of the cross.

Original Sin

Now we must consider the implications of Adam’s sin. It’s evident that Adam faced the penalty of his sin and transgression of the law which was death. However, did Adam’s sin and failure only affect him or did it affect all of his seed and posterity as well? Many teach that Adam’s sin went no farther than his own life. Adam faced death for his sins, but now all the rest of mankind is not “dead in sins” but simply sick or injured and has the ability to recover ourselves by our works from our fallen condition. On the contrary, the Bible teaches “original sin” – that sin originated in Adam and therefore all of mankind are born (they originate in this life) with the same sinful nature.

All of mankind inherited Adam’s nature of sin – we *“were by nature the children of wrath even as others”* (Eph. 2:3). All of mankind is now dead in sins, eternally separated from life in God, with no ability to come to God and remedy our sin. Children inherit their nature from their parents, particularly from their father. Since Adam’s nature was now permeated by sin, the only nature he could pass onto his children was a sin nature. Adam was made in the likeness and image of God: holy, upright, and good. Now, Adam’s children were born *“in his own likeness, after his image”* (Gen. 5:3). Now that Adam was sinful, he could only bring forth a sinful posterity in his own sinful likeness and image. It’s impossible to bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing. *“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.”* (Job 14:4) A fleshy, natural man can only bring forth another fleshy, natural man, not a spiritual man. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* (John 3:6) Therefore, all of Adam’s posterity is born after his likeness, image, and nature which is a sinful man, dead in trespasses and in sins.

This death into sin did not just corrupt Adam; it corrupted “all men” for all have sinned. *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for all have sinned:”* (Rom. 5:12) It was by the offense of one (Adam) that judgment came upon “all men” to condemnation. *“Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;”* (Rom. 5:18) Adam is known as the “federal head” (or a “governmental representative”) of all of mankind. Therefore, in Adam’s death, “all men” died and were condemned. In Adam “all die”. *“For since by man came death... For as in Adam all die...”* (1 Cor. 15:21-22)

All of mankind, all men and women without exception, are “sinners by nature” all the way up to their conception. The same original sin nature that our federal head father Adam had is now imparted to us immediately at our conception, even prior to our natural birth. *“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”* (Ps. 51:5) Even in man’s best state (and we are no better than when we are

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conceived), even then we are “altogether vanity. *“Every man at his best state is altogether vanity”* (Ps. 39:5). We are all *“by nature the children of wrath even as others”* (Eph. 2:3).

Now, everyone conceived with that sin nature, when they are born, they then manifest that they are “sinners by practice”. Children begin to practice the sin they have in their sinful nature as soon as they are born. Even newborn infants come forth “speaking lies”, bearing false witness with their cries for affection or hunger. *“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.”* (Ps. 58:3). We naturally transgress and sin against God’s law, even from the womb. *“For I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and was called a transgressor from the womb.”* (Isaiah 48:8)

Some denominations attempt to present an unscriptural “age of accountability”, that all children under a certain arbitrary age are innocent and not condemned before God. Well, even these little children are sinners because of inheriting Adam’s original sin nature. How do we know these children are sinners and not innocent? Simply because they die. Death is caused by sin (Rom. 6:23, James 1:15, Ezek. 18:4), so it’s clearly evident these children are sinners because they die. There is no one that escapes the original sin nature of total depravity that has been given us by our federal head father Adam, even including children who pass away in the womb or as young infants.

There is no one that has escaped the “federal head corruption” of our father Adam. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”* (Rom. 3:23). We cannot find one single person on this earth (apart from a new spiritual nature from God) that does good and sins not. *“For there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good, and sinneth not.”* (Eccl. 7:20). *“10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”* (Rom. 3:10-12) No matter how hard we look at man in his own nature, we will never find anyone who is righteous, does good, seeks after God, or understands spiritual things. No, there’s not a single natural man on this earth who is good or right before God. We are all “totally depraved”.

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Now, as a result of Adam’s sin, all of mankind is “totally depraved” (or “fully and radically corrupt”). Man has universally chosen together (we have gone “all together”) to live corruptly and in rebellion before God. *“1) ...They are corrupt, they have done abominable works... 3) They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”* (Ps. 14:3) Not just has man universally chosen to reject God, but now each part of every individual man is corrupted as well (we are “altogether” – every part of every individual man – corrupted). *“1) ...Corrupt are they, and have abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good... 3) Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”* (Ps. 53:1-3). The word “filthy” in both Ps. 14:1-3 and Ps. 53:1-3 literally means “corrupt”. Therefore, mankind is both “all together become corrupt” and “altogether become corrupt”. It’s obvious now after the fall, that in our flesh truly there *“dwelleth no good thing”* (Rom. 7:18).

The total depravity of man is taught all throughout scripture, but the Apostle Paul summarized all these Old Testament scriptures of man’s total depravity very succinctly in Romans 3. *“9) We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. 10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13) Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14) Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15) Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16) Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17) And the way of peace have they not known: 18) There is no fear of God before their eyes. 19) ...that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.*

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20) *Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall now flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin...* 23) *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" (Rom. 3:9-23)

Look how "fully and radically corrupt" man truly is. There none that is righteous or does right; none that understands God; none that seeks God; none that follows God's way; none that is profitable before God; none that does any good, no not one; none that seeks the way of peace; none that fears God. Notice that every part of natural man's body is depicted as being fully corrupt: A) Heart (Jer. 17:9-10, Matt. 15:19, Prov. 6:18, Eccl. 9:3), B) Mind/Will (Rom. 8:6-8, Isaiah 59:7, Gen. 6:5), C) Eyes (Rom. 3:18, Ps. 36:1), D) Throat (Rom. 3:13, Ps. 5:9), E) Tongue (Rom. 3:13, Ps. 5:9, Ps. 10:7, Ps. 140:3), F) Lips (Rom. 3:13, Ps. 140:3, Prov. 12:22, Prov. 24:2), G) Mouth (Rom. 3:14, Ps. 10:7), H) Feet (Rom. 3:15, Prov. 6:18, Isaiah 59:7), and I) Hands (Prov. 6:17, Isaiah 59:3).

Naturally, we are "enemies of God" (Rom. 5:10, Rom. 8:7, Col. 1:21). Natural man will not and cannot seek after God (Rom. 3:11, Ps. 10:4, Ps. 53:2, John 5:40, John 6:44). Natural man cannot do good (Rom. 3:10-12, Ps. 14:1-3, Ps. 53:1-3, Micah 7:2-6, Eccl. 7:20). In Gal. 5:22, "goodness" is noted as a fruit of the Spirit and an attribute of God; in contrast, the wicked are totally opposed to goodness. Natural man cannot please God (Rom. 8:8). They do not have faith and thus cannot do anything that is pleasing to God because without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Natural man cannot be subject to the law of God (Rom. 8:7-8). Natural man cannot hear or truly believe the word of God (John 8:43-48, John 10:25-27). Natural man cannot understand spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:12-14, Rom. 3:11, Ps. 53:2, Rom. 8:5-8). Natural man does not fear God (Rom. 3:18, Ps. 36:1, Ps. 55:19). Natural man unapologetically engages in all manner of carnal sin and lust (Gal. 5:16-21, Eph. 2:2-3, Rom. 8:5-8, Titus 3:3). Natural man in his nature "cannot cease from sin" (2 Pet. 2:14). Natural man's inward being is only wickedness – "their inward part is very wickedness" (Ps. 5:9).

We are dead in sins, and we lived in times past (prior to the new birth) only according to the natural flesh. All we did or could do was indulge our natural flesh all the time. "1) *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*" (Eph. 2:1-3) We served all different kinds of lusts and pleasures and lived in malice and in envy and exhibited hate towards God and others instead of love. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." (Titus 3:3) Every part of man has been corrupted by sin. Man is clearly totally depraved and radically corrupt.

Dead in Trespasses and in Sins

We must properly understand just how radical the fall of man was to understand the necessity of salvation by God's sovereign grace. Man was not merely injured or made sick where he can simply recover himself by spiritual work or spiritual medicine. No, man was now "dead in trespasses and in sins". The penalty for sin was not just a handicap, but the penalty was death. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt sure die." (Gen. 2:17). "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:23) Therefore, man had to be saved from this dead in trespasses and sins state. "1) *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...* 5) *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"* (Eph. 2:1-5) "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all your trespasses." (Col. 2:13)

Total Depravity

We were dead, without any strength, and thus had no ability to come to God or remedy ourselves from our fallen and condemned state. That's why Jesus had to die for our sins because we had no ability to do any action to save ourselves because we were dead in trespasses and in sins. *"6) For when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly... 8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us... 12) Wherefore as by one man sin entered in the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* (Rom .5:6-12)

It clearly takes a power that is alive to give life to those that are dead. Fortunately, even though we were dead in sins, God and Jesus Christ are characterized by "life" – Jesus is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25, 14:6). Jesus resurrects and gives life to our dead in trespasses and sins souls by calling us by the power of the Son of God's voice. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."* (John 5:25) Just like in natural creation, the power of the voice of God gave life and light to those in death and darkness; the power of the voice of the Son of God calls those dead in sins to life. Every one that hears the Son of God's call – every elect person that is called by God – shall be quickened from dead in trespasses and sins to new life in Jesus Christ by nothing more than the power of the Son of God's voice.

Man's Inability and God's Sovereignty in Salvation

Man's total depravity and radical corruption has to be the base line understanding of man by nature to properly understand how men are saved eternally. Because of total depravity and original sin, if man has to meet even one condition, perform just one work, to be saved to heaven, then no one would ever be saved at all. Because of original sin, the only hope of salvation is if eternal salvation is accomplished totally apart from man, which Jesus Christ did on the cross. Man's total depravity and original sin is the foundation for understanding salvation by God's sovereign grace. Man has no ability and no desire to choose God and cannot aid in any way in saving himself. If any action of man is required for eternal salvation, in our dead sinful natures, we have no ability to faithfully perform that work. Therefore, since man is totally depraved and cannot perform that work, the scriptures would affirm "universal damnation".

If man has to see his need of salvation and choose to seek God to be saved, no one would ever be saved because natural man cannot understand or seek God. *"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."* (Rom. 3:11). If man has to perform one good work, or even a lifetime of good and righteous works to go to heaven, then heaven would be empty because there is none righteous or none that does good, no not one. Man can't do any good work anyway because he is dead in sins. *"10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* (Rom. 3:10,12) If we need to confess with our mouths that Jesus is the Lord to be saved to heaven, we cannot because our mouths only utter deceit, death, cursing, and bitterness. *"13) Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14) Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:"* (Rom. 3:13-14) If man just has to make up his mind to honor and reverence God, we cannot because in our natural mind we have no fear of God. *"There is no fear of God before their eyes."* (Rom. 3:18) If man would just walk and live right and do enough good works we can be saved, then again no could be saved because our feet don't draw us to God but our natural feet lead us to shed blood. *"12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 15) Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16) Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17) And the way of peace have they not known:"* (Rom. 3:12,15-17) If we have to perform a work or obey God's law, heaven is again vacant because in our natures we don't even have the ability to be subject to the law of God or please God. *"7) Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, nether indeed can be. 8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."* (Rom. 8:7-8)

Total Depravity

Therefore, it's evident because of man's total depravity that if anyone is saved, he must be saved by God's sovereignty alone apart from any action of man. Man will never choose to seek God, so God chose out and elected a people to save before the foundation of the world. Man cannot do any good or righteous works that are acceptable before God, so Jesus Christ lived a perfect and righteous life in our stead and imputed his righteousness to our account before God. Man cannot perform any work to save himself, so Jesus Christ did the work himself of paying the penalty of death for all his people's sins.

If God did not foreknow, elect, predestinate, call, justify, and finally glorify his people totally by himself, conditioned upon no action of totally depraved man, no one would ever be saved to heaven. Praise the Lord for "But God". We used to "*walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*" (Eph. 2:1-3) In spite of our ruined nature and inability to save ourselves, God stepped into the scene and showed his mercy, love, and grace in a hopeless situation to save us from our sins. "*4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*" (Eph. 2:4-5) Man is doomed in himself, but the elect are saved in Jesus Christ. Let us praise God for commending his love towards us even when we were enemies and sinners towards God (Rom. 5:6-10).

Foreknowledge, Election, and Predestination

“29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” (Rom. 8:29-30)

“4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” (Eph. 1:4-6)

Covenant of Redemption

We see from the scriptures that man is totally depraved with no ability or desire to come to God or seek God at all. If eternal salvation is in any way dependent upon the actions of man, it's clear that no one would ever be saved to heaven. As we clearly see man's radical, pervasive corruption, we must then ask how can anyone be saved? The answer to this question is that out of all the ruined race of mankind, God saw fit to love a vast multitude that no man can number. God chose to covenant within himself in the Trinity to perform all the requirements necessary to save those people from their sins and for them to live in eternity in heaven with the Lord. We see the contractual requirements of this covenant of redemption in Romans 8:29-30: *“29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”*

God looked out on all the totally depraved race of man and saw that none would ever choose to love or serve the Lord (Ps. 14:2-3). Amazing God, knowing perfectly man's universal rejection of him, chose to love an innumerable group of people out of that ruined lot. God “foreknew” (or “foreloved”) a people. Those that God foreloved, he predestinated or predetermined their final destiny to be with God in heaven for all of eternity. Our natures were sinful, so God had to call his people in the new birth, and give us a new godly nature in our soul. Jesus had to come and pay the penalty for our sins by death so that we could be legally justified or declared righteous before a holy God. Finally, our bodies that are corrupted by sin, have to be changed to be fit for heaven, and at the last day in the resurrection, our bodies will be raised up and glorified and conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

God has chosen and covenanted in himself before the world even began that he would perform all the works necessary for his people to be saved to heaven. God made a covenant; he signed a will, a legally binding and unalterable document, and the Lord has been eternally bound to perform all the legal obligations of that will. God made an “everlasting covenant” to save his people before the world began. David described that everlasting covenant with his own family, God's family, that God enacted with himself. *“Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he maketh it not to grow.” (2 Sam. 23:5)* This everlasting covenant is “all my salvation”. There is no salvation apart from God performing all the works necessary for salvation in his covenant. This everlasting covenant is also “sure”. It's secure, with no possibility of failure because all the requirements in this covenant are carried out by God instead of by men. If any action of man was required in this will, it could not be “sure”; it is safely secure in the work of God.

God ensured that all the necessary requirements for our eternal salvation would be secured and completed in himself. You see in Romans 8:29-30 there is no action of man that is necessary to complete any of these five links in the chain of redemption. These are five actions – foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification – that are all completed solely by God with man just being the passive

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beneficiaries of the Lord's unmerited favor unto us. Just as Jonah perfectly summarized for us, from start to finish, "*Salvation is of the Lord*" (Jonah 2:9).

God promised eternal life to the elect before the world began, and it's because God cannot lie that we have confidence that God will never fail in fulfilling all the requirements of that covenant. "*In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.*" (Titus 1:2) Despite how we might fail the Lord here in our lives, even though God shall chastise us for our sin, ultimately God will not and cannot break his covenant with his children. "30) *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments... 32) Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. 33) Nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34) My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.*" (Ps. 89:30-37) It's because of God's faithfulness to his everlasting covenant of redemption that we have a hope of eternal life and can rest secure that the same God that loved us and enacted this covenant for us before the world began, will perfectly complete the final requirement of that covenant of redemption and we shall be glorified in heaven with Jesus Christ.

Foreknowledge

The first link in this covenant of redemption is that God "foreknew" a people. "*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*" (Rom. 8:29) This is not speaking of just God's "omniscience", that God literally knows everything without exception. That is absolutely true, but this "foreknowledge" is speaking of a special, intimate kind of knowledge. Not just a knowledge of events or facts, but God had an intimate knowledge of a "people" – it was "whom" (people) that God foreknew. There is a special intimacy of knowledge that Jesus as the Good Shepherd has with his sheep. "*My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me.*" (John 10:27) God knew Jeremiah in a very intimate way before he was ever even conceived in the womb of his mother. "*Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*" (Jer. 1:5) Those wolves in sheep's clothing that were false professors in this world, when they are cast away at the end of time, Jesus professes that "*I never knew you.*" (Matt. 7:23) Certainly, God had perfect academic knowledge of those wicked false professors' deeds and actions, but God never knew these non-elect persons in this intimate "foreknowledge" way that God loved his people before the world began.

This "intimate foreknowledge" is depicted by the intimacy of love that a husband has for his wife. "*And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived and bare Cain...*" (Gen. 4:1) Adam did not just meet Eve, was introduced to her and shook her hand, so now he knew who she was. No, there was a close intimacy of knowledge that Adam had with his wife, Eve, that he did not have with other women who he knew in his life. There is a special intimacy of knowledge and love that a husband has for a wife that is unique and special from his knowledge and affection for other women. Husbands "know" other women by acquaintance and even friendship, but this "intimate knowledge" of love is reserved for a wife who has been bound by a covenant of love to him as his bride. Because of God's intimate knowledge and love for a people before the world began, Jesus as our husband entered into a covenant of love with his bride of the elect to redeem her to himself.

This foreknowledge of God is based on love and covenant commitment, just like a marriage. Therefore, we can just as easily say that God "foreloved" a people before the world began. Those that God "foreloved", he "predestinated" to be with him in heaven. Will any husband who loves his wife be content for them to be separated indefinitely? No, that husband will perform all the necessary requirements for his bride to be with him forever. That is what God did in the covenant of redemption. The bride that God foreloved, Jesus Christ predetermined that his bride would be with him in heaven for all of eternity (that is predestination). However, for that to occur, some changes had to be made to this bride. This bride was naturally corrupt and

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sinful and under the penalty of sin. This bride was not fit for heaven, so some changes had to be made to her body, soul, and spirit that was corrupt. Therefore, the Holy Spirit had to purify the bride's soul in the calling and new birth; Jesus Christ had to purify the bride's sins by his death on the cross in justification; and God had to purify the bride's bodies in glorification to be made fit for heaven. All of the bride that God foreloved, God called, justified, and glorified all of her to make her fit for heaven, so that she could live in her predestinated home with Jesus Christ her husband.

God is identified and characterized by love. "*God is love*" (1 John 4:7-21). Also, God does not change (Mal. 3:6). Therefore, God has always loved his bride; God has always loved his people with an "everlasting love". "*The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*" (Jer. 31:3) Jesus declares that God has loved his people, his bride, in the exact same manner, duration, and fervency that God the Father loves God the Son. "(23) *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.* 24) *...for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world.*" (John 17:23-24) That means that even though man would ultimately fall into sin, there was no beginning point of God's love for his bride. God has loved "them" (the elect bride) "as thou hast loved me" (as God has loved the Son). There was no beginning point of God's love for the Son, and thus God did not begin to love his people. God has simply loved his bride with "an everlasting love".

That's why there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from God's love. The Son's love for his bride is "everlasting". Christ's love has no beginning, and thus it's also evident that his love will never end; it shall "last forever". God cannot change; God cannot lie; God's love predates this world and will extend beyond this world; God's love will last forever. "(35) *Who shall separate us from the love of God? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 38) For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39) Nor height, nor depth, or any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Rom. 8:35-39) All that God "foreloved", he will always love. All that God "foreloved" and predestinated, shall be called in the new birth, were justified by Christ on the cross, and their bodies shall be glorified at the resurrection. Then, the eternal love story of Christ and his bride will be consummated, and the bride shall finally be with the husband forever.

Election

All of the people that God "foreloved", the scriptures also depict God's "election" (or simply God's choosing) of that people to salvation. Even though there was no beginning point to God's love – he loved us with an "everlasting love" – God made a choice to love some people and pass over others in man's ruined race. Those who were elected and chosen in Christ are known in the scriptures as "the elect". "(1) *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2) Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*" (1 Pet. 1:2) The elect were chosen according to the "foreknowledge of God the Father". God's elect people were not chosen because of any deeds we performed but solely because of God's love.

Election means "the act of picking out or choosing". When did God choose the elect to salvation? God chose his people "before the foundation of the world". "*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.*" (Eph. 1:4) "*Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*" (2 Thess. 2:13) The reference to God's plan and choice of salvation before the world began is replete in scripture – see also Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2; Rom. 9:11; Ps. 33:12, 139:16; Rev. 17:8; 2 Thess. 2:13; John 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:9; Ps. 65:4; Acts 13:48; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 8:29; John 17:23-24; Jer. 31:3.

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Some people question that “election” is actually true or deny that it’s even taught in the Bible. A significant part of the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles must be denied if one denies the truth of election. Election was clearly taught by Jesus Christ. *“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?”* (Luke 18:7) *“22) For the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened. 24)...insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 31) And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds...”* (Matt. 24:22-31 and also Mark 13:20-27)

Election was clearly taught by the Apostle Paul. *“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.”* (Rom. 8:33) *“For the children being not yet born neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth.”* (Rom. 9:11) *“5) Even so at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 28) As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father’s sake.”* (Rom. 11:5,28) See also 1 Thess. 1:4, Col. 3:12, 2 Tim. 2:10, and Titus 1:1.

Election was clearly taught by the Apostle Peter. *“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:”* (1 Pet. 1:2 and see also 1 Pet. 5:13) *“Whether the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure:”*(2 Pet. 1:10) Election was also taught by the Apostle John. *“1) The elder unto the elect lady and her children... 13) The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.”* (2 John 1,13) In summary, anyone that denies that “election” is a true biblical doctrine has ignored a significant portion of the New Testament scriptures.

Now that we have established that God did choose a people to salvation, we must ask what was the basis of God’s election? How or why did God elect a people to save? Some might begrudgingly accept election, but then try to falsely characterize it as a “conditional election” – God chose those who he knew would later choose him. God’s election of a people to salvation was not based upon who would do good or choose to accept Christ (not based on any foreseen merit in the life of a man) because then no man would have been chosen because of the depth of man’s depravity. God did look out at all mankind in his perfect omniscience to see if any would choose him, but what he found was that there is “none that doeth good, no, not one”. The scriptures show that if God chose those who would ultimately choose him, then no one would be elected because no one can do good, understand, or seek God in our nature without God first changing our nature in the new birth. *“2) The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3) They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”* (Ps. 14:2-3)

God’s choice of a people to salvation is not based upon their works (because Ps. 14:2-3 affirms that then no one would be chosen), but instead God’s election is by “grace” (unmerited favor). *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”* (2 Tim. 1:9) Notice in Rom. 11:6 that grace and works are wholly opposed and incompatible to each other. If election (God’s choice) is of grace, then, by definition, it cannot be of works. *“5) Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6) And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work. 7) What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”* (Rom. 11:5-7) Grace is “unmerited favor”, but if an action of man is required to be performed to cause “grace” to be bestowed upon an individual, then it is no longer “grace” but “wages” because a work or action has been performed that has now “merited” favor being shown unto you. This is why grace and works are incompatible. When one performs a work that causes a good action to be done unto them, what has occurred is now “merited favor” rather than grace that requires the good work to be “unmerited” in the recipient. See

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also these verses for clear teaching of eternal salvation by grace and not by works: Titus 3:4-7; Eph. 1:6; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5; Rom. 9:11-16; Rom. 11:5-6; John 1:13.

God uses the example of His sovereign choice to bestow favor upon Jacob and to love Jacob in the Old Testament as an example of God's sovereignty in choosing an elect people to save. Jacob had not even been born yet when God pronounced him as the chosen or preferred son, so God's choice could not have been based on his future good works. In turn, God's elect people were chosen before the foundation of the world, before they even had the possibility of doing any good works to merit their choosing by God. *"11) (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth;), 12) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13) As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."* (Rom. 9:11-13) Both Jacob and Esau were condemned sinners justly condemned to the penalty of sin. Both Jacob and Esau were undeserving sinners with no merit to have been chosen by God. Of those two totally unworthy sinners, God in his sovereign election saw fit to love Jacob and to pass over Esau in his fallen condition. Due to our sin, all of mankind is naturally worthy of God's hatred because God hates sin and cannot even look upon sin. God did not choose to further harm Esau by not choosing to love him. Esau was already in a fallen sinful state and justly condemned to God's wrath and judgment and hatred because of his sin. Jacob in his nature was worthy of that same condemnation and judgment, but by nothing more than his own love and grace, God saw fit to choose to love Jacob.

The elect were not chosen because of any merit in themselves (just like Jacob's total unworthiness) but were chosen simply because of God's love for them. *"7) The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: 8) But because the Lord loved you..."* (Deut. 7:7-8) *"4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved);"* (Eph. 2:4-5) *"15) For he saith unto Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16) So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."* (Rom. 9:15-16)

God is sovereign and has the right to choose who he sees fit. The elect have been chosen by God's sovereign will and purpose. *"4) According as he hath chosen us in him...5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."* (Eph. 1:4-6) God chose the elect because it seemed good in his sight to do so. *"25) I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. 26) Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."* (Matt. 11:25-26) God would be just to not choose anyone because no one deserved to be elected. Thankfully because of God's grace, mercy, and love, God chose a vast, innumerable host of people to love and to save to heaven by the death of Jesus Christ.

Many get concerned that since God chose a people not based on anything we do, that God might have only chosen "a few elect". They think election is a "small exclusive group" but actually election encompasses an "innumerable inclusive group". While election might first appear "exclusive" since God did not choose everyone, if we properly understand man's total depravity and that no one would be saved apart from God's grace, election is actually extremely "inclusive" because otherwise everyone would be excluded from heaven. God's people are actually an "innumerable, diverse" group that no man can count or identify. *"After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."* (Rev. 7:9 and 5:9) God chose a people so vast that no man can number it. God's people are so diverse that he chose at least one person "out of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue". Man's works excludes anyone from heaven, but God's unconditional election saves so many people, we can't even count.

Foreknowledge, Election, and Predestination

Predestination

God predetermined the final, eternal destiny of all those that God chose (elected) to love before the foundation of the world. God did not leave the outcome for his elect uncertain to be ratified or completed by man's works in their life. Rather, the sovereign God predetermined the final destination and destiny of all the elect that God loved before the world began.

What is the final destiny of the elect that God predestinated before the world began?

God predestinated for the elect to be adopted into the family of God, as children of God. *"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."* (Eph. 1:5)

God predestinated for the elect to receive a full, eternal inheritance, as joint heirs with Jesus Christ. *"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."* (Eph. 1:11)

God predestinated for the elect to be finally conformed to the image of Jesus in glorification. *"For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."* (Rom. 8:29)

God predestinated for the elect to be given eternal life by Jesus Christ. *"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."* (John 17:2) *"27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28) And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my Father's hand."* (John 10:27-28)

God predestinated for the elect to live with God in the heavenly, eternal kingdom. *"Then shall the King shall say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matt. 24:34)

Predestination, in the scriptures, always pertains to "a people" (a "whom", Rom. 8:29-30) who were predetermined to salvation, and never refers to events (or a "what") that God has unalterably fixed to occur in a certain manner. Nowhere in scripture does God predetermine the events of man's life, particularly God has not predestinated the sin that man commits in his life. *"They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind."* (Jer. 19:5) God is not, and cannot be, the author of sin. *"13) Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14) But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."* (James 1:13-14) See also: Hab. 1:13; Zeph. 3:5; Job 34:10; Jer. 7:31, 32:5, 44:2-5; 1 Thess. 4:3.

Also, predestination is always in the positive sense, never in the negative sense. God did predestinate the elect to heaven, but God did not predestinate the wicked to hell. All those cast into the lake of fire at the end of time are justly condemned because of their own sin. God did not predestinate the wicked to eternal damnation in the lake of fire. All of mankind would be justly condemned before the Lord, but God chose to love, elect, and predestinate his people to be with God in heaven for all of eternity.

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“3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... 5) Jesus answered, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God... 7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8) The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell when it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:3-8)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” (John 5:25)

Sovereignty of God in the New Birth

Man by nature is dead in trespasses and in sins. Natural man has no ability to seek or understand God, no ability to do good or righteousness, no ability to come to God. If salvation, particularly if the new birth, is conditional upon man to perform an action for God to born them again, no one would ever be saved. *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:14)* The natural man has no ability to understand spiritual things, and he has no ability to know them because they are spiritually discerned. Since man is spiritually dead in sins, it’s obvious that a dead man cannot do anything to gain life. Man must be given spiritual life before he can perform any spiritual activity. Therefore, God has to sovereignly impart spiritual life and quicken the dead sinner. *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;” (Eph. 2:1) “21) For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. 25) Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” (John 5:21,25)*

Man has no ability to come unto God in his fallen nature being dead in sins. Remember the radical corruption of man from Rom. 3:10-18. There is no one that seeks after God, none that understands, none that does good or is righteous, no, not one. Simply put, no man can come unto God in our sinful natures. Therefore, God has to sovereignly “draw” the unable and unwilling sinner unto himself in the new birth. *“No man can come unto me, except the Father which hast sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:44)* The word “draw” here depicts the drawing of a bucket of water at a well. The “drawer” does not ask the bucket if it would like to be drawn or if it will accept being drawn, but he just sovereignly overpowers the passive bucket and draws it to himself. Therefore, God must be the great Initiator to draw and bring all His children unto Him. No man can come unto God, but God overpowers that inability and draws his passive child to him by his own power and sovereignty in the new birth. All the people that God chose in Christ before the world began are who God has “caused to approach” unto him in the new birth. *“Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee...” (Ps. 65:4)* Our works are not the cause of our approaching unto God, but God’s choice and sovereign drawing are how we brought unto God in the new birth. All of God’s children without exception will “come unto God” in the new birth. *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37)*

This change of the soul from a natural dead in trespasses and in sins state to a renewed holy, living, and spiritual nature inside of us is depicted in many ways in scripture. It’s depicted as a “calling” by the voice of the Son of God (Rom. 8:29-30, 2 Tim. 1:9, 1 Pet. 5:10, Acts 2:39, Jude 1, John 5:24-25, John 10:16,27; Gal. 1:15). It’s presented as a “quickenings” and “resurrection” from death to life in Christ (Eph. 2:1-5, John 5:21,25, Col. 2:13, 3:1; 1 John 3:14, John 6:63). It’s presented as a “new birth” and being “born again” to a new spiritual nature (John 3:1-8, 1 Pet. 1:23-25, John 1:12-13). It’s depicted by a “new creation” as we are created anew in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17, Eph. 2:10, 4:24). It’s also presented as a “drawing” of the helpless man unto God (John 6:44,65), as well as a few other depictions as well. What each of these

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depictions have in common is that one party is sovereign and active and the other party is passive in these actions. In each one of these instances in the world around us, man cannot cause or initiate a resurrection, a birth, or a drawing. Man does not choose when he desires to be resurrected or born or drawn because he's dead in sins and dead men cannot initiate anything. Therefore, all of these actions are accomplished by the sovereignty of God but man is just the passive beneficiary and recipient of the work of God upon him. God calls, quickens, and resurrects but the dead man is passive in that work. God causes the new birth, but the child is only the recipient of life in birth. God draws a dead sinner unto him, and he does not require man's permission or acceptance to do it. God did not consult the land, fowls, or man and ask if they desired to be created, God just commanded, and everything was created out of nothing. Each of these depictions of regeneration – the graveyard, the delivery room, drawing, and creation – show that this new nature is not given unto man because of something he did, but this quickening, birth, drawing, and creation is imposed upon man solely by the sovereignty of God.

Who is Born Again?

Who then is born again? The general teaching in Christianity is that man must meet some condition or perform some work, and then as a result of that work, God will in turn give that person new life and they will be born again. That describes a “conditional regeneration”, but the scriptures teach an “unconditional regeneration”. We are not born again based upon meeting a condition or work we performed, but we were called to new life in Christ solely by God's grace and mercy. *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,”* (2 Tim. 1:9) *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”* (Titus 3:5) God chose a people to save and those elect are the people that are born again. The new birth is not caused or initiated by the actions of man, but the grace of God appears to all of God's elect to give them new life in Christ.

Those who are called in the new birth are the exact same definite group of people that God “foreloved” and “predestinated” before the world began. *“29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”* (Rom. 8:29-30) Everyone that God loved and covenanted to save before the foundation of the world, their soul has to be changed to be fit for heaven. Our soul and spirit are natural and carnal and sinful, so God has to make our soul and spirit into a “new creation” after God's own holy nature that is now fit for the presence of God in heaven. *“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* (2 Cor. 5:17)

Everyone that God chose to love before the foundation of the world will be born again at some point in their life before their physical death. When does that new birth occur for the child of God? Most of Christianity will tell you that the new birth occurs “after” you perform some action – belief, acceptance, prayer, baptism, etc. They would say that God wants to save you, but he can only quicken you in Christ “after” you meet the supposed requirement for salvation. God is not waiting upon the dead sinner to perform an action to give him spiritual life. A dead man has no ability to do anything, and if that was the case, then no one would ever be saved. God sees fit to call to life and send his Spirit in the heart of his child at a time that seems good in his sight. It's “when it pleased God” (not when we perform some work) that God will “call me by his grace and reveal his Son in me”. Men are not born again when “they pleased” to believe or do some other work, but the elect are born again according to God's pleasure and will, not man's pleasure and will. *“15) But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16) To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”* (Gal. 1:15-16)

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Jesus himself gave a very detailed exposition of the new birth to Nicodemus in John 3. Jesus declared the necessity of the new birth to understand spiritual things, to see, experience, and enter into the kingdom of God. “3) *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...* 5) *Jesus answered, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* 6) *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* 7) *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*” (John 3:3-7) No man can see the kingdom of God unless he has been born again because the natural man has no ability to understand spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14) or see God’s spiritual kingdom. Those who only have had a fleshly birth can only understand fleshly things, and it takes being born of the Spirit to understand spiritual things, just as Jesus said in John 3:6. Jesus clearly summarized the necessity of the new birth, “*Ye must be born again*” (John 3:7). It’s absolutely necessary for our natures to be changed for us to be fit to abide in the presence of God in heaven.

There is something that is very mysterious about man being born again by the Spirit of God. It is a very intimate thing that happens directly in the heart of the sinner. No man is involved in that process, but God births his people again directly and personally. From an external perspective, we cannot know exactly when one is born again; we can only see the effects of that change in their heart. Jesus described the sovereignty of God in the new birth as the wind blowing upon their heart. “*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell when it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*” (John 3:8) We cannot pinpoint exactly when the wind blew upon a tree. We can only look at the effect upon the tree, listen to the sound thereof, examine what we know as the effects of wind, and then reach a conclusion that the wind must have blown upon that tree when we see the leaves move. In like manner, we cannot know definitively when others (or maybe even yourself) have been born again. We can only examine the evidences of the Spirit in our lives and others and determine that the “wind of the Holy Spirit” must have blown in our hearts and given us a new nature in Jesus Christ.

So is Every One that is Born of the Spirit

Notice that Jesus in John 3:8 sets the universal manner that all children of God are born again in the exact same way – “*so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*” This means that every single child of God without exception is born again the exact same way. This places considerable problems for so many that adhere to a “conditional salvation”. In today’s Christian climate, it’s common to have a preacher boldly proclaim from the pulpit that unless you repent, pray, accept, believe, and are baptized, you cannot be saved to heaven. However, if you ask that same preacher in private how all those that clearly cannot or will not meet that condition are saved to heaven – such as aborted babies, infants, mentally handicapped persons, Old Testament persons, or others that have never heard the gospel – you will find he will make unscriptural “exceptions” to the “repent and believe condition” of eternal salvation. If the “conditional salvationist” is consistent in his teaching and everyone is clearly born again the same way, all of those people that don’t repent and believe are going to hell. Period. No exceptions. However, you will find them making exceptions because it’s obvious in scripture that God has a people outside of that one supposed requirement for eternal salvation. The truth of regeneration by the direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit does not force us to make unscriptural exceptions. Every person in every people group in every stage of life regardless what time they lived in this world is born again the exact same way – by the direct and immediate work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the dead sinner.

It’s evident that a baby in the womb cannot meet any condition of salvation placed upon man. To keep from preaching babies and infants to hell that clearly cannot repent and believe the gospel, an unscriptural, fictional “age of accountability” has been set up; that teaching is absolutely nowhere in the word of God. Infants and aborted babies that have supposedly not passed beyond the unscriptural “age of accountability” are apparently still viewed by God as innocent so they are permitted into heaven on a free pass. There is

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none that is innocent before God and that includes babies in the womb and young infants. Sin brings forth death and those babies obviously die, so they are under the penalty of sin, just like full grown sinners. If there are any babies in heaven (and no doubt there will be many), they have to be saved the same way as every other child of God – chosen by God, quickened by the Holy Spirit, and saved from their sins by the blood of Christ.

Then, supposed the mentally handicapped never reach the unscriptural age of accountability, so they are given a free pass into heaven too. They never reach the point to where they can fully understand they are a sinner and need a savior and become “accountable for their sins” before God. No man in his nature will understand they are a sinner and need a savior. Man is totally content to live in rebellion to God with no conviction or desire to change. Mentally handicapped people are judged as sinners the same as everyone else, and their salvation is by grace alone just like all the rest of the elect.

Every Old Testament saint, even among the Jews but certainly the Gentiles too, clearly had no ability to believe on Jesus Christ because he had not come yet. Then one might say that the Old Testament saints were saved in a different way, that their observance of the law and their sacrifices appeased God and saved them. That doesn't work because God is adamant that the blood of goats and calves could never take away sins (Heb. 9:12, 10:4). That totally excludes the Gentiles because they didn't have the law to make those sacrifices. How is it possible, then, for God's elect people to be “*out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*” (Rev. 5:9, 7:9)? There are many of those Gentile nations, tongues, peoples, and families that are dead and gone and totally died out having never known the Mosaic law or the name of Christ. They were not all doomed to eternal perdition. It is evident God had a people among those nations, tongues and people too, so how were they born again? They were born again the same way every other child of God is: by the Holy Spirit separate and apart from the preacher and the gospel.

Then, what about those even today that have never heard the gospel? Supposedly we have to raise money to send preachers and missionaries so those unevangelized can hear the gospel and be saved otherwise they are going to hell. It's evident that all the money and preachers in the world won't be enough for everyone to hear the gospel, so are those who never hear and believe the gospel unequivocally condemned to hell? Well, once you drill down on this belief, typically another exception is given by a conditional salvationist for these people as well: “Well, I just believe God has a way of revealing himself to those unevangelized people and saving them part from the gospel if we don't make it to them.” Absolutely, I agree with that. God does reveal himself to unevangelized people and save them apart from the gospel. However, that is not the “exception” in salvation, that is the “only way of salvation”. The problem with that statement from one that believes you must believe the gospel to go heaven is the unevangelized heathen cannot meet that condition. If you are consistent in your doctrine and understand the teaching of John 3:8 that everyone is born again the same way, you cannot permit that person who has never heard and believed the gospel into heaven. If they didn't believe, they cannot be saved to heaven; there are no exceptions in scriptures; everyone is born again the same way, per Jesus.

Let's consider the blasphemous end results of these unscriptural exceptions. If one remains in gospel ignorance and they are secured of eternal life, then that should hinder us from wanting to tell the gospel to any unevangelized person. If their probability of eternal salvation is 100% by remaining in gospel ignorance, then why would you reduce their probability of salvation to 50% by you telling them the gospel? Then, the best way to populate heaven is to not preach the gospel at all because as long as they remain in gospel ignorance they are secured of heaven. Also, in regards to infants, if they all go to heaven if they die before the age of accountability, then the genocide of Herod murdering all children two and under in Jesus' day actually secured their eternal destiny in heaven instead of letting them live to full adulthood and then open up the possibility of them going to hell. That means the best way to populate heaven is to abort and murder babies in the womb because they will all go to heaven instead of risking them going to hell living

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too long and passing over the unscriptural age of accountability. Therefore, in these two instances disobeying God's command to preach the gospel and disobeying God's prohibition to murder would actually populate heaven in these exceptions. That is the total foolishness and heresy the false application of the gospel and these exceptions breeds.

Direct, Immediate Regeneration

The scriptures clearly show that all men are born again the same way. Men are born again by the "direct, immediate work of the Holy Spirit" on the heart of the dead, alien sinner. God does not subcontract out the new birth to preachers and the gospel. Jesus speaks "directly" to those dead sinners to give them life, calling directly by his own voice. The Holy Spirit applies salvation "directly" to their heart and changes their nature. Also, there is no "intermediary" for the work of the Spirit in the new birth. Many attempt to handicap God and say that God cannot born anyone again without the preacher and without the gospel. God's regeneration is "immediate" – without the use of a manmade "mediator" – but God borns his children again himself, personally and directly. God gave us three clear instances in scripture of the new birth that totally refute the necessity of the preacher and the gospel to be saved to heaven.

John the Baptist was prophesied that he would be "*filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb*" (Luke 1:15). Then, John the Baptist (already conceived but still in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth), he "*leaped in the womb for joy*" (Luke 1:44) at the salutation of Mary who was already carrying Jesus in her womb. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Therefore, John the Baptist was born again by the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb and exhibited the fruit of the Spirit (joy) when he heard the announcement that Jesus Christ had arrived. John's "leap of joy" is evidence that even before he was physically born into this world, he had already been born again by the Holy Spirit. Whatever condition you try to place upon man to be saved, I guarantee you John in his mother's womb didn't meet that condition. However, he did meet the only applicable condition for regeneration – when it "pleased God" to quicken him to life.

Saul of Tarsus was living the pretense of a religious life, but he was actually unregenerate and did not know God as he was devoted to persecuting the church. Saul had been in places many times before where the gospel was preached in demonstration of the Spirit and power but he was only cut to the heart and not pricked in the heart by that message. The true gospel meant nothing to him, but he only desired to tear down the church and the name of Jesus Christ. Then, Jesus Christ appeared to Saul directly and spoke to him directly and personally on the road to Damascus, "*Saul, Saul, why persecuteth thou me?*" (Acts 9:4) There was no preacher there to mediate or preach to him (only a bunch more of Christ-hating Jews just like Saul used to be with him). Jesus didn't offer for Saul to accept, receive, or pray, and if you will, I'll be willing to forgive you. No, Saul was overpowered, struck down, changed, and the same man that Saul had dedicated his life to destroying, he then asked Jesus Christ, "*Lord, what will thou have me to do?*" (Acts 9:6). Saul didn't invite Jesus into his heart. If it was up to Saul to invite Jesus into his heart, he would reject him just like he had all the other times he had heard the gospel preached. Jesus Christ kicked down the door of his heart, invaded and overpowered Saul's life, and he was born again by the direct calling of the voice of the Son of God on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. A preacher did not call upon Saul (Paul) to repent. He had heard that preaching many times before by the Christians, but it was utter foolishness to him in his prior unregenerate state. The Son of God appeared to him directly and spoke personally to his dead heart and called him to life. We see the evidences of the wind having blown in Paul's heart as he immediately goes from persecuting the church to preaching the gospel of Christ that he was previously devoted to tearing down. Paul did not make a decision to choose Christ. If he was given that option, he would have rejected Christ, just like every man will in his nature. Jesus Christ sovereignly imposed and overpowered the dead nature of Paul to give him new life in the Lord on the road to Damascus, calling him to life by the voice of the Son of God.

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On one side of Jesus on the cross, there was a thief that was changed at the end of his life. This man was a “malefactor” (a violent thief and criminal) that had broken the law to such a degree that he was now justly condemned to death (Luke 23:32-33). Both of the thieves that were crucified with Christ were blaspheming Jesus and they both “*cast the same in his teeth*” (Matt. 27:43-44) and “*they that were crucified with him reviled him*” (Mark 15:32). One of those thieves on the cross experienced a change of his heart and nature. The same man that was blaspheming and reviling Jesus earlier on the cross, now rebukes the other thief and says, “*40) But the other rebuked him, saying, Dost thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41) And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42) And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*” (Luke 23:41-42) This thief that had lived a wicked life that ended up with him being condemned to death, he now fears God; he now sees that he is justly condemned to death for his sin; he now sees that Jesus Christ has done nothing amiss; he now knows that the man being crucified before him is a King and he about to be returning to his kingdom. There was no preacher that gave him this information, no bible tract, no mission or Sunday school teacher. This man was born again by the voice of the Son of God at the end of his life while he was nailed to a cross. Jesus affirmed this man was saved and would be with him in heaven, “*And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*” (Luke 23:43) This thief that was changed at the end of his life should also debunk the necessity of an entire lifetime of good works to be admitted into heaven. This man did not live an overall good and godly life, but his sins (though they were many) were forgiven in Jesus Christ, and he was born again on the cross in the same way of every other child of God – by the direct, immediate, and personal calling of the Son of God to our souls to life in Christ. “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.*” (John 5:25)

The Effectual Call and Irresistible Grace

God’s call unto man to life in Christ always produces the intended result in the recipient. Therefore, the new birth is also referred to as the “effectual call” because God’s calling is always effectual (effective) in its intended purpose. “*10) For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not hither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11) So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*” (Isaiah 55:10-11) Man has no ability to reject the call of God unto life because man is dead in trespasses and sins, with no ability to either accept or reject any call. Since God’s grace that is imparted into the heart of God’s children cannot be rejected or resisted by man as the recipient, this doctrine is also known as “irresistible grace”. “*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace,*” (Gal. 1:15)

The general Christian idea that God desires to save the whole world, but he’s unable to save anyone unless they allow him to – unless they pray, accept, believe, or are baptized – is blasphemous to the sovereignty of God. God “*doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*” (Dan. 4:35) How can a dead in sins man reject the power of the totally sovereign God in giving him new life? It’s clearly impossible. Paul asked the rhetorical question: “*For who hath resisted his will?*” (Rom. 9:19) The implied answer is “No one can resist the will of the sovereign God of this universe.” Yet for some reason the majority of Christianity thinks that God cannot save a sinner unless you let him do it, you give your consent, and you accept God’s salvation. They place dead in sins man as having the sovereign authority over God to do what scripture says is impossible – that dead, natural man can “stay the hand” of God in salvation and reject his desire to born you again. The idea that man that is dead can prevent God from saving him because he just is too stubborn and won’t let God save him is foolishness gone to seed. God’s will and calling in salvation is always “perfectly effectual” in borning again every one that hears the voice of the Son of God.

Calling and The New Birth

All those that hear the call of the voice of the Son of God to life, every one of those without exception that Christ calls “shall live”. *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”* (John 5:25) All of God’s sheep will hear the voice of their Great Shepherd, and all the sheep will follow Jesus Christ in the new birth. *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:”* (John 10:27) All that were given to Christ before the world began, shall “come to me” in regeneration. *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”* (John 6:37) All that God calls shall have an intimate knowledge of God that is given in the new birth; they shall all “know the Lord” from the least to the greatest of God’s children. *“And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.”* (Heb. 8:11) *“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”* (John 10:14) That does not mean that every child of God will hear and believe the gospel, but every child of God shall have the “Abba Father” knowledge of the Lord given in the new birth. Notice also that you don’t become a son by calling upon the Lord, you cry “Abba Father” to the Lord because you are “already a son”. *“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”* (Gal. 4:6) *“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.”* (Rom. 8:15) All of God’s children that were foreloved, and predestinated shall be called in Jesus Christ; they shall come to hear his voice, follow him, come to him, and know him in regeneration.

Effects of the New Birth

Part of the confusion in Christianity today regarding the new birth is that what are actually the “effects” (or evidences) of salvation are generally presented as conditions that have to be met to “cause” God to save the sinner. When God gives you a new nature in regeneration, we now have a new heart to be able to believe and do good and show love. God writes his nature and his laws in the heart of the child of God at the moment of regeneration. *“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people.”* (Heb. 8:10; See also Heb. 10:16; 1 Thess. 4:9; 2 Cor. 3:3; Rom. 2:15; Ps. 37:30-31, 40:8; Jer. 31:33; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10, 4:24)

After the new birth, we now have the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and we can exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Spiritual fruit can only come from a tree with the Spirit, so these are all evidences of regeneration by the Spirit in one’s life. *“(22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”* (Gal. 5:22-23) These fruits are evidences that the wind of the Spirit has blown in our hearts, changing our natures. We cannot see the wind, but we can see the evidences that the wind has blown. Remember, in our natures we were *“hateful and hating one another”* (Titus 3:3), but now by the Spirit we have “love” instead of hate. In our natures, we care nothing for God and even reject that there is a God (Ps. 14:1) but now we have “faith” to believe in Christ. In our natures we cannot do good (Rom. 3:10-12), but now we exhibit “goodness” in our lives. These fruits display the change of heart and change of nature in the heart of a child of God.

Faith is not given to everyone and then we have to enact that faith to be saved to heaven. No, faith is clearly identified as a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Therefore, faith is not how you “get saved”; faith in your life is how you exhibit fruit that you “already are saved” and already have the Spirit. Faith is “for living” not for “getting life” – the just (those already just in Christ) shall live by faith. *“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”* (Rom. 1:17)

Internal faith given in the new birth, is exhibited in an external way by “belief”. Almost every other denomination will say that you have to believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved; that your belief is the condition that causes your eternal salvation. Well, the scriptures teach that belief is not the cause of the new

Calling and The New Birth

birth, but an evidence that one is “already born of God”. *“1) Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God... 10) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself... 13) These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God”* (1 John 5:1,10,13) *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”* (John 5:24) Notice that one who believes “is born of God” (1 John 5:1), and Jesus clarifies further that the person who believes “is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). *“2) Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. 15) Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God”* (1 John 4:2,15) *“Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”* (1 Cor. 12:3) The scriptures make it clear that there is no one that has the ability to confess Jesus and believe unless he is already “of God” and already has the Holy Spirit.

All that believe on Jesus Christ already “hath everlasting life”. The word “hath” is in your King James Bible as a “present possessive verb”. That means that those who believe are already in “present possession” of eternal life. We do not believe to “get everlasting life”; we believe because we are “already in present possession” of everlasting life. *“3:36) He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him... 5:24) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life... 6:47) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life... 8:47) He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”* (John 3:36, 5:24, 6:47, 8:47)

The love of God and love of the brethren is a fruit of the Spirit and a strong evidence of eternal life. *“3:14) We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death... 4:7) Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God... 12) No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us... 19) We love him, because he first loved us.”* (1 John 3:14, 4:7,12,19) *“9) But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.”* (1 Thess. 4:9) Those who love God and love others exhibit they have already been born of the Spirit of God because God first loved us before the world began.

We do not follow God’s commandments to “get life”; we follow God’s commands and do good works because God has already borned us again. Notice the clarity of 1 John 2:29 – “every one that doeth righteousness is born of him”. Good works do not cause salvation; good works evidence salvation. *“3) And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4) He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5) But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him... 29) If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.”* (1 John 2:3-5,29)

Back to our original point of the new birth, we are called to life in Christ not by any works we perform, but solely by the grace, power, and sovereignty of God. The new birth is not God “reacting” to you meeting his condition, but it is God changing your dead sinful nature that would never choose or love him. We now have been given the nature of God in our lives, with a new law in our new hearts, and we have the Holy Spirit to serve God faithfully in our lives to honor and glorify him.

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“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor. 5:21)

“(20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight...24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 3:24)

Man’s Unrighteousness

Justification means “to declare righteous” and righteous means “innocent, faultless, or guiltless”. Therefore, justification is the conclusion of a finding of righteousness in result a process by which the guilt and sin that have been charged against the elect before God due to their transgression of God’s holy law is taken away in the sight of God by Jesus Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary. The elect are justified, declared righteous, in the mind and purpose of God solely by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. This removal of sin and subsequent justification of the elect before God can only be accomplished by Jesus Christ. Man is incapable of making himself righteous before God by his works because of his total depravity, and therefore justification must be initiated by God’s grace.

We have seen in a prior chapter on Total Depravity that man is condemned to death because of our sin and transgression of God’s law. Justification describes a courtroom setting, a legal proceeding, a verdict by a judge, and a penalty for the convicted. In God’s eternal courtroom, God gave the law and God is also the Judge that carries out the punishment for offense of God’s law (Isaiah 33:22, James 4:12). Because of man’s sin, all of mankind in our own natures have been declared guilty before God. *“...all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19) “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Rom. 5:12)* All of mankind is justly condemned as guilty in God’s eternal justification courtroom and condemned to the penalty of death.

No man’s good works are sufficient before God to make him righteous because God requires total perfect obedience to the law (if we offend in one point of the law, we are guilty of the whole law, James 2:10). No man can stand up to the scrutiny of God in assessing our obedience to the law. *“If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Ps. 130:3)* Remember that man in his nature is not righteous at all – *“there is none, righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10)*. The very best we can offer to God, the very best of our “righteousnesses” (our individual acts of righteous) are just “as an unclean thing” and “are as filthy rags” before God. *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isaiah 64:6)*

We have no righteousness to present to God, so man has no ability to justify himself by his own works. Job clearly understood both his own and man is general’s sin and unrighteousness, so he wondered aloud how it’s possible that man can be justified with God? *“I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?” (Job 9:2) “4) How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? 5) Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. 6) How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?” (Job 25:4-6) “14) What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? 15) Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not pure in his sight. 16) How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?” (Job 15:14-16)*

Scripture is adamant that man has no ability to justify himself though the works he performs. *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Rom. 3:20)* If we tried to justify ourselves before God, our own mouth would eventually betray us and

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declare us sinful and unrighteous from our speech. That excludes any words we might confess (such as belief and confession of Christ) as the means for making us righteous. Our words will only condemn us and will never justify us. *“20) If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. 21) Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life.”* (Job 9:20-21) Therefore, it is of necessity for God to impute righteousness to our account before God “without works” because our own works would only nullify that righteousness. *“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,”* (Rom. 4:6)

Justification by Grace and Christ’s Blood

Since man is wholly incapable of justifying himself, apart from the interceding work of Christ on the behalf of the elect no man could be justified in the sight of God. If it’s up to man to be justified, then in God’s sight no man living would be ever be justified. *“And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.”* (Ps. 143:2) The works of the law and the works of man are incapable of justifying man, so God is our only hope of righteousness. We are justified *“by the faith of Jesus Christ”* not by our faith in Jesus Christ. *“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”* (Gal. 2:16)

We are justified by God’s grace (his unmerited favor freely bestowed upon us), not based upon any works we perform because by our works shall no flesh be justified in his sight. *“20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight...24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* (Rom. 3:24) *“5) Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us... 7) That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”* (Titus 3:5-7)

The sacrifice of animals under the Mosaic law could not take away sin. *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”* (Heb. 10:4) Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins for the breach of God’s law, so the only way that the sins of the elect could be removed and the elect to be justified before God is that Jesus had to pay the penalty of God’s law in full – for Jesus Christ to shed his own blood and die. Jesus entered into the holy place once before God and shed his precious blood to obtain eternal redemption for his people. *“12) Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. 22) And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Heb. 9:12,22)

We have been made righteous before God (justified) by the death and blood of Jesus Christ. The sins of all the elect were put upon Jesus Christ. Jesus was “made to be sin for us”, and he suffered the penalty of that sin, which was death, that we might be made righteous. *“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”* (2 Cor. 5:21) God laid upon Christ all of our sins; the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all; he bore our griefs; he carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities. *“4) Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5) But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; with his stripes we are healed. 6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all... 8) ...for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken...10) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin...11) ...by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12) ...and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made transgression for the transgressors.”* (Isaiah 53:4-12)

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There are other references in scripture to justification by faith and justification by works that apply to a different setting other than being eternally justified before God by grace and blood. It's obvious that man cannot be justified by both works and by grace before God because they are totally contradictory, especially since these scriptures clearly teach that man cannot be justified before God by works. The references to the different types of justification require a great deal of rightly dividing in scripture. We will address each of these different types of justification individually in a later chapter.

The Effect of Christ's Justification

As the sin of the elect was placed upon Christ, in turn the righteousness of Christ was then imputed to our account before God; we are now viewed by God as if we lived Jesus' perfectly righteous life. *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* (2 Cor. 5:21) Christ is the only source of our righteousness before God. *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."* (1 Cor. 1:30) The Lord is our righteousness. *"In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."* (Jer. 23:6)

God is the only authority that can justify (declare righteous) man because he is the Judge and the enforcer of his law. God is the Judge that declares the elect of God are justified and righteous by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. The elect now have no charges before God and we are no longer condemned to death but legally righteous before the Lord by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. *"30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified them he also glorified... 33) Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."* (Rom. 8:30-34) *"1) There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ hath made me free from the law of sin and death."* (Rom. 8:1-2) *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life."* (John 5:24) All of our prior legal offenses before God have been blotted out by Christ's death on the cross. *"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross;"* (Col. 2:14)

The elect were made righteous before God by the "obedience of One", Jesus Christ. The general teaching in Christianity is that men are made righteous by every person individually being obedient to the call of the gospel to believe. It's not each individual sinner's obedience that makes them righteous, but the elect were made righteous by the obedience of only One and that is Jesus Christ. *"18) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19) For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."* (Rom. 5:18-19) The elect are justified in the sight of God by Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Jesus' resurrection was validation that God had accepted his death sacrifice for our sins. *"24) But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25) Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised for our justification."* (Rom. 4:24-25)

Jesus appeared before God – as our "righteous advocate", 1 John 2:1 – as the legal representative of the elect only "one time" by "one offering" to put away the sin of God's children by the sacrifice of himself. *"24) For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25) Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26) For then must he*

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often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Heb. 9:24-26)

Jesus purged our sins – or totally removed our offenses of God’s law – by himself alone by his blood, not with any cooperative effort or help of man. Jesus purged our sins “by himself” – not by man’s obedience or belief, but salvation was accomplished solely by Jesus himself. *“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 on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” (Heb. 1:3) “(3) I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me... 5) And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered and there were none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.” (Isaiah 63:3-5)*

We are justified by the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus obtained eternal redemption for the elect by his blood. *“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” (Heb. 9:12) “...the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7) Jesus finished the work of justification that God gave him to do. “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” (John 17:4) “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” (John 19:30)*

The elect have been washed and justified from their former sins. *“(10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. 6:10-11) The elect that were alienated from God by their sin are now holy, unblameable, unreprouvable, and faultless in the sight of God by the death of Jesus Christ. “(21) And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled 22) In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight:” (Col. 1:21-22) “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” (Jude 24) The elect are perfectly righteous and holy before the Lord by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.*

The Finished Work of Christ’s Death

Jesus came into this world with an intended purpose, and he perfectly accomplished that purpose. Jesus did not die for the entire world and then because man was too stubborn to validate Jesus’ sacrifice with his belief, then actually Jesus failed in saving some people. Jesus came with a definite work to accomplish, and he saved every single person that was given him to save. Jesus’ sacrifice for sins was effectual (effective) to accomplish his intended purpose.

Jesus came to do the will of God the Father. *“(38) For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39) And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40) And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:38-40) The will of the Father was for Jesus to save all that were given to him, without the loss of one (John 17:2). Anything less than everyone given to Jesus having everlasting life would not be the fulfillment of God the Father’s will.*

Jesus came to save “his people” from their sins. *“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matt. 1:21) Jesus came to save sinners; not to offer salvation or make salvation possible but to perfectly save all the sinners that he loved. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of*

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whom I am chief." (1 Tim. 1:15) God's people that were given unto Christ were the elect that God loved from before the world began, and all of those sinners are saved by Christ.

Jesus came to give eternal life to all of those that were given to him in covenant by the Father. *"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."* (John 17:2) A definite, restricted group of people ("the sheep", John 10) were given to Christ when He came into the world. Jesus came to give his life for the sheep and the sheep shall never perish. *"11) I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and the follow me. 28) And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, nether shall any man pluck them out of my hand."* (John 10:11,27,28) Jesus came to redeem his people that were under the law and adopt them into his family. *"4) But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."* (Gal. 4:4-5)

Jesus accomplished everything he came into the world to do. Jesus perfectly fulfilled the will of the Father. It was the Father's will for all that were given to Christ to have eternal life and not lose any one of them, and Jesus secured eternal life for all the elect given unto him. *"And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things which please him."* (John 8:29) *"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."* (John 4:34) Jesus finished the work of salvation that he came to complete. *"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."* (John 17:4) *"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."* (John 19:30)

Jesus made the sacrifice for sins one time and put away sin for the elect once for all. *"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."* (Heb. 9:26) *"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 of the throne on high;"* (Heb. 1:3) *"11) And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12) But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13) From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14) For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."* (Heb. 10:11-14)

Finally, at the end of time, Jesus will present before the Father all the children that were given to Him, without the loss of one. *"And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me."* (Heb. 2:13) All that the Father gave to Christ, and those who Jesus promised to give eternal life unto, all of those elect shall be saved to heaven and presented to God the Father without the loss of a single one. *"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."* (John 17:2) Jesus finished the work of salvation that he came into this world to complete. Christ saved his people from their sins and will not and cannot lose a single one.

Limited Atonement

Christ died for on the cross and justified a number less than all of humanity. There are some that believe in a "universal atonement" – that Christ died for and saved every person that has or ever will live, without exception. All that Jesus loved and died for have been saved, so if Jesus loved and died for all of mankind without exception, then all men have already been saved by Christ to spend eternity in heaven. Jesus promised that all that were given to him by the Father would have everlasting life and none of them would ever perish (John 6:37-40, 10:27-29). That definite group is saved to heaven, and if Jesus was given the entire world without exception on the cross, then the entire world has been "universally atoned". However,

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we find at the end of time, there is a group of people who will be banished from God's presence into the lake of fire for eternity (Rev. 20:11-15, Matt. 25:31-46, 2 Thess. 1:8-9), so the scriptures deny a "universal atonement". Any person who doesn't believe all of mankind will be in heaven adheres to a "limited atonement" view of the work of Christ. There are, therefore, two causes of the limitation of Christ's atonement, either by: a) the choice of man or b) the choice of God.

If salvation is limited by the work or choice of man, then salvation is actually limited by the "effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice". If Jesus died for the whole world, but did not actually "atone" for their sins because man did not perform a work to complete the transaction, then it's actually man that limits the atonement of the death of Christ. If Jesus loved and died for all mankind, but yet all of those for whom he promised to save do not inherit eternal life in heaven, we are forced to conclude:

- a) That God has failed in His purpose and intent to save. (But God cannot fail nor be discouraged, Isaiah 42:4, Eccl. 3:14)
- b) That God's sovereign will has been overruled. (But none can stay the hand of God, or resist the will of God, Dan. 4:35, Is. 14:24, Rom. 9:19-23)
- c) That God has been made a liar; God promised eternal life (Titus 1:2) before the world began, but he couldn't deliver it; Jesus proclaimed to the Father that he finished the work of salvation (John 17:4, 19:30), but he made a false profession. (But God and Jesus Christ cannot lie, Titus 1:2, Heb. 6:18, Ps. 89:35)

On the other hand, which is the option that the scriptures actually affirm, salvation is limited by the "extent of God's choice", so the atonement was restricted by God's unconditional, sovereign election. The scriptures do not support that God loves all of mankind without exception. God cannot love everyone without exception because he hated Esau. "*As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*" (Rom. 9:13, Mal. 1:2-3) God hates the wicked. "*The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.*" (Ps. 11:5) God hates the workers of iniquity. "*The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*" (Ps. 5:5)

The limitation of the atonement by Christ's death is, therefore, limited to those that God chose to love, elect, and predestinate – a group of persons that is less than all of mankind, but a group that is both definite and particular in nature. "*As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*" (John 17:2) The same group that God elected, foreknew, and predestinated is the same definite group (not universal) that will be "called" (or born again), "justified" (by the blood of Christ), and "glorified" (remade into the divine body of Jesus), Rom. 8:29-30. The character of God revealed in scripture emphasizes that Jesus did not, and could not, fail in his salvation of sinners and atonement for sin. Since all men without exception are not saved to heaven, then we must conclude that the atonement that Christ procured on the cross was limited in nature, but yet still definite and particular in scope.

Christ died for all that were given to him by the Father (John 6:37-39, 10:28-29, 17:2). Christ died for "his people" (Matt. 1:21, Ps. 111:9). Christ died for "his sheep" (John 10:11-15, Matt. 25:32). Christ died for "the church" (Acts 20:28, Eph. 5:25). Christ came to die for a vast multitude which no man can number, out of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue (Rev. 7:9). Jesus came to save, and he did save the elect. Jesus testified to the Father that the work of salvation was complete – "*It is finished*" (John 19:30).

Preservation of the Saints

“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:” (Jude 1)

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess. 5:23)

Eternal Security

All of the people that were foreknown and loved by God before the world began and predestinated to heaven and called by the Spirit and justified by Christ shall end up “glorified” into the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29-30). There is absolutely nothing that can prevent all of God’s elect, foreknown, predestinated, called, and justified children from being with God in heaven. This is the doctrine of the “preservation of the saints” or simply “eternal security”.

Those who believe in a works salvation offer the possibility that someone might lose their eternal salvation. While it’s certainly possible that a child of God can fall into sin in their life (David, Solomon, Saul, Noah, Lot, and Samson for example), since none of our works “gain us” eternal life, it’s not possible for any of works to “lose us” eternal life. Salvation is by “grace” (unmerited favor, not works) from start to finish. If one has the possibility of having eternal life but then losing that eternal life, then it’s obvious that the life they once possessed was not “eternal” or “everlasting” because it clearly didn’t “last forever”. God promised eternal life before the world began; there is nothing that can change that because God cannot change, and God cannot lie. *“In hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”* (Titus 1:2)

There is nothing in our “death nor life” that can separate us from the love of God. *“38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom. 8:38-39) There is nothing in “our life” that can separate us from God’s love. Many believe that God loved all of mankind, but their unbelief during their life will cause God to stop loving them and cast them into hell. There is no action in our lives that can separate us from God’s love, and therefore our eternal life is “secure in God’s love”. There is also nothing in “our death” that can separate us from God’s love. There are some that would falsely say that anyone who commits suicide will go to hell. There is nothing in our death, regardless of how we die or even if we take our own life, that can separate us from God’s love. The elect are “preserved in Christ”.

The scriptures consistently describe God’s children as “preserved” in Christ and all those in Christ shall never fall finally away. *“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:”* (Jude 1) It is God that will preserve his children as blameless unto heaven. It’s not up to God’s children to remain perfect and blameless before God to preserve our eternal life. We have been made eternally blameless by the death of Christ, and God will preserve that blameless state for all of his elect. *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Thess. 5:23)

The final aspect of our preservation is that all the elect will be “glorified” and conformed into the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29-30). We shall be eternally preserved into God’s heavenly kingdom and shall live with the Lord forever. *“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* (2 Tim. 4:18) *“28) For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut*

Preservation of the Saints

off. 29) The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.” (Ps. 37:28-29) God will finish what he started. The work of eternal salvation that was promised before the world began shall be completed in all the elect without the loss of one. God that began a good work in you will complete and perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:” (Phil. 1:6)

Preserved by God

There is no possibility of an elect child of God ever losing their salvation. No child of God that was given to Jesus Christ shall ever be lost but shall be raised up again glorified at the last day. *“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.” (John 6:39) God cannot fail or be discouraged (Isaiah 42:4), so it is obviously impossible for any of God’s children that Christ purposed to save to be lost. For anyone to lose their eternal salvation would be like man or the devil or anyone reaching into the hand of the sovereign God and plucking God’s child from his hand. God forbid! “27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28) And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29) My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:27-29)*

Since salvation is not initiated or preserved by man, we can actually have a confidence and assurance of our salvation. If man had anything to do with gaining his eternal salvation, then man could clearly lose his salvation. We would justifiably have to live in fear that we might mess up and lose our eternal salvation. Thankfully, God himself meets all the requirements necessary for our preservation and eternal security.

The elect are preserved because of God’s faithfulness to his covenant of salvation. Even if *“his children forsake my law and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments”*, then God will still chastise them for their sin as a faithful Father (Ps. 89:30-32). Even if God’s children sin in their life, *“33) Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34) My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.” (Ps. 89:33-34)* God’s faithfulness and love for his covenant people will never be broken.

The elect are preserved because of the promise of God and the Lord cannot lie or change his mind. *“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;” (Titus 1:2)* The promise of eternal life that was made and ratified before the world began cannot be changed now because of our works. God’s nature and character cannot and will not change. It’s because God does not change that we can have assurance that we will not be consumed. *“For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” (Mal. 3:6)* God confirmed salvation by an oath, a covenant, a promise, and God cannot lie or change that promise now without undermining his immutable nature. *“17) Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18) That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:” (Heb. 6:17-18)*

The elect are preserved by the power of God. The false idea that God wants to save someone and wants to keep them saved, but because of their actions in their life, he loses their eternal life totally undermines the absolute power of God. We are kept by the power of God until Christ’s second coming. *“4) To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 5) Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Pet. 1:4-5)* God’s power is perfectly sufficient to “keep the elect from falling” finally away. *“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding*

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joy” (Jude 24) *“23) The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. 24) Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.”* (Ps. 37:24)

The elect are preserved by the faithfulness of God. The Lord has promised that even if God’s people forsake his commandments and sin against him, *“nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail”* (Ps. 89:33). God is faithful to fulfil his promises. *“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”* (1 Thess. 5:24) Even if we are not faithful to God, even if we err from the truth, God still abides faithful and cannot deny himself and cannot reject the truth that all the elect “are his”. *“13) If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself... 18) Who concerning the truth have erred... 19) Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”* (2 Tim. 2:13-19) We are still God’s children, even if we don’t act like a child should and impugn the family name, that still does not change our legal, adopted, and born-again status as a child of the Father. God *“shall not fail nor be discouraged.”* (Isaiah 42:4) God will never leave us nor forsake us. *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”* (Heb. 13:5)

The elect are preserved by the love of God. There is absolutely nothing that can separate a child of God from the love of God. *“35) Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom. 8:35-39) God’s love is “everlasting” so, naturally, it “lasts forever”. *“The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”* (Jer. 31:3) God the Father planned salvation in election, the Holy Spirit applies salvation to the heart of the sinner in calling, Jesus Christ secured salvation by his death on the cross, and the work that God began to save sinners will be finally completed by Jesus Christ when he returns to bring all of his elect children home to heaven. The work that God started, he will complete and bring to perfect fulfillment in the elect.

Preservation vs. Perseverance

There is a very prevalent misapplication of the eternal security of God’s children that is known as the “perseverance of the saints”. This doctrine holds that all of God’s children will “persevere in faith and holiness” in their lives. This would maintain that all of God’s children are predetermined that they will never fall into sin in their lives without repenting of that sinful lifestyle before their death. The degree to which the elect will supposedly persevere in faith and holiness varies significantly. The standard that constitutes this perseverance is a sliding scale, and if anyone does not meet this standard, then supposedly they were never among God’s elect in the first place. Their fall from godly living is supposedly evidence that they were never among God’s elect.

While God’s children ought to live holy and faithfully in their lives, scripture is replete with examples of God’s children who simply did not “persevere”. Solomon was loved by the Lord, but by the end of his life, he was fully apostate and worshipping false gods (1 Kings 11:1-10). Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, but the last account of Noah in scripture is him drunken with an inappropriate situation with his sons (Gen. 9:20-27). Lot had a righteous soul (2 Pet. 2:8), but his last appearance in scripture is him drunken and incestuously impregnating his daughters (Gen. 19:30-38). Saul was destined for heaven to be with Samuel (1 Sam. 28:19) but he lived in jealousy and persecution of David and eventually took his own life. Samson was anointed of God as a judge with extraordinary strength, but all throughout his life, he indulged in lust, promiscuity, vengeance, and pride. Samson finally took his own life in killing many Philistines, but he didn’t even do that out of righteous motive from God, but he killed them out of vengeance because of losing his two eyes (Judges 14-16). Asa was a godly king of Judah most all of his life, but at the end of his life, he

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was diseased in his feet and rejected the Lord but sought to the physicians instead (2 Chron. 16:11-14). There are plenty of other examples in scripture as well of born-again children of God that did not “persevere in faith and holiness” to the end of their life.

It is possible for a child of God to “fall from grace” in his life, but he can never “fall out of grace” and lose his eternal life. Paul addressed the Galatians that were forsaking the gospel of “salvation by grace alone” and were instead adopting a false gospel of “grace plus the law”. He warns them that if they forsook faith in Jesus Christ alone as their only hope of salvation, then *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”* (Gal. 5:4) Paul does not say that Christ ceased to be their Savior, but that he has become of no effect “unto you”. By believing in salvation by works, you act like the work of Christ was not sufficient for your eternal salvation and “you” have lost the power of the gospel in your life. If you believe you are saved by works, you have then “fallen from grace” – fallen from the assurance that belief in salvation by grace affords the child of God. Even though they had fallen from *“access by faith into the grace wherein ye stand”* (Rom. 5:1-2), they did not “fall out of God’s eternal grace” and lose their eternal life in Christ.

God’s power is perfectly sufficient to “keep the elect from falling” finally away. *“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy”* (Jude 24) *“23) The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. 24) Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.”* (Ps. 37:24) Just because God will not allow any of his children to not inherit eternal life, does not mean that we cannot squander gospel and kingdom blessings here in our lives. If it was predetermined that all of the elect would live godly, there would be no need for all of the admonitions in scripture telling you to be vigilant about the choices you make. God’s predetermining your “persevering holiness” is backhanded fatalism and removes any need for us to choose to seek God and live godly in our lives.

Even if we are not faithful to God, even if we err from the truth, even if we become apostate like Solomon, God still abides faithful and cannot deny himself and cannot reject the truth that all the elect “are his”. *“13) If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself. 18) Who concerning the truth have erred...19) Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”* (2 Tim. 2:13-19) God’s faithfulness to the elect is not determined by our faithfulness back to God. Even if we do not believe God and err from the truth, God cannot deny the truth of our sonship. We are still God’s children; even if we don’t act like a child should and even impugn the family name, that still does not change our legal, adopted, and born-again status as a child of the Father.

Finally, “preservation” is the biblical term to describe the eternal security of God’s elect and is used frequently in scripture (Jude 1, Ps. 27:28, 1 Thess. 5:23, 2 Tim. 4:18). The word “persevere” or any other derivative of that word is only found once in the scriptures, and it is an admonition to “persevere in prayer and supplication” for the saints (Eph. 6:18). The only reference in scripture to “perseverance” has nothing to do with us maintaining a level of godliness to validate our election but encourages the children of God that might fail to be diligent to persevere to work hard to pray for the saints. All of God’s elect that were promised eternal life before the world began and were justified by Christ shall finally be saved to heaven at the end of time without the loss of a single one.

Christ's Second Coming, Resurrection, and Glorification

“16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17) Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4:16-17)

“28) Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29) And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (John 5:28-29)

Christ's Second Coming

When Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, the angels promised the disciples that *“this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:11). Jesus has not permanently left his people destitute, but he promised to return again the second time. It's important to understand that Christ's second coming will be a simultaneous event with the resurrection of the dead and the destruction of the physical earth. *“16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17) Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* (1 Thess. 4:16-17) When Jesus returns, there will be a shout and all the dead will be raised out of the grave and the elect will be raised to life ever to be with the Lord. At the same time, there will also be a resurrection of the evil unto damnation, who will face the judgment of God for their sin. *“28) Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29) And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”* (John 5:28-29)

There is a tremendous amount of confusion and speculation regarding the second coming of the Lord in general Christianity today. The teaching of “dispensationalism” and a “secret rapture” and a tribulation and a subsequent thousand-year reign of Jesus and the saints on the earth are all prevalently taught in Christianity. These are based upon a misapplication of a few verses, while ignoring the plain and clear teaching of Christ's second coming in the rest of the scriptures. There is no teaching in scripture of a “secret rapture” – that all the saved just disappear one day (raptured up to heaven) and then those that are left have one last opportunity to believe and be saved to heaven. There is a “change” for the elect who are alive, but it's not secret. That changing happens when Jesus returns at the last day (1 Thess. 4:16-17). The return of Jesus is not a secret event, but on the contrary, every single eye of all of mankind shall see Jesus return because all of mankind will be resurrected at that moment. *“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”* (Rev. 1:7) “Every eye shall see” Jesus at his return, even the men from the first century who “pierced Jesus” during his crucifixion will see him, so therefore every person who is already dead will be resurrected at Jesus' second coming.

There are no different “dispensations” of time that children of God are treated in a different manner. It does not take a complicated timeline and map to determine when Jesus will return. Even though men have been trying for centuries to use certain prophecies to calculate the exact date of the Lord's return, no man does know (or can know) the date of Jesus' return. It will be sudden, immediate, and unexpected to the world. *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”* (Matt. 24:36) No, Christ's return will be sudden and unexpected (just like a thief in the night, 2 Pet. 3:10) and cannot be drawn out or determined on a timeline map. It will happen “in the twinkling of an eye”, so fast that we will just blink, and then we see Jesus returning in the clouds. *“51) Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the*

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trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 Cor. 15:51-52) The scriptures depict the return of Jesus as a very simple event, not complicated or hard to understand as most of Christianity presents it. When Jesus returns the second time, we will be with him in glory. Just that quick; just that simple. *“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”* (Col. 3:4)

Jesus is not planning to set up another earthly kingdom on this earth for a thousand years before we all get to go to heaven. That is based upon a very myopic view of Rev. 20:1-7 while ignoring the plain teaching of the rest of scripture. Jesus was not foiled in his attempt to set up a kingdom during his first advent so now he must try again to set up a thousand-year eutopia kingdom on the earth. No, Jesus set up the spiritual kingdom of his church exactly like he planned to do, and his kingdom shall stand forever (Dan. 2:33-45; Matt. 16:18, 28:20; Eph. 3:21). Jesus doesn't have any use left for this earth when he returns other than to just burn it up with fervent heat, ushering in the new heavens and the new earth. *“10) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11) Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, 12) Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”* (2 Pet. 3:10-12)

The return of Jesus is not intended to give the child of God fear and anxiety, but rather it should incite hope, excitement and comfort. After Paul gives the Thessalonians a reason to not sorrow as others that have no hope and to know Jesus' return will be sudden, swift, and public; then shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13-17). After giving those precious truths, he then exhorts the church to *“wherefore comfort one another with these words”* (1 Thess. 4:18). The teaching of dispensationalism and tribulation and *“did I miss the secret rapture? maybe I was not really saved”* incites fear and anxiety for the child of God. Instead, the scriptures promote *“comfort”* among the believers with the precious truth that suddenly and immediately one day Jesus will return in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be resurrected and changed, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. That glorious hope and prospect should incite excitement as we anxiously await the Lord's return. Just as the canon of scripture is closed by the Apostle John with his anxious anticipation of the Lord's return, we also excitedly wait for Christ's second coming. *“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”* (Rev. 22:20)

Resurrection of the Dead

All the dead in the graves shall be raised at the Lord's second coming. There is *“one resurrection of the just and the unjust”*, and that resurrection is not separated by different periods of time but will occur simultaneous to the Lord's return. When the shout occurs at the end of time, *“all that are in the graves”* shall be raised at the same time – some of them (the elect) to inherit the *“resurrection of life”* and the rest to be judged in the *“resurrection of damnation”*. *“28) Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29) And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”* (John 5:28-29) See also 1 Cor. 15:51-58, 1 Thess. 4:13-17, Matt. 24:30-31, Acts 24:15, Dan. 12:1-3, Luke 14:14, John 6:39-44, 2 Cor. 4:14, John 11:23-26, Luke 20:35-38.

There will be only *“one resurrection”* where all who have died – both elect (the just) and non-elect (the unjust) – are raised together at one time. Scripture consistently presents this event as *“the day”* and *“the hour”* of the resurrection: *“the day of the Lord”* (2 Pet. 3:10, 1 Thess. 5:2, Rom. 2:16), *“the day of the Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor. 1:8, 5:5), *“the day of God”* (2 Peter 3:12), *“the day of redemption”* (Eph. 4:30), *“the day of judgment”* (2 Pet. 2:9), *“the day of wrath...”* (Rom. 2:5), *“the last day”* (John 6:39,40,44,54, 11:24, 12:48), *“the hour”* (John 5:28, Matt. 25:13), and *“that day”* (2 Thess. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:18, 4:8; Matt. 7:22).

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The elect are “just” (justified, declared righteous) before God by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, and they are raised “just” in the sight of God at the last day. *“And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”* (Acts 24:15). *“And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”* (Luke 14:14) The elect are depicted as having “done good” because the goodness of Christ has been imputed on their account). *“And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life...”* (John 5:29) The just are raised to inherit “everlasting life” with God, and so shall they ever be with the Lord. *“(2) And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life... 3) And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”* (Dan. 12:2-3) The elect have been given eternal life by the death and blood of Jesus Christ, and they shall inherit everlasting joy with God the Father.

Those who God did not see fit to love and save in Jesus Christ are still “unjust” and condemned before God (Acts 24:15). They shall also come forth at the last day at the voice of Jesus Christ, but they shall be raised unto the “resurrection of damnation”. *“(28) Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29) And shall come forth... and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”* (John 5:28-29) The unjust shall be raised to shame and everlasting contempt and shall endure the unending judgment and contempt of Almighty God in the lake of fire for eternity. *“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake... and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”* (Dan. 12:2)

General Judgment

When Jesus returns and all the dead are raised, then there will be a general judgment before Almighty God. God is the only Judge of the world, and his judgment is always perfectly righteous and holy. *“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.”* (Isaiah 33:22) *“Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with truth.”* (Ps. 96:13) God has the authority to judge all of mankind because God gave the law as the original Lawgiver. God upholds the law as King, and then God will judge men for their obedience to the law and exact the judgment for breaking of that law which is death.

God has appointed Jesus Christ as the Judge of all men. Christ has been given the authority by God the Father to judge the world for all their deeds at the last day. *“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”* (Acts 17:31) *“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:”* (John 5:22) *“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”* (Rom. 2:16) *“And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead.”* (Acts 10:42)

All men will stand before Jesus Christ in judgment at the same time when He returns. *“(31) When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.”* (Matt. 25:31-33) Jesus separates “his sheep” on the right hand from “the goats” on the left hand. The sheep (the elect) that God loves, and Jesus saved are possessed by God (“his sheep”) because we have been bought and paid for by Jesus’ blood. However, there was never any relationship with the non-elect, “the goats” (they are not “his” like the sheep), who are placed on God’s left hand because the Lord “never knew you”.

Christ's Second Coming, Resurrection, and Glorification

In this setting of the final judgment, all men will confess Jesus Christ as Lord. *"10) But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11) For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."* (Rom. 14:11-12) *"10) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Phil. 2:10-11) *"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."* (1 Cor. 4:4) Therefore, it's evident that man's confession and acknowledgment of the sovereignty and Lordship of Jesus Christ is not the means of eternal salvation because if that was the case then all men will be saved at the end of time. At that last day, even the wicked non-elect who hate God in their nature will see the glory of God fully manifest in Jesus Christ at his return and even they will have no other option but to acknowledge that "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father".

The elect (his sheep) are placed on the right hand of God at the general judgment. The sheep are judged according to the work of Christ on the cross, not judged by their own works; they are seen as righteous in the sight of God because they have been justified by the blood of Jesus Christ; they are viewed as having lived Jesus' perfect life and thus are "just" before God; therefore, they are ushered in by God the Father to the eternal kingdom in heaven that God has prepared for his children since before the world began. *"32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34) Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...46) ...the righteous [shall go away] into life eternal."* (Matt. 25:32-46) The elect sheep go to be with God the Father and will have eternal joy and life with the Lord. The elect inherit: *"life eternal"* (Matt. 25:46), *"eternal life"* (John 3:15, 10:28), *"everlasting life"* (Matt. 19:29, John 3:36, 4:14, 5:24, 6:27,47; Dan. 12:2), *"shall awake, some to everlasting life... And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."* (Dan. 12:2-3).

The non-elect (the goats) are judged according to their own works that have transgressed God's law, for which the just penalty for sin is eternal death in the lake of fire. *"32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left...41) Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels...46) And these shall go away into everlasting punishment."* (Matt. 25:32-46) We see a glimpse into the "left hand judgment" at the last day as the goats stand before the great white throne of God's judgment. This Rev. 20 great white throne of judgment only depicts the judgment of the non-elect on the left hand according to their own works. The elect on God's right hand are not judged according to their own works but are judged by the imputed work of Jesus' righteousness. These goats on the left hand are judged according to their own works which are only sinful, and thus they are condemned to an eternity of God's judgment in the lake of fire. *"11) And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12) And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14) And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."* (Rev. 20:11-15)

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The punishment and judgment of the non-elect is an eternity of God's wrath and suffering in the lake of fire. They are condemned to everlasting punishment: "*punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*" (2 Thess. 1:9); "*shall go away into everlasting punishment*" (Matt. 25:46); "*shall awake...to shame and everlasting contempt*" (Dan. 12:2); "*shall come forth... unto the resurrection of damnation*" (John 5:29); "*everlasting fire*" (Matt. 25:41); "*cast into the lake of fire*" (Rev. 20:15); "*great day of his wrath*" (Rev. 6:17, 14:10, 19:15; 1 Thess. 5:10); "*in flaming fire taking vengeance on them*" (2 Thess. 1:8; Isaiah 61:2, 63:4, 59:17; Ps. 149:7; Prov. 6:34, Micah 5:15). God finally takes vengeance and repays all those men who have sinned against him.

It's important to remember that apart from God's electing grace in choosing an innumerable host of his people to save by Jesus Christ, then we would all be condemned to the lake of fire. Any man that stands before the judgment throne of God and is judged by his own works in obedience to the law will always be condemned guilty. Apart from the work of Jesus Christ imputed to the elect's account before God, all of mankind would stand before the great white throne of judgment and would be justly condemned because of our own works. If not for election and grace, Rev. 20:11-15 would only teach "universal damnation" in the lake of fire. Thankfully, by the Lord's grace, the sheep that have been redeemed by the Great Shepherd shall inherit God's eternal kingdom that was prepared for them from before the world began (Matt. 25:34).

Glorification

The covenant of redemption that was enacted by God before the world began shall finally be consummated at the end of time as Jesus returns and the elect are finally "glorified" in the image of Christ. "*29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*" (Rom. 8:29-30) Even though it's evident the elect are not yet "glorified", just like all the rest of the terms in this five chain covenant of redemption, glorification as presented as "past tense" (glorified), as if it's already done. Even though we are not yet glorified, as soon as God covenanted to finally glorify the foreknown, predestinated, called, and justified elect, it was as good as done even before the world began because God cannot lie, cannot change, and Jesus Christ could not fail in his work of eternal salvation.

In what manner will the elect be glorified? The elect will be changed into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. "*For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*" (Rom. 8:29) We shall be "like Christ" as we are resurrected in the glorified image of the Son of God and will see him as he is. "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*" (1 John 3:2) We shall arise in righteousness in the likeness of Jesus Christ and at the final day, we will finally be "satisfied" in the Lord. "*As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*" (Ps. 17:15) While there is still a good degree of mystery surrounding what our bodies will look like or be like in our glorified state (1 Cor. 15 attempts to address some of this change of our natural bodies to spiritual bodies in depth), the truth is that we will be like Jesus and will be perfectly satisfied with our glorification for all eternity.

The elect will be resurrected and glorified in the same body that they inhabited during their earthly life. Our personal spirit and soul go immediately into the presence of Jesus when we die (2 Cor. 5:6-8). Our bodies have to wait until the resurrection be glorified into Jesus' image and be fit for admittance into heaven. At the last day, our body shall also be preserved and presented blameless before God the Father. "*23) And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24) Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*" (1 Thess. 5:23-24)

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Job was confident that in his own body he would ultimately see God. In “this body” that would decompose in the grave, yet “in my flesh” he would see God personally. Job, like all the rest of the elect, “shall see [him] for myself and mine eyes shall behold and not another”. In our own personal bodies, in our own flesh, and with our own eyes, our physical, natural body shall be glorified into a spiritual body, and we shall see the Lord personally ourselves. “26) *And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27) Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.*” (Job 19:26-27)

When Jesus returns, we shall be changed, and our bodies raised glorified. Our corruptible, dishonorable, weak, natural, earthy and mortal bodies shall be raised anew as incorruptible, glorified, powerful, spiritual, heavenly, and immortal bodies (see 1 Cor. 15:42-54). “51) *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*” (1 Cor. 15:51-54)

Jesus will return with a great shout and the elect shall be changed into glorified bodies and then “so shall we ever be with the Lord”. Oh, happy day, long waited for, to see the Lord face to face with our own eyes! Lord Jesus come quickly, and then so shall we ever be with the Lord. “13) *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as other which have no hope. 14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so to them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15) For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17) Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18) Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*” (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

Rightly Dividing Salvation in Scripture

“Who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.” (2 Cor. 1:10)

Different Types of Salvation in Scripture

When we are attempting to rightly divide scripture (2 Tim. 2:15), on the subject of salvation we must pay especially close attention to the context to derive the correct meaning of each text. There are multiple types of salvation (or “deliverance”) that are presented in the scriptures. For example, consider a few scriptures that clearly include more than one salvation (or “deliverance”) even in the same verse.

First, *“Who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;”* (2 Cor. 1:10) Just in this one verse, we see multiple different contexts and settings of salvation: 1) one past (*“delivered us”*), 2) one present (*“doth deliver”*), and 3) one future (*“will yet deliver us”*). We also find presented both an eternal deliverance (*“so great a death”*) as well as temporal or providential deliverances here in time (*“doth deliver”*).

1) God has *“delivered us from so great a death”*. This first deliverance (or salvation) is from *“so great a death”*, clearly referencing eternal salvation from the wrath to come.

2) God also *“doth deliver”*. This deliverance is a current deliverance here in this time, in Paul’s current life. This is most likely a reference to the repeated providential deliverances that God had blessed Paul with here in his life in this world, not in eternity.

3) And *“in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us”*. Also, Paul had a great confidence that God would continue in the future to grant him similar providential deliverances that he had received in the past. Furthermore, he also had a trust that the final fulfillment of his eternal deliverance from sin would be completed by God when Paul was finally taken to heaven.

Secondly, *“For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.”* (1 Tim. 4:10). God is both: 1) the Savior of all men, and then also 2) specially of those that believe.

1) Jesus is *“the Saviour of all men”*. Jesus Christ was the Saviour of all men that were given to him on the cross to save (John 6:37-39, 17:2,4). He saved them all from the eternal wrath of God by his death. Now, this group of all men is not all of mankind “without exception”, but rather “all men” here means all men “without distinction” – *“there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.”* (Col. 3:11).

2) Christ is also the Savior *“specially of those that believe”*. Here we find a “special salvation” for those who have already been saved to eternal life by Jesus Christ. This special salvation is taken hold of by God’s children when they believe on Christ; this “special salvation” is received in addition to eternal salvation.

Saved “From” What, Saved “To” What?

Each verse can have a considerably different meaning of salvation, depending on the context or setting that salvation is presented under. To place the salvation that’s under consideration into the appropriate context, it’s very helpful to find the “from” and “to” in the text. From what situation are the people “saved from” and to what new situation are the people “saved to”? The situation from which one is saved from and saved to affects the setting of salvation under consideration.

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For example, if a person believes they are in danger of losing their job, but their supervisor intervenes and convinces the owner to save their job, the grateful, retained employee might say the manager “saved me”. What he actually means is that he was “saved from” losing his job, and “saved to” being allowed to continue working for that company and to provide for his family. Notice the context and setting of the salvation is only related to the man’s job status, not his entire life or other areas of his life.

Another example is when one might be drowning but a lifeguard dives into the water and “saved their life”. The person who was drowning in the correct context was “saved from” drowning in the water and dying, and they were “saved to” continuing to live and enjoy swimming in the future. This presents an entirely different setting for salvation based on the context of what situation a person might be saved from, and what situation that person is then saved to. Scripture uses the same type of language that restricts the context of salvation in specific verses as well. In scripture, some texts regarding salvation are teaching an eternal deliverance in an everlasting setting, while other texts teach a temporal deliverance in a setting here in time in this world.

Eternal vs. Time Salvation

Salvation in the scriptures can be grouped into two categories based on the implication of what one is saved from and saved to, either: 1) Eternal Salvation, or 2) Time or Temporal Salvation.

1) Eternal Salvation. The scriptures that teach “eternal salvation” has to do with the “eternal state” of man, and this deliverance saves the elect from the eternal wrath of God. The setting of this deliverance is in eternity, not here in time. In eternal salvation, the elect are “saved from” being dead in trespasses and in sins and the eternal judgment and wrath of God, and they are “saved to” eternal life with God and Jesus Christ in heaven.

2) Time or Temporal Salvation. The setting of deliverances other than eternal salvation occur here in “time” rather than in “eternity”. Therefore, we attempt to refer to salvations other than eternal salvation as “time salvation”. Sometimes time salvation is called “temporal salvation” since it occurs here in this temporal world which we can see, whereas eternal salvation occurs in a world that we cannot see. This distinction between “temporal” things and “eternal” things is noted in 2 Cor. 4:18: *“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

It’s also very important to understand the principles of applying systematic theology in understanding the text that’s under consideration. There are no contradictions in the doctrine of scripture, so we must keep that principle in mind as we interpret difficult scriptures. No single verse will ever contradict a basic principle of systematic theology when properly understood and when the context is properly applied. For example, salvation from God’s eternal wrath is given “by grace” of God and not by any works that man can perform (Eph. 2:8-9, 2 Tim. 1:9, Titus 3:5). By definition, grace (“unmerited favor”) cannot be based on any work that is performed otherwise grace is no longer grace but rather becomes all of works (Rom. 11:6). Therefore, if we see a text that requires a work or action of man as a condition for the salvation to be obtained, we can automatically conclude that eternal salvation is not under consideration, but the context must be teaching some form of time or temporal salvation.

Eternal Salvation

Eternity is the setting or context in which eternal salvation takes place. Eternity exists outside of time since God is an eternal being which exists outside of time (Ps. 90:2). Consequently, since man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), when man was created, he was given an eternal soul. Therefore, the eternal

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salvation of man has to do with the eternal state of man's soul. In the context of eternal salvation, what are we "saved from"?

1) Saved from eternal death. The penalty for sin or transgression of God's law is death, and all men have sinned. Therefore, all men are guilty of eternal death from their transgression of God's holy law. *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"* (Rom. 5:12) Jesus Christ has saved his children from this eternal death by his substitutionary, sacrificial death in our stead on the cross. *"Who hath delivered us from so great a death..."* (2 Cor. 1:10) See also John 3:16-17, 2 Tim. 2:10, 1 Cor. 15:54-57.

2) Saved from the eternal wrath to come. God's eternal wrath will be exacted upon all those men and women found guilty of transgressing his law. God's wrath will be meted out upon everyone for whom Christ did not die on the cross. The elect, for whom Christ died, have been saved from this future wrath of God. *"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."* (1 Thess. 1:10) *"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."* (Rom. 5:9)

3) Saved from the power of darkness and saved into the kingdom of God's Son. *"13) Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14) In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:"* (Col. 1:13-14)

4) Saved from our sins. *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."* (Matt. 1:21) *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."* (1 Tim. 1:15)

Now, in the context of eternal salvation, what are we "saved to"?

1) Saved to eternal life. *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom. 6:23) *"15) That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life. 16) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17) For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."* (John 3:15-17) See also John 10:27-28, John 17:2-3, 2 Tim. 2:10.

2) Saved to heaven. *"33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34) Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:"* (Matt. 25:33-34) See also Heb. 11:16, 13:14; Rev. 21-22; Luke 23:43; 1 Cor. 2:9.

How are we saved eternally from the wrath to come?

1) We are eternally saved by Jesus alone. *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12) See also Luke 2:30, Ps. 3:8, Ps. 37:39, Isaiah 63:1-5, Isaiah 43:11

2) We are eternally saved by grace alone, not by our works. *"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,"* (2 Tim. 1:9) See also Acts 15:11, Eph. 2:5-8, Titus 3:5

How long does eternal salvation last? The salvation that God gave unto his children by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross fully procured the deliverance of the elect's souls from eternal death and separation from God. It is an "everlasting salvation"; that means it "lasts forever"! *"But Israel shall be saved with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end."* (Isaiah 45:17) *"6) Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like*

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manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, my righteousness shall not be abolished... 8) For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.” (Isaiah 51:6-8) See also Heb. 5:9; Jer. 23:6, 33:16; Hosea 11:17; Zech. 8:13, 10:6.

Time or Temporal Salvation

Some other verses in scripture present a salvation that occurs in the setting or context of here in time and in this world – or in a temporal setting that we can see and observe around us in our lives. These instances of salvation have no bearing or effect on a man’s eternal destination or eternal salvation. However, there are additional blessings and certain forms of “additional salvation” that can be obtained by the child of God performing certain actions here in this time and world.

There is a salvation that the elect may obtain here in God’s church kingdom that is “with” (which here means “*accompaniment*”) their “*eternal glory*” (or future eternal salvation). “*Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*” (2 Tim. 2:10) See also 1 Cor. 9:22, 10:33; Acts 13:47, 16:17; 1 Thess. 2:16. Also, there are blessings for God’s children here in this world that “*accompany salvation*”. “*But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*” (Heb. 6:9)

Salvation in obedience to the gospel. There are a multitude of different deliverances (salvations) here in time that the child of God experiences when they hear and believe the gospel during their life and submit to baptism in the Lord’s church.

A) Saved by belief of the gospel of Christ. “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*” (Rom. 1:16) “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” (Mark 16:16) See also Luke 8:12, Acts 11:14, Acts 16:30-31. “*For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*” (1 Cor. 1:21) Note that in 1 Cor. 1:18 the gospel is only manifested in power to those “*which are [already] saved*”. In context, the same ones that “*are saved*” in 1 Cor. v.18 is the same group in v.21 that are saved by belief of the gospel. This again denotes an “*additional salvation*” in belief of the gospel for those that are already saved eternally by Jesus Christ. Compare 1 Cor. 1:18 & 21 with the same distinction of two distinct salvations in 1 Tim. 4:10 – “*For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.*”

B) Saved by confession of Jesus Christ. “*9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*” (Rom. 10:9-10) “*16) But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel... 21) And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved... 39) For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*” (Acts 2:16-39) See also Joel 2:32, Rom. 10:13

C) Saved from ignorance of Jesus Christ and the gospel. “*1) Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2) For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3) For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God... 8) But what saith it?... 9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in*

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thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Rom. 10:1-10)

D) Saved from ignorance and saved to the knowledge of the truth. *“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim. 2:4) “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” (2 Thess. 2:10)*

E) Saved by repentance from sins. *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” (2 Cor. 7:10) See also Heb. 6:1; Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:22, 11:18, 20:21, 26:20*

F) Saved from the untoward generation around us by repentance and baptism. *“38) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39) For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40) And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” (Acts 2:38-40) See also 1 John 2:15-16, James 4:4, Phil. 2:15*

G) Salvation in submission to baptism. *“20) Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waiting in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water. 21) The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:” (1 Pet. 3:20-21) Eternal salvation is introduced in 1 Pet. 3:18, where Jesus Christ suffered once for the sins of his people. In addition to eternal salvation, notice the context of salvation in baptism in verse 21 takes place here in time – baptism saves us “now” (“baptism doth also now save us”). The effect of the salvation in baptism is directly addressed in verse 21. Baptism does not save one from or put away “the filth of the flesh”. In other words, baptism has no bearing on eternal salvation which requires the putting away of the sins of the flesh. Rather the salvation of baptism gives “the answer of a good conscience towards God”. This salvation soothes the conscience of the child of God when they are obedient to the command of Jesus Christ to believe and be baptized. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16)*

Salvation in faithful discipleship. There is a further salvation when we serve as obedient and faithful disciples during our lives in serving God in discipleship.

A) Saved by entering into the door of discipleship in following Jesus Christ. *“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” (John 10:9)*

B) Saved from death to fellowship with Jesus and the church by our faithfulness. *“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” (James 5:20) See also Luke 15:24, 1 Tim. 5:8, Ezek. 18:27-28, Ezek. 3:8*

C) Saved when you keep in memory the word of God. *“By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.” (1 Cor. 15:2)*

D) Saved by faith. *“41) Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. 42) And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.” (Luke 18:41-42) See also Eph. 2:8, Heb. 11:7, Luke 7:50*

E) Saved by hope. *“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet have hope for?” (Rom. 8:24)*

F) Saved by walking uprightly in discipleship. *“Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.” (Prov. 28:18)*

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G) Saved by exhibiting a contrite spirit and meekness. *“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”* (Ps. 34:18) *“For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.”* (Ps. 149:4)

H) Saved by studying and applying ourselves to the word of God. *“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”* (1 Tim. 4:16) This is one instance in scripture where one can “save thyself”. Certainly, this is not speaking of eternal salvation since scripture is emphatic that depraved man cannot save himself from hell to heaven by his works. The context where one can save themselves is salvation from the temporal chastisement and punishment of sin in their life which they can be saved from by taking heed to the word of God in their daily walk of discipleship.

Salvation of others. There are some circumstances in scripture where our actions can affect or even secure the temporal salvation or deliverance of others from various things here in this world. These instances of salvation occur as a direct result from our works or actions. Therefore, these works do not produce eternal salvation for others because eternal salvation is obtained by grace alone and not by any works that we may perform on their behalf.

A) We may save others from death in fellowship by converting them from their sins. *“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”* (James 5:20) *“And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.”* (Jude 23)

B) Parents may save their children from God’s chastisement by proper discipline. *“13) Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. 14) Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.”* (Prov. 23:13-14)

C) We may save others by applying ourselves to the word of God. *“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”* (1 Tim. 4:16)

D) We may save the sick by faithfully praying for them. *“And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”* (James 5:15)

E) We may save others from persecution by faithfully praying for them. *“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,”* (Phil. 1:19)

F) We may use our past experiences to console and help others in time of need. *“And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.”* (2 Cor. 1:6)

G) The faithful spouse may save their unbelieving spouse by faithfulness to the marriage covenant. *“13) And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. 14) For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy... 16) For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?”* (1 Cor. 7:12-16) See also 1 Pet. 3:1-2

Providential Salvation

Providence is defined as: “1) The act of providing or preparing for future use or application; 2) Foresight; timely care; particularly, active foresight, or foresight accompanied with the procurement of what is necessary for future use, or with suitable preparation; 3) In theology, the care and superintendence which

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God exercises over his creatures.” (Webster’s American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828) Therefore, “providence” refers to God’s preparations before and during any situation that occurs to procure all the necessary provisions in advance for the benefit and care of God’s children.

Furthermore, “providential salvation” refers to God’s preparations before and during certain situations or actions in the lives of his people for their benefit and deliverance (or salvation) from all manner of troubles here in this time in their lives, here in this temporal setting. “19) *He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.* 20) *In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword.*” (Job 5:19-20)

Saved from death.

A) Jesus saved the disciples from the tempest on the sea. “25) *And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.* 26) *And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*” (Matt. 8:25-26)

B) Jesus saved Peter from drowning. “30) *But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.* 31) *And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? 32) And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.*” (Matt. 14:30-32)

C) God saved Noah and his family from judgment and death in the flood. “*And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;*” (2 Pet. 2:5) “*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by the faith.*” (Heb. 11:7)

D) God saved the Israelites from the Egyptians at the Red Sea. “13) *And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you today... 30) Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.*” (Exod. 14:13,30) See also Ps. 106:8-10, Exod. 15:2

E) God saved Rahab and her family from death in the conquest of Jericho. “*And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.*” (Joshua 2:13)

F) God used Joseph to save the lives of his natural kindred from starvation. “*And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*” (Gen. 45:7)

Saved from our enemies. “*I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.*” (2 Sam. 22:4) See also Ps. 18:3, 44:7; Num. 10:9

A) God saved Israel from the Philistines by David. “*Now then do it: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.*” (2 Sam. 3:18)

B) God saved Israel from the Philistines by Jonathan. “6) *And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or few... 23) So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over Bethaven.*” (1 Sam. 14:6,23)

C) God saved Israel and Hezekiah from King Sennacherib. “*Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side.*” (2 Chron. 32:22)

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D) God saved Israel from the Midianites by Gideon. *“And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?”* (Judges 6:14)

Saved from unreasonable and wicked men. *“And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.”* (2 Thess. 3:2) *“And the LORD shall help them and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.”* (Ps. 37:40) *“Deliver me from the workers of iniquity and save me from bloody men.”* (Ps. 59:2)

Saved from persecutions and afflictions. *“O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:”* (Ps. 7:1) *“Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.”* (2 Tim. 3:11) *“16) At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. 17) Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18) And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* (2 Tim. 4:16-18)

Saved from distresses and trouble. *“13) Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. 19) Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses.”* (Ps. 107:13,19) *“The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.”* (Prov. 11:8) *“He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.”* (Job 5:19)

Saved from violence. *“The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my savior; thou savest me from violence.”* (2 Sam. 22:3)

Other salvations

A) **Women are saved in childbearing.** *“14) And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. 15) Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”* (1 Tim. 2:14-15)

B) **Salvation of the poor by God.** *“15) But he saveth the poor from the sword, from the mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. 16) So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.”* (Job 5:15-16) *“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.”* (Ps. 41:1)

Summary

There are many, many other instances of deliverance and salvation in scripture that are presented in time and in a temporal setting. We have only considered a few for further explanation. Time or temporal salvation is separate and distinct from eternal salvation. While time salvation often requires an action or work of man as a necessary condition for that salvation to occur, eternal salvation is accomplished by the sovereign grace of God, apart from any work of man. We must be very precise in rightly dividing the proper context of salvation in scripture and to correctly distinguish the proper setting of the deliverance, whether the salvation takes place in an eternal setting or if it takes place here in time and in a temporal setting.

Rightly Dividing All Inclusive Terms in Scripture

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

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When we study scripture, it’s vitally important to *“rightly divide the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15) and compare scripture with scripture. We must compare scripture with scripture and examine *“line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little”* (Isaiah 28:10-13). We cannot look at one verse in isolation and reach a conclusion based solely upon a myopic view of that one verse. We must examine each verse in light of the overall teaching of truth in scripture and compare with other verses to determine what that verse truly means. The necessity of comparing scripture with scripture to determine the appropriate context and interpretation of each verse is clearly exhibited by certain “all-inclusive terms” in scripture.

Just because we see the apparently all-inclusive terms in a verse – such as world, all, every, whosoever, or similar terms – we cannot automatically assume that verse is talking about all of mankind without exception. We have to compare that verse with other scriptures to determine if there might be a “qualifier” in another verse that gives us more understanding on the context and meaning of that verse. For example, Rom. 12:3 appears to plainly say at your first reading that *“God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith”*. That might appear at first glance to read that God has given faith to all of mankind without exception. However, 2 Thess. 3:2 clarifies that *“all men have not faith”* and others in Heb. 4:2 also did not have faith to hear the gospel. We have further clarification in Gal. 5:22 that faith is not given universally by God but is a fruit of the Spirit. Therefore, the “every man” that God has dealt the measure of faith unto is not all men without exception, but “every man without distinction” (*“to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”*, Rom. 1:16) that has been born again by the Spirit of God.

In Gen. 6:12, it says that *“all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth”* but yet that’s not all flesh without exception because *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord”* (Gen. 6:8). In Gen. 7:21-22, it indicates that *“every man”* and *“all flesh”* and *“all in whose nostrils was the breath of life”* died in the flood of Noah. However, we know that all animals didn’t die because one of each kind went two by two or seven by seven onto the ark. We also know that “every man” didn’t die because eight souls of Noah’s family were saved by God. That language is not intended to mean everyone without exception, but that language is used to convey a majority and overwhelming number of men, animals, and all flesh were killed in the flood.

In Luke 1:37, it says plainly that *“with God nothing shall be impossible”*. While God’s power and sovereignty is not limited in any way, there are actually some things that are impossible with God that are contradictory to his nature. God cannot change (Mal. 3:6); God cannot lie (Titus 1:2); God cannot fail or be discouraged (Isaiah 42:4); God cannot deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13); God cannot be tempted with evil (James 1:13). Therefore, it takes a rightly dividing of scripture and studying of many other verses in the Bible to determine the true context of this verse through the systematic teaching of truth in scripture.

In Luke 2:1, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that *“all the world should be taxed”*. Now Caesar did not have the authority to tax the Native American Indians, the Chinese, or the Australians. He did not literally tax “all the world without exception”. Instead, those under the legal authority of Caesar, all of those under Caesar’s taxable jurisdiction were taxed, but that is not truly all the world without exception. In Rom. 1:8, Paul commended the Roman church because *“your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world”*. It’s obvious that every person in the “whole world” was not speaking of the faith of the Romans. Rather Paul uses this all-inclusive language to convey that their faith was widely known and commended in the context of all the churches and disciples of Christ at that time.

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These are just a few examples (multitudes more could be given) to exhibit that we must rightly divide and compare scripture with scripture for all verses. This is especially crucial for these verses that appear to convey “all-inclusive terms” because just looking at that one verse without comparing it to other scriptures can lead to an erroneous understanding of that verse’s teaching. God inspired his word to teach truth in a systematic way, so we cannot interpret any verse as an island solely unto itself. We must be careful and study diligently to rightly divide these scriptures.

It’s also important to remember that we need to take each verse for exactly what it says unless another scripture gives us a “qualifier” to limit its scope. In other words, we don’t need to automatically question every word and immediately say that it doesn’t really mean what it says. If the scripture says “all”, we need to presume that verse does mean “all” unless we see another verse that qualifies or limits its scope. When we see there is “*none righteous, no not one; none that doeth good, no not one*” (Rom. 3:10,12), we don’t automatically assume that doesn’t mean what it says. As we study scripture we realize, there are no exceptions or qualifiers to man’s total depravity, so that verse does mean all men without exception are corrupt, no, not one exception. However, other verses that say “all” or “none” or “every”, may not mean all men without exception like that verse does. That’s why it’s so important to let scripture speak for itself, compare each line and precept to other lines and precepts to properly interpret the meaning of each verse. We will consider a few of the more prominent verses that are typically misunderstood in Christianity today.

World

John 3:16. Arguably the most prominent verse in all of Christianity is John 3:16: “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” This verse is oftentimes presented in Bible tracts and pamphlets just by itself to teach that God loves the whole world (every person without exception), and it’s necessary for man (whosoever) to believe in him to be saved to eternal life. This verse in isolation might appear to teach that God loved the entire world without exception. However, scripture also teaches that “*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*” (Rom. 9:13). This statement is quoted from and further clarified in Malachi 1 that God did not simply “love Esau less” but Esau and his wicked people (representing the non-elect), those are “*the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever*” (Mal. 1:2-4). Therefore, since God hated Esau and hates the wicked, he simply could not love the entire world without exception. God is love (1 John 4:8); God loves righteousness, but he also hates iniquity (Ps. 45:7). Therefore, God hates all the workers of iniquity (Ps. 5:5). God hates the wicked and those that love violence (Ps. 11:5). God is angry with the wicked every day (Ps. 7:11). The sacrifice, the way, and the thoughts of the wicked are all an abomination before the Lord (Prov. 15:8,9,26). God hates those who exhibit a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that run to mischief, a false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among the brethren (Prov. 6:16-19). God is a God of love, but he’s also holy and righteous, and he hates those who work iniquity and wickedness in disobedience to his holy law.

If God is so holy that he cannot even look upon iniquity (Hab. 1:13), and he hates all workers of iniquity (Ps. 5:5), and since in our natures men only work iniquity and sin, how then can anyone be saved? Esau worked iniquity and earned God’s judgment and hatred as just wages from his own works. The real question then is how could God love Jacob who also worked iniquity in his life? Was Jacob loved by God because he did good works and chose to accept God? No, Jacob lived a very scandalous life prior to his experience with God at Bethel in Genesis 28. Jacob deceived Esau into selling his birthright, he lied and deceived his father to receive the eldest son’s blessing, and then when Esau found out, he had to flee his father’s house to preserve his life. Jacob was just as guilty before God as Esau in his own works, but in spite of all that, God chose to love Jacob anyway. God chose to love Jacob with “*the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil that that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works*

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but of him that calleth” (Rom. 9:11). God chose (elected) to love Jacob before he was born, not based upon his works but based upon God’s grace, his unmerited favor shown unto undeserving Jacob. Why did God choose to love Jacob? Because it was according to God’s own good will and purpose to show mercy and compassion to Jacob. *“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”* (Rom. 9:15-16) Jacob was not loved by God by his own will or works, but he was saved and loved according to God’s sovereign purpose to show mercy unto him. He was just as undeserving of God’s mercy as Esau, but according to God’s mercy, he amazingly saw fit to love the supplanter, Jacob.

Who then is “the world” that God “so loved” to send his only begotten Son to die for their sins that they would have eternal life? John 3:16 is not teaching that God loved the entire world without exception. That cannot be the case because the scriptures teach that there are some that God hates, as we have seen. Furthermore, God cannot change (Mal. 3:6) and God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and God’s love is everlasting (Jer. 31:3) and there is nothing can separate anyone from the love of God (Rom. 8:35-39). If God loved the entire world without exception, there is nothing that can separate them from God’s love, and they will all be in heaven with the Lord. Since we know all the world will not be in heaven, it’s evident that God did not love the entire world without exception. Instead, this verse is teaching that God loved a vast, diverse group of people for Christ to save.

Jesus delivered this statement in verse 16 in the midst of his conversation with Nicodemus who questions Jesus by night from John 3:1-21. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews. Nicodemus, like almost all Jews at that time, believed that God only loved the natural born, circumcised lineage of the Jews. However, Jesus is giving Nicodemus a revelation that God’s family is much broader and more diverse than just the natural born lineage of the Jews. God doesn’t just love “the Jews” but God loves “the world”, including the Gentiles. God’s family is *“out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”* (Rev. 5:9, 7:9). It’s as if Jesus is attempting to teach Nicodemus the same lesson that Peter learned when he preached to Cornelius, a Gentile. Previously, Peter (a devout natural born Jew) was proud of the fact that he had never defiled himself with anything common or unclean (including interaction with the Gentiles). Then God showed him that the elect family of God is not just comprised of only Jews but includes “the world of the Gentiles” as well. Peter declares what Jesus was trying to teach Nicodemus by saying that God loves “the world”, even including the Gentiles out of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue. *“And Peter opened his mouth and said Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.”* (Acts 10:34-35)

The “whosoever believeth” in John 3:16 is not the means of gaining “everlasting life”. God does not offer an “opt-in” policy to everlasting life for whosoever chooses to believe. This verse is not an invitation to gain everlasting life; it is rather an assurance text for those who believe and already have everlasting life. Anyone who wants to – a general “whosoever” – cannot just choose to believe on Jesus. Only those who are already born again can believe on Jesus (John 5:24; 1 John 5:1). The only “whosoever’s” that can believe on Christ are those elect children of God that have already been born again. Therefore, this verse is not offering eternal life to “whosoever” chooses to believe on Christ, but this verse offers assurance to the believer in Christ that Jesus died for their sins and that they already have eternal life.

1 John 2:2. *“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”* This verse teaches that Jesus “is” the “propitiation” for the sins of “the whole world” that is under consideration. Propitiation is an atoning sacrifice, and everyone who received this atonement no longer has any sins laid to their charge. Salvation is not offered in this verse, but rather this is a declaration that the propitiation for sins has already been successfully made by Christ. Therefore, if this verse meant the entire world without exception, it would teach that Christ atoned for the sins of the entire world without exception and all of mankind will be in heaven.

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The “whole world” in scripture does not always mean all of mankind without exception. “*And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*” (1 John 5:19). It’s evident that the whole world of every man without exception doesn’t lie in wickedness. In this verse, two groups are presented: one that is “*of God*”, and the contrasting group that “*lies in wickedness*”. The first group cannot be included with the second, so therefore the whole world cannot mean every person in the world without exception because some are clearly stated as “of God”. However, the “world” is often used in scripture to portray the systematic opposition of “this world” against God and his kingdom. That “whole world” does lie in wickedness. This world in opposition to God cannot even receive the Spirit of truth (John 14:17).

Jesus did not die for the “whole world that lies in wickedness”, but Jesus was the propitiation for the “whole world” of his children. Just like Jesus in speaking with Nicodemus, the Apostle John is conveying the broad diversity of God’s family – out of every nation, kindred, people and tongue; out of the whole world. Every one of the “whole world of God’s children” that Jesus was a propitiation for, their sins have been put away and atoned for by his death on the cross. Jesus “*offered one sacrifice (one propitiation) for sins forever*” and by that one offering “*he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified*” (Heb. 10:12,14).

John 1:29. “*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” John the Baptist declared that Jesus was the Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world. If Jesus was a Lamb that was to be offered for the whole world without exception, then the sin of the whole world has been taken away. This does not offer a remission and payment of sins, but this declares a completed work of Jesus taking away this world’s sins. Jesus did not take away the sins of the whole world, but he paid for the sins of those given unto him by God (the elect). “*I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.*” (John 17:9) It’s interesting that Jesus here did not pray “for the world” but instead he prayed for the remnant that had been given unto him by the Father. The elect that were given unto Christ have been given eternal life by his death. “*As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*” (John 17:2) In another similar vein, here in John 1:29, John the Baptist is also teaching his Jewish disciples that Jesus came to die not just for the Jews, but that Jesus came to take away the sin of “the world”, including the Gentiles, out of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue; a people out of the whole world.

All

1 Timothy 4:10. “*For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.*” This verse might seem to indicate that Jesus is the Savior of all men without exception. However, we know that is not the case since God did not love all of mankind and Jesus did not save all of mankind. Jesus’ name means Savior, and he – as God manifest in the flesh – cannot fail or be discouraged (Isaiah 42:4). Therefore, all for whom Jesus died have been eternally saved and will be with God in heaven at the end of time. Jesus Christ was the Savior of all men that were given to him on the cross to save (John 6:37-39, 17:2,4). He saved them all from the eternal wrath of God by his death. Now, this group of “all men” that Jesus saved is not all of mankind “without exception”, but rather “all men” here means all men “without distinction” – “*there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*” (Col. 3:11)

Here in this verse we also see the distinction of different salvations in scripture. There is a “special salvation” for those who believe that is in addition to eternal life that is given to the elect by the death of Jesus Christ. There are blessings in gospel obedience that deliver and save us in a special way here in our lives when we believe on Jesus Christ as our Savior. The scriptures do not support that every child of God will believe on Christ and confess his name here in their life. For those who have been blessed to hear the

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gospel message and chose to believe it, there is a “special salvation” for those who believe, an added deliverance and salvation for those “all men” that have been already been saved by Jesus Christ. Belief is not the means of eternal life, but belief is an evidence that one is already saved and already in possession of eternal life. For those children of God who are obedient to the gospel message to believe, they experience that special salvation in the abundant life in the kingdom of God for the Lord’s born-again children.

2 Peter 3:9. *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* Jesus Christ has promised to return the second time without sin unto salvation. While it might appear to some scoffers that Jesus is slack concerning his promise to return since it has been 2,000 years and Jesus has still not come back yet, we know that God has not forgot his promise and will return at the appointed time. What then is hindering the Lord’s return? God is longsuffering; he is suffering long the wickedness of this world, keeping from burning it up with fervent heat with his return because God is not willing that any of God’s children should perish but that all would come to repentance.

Is this verse teaching that God desires every man (“all”) to come to repentance? God is not waiting to return to give more people a “chance to repent” and be saved to heaven. Just like with all scripture, God says what he means, and he means what he says. God is not longsuffering to “the world” (to every man) to try to get them saved; God is rather longsuffering to “us-ward”, to the church, to the believers, to the elect children of God that Peter’s epistles were written unto – *“Peter...to the strangers scattered...Elect according to the foreknowledge of God...”* (1 Pet. 1:1-2). God is suffering long the wickedness of this world because not every elect child of God has been brought to “repentance” in the sense of being born again with a capacity to be convicted and repent of their sins. God is not willing that any of his elect will perish in hell being in an unregenerate state at his return, but he is longsuffering to the “us-ward elect” that they would be born again before his return. When the last child of God is quickened by the Holy Spirit, brought to “vital repentance”, not necessarily “gospel repentance”, then there will be nothing restraining God from judging this earth by fire at his second coming. Jesus Christ desires that none of his “us-ward elect” would perish but that we would all be born again and made a new creature prior to Jesus’ second coming.

1 Timothy 2:4. *“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”* This verse reads very similarly to 2 Peter 3:9. Does God desire every man to be saved to heaven, just like does God desire every man to come to repentance and gospel confession? This salvation under consideration is not absolute and not completed from start to finish by God. God “will have all men to be saved”; God desires for all men to be saved in this sense, but God is not the active party to accomplish this salvation. Is this speaking of eternal salvation? No, Jesus Christ is not desiring and hoping that men will perform a work and be saved to heaven. All of the requirements for eternal salvation were completed and perfectly executed in the person of Jesus Christ. That eternal salvation is not something that God “desires will happen”, but it’s already done and complete and finished in Jesus Christ.

If you simply read the second half of this verse, the Holy Spirit gives us the exact context of this salvation under consideration. How does God desire that “all men (all the elect) would be saved”? God desires that all his elect children would “come unto the knowledge of the truth”. It is God’s will that all of God’s children would come to a fulness of knowledge and understanding of the truth that salvation is solely by the sovereign grace of God and that the work of eternal salvation was perfectly finished by Jesus Christ on the cross. God desires for all his children to come to the knowledge of the truth of the gospel and for them to experience the salvation and deliverance that knowledge of the truth gives to us here in our lives.

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Every

Hebrews 2:9. *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”* Did Jesus taste death for “every man” without exception? None of the blood of Jesus Christ was wasted on the cross. Everyone for whom Jesus tasted death for on the cross will never have to taste the penalty of death themselves. God will not allow double jeopardy in his eternal courtroom. There will not be two persons that will bear the eternal wrath of God and the penalty of death for the same sin and transgression. If Jesus bore the sins and tasted death for every man without exception, there is no one left to taste eternal death in the lake of fire for all eternity. Everyone for whom Jesus died on the cross has their death penalty paid in full based on Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice. Jesus tasted death for “every man” of his elect, and every one of those that he died for on the cross will not have to bear the penalty of death a second time at the end of time. The eternal death penalty of the elect was tasted and paid in full by Christ on the cross.

Whosoever

Romans 10:13. *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* We have already considered in John 3:16 the “whosoever believeth” is not an invitation to gain eternal life, but an assurance to the “whosoever’s that already believe” that they are already in possession of eternal life. In like manner, here in Romans 10, who are the “whosoever’s” that can call upon the name of the Lord to be saved? They are those who already *“have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge”* (10:2); those who already have the word of faith in their mouth and in their heart (10:8). These are not unregenerate, hell-bound sinners that need to call upon the name of the Lord to be saved to heaven. These are born again children of God that have a zeal of God and the testimony of faith in their heart, but they have not confessed Jesus Christ publicly but instead are futilely trying to establish their own righteousness through their works of the law (10:3-4). The Holy Spirit calls upon these born-again children of God to *“confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* (10:9) These children of God were not danger of hell, but they did need to be saved from gospel ignorance – *“they being ignorant of God’s righteousness”* (10:3) – and saved from shame – *“whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed”* (10:11). This salvation that is offered for those who call upon the name of the Lord is a temporal salvation in gospel obedience by confession Jesus Christ before men and believing in your heart that Jesus is the only end of the law for righteousness for the child of God.

The “whosoever” that believes is not first condemned to hell but then can believe on Christ and in turn be saved to heaven; the scriptures are clear that if any “whosoever” believes in Christ, they are already born of God. *“1) Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God... 10) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself... 13) These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God”* (1 John 5:1,10,13) *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”* (John 5:24) Notice that one who believes “is born of God” (1 John 5:1), and Jesus clarifies further that the person who believes “is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). *“2) Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. 15) Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God”* (1 John 4:2,15) *“Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”* (1 Cor. 12:3) The scriptures make it clear that there is no one that has the ability to confess Jesus and believe unless he is already “of God” and already has the Holy Spirit. Any “whosoever” that believes in Jesus Christ is simply exhibiting the evidence that they are already born-again and already a child of God.

Rightly Dividing Justification In Scripture

“Being justified freely by his grace through redemption that is in Christ Jesus:” (Rom. 3:24)

“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” (Rom. 5:9)

“1) Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1-2)

“21) Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22) Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? ... 24) Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only..” (James 2:14-28)

Three Types of Justification

There is more than one “type” of justification taught in the scriptures. We are told that a child of God can be justified by grace (Rom. 3:24), justified by blood (Rom. 5:9), justified by faith (Rom. 5:1), and justified by works (Rom. 4:2, James 2:24). Therefore, we must be very careful to rightfully divide these different types of justification correctly.

Since justification deals with a “declaration of righteousness”, it’s important to distinguish who makes the declaration of justification or righteousness in each case. For example, Abraham had a reason to have confidence (“*to glory*”) if he was justified by works, but he did not have reason to glory before God because of his works (Rom. 4:2). This shows there is a different audience under consideration with each type of justification. Since justification is a legal term, it’s easy to think about these different types of justification occurring in three different courtroom settings to distinguish the unique audience of each declaration of justification.

It’s important to understand that the verdict or declaration in each of the three courtrooms are independent and do not affect the verdict in another courtroom. For example, if a child of God is not justified by faith in their own heart, that has no bearing that they are justified in God’s eternal courtroom by the blood of Jesus Christ. The opposite is true as well; if men make an incorrect determination that a certain man is righteous but he is actually inwardly corrupt (as the Pharisees were actually whited sepulchres, Matt. 23:27), that has no bearing on God’s eternal declaration of whether a man is justified or not.

Justification by Blood and Grace

Sinners are justified before God only by Christ’s grace, not by man’s works. *“Being justified freely by his grace through redemption that is in Christ Jesus:”* (Rom. 3:24) *“5) Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6) Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7) That being justified by grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”* (Titus 3:5-7) See also Rom. 4:2-6, 9:11, 11:5-7; Eph. 2:8-9, 2 Tim. 1:9. See chapter 7, “Justification by Christ Alone” for more detailed information on this justification by Christ’s blood and grace.

Sinners are justified before God only by the blood of Jesus Christ. *“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”* (Rom. 5:9) *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”* (Eph. 1:7) *“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.*

Rightly Dividing Justification In Scripture

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,” (Rev. 1:5) “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” (Heb. 9:12) See also Heb. 9:22-28, 10:3-18; Isaiah 53:1-12, John 1:29, 1 Pet. 1:19-20, Acts 20:28, 1 John 1:7.

Aspects of the Courtroom of Justification by Grace and Blood

Courtroom. The declaration of all men as either righteous or unrighteous is made in God’s eternal courtroom in heaven. Jesus appeared before God in his eternal courtroom as the legal representative of the elect only one time to put away the sin of God’s children by the sacrifice of himself. *“24) For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: ...26) For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Heb. 9:24-26)*

Applicable Law. Men are judged in this eternal courtroom by God’s commandments, and the penalty for sin and the transgression of the law of God is death. The penalty for sin according to God’s law is death. *“...in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen. 2:17) “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23) “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of law.” (1 John 3:4)*

Judge. God is the Sovereign Judge in this eternal courtroom. God is the Judge who upholds the Law and sentences punishment for breaking the Law that he has established. *“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.” (Isaiah 33:22) “...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right.” (Gen. 18:25) “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?” (James 4:12) God knows and sees all things so his judgment will always be carried out justly based on perfect knowledge; no transgression will go unnoticed by the Judge. “12) For the word of God...is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13) Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” (Heb. 4:12-13)*

Defendant. Every man is a defendant in God’s eternal courtroom, since all men have transgressed God’s law. All men, without exception, have sinned and are justly condemned by God’s law. *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Rom. 5:12) “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” (Rom. 3:23) “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Ps. 130:3) As a result of sin, no man is righteous in the sight of God in his own works. “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isaiah 64:6)*

Advocate. Jesus Christ, as the federal head of the elect (who were positionally in him in the atonement) is their advocate (the defense attorney); therefore, Christ is the only valid, legal mediator between God and man. *“And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1) “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” (1 Tim. 2:5) However, the non-elect have no advocate before God, and stand before God based solely on their own merit and are judged according to their works. “11) And I saw a great white throne...12) And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13) ...and they were judged every man according to their works.” (Rev. 20:11-15)*

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Verdict (Declaration). Verdict of Righteousness of the Elect. The elect are declared righteous in the sight of God in his eternal courtroom based the atoning blood of Jesus Christ because he has already paid the penalty of death for the elect. Therefore, the elect are admitted into heaven based on the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ on their behalf. See Matt. 25:31-40, Rom. 5:9, Eph. 1:7, Rev. 5:9, Heb. 9:12

Verdict of Condemnation to the Non-Elect. All men who Jesus did not die for on the cross are declared to be unrighteous, and the penalty for their transgression of God's law is eternal death and separation from God in the lake of fire. See Rev. 20:11-15 – *“the second death”* (v.14), Matt. 25:41-46, 2 Thess. 1:7-9

Justification by Faith

God's elect, born-again children may also be justified by faith. Faith (and belief as an expression or manifestation of faith) is an evidence of regeneration, not the cause of regeneration. Faith is a fruit of the Spirit, so the Spirit must be present first in one's heart before faith can be manifested in one's life. *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”* (Gal. 5:22) *“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell when it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”* (John 3:8) *“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”* (1 John 4:13)

While scripture does say that *“God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith”* (Rom. 12:3), that does not mean that every man without exception has faith. Rather that verse is addressing every man without distinction (*“to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”*, Rom. 1:16) because there are certain men that do not have faith in scripture. *“And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.”* (2 Thess. 3:2) Compare to Rom. 15:30-31 as well. *“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”* (Heb. 4:2)

Man cannot come to God without faith, and since faith is a fruit of the Spirit in the new birth, a man cannot please God or come unto God until he has already been born again. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* (Heb. 11:6) *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”* (Gal. 5:22)

Faith, and subsequent belief, are evidence that one has already been born again. *“(1) Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...10) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself...13) These things have I written unto you that believe on the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”* (1 John 5:1,10,13) *“Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”* (1 Cor. 12:3) *“(2) Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 15) Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”* (1 John 4:2,15) *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”* (John 5:24) See also John 1:12-13, 3:36, 6:47, 8:47, 10:26-28; Rom. 1:17; Hab. 2:4; Gal. 3:11

Abraham as the example of Justification by Faith. Abraham is presented as the principle example of justification by faith in the New Testament. See Rom. 4:1-25, Gal. 3:6-29, Heb. 11:8-19, James 2:20-24. Abraham had faith a long time before he was “justified by faith” in Gen. 15:6. Abraham was chosen and called by God to leave his home in Mesopotamia (Gen. 12:1-4, Acts 7:2-5) and had faith in God to leave his homeland (*“By faith Abraham, when he was called out to go...he went out, not knowing where he*

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went...” Heb. 11:8-9) over 10-15 years before he was declared to have been “justified by faith” in Gen. 15:6 (Rom. 4:3). Therefore, Abraham was already a child of God who was walking by faith (evidencing that he was already born again by the Spirit of God) before the instance where “*Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*” (Rom. 4:3).

Abraham believed God’s promise and it was counted to him for righteousness. Abraham believed God’s promise that he was able to resurrect Sarah’s dead, barren womb and give him an heir against all natural odds; when he believed God, his faith and belief was counted to Abraham for righteousness. The faith was “*imputed to him [imputed to Abraham, not to God] for righteousness*” (Rom. 4:22). This shows the distinct courtroom setting of justification by faith; this imputation of righteousness is not before God, but rather it was imputed to Abraham’s account in his own heart as a token of his own righteousness before God when he believed the promise that God had made to him. Abraham’s belief of God’s promise did not make him righteous before God, (the blood of Jesus Christ did that by removing his sins and justifying him by grace), but his faith assured Abraham in his own heart that he was already viewed as righteous before God based on the justification of Jesus Christ. “...20) *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21) And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22) And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*” (Rom. 4:18-22)

Justification by faith in the heart of the believer. We cannot establish our own righteousness through works or through the law, but we must exhibit faith to trust our righteousness is only through the merits of Jesus. “3) *For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*” (Rom. 10:3-4) The child of God shall be justified by faith in their heart when they believe that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. “23) *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24) But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;*” (Rom. 4:23-24)

Our actions of faith either condemn or assure the heart of God’s child of their standing with God and adherence to God’s law. “19) *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 20) For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21) Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then we have confidence towards God.*” (1 John 3:19-21) “13) *(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14) For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves. 15) Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or excusing one another;)*” (Rom. 2:13-15)

Jesus was teaching about the effects of justification by faith by using a Pharisee and a publican at the temple in his ministry. When the publican prayed unto God to be merciful to him a sinner, that is not when he was justified before God. Jesus clarifies that this man rather “went down to his house justified” in his heart (feeling just and feeling saved) when he confessed Jesus Christ as his only hope of salvation. “*I tell you, this man [the publican] went down to his house justified rather than the other [the Pharisee]; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*” (Luke 18:14)

Effects of justification by faith in the heart of the believer. Faith produces peace, joy, and hope in the heart of the child of God, and we have access into the grace that God has placed us in by Jesus’ blood “1) *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*” (Rom. 5:1-2) “*And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.*” (Isaiah 32:17) “*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*” (Rom. 15:13)

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Faith gives assurance of our salvation and our eternal security. *“19) And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him...21) Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then we have confidence towards God.”* (1 John 3:19-21) *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”* (Rom. 8:16) *“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”* (1 John 5:10) See also 1 John 4:17, Isaiah 32:17, 1 Thess. 1:5, 2 Tim. 3:14

Faith reveals the righteousness of God to the believer through the gospel. *“16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”* (Rom. 1:16-17) See also Rom. 10:3-4,17; 2 Tim. 1:10, Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:26-27

Faith that is backed up by works manifests to others that our faith is authentic (justification by works). It makes our calling and election sure to others. *“20) But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?...22) Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?...26) For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”* (James 2:20-26)

Aspects of the Courtroom of Justification by Faith

Courtroom. This declaration of whether we are righteous or unrighteous by faith is made in the heart and conscience of every child of God. The declaration of righteousness was made “unto Abraham” (Rom. 4:2,22,23) and shall be made unto the individual believer’s heart who has faith that Jesus was raised from the dead, “to whom it shall be imputed if we believe” (Rom. 4:24). The righteousness of Abraham was not imputed “unto God” but rather it was imputed “unto Abraham”, because Abraham had already been declared righteous in the sight of God by the blood and grace of Jesus Christ imputed onto his eternal account. Since faith is a fruit of the Spirit, only the regenerated child of God can be justified by faith because only a born-again child of God has faith

Applicable Law. The believer measures and judges their faith in accordance with the law that God has written in their heart in the new birth. The faith written in our heart in the new birth either accuses or excuses our conscience in accordance with our obedience to God’s law by faith. *“For this the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”* (Heb. 8:10) *“14) For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves. 15) Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts....”* (Rom. 2:14-15) See also Heb. 10:12, 2 Cor. 3:3

Judge. The heart (1 John 3:19-21) and the conscience (Rom. 2:15) of the child of God acts as the judge in this courtroom, making a declaration if they are righteous through faith when comparing their actions to the law of God that has been written in their heart. Thus, the child of God judges and determines if they are justified by faith depending on their response to the gospel and their faith in Jesus Christ.

Defendant. Only the regenerated child of God can be a defendant in this courtroom and be justified by faith because faith is given by the Spirit in the new birth, and one cannot be justified by faith without first having faith. The only person that can truly be justified by faith is a born-again child of God because only they have faith in their heart to be justified by. *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”* (Gal. 5:22)

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Verdict (Declaration). The heart of the child of God makes a declaration of the state of our righteousness with God in accordance with the laws written in our hearts. Our heart will either assure (1 John 3:19,21) or excuse (Rom. 2:15) our actions by faith. This describes the blessedness of the man who has been justified by faith (Rom. 4:3,22) and has peace with God through their belief (Rom. 5:1) and confidence before God of our eternal security (1 John 3:21, 4:17).

Our heart will condemn (1 John 3:20) or accuse (Rom. 2:15) our actions that are not carried out by faith. This describes the child of God who is acting contrary to the law of God written in their heart, and they are condemned and accused in their conscience because of their sin and transgression of God's law. They have not trusted in Jesus Christ as the end of the law for righteousness (Rom. 10:3-4) and will be condemned and accused in their heart because of their lack of faith.

The verdict or declaration of righteousness in the heart of a child of God has no bearing on one's eternal standing in God's heavenly courtroom. Even though our hearts condemn us (we make a declaration or judgment that we are not righteous), God is greater than our heart and he is the only Judge of our eternal righteousness. *"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. "* (1 John 3:20)

Justification by Works

Our good works should manifest to others that we are the children of God. A child of God should manifest good works that show "fruit" that they are a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. *"15) Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16) Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17) Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18) A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit...20) Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."* (Matt. 7:15-20) *"7) Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8) Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance..."* (Luke 3:7-14)

Our election of God is manifested and "made sure" to others by our good works. *"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, ye shall never fall:"* (2 Pet. 1:10) *"4) Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. 5) For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you."* (1 Thess. 1:4-5)

Our good works should manifest to others that we are the children of God, and then cause other men to glorify God because of our good works. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven."* (Matt. 5:16) *"44) But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven...48) Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."* (Matt. 5:44-48)

We can make the same judgments of one's righteousness or unrighteousness from the works of men that are recorded in the Bible. We can assess the works of men and inspect the fruit of their good works in the scriptures and make a determination in our mind of whether they are righteous or not, even though we do not actually know their heart. We believe Abraham is righteous because we read of his good works in the Bible and assess that he was godly. We can also read of all the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, and even though we cannot know their true hearts and know if they truly are a child of God, we can still make a confident assertion based on their good works that they are righteous.

Rightly Dividing Justification In Scripture

The opposite is true as well. We read about the actions of men in the Bible and make a determination in the courtroom of our mind that they are wicked and not righteous. We can read of Cain's actions in murdering his brother Abel and determine according to his works that he was of that wicked one. We can read of Judas Iscariot's actions and make a determination in the courtroom of our opinion that he was evil because of his betrayal of Jesus. It's important to note, however, that our determination in the courtroom of our opinion has no bearing on whether one is eternally justified before God or justified by faith in their heart.

Other men should be able to see a believer's faith through their good works. Our faith without good works to authenticate that faith in the sight of others is dead and vain. Consider the in-depth treatment of justification by works in James 2. *"14) What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?...17) Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18) Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works...20) But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21) Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22) Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23) And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24) Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25) Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? 26) For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."* (James 2:14-28)

Others should be able to "see our faith" by our works. We "shew" (authenticate and manifest) to others our faith by good works in our lives. *"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."* (James 2:18) Jesus "saw the faith" of the men bringing the palsy unto Him because their actions manifested clearly the inward faith that they had in their heart by the Holy Spirit. *"...5) And when Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."* (Mark 2:3-5)

Aspects of the Courtroom of Justification by Works

Courtroom. This declaration of one as righteous or unrighteous by works is made in the courtroom of men's opinions or in the mind of other people. Our good works make our calling and election "sure" unto other men (2 Pet. 1:10). There is no need to make our election sure unto God because he knows all those that are his (2 Tim. 2:19). However, we can manifest to others that we are the elect by our good works. If Abraham did good works and was justified by works, he had no reason to glory before God because of his good works; but he did have a certain measure to glory before men. *"For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God."* (Rom. 4:2)

Paul was confident of the election of the believers at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:4) based the works he saw them do while he was with them. He saw: a) Their *"work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope"* (1 Thess. 1:3), b) Their belief and acceptance of the gospel (1 Thess. 1:5-6), c) Their example to other believers and commitment to evangelism (1 Thess. 1:7-8), d) Their rejection of idols and conversion to *"serve the true and living God"* (1 Thess. 1:9). All of these fruit were sufficient in Paul's mind for him to declare that they truly were among the elect of God – *"knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God"* (1 Thess. 1:4).

Applicable Law. Men judge the authenticity of a believer's faith according to God's word and if their actions as a child of God resemble the actions of their Father. We read the word of God that establishes the law of God's righteousness, and then we examine the actions of those around us based on the standard of God's word.

Rightly Dividing Justification In Scripture

Judge. Other men are the judge in this courtroom as they make a determination from one's manner of life, good works they perform, etc. as to whether they perceive this is a righteous person or not. It's important to understand that it's not our calling or responsibility to make a definitive determination of who is or who is not a child of God. God knoweth them that are his (2 Tim. 2:19), and he does not need our help in determining or validating one's eternal state. We judge by justification by works in our own opinion primarily for the purposes of identifying or possibly severing fellowship based upon the works of others.

Defendant. Every man can be the defendant in this justification by faith courtroom, since all men are judged to some degree in the minds of others as to whether they are acting in a righteous way or not. We do not judge simply to condemn others for their actions. We must first judge ourselves honestly before we can judge others (Matt. 7:1-5). However, it is necessary to honestly evaluate the actions of others to see if they are an encouragement or a hinderance to our discipleship.

Verdict (Declaration). Just as Paul did with the believers at Thessalonica, we judge men's actions against the standard of God's word, judge their fruit whether it is good or corrupt fruit, and declare in our own mind and opinion whether a man's works back up and validate the faith that he professes in Christ. We hope to live in such a way in the sight of others that we make our calling and election sure and give them assurance of our state of righteousness before God.

It's important to understand that it's not our calling or responsibility to make a definitive determination of who is or who is not a child of God. God knoweth them that are his (2 Tim. 2:19), and he does not need our help in validating or determining one's eternal state. We make these determinations in our own justification by works courtroom primarily for the purpose of identifying fellowship. If based on our assessment of one's works, we determine they are living in an unrighteous way, it might be necessary to remove ourselves from close fellowship with that person. If we continue in close fellowship with ones who perpetually live ungodly, eventually we will be affected by their sin and they will become a stumbling block to our own discipleship (1 Cor. 5:1-12). If one is "condemned" in our courtroom of justification by works by their unrighteous deeds, it's probably necessary to remove them from our close fellowship.

Rightly Dividing the Kingdom of God in Scripture

“44) And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” (Daniel 2:44)

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 4:17)

The Kingdom of God

Another topic that is commonly misunderstood in scripture and requires a great deal of rightly dividing to understand is “the kingdom of God”. Generally speaking, a kingdom has a king with sovereign power, a jurisdiction of authority over its subjects, a capital city where the king resides, an army to protect the kingdom, and some other important kingdom attributes. God’s kingdom is “*not of this world*” (John 18:36); it is not a natural kingdom, but it is a spiritual kingdom inhabited by the spiritually regenerated children of God under the authority of their King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The general teaching in Christianity is that the “kingdom of God” is not applicable to the child of God today, but that Jesus will come back and set up a natural kingdom on earth for a thousand years because he was not successful in properly setting up his kingdom during his first advent. This misconception is taken from a myopic misinterpretation of Rev. 20:1-8. This teaching totally ignores the clear teaching of scripture that in Jesus’ day the kingdom of God was already “*at hand*” (Matt. 4:17), and Jesus set up a kingdom that would stand forever (Dan. 2:44). Many children of God have missed the blessings of the kingdom of God in the church because they are looking for a kingdom to come later. No, we need to heed the teaching of Jesus and apostles today as well. Look and see that the kingdom of God is right here and right now in the church of Jesus Christ! The kingdom of God is still at hand and God desires for his children to experience the joys of his kingdom today!

There are many different aspects of the kingdom of God in scripture. In a general sense, we can say that the kingdom of God is wherever the King, Jesus Christ, rules and exercises authority and dominion over his kingdom subjects. Jesus rules as Creator of this world and has all power in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18). Jesus rules as the King over all the elect family of God and will one day bring them into his eternal kingdom in heaven with God (Matt. 25:34). The King rules and reigns in the hearts of God’s children by the Holy Ghost, so the kingdom is also experienced in the heart of the child of God – “*the kingdom of God is within you*” (Luke 17:21) and is “*righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*” (Rom. 14:17). There is also a special manifestation of the kingdom of God in the church of Jesus Christ. The spiritual blessings we receive in the church are truly a “foretaste of glory divine”, a small sliver of the spiritual blessings in heavenly places we shall experience in heaven for all eternity. That is why in the gospel of Matthew the writer was inspired by the Spirit to primarily describe this kingdom as “*the kingdom of heaven*”. It’s in this kingdom that we can experience – albeit to a diluted and diminished degree – the joys of heaven here in our lives today. We need to understand this “church kingdom of heaven” here in time to press into that kingdom and experience these joys in discipleship in the church.

Spiritual Israel – The Israel of God

We see a natural type and allusion to God’s spiritual kingdom in the natural nation of Israel in the Old Testament. God chose Israel to bless out of all the nations of the earth and to be their King, not based upon anything they did or any merit in themselves, but God simply chose them according to his love for them (Deut. 7:6-8). God was originally established as their King, but they rejected him and set up a man to rule over them. Then, God sent a man after his own heart, David, to be their king and to rule over God’s people.

Rightly Dividing the Kingdom of God in Scripture

This kingdom had jurisdiction and authority over God's people to set laws for how they were to live their life, and the citizens had to answer to the wrath of the king if they disobeyed God's law. Israel had an army that protected its kingdom and had to fight against enemies that sought to overthrow it. They had a capital city in Jerusalem, in Zion, in which the king resided and from which he sent out decrees for his kingdom subjects to obey. Israel had a God-ordained priesthood that made sacrifices unto God according to God's law on behalf of its people. Each of these natural pictures of Israel give us insight into spiritual lessons of the order and functioning of God's spiritual kingdom of heaven here in the church. There are many other examples that could be given as well to exhibit that God's choosing and establishment and functioning of the natural nation of Israel were primarily given to teach us spiritual lessons about God's spiritual kingdom of heaven.

Just like God chose a natural nation to love and to manifest his glory in this world for a period of time, before the foundation of the world God chose a spiritual people to glorify him in this world as well. God originally made a covenant with the natural nation of Israel, but now God has made a "*new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah*". This covenant was not made with natural-born Israel, but this new covenant was made with God's chosen spiritual people. God covenanted with "spiritual Israel" to give them a new heart, write his own laws upon that new heart, and give them a vital, new birth knowledge of the Lord. "8) *For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11) And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12) For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*" (Heb. 8:8-12) See also Heb. 10:16, 2 Cor. 3:3, Rom. 2:15.

The outward mark of a natural Jewish male was circumcision of his flesh. In the new covenant kingdom of heaven, the inward marks of God's chosen spiritual people is a circumcision of the heart. What makes one a "spiritual Jew" is not the outward circumcision of the flesh, but it is an inward circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit in the new birth. "28) *For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly: neither is circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29) But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*" (Rom. 2:28-29) The "Israel of God" are those who have been made a new creature by God in the new birth and that live and walk according to this new rule of the laws written in their hearts. "15) *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. 16) And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*" (Gal. 6:15-16)

Many prophecies in the Old Testament that speak of Zion, Israel, and Jerusalem are fulfilled in the church kingdom, in the spiritual Mount Zion, in the spiritual city of the living God, in the heavenly Jerusalem. "22) *But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23) To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.*" (Heb. 12:22-23) There are many references in Revelation to the city of God, which is the "New Jerusalem" that comes down from God out of heaven (Rev. 21:2, 21:10, 3:12). Many of the attributes of the natural city of Jerusalem that was the center of authority for the king in Israel, teach us of a "heavenly Jerusalem" that we can experience here in the church and the final fulfilment in God's eternal kingdom in heaven. As we read scripture, especially in the Old Testament depictions of natural Israel, we need to consider the implications for us as "spiritual Jews" in the "church kingdom of heaven" instead of just natural Israel.

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God's Heavenly Eternal Kingdom

The ultimate fulfilment of God's kingdom of heaven is certainly for all the elect children of God to live in heaven, in the immediate presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords. For man to be able to live in heaven with God, our sinful hearts needed to be changed in the new birth. We have been delivered from the power of darkness of sin and have been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son by the new birth. *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."* (Col. 1:13) It is of necessity that man must be born again to enter into God's final eternal kingdom or even the church kingdom. *"3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 5) Jesus answered, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3,5) Man's soul must be born of the Spirit to be fit to enter into God's eternal heavenly kingdom. It's also a necessity for God's children to be born again before they can "see" (experience) the church kingdom here in this world and to also press into the church kingdom in their lives.

When Jesus returns the second time and separates the sheep from the goats at the end of time, then shall the King usher his people into the kingdom prepared for them from before the foundation of the world. *"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matt. 25:34) The original purpose of God's election of a people before the world began was for all his children to be with him in heaven for all eternity, and Jesus shall present all those children before the Father in the heavenly kingdom at the end of time without the loss of one. *"And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children with God hath given me."* (Heb. 2:13)

Internal Manifestation of the Kingdom of God

While we won't get to experience the eternal kingdom of heaven until we pass away or Jesus returns, we can feel the kingdom of God in our hearts in this life. Jesus (our King) resides in our hearts after the new birth – *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col. 1:27). Therefore, the King rules in the kingdom of the heart of the born-again child of God. Man has always wanted to see God's work and kingdom with a natural eye. The Jews in Jesus' day were looking for a natural Messiah, a military conqueror to overthrow Roman oppression and reestablish Jewish governmental independence. They were looking for a battlefield and the beginning of a military conquest to identify the kingdom was coming and near. However, Jesus clarified that *"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight... but now is my kingdom not from hence."* (John 18:36) The kingdom of God cannot be seen with the natural eye – it *"cometh not with observation"*. The kingdom is also not based on physical location – it's not *"Lo here! Or lo, there!"*. Instead, Jesus clarified that the primary manifestation of God's spiritual kingdom *"is within you"*, within the heart of the child of God. *"20) And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21) Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo, there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."* (Luke 17:20-21)

The child of God that has been born of the Spirit, not only has Jesus Christ residing in their heart, but has the Holy Ghost residing in their heart. The kingdom of God is "not meat and drink" but it's "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost". *"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"*. (Rom. 14:17) We feel the presence of God in our souls by the Holy Ghost. We feel right by the imputed righteousness of Jesus. We feel peace and joy in our hearts when we are in submission to the authority of King Jesus. We experience the kingdom of heaven in our hearts as we feel the assurance of the Holy Ghost with joy and peace in our souls.

Rightly Dividing the Kingdom of God in Scripture

Establishment of the Kingdom of God

There is a sense that since the world began, Jesus has been ruling the kingdom of God. The elect that were born again in the Old Testament days had the King residing in their heart and submitted to his authority in a kingdom sense. God exercised his sovereign authority as King since the creation of the world. However, there came a time in Jesus' earthly ministry that the kingdom of God was more clearly manifest to public view than just in the hearts of God's children. The kingdom "came" in power and in clarity to the earth.

God gave to King David a promise that his son would establish a kingdom that would stand forever. *"12) And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13) He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14) I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 15) But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16) And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."* (2 Sam. 7:12-16) It's true that David's natural son, Solomon, built a house for God (the temple), but Solomon's throne and kingdom certainly did not last forever. The natural Davidic kingly lineage eventually died out and the kingdom of Judah was overthrown. The true fulfillment of this promise to David was that Jesus Christ (who was of the seed of David) would establish the kingdom of God, build a house for God's name (the church of the living God, 1 Tim. 3:15), and Christ's throne of his kingdom would reign forever.

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, by Peter's preaching on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2 verifies for us the fulfillment of this prophecy to David in his seed, Jesus Christ. *"29) Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30) Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne... 32) This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33) Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34) For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35) Until I make thy foes thy footstool. 36) Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."* (Acts 2:29-36) Jesus as the seed of David, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, was "the Christ" (the anointed one, the anointed rightful King) who set up the kingdom of God of the church during his earthly ministry.

We also have a prophecy in Daniel 2 of the establishment of the kingdom of heaven during the days of the Roman empire. *"37) Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38) And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. 39) And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. 40) And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. 41) And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42) And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43) And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. 44) And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45) Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the*

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silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” (Dan. 2:37-45) History has clearly proven that the fourth kingdom in this prophecy is the Roman Empire. The prophecy affirmed that in the days of the Roman Empire – “*in the days of these kings*” – that “*the God of heaven*” would set up a kingdom. God came down into this earth himself as a man, in the person of Jesus Christ, to set up the kingdom of heaven “himself”. The kingdom of God that Jesus established “*shall never be destroyed*” and “*it shall stand forever*”. This kingdom would not be like the kingdoms of men that are “left to other people” as one king dies and another king comes into authority. No, this kingdom is ruled by an eternal King that lives forever. This kingdom would also “consume all these kingdoms” and would stand forever. The reason why there has not been another worldwide kingdom since the Roman Empire is that the spiritual kingdom of God has “consumed” all these earthly kingdoms and has taken precedence in this world.

The child that was born of David’s seed (Jesus Christ) would reign upon the throne of David forever. “6) *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.* 7) *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*” (Isaiah 9:6-7) During Jesus’ earthly ministry, Zion’s King came lowly, riding upon an ass in fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy of the coming King. “*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*” (Zech. 9:9, see also Matt. 21:4) The prophecy in 2 Samuel 7 which was verified in Acts 2 shows that Christ is the fulfillment of that prophecy and that he was sitting upon the throne of his kingdom at the writing of the book of Acts. The prophecy in Daniel indicates that Christ would reign in the kingdom of God beginning in the days of the Roman Empire. The prophecy in Zechariah shows us that Christ came as a King when he ascended to Jerusalem riding upon an ass. Thus, these scriptures clearly teach us that Christ is the King of the kingdom of heaven and that he established his kingdom of heaven during his earthly ministry. For other verses that validate Jesus Christ as both the King of the Jews and as the King of kings, see Matt. 2:1, 27:11, 27:37; Luke 19:37; John 1:49; 1 Tim. 1:17, 6:14-16; Rev. 15:3.

The Kingdom of Heaven is “At Hand”

As we have noted, the general teaching of Christianity today, is that the kingdom of God is not coming for thousands of years and is far out in the future, irrelevant to our daily lives today. Instead, the scriptures teach that Jesus established the church kingdom of heaven in his earthly ministry in the midst of the Roman empire (see Dan. 2:37-45, 2 Sam. 7:14-16, and Acts 2:29-36 that we have already considered). Furthermore, the original gospel proclamations of John, Jesus, and the apostles were all centered around the kingdom of God being “at hand” – close, near, and within reach. John the Baptist came first as the forerunner of Jesus Christ preaching the kingdom of heaven is “at hand”. “1) *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2) And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” (Matt. 3:1-2) Then, Jesus himself, in his first gospel message after being baptized and then immediately tempted, he immediately began to preach the immediacy of the kingdom of heaven. “*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” (Matt. 4:17) “14) *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15) And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*” (Mark 1:14-15) Then, Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with a single commission, to preach the kingdom of heaven was at hand, the same message that Jesus himself proclaimed. “*And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” (Matt. 10:7)

Rightly Dividing the Kingdom of God in Scripture

In Jesus' day there were already disciples that were "entering in" to the kingdom of heaven, but the scribes and Pharisees were hindering their liberty of movement into the kingdom. *"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."* (Matt. 23:13) This shows the necessity of rightly dividing the kingdom of heaven under consideration in each verse. It's obvious that the actions of men, the action of the scribes and Pharisees cannot "shut up" men from going to eternal heaven. Eternal salvation is accomplished solely by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and no action of man can prevent another person from going to heaven. However, the actions and legalism and persecutions of the scribes and Pharisees in Jesus' day did prevent some disciples from continuing to enter into the kingdom of God. We see here that the kingdom was applicable to disciples in Jesus' day and there were some that were already entering into that kingdom of heaven during Jesus' ministry as well.

When something is "at hand", it's evident it is close, near, and within reach. The kingdom of God is not a far-out irrelevant concept for the child of God that we won't experience until Jesus returns. The kingdom of heaven was "at hand" in Jesus ministry, and it's still "at hand" today because Jesus' church kingdom will last forever. If something is "at hand" that means it's within our reach, that we can reach out and grasp this kingdom if we are willing to follow the commands of the King. This kingdom is not unattainable for the child of God here in our lives; it's right within our grasp; it's right within our reach for the diligent child of God. How then do we "lay hold" on the kingdom of heaven that is "at hand"? We can experience the eternal joys of heaven here in the church kingdom of heaven by following the command of Jesus to first of all "Repent" and then to diligently press into the kingdom of God.

Seeing the Kingdom of God

The first necessity to entering into the kingdom of God is to be born again by the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus undeniably clarified the necessity of the new birth to either see or enter into the kingdom of God during his conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. *"3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4) Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5) Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8) The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."* (John 3:3-8)

Nicodemus was seeking Jesus and knew that this man must come from God to do the miracles he had performed. Jesus clarifies the reason that Nicodemus can understand that his miracles manifest his divinity, while others of his peers among the Pharisees not only rejected Jesus but even attributed his deeds to Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24-37). Jesus tells him the reason he can "see" this is the work of the kingdom of God is that he is born again. In contrast, man apart from God's new birth has no ability to see the kingdom of God, hear God's words, or believe on Jesus Christ. Jesus condemned some wicked men severely in John 8. *"42) Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43) Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44) Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45) And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46) Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47) He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."* (John 8:42-47) Jesus clarifies these wicked men "cannot hear my word" (v.43). Why? Because "ye are of your father the devil" (v.44) and "ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (v.47) Why was

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it that they did not have the ability to hear God's word? It was because they were not born again; they were not of God; they were still spiritually dead in sins. It's not just that they were stubborn and didn't choose to believe; they had no "ability" to hear and believe because they were not "of God" and not born of God the Father; they were instead manifesting the deeds of their father the devil. They still only had a carnal mind that has no ability to be subject the law of God and cannot please God (Rom. 8:7-8). They had not been given spiritual "ears to hear" in the new birth (Matt. 13:6,16,43; Rev. 2:11, etc). They did not have spiritual "eyes to see" like Nicodemus had when he "saw" that Jesus miracles were "from God".

The natural man, apart from the new birth of God, has no ability to receive, hear, see, or understand spiritual things. Spiritual things are just foolishness to the natural man. *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* (1 Cor. 2:14) Even the preaching of the gospel and believing that Jesus died and rose from the dead is utter foolishness to those who have not been born again. *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* (1 Cor. 1:18) On the other hand though, unto those which "are saved", unto those that have been born again by the Spirit of God, when "the saved" hear the preaching of the cross, it is powerful in their hearts and minds.

Jesus says no one can "see" the kingdom of God without first being born again. Certainly, we have to be given spiritual eyes "to see" spiritual things. Man that is natural and dead in sins spiritually cannot "see" anything in a spiritual realm. Furthermore, "to see" can also mean "to experience". No natural man can "experience" the kingdom of God without the new birth. Natural man cannot experience eternal heaven because without the new birth; man's naturally wicked soul is not fit for the presence of God. It's also true that natural man cannot "experience" the kingdom of God without a heart that has been tendered by grace. If one who is unregenerate (not born again) attends church for some reason, it can be the most spiritual meeting ever, but they will not feel or experience anything in their soul. In that same Spirit-filled church worship service, those who are born again may powerfully experience *"righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost"* (Rom. 14:17) and say that was the most spiritual worship they had ever attended. Even though they were in the exact same physical location, hearing the same natural sounds of singing, praying, and preaching, they cannot "see" or "experience" the kingdom of God because they do not have a spiritual heart that has been given to them in the new birth. First of all, man has to be born again to "see" the kingdom of God. Then, after the born-again child of God "sees" the kingdom, he should have a fervent to desire to then "enter into the kingdom of God". *"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* (John 3:5)

Entering Into the Kingdom of God

Once a child of God has been born again by the Spirit, they now have the capacity to "enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). As evidenced by the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and his apostles, the first step to entering into the kingdom of God is repentance (Matt. 4:17). We should acknowledge that we are a sinner and our only hope of salvation and righteousness is Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:3-9). We should confess our sins and bring forth fruits (works) meet for repentance (Matt. 3:7, Acts 26:20). We should submit to believer's baptism after our confession of belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:37-41, 8:12; 1 Pet. 3:21). When a born-again child of God hears the preaching of the gospel and "sees" with his spiritual eyes the kingdom of God, we ought to enter into the kingdom by confessing Jesus Christ and being baptized in his name. *"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."* (Acts 8:12)

It is not easy to enter into – to "press into" – the kingdom of God. *"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."* (Luke 16:16) It's evident that "every man" (every child of God without exception) does not "press into" the kingdom of God

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as they ought. Not every born-again child of God is willing to make that sacrifice. Like the rich young ruler, there are things they are not willing to give up and sacrifice to press into the kingdom of God, and they go away sorrowful instead of experiencing the joys of the kingdom (Mark 10:17-27). Our natures want to go our own way, do our own thing, and not submit to the authority and law of King Jesus. We want to confess ourselves and serve ourselves instead of serving Jesus as our King. It is challenging to mortify our natures and to choose to serve God instead of serving ourselves. *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."* (Matt. 11:12) We have to be purposeful and forceful to put down and mortify our carnal natures to serve Jesus instead of ourselves.

We must exhibit a humility of soul, as a little child, to press into the kingdom of God. *"3) And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4) Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* (Matt. 18:3-4) It's not the prideful and haughty that experience the joys of the kingdom of heaven; it's the poor in spirit and those that are persecuted for righteousness sake that "possess" the kingdom. *"3) Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 10) Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* (Matt. 5:3,10)

When we press into the kingdom of God, we should exhibit a change of actions, fruits meet for repentance. God's standard of righteousness is not just outward displays of good works but a pure inward righteousness, even in our thoughts and intents. That inner purity of heart is required to enter into the kingdom. *"19) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20) For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* (Matt. 5:19-20). The standard of righteousness for pressing into the kingdom of God is narrow and strait. Only a few of God's children will make the appropriate sacrifices to enter the narrow way and strait gate of authentic discipleship. *"13) Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14) Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* (Matt. 7:13-14)

Jesus gave many kingdom of heaven parables in his preaching ministry. Some of the most prominent of these kingdom parables are given in Matthew 13. Here Jesus compared the joys of the kingdom of heaven to a treasure hidden in a field and a pearl of great price. *"44) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. 45) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: 46) Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."* (Matt. 13:44-46) Here is a man who is seeking for a treasure in a field. He's seeking a treasure (he's already born again with a desire to seek godly things), but he's not satisfied with what he's found elsewhere in the world. The treasure of the kingdom of heaven is hidden in a field; it's not out in the open where anyone can see or partake of it. It takes diligent searching to find the treasure; it takes some digging in the field to possess the treasure. When he finally finds that treasure, because of his joy, he's willing to sell everything he has to buy that field and possess the treasure. Then, a merchant man is seeking goodly pearls; he's seeking for that once in a lifetime pearl that is priceless. When he finally finds that one pearl of great price, he immediately goes and sells all that he has to possess that pearl. This is the type of "all-in sacrifice" to our King that is required to press into the kingdom of God and possess the treasure of the kingdom. We forsake ourselves, submit to the authority of our King, and follow his command to press into the kingdom of God. It's in the Lord's kingdom that we find this treasure – righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost – and sweet fellowship and communion with our King in his kingdom.

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“But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:” (2 Tim. 2:10)

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor. 1:18)

What is the Gospel?

God has planned and purposed the elect’s eternal salvation from before the world began, and Jesus perfectly completed the work of salvation on the cross and saved all his people. If salvation is totally of the Lord with no action of man involved in securing his eternal salvation, then what role does the gospel play in the life of the child of God? The gospel is not an invitation for eternal life, but a “declaration of the good news that Jesus has already finished the work of salvation”.

The original Greek word that is commonly used in the New Testament for “gospel” is “euaggelion” (or some other derivative of that base word). That word means “good news” or the verb form “to preach or bring the good news”. This word is also the basis for our English words “evangelist” and “evangelism”, and its root word conveys delivering a “eulogy”, like at a funeral – a speech or writing in commendation of the qualities of a person or thing. Therefore, the definition of this word clearly shows that the gospel is not a proposition for the sinner to believe and gain eternal life, but the gospel is a publication, proclamation, and declaration extolling the work of salvation that has been finished by Jesus Christ.

Those who preach the gospel “publish peace and salvation”, bring “good tidings of good” to God’s people. *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”* (Isaiah 52:7) The gospel does not offer eternal peace and salvation if you believe, but it declares that Jesus has already brought peace and salvation to his people by his finished work on the cross. Preachers are essentially news boys trying to get someone to read and listen to their publication that “It is Finished” (John 19:30) and believe their report (Isaiah 53:1). News can only be declared and published once the facts of that good news have already occurred. If the gospel is an invitation that the sinner has to accept to make salvation a reality, then there is not yet any news to declare or publish because salvation is still pending.

Instead, the gospel is a “declaration” – *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...”* (1 Cor. 15:1) – of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, validated by the scriptures – *“3) For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4) And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”* (1 Cor. 15:3-4) Jesus Christ and his death to save sinners is the central theme of the gospel. Paul sets the tone for the entire gospel ministry, to proclaim and declare the crucifixion of Christ in the salvation of sinners. *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”* (1 Cor. 2:2)

The preaching of the gospel does not attempt to promote a fear of hell to get people to believe, to preach a “turn or burn” message. No, the gospel gives “comfort” for God’s people, assuring their fears and proclaiming that “your warfare is already accomplished” and “your iniquity is already pardoned” because of the death of Jesus Christ. *“1) Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2) Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.”* (Isaiah 40:1-2) The gospel does not tell a dead sinner to choose life, but it does *“bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”* (Isaiah 61:1) There is a liberty in the proclamation and subsequent belief of the message that tells one that feels to be in prison and in captivity to their sin that they

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are actually free and have liberty through Jesus Christ. The truth of God's word declares glorious liberty to God's people, a freedom from the bondage of sin to "live free" in the gospel of the finished work of Jesus Christ. *"31) Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32) And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* (John 8:31-32)

Gospel Gives Light, Not Life

The gospel is not an offer to receive eternal life, but it gives light to those that have already been given eternal life in Christ. Man that is dead in sins cannot perform any action to choose life... because he's dead. Therefore, the idea that the gospel is a well-meant offer to the sinner to gain eternal life is futile because no man can choose God (because he's dead in sins) nor would choose God (because he's totally depraved). We have been eternally saved by grace alone, not by our works (2 Tim. 1:9) but that settled fact of our salvation is *"now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:"* (2 Tim. 1:10) The elect have already been given "life and immortality" in Jesus Christ. Now, the fact of our eternal salvation is now "brought to light through the gospel". Light does not create anything; it only illuminates and reveals what is already there. When you turn on a light, it does not change the substance of anything in that room, it just gives you illumination so you can clearly see what has been there all along.

This is the case with the gospel as well. The gospel does not give or offer eternal life to the sinner. The "light switch of the gospel" simply illuminates, for the elect, the reality of eternal salvation they already have in Jesus Christ. God's children can get entangled with the affairs of this life and deceived by Satan in this world, but the light of the gospel gives the proper vision for them to live as they ought to in this world. *"3) But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4) In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."* (2 Cor. 4:3-4) The "lost" in verse 3 are not those lost in sins and destined to hell if they don't repent and believe. There is no need for Satan to blind the minds and hide the gospel from those who are dead in sins and already living according to the course of this world and the prince of the power of the air. No, those who Satan desires to blind from the light of the gospel are the born-again children of God who are living in the bondage of sin and fear and not serving God in liberty and freedom.

Paul's commission to preach the gospel was not to populate heaven but *"to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."* (Acts 26:18) Those children of God that live in perpetual fear that they are not one of God's children and are oppressed by the power of Satan because of that fear. We preach the gospel that their eyes may be opened, and they may be turned from darkness to light and to feel the power of the gospel instead of being oppressed by the power of Satan's condemnation.

There is a powerful salvation in the gospel for God's children. One's belief of the gospel is not what puts one on the fast track to heaven, but it does powerfully reveal what God has already done for his child. The gospel does not "offer righteousness" to be eternally saved, but the gospel "reveals the righteousness of God from faith to faith" for the born-again child of God. *"16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."* (Rom. 1:16-17) The gospel "reveals" that we already have the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to our account. The light of the gospel "reveals" and "illuminates" the righteousness the child of God already has in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

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Belief and Faith as Evidence of Salvation

A significant amount of the confusion in Christianity regarding the gospel is that what most people incorrectly attribute as the “causes” of eternal salvation (belief, acceptance, baptism, good works) are actually the “effects” or evidences of eternal salvation. A dead man does not do good works (including belief) to get life; instead, a man does good works because he “already has been given life”. Anyone who believes the gospel and exhibits faith in Jesus Christ did not just “get born again” when they believed; they are manifesting the evidence that they “are already born-again” prior to their belief of the gospel.

All that believe on Jesus Christ already “hath everlasting life”. The word “hath” is in your King James Bible as a “present possessive verb”. That means that those who believe are already in “present possession” of eternal life. We do not believe to “get everlasting life”; we believe because we are “already in present possession” of everlasting life. “3:36) *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him... 5:24) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life... 6:47) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life... 8:47) He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*” (John 3:36, 5:24, 6:47, 8:47)

Faith is not given to everyone and then we have to enact that faith in belief to be saved to heaven. No, faith is clearly identified as a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Only those who already have the Spirit and have already been born again by the Spirit have the faith to believe in Jesus Christ. Therefore, faith is not how you “get saved”. Faith in your life is how you exhibit “fruit” to manifest that you “already are saved” and already have been given the Spirit in the new birth. Faith is not for “getting life”, but faith is for “living life” – the just (those already just in Christ) shall live by faith. “*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*” (Rom. 1:17)

Internal faith given in the new birth is exhibited and manifested in an external way by “belief”. Almost every other denomination will say that you have to believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved to heaven; that your belief is the condition you meet that “causes” your eternal salvation. Well, the scriptures teach (and Primitive Baptists believe) that belief is not the “cause” of the new birth, but an “evidence” that one is “already born of God”. “1) *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God... 10) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself... 13) These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God*” (1 John 5:1,10,13) These are people that already believe in verse 13, but they are still encouraged to “continue believing” in Jesus Christ that they may “know that ye have eternal life” and have assurance of their salvation. That is one the main purposes of the gospel for the child of God – for those who “already believe” and “already are born-again” for them to have the assurance and peace to “know that ye have eternal life”.

Belief is not “how you pass from death unto life”, but belief is an external manifestation that one “is [already] passed from death unto life”. “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*” (John 5:24) Notice that one who believes “is born of God” (1 John 5:1), and Jesus clarifies further that the person who believes “is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). “2) *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. 15) Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God*” (1 John 4:2,15) “*Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*” (1 Cor. 12:3) The scriptures make

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it abundantly clear that there is no one that has the ability to confess Jesus and believe on Christ unless he is already “of God” and already has the Holy Spirit in the new birth.

Biblical Evangelism and Open Doors

It is very commonly asked of us who believe in salvation by God’s sovereign grace alone and that man’s belief is not necessary for his eternal life, then why do you preach the gospel at all? Well, the short answer is because God commanded us to preach the gospel. Even though the gospel does not offer eternal life, it does provide for the child of God: good news (Isaiah 52:7), peace (Rom. 5:1), joy (Luke 2:11), comfort (Isaiah 40:1-2), freedom (John 8:32), liberty (Isaiah 61:1-2), light (2 Tim. 1:10), healing (Mark 2:17), edification (Eph. 4:11-16), assurance (1 Thess. 1:5), timely (just not eternal) salvation (Rom. 1:16), along with innumerable other benefits and blessings for the child of God in their life. Simply put, God’s children need to know what God has done for them, so they can glorify and praise him for his grace (Eph. 1:6).

While the preaching of the gospel is not the hinge that swings one’s eternal life, the gospel is absolutely vital in the life of the child of God. God has commanded his people, and particularly his God-called preachers, to preach the gospel to “all nations” and to “every creature”. *“19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”* (Matt. 28:19-20) God has commissioned the church to preach and given gifts to men (Eph. 4:11-16) so that the body of the church can be edified and strengthened by the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are called to preach the gospel to every nation and person under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

However, where and how we preach the gospel is not dictated by an independent body apart from the church but is directed by the Holy Spirit. There is no biblical precedent for a “mission board”, an organization independent of the church that chooses locations and funding for how and where preachers are to preach. The scriptures only present a “heavenly mission board” with one member, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit told Philip the evangelist to go to the middle of the desert to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-38). The Spirit revealed to the church that Paul and Barnabas had been separated for their preaching work and the church acknowledged that calling by the laying of hands (Acts 13:1-4). Furthermore, when men go forth to preach, they do so under the authority of the local church (just like in Acts 13), not independent of the church under the authority of an unscriptural mission board. The church acknowledged the calling of the Spirit upon these men and sent them out under the authority and blessing of the local church to preach the gospel. The Spirit forbid Paul from going to Asia and Bithynia but revealed to him to preach in Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). The Spirit encouraged Paul to remain and faithfully preach in Corinth because God already had “much people” in that city, even before they had believed the gospel (Acts 18:10).

It is necessary for God to first “open a door of utterance” for gospel preaching to have any success. We cannot just simply pick a place that looks opportune or promising to preach and go there without God first opening the door. The Holy Spirit might forbid our preaching there like the Spirit did to Paul in Asia and Bithynia in Acts 16:6-8. Then, the Lord made it clear that even though there were closed doors in those two cities, God showed he had opened a door in Macedonia and Paul pressed through that open door (Acts 16:9-40). God is the only authority to open a door for the gospel. *“7) And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; 8) I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it...”* (Rev. 3:7-8) God opens doors and avenues for the gospel that no one else could open or could even imagine. If God opens a door, no man can shut that open door. The contrary is just as true though; if God shuts a door, then no man can open it either.

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Paul was given great clarity of the Holy Spirit that God had opened a door for the gospel in Ephesus, and he was going to labor in that open door until the Lord saw fit to close it. *“For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.”* (1 Cor. 16:9) *“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,”* (2 Cor. 2:12) We have to be diligent in prayer and in reliance upon the Holy Spirit to pray for God to give us open doors of utterance for the gospel to have success and God's children to be converted to the truth. *“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:”* (Col. 4:3) *“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.”* (2 Thess. 3:1) It's of necessity for God to direct the ministry to where there are already born-again children of God who are hungering and thirsting for the truth. The gospel has no effect or power upon anyone unless they “are already saved” (1 Cor. 1:18). When God has already done his work and already has “much people in the city” (Acts 18:10), then the preaching of the gospel can convert God's children to the truth. We follow God's command to preach the gospel to everyone, but we are still wholly dependent upon the direction and guidance and opening of doors by the Holy Spirit to have any success in preaching the gospel.

Will All the Elect Hear and Believe the Gospel?

God's children are born again apart from any action of the preacher or the gospel; the elect are regenerated by the immediate, direct work of the Holy Spirit upon their heart in giving them life in Christ. Since the gospel is not the means of the new birth or eternal salvation, we must ask, “will all the elect hear and believe the gospel in their life”? This is a commonly debated question in all of Christianity and even among believers in God's sovereign grace in salvation. While the scriptures do not uphold that all the elect will hear and believe the gospel in their life, that does not diminish our desire or responsibility to preach the gospel as broadly as possible so that as many as possible of God's children do hear the gospel.

God's elect family is *“a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues”* (Rev. 7:9 & 5:9). This verse affirms that out of every “nation”, out of every “kindred” (family group), out of every “people”, and out of every “tongue” and language, that God has chosen at least one elect child out of every one of those groups. There are innumerable nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues that have lived previously but are now extinct and gone, clearly having never heard the gospel. Certainly, that is true of all the Old Testament Gentile nations, but there are many even today that will obviously never even hear the gospel, let alone believe that message. All of those people are not doomed to hell, and God refused to elect them because the gospel wouldn't make it them in their life. All that God loved are saved in Christ, regardless of what nation or tongue or time period they lived that might have prevented them from hearing the good news of Christ. Despite the limitations of the gospel, our God is not limited in saving a people out of every one of the nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues that have long since been extinct from this earth.

Furthermore, it's evident that no one in the Old Testament could meet the criteria of hearing and believing the gospel either, even the Jews. There was no “good news of the finished work of salvation by Christ” yet because Christ had not come yet. Not even the Old Testament patriarchs can meet that criteria of having heard and believed the true gospel message of Jesus Christ.

It's clear that an infant in the womb cannot hear and believe the gospel, but John (Luke 1:15,44) and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5) were born again before their physical birth. The mothers of the young children two years of age and under that were slain by Herod were given assurance of their eternal security (Matt. 2:16-18, Jer. 31:15-17), but they had not heard and believed the gospel. What about “deaf people” that literally can't hear or “mute people” that have no ability to audibly confess Jesus? Did God not elect them because they would have physical handicaps that would limit them gaining eternal life? Of course not; that's foolishness.

Purpose of the Gospel

Scripture is replete with references to God's elect children apart from a true gospel knowledge and belief in Jesus Christ. *"As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes."* (Rom. 11:28) These are children of God that are "elected" but they are still "enemies of the gospel" in their life at this time. There are also clear indications that God gave many elect people among the natural-born Jews a "judicial blindness" to not be able to see and understand the gospel (Matt. 11:25-26, 13:11-17; John 12:37-43; Rom. 11:7-30). God sovereignly saw fit to restrict their ability to understand the work of Christ and believe on his name.

In the Old Testament, God says that if he had sent his prophets to the other Gentile nations, then they would have hearkened unto the message. God did not see fit to send that message to these Gentile nations (but instead sent it to Israel), but he says if he had sent that message, then they would have hearkened unto the preaching of his prophets. *"Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee."* (Ezek. 3:6) Then in the New Testament, Jesus affirms the same thing, that if his mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented. They would have repented (which is an evidence of election and salvation) but they never did because they never heard the gospel message. *"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."* (Matt. 11:21) These are people that would have repented if they heard the message, but they never heard it. Also note that God already had "much people" in Corinth before Paul had preached the gospel to them (Acts 18:10).

Even if we do not believe, we are still "of Christ" and Christ cannot deny himself. *"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."* (2 Tim. 2:13) Even if God's children fall away in their belief and have their faith overthrown, God still cannot deny "them that are his". *"18) Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. 19) Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."* (2 Tim. 2:18-19) Those who do not have the privilege of hearing the gospel or even those that fall away from steadfast belief are all saved the same way as every other child of God that does have the privilege of gospel knowledge – by the sovereign grace of God, the finished work of Jesus on the cross, and the immediate work of the Holy spirit in regeneration.

Belief in Christ and Joining the Church

Even though it's a reality that every child of God will not hear and believe the gospel, that does not diminish the responsibility for God's children to believe what Christ has done for them. There is "power" (Greek "dunamis" or "dynamite" power) in the gospel message for God's children. *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* (1 Cor. 1:18) The gospel doesn't mean anything to the non-elect "that perish"; it's just "foolishness" unto them. But unto us that "are saved" (are already born again by the Spirit), the preaching of the cross is "the power of God". If you have heard that gospel message and not only felt peace, joy, comfort, and assurance but also felt the power of God in your heart from that message, it is your responsibility to confess Jesus Christ publicly and to join the local church and to commit to serve God all your life by being baptized. Baptism depicts a putting away of the old life where you served only yourself and a new commitment based on the power of the gospel to serve God in your life. We call upon all of God's children that have been called by God in the new birth with ears to hear the gospel, to believe it, accept it, confess Christ publicly, be baptized and faithfully serve the Lord as a member of the Lord's body in the local church.

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“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I have delivered them to you.” (1 Cor. 11:2)

“18) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matt. 28:18-20)

Baptism

For those who believe in Jesus Christ, God calls upon those children of God to “Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ”. The King James Bible translators could not find a word in English that accurately conveyed the meaning of “to baptize” from the Greek text, so therefore they left the Greek word in its original form, even in the English translation; “*baptize*” (the verb form) – and all the applicable variations of that word – is the English transliteration of the Greek word “*baptizo*” which means “to make whelmed (i.e. fully wet)” (Strongs# 907), and a more detailed definition: “1) to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk); 2) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water; 3) to overwhelm” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon). Any person who submits to a mode of baptism other than full immersion totally subverts even the definition of the word which literally means “to immerse” or “to submerge”. When a ship is submerged at the bottom of the sea, it is fully immersed and overwhelmed by the water; it’s certainly not sprinkled with just a little bit of water on top of the ship.

Baptism is not the means of salvation or regeneration, but it produces a soothing of the child of God’s conscience and heart from their submission to God’s command. *“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:”* (1 Pet. 3:21) Jesus Christ submitted to baptism himself (Matt. 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-23, John 1:29-34) as he set the example to submit to this ordinance. Baptism did not make Jesus the Son of God, and baptism is not the means that makes a believer God’s child or son. Baptism just expresses in an external way to public view a validation of our sonship, just like with Jesus Christ. If Jesus was baptized, that should be a good enough reason to follow his example in baptism. Believers are commanded to be “disciples” – or “followers of Jesus”. A disciple should therefore follow the example of Jesus in submission to baptism. Baptism signifies the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism symbolizes that Jesus Christ was fully immersed in the grave by death (“buried”, Rom. 6:4, Col. 2:12), and we are professing a belief in Jesus’ resurrection, identifying with his resurrection, and committing to put to death our former life to serve Christ.

Baptism is performed based on the authority of all three persons of the Trinity. *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”* (Matt. 28:19) Scripture teaches there is only “one baptism”, not multiple forms or variations of an acceptable baptism. There is only “*one baptism*” which shows submission to “*one Lord*” in accordance with “*one faith*”. *“4) There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6) One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* (Eph. 4:4-6). There has been a great deal of contention over the proper manner of baptism in Christianity over the centuries. We believe scripture affirms that four elements identify the proper “one baptism” in the church: a) proper subject, b) proper belief and doctrine, c) proper mode, d) proper administrator.

Proper Subject. Only those who profess a belief in Jesus Christ are the proper subjects of baptism. This belief must be manifested in a public way by publicly confessing a belief in Jesus Christ to the local church. The baptism (or sprinkling) of infants do not meet this scriptural requirement for baptism because that

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young infant has not professed a public belief in Jesus Christ. Only those that have been taught (and have the ability to learn) are the proper subjects of baptism. *“19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”* (Matt. 28:19-20) Every example of baptism in the New Testament shows that belief is always the precursor to baptism: 3,000 gladly received the word (Acts 2:41); Samaritans believed (Acts 8:12-13); Ethiopian eunuch believes (Acts 8:36-38); Saul is converted and believes (Acts 22:12-16, 9:17-18); Cornelius and the Gentiles believe (Acts 10:44-48, 11:17); Lydia and her house believe (Acts 16:13-15); Philippian jailer and his house believe (Acts 16:30-33); Crispus and many other Corinthians believe (Acts 18:8); Twelve disciples from Ephesus believe and are rebaptized (Acts 19:4-7). We will address some specific aspects about what we ought to believe about Jesus Christ in the next section.

A proper subject for baptism should also exhibit a confession of our sins, acknowledging that I am a sinner before a holy God and my hope of salvation is in Jesus Christ alone. *“And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.”* (Mark 1:5, see also Matt. 3:6, Acts 19:18-20, Luke 18:13, Matt. 10:32, 1 John 1:9, James 5:16). For those who have been living a sinful life that is not in accordance with God’s word, they should show some change in their manner of life that is evidence of their changed heart, to manifest “fruits meet for repentance” in their works. There can be no discipleship without repentance. *“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.”* (Matt. 3:8, see also Acts 27:20 and Luke 3:7-14) *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”* (Acts 2:38, see also Acts 3:19, Matt. 3:2, 7-8, 4:17; 2 Cor. 7:10; Rev. 2:5, 2:16) While the proper subject for baptism should exhibit a desire to change their former actions to serve God in a newness of life (which is what the action of baptism represents), this is not an excuse for the church to give an harsh, legalistic inquisition to allow admittance into the church by baptism. One who desires to join the church should exhibit a repentant heart, desire to confess and repent from their sins, and want to change their manner of life to submit to the authority of God’s word.

Proper Belief and Doctrine. The New Testament scriptures make it clear that for one to be baptized (to be a proper subject), they must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. *“36) ...and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37) And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38) And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”* (Acts 8:36-38, see also Acts 16:30-33, Rom. 10:9, John 20:31; Acts 2:37-41, 8:12) However, it’s necessary for us to further clarify that statement here in Christianity today. Remember at that time when Philip baptized the eunuch there was only “one church” with one belief system. If one in the early 1st century professed a belief in Jesus as the Son of God, that effectively renounced Judaism or any other pagan religion that was around at that time. In today’s Christian climate, there is such a multitude of different religions and denominations that many of them might accept Jesus as the Son of God but teach rank heresy in every other part of their doctrine.

Just a cursory belief or confession of the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is not sufficient to be baptized into the Lord’s church. Even the devils believe there is one God (James 2:19); Satan (Matt. 4:3) and the evil spirits (Matt. 8:29, etc.) confessed that Jesus was the Son of God during his earthly ministry. Therefore, just a general belief and even confession of the deity of Jesus Christ is not sufficient. Just a cursory belief that Jesus is the Son of God is not sufficient to be baptized, but this belief signifies a broader profession of who Jesus is and what he accomplished in his death. We want to highlight four core beliefs of doctrinal truths that should be signified by a confession and belief that “Jesus is the Son of God”: a) they believe in the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ, b) they believe what the resurrection of Jesus Christ

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accomplished in securing eternal salvation, c) they believe that Jesus will return, resurrect the dead, and bring his elect home to glory, d) they are committing to walk in newness of life in service to Jesus Christ.

When we confess that Jesus is the Son of God, it is implied that we believe that Jesus was resurrected and raised from the dead for our justification. *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* (Rom. 10:9) *“(3) For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4) And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”* (1 Cor. 15:3-4)

When we confess that Jesus was raised from the dead, we are not just professing our belief in that historical fact, but we are publicly attesting our belief in what the resurrection of Jesus accomplished. We believe that the resurrection of Jesus Christ declared the finished work of salvation and signified that God the Father had accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on behalf of His people. The resurrection of Christ did not just make men savable or offer salvation if man is willing, but the resurrection validated Jesus’ affirmation that “It is Finished” (John 19:30) and he fully saved his people from their sins. *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, and quickened by the Spirit:”* (1 Pet. 3:18, see also 1 Cor. 15:17; Heb. 1:3, 9:12,24-26, 10:10-14; Rom. 1:4)

When we confess Jesus, we affirm a belief that Jesus will return to resurrect his people and bring them home to eternal glory without the loss of a single one of his elect. *“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:”* (Rom. 6:8) *“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”* (Rom. 8:11, see also Rom. 8:24, 1 Cor. 15:12-20,35-58)

When we confess Jesus, we are making a commitment to walk in newness of life based on the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *“1) What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2) God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?...4) ...that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life...”* (Rom. 6:1-11) Baptism depicts a burial and resurrection in the water. Therefore, we are committing to God in a public way that we will put to death our former manner of life and leave that sin in the watery grave of baptism and to be resurrected to serve God in newness of life.

There are many people who come to the Primitive Baptist Church who have believed that Jesus was the Son of God previously and been baptized in another church, but their understanding was lacking in what the resurrection of Jesus Christ accomplished in actually saving his people from their sins. Therefore, we humbly request those sincere disciples to submit to being baptized again into the Primitive Baptist Church under the proper belief of Jesus having finished the work of salvation on the cross. We will address this further in the upcoming “Re-Baptism” section. All of these beliefs and understanding of these doctrinal truths should be present for the “one baptism” in accordance with the scriptural pattern.

Proper Mode. Baptism by full immersion in water is the only proper mode for baptism. Just a sprinkling with water does not meet the scriptural requirement for a valid baptism. Even the definition of “*baptizo*” itself means “to submerge; to fully immerse”. The definition of baptism itself will not allow anything other than full immersion in water to be a proper baptism. Baptism is a symbolic picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; Jesus was not sprinkled with dirt, but He was fully immersed and buried in the grave. *“(3) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* (Rom. 6:3-4)

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John the Baptist baptized in an area sufficient for full immersion. John the Baptist was performing baptisms at this particular place (Aenon near to Salim) because there was enough water (“*there was much water there*”) at that part of the river for full immersion (John 3:23). Philip and the eunuch “*went down both into the water*” and “*came up out of the water*”, indicating they were fully immersed with water for them to be able to come up “*out of the water*” (Acts 8:38-39). When Jesus was baptized, he came up “*out of the water*”, indicating He was fully immersed in the water since He then came up “*out of the water*” (Matt. 3:16)

There has been a tremendous amount of persecution of the Original Baptist Church over the centuries for our commitment to full immersion as the only proper mode of baptism. Most of the persecution of our Baptist forefathers have been due to their rejection of the validity of Catholic and other “sprinkling baptisms” and their requirement for “full immersion re-baptism” for those who were converted from those other orders. We rejected that those were valid baptisms in accordance with the “one baptism” model of the scriptures and require those coming from those backgrounds to be re-baptized by full immersion according to the proper mode and standard in God’s word.

Proper Administrator. Who has the authority to baptize? Baptism is an ordinance of the church that is administered by an ordained minister on behalf of the church. “*16) Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them...18) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*” (Matt. 28:16-20) Jesus had 120 disciples prior to His ascension (Acts 1:15), but only the 11 apostles were taken up into a mountain by Jesus (Matt. 28:16) and given the command and authority to baptize (Matt. 28:18-20). This shows that the command to baptize was only given to the apostles, and the authority to baptize is only placed with men who have been ordained by the laying of hands (Acts 13:1-3, 1 Tim. 4:14, Heb. 6:2). The authority for baptism has been retained from the unbroken ministry dating back to the original apostles and this command in 30 AD. The modern-day ministry in the Primitive Baptist Church traces its authority back to the unbroken lineage dating all the way back to the apostles. The authority to uphold God’s word has been taught and passed on to successive generations of elders, just as was prescribed in 2 Tim. 2:2. The authority for elders to baptize is traced directly back to the command given by Jesus in Matt. 28:18-20 to the apostles that has been passed on faithfully in the ministry unto the current-day Primitive Baptist Church and elders in the church.

Every instance of baptizing recorded in scripture indicates the ordinance was administered by a minister of the gospel. The first example of a preacher baptizing is John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-6) who had a unique authority for his baptism as the last of the Old Testament prophets and forerunner of Jesus Christ. Peter preached and baptized (Acts 2:14-41, 10:34-48), as Peter had received the command directly from Jesus in Matt. 28:18-20. Also, even though he was an apostle, Peter denotes himself as “*also an elder*” (1 Pet. 5:1), (as did the apostle John, 2 John 1, 3 John 1), further denoting that baptismal authority was designated to the ordained elders in the church. Paul preached and baptized (Acts 16:13-15, 16:30-33, 18:8, 19:4-7, 1 Cor. 1:14-17) under authority as an apostle born out of due time (1 Cor. 15:8). Ananias baptized Paul in Damascus (Acts 22:12-16, 9:10-18), presumably under authority from the Jerusalem Church. Philip the evangelist preached and baptized (Acts 8:12, 8:35-38) after he had been ordained by the apostles at the Church at Jerusalem (Acts 6:5-6). Other unnamed men baptized at the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. 1:14-17) under the authority given them by Paul, which would have been through the New Testament pattern of laying on of hands. The teachers of the gospel are the same ones who have authority to baptize the believers (Matt. 28:19). It is only the ordained “elder” who has the authority to teach in the church (Matt. 28:18-20, 1 Tim. 3:2, 2 Tim. 2:24, Titus 2:1-7, Eph. 4:11, 1 Tim. 2:12) and thus is the only authority to baptize believers.

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Re-Baptism

The Primitive Baptist Church requires potential church members that have been baptized in another order or denomination to be re-baptized to be accepted as a member in full fellowship with the church. We see the biblical pattern for re-baptism addressed in Acts 19. *“1) And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples. 2) He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3) And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. 4) The said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”* (Acts 19:1-5)

The men that Paul encountered from Ephesus in Acts 19 had been baptized once in accordance with the baptism of John. Since they had not even heard that there was a Holy Ghost, then they had not been baptized by a duly ordained minister which would have baptized them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19). These men were also baptized under an incomplete message of the gospel from John and a belief that Christ was still to come. After hearing the gospel that Christ had already come and finished the work of salvation, the men believed in the name of Jesus and willingly submitted to be baptized again in the name of Jesus with a correct belief of Jesus Christ and correct understanding of the gospel. The necessity of re-baptism does not devalue the personal experience of the first baptism. In Acts 19, scripture still calls the men disciples (v.1) and Paul still acknowledges them as believers (v.2,4). However, when one hears the true gospel he should submit to baptism in accordance with belief and acceptance of that truth.

If any of the four elements of a proper baptism (the “one baptism”) – proper subject, proper belief, proper mode, proper administrator – are missing from the previous baptism, then the subject should submit to rebaptism to be accepted in full fellowship with the church. Based on this New Testament example in Acts 19, any person that has been baptized in another church or denomination under an incomplete understanding of the true gospel of the finished work of Jesus Christ or the Trinity or any other major scriptural doctrine, would need to be re-baptized under the “one baptism” that is in accordance with the “one faith” and the “true gospel” of the church.

The Lord’s Supper

Jesus instituted the observance of “the Lord’s Supper” on the evening before his crucifixion (the name “*the Lord’s supper*” comes from 1 Cor. 11:20) *“26) And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27) And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; 28) For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29) But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom. 30) And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”* (Matt. 26:26-30)

Jesus commanded his church to observe this ordinance to remember his death for our sins – this do in remembrance of me – until the Lord returns the second time. *“...23) For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24) And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25) After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

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26) *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come...*" (1 Cor. 11:17-34)

The Passover Lamb. After Jesus and the apostles completed observing the Jewish Passover meal, he used the same food and drink that was already there to institute the Lord's Supper. There is a tremendous amount of significance of the Jewish Passover feast in the Lord's Supper. The Israelites were commanded by God to observe the Passover feast every year during the first Jewish month to commemorate their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. They sacrificed a Passover lamb on the first day, and then ate only unleavened bread throughout the seven-day feast. (Exod. 12:1-28,43-49; Lev. 23:4-8; Num. 28:16-25; Deut. 16:1-8). Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and was subsequently crucified in the midst of the Jewish Passover feast (Luke 22:1,7-13). In accordance with Jesus' fulfillment of all the Mosaic law during his life (Matt. 5:17-18), Jesus observed the Passover meal (Luke 22:7-18) on the same night, just before he instituted the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19-20).

Jesus was the New Testament fulfillment of "the Passover Lamb" by his substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of his People. *"7) For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8) Therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."* (1 Cor. 5:7-8) Jesus was the Lamb of God that was offered for the sins of all his people on the cross, just as the Passover lamb was offered for the sins of God's people *"...John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* (John 1:29)

Unleavened Bread. The Israelites were commanded to only eat unleavened bread throughout the seven days of the Passover feast, and consequently it was this unleavened bread that Jesus gave to his disciples to eat after they had observed the Passover meal. Leaven is used as a symbol of sin in the scriptures. *"Therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."* (1 Cor. 5:8)

The unleavened bread represented the body of Jesus Christ because his body was pure, without blemish, and without sin – figuratively, Jesus was an "unleavened" sacrifice for sin. *"And he took [the unleavened] bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."* (Luke 22:19) *"But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"* (1 Pet. 1:19) The unleavened bread showed the sinless, perfect, without blemish nature of Jesus Christ that was offered on our behalf.

Wine. Fermented wine was used in the Lord's Supper, not grape juice. During Jesus' time, fermented wine was customarily used as the beverage of choice in conjunction with the meal of the Passover lamb and the unleavened bread. In Judea, the harvest of grapes was taken in September or October, but the Passover was not observed until March or April. The only way for grape juice to be preserved for six months from the harvest till the Passover feast in a world without modern refrigeration would have been to ferment the grapes into wine. Alcoholic wine was used by the churches in the New Testament because some in the Corinthian Church were abusing the Lord's Supper and had become drunk from excess consumption of the wine (*"one is hungry, and another is drunken"*, 1 Cor. 11:21). One cannot become drunken from the consumption of grape juice.

Wine was given in the Lord's Supper to signify the blood of Jesus that was shed to redeem God's children from their sins. *"27) And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; 28) For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."* (Matt. 26:27-28) *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"* (Eph. 1:7) Jesus Christ drank the cup of God's wrath (signified by the wine) for his children by the shedding of his blood. Our partaking of wine in the Lord's Supper should not be a pleasant taste to

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us (such as sweet tasting grape juice with plenty of sugar), but rather the wine should be bitter to our taste because it represents the cup of God's wrath that Christ drank to the dregs to save us from our sins (Ps. 75:8, Job 21:20, Isaiah 63:3-5)

Washing of the Saints' Feet

Observance of the Lord's Supper and the washing of the saints' feet are administered and observed together by the church, referred to as the "communion service". Reference to the "communion" service comes from the implications of this text: *"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"* (1 Cor. 10:16) These two activities are administered together because just after Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper was when he bowed down and set the example to wash the feet of the saints; since they were established or commanded together, we attempt to observe them together. *"2) And supper being ended...4) He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. 5) After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."* (John 13:2-5)

Jesus bowed down and washed the feet of the disciples as an example for the church to follow. *"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."* (John 13:15) The word "should" here is used in the New Testament as an equivalent of "shall", which denotes a required command to observe. Jesus commanded that the disciples observe this practice of feet washing; it was not a suggestion for them to follow. *"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet."* (John 13:14). The word "ought" denotes a legally required obligation that one must perform, a legal debt that is required to be repaid (not a suggested action that we should perform, as it's used in American English). Therefore, Jesus is not just setting a good example for his people to follow, but he established a legally binding commandment for his church to observe this practice of washing the saints' feet. Furthermore, the early New Testament church observed the washing of feet because this was one of the qualifications for a "widow indeed" – *"if she have washed the saints' feet."* (1 Tim. 5:10)

Jesus promised joy and happiness (*"happy are ye"*) to the person who has heard this command (*"if ye know these things"*) and observes it according to the example of Jesus (*"if ye do them"*) in John 13:17. If Jesus has promised happiness from observing his command and following his example to wash the saints' feet, why would we not eagerly observe this practice?

Closed Communion

The Primitive Baptist church holds that only regularly baptized members of the church have a right to partake of the church ordinance of the "communion service", or more specifically to partake of the Lord's Supper and participate in washing of the saints' feet. There are generally at least six reasons why the church observes closed communion: a) the example of Jesus, b) the example of the early church, c) to protect the church from the sin and immorality of the world, d) to protect the church from false doctrine and divisions, e) to protect the sacredness of the ordinance, f) to protect the fellowship of the church.

There were many multitudes who followed Jesus and heard him preach (Luke 12:1, 14:25, etc.), but he did not invite the multitudes to openly partake of the Lord's Supper; rather, it was only the 12 chosen disciples with whom he observed this ordinance. *"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him."* (Luke 22:14) The ordinance was given to those who were not offended by his doctrine but remained faithful to follow Jesus when others departed (John 6:60-69, 8:31). There were other people in the house (at a minimum the goodman of the house and the servants, Mark 14:13-16) where Jesus took

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communion with the disciples, but the others of the household were not openly invited to partake of the communion with the Lord, but only the 12 disciples.

In the early church, it was the men that gladly received the word and submitted to baptism that were “added unto” the church (Acts 2:41). And it was the church that observed the fellowship and breaking of bread (Acts 2:42,46; 20:7). The same group that believed and accepted the apostles’ doctrine is the same group that had fellowship and broke the bread of communion. The Lord’s Supper was not open to all people in Jerusalem but was only observed by those who had been believed in Christ and were members of the Lord’s church. The church also attempts to protect the church from the sin and immorality of the world (1 Cor. 5:11, Eph. 5:6-7), to protect the church from false doctrine and divisions (Rom. 16:17, 2 Thess. 3:14-15, Titus 3:10-11, Gal. 1:6-9), to protect the sacredness of the ordinance (1 Cor. 11:27-30), and to protect the fellowship of the church (Eph. 5:11, 1 Cor. 10:16-21, 2 Cor. 6:14-17).

Jesus Christ clearly set the example for closed communion of the disciples when he instituted the Lord’s Supper and feet washing, and the church is commanded to follow the commandments of Jesus (Matt. 28:20), not to adjust them as we see fit. We also notice the early church followed the example of Jesus and did not permit anyone in Jerusalem (particularly the non-believing Jews) to partake in communion with them, but rather the “breaking of bread” was reserved for only those baptized believers of the church. The practice of closed communion is also necessary to protect against immorality, false teaching and divisions, to maintain the sacredness of the ordinance, and to preserve fellowship in the church. The scriptures provide ample support to restrict the communion service to only those baptized believers that are members of the Lord’s church, the Primitive Baptist church.

Observance of the Ordinances

The church has been commanded by Jesus Christ to observe these ordinances in the exact way they have been originally given unto us in the scriptures until the Lord’s second coming. The church is commanded to baptize professing believers until the end of the world “18) *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. 19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*” (Matt. 28:18-20)

There is no prescribed frequency for how often the church is to partake of the Lord’s Supper, but we are simply commanded to observe the ordinance regularly and in a respectful manner (most Primitive Baptist churches partake of the Lord’s Supper one or two times per year). “25) *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26) For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.*” (1 Cor. 11:25-26) It appears the early church observed the Lord’s Supper quite frequently (and “steadfastly”), referred to as “*breaking of bread*” (Acts 2:42,46, 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; 1 Cor. 5:11, 10:16-21). However, there is a prescribed duration that we are to observe this ordinance; the Lord’s Supper shall be observed by the church until Jesus Christ returns again the second time. “26) *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.*” (1 Cor. 11:26)

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“23) But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24) God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23-24)

Authority for Worship

The church is to observe and uphold the commandments of Jesus Christ and that goes for our worship in the church as well. We have not been given any authority to add to or take away from the commandments of Jesus Christ for our conduct in the church, but rather our commission is to observe and keep the commandments of Jesus Christ and the ordinances of the church in the exact original manner that they were given and prescribed by Jesus Christ. *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”* (Matt. 28:20) *“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I have delivered them to you.”* (1 Cor. 11:2)

God takes his worship service and the observance of his word and his commands very seriously, and we should treat his worship service in an appropriate reverential and serious tone. Since Jesus Christ prescribed in his personal ministry and his inspired Holy Scriptures the exact manner and form of his worship service in the New Testament Church, then the observance or use of anything other than what is expressly detailed in the scriptures is prohibited by God. This is known as the “regulative principle” of worship. The “regulative principle” of worship means that unless a worship practice is expressly authorized in scripture then it is implicitly prohibited. The opposite of this is the “normative principle” of worship which says that any worship practice is admissible so long as scriptures do not explicitly prohibit it.

The regulative principle restricts worship to the manner that is prescribed in scripture, whereas the normative principle opens the door to any addition or invention of man to be added to God’s worship service. It should be noted that the regulative principle does not prohibit something that the scriptures are totally silent on, but rather if a correct pattern is expressly stated in scripture then any deviations from that prescribed pattern are implicitly prohibited. The “regulative principle” is obvious in God’s commandments of his worship service in the Old Testament. There were exact dimensions given for everything in the tabernacle and temple, exact specifications of the type of materials, and exact placement in the tabernacle and temple. Anything other than exactly what God had prescribed was not acceptable before God. God shows his adherence to the “regulative principle” of worship from his judgment of the actions of Nadab and Abihu in slaying them for trying to add their own “personal flavor” to God’s worship (Lev. 10:1-2).

Since Jesus fulfilled all the law prescribed in the Old Testament (Matt. 5:17-18), we are not under authority of the Old Testament law service but rather now we are under authority of the New Testament covenant of grace (Heb. 9:15, 10:9; Rom. 6:14). Therefore, our pattern for all manner of practice in the church and our pattern for worship in the church is prescribed in the New Testament of the Bible, not in the Old Testament. We cannot pick and choose which parts of the Old Testament practice we desire to implement in the church; the law is an all or nothing proposition. If we try to add one requirement of the law, or one requirement of the Old Testament pattern of worship, then we are then a debtor to do the whole law (Gal. 5:3). This is especially true of the use of musical instruments in worship. Even if the use of musical instruments was permitted in the Old Testament, for consistency we would have to adopt all of the Old Testament worship practices, not just that one component. Therefore, our entire instruction for worship in the church is found in the New Testament.

God seeks and requires true worshippers that will worship God in Spirit and in truth. *“23) But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24) God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and*

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in truth.” (John 4:23-24) God’s word sets the standard for worship in Spirit and in truth, and we attempt to worship in accordance with the prescribed pattern of worship in the truth of the scriptures. Our public worship in the church consists of three primary components: singing, praying, and preaching.

Singing

The pattern of singing in the New Testament worship is singing by the voice of the saints with no scriptural mention of the addition of any auxiliary accompaniment, such as musical instruments. *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”* (Eph. 5:19) *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”* (Col. 3:16) *“What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”* (1 Cor. 14:15) See also Heb. 2:12, 13:15; Rom. 15:9; James 5:13; Acts 16:25. We also see the example of Jesus and the disciples singing a hymn after they had completed the institution of the Lord’s Supper and communion service. *“And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”* (Matt. 26:30) We use the God-given instrument of our voices to sing praise to God in the church, not musical instruments that are made by man.

Certain instruments were used in the Old Testament worship and addressed in the Old Testament scriptures because God allowed David to implement instruments into the temple worship. However, God never commanded for instruments to be used in the tabernacle or in worship before or after the reign of David as King of Israel. God gave a commandment to allow David to use musical instruments in the temple (2 Chron. 29:25). However, it is always noted when they are mentioned that David is attributed with making and implementing the musical instruments (1 Chron. 23:5, 2 Chron. 29:26-27, 2 Chron. 7:6, Neh. 12:36). Only 200 years after the reign of King David, the prophet Amos pronounces a *“woe”* to those that *“invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David”* (Amos 6:5). Furthermore, God declares he *“will not hear the melody of thy viols”* (Amos 5:23). Even the Jews understood this was not a permanent commandment for worship in the temple because musical instruments were not reinstated in the temple worship from its rebuilding under Zerubbabel all the way up to and through the life of Jesus Christ. Even if the musical instruments were commanded as an integral part of the Old Testament worship service, that law and method of worship has been put away and superseded by the New Testament worship and method of grace since Jesus Christ fulfilled all the law (Matt. 5:17-18).

It’s interesting to note the history of musical instruments in worship in the scripture. Musical instruments – particularly *“the harp and the organ”* – appears to have been created by Jubal (Gen. 4:21), which was the son of Lamech of the lineage of Cain. The invention of musical instruments came from the cursed descendants of the murderer Cain. There were no musical instruments commanded by God or used in the tabernacle worship or any worship in Israel before King David. Instruments were used in Solomon’s temple because God granted David permission to use musical instruments (2 Chron. 29:25) during his reign and for some years afterwards. When the temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel in 510 BC, and then the temple worship was reinstated by Ezra in 458 BC, the use of musical instruments was not included in the renewal of the worship service. There is no record of musical instruments in Jewish temple worship even up till its destruction in 70 AD. Even the devout Jews understood that was a temporary provision that was afforded to King David and his descendants and was not a permanent provision for the Jewish temple worship.

There is no historically recorded use of musical instruments during worship in the early church from the 1st century until the mid-7th century. In 666 AD, the organ was introduced into the Roman Catholic churches by the Pope Vitalian. It’s very interesting that these musical instruments were introduced into church worship in the year that corresponds to the number of the beast out of the sea, 666 (Rev. 13:18). We simply attempt to follow the New Testament pattern of singing with our voices alone in praise to God in worship.

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Prayer

God ordained for his people in his church to pray collectively in a public worship assembly and privately during our individual devotions. God's house (the church) is to be called "the house of prayer". *"And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."* (Matt. 21:13) Both public and private prayer was an integral part of the life of the early church. *"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."* (Acts 1:14) *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."* (Acts 2:42) *"24) And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is... 31) And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."* (Acts 4:24-31)

Jesus set the example for public prayer in the church as he delivered his final extended prayer to God in the presence of the disciples after they partook of communion. *"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify:"* (John 17:1) As we attempt to worship in Spirit and in truth, praying with the Spirit in the church is necessary for us to fulfill that mandate. *"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."* (1 Cor. 14:15) We pray for those in the church who are afflicted and sick and stand in need, knowing that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. *"13) Is any among you afflicted? let him pray... 14) Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15) And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16)...* *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* (James 5:13-16) See also 1 Thess. 5:17,25; Eph. 6:18; Luke 18:1; Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2; Acts 12:5; 2 Thess. 3:1-2; Matt. 9:38; Eph. 6:19; Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:3; Heb. 13:18-19; Philemon 22; and 2 Cor. 1:11 for many other admonitions to be diligent in prayer in the church.

Preaching

God has ordained for the men he has called into the ministry to preach in the church, exhorting and edifying the saints according to the word of God. *"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."* (Acts 20:7) *"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."* (Acts 5:42) *"And when he found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."* (Acts 11:26) *"And there they preached the gospel."* (Acts 14:7) *"Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also."* (Acts 15:35) *"20) And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house... 25) And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more... 27) For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God... 31) Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn you every one night and day with tears..."* (Acts 20:18-35)

Jesus taught and preached the gospel in his ministry, setting the example for the ministry that he has called to preach as well. *"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Matt. 4:17) *"And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities."* (Matt. 11:1, see also Matt. 4:23, 9:35)

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When we assemble for public worship, a man who has been called by God delivers a message from the word of God to the church. He does not come before the church with enticing words of man's wisdom to impress with a fancy speech but comes with a commitment to faithfully deliver a message from God to God's people under the direction of the Holy Spirit. *"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."* (1 Cor. 1:17) It requires a special application of the Holy Spirit to apply the message of the preacher to heart of the child of God to feed their soul through the preaching of the gospel in the church. See also Acts 8:4,5,12,25,35; 9:20,27; 13:5,42; 14:15,21,25; 16:10; 17:3, 13,18; 19:13; 28:31; Rom. 1:5, 15:19-20, 16:25; 1 Cor. 9:16-18, 15:1; 2 Cor. 2:12, 10:14-16, 11:4-7; Gal. 1:8-11, 2:2, 4:13; 1 Thess. 2:9, and 1 Pet. 1:25 for many other references to the preaching of God's word in the New Testament church.

Family Integrated Worship

God has designed for the family to be the primary teaching method of the word of God to children (Acts 5:42; 10:24-28; 16:15,30-34; 18:7-8). Therefore, God ordained his New Testament worship to where the entire family worships together. There is absolutely no Biblical precedent for segregation or division in the worship service or in the church. Rather, the New Testament always promotes unity in the church (Eph. 4:3,13) and universally condemns division (Matt. 12:25, 1 Cor. 1:10-13, Rom. 16:17). Therefore, God does not promote and has not commanded segregation of the family during the worship service, but instead he has ordained that the entire family worship together in the church. This is known as "family integrated worship", as opposed to family segregated worship.

Jesus taught in the homes of the disciples during his ministry, and the children were present with their parents to hear his teaching. Jesus did not command the children to be taken to another room when He taught. Jesus even took up a child that was present during his teaching to use as an example of discipleship. *"33) And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house... 36) And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, 37) Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, received not me, but him that sent me."* (Mark 9:33-37)

Jesus did not command or promote for the children to be isolated from his public preaching, but rather he rebuked the disciples for their lack of understanding in trying to remove children from him. *"13) Then were brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. 14) But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. 15) And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence."* (Matt. 19:13-15)

Entire families – husbands, wives, and children – came out together to worship and hear the teaching of Jesus in the desert and were subsequently miraculously fed by Jesus Christ. *"13) When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of their cities... 19) And he commanded the multitude to sit on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude... 21) And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."* (Matt. 14:13-21 & 15:30-38)

Children are capable of understanding worship and praising God. Children were praising Jesus Christ in the temple in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. God "ordained" (Ps. 8:2) for children – even babes and sucklings (infants that are still nursing) – to praise him and that was fulfilled during Jesus' ministry. The same should be true in the New Testament Church today for children to be praising and worshipping Jesus because God has ordained it. *"15) And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore*

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displeased. 16) And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” (Matt. 21:15-16)

Family worship is consistently presented as the pattern of the early church, with the entire family gathering together in their home for worship. “30) *And brought them out, and said, Sirs what must I do to be saved? 31) And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32) And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33) And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34) And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*” (Acts 16:30-34) “24) *And the morrow they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends... 30) And Cornelius said... 33) ...Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.*” (Acts 10:24-48) See also Acts 16:15; Acts 18:7-8; 1 Cor. 16:15; Rom. 16:5,10,11; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; 2 Tim. 1:16; Philem. 2; Acts 5:42, 2:46, 20:20, Acts 21:4-5

It was expected by Jesus and the apostles that God’s ministers and the written epistles would be teaching all ages of people together at the same time in one congregation. Jesus commands Peter to “Feed my lambs” (John 21:15) and to also “Feed my sheep” (John 21:16,17). Peter was to preach to both the babes and young children (the lambs) and the mature disciples (the sheep) together. Paul instructs his son in the ministry, Titus, to teach all genders and ages in the church; for Titus to teach the aged men (Titus 2:2), the aged women (Titus 2:3), the young women (Titus 2:4), and the young men (Titus 2:6). The Apostle John writes unto the little children (1 John 2:12,13), the fathers (1 John 2:13,14), and the young men (1 John 2:13,14), addressing all those groups interchangeably, showing that this epistle was intended to be read in the public congregation of the young and old men together. Notice from these examples, it is the ordained elder who is commissioned with teaching all groups of people in the church regardless of age or gender, not a separate teacher for each group.

From the way that the New Testament epistles were written, it was expected that those epistles would be read and taught in an audience with all ages and genders of the church together in one congregation. The New Testament epistles were expected to be read aloud to the church by the church’s pastor. “*And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*” (Col. 4:16, see also 1 Thess. 5:27) Therefore, since all different age groups (particularly children) are addressed in these epistles, it is clear that the writers expected children to be present in the public assembly of worship where this epistle would be read to the church.

The family was expected to be assembled together (not separated) because the admonitions to fathers, wives, and children are all delivered interchangeably. In Colossians 3:18 to 4:1, wives (3:18), husbands (3:19), children (3:20), fathers (3:21), servants (3:22), and masters (4:1) are all admonished in various ways in consecutive verses. This is very obvious that all these different age and people groups were assembled together in public worship when this epistle was read aloud (Col. 4:16). In Ephesians 5:25 to 6:9, wives (5:22-24), husbands (5:25-33), children (6:1-3), fathers (6:4), servants (6:5-8), and masters (6:9) are again all addressed consecutively by Paul. Colossians and Ephesians are sister epistles that were penned at the same time by Paul in Roman imprisonment and delivered by the same courier, so it is very reasonable to assume that Paul expected the Ephesian epistle to be treated as a “circular epistle” to be read aloud in the exact same manner as Colossians (Col. 4:16). In 1 John 2:12-14, the Apostle John writes unto the little children (1 John 2:12,13), the fathers (1 John 2:13,14), and the young men (1 John 2:13,14), addressing them all interchangeably because he expected them all to be gathered together in public worship when this epistle was read to the church.

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Objection to Sunday Schools

Sunday schools promote division and segregation of the church into different classes or groups based on subjective criteria such as age, gender, or perceived scriptural acumen. In contrast, the scriptures consistently promote unity in the church (Eph. 4:3,13) and universally condemn division (Matt. 12:25, 1 Cor. 1:10-13, Rom. 16:17). The Biblical pattern favors inclusive family integrated teaching where the church and all families worship and learn together in unity. There are no scriptures that command the use of Sunday schools or even remotely promote that concept in scripture. The scriptures do however offer severe condemnation for adding to or taking away from the commandments of God's word.

Sunday schools were added by man to the activities of certain churches and were not commanded or ordained by God in His church. Sunday schools were first introduced into churches in 1781 in Gloucester, England by Anglican minister Robert Raikes. The original intention of these classes was to offer literary classes to poor children living in the city's slums. Since young boys often worked six days a week in factories, Sunday was the most opportune time to offer these teaching classes to the poor children. Before the church worship service would begin, the poor illiterate children would be taught to read and write before dismissing to attend the worship services. This was sometimes the only opportunity for an education that the children could receive. The Bible was usually used as the textbook to teach the illiterate children how to read, and Biblical concepts were also taught to the students.

This same practice of teaching illiterate children to read and write on Sundays before church began to be adopted by churches in America during the 1820's. After the inception of state sponsored and mandated education in America through the public school system during the 1870's, every child then had the opportunity for an education. The Sunday schools remained in those churches, but dropped the literacy curriculum and then only taught Biblical concepts and doctrine to the young children.

Sunday school classes are not taught by those who have been thoroughly vetted and proven by the church to see if they are faithful and knowledgeable enough to teach others. This is the purpose of submitting an elder to an ordination service to prove his soundness in doctrine to teach others in the church. In most other denominational churches, anyone who is willing to do it is allowed to teach a Sunday school class. The only person with scriptural authority to teach publicly in the church is an ordained elder. Sunday school classes are also often taught by women, which is patently unscriptural.

Proper Manner of Teaching in the Church

An ordained minister is the only person given the scriptural authority to teach in the public worship of the church. God gave gifts unto the church to teach and edify the body (Eph. 4:8-16, Matt. 28:19-20). The pastor/teacher in the Lord's church is one who has proven the ability to be "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). It is those men that have been vetted by the church and have been proven faithful and sound in the word of God that have the authority to teach publicly in the church's public worship service.

The men that God has called to preach should be committed to teaching the word of God to the church all the time and at every occasion that is available. *"20) And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house... 31) Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn you every one night and day with tears..."* (Acts 20:18-35) The ministry ought to teach the church without ceasing, both publicly and from house to house. *"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."* (Acts 5:42)

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The scriptures affirm that women are prohibited from teaching in a public worship setting. *“11) Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12) But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”* (1 Tim. 2:11-12) The reason why Paul instructs Timothy to not permit the women to teach publicly in the church was to keep the woman from “usurping authority over the man” (v. 12). God ordained for man to be the head over his wife (Eph. 5:23, Gen. 3:16) and a woman teaching with authority over a man in the church would violate God’s prescribed order in the family and also in the church. *“34) Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. 35) And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”* (1 Cor. 14:34-35) This verse is not teaching that women are not allowed to utter a single word in the church building or not permitted to speak at all in church conference, etc. Rather, these verses in the full context (v. 22-40) are dealing with “prophesying” (or “preaching”) when the church comes together to worship (v. 26) and how to administer who would speak in the Corinth Church’s public worship setting (v. 27-33).

Ordained ministers who teach in the church must be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6), if they are married, which excludes any female from meeting this qualification to be an elder or bishop. This clearly prohibits a woman from being a possible candidate for ordination to the church office of elder (or deacon, 1 Tim. 3:12). Therefore, women are prohibited by scripture from being an ordained elder in the church and prohibited from speaking in the public worship setting when the church is assembled together.

However, it’s important to point out that women still carry out very important roles in the church. They are commanded to teach their children (and grandchildren) the scriptures privately in the home (2 Tim. 1:5, 3:15) and to guide and keep the home (1 Tim. 5:14, Titus 2:5). The women ought to teach younger women in the church how to be chaste and godly and obedient to their husbands (Titus 2:3-5). The sisters ought to support and labor for the furtherance of the gospel (Phil. 4:3) by supporting the ministry (Rom. 16:1-3,6), and supporting their husbands in teaching others the truth, just as Priscilla supported her husband, Aquila (Acts 18:26, Rom. 16:3).

Every member of the church has a responsibility to study the scriptures individually and to teach others privately as they have opportunity. *“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”* (Acts 17:11) *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”* (John 5:39) *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* (2 Tim. 2:15)

The older members of the church who have gained wisdom through their many life experiences should instruct the younger members for how to conduct themselves. Older, aged men in the church should instruct the younger men. *“1) But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: 2) That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience... 6) Young men likewise exhort to be soberminded.”* (Titus 2:1-6) Older, aged women in the church should teach the younger women. *“3) The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4) That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5) To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”* (Titus 2:3-5)

Parents are charged with the primary responsibility of teaching their children the word of God in the home, not contracting that responsibility out to the church and unscriptural Sunday schools. *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* (Eph. 6:4 & Col. 3:21) *“8) My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.”* (Prov. 1:8-9). *“Train up a*

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child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Prov. 22:6) “1:5) When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. 3:15) And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 1:5, 3:15) “6) And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7) And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8) And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9) And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” (Deut. 6:6-9) See also Deut. 4:9, 11:19; Ps. 78:4-7; Joshua 4:20-24; 1 Tim. 3:4-5; Gen. 18:19; Ps. 127:3-5

Giving to the Church (Not Tithing)

Our giving to the church and giving to those in need (our alms, Matt. 6:1-4) is also an act of worship to the Lord. We ascribe worth, honor, and glory to God when we give back freely to God and to others what God has freely given us. We should view our finances as a gift from God that we are temporarily stewards over that we can use to glorify God and serve others by our giving. All the money in this world belongs to God, and when we give back to God and others in worship, we are simply offering back to God what he has freely given to us – *“for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”* (1 Chron. 29:14)

Under the Old Testament Levitical law, the Israelites were commanded to offer a “tithe” (a tenth) of their crops, harvest, livestock, etc. to support the Levitical priesthood and also to help the fatherless, widows, and strangers in the land (Lev. 27:30-32; Num. 18:20-21; Deut. 14:22-29, 26:1-15). Also, Melchizedek gave a tenth tithe to Abraham (Gen. 14:20), and Jacob committed a tithe to God (Gen. 28:22). This Old Testament tithe was primarily to support the Levites who were fully committed to serving God in the temple. After you take into account their daily tithe, annual tithe, and every third-year tithe, the amount of their goods that they gave to God was actually more than a flat ten percent. In the New Testament church, we are not under obligation to give ten percent of our income to the church. Jesus Christ came and fulfilled the Levitical law perfectly to a jot and tittle (Matt. 5:17-18), and we are not under any more obligation to give a fixed tenth of our income than we are to offer any of the Old Testament sacrifices or any other requirement of the law. We are under grace, not under the law, and that applies to our giving as well.

Even though we are not under a scriptural requirement to give a flat tenth of our income to the church, we should give freely and cheerfully to the church as an act of worship to God. *“6) But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7) Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* (2 Cor. 9:6-7) We don’t give “grudgingly” or “of necessity” to the church because our ten percent calculator tells me that is how much I am supposed to give. Instead, we give “cheerfully, as everyone purposes in his heart”. We are to give *“every man according to our ability”* (Acts 11:29) and *“as God has prospered you”* (1 Cor. 16:2). God will oftentimes burden his people to give cheerfully to the church and help those that are in need that sometimes might even exceed ten percent of their income. There are times God has prospered us to where we can give more to the church and others, but there are other times when our ability is limited and we cannot give as much. Regardless of how our finances fluctuate from time to time, God’s people should be committed to cheerfully give back to the Lord a portion of our finances in worship to our God.

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“13) And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. 14) And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,”
(Mark 3:13-14)

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim. 2:2)

Calling of the Ministry

Men do not sign up to be preachers or ministers in the church. God is the only Authority that calls a man to preach the gospel to his church. When Jesus chose his disciples, he didn't hold open auditions for who were the best speakers to preach or who had the best church growth plan. No Jesus “calleth unto him whom he would”, and every one of those that God called into ministry “came unto him”. *“And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.”* (Mark 3:13) Men cannot ignore this calling to the ministry, but everyone that God calls shall eventually come to him and preach the gospel. God does not call the impressive people of this world into the ministry. Christ called lowly fisherman as his apostles, not the highly fluent Pharisees or scribes of the day. *“18) And Jesus, walking by the sea, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19) And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20) And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. 21) And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. 22) And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.”* (Matt. 4:18-22)

Men do not choose their calling, but God chooses them. No man takes this honor unto himself, but God places this honor upon those that he has called. *“And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”* (Heb. 5:4) *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit...”* (John 15:16) It's God that calls men into the ministry, and God reveals to the church the man's calling to the ministry through their works and gift just as he manifested Paul and Barnabas's calling to the Antioch Church by the Holy Ghost. *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”* (Acts 13:2) *“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,”* (Rom. 1:1) *“4) Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 5) Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”* (Jer. 1:4-5) See also 1 Tim. 1:11-12; 1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Cor. 1:1, 4:2; Acts 20:24; Gal. 2:7.

God saw fit in his wisdom to give gifts unto men for the edification of the church. God calls men and gives them a gift to preach the gospel and minister to God's people so that the body of Christ can be strengthened and edified. *“8) Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9) (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10) He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, 12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”* (Eph. 4:8-12, see also 1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:16, 1 Cor. 7:17)

God is the only Authority that sends out his ministers to preach the gospel. God directs by his Holy Spirit where the Lord intends for his preachers to preach. *“14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”* (Rom. 10:14-15)

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“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” (1 Cor. 1:17) “6) There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7) The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.” (John 1:6-7) “4) So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. 5) And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God...” (Acts 13:4-5, see also Matt 10:5; Luke 9:1, 10:1; Isaiah 52:7; Nah. 1:14; Acts 16:6-10; Mark 3:14)

God is also the only Authority to appoint a man as the overseer (the pastor) of a church. Churches need to seek the direction of the Holy Ghost to determine who the Lord has appointed to pastor their individual local assembly of the church. *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost had made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28) “And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jer. 3:15)*

Since it's God alone that calls a man into the ministry, those ministers have to answer to the One who has called them to the work; they answer unto God for their ministry. *“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” (Gal. 1:10) “3) But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. 4) For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” (1 Cor. 4:3-4) “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” (Heb. 13:17)*

Training of the Ministry

The New Testament pattern for training of the ministry is for the prospective minister to learn under the tutelage and supervision of a seasoned minister. This develops a father to son instructive relationship where the “son in the ministry” learns and grows in the ministry and exercises his gift under the direction of his “father in the ministry”. This operates much like a mentor and apprentice relationship, where the apprentice learns “on the job” under the direction of the mentor, following the example of the mentor for how to administer his calling, and having a seasoned, experienced mentor to ask questions when the apprentice needs further instruction, helping the apprentice in his growth in the ministry. There is no biblical precedent for sending someone off to a school in another state to take classes and take tests in a seminary type setting to train one for the ministry. The New Testament pattern is for a man to learn ministry in the field in which he will labor, by preaching and serving the local church under the instruction of a seasoned minister.

The training of the apostles set the original example for how they were trained up under the direct instruction of Jesus Christ. The apostles, who administered the establishment and the ordinances of the early church and also ordained the original successors to the apostolic ministry, were taught directly by Jesus, following and traveling with him, listening to his preaching, and learning from his perfect example. These men were shown the way to defend and contend for the truth and how to administer the commandments of Jesus Christ to the church that they were now called to serve. After the ascension of Jesus Christ, it was the responsibility of the apostles that had learned under the tutelage of Jesus to now teach the church exactly what they had been commanded and instructed by their mentor, the Bishop of God's children, the Lord Jesus Christ. *“19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matt. 28:19-20)*

The commandments of the church that Jesus taught to the apostles was then passed on through the church from the personal instruction of faithful elders, who taught the word of God to others and imparted its

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custody and trust to successive generations of ordained elders. *“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”* (2 Tim. 2:2) This verse shows the “perpetuity of the gospel ministry”. Four “generations” of the ministry are presented in this one verse: 1) Paul – original apostle, *“heard of me”*, 2) Timothy – who was taught by the Apostle Paul, *“that thou hast heard of me”*, 3) Ministers who Timothy would teach and ordain – *“the same commit thou to faithful men”*, 4) Ministers who would be taught from Timothy’s son in the ministry – *“who shall be able to teach others also”*. The same truth that was entrusted to the apostles (Matt. 28:20), was perpetually “committed to faithful men” (2 Tim. 2:2), and the truth of God’s word and the practice of the New Testament church has therefore remained intact in the church since the original apostolic ministry.

There is a father and son mentor relationship in the training up of a minister. An experienced, already ordained elder teaches and instructs the up-and-coming brother in the way he must administer his gift, as a father would instruct a son. *“14) I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. 15) For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 16) Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me.”* (1 Cor. 4:16-16) *“19) But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state...22) But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.”* (Phil. 2:19,22) The father in the ministry sets the example for the son to follow and teaches him how to lead the church.

- Paul instructed others to follow his example. *“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Phil. 4:9) *“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”* (Phil. 3:17) *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”* (1 Cor. 11:1) *“Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me.”* (1 Cor. 4:16)
- Paul instructed Timothy to teach others in the same manner that he taught Timothy. *“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”* (2 Tim. 2:2)
- Then the apostles instructed the current ministry to set the example for the church and set the example for the successive generation of elders as well. *“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”* (1 Tim. 4:12) *“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”* (1 Pet. 5:3)
- New Testament examples of father and son in the ministry relationships:
 - Timothy as the son in the ministry of Paul. *“Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith:”* (1 Tim. 1:2 and 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 1:2, 2:1; 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19,22)
 - Titus as the son in the ministry of Paul (Titus 1:4)
 - Onesimus as the son in the ministry of Paul (Philemon 10)
 - Leaders in the church at Corinth as the sons of Paul (1 Cor. 4:14-15)
 - Mark as the son in the ministry of Peter (1 Pet. 5:13)

As this young man labors under the instruction of a seasoned elder, his works are evaluated, and the church will eventually determine if he has proven to be faithful to be ordained to the ministry. Paul and Barnabas labored among the prophets and teachers at Antioch, and it was those Antiochan prophets and teachers who confirmed the calling of Paul and Barnabas and ordained them to the work of the ministry. *“25) Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 26) And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people...”* (Acts 11:25-26) *“1) Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2) As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the*

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Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the whereunto I have called them. 3) And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” (Acts 13:1-3)

Ordination to the Ministry

The qualifications for one to be considered for ordination as a “bishop” (or “elder”) are given multiple times in the New Testament – 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 2 Tim. 2:24-26, Titus 2:7-8, 1 Pet. 5:1-4. There are moral qualifications for the type of character a man should exhibit before being ordained as an elder. He must have manifested to be: *blameless, have a good report of them which are without, husband of one wife, rules well his own house, lover of hospitality, lover of good men, of good behavior, patient, temperate, not soon angry, not a brawler, no striker, not strive, vigilant, sober, meek, just, holy, not self-willed, not covetous, not greedy of filthy lucre, and not given to wine.*

The man must also exhibit a maturity in the scriptures, an ability to teach and edify the flock, and to stand up for the truth for those without the church as well. He must have proven to be: *apt to teach, able by sound doctrine to exhort and to convince the gainsayers, holding fast the faithful word, sound speech that cannot be condemned, not a novice, displaying wisdom, faithful to sound doctrine, commitment to the “one faith” and “true gospel”, and willingly and eagerly accept the responsibility of an elder.*

When a man has demonstrated that he has been called of God by exercising his gift and preaching the gospel, the church will call for the man to be “ordained to the full work of the gospel ministry”. Ordained means “appointed” and is the appropriate biblical terminology for the designation of a man to the gospel ministry. This ordination service is performed with the candidate being questioned to ensure he meets the moral and ministerial qualifications, proving to be sound in doctrine. Then, the ministerial candidate receives the laying on of hands by the presbytery (a group of “elders”), and prayer is offered ordaining them to the work of the ministry, in accordance with the pattern of Acts 13:1-3. Then, the man will receive a charge from the presbytery to faithfully administer his office as an elder in the church.

The apostles were chosen and “ordained” by Jesus Christ. *“13) And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. 14) And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,” (Mark 3:13-14) “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit...” (John 15:16) The apostles were then to commission faithful men to be entrusted with the ministry, and we believe the “genealogy” of laying on of hands of our elders goes back all the way to the first apostles. “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim. 2:2)*

Elders were “ordained” by the apostles and then by the successive apostolic ministry. *“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed,” (Acts 14:23) “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:” (Titus 1:5) “But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all the churches.” (1 Cor. 7:17) “Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.” (1 Tim. 2:7)*

The method of ordination is by the laying on of hands by a presbytery, a group of elders. *“1) Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2) As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the whereunto I have called them. 3) And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on*

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them, they sent them away.” (Acts 13:1-3) *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery:”* (1 Tim. 4:14) *“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”* (2 Tim. 1:6) *“Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure:”* (1 Tim. 5:22) *“1) Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrines of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of... 2)...of laying on of hands...”* (Heb. 6:1-2). Deacons are ordained by the laying on of hands as well (Acts 6:1-7). We trust the gospel ministry has been ordained by the laying of hands all the way back to the original hands of the apostles in the Original Baptist Church.

Title of a Minister (Elder)

There are many different titles that are typically used in Christianity for ordained ministers that are either attributed to God or are specifically prohibited in scripture from being used to address men.

- Reverend. The word “reverend” is only recorded one time in scripture and it is referring to God; therefore, this title should be reserved for God alone, not attributed to a sinful man who is certainly un-reverend. *“He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.”* (Ps. 111:9)
- Father and Rabbi and Master. God is described as our “Father” on multiple occasions in scripture, and Jesus specifically prohibits his disciples from calling another man Rabbi or Father or Master here in this world. *“8) But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; all ye are brethren. 9) And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10) Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.”* (Matt. 23:8-10)
- Priest and High Priest. Jesus is described as the “High Priest” of our profession. While God’s children are described as priests before God (1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6, 5:10), the title of “Priest” or certainly “High Priest” should be reserved for only Jesus Christ. *“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;”* (Heb. 3:1)
- All of these titles have reference to God and Jesus Christ in scripture. Furthermore, all of these titles are capitalized in the KJV, noting God and Jesus are given these titles and is the personification of the position. Therefore, these titles should not be given to men but only attributed unto God.

There are some acceptable titles that are attributed to the ordained ministry in the New Testament.

- Elder. *“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:”* (Titus 1:5 and Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:2,4,22,23, 16:4, 20:17, 21:18, 1 Tim. 5:17, 19, Titus 1:5, James 5:14, 1 Pet. 5:1, 2 John 1, 3 John 1)
- Bishop. *“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”* (1 Tim. 3:1 and Phil. 1:1, 1 Tim. 3:1,2, Titus 1:7)
- Pastor. *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.”* (Eph. 4:11)

In the Primitive Baptist Church, we prefer the use of “Elder” as the proper title for an ordained minister. The apostles called themselves “elder” but never used any of the alternate names firsthand. *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ...”* (1 Pet. 5:1 and 2 John 1 and 3 John 1). “Bishop” and “Pastor” are names attributed to Jesus Christ in scripture. While these are acceptable titles for ordained men, it is prudent in the church for these titles to be attributed to Jesus Christ first and foremost. Jesus is described as the “Bishop” of our souls. Pastor literally means “shepherd”. Jesus is described as the “Shepherd” of our souls, so if the words are interchangeable, then

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Jesus is the “Pastor” of our souls as well. *“For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”* (1 Pet. 2:25) Finally, we see elder used the most prevalently as the title for either the man or the office in the New Testament: a) Elder, used 16 times, b) Bishop, used 4 times, c) Pastor, used 1 time. Therefore, while other names are acceptable scriptural titles to describe the ordained man and the office in the church, “Elder” is the most scripturally appropriate and the most often used title for the ordained minister in the church.

Duties of the Ministry

God has called men to the ministry and given gifts unto those men for many different purposes in serving and providing for the needs of the church. Among many other things, God’s ministers are called to:

- Preach the word. *“1) I charge thee therefore before God... 2) Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.”* (2 Tim. 4:1-2 and Matt. 10:7; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 8:12, 19:8, 28:23,30, etc.)
- Teach the church. *“19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations... 20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”* (Matt. 28:19-20) *“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”* (Acts 5:42 and 1 Cor. 4:17, 14:19; 1 Tim. 3:2, 6:2)
- Feed the flock of God. *“1) The elders which are among you I exhort... 2) Feed the flock of God which is among you...”* (1 Pet. 5:1, and John 21:15, Acts 20:28)
- The perfecting of the saints. *“8) Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men... 11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12) For the perfecting of the saints...”* (Eph. 4:8-12, and Col. 1:28-29, Col. 1:28, Col. 4:12, 1 Thess. 4:9, 2 Tim. 3:16)
- The work of the ministry. *“11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry...”* (Eph. 4:11-12, and Rom. 15:27, 1 Cor. 16:15, Heb. 6:10, 1 Pet. 4:10)
- The edifying of the body of Christ. *“11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”* (Eph. 4:11-12, and 1 Cor. 3:9-15, 1 Pet. 2:5, Eph. 2:19-22, 1 Cor. 14:3-5)
- Protect the church from false doctrine. *“11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teacher... 14) That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”* (Eph. 4:11-14)
- Promote the unity and growth of the body of Christ. *“11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teacher... 12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ... 15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16) From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”* (Eph. 4:11-16)

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“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” (Col. 1:18)

“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Eph. 3:21)

Christ as the Head of the Church

In the church, we submit to Jesus Christ as the Head of the church. The church is not a democracy; it is a kingdom that is ruled sovereignly by the King of kings and Lord of lords. The church is a body that is directed and controlled by its Head, Jesus Christ, that sends out commands and directs the movements and actions of the rest of the body. *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” (Col. 1:18) “23) For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24) Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.” (Eph. 5:23-24) “And hath put all things under his feet, and give him to be head over all things to the church.” (Eph. 1:22, and Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 2:10,19; 1 Pet. 2:7) Anything that has two heads is considered a monster, and there will be no clear direction when two heads are sending conflicting commands and pulling a body in two opposite directions. Therefore, we submit solely to the direction and authority of Jesus Christ as our Head in the church.*

Furthermore, the Lord is the only Lawgiver in the church. *“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.” (Isaiah 33:22) “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?” (James 4:12) The authority for commanding how we are to act in the house of God is our Head, our Lawgiver, Jesus Christ. It’s the scriptures, the word of God, that is our Head’s prescribed pattern for “how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God” (1 Tim. 3:15). The truth of God is revealed in the word of God (John 17:17), and God has commanded for his church to uphold his truth and carry out the commandments of the church’s Head. The church is the pillar and ground of God’s truth in the world, shining out the truth of Jesus Christ to the world. “...The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” (1 Tim. 3:15)*

The church is the custodian of the ordinances that Jesus established. The apostles only had the authority to administer what Jesus had already commanded them, not to add to or take away from the commandment of Jesus Christ. *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matt. 28:20) “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you...” (1 Cor. 11:23) Now, it is the church’s responsibility to continue to administer the ordinances of the church in the exact manner that they have been delivered to the church by the Jesus Christ in God’s word. “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I have delivered them to you.” (1 Cor. 11:2, compare with 1 Cor. 11:23) The church is a body that submits to the authority of Jesus Christ as our Head according to the standard of God’s word.*

Purpose of the Church

The Greek root for “church” in the New Testament is the word “ekklesia”, meaning “a called-out assembly”. God has chosen to “call-out” a people to serve him and glorify him here in this world. God’s people have been formed and created and called out for the glory of God. *“7) Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him. 21) This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.” (Isaiah 43:7,21). The reason why God chose (elected) and predestinated a people to save is “to the praise of the glory of his grace...” (Eph. 1:6). God called out a*

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people to save to glorify his grace, his unmerited favor towards them, for all of eternity. The church is God's ordained repository for his glory until Jesus Christ returns and this world is ended. *"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."* (Eph. 3:21) While God chose and called out a people for his glory, there are other reasons why God purposed to save and establish his church in the world as well.

"The church is a repository for divine truth (John 17:14; 1 Tim. 3:15). Her task is to faithfully keep the trust God has given her by dispensing and disseminating truth with accuracy and integrity (Titus 2:1). Secondly, the church is a home away from home for God's children (Heb. 3:6; Matt. 18). It is the context God has established for loving fellowship and mutual ministry (Eph. 3:15-19, 4:12-16). Thirdly, the church is a training center where God's people are equipped with knowledge of how to exercise their spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:11-12). Finally, the church is God's light in a dark world (Matt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:15). Her task is both conservative (i.e. protecting God's truth and caring for one another) and contemporary (i.e. equipping the saints, deploying them into the real world of ministry, and calling sinner to repentance). In a word, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has a threefold ministry. It exists to exalt and worship the Lord (Eph. 3:21), to edify and strengthen believers (Eph. 4:16), and to extend the kingdom of God by making disciples (Matt. 28:19-20). The Church, then, is a worshipping, a working, and a witnessing community." (Excerpt from *Basic Bible Doctrines*, by Elder Michael Gowens, page 168)

Body of Christ

The church is not just a physical structure or building; that is just the location where the church meets together for worship on a regular basis. The church is consistently presented as the body of Christ in scripture. We are a living, breathing body under the direction and authority of our Head, Jesus Christ. Due to our marriage union with Jesus Christ, we are truly a "one flesh" body with Christ by marriage (Eph. 5:30-32). Just like our natural bodies, we have many members that all work together for the body to function properly. *"4) For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5) So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."* (Rom. 12:4-5) *"12) ... for the edifying of the body of Christ... 16) From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."* (Eph. 4:12-16, and 1 Cor. 12:13-27; Eph. 1:22-23, 3:6, 5:30-32) Just like a body, when one member of the body hurts, the whole body hurts; when one member of the body is rejoicing, all members of the body rejoice together with that member. We *"rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."* (Rom. 12:15) *"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."* (1 Cor. 12:26)

Every member of the body is vital and crucial for the entire body to function in a healthy manner. Every member of the body – every single child of God – has been given a spiritual gift by the Spirit to profit the entire body. *"7) But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 11) But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."* (1 Cor. 12:7,11) While every single child of God has been given a spiritual gift to edify the rest of the church, there is a tremendous amount of "diversity" in the "administration" and "operation" of each gift. Not every person's gifts will operate and be administered in the same way. *"4) Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5) And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6) And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7) But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."* (1 Cor. 12:4-7) God has given to every member the specific spiritual gift, as it hath pleased him (1 Cor. 12:18). Just because we don't have another more prominent spiritual gift in the body doesn't mean that each member is not absolutely vital in the healthy functioning of the body. *"15) If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16) And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17) If the*

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whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?... 19) And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20) But now are they many members, yet but one body.” (1 Cor. 12:15-20)

No member of the body of the Lord’s church can function alone. We are all dependent upon each other in the church, dependent upon every other member of the body. We cannot think that some members are not vital. Even those that have not necessarily been given a very public or prominent gift in the church are still absolutely vital for the healthy functioning of the entire body. “21) *And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22) Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23) And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24) For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. 25) That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26) And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27) Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”*

God has distributed spiritual gifts unto every member of his church as it hath pleased him. These gifts are given to strengthen and edify the entire body. If one portion of our bodies doesn’t work correctly, the church is handicapped. It is vitally important for every member of the church, for every member of the body of Christ to be fully functioning for the health of the overall body. Our spiritual gifts are manifest in a diversity of different ways in our lives. Some gifts – such as the four gifts given in the gospel ministry – are displayed in a more public way in the church. However, that does not diminish the absolute necessity for every child of God to be fully manifesting their spiritual gift to the edification of the entire body of Christ.

Four Gifts in the Gospel Ministry

In Ephesians 4, we see four gifts of the gospel ministry that were given to men in the church to edify the body of Christ and the church as a whole. “8) *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men... 11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Eph. 4:8-12) Each of these four gifts are given to men that are called into the ministry to preach the gospel. Men who are given these gifts are called of God the same as every minister, but the extent of the authority given and the administration of each gift does somewhat vary among each one.*

Apostles. For one to be an apostle, they had to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Jesus Christ (Acts 1:22, 1 Cor. 9:1). Apostles performed special signs and miracles that validated the authenticity of their apostleship (2 Cor. 12:12, Heb. 2:3-4). Apostles were given a special authority in the early church to bind and loose and establish church practice under the direction of Christ and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 16:19) and to set forth the ordinances authoritatively to the church (1 Cor. 11:2,23). They spoke on behalf of God to the church and were used by divine inspiration to deliver the word of God to the church (1 Thess. 2:13). Both apostles and prophets were given a special revelation by the Spirit (Eph. 3:5), and both were the foundational cornerstones used by God in establishing the church in the first century (Eph. 2:20).

The identifying mark of the apostles is that they were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus Christ (Acts 1:22, 1 Cor. 9:1). Therefore, this gift in the gospel ministry is vacant today because no one can meet that qualification of having seen with their own eyes the resurrected Christ. Apostles were given special authority and revelation to establish God’s word and ordinances and truth to the church. Now that the canon of scripture has been closed and the practices of the church established in the word of God, there is no

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further need for this special gift in the church. Thus, this gift in the ministry has been vacant since the passing away of the original apostles in the first century after the death of the Apostle John.

Prophets. Prophets were given, along with apostles, a special revelation to the early church in the inspiration of God's word and laying the foundation of God's church (Eph. 2:20, 3:5). Prophets were not required to have seen the resurrected Christ like apostles but were still given a great degree of authority in the early church. These prophets typically manifested their gift by the foretelling of future events (Acts 11:28, 21:11). However, there would come a time when these miraculous prophesying of events would fail and cease (1 Cor. 13:8). While there is still a gift of "prophecy" in the church today (Rom. 12:6, 1 Cor. 14), that gift has a different administration now in simply "preaching" to the edification of the body instead of the foretelling of future events or revelation from God. Now that God has inspired all his scripture and ceased divine revelation of his word, there is no further need for this special gift in the ministry. God's people don't have to rely upon a prophet to receive a message from God like during the early church and Old Testament, but now we can read the inspired word of God and the Holy Spirit can convict and direct his people in a manner that God had previously used prophets to deliver that message in the early church.

Evangelists. An evangelist is a preacher who will typically travel and preach the gospel in an area or to a people that had previously never heard the gospel. Philip is the only minister in scripture who is specifically denoted as an "evangelist" (Acts 21:8). Philip went and preached in Samaria where many were converted to the truth (Acts 8:5-25). Then, in the middle of that revival in Samaria, Philip was called to leave and go preach to one Ethiopian eunuch in the middle of the Gaza desert (Acts 8:26-39). After baptizing the eunuch and being caught up by the Spirit, he then preached in all the cities from Azotus to Caesarea (Acts 8:40). Philip appears to have settled in Caesarea and used that city as a base for his evangelism as he is found still in Caesarea in Acts 21:8. Paul encouraged Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5). A pastor and teacher typically will serve God in a local church setting, edifying and ministering to the local church. An evangelist is called to a broader ministry, to bring the gospel to those that are not already established in the faith, and to travel more extensively to preach the gospel to those often still in gospel ignorance.

Pastors and Teachers. The gift of "pastors and teachers" is typically considered to be one gift in the church. Every ordained preacher must be proven to be "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2, 2 Tim. 2:24), and they are called to preach and teach the church without ceasing (Acts 5:42). Therefore, any man that has been ordained to the ministry should have displayed a gift to teach, and therefore is a "teacher" to the church. The word "pastor" means "shepherd". Since all of God's ministers are called to "feed the lambs" and "feed the sheep" (John 21:15-17), there is a sense that all of God's preachers "shepherd" the Lord's sheep in the church.

However, there is also a special "appointment" by the Lord for a man to be a pastor of the local church; to be an overseer to feed, guide, and protect the sheep of a local church assembly. It's the Holy Spirit that appoints a man as an overseer of the local church (Acts 20:28), and we trust the church shall follow the burden of the Holy Spirit in choosing their pastor. This man as pastor is entrusted with the spiritual care of these sheep in the church, and as pastor, he must give an account before God for the souls of the sheep that have been entrusted to his care (Heb. 13:17). History has proven that not every man that has been called to teach and preach, has been given a "gift" to pastor and shepherd sheep in an effective way in the local church. Despite some of the limitations that these men might have, God gave the gift of teaching the word of God to these men to feed the Lord's sheep, to guide them in the paths of righteousness, and strengthen their souls in the church.

Of these four gifts in the ministry that God has given unto men, two gifts are vacant, and two gifts are active in the church. The apostle and prophet gifts were special revelations and authority that was given to the original church to inspire the canon of scripture and to establish the ordinances of the church in the word of God. Now that we have the fully inspired scriptures, there is no further need for those special gifts in the

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church. God still grants the gifts of “evangelists” and “pastors and teachers” to his ministers in the church today. While evangelists might travel more extensively and pastors and teachers might strengthen the local church body, all these gifts of the ministry have been given one commission: to “preach the word” and to “edify the body of Christ”.

Seven Gifts in the Church

God gave additional spiritual gifts to the church for the edification of the rest of the body. Some of the most prevalent gifts that are still prominent in the Lord’s church are given in the Romans 12 description of the body of Christ. “4) *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5) So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6) Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7) Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8) Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*” (Rom. 12:4-8) Some people in the church may have more than one spiritual gift or more or less of some gifts to different degrees. Remember, there are many different administrations and operations of these gifts for how they are exhibited in the lives of the church and they are not one size fits all spiritual gifts.

Prophecy. Those who have the gift of prophecy are instructed to “*prophesy according to the proportion of faith*”. Prophecy in the Old Testament and in most of the New Testament was administered by the foretelling of future events or delivering a message from God to the Lord’s people. The foretelling of future events is no longer necessary in the church after the inspiration of scripture. The gift of “prophecy” as described in 1 Cor. 14 relates to “preaching” in the church for the edification of the body. That operation of bringing God’s message to God’s people through preaching is certainly active and alive in the church today. There are also some in the church that have a unique gift of wisdom and spiritual discernment to give counsel for how certain events might occur.

Ministry. Those who minister (or simply “serve others”) are exhorted to “*let us wait on our ministering:*” It takes a great deal of patience to wait and serve other people in the church, and there are some who have been given a great gift of service. We should all serve one another in the church, minister to those in need and the body as a whole. There are still some though that have a unique attentiveness and touch to patiently wait in helping others in the church. Just like the original deacons ordained in Acts 6, the gift of ministry waits upon the needs of others, as the waiter waits tables at a restaurant.

Teaching. Those who have been called to the ministry have displayed the gift of teaching, having been proven to be “apt to teach”. There is supposed to be a more dynamic teaching atmosphere in the church than just the “pastor and teacher” preaching on Sunday morning. Parents teach their children in the home (Eph. 6:4); older men and women teach younger men and women (Titus 2:1-6), and we should all instruct and encourage others in the church as we have opportunity. There are some mothers and aged women who have a special gift to teach their children in their homes and also to teach younger women in fellowship together. There are older men who have a gift to impart their wisdom to younger men and teach them how they should lead their families. There are also some men who are not called to preach that can teach a good lesson from the scriptures to the church in a public worship setting as well.

Exhortation. Those blessed with the gift of exhortation can encourage others in their discipleship. When some members of the church get discouraged or need comfort, the exhorter comes to encourage them and stimulate their faith. The gift of exhortation can be a great spiritual cheerleader for those who are weak and need a spiritual boost. When we need an encouragement and boost to our spiritual walk, the exhorter will comfort, encourage, and refresh your strength to continue in service to the Lord.

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Giving. The members with a gift of giving should “*do it with simplicity.*” Everyone in the church is commanded to give freely to the church and to help others, but it’s evident there are some that have a unique gift of giving. They give freely and liberally of their money and of their time. Giving is about sacrifice and they are willing to sacrifice their money, goods, wisdom, and time to give freely to others who stand in need. They do not give to obligate others to have to repay them, but they give with “simplicity”. They do not draw attention to their ability to give, but they give freely and simply to honor the Lord and help others that are in need.

Ruling. Those who have the gift of ruling should rule “*with diligence.*” The gift of ruling will probably be manifest in skillful organization and supervising different projects in the church. They will often have a close attention to detail and are willing to make difficult decisions when other members cannot reach a conclusion. This gift will often manifest itself in the office of deacon, to help with the organization and administration of the needs of the church, just like the original deacons in Acts 6 as they dispensed the daily ministrations in the Jerusalem church.

Showing Mercy. Some members may also manifest the gift of showing mercy. We should all be merciful and kind to others, but some have a great gift of showing mercy. The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 shows a man with the spiritual gift of showing mercy. He took out of his busy schedule to show mercy and help his neighbor that was in need. The gift of showing mercy should be administered “*with cheerfulness.*” Sometimes we might not want to show mercy to others, but we still might help them begrudgingly out of necessity. Instead, the merciful shows their mercy “with cheerfulness”, with a joyful and kind spirit in their helping of others.

In addition to these seven gifts in the church from Romans 12, there are other gifts that are addressed in the New Testament. Some of these gifts were manifested in a miraculous way in the early New Testament church and no longer are administered in such a miraculous way. We will consider the cessation of the apostolic miraculous gifts in the next section. In 1 Cor. 12:8-10, we are told of nine diversities of gifts given by the Spirit to the church: 1) the word of wisdom, 2) the word of knowledge, 3) faith, 4) the gifts of healing, 5) the working of miracles, 6) prophecy, 7) discerning of spirits, 8) divers kinds of tongues, and 9) the interpretation of tongues. We need to remember that there is a diversity of ways, a diversity of administrations and operations, that all of these spiritual gifts are manifested (1 Cor. 12:4-7). In the early church, many of these spiritual gifts were manifested in a miraculous way, particularly the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, diverse tongues, and interpretation of tongues. While the miraculous manifestation of many of these gifts might have passed away with the apostles, there certainly could be a somewhat different “operation” and “administration” of that gift here today. Some of these spiritual gifts would clearly be evident among God’s people today; those in the church with a special gift of wisdom, or knowledge, or faith. The other gifts might be in the church today as well, but they will have a different operation and administration than the miraculous administrations we see quite prevalently in the New Testament scriptures.

Cessation of Apostolic Miraculous Gifts

In the New Testament, there are many instances of what we would call “miraculous” spiritual gifts. God oftentimes manifested signs and wonders in the Old Testament to validate his message to his people, and that was also a significant purpose of signs and wonders in the early New Testament church. Jesus performed signs and wonders to validate himself as the Messiah to the Jews in accordance with many Old Testament prophecies (Acts 2:22). The prophesying and speaking in tongues specifically on the Day of Pentecost was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and a validation of the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:16-21, Joel 2:28). The miraculous gifts and signs of an apostles were used to validate the authenticity of their apostleship from the false apostles (2 Cor. 12:12). These signs and wonders served

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their purpose in their time, but now that God has inspired the full canon of the scriptures, there is not a need for these miraculous gifts for validation like there was in the infancy of the church.

The Jews generally desired a sign to believe God (1 Cor. 1:22), so God catered to them and gave them signs in Jesus and the apostles' day. Jesus rebuked this lack of faith among the Jews, that "an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign". The last sign that would be given of Jesus' Messiahship would be his resurrection, so therefore God quit catering to the Jews by signs and wonders just a few years after his resurrection. "39) *But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40) For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" (Matt. 12:39-40) After Jesus' day, signs from God began to diminish, but false signs and wonders began to be used by Satan attempting to deceive the Lord's people (Matt. 24:24, 2 Thess. 2:9)

These special gifts of the Holy Ghost appear to have been given primarily from the laying on of hands by the apostles. Philip had to call the apostles down to Samaria for the apostles to lay hands and impart the gift of the Holy Ghost unto the people because even though Philip had this gift by the laying on of the apostles hands (in Acts 6), he could not impart this gift to a third party by the laying of his hands (Acts 8:14-18). Therefore, these miraculous gifts were not conferred upon the church in perpetuity but were given to the apostles and to those on whom the apostles laid their hands. Therefore, once the apostles died, these miraculous apostolic gifts died out with the apostles.

As the time for the use of these apostolic miraculous gifts in the church appeared to be closing, Paul concludes his teaching on spiritual gifts by exhorting them to "*covet earnestly the best gifts*" and follow the "*more excellent way*" of charity (1 Cor. 12:28-31 & 13:1-13). After extolling the better way of charity, Paul then explains why charity is better. Charity will never fail, but these miraculous gifts would fail and cease and vanish away very soon. "*Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*" (1 Cor. 13:8) Prophecies of future events would fail (not come to pass). Speaking in tongues would cease, and special knowledge of revelation would vanish away. Paul understood these were temporary gifts to serve a special purpose, but once the church was established and scripture inspired these apostolic miraculous gifts would fail, cease, and vanish away.

Speaking in Tongues. In the infancy of the church, we can see how it was necessary for the miraculous gift of speaking in tongues. On the Day of Pentecost, there were men from at least 15 different nationalities in the temple in Acts 2. There was no way for a native Galilean to preach to where everyone could understand his message unless the Holy Spirit allowed for everyone to hear in their own language. When Paul went and preached in countries where there was not an established church and did not always know their native language, then it was necessary for him to speak in an unknown tongue to communicate with those people. Paul was actually thankful that he spoke in tongues more than anyone else (1 Cor. 14:18) because that was necessary with him preaching in many cities that he didn't know their language. Now, once the local church was established in those cities, there was not a significant need to preach in tongues because everyone in the local church spoke the same language. That's why Paul later clarifies that speaking in an unknown tongue only lends to confusion and does not edify the church. "2) *He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him. 4) He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself*" (1 Cor. 14:2,4) Prophesying (preaching) on the other hand gives edification, exhortation, and comfort to the church. Therefore, unless there is an interpreter for the church to be able to understand the unknown tongues, then he should be quiet to allow for one to prophecy (preach) so the church can actually be edified. "5) *I would that ye all spake with tongues but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying...* 13) *Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he*

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may interpret.” (1 Cor. 14:5,13) Paul is clear that in the church unless there is an interpreter, one should not speak in an unknown tongue because it does not edify the church but only creates confusion and “*God is not the author of confusion*” (1 Cor. 14:33).

The “charismatic movement” today that places such an emphasis on speaking in tongues appears to totally ignore Paul’s clear teaching in 1 Cor. 14. Speaking in unknown tongues had its place in the early church to communicate with large numbers of people who did not all speak the same language. Now, scripture affirms that unless you have an interpreter so the church can understand what you are saying, then no one should speak in tongues in the church. The “charismatic speaking in tongues” today is usually just incoherent babbling and clearly with no interpreter. Scripture makes it very clear that is not appropriate in the church because that only creates confusion in the church and does not edify the church at all. Instead, preaching the word of God to where all can understand and be edified is exalted in the church.

Physical Healing. Jesus gave the apostles the authority to heal those that were sick (Matt. 10:1, Mark 3:15) and the apostles miraculously healed many people. Some wanted just the shadow of Peter to pass over them in hopes of healing (Acts 5:15). Just touching Paul’s handkerchiefs or aprons healed many in Ephesus (Acts 19:11-12). When these apostles actually administered this gift and healed others “*they were healed every one*” (Acts 5:16). If someone has the true spiritual gift of healing, then they will not fail in healing others; everyone they attempt to heal will be healed. The true gift of healing has a 100% success rate. The false healers today tell those who are not healed that they don’t have enough faith. If they actually had the real gift of healing, they would be healed “every one”, regardless of the recipient’s faith or lack thereof. This miraculous gift of healing passed away with the apostles. While we reject the validity of the “charismatic faith healers” of today, we do believe in a “Divine Healer”, that God answers the prayers of his saints to heal his people that are sick (James 5:13-15, Matt. 17:19-20, Mark 9:23, Phil. 4:6).

Christ promised the apostles that they would cast out evil spirits, speak in tongues, and that deadly serpents would have no power to kill them. When Paul was stranded on the island of Melita, a venomous viper bit his hand that would normally kill a man immediately, but Paul did not die from that viper’s bite (Acts 28:3-6). That special protection from dying from venomous snake bites and drinking deadly poison is not true of anyone beyond the apostles, even though this practice of handling deadly snakes and even drinking deadly poison is prevalent in the charismatic churches today.

It became evident later in the apostles’ day that this gift of physical healing was diminishing and about to cease. Paul gives Timothy the practical advice to use a little wine for his stomach’s sake and for his often infirmities (1 Tim. 5:23). Paul also says he left Trophimus at Miletum sick instead of just healing him (2 Tim. 4:20). It appears the gift of miraculous physical healing was diminishing even in Paul’s day as he did not just heal anyone who was sick around him. Just like the rest of the apostolic miraculous gifts, these gifts ceased and vanished away in the church after the death of the apostles in the first century.

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“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt. 16:18)

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matt. 28:20)

“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Eph. 3:21)

Perpetuity of the Church

In the Old Testament, Daniel’s prophecy affirmed that the kingdom of God would be established in the days of the Roman empire and would “*never be destroyed*” and that kingdom “*shall stand forever*” (Daniel 2:44). Jesus declared in Matt. 16:18 that the gates of hell would never prevail against the Lord’s church. Jesus promised to remain with the church “*always, even unto the end of the world*” (Matt. 28:20). The church is God’s designated entity in the world to manifest his glory until the Lord returns “*throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*” (Eph. 3:21) Since Jesus has promised that God will have a church worshipping him in Spirit and in truth until Christ’s second coming, the question we have to answer is where has that church resided since the days of original apostles and where does it reside today?

In the Primitive Baptist Church, we believe to be holding to the same doctrine and practice that we see in the New Testament scriptures of the Original Church, and thus we believe that we can trace our church ancestry back in an unbroken line to the original apostles and the Original (“Primitive”) Baptist Church that was set up by Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry. Those, who have held to the same doctrine and practice of the Original Baptist Church have been called by many different names over the years. The Original Baptist Church were first called Christians at Antioch, but those who have held staunchly to the New Testament doctrine and practice of the church have been known by Novatians, Donatists, Waldenses, Albigenses, Ana-Baptists, and other names over the years in various countries. Historical references to this small remnant of the original church can be found throughout the Middle East, Northern Africa, and Europe for all the centuries dating back to the first century church.

The name that history has settled upon for the true church in America today is the Primitive Baptist Church. “Primitive” simply means “original”. Therefore, we believe the Primitive Baptist Church today represents the Original Baptist Church that was established by Jesus Christ after his baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Although, the disciples of Christ who have held to the uncorrupted teachings of the New Testament have been known by many names over the centuries, we trust that we can trace our church ancestry all the way back to the original apostles who held firm to the commandments that Christ proclaimed at the institution and establishment of the New Testament Church.

First Called Christians at Antioch

The church were first called “Christians” in Antioch. “*And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*” (Acts 11:26) The people who have held to the doctrine and practice of the original Christians – of the Original Baptist Church – who have believed in the scriptural truths of election, predestination, and salvation by grace alone and have observed the simplistic worship and practice of the scriptures have been called by many names since Antioch in the first century. In accordance with God’s promise that his kingdom would stand forever and his church would continue until Jesus’ second coming, there was always a continuous stream of these believers dating all the way back to the establishment of the church in the first century, even if they were not prevalently documented in secular or religious history.

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The canon of scripture was closed somewhere near the end of the 1st century around 95 AD with the penning of the Book of Revelation by the Apostle John. We know of the death of Polycarp, bishop of the Smyrna church, in 166 AD who was burned to death for his defiance to recant his faith in Christ. Around 250 AD, we see the “Novatians” (or the Cathari, “the Pure”) come out of the church at Rome, because of their commitment to strict discipline and purity of life among the church, instead of the lax discipline that had invaded the Roman church. The Novatians were also well known historically for their soundness on the doctrine of predestination.

In Northern Africa around 303 AD, the “Donatists” separated from the main church at Carthage (in like fashion to the Novatians in Rome) over the practices of loose discipline and false doctrines in the church, as well as the new bishop’s catering to the wishes of the Roman emperor. The Donatists (like the Novatians) required converts from other false denominations to be rebaptized according to the scriptural pattern. In the 5th century, the Roman Catholic church as we know it began to come into being with the establishment of many of their false teachings and the Bishop of the church at Rome eventually taking the title of “Pope”. The Catholic church made infant baptism compulsory, and the true church who rejected this infant baptism as a valid, scriptural baptism were labeled by the Catholics as “Anabaptists”. The Novatians and the Donatists had their meeting houses confiscated and books burned under persecution from the Catholic Church over their rejection of the Catholic baptisms.

Also in the 5th Century, Augustine, the bishop of Hippo in North Africa, wrote extensively opposing Catholic false teachings and baptisms. Augustine maintained that God’s election and predestination of the sinner to eternal life were altogether of free and unmerited grace, and not all conditioned on the sinner’s repentance, faith and good works; for these are declared in the scriptures to be the fruit of God’s Spirit in the heart. Augustine was the most vocal and prominent writer after the apostles of the scriptural truths of man’s depravity, election, predestination, and salvation by God’s grace alone. Some have attributed Augustine with being the precursor to John Calvin and establishing the doctrine of election and predestination and salvation by grace, but Augustine was simply teaching the same truth taught in the scriptures and believed by the original church; these doctrinal truths did not begin with Augustine but began with the teaching of Christ and the apostles.

As the Dark Ages set in on religion in the 6th century, the true church had to worship secretly due to persecution and is not seen very prominently in history for quite a few centuries due to the severe persecution of the church. In the 7th century, there was a group that arose in Armenia that emphasized the teachings of the Apostle Paul in scripture. These disciples of the church came to be known as “Paulicans” due to their commitment to teachings of Paul and purity in doctrine and purity in the life of the disciples. In the 11th century in Italy there was another group known as the “Paterines” that were committed to believer’s baptism, the Lord’s supper, and purity of life. In the 12th century, the Albigenses in Southern France arose claiming to be the true successors of the apostles believing the truth of the New Testament scriptures. The Roman Catholic church declared religious war on the Albigenses and slew over one million of those believers over 20 years beginning in 1209 AD. The persecuted Albigenses then migrated into Germany, Switzerland, and in the valleys of the Piedmont.

Also, in the 12th century the Waldenses of Northwest Italy and their apostolic doctrine came to a more public or prominent view through the teachings of Peter Waldo. The roots of the Waldenses in the Piedmont Valley trace all the way back to the Novatians in the 3rd century. Since that time, they continued to maintain, albeit in relative secret for many years, their commitment to re-baptism by immersion, strict discipline, and holy living. "It is highly probable, and is believed by many eminent historians, that the Waldenses in northern Italy were the spiritual descendants and successors of the Novatians – like them, stigmatized as Anabaptists, rejecting the superstitions and corruptions of Rome, and re-immersing all who joined them from the Catholic communion." (Hassell) "The Waldenses served God in the ancient purity of His worship,

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and never submitted to Rome. Some of the popish writers themselves own that this people never submitted to the church of Rome. One of the popish writers, speaking of the Waldenses, says, the heresy of the Waldenses is the oldest heresy in the world." (A History of the Work of Redemption, Comprising an Outline of Church History, Jonathan Edwards)

Their beliefs were summarized in 1120 AD in the first Waldenses Confession of Faith, which closely reflects the major tenets still held to by Primitive Baptists today while also denouncing many of the unscriptural practices performed by the Catholic church during that time. They believed that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament were the only rule of faith and practice. They rejected all the Catholic doctrines such as transubstantiation, indulgences, purgatory, and celibacy. Instead, they affirmed that God alone can forgive sin. They recognized only two scriptural ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper with both being the emblems and signs of grace (Hassell). The Waldenses said in the year 1208 that the church "is meant to include all the elect of God, from the beginning to the end, by the grace of God, through the merits of Christ, gathered together by the Holy Spirit and foreordained to eternal life." (Orchard)

In the 14th century, the Waldenses that had emigrated into Northern Italy settled in valleys and assembled themselves as a church with motto, "the light shineth in darkness." It was here they enjoyed a relatively secure time from persecution with only occasional troubles from the inquisitors for a period of one hundred and thirty years. A bold teacher was raised up named Walter Lollard that aroused the Albigenses with his powerful preaching. It is from this man that Waldenses were called Lollards as his views were in harmony with the doctrine and practice of the Waldenses. Lollard was burned alive in 1320 AD, but the truth he preached continued with his followers in Germany. Many godly men such as John Wycliffe, John Huss, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Bunyan and many others over the centuries stood against the false teaching of the Roman Catholic church and upheld the scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice instead of Catholic orthodoxy, even if they did not believe all historical Baptist doctrines.

Even though the Original Baptist Church that was called by many different names through the centuries was not always in public view for history, there was always a group of devoted disciples committed to the truth of God's word. The Lutheran historian J.L. Mosheim states in reference to the origin of the Baptists, "The true origin of the Anabaptists or Mennonites (or Baptists) is hidden in the depths of antiquity, and is, of consequence, extremely difficult to be ascertained. There are not entirely in error when they boast of their descent from the Waldenses, Petrobrusians and other ancient sects, who are usually considered as witnesses of the truth in the times of general darkness and superstition. Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe, particularly in Bohemia, Moravia, Switzerland, and Germany, many persons who adhered to the doctrine tenaciously, which the Waldenses, Wycliffites, and Hussites had maintained, some in a more disguised, and others in a more open and public manner, viz: 'That the kingdom of Christ, or the visible church which he established upon earth, was an assembly of real and true saints, and ought, therefore, to be inaccessible to the wicked and unrighteous, and also exempt from all those institutions which human prudence suggests, to oppose the progress of iniquity, or to correct and reform transgressors.' I know of no people who are, by their principles, so closely identified as Old School or Bible Baptists with the primitive, spiritual, truly apostolic succession." (Hassell)

Not Protestants

Primitive Baptists are not "Protestants". Since we were never a part of the Roman Catholic church, we never left the Catholic church "in protest" of their doctrine and practice. Our Primitive Baptist ancestors of the Novatians, Donatists, Waldenses, Albigenses and Anabaptists were always separate and distinct from the Roman Catholic church and thus we did not leave the Catholic church "in protest" or leave as Protestants. We did not come into existence during the Reformation in the 16th century with the historical Protestants, but rather we believe we can trace our church ancestry back to the Original Baptist Church

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established by Christ and the apostles in the first century, never with any connection or fellowship with the Roman Catholic church.

Primitive Baptists History in America

After migrating to America, the church was known as simply Baptists from the 17th century till the early 19th century. Culminating in 1832, there was a group who splintered off from the historical Baptist church who adopted an unscriptural purpose of the gospel to save souls to heaven and correspondingly added unscriptural additions to the church such as mission boards and Sunday schools to accomplish this end. Those who desired to adopt these unscriptural doctrines and practices took the name of Missionary Baptists or New School Baptists. Those who remained committed to the original doctrine and practice of the church as historically believed by Baptists and by the Original Baptist Church that we see in the New Testament Scriptures were given the name by their detractors of Primitive Baptists or Old School Baptists, since we held to the original or old school teachings of the church. Thus, those who believe in salvation by grace alone and the simple manner of worship that we see prescribed in the New Testament scriptures have taken the name in America of Primitive Baptists, just as the original church has been called by many names in other countries over the centuries. Since we view the scriptures as our only rule of faith and practice, we believe that our doctrine and practice and worship is the same as the Original Baptist Church that we see expressed in the New Testament scriptures and we believe we can trace our primitive church ancestry back to the first century and the establishment of the original church by Jesus Christ and the apostles.

Historical Quotes of the True Original Baptist Church

The unbroken chain of faithful Baptists has been confirmed by independent historians throughout all the centuries of the church.

- “It is a significant and well-established in credible history that even as far back as the fourth century those refusing to go into the Hierarchy, and refusing to accept the baptism or those baptized in infancy, and refusing to accept the doctrine of ‘Baptismal Regeneration’ and demanding rebaptism for all those who came to them from the Hierarchy, were called ‘Ana-Baptists’. No matter what other names they then bore they were always referred to as ‘Ana-Baptists’. Near the beginning of the sixteenth century, the ‘Ana’ was dropped, and the name shortened to simply ‘Baptists’, and gradually all other names were dropped... The name, however, has become fixed and is willingly accepted and proudly borne. It snugly fits. It was the distinguishing name of the forerunner of Christ (John the Baptist), the first to teach the doctrine to which the Baptists now hold.” (Carroll)
- Dr. J.J. Durmont, Chaplain to the King of Holland, and Dr. Ypeig, professor of theology in the university of Groningen, were commissioned by the king of Holland to investigate the origin and foundation of the Dutch Baptists. They issued their report to the king of Holland in 1818. “The Mennonites are descended from the tolerably pure evangelical Waldenses, who were driven by persecution into various countries; and who during the latter part of the twelfth century, fled into Flanders and into the provinces of Holland and Zealand, where they lived simple and exemplary lives – in the villages as farmers, in the towns by trades, free from the charge of any gross immoralities, and professing the most pure and simple principles, which they exemplified in their holy conversation. *THEY WERE, THEREFORE, IN EXISTENCE LONG BEFORE THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE NETHERLANDS.* We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites, were the original Waldenses; and who have long in the history of the Church, received the honor of that origin. *ON THIS ACCOUNT THE BAPTISTS MAY BE CONSIDERED THE ONLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WHICH HAS STOOD*

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SINCE THE APOSTLES; AND AS A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY WHICH HAS PRESERVED PURE THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT ALL AGES. The perfectly correct external economy of the Baptist denomination tends to confirm the truth disputed by the Romish Church, that the Reformation brought about in the sixteenth century was in the highest degree necessary; and at the same time goes to refute the erroneous notion of the Catholics, that their communion is the most ancient.” (Orchard, emphasis added)

- J.L. Mosheim (Lutheran historian): “Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe, particularly in Bohemia, Moravia, Switzerland, and Germany, many persons who adhered to the doctrine tenaciously, which the Waldenses, Wycliffites, and Hussites had maintained, some in a more disguised, and others in a more open and public manner, viz: ‘That the kingdom of Christ, or the visible church which he established upon earth, was an assembly of real and true saints, and ought, therefore, to be inaccessible to the wicked and unrighteous, and also exempt from all those institutions which human prudence suggests, to oppose the progress of iniquity, or to correct and reform transgressors.’ I know of no people who are, by their principles, so closely identified as Old School or Bible Baptists with the primitive, spiritual, truly apostolic succession.” (Hassell)
- Edinburg Cyclopedia (Presbyterian): “It must have already occurred to our readers that the Baptists are the same sect of Christians that were formerly described as Ana-Baptists. Indeed this seems to have been their leading principle from the time of Tertullian to the present time.” (Tertullian ministered in the 2nd century in Carthage and was born only about 50 years after the death of the Apostle John). (Carroll)
- Cardinal Hosius (Catholic, A.D. 1524), President of the Council of Trent: “Were it not that the Baptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past twelve hundred (1,200) years, they would swarm in greater numbers than all the Reformers.” (Carroll)
- Sir Isaac Newton: “The Baptists are the only body of known Christians that have never symbolized (held the same faith as) with Rome.” (Carroll)

Furthermore, the church’s historical position as believing in predestination, election, particular atonement, and baptism by immersion are affirmed by the writings of many prominent men and elders in the early church.

- "The advocates of Pelagianism say that Augustine first discovered and propagated those sentiments since termed Calvinistic, but this is an error. The early writers expressed themselves equally as decisive on election, predestination, etc., though not so frequently; and it is equally evident that the early churches held his views." (Orchard).
- “Dr. John Gill (1697-1741), an able Baptist minister of England, devoted much of his time to the study of ancient writers, and in his valuable work, *The Cause of God and Truth*, has collected numerous extracts from many early writers showing that they believed in election, predestination, etc. Of this number he here names the following: 1) Clement of Rome, who lived in the times of the apostles, and is thought by some to be the same Clement the apostle Paul speaks of (Phil. 3:3) as one of his fellow laborers. Clement wrote an epistle in the name of the church at Rome to the church at Corinth, about the year 69, which is the earliest piece of antiquity next to the writings of the apostles extant, being written when some of them were yet living. In this epistle are several things relating to the doctrine of election, and which greatly serve to confirm it. 2) Ignatius was

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made bishop of Antioch in 71, and suffered martyrdom in the eleventh year of Trajan, about 108. There are several epistles written by him still extant; among which is one to the Ephesians. 3) Justin, called the Martyr, to distinguish him from others of the same name, was a native of Samaria; born in 89, became a Christian, and suffered martyrdom in 163. Several of his writings continue to this day. 4) Minutius Foelix was a famous councillor at Rome, about 170. He wrote a dialogue between Caecilius a heathen, and Octavius a Christian, which is still in existence. 5) Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, became bishop of Lyons, France, about 178, and was martyred about 198. He wrote five books which remain to this day, and from which may be gathered his belief concerning the decrees of God. This was a very strong writer. 6) Clement of Alexandria (about 150-220), a heathen philosopher, became a Christian, and was a presbyter of the church at Alexandria. Several of his works are still extant, in which he clearly asserts the doctrine of election. 7) Tertullian (160-230) was by birth an African, of the city of Carthage. He was one of the first Latin writers among the Christians. He wrote much and many of his works remain to this day. 8) Cyprian (200-258) was an African by birth, bishop of Carthage, and suffered martyrdom in 258. He wrote many excellent things, some of which are preserved. Augustine thought he was of the same mind with himself on the doctrine of predestination. 9) Novatian of Rome was contemporary with Cyprian. He disagreed with Cornelius who was chosen bishop of Rome, but he was judged orthodox, and his book, *De Trinitate*, is highly esteemed and stands as a full and memorable testimony to the doctrine of predestination. Dr. Gill takes up these different writers and devotes many pages to prove from their own writings that they really believed in election and predestination. Then he again takes up these same writers and shows that they held to the other Calvinistic doctrines of special atonement, original sin, the impotence of man's free will, and the necessity of the grace of God to everything that is spiritually good. And it will be noted that this was before the days of Augustine. Also, Gill shows that Augustine claims that the church writers before him, believed these doctrines.” (Daily)

God promised that his church and his kingdom would stand forever, the gates of hell should never prevail against it, and his glory would be proclaimed in the church world without end, amen. Even though the Original Baptist Church as been obscured from public view for many years throughout its history, there has always been a people that has been committed to the purity of the doctrine and practice in the scriptures. We believe the representation of this Original Baptist Church resides today in the Primitive Baptist Church in America, as we continue to uphold the doctrine and practice of the original church. We further believe that God will always preserve his kingdom to where there will always be a true church remnant observing the original doctrine and practice of the Lord's church until Christ's second coming. We hope and pray it will still be among the Primitive Baptist Church in America at Jesus Christ's second coming. *“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”* (Ephesians 3:21)

There were multiple sources consulted and referenced in this chapter. Those sources include: *History of the Church of God*, by Elder C.B. Hassell; *A Concise History of the Baptists*, by G.H. Orchard; *History of the Primitive Baptist Church*, by Elder W.S. Craig; *Church History*, by Elder J. Harvey Daily; *The History of the Christian Church*, (Volumes I and II), by William Jones; *The Trail of Blood*, by J.M. Carroll; and certain other sources as specifically noted.