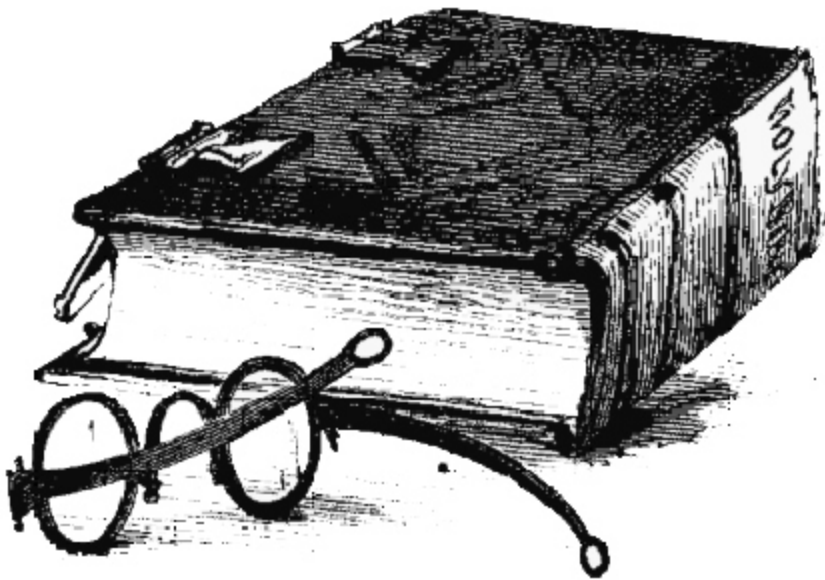

Seeking the Truth

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." - John 8:32



A Bible Correspondence Course
Designed to Be Studied in the Privacy of One's Home

Gene Taylor

Introduction

In this course you will learn about God the Father and Jesus Christ, God the Son, and what They would have you do so that you might have eternal salvation. Though salvation is a personal matter (Philippians 2:12), we can help one another look for the Truth which frees one from sin (John 8:32) and its subsequent penalty, death (Romans 6:23). An example of this is found in the book of Acts. The man from Ethiopia learned about salvation when Philip guided him to the Truth of the gospel (Acts 8:26-40).

Our only desire in presenting this material to you is so that you might come to a knowledge of saving Truth. This is the same desire God also has for you. 2 Peter 3:9, in speaking of God, says, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**" God, "**desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**" (1 Timothy 2:4).

As you study each lesson, use your Bible to confirm each thought presented. Turn to each passage of Scripture as it is cited in the lesson and read it carefully in its context.

After completing each lesson in the above manner, answer the appropriate questions for that lesson and mail them to us for grading. After they have been graded, we will return them promptly to you along with any corrections and explanations of those corrections. We hope this study will be both enjoyable and informative for you. We are pleased to be able to be of service to you in this way.

Enjoy your study!



Philip teaching the Ethiopian

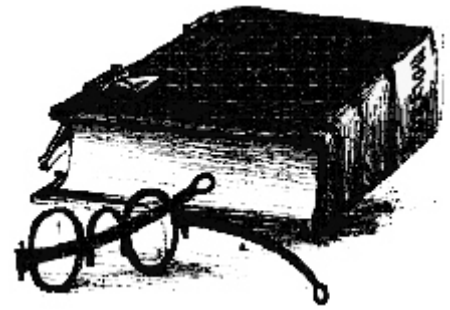
Understanding References to Scripture

If the Scripture cited, for example, is John 3:16, "John" is the book of the Bible, "3" is the chapter of that book, and "16" is the verse in that chapter.

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Seeking the Truth

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Lesson One: The Reality of God

The question “Does God exist?” challenges every person. The reality of God, whether or not He exists, is the most significant subject anyone can consider. To deny God’s existence is, in essence, to deny the reality of the universe and life. To admit it, though, is to acknowledge Him as the greatest of all realities.

There are only two sources to which one can look for information which testify to the existence of God. One is the universe, His creation. The second is the Bible, His revelation.

The Universe

No sane person would dispute the reality of the universe. Without a shadow of a doubt, it exists. It is an accepted fact that “Nothing comes from nothing” or “Something cannot come from nothing.” Every effect must have a cause. All scientists, even those who are atheists, agree that this principle is true. Something, then, had to be in existence before the universe from which the universe came into being. Something has to be eternal.

Only two things could be eternal: matter or intelligence. Evolutionists and atheists believe matter is eternal and that life came from inanimate matter by spontaneous generation. Believers in God consider intelligence, in the form of an all-wise God, to be eternal. They claim that God originated, designed, and created the universe and all that lives in it. We must determine which view is correct.

That intelligence, not matter, is eternal can be demonstrated to be the more rational of the two views by an examination of the facts. By comparing mind, i.e. intelligence, to matter, mind is shown to be superior. Mind knows while matter is the object known. Mind moves, directs,

“The heavens declare
the glory of God;
And the firmament
shows His handiwork.”
Psalm 19:1

and modifies matter. Matter is not eternal but can be changed into energy and cease to exist as matter.

Consider also the signs of purpose and design in the universe. The great expanse of the universe, the smallest detail of the human body, the tiniest cell of a living organism, and even the minute atom all display purpose and design. Our question: “Could all of that purpose and design have happened by mere chance?” The atheist would have us believe that every thing that exists came into being by blind luck and mere chance. Another accepted principle, though,

is applicable here: "Design demands a designer." Purpose reflects planning. The universe speaks of the intelligent being which brought it into existence. "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1; cf. Romans 1:18-22). A "fool" denies the evidence (Psalm 14:1).

The Bible

Since the being and will of God are matters of divine revelation (1 Corinthians 1:21), the Bible does not argue for the existence of God. Rather, it presents it as fact in its very first verse (Genesis 1:1). Yet, one's faith is not to be blind. For faith to have both meaning and validity, it must rest upon true and convincing evidence which has been honestly and fairly considered. Still, there are limitations to evidence and proof.

The existence of God cannot be proven empirically, i.e, He cannot be proven to exist by using the five senses. That should neither

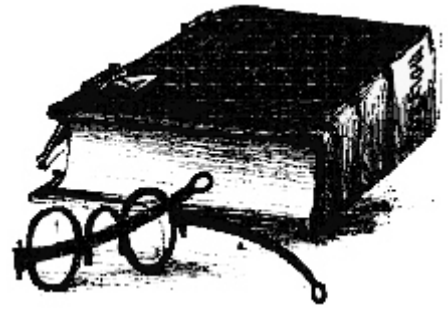
surprise nor discourage you. As a matter of fact, a good deal of reality cannot be proven by empirical means. Such things as beauty, love, etc., are real but they, just like faith, cannot be proven by empirical methods. By its very definition faith is "the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). We may not be able to see God nor touch Him but we can know He exists by His creation and by His word, the Bible, in which He has revealed Himself and His will to mankind. We must believe in Him (Hebrews 11:6) and the truth of His word (John 17:17) to be pleasing to Him and to live with Him eternally.

To begin your study, you must honestly consider all of the evidence for the existence of God. When you do, we believe you will conclude that there is a God in whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). If you will believe in Him and obey His will, He will grant you eternal life.✠

● **Complete the Questions for Lesson One** ●

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Questions on Lesson One

Answer the following questions by using the lesson text and your Bible.

1. What two sources provide information as to the existence of God?

2. Which is eternal, matter or intelligence?

Matter Intelligence

3. Which is superior, mind or matter?

Mind Matter

4. Does the universe show purpose and design?

Yes No

Do you believe "design demands a designer?"

Yes No

Do you believe the universe had a designer?

Yes No

5. According to Genesis 1:1, how did the heavens and the earth come into existence?

6. According to Psalm 19:1, what do "the heavens" declare?

7. Can the existence of God be proven by empirical means, i.e., by our senses (touch, taste, sight, etc.)?

Yes No

Does that prove He does not exist?

Yes No

8. Psalm 14:1 says, "The _____ has said in his heart 'There is no God.'"

9. Hebrews 11:6 says, "...He who comes to God must _____ that He _____."

10. When all the evidence is fairly and honestly considered, does God exist?

Yes No

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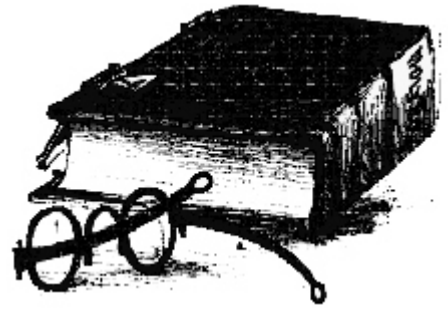
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Lesson Two: The Validity of the Bible

When the chief priests and elders of the Jews questioned the authority of Jesus, He, in turn posed a question to them about the baptism of John—“where was it from? From heaven or from men?” (Matthew 21:25). That same question needs to be asked about the origin of the Bible—“Where is it from? From heaven or from men?” It is a question that each person must answer because the response one gives to it may well determine the eternal destiny of his/her soul.

The Bible: From God or Man?

If the Bible is a product of man, think of the kind of men involved in its production. They would be wicked liars who posed as something they were not, who offered empty promises and hopes which could not be fulfilled, and who claimed to be from God when, in reality, they would be far from Him. Also, since they received no worldly acclaim, power, or riches from authoring it. Not only, then, would they be wicked but also they would be stupid. Additionally, nearly all those men who authored books of it died a martyr's death because of it. To say that the origin of the Bible is with man is illogical.

On the other hand, it is completely logical to believe God is the source of the Bible. Since man could never have known of God and His will by his own wisdom and resources, it was necessary for God to reveal Himself and His will to him. If man were going to know his origin, identity, purpose, and destiny, God had to reveal them to him. To accomplish such a revelation, God

revealed His word to the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-13) who, having searched the mind of God, made it known to men, inspiring them to write down what He revealed to them (2 Peter 1:20-21). The Bible, then, is a product of inspiration.

The Bible: A Product of Inspiration

Inspiration is “a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness” (Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p. 131). The Bible claims such inspiration. In 2 Timothy 3:16 it says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

Having revealed Himself and His will to the Holy Spirit, God separated certain men to reveal that will to man. They did not teach according to their own wills (2 Peter 1:20). Rather, they spoke the words and thoughts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-13). They were inspired to great depth and detail (Matthew 22:31,32; Galatians 3:16).

This inspiration fully qualified them in their teaching both what they spoke and what they wrote (Matthew 10:9; Acts 2:4). Thus, what they wrote were the words and commands of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37). They wrote exactly what God wanted them to write without errors or mistakes. Therefore, when one reads the Bible, he is reading the words of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Evidence of Inspiration

There are many areas which give supporting evidence for the inspiration of the Bible showing it to be from God. Consider the following.

The Unity of the Bible. The Bible's sixty-six books were written by about forty men over a period of approximately 1600 years yet all are written in perfect harmony each complementing, never contradicting, the others.

The Scriptures Claim Inspiration. Besides 2 Timothy 3:16, which we have already noted, the Scriptures have an "air of infallibility" about them. Though unlearned men—fishermen, farmers, tax-collectors, etc.—often did the writing, they wrote with confidence. They announced without embarrassment they were revealing God's message (1 Corinthians 14:37).

The Brevity of the Scriptures. The Bible's brevity is a good example of inspiration. In the Scriptures, facts are related in a small amount of text that under normal circumstances would have taken men volumes to reveal.

The Calmness of the Scriptures. In the Bible, the wonderful and commonplace are described alike. Such events as the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-5), the murder of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:6-12), the miracles of Jesus, and even the crucifixion (Matthew 27:33-56) are related in simple, commonplace terms.

Fulfilled Prophecies. Prophecy is a declaration of future events, such as no human wisdom or forecast is sufficient to make; depending on a knowledge of the innumerable contingencies of human affairs, which belongs exclusively to the omniscience of God; so that, from its very nature, prophecy must

be divine revelation. Time and again the writers of the Bible foretold of events which would later come to pass. Sometimes speaking hundreds of years before the events were to occur, the prophecies of the writers of the Bible were detailed. They were not like the broad generalizations of the so-called "prophets" of today. Every Biblical prophecy was fulfilled in exact detail.

Scientific Knowledge. Negatively, one does not find the superstitions or wrong ideas which were prevalent in Biblical times. Positively, its writers possessed advanced knowledge that mankind did not discover until centuries later. This includes such ideas as the roundness of the earth (Isaiah 40:22), the suspension of the earth in space (Job 26:7), the isolation of communicable diseases (Leviticus 13:45), and the need to wash in running water because of the presence of germs (Leviticus 14:1-6).

Archaeological Proof. No archaeological discovery has ever disproved any portion of the Bible. On the other hand, archaeology has proven many Biblical facts to be true.

Historical Accuracy. The Bible is without error in relation to its historical record of events.

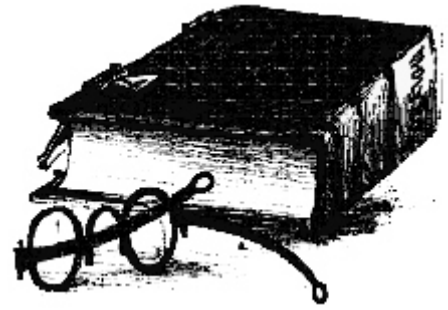
Conclusion

The Bible is the word of God. It bridges the gap between human and divine wisdom. In it God has revealed those things man could not know in and of himself. God has given man all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3) so that he might live soberly, righteously, and godly in this life (Titus 2:11-14) in order to live eternally with Him in the life to come. 🙏

● **Complete the Questions for Lesson Two** ●

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Questions on Lesson Two

Answer the following questions by using the lesson text and your Bible.

1. Why is it important to know whether or not the Bible is from God or man?

2. If the Bible were a product of mere men, what kind of men would have written it?

3. How many men wrote the Bible? _____

Approximately how many years did it take to write the Bible?

4. What happened to most of the men who wrote the Bible?

5. What is inspiration?

6. Who inspired the men who wrote the books of the Bible?

7. Does the Bible claim to be inspired?

Yes No

8. What is prophecy?

9. Who is the source of all true prophecy?

10. Has any archaeological discovery ever disproved any portion of the Bible?

Yes No

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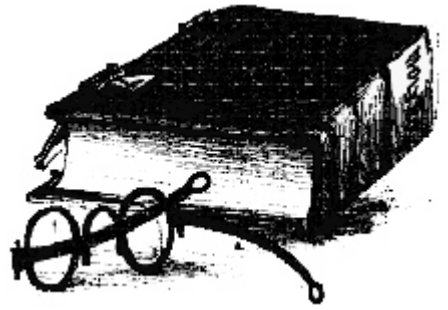
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Lesson Three: Jesus - The Son of God

The fundamental teaching of God's revelation to man is that Jesus is the Son of God. It is the basis of the New Testament Scriptures (John 20:30-31), the theme of New Testament preaching (cf. Acts 2:36; Acts 17:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:2), and one of the basic precepts of the faith we hold dear. The Scriptures contain many facts that give positive evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.

The Life and Characteristics of Jesus

His life, as presented in Scripture, offers great evidence that Jesus is the Son of God.

It is an historical fact that Jesus lived, that He had a great influence on people, and that He died a martyr for His cause. But there are other facts which affirm Him to be what He claimed to be—the Son of God.

He was sinless. Hebrews 4:15 says He was tempted in all points as we are but was without sin. 2 Corinthians 5:21 states that He knew no sin. 1 Peter 2:21 says He committed no sin. This fact alone sets Him apart from all other responsible beings who have ever lived for everyone of them has sinned at one time or another (Romans 3:10,23). Even His enemies admitted His innocence (Acts 2).

His words are the greatest words ever spoken. His gospel is not only the most popular of all literature ever written, it is also the greatest literary work ever penned. The greatness of His teaching lies in its pure, lucid spirituality in dealing clearly, definitively, and authoritatively with man's greatest problems (Matthew 7:28-29; John 7:43-46).

The miraculous works Jesus performed, done by the power of God (John 3:2), gave evidence He was from God and supported His claim to be the Son of God (John 5:36).

Fulfilled Messianic Prophecies

The Scriptures show how Jesus used the Messianic prophecies found in the Old Testament as proof of His identity (Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39-40). He fulfilled in detail over 300 Old Testament prophecies. It would have been impossible for an impostor to appear as the genuine Messiah by manipulating events because many of the prophecies were minute in their details and others were impossible to control. Someone has calculated the possibility of fulfilling those prophecies as being one chance in 8,400 followed by 129 zeros.

The Testimony of His Contemporaries

Those who knew Jesus gave their testimony as to His identity. John the Baptist, who fulfilled the role of forerunner to the Messiah, was fully convinced that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:29,33). The apostle Peter was closely associated with Jesus. He firmly believed He was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:15-16). Nathanael, who did not believe that any good thing could come out of Nazareth, was overwhelming convinced that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:45-50). Even the centurion who helped crucify Him, who watched Him on the cross, and who saw the earthquake and other unusual physical phenomena surrounding His

death said, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54).

Historians who chronicled the era in which Jesus lived on the earth agree He was the Christ. Ignatius, Barnabas, Polycarp, Clement, Hermas, Irenaus, and Justin Martyr all recognize Him to be the Son of God. Even those who made no claim to any part of Christianity such as Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny, and Josephus, do not deny the evidence and write of Him as the Christ.

The Testimony of the Spirit World

Angels, spirits, and demons knew who Jesus was. The angel “Gabriel” announced to Mary that she was to be the mother of the Son of God (Luke 1:26-35). Before the child “Jesus” was born an angel told Joseph that Mary was with child of the Holy Spirit and that He would save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:20-21). Even demons knew Jesus to be the Son of God (Mark 1:21-24).

The Resurrection from the Dead

Nothing is more crucial in establishing the divinity of Jesus than His resurrection from the dead. If He was raised from the dead, there can be no question of His divinity. If He was not raised from the dead, He is nothing more than a martyr to be pitied (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). But Romans 1:4 says the resurrection demonstrated to all that Jesus is the “Son of God with power.”

The Old Testament prophesied of the Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Consider what is said of that resurrection in Psalm 16:10 and then read the application made of it by the apostle Peter in Acts 2:29-32. He specifically applied it to Jesus.

Jesus made frequent references to His resurrection during His earthly ministry. In John 2:19-22 He said that after His death His body would be raised in three days. In Luke 9:22 He said He would be killed and then raised the third day. He used the sign of the prophet Jonah in Matthew 12:40 to show that He would only be in the grave for three days and nights. He emphatically stated in Matthew 20:18-19 that He would rise again the third day.

Seeing that the resurrection is so pivotal in establishing the true identity of Jesus, there have been many efforts to explain it away. Some of the explanations given for the disappearance of the body of Jesus include that it was stolen by His disciples, that it was removed by Joseph of Arimathea, that it was removed by the soldiers, that the women went to the wrong tomb on Sunday morning, and, believe it or not, that Jesus did not actually die but only swooned. What really happened is found in Acts 2:25-32; Romans 1:1-4; and Romans 6:5—Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God.

The post-resurrection appearances establish the resurrection as genuine. Jesus appeared on at least ten occasions to His disciples (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). Appearing to over 500 people after He was resurrected establishes beyond doubt that Jesus was raised from the dead.

The Testimony of the Father

At Jesus’ baptism (Matthew 3:17) and then again on the mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5) the voice of the Father came from heaven. He was speaking of Jesus when He said, “This is my beloved Son.” No one can doubt the honesty and integrity of the heavenly Father. His personal testimony is without parallel. He says Jesus Christ is His Son.

Conclusion

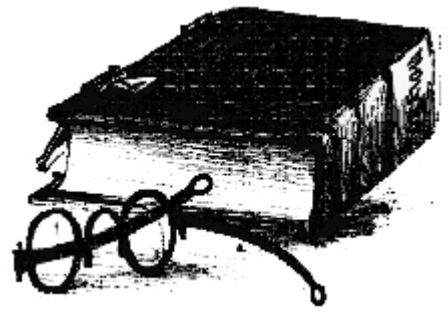
With all the evidence that God has given, one would either be foolish or dishonest, or both, not to believe in Jesus. It is extremely important that you believe in Him for Jesus said, in John 8:24, “...if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”

Consider all the evidence. Give it a fair and honest hearing. You will come to the conclusion that truly Jesus Christ is what He claims to be and what millions have believed Him to be—the all-mighty Son of God who came into the world to save man from his sins. 🙏

● **Complete the Questions for Lesson Three** ●

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Questions on Lesson Three

Answer the following questions by using the lesson text and your Bible.

1. What is the fundamental message of the Bible?

2. According to John 20:30-31, why did John write a record of the life of Jesus?

3. Did Jesus commit any sins while on earth?

Yes No

Has any other responsible person other than Jesus ever lived without sinning?

Yes No

4. What power did Jesus use to perform miracles?

5. How many of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament did Jesus fulfill?

6. Who did John the Baptist, the apostle Peter, Nathanael, and the centurion who crucified Him believe Jesus to be?

7. According to the angel Gabriel, to whom did Mary give birth? (Luke 1:35)

8. What, according to Romans 1:4, does His resurrection from the dead show Jesus to be?

9. On what two occasions did the Father speak from heaven and identify Jesus as His Son?

10. Why is it important to believe that Jesus is the Son of God? (John 8:24)

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Grade _____

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Lesson Four: Salvation - Our Need and Source

All responsible people stand as sinners before God (Romans 3:9,23; 1 John 1:8). Sin, as defined by the Bible, is:

Unrighteousness (1 John 5:17). Since the Bible reveals righteousness (Romans 1:16), when one practices unrighteousness he does that which is contradictory to the Bible's teachings.

Lawlessness (1 John 3:4). The law of God today is the gospel of Christ, His "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). Lawlessness is acting without the authority of law — living in violation of it. Transgression of the law of God is sin.

What is not of faith (Romans 14:23). Faith comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). That which is "not of faith" is that which is not expressed in Scripture. One who does things not authorized by the Bible sins.

Not doing good (James 4:17). God, in the Bible, has shown man what is good (Micah 6:8). If one knows he should do what God wants him to do but still does not do it, he sins.

The Tragedy of Sin

The tragedy of sin is that it separates the sinner from God. He can neither associate with sin nor with the one involved in it (Isaiah 59:1-2). Separated from God, the sinner is lost and alone without the hope of redemption and doomed to spiritual death, the wages of sin (Romans 6:23).

The Mercy of God

God, though, being merciful, kind, gracious, and loving, saw the sinner's plight and decided to help. Since God knew man was helpless to take

away sin by himself, He gave him Divine aid (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12). Only God had the wisdom and power to grant salvation and love sufficient to make it available to all. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for sin, to pay the price for man's sins so that not a single person would have to perish because of his sins but could be saved in spite of them (Galatians 4:4; John 3:16; Matthew 1:21).

God has revealed His plan for man's salvation in the Bible, His inspired word. The apostle Peter, writing of that word, said, "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). If one is to have eternal life, therefore, he must study and apply those things God has revealed about life and godliness in His word.

Man's Responsibility to the Word

All people, then, have the responsibility to read, believe, and obey God's word for their salvation (Philippians 2:12). No one who desires to be saved can close his ears to the voice of God as He speaks in the Bible (1 Corinthians 2:10-12; Hebrews 1:1-2).

Yet to some, the Bible poses problems instead of providing solutions because they fail to properly study it. Some just skip haphazardly through it randomly selecting passages pulling them out of context and misapplying them. Some have preconceived ideas before reading the Bible. They try to get it to prove their own views and prejudices. Others make no distinction between the Old and New Testaments. They try to bind

things from the Old Testament that are not applicable today.

How to Understand God's Word

To properly understand the Bible's truths:

Passages must not be pulled out of their contexts. Context is "the parts of a discourse that surround a word or passage and can throw light upon its meaning" (*Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, Springfield, Mass: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1967, p. 180). The word of God must be "rightly divided" (2 Timothy 2:15), i.e., it must be accurately studied and applied.

One must gather and apply all the Bible teaches on any matter. To know exactly what God wants one to do in any area, he must gather all that God has to say on that subject. One cannot consider just a portion of God's word without taking into account other parts of it that deal with the same subject matter.

One must always remember to divide the Old Testament from the New. The 39 Old Testament books contain two great covenants from God. They present valuable lessons and examples to us but they are not binding upon us. The 27 New Testament books contain the law of God that is now in effect.

The Gospel: Our Law from God

In all of God's dealing with mankind, three basic eras cover the entire existence of man. In each, a different law from God was in effect.

During the first, the Patriarchal, there was no written law from God. He orally revealed His will to the fathers (hence the term "patriarchal"). They, in turn, taught their families, passing down the law from generation to generation. Abraham is an example of one who lived during this era (Genesis 18:19). Such Patriarchal law was in effect for all men until the children of Israel became the chosen people of God. He gave them a law that was intended for them alone while the rest of the world continued under the Patriarchal system.

Only the Jews were accountable to the law given to them through Moses. It is variously referred to as the Law of Moses, the Jewish Law, or the Old Law.

Both of these systems remained in effect for those for whom they were intended until Christ died on the cross. His death validated His will or testament, the Gospel. Such passages as Galatians 3:19; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:13; and Matthew 5:17 show that Jesus fulfilled the Old Law, taking it out of the way, thus establishing His new law (Romans 7:1-4).

Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers in the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."

Since He has been given all authority (Matthew 28:18), all are now to be accountable to the law Christ has given, the Gospel (see Ephesians 2:14-16). In it He has stated the conditions of man's salvation. In it is the power of God to save (Romans 1:16). Validated by His death (Hebrews 9:14-17) and first preached by Peter and the other apostles (Acts 2), it was to be proclaimed throughout all the world (Mark 16:15) for all must obey it.

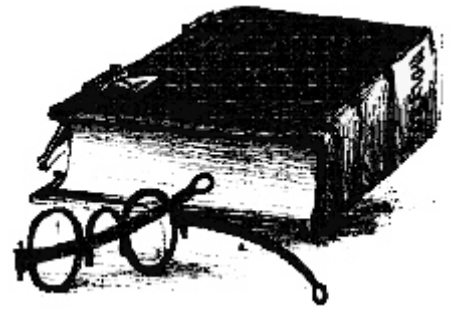
To try to bind things today from the Old Law is a grave error. Some, who in New Testament times tried to do it, were soundly rebuked (Acts 15:1-2; Galatians 3:1f; 5:4).

To understand what he needs to do to be saved, one must look to the law of Christ and listen to His words, the New Testament. One cannot appeal to the Old Law in search of the conditions of salvation. The Old Law is profitable for learning (Romans 15:4), but no one today is accountable to its precepts and commands. It does not contain the conditions of salvation. The new law, the Gospel, does. ✠

● **Complete the Questions for Lesson Four** ●

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Questions on Lesson Four

Answer the following questions by using the lesson text and your Bible.

1. Give the definitions of sin found in each of the following passages.

1 John 5:17 _____

1 John 3:4 _____

Romans 14:23 _____

James 4:17 _____

2. What results of sin are seen in the following passages?

Isaiah 59:1-2 _____

Romans 6:23 _____

3. Though God has made salvation available to all people, not all will be saved. From the following passages identify those who will.

Matthew 7:21 _____

Hebrews 5:8-9 _____

4. According to Jeremiah 10:23 and Proverbs 14:12, can a person, apart from God, save himself?

Yes No

5. What does Romans 1:16 say the Gospel is?

6. To have the truth on any spiritual matter, how much of what God's word says on that subject must be taken into account?

7. What does Matthew 5:17 say that Jesus did in regard to the Old Law?

8. Seeing it was fulfilled by Jesus (Matthew 5:17), are people of today to obey the commands of the Old Testament?

Yes No

9. According to Matthew 28:18, who possesses all authority in religion today?

10. According to Colossians 3:17, in whose name are all things to be done in religion today?

Name _____

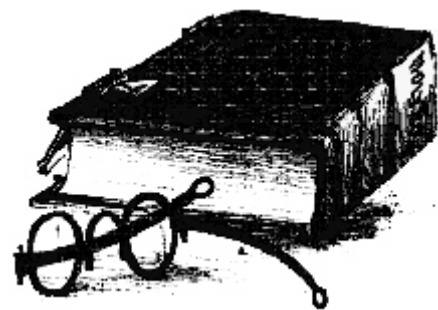
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Lesson Five: Faith - Repentance - Confession

Before the foundation of the world, God the Father designed the plan by which He would reconcile sinful man to Him (Ephesians 3:10-11). He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to live as a man and die on the cross to make it effective (John 3:16; Matthew 1:21; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:22). Following His ascension back to heaven, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to reveal that plan to the apostles and other inspired writers. They, in their writings, made known what God requires man to do to be a recipient of the blessings that Christ's sacrificial death made possible (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-16).

For, you see, there are two sides to salvation — one Divine, the other human. While salvation is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8), there are certain things the Lord sets forth in His Gospel that one must do in order to receive that gift. When a person obeys those commands, God imparts the gift of salvation to him.

Faith

Faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1 as, "...the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is an assured trust in God upon which rests a person's conviction that God can accomplish all of the promises He has made. It gives the believer both the desire and endurance to serve the Lord diligently and to strive for the eternal reward God gives to the faithful—a life in heaven.

Faith is necessary for salvation. Such passages as John 3:16; Hebrews 11:6; Ephesians 2:8; and Romans 5:12 all say it is. Jesus said, "Therefore I

said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).

Such a faith does not come by a vision or special revelation. One does not get it by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart separate and apart from the word of God or some inner ecstatic feeling. Faith is produced in the heart (mind) of the believer when he hears what God's word, the Bible, reveals about God and Christ and what they have done for man. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." In stating his purpose for writing his inspired account of the life of Jesus, the apostle John shows how the Scriptures develop this faith in a person's heart. He wrote, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).

One must have faith in order to receive eternal life. Yet, it is sad to think that many people who believe on Jesus stop at the point of faith. They have been taught that it is the only thing necessary for life. While it is a requirement, it is not the only one.

In addition to having faith, if one is going to have eternal life, he must obey all that God commands in the Gospel for the salvation of the soul. Consider the following passages.

Hebrews 5:8-9. "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He

suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."

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

James 2:24-26. "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Man does not have any right to single out just one condition of salvation, such as faith, to the exclusion of all others. All of God's commands in the Gospel which pertain to salvation are equal in importance and cannot be over-looked. Not a one of them may be disregarded if one is honestly seeking salvation.

Repentance

Those seeking salvation are also commanded to repent. While in the Athens, speaking by inspiration, the apostle Paul said, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

Repentance is a change. W.E. Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, says of it, "In the New Testament the subject chiefly has reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God" (p. 962).

When a person is penitent, he becomes repulsed by sin. Knowing its horror and the tragedy it causes, he no longer desires to be its servant but determines to be a servant of righteousness (Romans 6:17-18). He will no longer live in pursuit of sin, worldly lusts, and

fleshly appetites. Instead he decides to live for God, seeking Him and His will first in all things (see Romans 6:12-14; Matthew 6:33).

The one who repents subdues his own will and honors the will of God. His attitude is the same as that of Jesus in John 6:38, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Abandoning personal will and desire in spiritual matters, one must look to God and say, "Lord, you have spoken and I must obey."

Confession

Confession is also a condition of salvation. Romans 10:10 states, "For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation."

In the act of confession, one simply states before men his firm conviction that Jesus is the Son of God. While one's mind accepts all the facts and testimony of the Divinity of Jesus, his mouth tells men of this faith.

Jesus stressed the importance of this confession in Matthew 10:32-33 when He said, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."

The case of the conversion of the eunuch from Ethiopia that is found in Acts chapter 8 supplies us with a good example of this confession. After hearing the Gospel preached and understanding his sinful condition, the Ethiopian desired to be baptized (Baptism will be discussed later in this course). Philip, the evangelist, told him that if he believed he could be baptized. The eunuch then confessed his belief by saying, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37).

One who truly believes what the Bible teaches about Jesus and comes to the conclusion that He is the Son of God, must allow that belief to motivate him to make that same confession. ❧

● **Complete the Questions for Lesson Five** ●

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Questions on Lesson Five

Answer the following questions by using the lesson text and your Bible.

1. What is the fate of one who does not believe that Jesus is the Son of God?

2. What does Hebrews 11:6 say that a person must believe before He can be pleasing to God?

3. According to Hebrews 11:1, what is faith?

4. How does a person get the faith that is necessary for salvation? (Romans 10:17)

5. Is faith the only thing one must have to be saved? (Before answering, read Hebrews 5:8-9; Matthew 7:21; and James 2:24-26)

Yes No

6. According to Acts 17:30-31, what does God require of all men?

7. What is repentance?

8. What should be first in the life of every individual (Matthew 6:33)?

9. If one is going to please God, can he continue in sin after his repentance?

Yes No

10. According to Romans 10:10, is confession essential to salvation?

Yes No

11. What is one to confess? (Acts 8:37 and Matthew 10:32)

12. What is the fate of one who does not confess Jesus before men? (Matthew 10:32-33)

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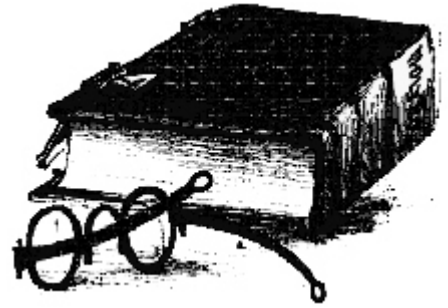
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Lesson Six: Baptism

Even though a careful study of the New Testament shows baptism for the remission of sins to be a condition of salvation, many people teach it is not. If a person is honestly seeking the salvation of his soul, though, he will strive to do what God commands even though it may seem contrary to the thoughts of men. Man has never had, nor will he ever have, the right to bind any of his conditions or loose any of God's. And one of God's conditions for salvation, as stated in the Gospel, is baptism.

Baptism: A Part of God's Plan

By noting just three passages of Scripture, baptism is readily seen to be an integral part of God's plan for the redemption of mankind.

Matthew 28:18-20. "Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

Mark 16:15-16. "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. **He who believes and is baptized** will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'"

Acts 2:38-39. "Then Peter said to them, '**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children,

and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.'"

Jesus is speaking in two of these Scriptures while the apostle Peter, being guided by the Holy Spirit, is the speaker in the other. In each passage baptism is stated as being necessary for salvation. Since God's word is truth (John 17:17), since truth cannot conflict with truth, and since these three passages are found in God's truth, where does that leave those who claim that it is not necessary for a person to be baptized to be saved? It leaves them holding onto a doctrine that cannot be true because it teaches exactly the opposite of what Jesus and Peter taught in these verses.

Consider what the apostle Peter wrote later in his life about baptism in 1 Peter 3:21: "There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism..."

It is plain to see, then, that baptism is essential to salvation. Seeing its necessity, we need to understand what it is and what it is for.

Baptism: A Burial in Water

Baptism, coming from the Greek word "*baptisma*," means immersion or burial. It is a burial in water. It is not sprinkling or pouring water on someone but rather immersing the person's complete body under water. This definition is supported by the use of the word in Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12. Both of these passages speak of being buried with Christ in baptism.

The things that the Bible says that baptism requires offer convincing evidence that it is a

burial in water. According to the Gospel, baptism requires:

- Much water (John 3:23).
- Going down into water (Acts 8:39).
- A coming up out of water (Acts 8:39).
- The likeness of a birth (John 3:5).
- The likeness of a burial (Romans 6:3-4).
- The likeness of a resurrection (Col. 2:12).

The Purpose of Baptism

As for the purpose of baptism, Acts 2:38 says it is “for the remission of sins.” When Ananias, the preacher who was sent by God to tell Saul of Tarsus, who would become the apostle Paul, what to do to give obedience to the Lord, he said, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Remember, Romans 6:3-4 states that in baptism one is baptized into the likeness of the death of Christ and then is raised to walk in newness of life. What makes one new? It is the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7). His blood flowed at His death. When one is baptized in the likeness of Christ’s death, he comes in contact with His cleansing blood, his sins are remitted, and he is saved (see also 1 Peter 3:21 and Hebrews 9:14). Without baptism, the blood of Christ is never applied, hence, that person’s sins would still be retained and he would remain lost because of them.

In one’s primary obedience to the gospel, baptism is the culminating step that saves him. The person who meets all the previous conditions – hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), believing in Christ and God (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6), repenting of past sins (Acts 17:30-31), and confessing Jesus as the Son of God (Romans 10:10) – and is then baptized:

- Is saved from sin (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:16-18).
- Puts on Christ (Galatians 3:27) where all spiritual blessings are (Ephesians 1:3).
- Becomes part of the body of Christ, being

added to the church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 1:18; Acts 2:47).

- Becomes a child of God (Galatians 3:26-27), a member of the family of God (1 Timothy 3:15).
- Is put into the kingdom of heaven under Christ’s rule (John 3:5).

If one is going to be saved, he must heed the command of the Lord to be baptized.

Life After Baptism

When one is baptized, as in the figure of the new birth in John 3:5, he is “born of water and the Spirit.” With this new birth, he becomes a babe in Christ who is to long for spiritual milk so that he can grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:1-2). What is this spiritual nourishment that builds up the Christian? It is the word of God (Acts 20:32). The Christian must abide in it if he wants to remain a disciple of Jesus (John 8:31). One’s knowledge of this word, if applied, will keep him faithful unto death and reward him with a crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

Following baptism, then, one must commit himself to Christ as a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:2), allowing Christ and His word to live and reign in Him (Galatians 2:20). To ensure his success he will constantly gain more knowledge of the Bible and apply it to his life every day in order to grow closer to God and to be more like Christ. At the end of his days upon this earth, he will have an eternal home in heaven.

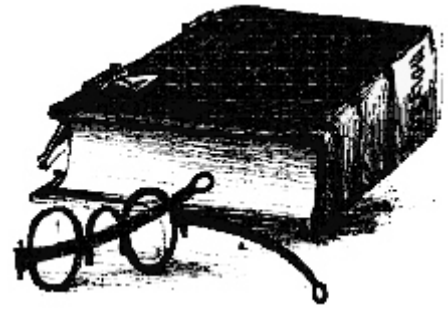
Conclusion

What about you? Have you done those things God would have you to do for the salvation of your soul? Can you anticipate having heaven as your home? If you cannot answer “yes” to these questions, you need to act swiftly to make your life right with God. Do not delay. The apostle Paul said, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). Do not neglect the great salvation offered to you by Jesus. ☛

- **Complete the Questions for Lesson Six** ●

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Questions on Lesson Six

Answer the following questions by using the lesson text and your Bible.

1. According to Mark 16:15-16, who is going to be saved?

2. What, in Acts 2:38, did the apostle Peter command those guilty of crucifying Jesus to do in order to have their sins remitted?

3. According to I Peter 3:21, what is one of the things that now saves us?

4. From what you have read in the Bible, is the mode, i.e. the Scriptural method, of baptism:

- Burial in water?
 Sprinkling of water?
 Pouring of water?

5. According to Colossians 2:12 and Romans 6:4, is baptism a burial?

- Yes No

6. Why was John the Baptist baptizing in Aenon? (John 3:23)

7. Which of the following requires "much water?"

- Sprinkling.
 Pouring.
 Immersion.

8. What do the following Scriptures say that the purpose of baptism is?

Acts 2:38 _____

Acts 22:16 _____

9. From the following passages, name some of the results of baptism.

Acts 2:38 _____

John 3:5 _____

10. In what is one to abide? (John 8:31)

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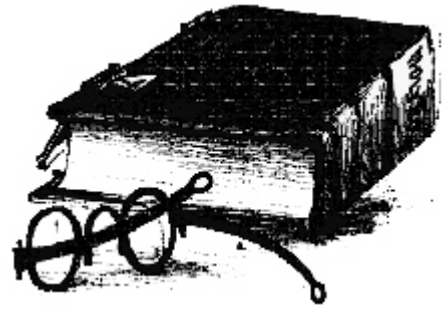
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Lesson Seven: The Church of the Lord

Central in God's scheme for the redemption of mankind was the sending of His Son to earth to live as a man and die on the cross for the sins of all people. A major part Jesus' mission while on earth was to prepare people for His kingdom which would be established following His death. Repeatedly during His personal ministry, He gave the same message to His audiences, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). He continually emphasized the kingdom in His teaching, especially in the parables, because of its key role in God's eternal purpose.

Preparation for and Purpose of the Kingdom

The importance of that kingdom is seen in the fact that throughout the time which preceded it, God tried to prepare men for its coming. Even hundreds of years before the earthly ministry of Jesus, prophets such as Daniel (Daniel 2:44), Isaiah (Isaiah 2:2-4), and Micah (Micah 4:1-2) prophesied of its establishment. John the Baptist, the one who was to prepare the hearts of the people for Jesus, spoke of it and how near it was to being a reality upon the earth (Matthew 3:2).

God's purpose for the kingdom was made plain when Jesus said, "...on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18; cf. Ephesians 3:10-11). Jesus was to rule over a universal church composed of people from all nations of the earth who would submit to Him and His rule over them (Mark 16:15).

Less than one year after He promised to build His church, Jesus was betrayed, condemned,

crucified, and entombed. But three days later He was raised from the dead (Luke 24:1-35). He was raised "the Son of God with power" (Romans 1:4). By His resurrection, He claimed victory over death and sin and proclaimed the beginning of His reign.

The Reality of the Kingdom and the Church

In the city of Jerusalem on the Jewish festival day of Pentecost after His death, Jesus' apostles preached, for the first time, the wonderful news "...that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Jews from every nation under heaven were present. They had been guilty of putting Jesus to death. Therefore, "...when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:37-38).

On that Pentecost day, those who were obedient to the commands of God given through Peter and the other apostles were given salvation. Having been saved, they were added together (Acts 2:41) to the church (Acts 2:47). We can therefore conclude that the church is the body of saved people.

Those who were added to the church were, at the same time, made citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Having been purchased and sanctified by His blood (Ephesians 5:25-30), they were placed under His rule. Such passages as Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; and Acts 2:1-4 show that when the church

of the Lord was established (Acts 2), His kingdom became a reality.

In Mark 9:1, Jesus said that there were some who stood before Him that day who would see the kingdom come with power before they died. In Luke 24:49, He commanded His apostles to remain in the city of Jerusalem where they would be clothed with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came upon them. In Acts 2:1-4, the Holy Spirit came and the power came, therefore, the kingdom came with power.

The Church: A Present Reality

Under His rule, Christ's church continues to exist because He continually adds the saved to it. This means that if one is going to have salvation, he must be a part of that church. One becomes a member of it by giving obedience to the conditions given in the Gospel for the salvation of one's soul. For, you see, the very means by which one receives forgiveness of sins is the same means by which he is made a member of the Lord's church. For example, Scripture tells us that baptism "saves us" (1 Peter 3:21). But the New Testament also says that it adds one to the body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 1:18,24). Therefore, it is impossible for one to be saved and not be in the church that belongs to Christ (cf. Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:38).

The idea that many have that one is saved and then later joins the "church of his choice" is not true. According to the New Testament, there is "one body" (Ephesians 4:4) and that body is the church to which the Lord adds the saved (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:24).

Even though men may hold forth over 400 denominations which they claim belong to Christ, He built just one church (Matthew 16:18), purchased just one with His blood (Acts 20:28), and will save just one in the final day (Ephesians 5:23). Jesus has never promised to save any person who has not done those things that put him into Christ and His one body.

Identifying Christ's Church

How can one be sure, though, that he is a member of that church? Again, the word of God supplies the answer because it gives the identifying characteristics of the church of Christ.

Builder and Founder. Jesus (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11). Any religious body whose founder is not Jesus Christ is not His church.

Head. Jesus (Ephesians 1:22-23). He has all authority (Matthew 28:18-20) and everything is to be done in His name, i.e., by His authority (Colossians 3:17).

Name. Members of His church are called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). If one belongs to a church whose members wear another name, is he a member of the Lord's church?

Creed. Christ and His word (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 John 9). If one is a member of a church that has formulated its own creed, is he a part of the Lord's body?

Terms of Admission. Those things which grant salvation to the individual. Any religious group having any other terms of admission has substituted its own terms for those of the Lord. Such denies His headship, rule, and authority.

Worship. New Testament Christians met upon the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; Acts 20:7), to give as they had prospered (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), to sing (Ephesians 5:19), to pray (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and to give and receive instruction in the word of God (Hebrews 10:24-25). If one's worship today is going to be acceptable to God, it must be in "spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) and include only these things. If one is a part of a religious group that either omits any of these or adds others, can he be offering acceptable worship to God?

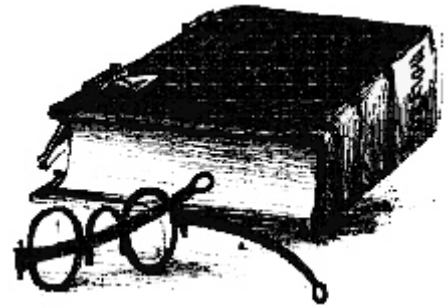
Conclusion

The church of the Lord is the one He will save in the final day. One must be a member of it if he is going to have eternal life. 🙏

• **Complete the Questions for Lesson Seven** •

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Questions on Lesson Seven

Answer the following questions by using the lesson text and your Bible.

1. According to Matthew 16:18, to whom does the church belong?

2. Is the body of Christ the same as His church? (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Yes No

3. Is Christ the Savior of the body? (Ephesians 5:23)

Yes No

4. Since Christ is going to save the body (Ephesians 5:23), must one be in that body to be saved?

Yes No

5. Since the church is Christ's body (Colossians 1:18,24), must one be in the church to be saved?

Yes No

6. Acts 2:47 states that the Lord adds the saved to the church.

True False

7. Has the kingdom of heaven been established? (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1-4)

Yes No

8. According to Galatians 3:27, how does one get into Christ?

9. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, how does one get into the body, the church?

10. Using your answers to questions eight and nine to respond, can one be in Christ without being in the one church?

Yes No

11. How many bodies are there? (Ephesians 4:4)

12. Since the body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23), how many true churches are there?

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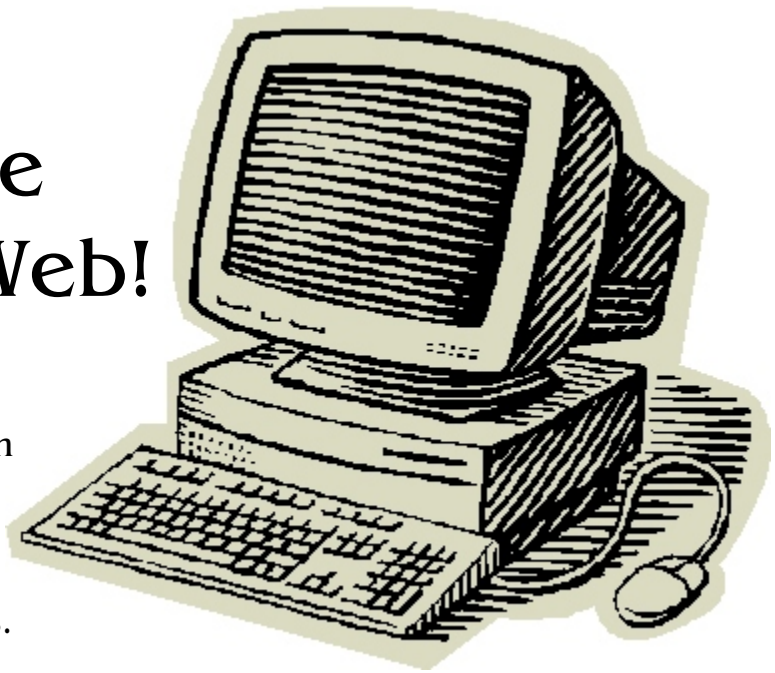
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