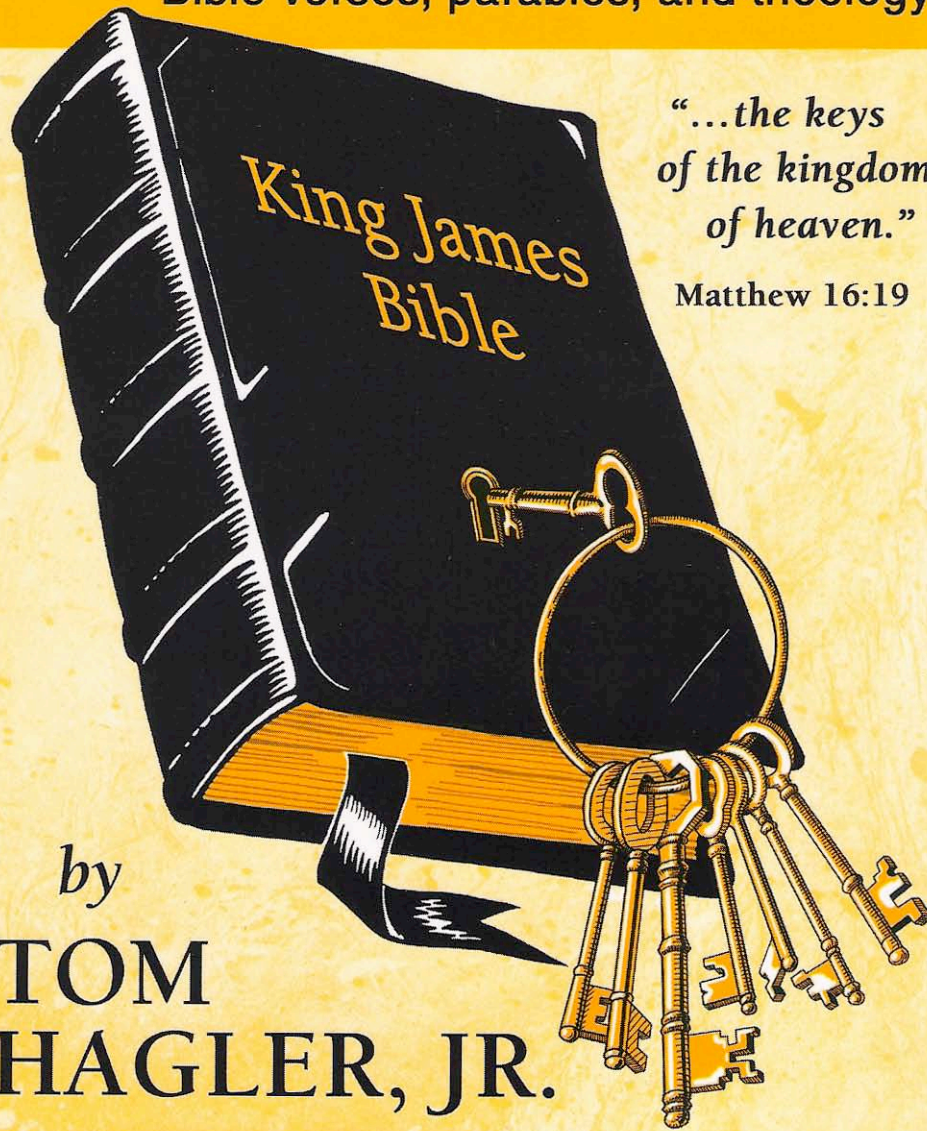


UNLOCKING BIBLE TRUTH

Unlocking the meaning of confusing
Bible verses, parables, and theology.



*“...the keys
of the kingdom
of heaven.”*

Matthew 16:19

by
**TOM
HAGLER, JR.**

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**Bible Quotations
King James Authorized Version of 1611**

**By
Tom Hagler, Jr.**

September 21, 2006

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Introduction

This book is another of Brother Hagler's writings which is intended for anyone seriously seeking the truth of the gospel.

The true gospel will always confirm and establish that salvation is solely of the Lord. Often many of God's sincere born again children will say they agree with this, but will then turn right around and say there is something that man must do. Whether it be to "accept Christ," believe on Christ, believe the gospel, repent, say a certain prayer, be baptized, partake of communion, etc., etc. The truth is either Jesus saved or He did not.

If something else must be done in order to be saved, then no one is truly saved until that requirement is met. If that requirement must be done by a man or men, then who ever would meet that requirement becomes the savior. This has been the theological struggle for many of God's children. How do we reconcile God's sovereignty versus man's responsibility?

Primitive Baptists would contend such things as repentance, confessing Christ as Saviour, and baptism are things only a child of God will feel the need to do, and so the desire and burden to do these things are an evidence the person already has spiritual life. Their "born again" conscience accuses them of their sins, and so they seek forgiveness and fellowship with their Lord, so as to obtain the joy of their salvation. This leads to a deliverance, or salvation, in this lifetime.

This book is written in a loving spirit. The love of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of His Word, and the love of His children is the motivation behind this work. It is written in a straight forward, logical, and easy to follow style. It also

takes some of the difficult passages and explains them by rightly dividing the Word of truth. The Bible is not self contradictory. It is consistent throughout. Hopefully this book when read sincerely will help a little lamb of God better understand the precious truth that salvation is of the Lord.

Elder Dwayne Hooven

Acknowledgements

Elder Dwayne Hooven, pastor of Augusta Old Line Primitive Church, where I feel fortunate to be a member, has made important suggestions to a number of my books and booklets, to improve readability, and especially valuable advice on doctrinal issues that have been incorporated into this document.

My former pastors, Elder Harold Hunt, Maryville, TN, and Elder Sam Bryant, Hoover AL, have always encouraged me in writing and offered me the benefit of their great wisdom in doctrinal matters. Their suggestions to this and all my books have been invaluable.

The preaching of Elder Sonny Pyles has been the source of the idea and expressions used in several chapters of this book (as noted). In my opinion, he is the greatest preaching evangelist alive today. He has been of tremendous benefit to many Primitive Baptist Elders as well as church members and has strengthened the Lord's churches all across America. He has been a great blessing to us all.

My granddaughter Rachael and her husband Robbie Mundy have been of great benefit to me as proofreaders correcting my poor and unprofessional grammar.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., and Curtis C. Thomas, the only surviving author of the excellent book *The Five Points of Calvinism*, for giving me approval to copy several portions of their book into my document. This historically accurate presentation of the proclamation published by the Synod of Dort in 1619 makes it easier to distinguish between Reformed Theology (Calvinism) and Primitive Baptist Theology.

Dedicated to...

...Billie, my wife of fifty-three years, November 27, 2006. She is a wonderful wife, as well as a valuable advisor. She is sensitive to the feelings of others, and so is most helpful in my effort to not be offensive in my writing. She loves people and is loved by everyone who knows her. God surely blessed me to find her...to be the wife of my youth, as well as wife of my old age.

Foreword

This book is for my friends and others who may be interested in understanding some of the seeming contradictions in the Bible. Hopefully, I can share a few keys that have been exciting and uplifting to me because they have unlocked the meaning of several important Bible verses, parables, and principles of theology. This book is a doctrinal study in which concepts suggested will reconcile Bible verses so they fit together without contradictions.

In studying the Bible, one should always consider the methods of Bible study taught in Scripture. Some of these methods are as follows:

- 2 Timothy 2:15 *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* Jesus said something divided against itself cannot stand (Matthew 12:25-26). The Bible is the Word of truth, it could never be divided against itself. There are no contradictions.
- 2 Peter 1:20 *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.”* Private means separate or different. In other words, no contradictions exist in the Bible. All verses must mesh together and harmonize.
- 1 Corinthians 2:13 *“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”*
- Isaiah 28:10 *“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.”* This verse implies a doctrinal systematic study of theology can be made throughout Scripture.

- Nehemiah 8:8 *“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”*

What is Bible doctrine? Think of it as the steel girders which support a tall skyscraper. In a similar manner the proper doctrine provides a structure which supports all Bible verses in a way that harmonizes Scripture without contradictions. Why is Bible doctrine so important? Notice the shocking and very strong statements by the Apostle Paul:

- Galatians 1:8-9 *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”* As we said before, so say I now again, If any [man] preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.
- 2 Corinthians 11:4 *“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or [if] ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with [him].”*

Bible doctrine defines whether or not someone has preached another Jesus, or another gospel. Another Jesus or gospel determines if another spirit (implying a spirit other than the Holy Spirit) is involved. Obviously this is a very serious matter, whether it has eternal consequences, or if only this lifetime is affected.

While there are many different Christian denominations today, for this study, I will consider four Christian doctrinal theology groups. Most, if not all, of the Christian religions will fall into or between one of these theology groups: Roman Catholic, Protestant Arminian, Protestant Calvinist, and Primitive Baptist. Primitive Baptists (formally Separate Baptist, Welsh Baptists, and called by other names over

the past 2,000 years) believe man provides no mental or physical action or works at all in regeneration (being born again) so as to be saved eternally for heaven. The other three groups require an ever increasing amount of work, with the Roman Catholic Church requiring the most. One needs to know that the exercise of our faith is a work according to 1 Thessalonians 1:3, "*Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;*" 2 Thessalonians 1:11 states this same principle. Our belief in Jesus is a work of God. John 6:29 "*Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*"

In the first Section, I have included three chapters that should give the reader a foundation to better understand the chapters that follow. The concepts introduced are straight-forward and simple...they should not be controversial. I have tried to provide information in the next three sections in a logical order so that each chapter builds on what was previously written in earlier chapters.

The interpretation of Bible verses and parables are usually determined based on one's doctrinal beliefs. For this reason, Theology Problems, Section II, will be dealt with first. This will be followed by Problem Bible Verses, Section III, and finally Problem Parables, Section IV.

To prepare the reader for what to expect in Section II, entitled Theology Problems, it may be helpful to define briefly the theology of Calvinists, Arminians, and Primitive Baptists. Consider the following:

1. Calvinists believe in the absolute sovereignty of God. They believe in the total depravity of fallen man, so one's salvation is only possible by a sovereign God. That election (Ephesians 1:4-6) is unconditional, and the atonement of Christ on the cross is limited to the

elect only by irresistible grace. These elect of God will hear the gospel preached, they will be obedient unto discipleship, and will persevere in faith so none will be guilty of unbelief at the time of their death. Those who die as infants, or who are mentally impaired, are saved in a different way.

2. Arminians would say God's election is based on His foreseeing they would respond in a positive way to the gospel call; therefore, man's free will is the determining factor. God's grace is available to all humans, but this grace can be resisted. Most Arminians would say those saved by gospel preaching would be saved eternally only if they are disciples of Christ at the time of their death. Those who die as infants, or who are mentally impaired, are saved in a different way.
3. Primitive Baptists believe a sovereign God has unconditionally elected a people (limited atonement, or particular redemption...Ephesians 1:4-6) for eternal salvation. In Psalms 14:2-3, God sees the future in which no one will seek Him; therefore, all are saved in the same way...infant deaths, mentally impaired, etc. In John 3:8 Jesus further confirms this fact: *"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."* No one can control the action of the wind, or the Spirit of God in giving spiritual life to a child of God. Most heaven bound children of God never hear the gospel preached, many of those that do hear the gospel message will not be obedient unto discipleship, and some disciples of Christ will backslide and die in a state of rebellion. God's children will suffer in this lifetime for their sinful acts, but never eternal damnation in hell. The church is a hospital for sinners, and is not used by God to save people for heaven. The church is the place where God's people can be comforted,

healed, and receive spiritual food through the preached word...so as to grow and mature spiritually. All of the elect of God will be born again by direct action of the Son of God through the Holy Spirit sometime between conception and death, and these will go to heaven after death. Jesus says:

- John 5:25 *“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 6:63 *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, [they] are spirit, and [they] are life.”*

Primitive Baptists believe there are many who will suffer in the flames of hell for an eternity; however, by the grace of God alone, *“...a great multitude, which no man could number...”* (Revelation 7:9) will spend an eternity in heaven.

In all sincerity, my primary goal is that no one will be personally offended during this study, but rather will only look to the Bible for proof on all points. Hopefully, enough Bible proof will be provided in this small book so as to interest the reader in a much deeper study.

Since I do not expect everyone to agree with the meaning assigned to every verse quoted, I invite readers to give me an explanation as to their interpretation. I need and want constructive criticism. Please send any comments to Tom Hagler, 5 Somerset Court, Augusta, GA 30909.

Let's reason together from Scripture, as Acts 17:2: *“And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.”*

Tom Hagler

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Section I

Beginning the Study

We will begin the study with a review of some material from my book *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*. The purpose is to establish a foundation before we consider theology doctrines, Bible verses, or parables that would otherwise be much more difficult to understand. Since all Scripture must harmonize, the simple, straight-forward verses set parameters to keep one from misunderstanding the more difficult concepts.

Elder Sonny Pyles preached a sermon some time ago entitled “Three Essential Facts.” We will start with two of the essential facts, or concepts, he described in this excellent sermon. The first concept is labeled Cause and Effect (belief in Christ is the effect of eternal life and never the cause), beginning on page 1. The second essential fact is Multiple Salvations (there is more than one salvation taught in the Bible), beginning on page 6. The third essential fact covering the Kingdom Bible Verses (kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven, and kingdom of His dear Son) will be covered later in the Parable Section, page 195.

Elder Pyles stated something to the effect that if one of God’s children could understand even one or two of these concepts, then he would be a long way down the road to understanding what the Lord has done for him. Hopefully the reader will be satisfied that these concepts are truly Scriptural.

A final chapter in this section will be entitled Total Depravity, beginning on page 18. It has been said that to fully appreciate eternal salvation, one must first understand the hopeless condition from which one was saved because of the sin of Adam in the dawn of time. All were dead in trespasses and sins. Only God can help the dead.

Chapter I Cause and Effect

The first essential fact of the three given in the sermon preached by Elder Sonny Pyles, Graham, Texas, entitled *Three Essential Facts* is “cause and effect.” Elder Sonny said if we are blessed to understand only one or two of these concepts, then we will be a long way down the road to understanding what Jesus has done for us.

The principle of cause and effect applies to belief in Christ. The question to be answered is “does our belief in Jesus Christ as Son of God obtain eternal life for us, or does our belief in Christ give evidence we are already eternally saved?” Is belief in Christ the cause, or is it the effect (or evidence) we are eternally saved? This chapter will show that the Bible clearly teaches our belief that Jesus is the Christ, the eternal Son of God, is evidence that we are already a child of God.

Belief in Christ cannot be both the cause as well as the effect of eternal life. It is technically impossible for it to be both; it must be either one or the other. For real world examples of cause and effect, consider a person that has high fever. A medical doctor would say the fever is an effect or evidence of some sickness. The doctor would then look for the cause of this problem. The doctor would never consider the fever to be the cause of the sickness. It is impossible for something to be both the cause as well as the effect of an occurrence.

Let's consider another real world example. Imagine that an electric lamp does not work. The fact that the lamp does not work is the symptom, evidence, or effect that points you

back to the cause of the problem. The cause may be a burned out light bulb, faulty wiring, unplugged cord, a popped circuit breaker, etc. You could not say that the lack of light is the cause of the problem. No light when the lamp is turned on is the effect.

We should take the time now to prove with Bible verses that our belief is always the effect or evidence of eternal life. Our belief cannot possibly be both the cause (and a condition that one must meet) as well as the effect or evidence. Consider the following:

- 1 John 5:1 *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”* Our belief is evidence that eternal life already exists.
- John 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.”*
- John 6:47 *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”*
- Acts 13:48 *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”*

Our faith is listed as one of the nine *“fruit of the Spirit”* given in the following verse:

- Galatians 5:22-23 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*

The fruit of an apple tree is an apple. First there must be the apple tree, and then later the tree produces the apple as fruit. In the same way a person must first be born of the Spirit so as to have the Spirit of God dwelling within them (1 Corinthians 3:16, *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”*), and then the person is able to produce fruit of the Spirit...the seventh fruit listed being faith. An unregenerate person could not exercise his faith (which he does not have) by believing that Jesus is the Christ until after he has been born of the Spirit of God and received faith as fruit of the Spirit.

If someone were to say that all people have a little faith, one must then point out that the Bible clearly states all people do not have faith. The Bible verse which says exactly that is as follows:

- 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 *“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.”*

For this reason the gospel is delivered by a child of God who has faith to other of God's children who also have faith. The gospel cannot be delivered from those who have faith to those who are without faith. Notice what is stated by Romans 1:17 *“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.”* In others words the gospel is the power of God only to regenerate children of God who have faith. 1 Corinthians 1:18 also says exactly that, as follows: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*

Finally, the theory that a person must believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God in order to obtain eternal life has a problem because of statements made by Jesus in the Gospel of John:

- John 10:25-28 *“Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”*
- John 8:46-47 *“Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”*

Jesus clearly states to His audience that they cannot hear or believe because they are not God's children. It is not a matter of their decision for Christ. The problem is they have no spiritual life.

These people addressed by Jesus do not have the ability to understand spiritual matters. This principle is also proven by the following verse:

- 1 Corinthians 2:14 *“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.”* (a natural man is unregenerate)

Conclusion

It should be very clear from the above that our belief that Jesus is the Christ is evidence we are already a child of

God. It is the “effect” of being already born again. It cannot be something we must try to do so as to obtain eternal life. It is impossible for something to be both the cause of an occurrence as well as being the effect and evidence.

Further, we also proved the unregenerate cannot hear, understand or believe spiritual things, so how could they believe Jesus is the Christ? Spiritual life must come first, and then action is possible. In the physical or spiritual world, life must be first, and then action is possible. Regeneration by God (Ephesians 2:1, “*And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins;*”) gives spiritual life, and then obedience to gospel commands offers the possibility of a great blessing to the child of God to be enjoyed during his lifetime. Only a few (compared to the great number to be in heaven) of God’s children will enjoy the blessings of the gospel.

Chapter II Multiple Salvations

The purpose of this chapter is to consider how the Bible uses “save,” “saved” or “salvation” to mean several different things. This is the second essential fact taught by Elder Sonny Pyles in his sermon entitled *Three Essential Facts*.

Too often the Bible believer assumes that the word “save” means only saved eternally, which is not the case. When one becomes aware of the different ways the Bible uses this word, he is more likely to consider the context and grammar, as well as comparisons with other verses, and not jump to a hasty conclusion. We are told to “*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” (2 Timothy 2:15)

One of the most important principles of Bible study is to “rightly divide” the Scripture. The Bible contains examples in which the meaning of the word “save” is obvious. For two simple examples, notice the meaning of “save” in the following:

- 2 Corinthians 11:24 “*Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.*” Paul obviously means he received forty stripes except (or less) one, for a total of thirty-nine stripes.
- Matthew 19:11 “*But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.*” Obviously “save” in this verse means “except.”

The above verses could not be confused with saved eternally; however, they show that one should at least pause briefly to consider other possible definitions when the meaning is not so obvious.

Eternal Salvation

To begin our study, let's first look at verses that teach eternal salvation. Very little, if any, disagreement should exist as to their meaning. Notice that these verses clearly state that the sinner has nothing to do with his eternal salvation. Eternal salvation is totally a work performed by God, alone and unaided. This fact is most important to remember. Consider the following:

- 2 Timothy 1:9 *"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."*
- Titus 3:5 *"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;"*
- Ephesians 2:8-9 *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*
- Matthew 1:21 *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."* This verse does not say Jesus will try to save His people if they will only cooperate. It just says He shall save His people from their sins.

Notice the prayer Jesus prays to the Father just before He is crucified. John 17:1-2 *“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 thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”* Jesus has power over all flesh, and this verse says He gives eternal life to as many as the Father gave Him to save. As many as means not one more or not one less. Apparently Jesus did not just make a way of salvation possible if the sinner would accept Him as their personal saviour, but rather, He actually saved eternally every one the Father gave Him to save, without the loss of even one. John 6:37-39 quoted below is also very strong on this point. Jesus saved everyone chosen by the Father as declared in Ephesians 1:4: *“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.”*

As noted above, Jesus Christ saves all those chosen before the foundation of the world by the Father, and He saves them eternally without the loss of one. This fact is also clearly stated in John 6:37-39, as follows:

- John 6:37-39 *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 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.”*

Now, if the reader will refer to Chapter III, entitled Total depravity beginning on page 18, we will see that the spiritually dead sinner can neither hear nor understand

things of God, and their carnal mind is enmity against God. In this condition, the unregenerate must have a Saviour that does everything, because the dead can do nothing for themselves. Only God can quicken the dead, as given in Ephesians 2:1 *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:”*

Before we begin to look at other “save” Bible verses, remember how clearly the language used above teaches that eternal salvation is totally the work of God, and that our personal failures in this life do not hinder God from accomplishing His purpose.

Salvation from physical danger

The following Bible verses deal with physical dangers which could result in physical suffering and physical death. No one would misunderstand these verses and think eternal salvation is the subject. Notice how these Bible verses with save or saved mean a timely deliverance from a timely danger:

- Exodus 14:28-30 *“And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.”* The Lord saved the children of Israel that day from physical death at the hands of the Egyptians. No one would make the mistake of thinking this verse had anything to do with eternal

salvation. “Saved” in this verse means a timely deliverance from a timely danger.

- Acts 27:31 *“Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.”* Paul obviously means saved from physical death due to drowning. Once again, “saved” in this verse means a timely deliverance from a timely danger.
- Matthew 14:29-30 *“And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”* Peter was asking Jesus to save him from drowning; he was not asking Jesus to save him eternally. Peter was asking for a timely deliverance from a timely danger.
- 1 Timothy 2:15 *“Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”* Everyone would agree that saved in this verse does not mean saved eternally. The verse means a timely deliverance from a timely danger.

After considering the above Bible verses, one should have no problem understanding the correct meaning of the word “save” or “saved.”

Time Salvation

The term “time salvation” or “temporal salvation” is not found in Scripture. “Time salvation” describes salvation “in time,” or salvation in this present world. This salvation is also a timely deliverance from a timely danger. This timely deliverance is a salvation from physical suffering and

possible physical death from the chastening rod of God against His disobedient children, as opposed to eternal suffering in hell (called the second death). For a good Scripture reference, consider the following:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”* (Also Hebrews 10:26-31)

Now let’s get a little more complicated. Not everyone agrees on the meaning of the following Bible verses. Even so, unless the Bible has contradictions (and we know that it does not) then these verses cannot refer to eternal salvation, but must be a timely deliverance from a timely danger for God’s born again children. In other words, they must have reference to time or temporal “salvation,” available to an obedient disciple of Christ.

- 1 Timothy 4:16 *“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.”* Surely Paul believes Timothy is already saved eternally. Surely he does not think Timothy could save himself and those that hear him eternally by taking *“heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, etc.”* or he would be preaching a works salvation about which Timothy and those that hear him could boast. As Ephesians 2:8-9 *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”* Also, Titus 3:5 says the same, as follows: *“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.”* In returning to 1 Timothy 4:16, obviously Paul meant that if

Timothy takes heed to the doctrine and continued in it, he could save himself and those that hear him from the untoward generation of that day. Peter preaches this same salvation in Acts 2:38-40, which deals with God's born again children following Christ as disciples. Not all of God's people will agree to be disciples. Those who will not follow Christ as His disciples will never lose eternal salvation, but their disobedience will result in their suffering chastisement in this life, as in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Hebrews 10:26-31 and 12:5-11. Since chastisement could result in not only physical suffering, but also physical death, one could say the salvation called for by 1 Timothy 4:16 is a "timely deliverance from a timely danger" or "time salvation."

- 1 Peter 3:20-21 *"Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 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:"* In what sense did water save Noah and his family? Also, this verse says that baptism now saves us in the same way that the water (floodwaters) saved Noah and his family. We remember how wicked man was in the days of Noah, as Genesis 6:5 *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."* Also much violence existed, as Genesis 6:13 *"And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth."* Returning to 1 Peter 3:20-21, the only logical meaning for how water (the floodwaters) saved

Noah and his family, is that it saved them from the “wickedness “ and “violence” of that time. It was a “time salvation.” Noah and his family were saved by floodwaters from the untoward (unruly) generation of that day. This salvation is compared to how we are now saved by baptism. To prove this fact more clearly, see Acts 2:38, 40: *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized....”* Now in verse 40 we have *“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”* Obedience to the gospel and baptism of a believer saves one, but the salvation is not eternal. Rather, it is a salvation from the wicked untoward generation in which we live. The same principle applicable in the days of Peter (Acts 2:40), or in the days of Noah (1 Peter 3:20-21), is applicable today. The one who is to be saved through discipleship needs “good works,” by being obedient to the gospel.

- Mark 16:15-16 *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* We just learned above that baptism saves one *“from this untoward generation”* (Acts 2:40), which is a salvation in this life for a born again child of God. For further proof on this verse, notice that “every creature” refers to a born again person. When referring to a person, creature is defined by the Bible as in 2 Corinthians 5:17, which states the following: *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* Also, we know a believer is someone that is already saved eternally, as 1 John 5:1, *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:”* We also learn that if this creature (born again person) rejects the gospel message in unbelief and

refuses to be baptized, then he will be damned (suffer chastisement, not eternal damnation) as Luke 12:47 *“And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.”* From this verse we should see that Mark 16:15-16 offers a timely deliverance from a timely danger, or time “salvation.”

- Philippians 2:12 *“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”* This verse refers to a “works salvation,” so it cannot mean eternal salvation based on the Bible verses quoted earlier. “Fear and trembling” reminds one that God chastens His rebellious and disobedient children. Remember the Corinthian brethren who were guilty of taking the communion service unworthily, as 1 Corinthians 11:28, 30 *“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”* The 30th verse says *“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”* Disobedience cost many of these Corinthians their health and some their physical life. God’s children who possess faith need to demonstrate “good works.” As James 2:20 says *“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”* Good works can never produce eternal salvation, but, for an obedient child of God, discipleship yields comfort and spiritual happiness. This salvation offers a timely deliverance from a timely danger, or in other words, time “salvation.”

- Romans 10:13 *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* Notice the action needed by the person in order that he receive salvation. As above, this verse refers to a “works salvation,” so it must mean the salvation *“save yourselves from this untoward generation”* that was preached by Peter in Acts 2:38-40. This salvation is gained by the obedient child of God when he repents of his sins (Acts 3:19), confesses Christ (Romans 10:9), and as a believer, submits to baptism (Mark 16:16). Notice that the 10th Chapter of Romans is addressed to God’s born again children. It begins as follows: Romans 10:1 *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”* Brethren is defined by Hebrews 3:1 *“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling...”* Romans 10:2 says, *“...they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”* The unregenerate do not have a zeal of God because their *“carnal mind is enmity against God.”* (Romans 8:7) Romans 10:1 says, *“that they might be saved.”* This salvation is conditionally based on works that will later be explained, such as to confess Christ as saviour in the 9th verse. To confess Christ is not the same as to accept Christ. No verse in the Bible says we should accept Christ. Not one. Ephesians 1:6 says *“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”* God made us accepted, not the opposite, where we accept Christ. The unregenerate hate God, their *“carnal mind is enmity against God”* (Romans 8:7).

The Bible verses quoted above speak of a salvation that is in addition to eternal glory. Another verse states this fact exactly, as follows:

- 2 Timothy 2:10 *“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”* The elect are God’s children, chosen by the Father as stated in Ephesians 1:4. Paul endures all things with the hope they may also obtain something in addition to eternal glory, and that something is *“the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus,”* the salvation Peter proclaimed, *“Save yourselves from this untoward generation”* (Acts 2:40).

Another verse that says the gospel saves one of God’s children who are already saved eternally, is as follows:

- 1 Corinthians 1:21 *“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.”* We remember that someone who believes that Jesus is the Christ, is already saved eternally. This fact is stated in 1 John 5:1 as follows: *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:”* It is also clearly stated in John 6:47 *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”* This salvation must be a salvation from this untoward generation, as Acts 2:40. Therefore, preaching the gospel only benefits those who are already saved eternally. Actually, 1 Corinthians 1:18 states this fact, as follows: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish (unregenerate) foolishness; but unto us which are saved (eternally) it is the power of God.”*

Another verse that is related to this subject is not always understood properly, in my opinion. Consider the following:

- Matthew 7:13-14 *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to*

destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” If this verse refers to eternal salvation and eternal destruction, then it would support a works salvation. It must have reference to “a timely deliverance from a timely danger.” This advice about how we should conduct ourselves during our lifetime must offer us time “salvation.” We can save ourselves from this untoward generation (Acts 2:40, “*Save yourselves from this untoward generation*”) that is a timely deliverance from timely dangers.

Conclusion

Hopefully, this chapter has created enough interest in the words “save,” “saved” and “salvation,” so that the reader will always examine more closely how the Bible uses these words before jumping to a hasty conclusion as to their actual meaning. See Chapter VI, Salvation, beginning on page 42, to see the five stages of salvation for God’s children...four unfailing phases, and one conditional aspect.

While there are many deep subjects in the Bible that are difficult to understand, salvation should be straightforward and simple for God’s children. The sovereignty of God verses in Romans 9 do not conflict with the responsibility of man verses given in Romans 10. His people can rejoice that eternal salvation is totally in God’s hands, and the gospel is sent to His elect children offering a salvation from this “*untoward generation*” (Acts 2:40), free of the chastening rod of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Hebrews 10:26-31 and 12:5-11), in fellowship with Christ (Revelation 3:20-22) in His church. This is called conditional time “salvation.” It is gospel conversion unto discipleship in the Lord’s church for blessings to be enjoyed during this lifetime.

Chapter III

Total Depravity

We will now consider the total depravity of every person caused by the original sin of Adam. The natural state of every human refers to their condition as they were physically born into the world (not being born again). However, we should also remember some will never be born again, while some will be born again before they are physically born, as in the case of John the Baptist (born again when his mother was six months pregnant, Luke 1:15, 36, 41, and 44).

We know that Adam violated the Law of God, which was recorded in Genesis 2:16-17, as follows: *“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 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.”* In the margin of many Bibles, it states that the Hebrew language literally means, “dying thou shalt die.” Three deaths will be suffered. Adam immediately suffered death to fellowship with God. Next he began to physically die, which ended 930 years after he was created. (Genesis 5:5) And finally, eternal damnation (known as the second death) would have followed physical death, except for the grace of God.

Death by sin

Notice the sin of Adam, as clearly stated in the Roman letter, *“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.”* (Romans 5:12) As an aside, for any Christian who believes the book of Romans is literally accurate, this person could not possibly believe in evolution

since the Bible states there was no death before the sin of Adam. Evolution teaches that there are billions of years of death before man “evolved.” Both cannot be true. However, this subject is covered in my book *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, Chapter XIX, Creation versus Evolution, beginning on page 223. Also, a considerable number of books are available to the reader on creation science (www.AnswersInGenesis.org).

To better understand the state of all human beings because of the sin of Adam, consider the statements of David in the book of Psalms.

- *“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”* (Psalms 51:5)
- *“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.”* (Psalms 58:3) The age of accountability is not taught in Scripture. Genesis 8:21 states, *“...the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth....”*

Apparently, the sin of Adam resulted in everyone being physically born spiritually dead (unless God quickens them with the spiritual birth, while in their mother’s womb, as with John the Baptist, recorded in Luke 1:15, 36, 41, 44). To clearly see this particular occurrence (regeneration or being born again), notice in Ephesians where the spiritual birth is under consideration. In this case, a person was dead in trespasses and sins, as follows:

- *“And you hath he quickened; who were dead in trespasses and sins: 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: 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.” (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Notice above that a person not born again is by nature a child of wrath. Only God can quicken, or give life. The above verse states, “*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*” The dead are dead, not even a “spark of life” is present. Death does not exist in degrees as in dead, deader and deadest. The dead are simply dead! The unregenerate (spiritually dead) hate God (Romans 8:7) and love evil (John 3:19). The giving of life to the dead is something that only God can do, and it occurs for the elect of God at some age between conception and death. This fact should be obvious. Those physically born do not assist their natural parents or God with the process of their physical birth. The spiritual birth is even more of a miracle, since this spiritual life will live forever and is not capable of committing sin, as follows: “*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*” (1 John 3:9) Refer to Romans 7:15-25 to see more on the two natures (carnal and spiritual) of a born again person.

Foreknowledge

There are some people who think that God, who can see the future, looked down through time to see who would seek Him (even though we have shown above that the spiritually dead cannot seek God). Based on this misunderstood type of “foreknowledge,” God is supposed to have elected for heaven, those who would seek Him. To disprove this position, the several verses that are used,

Romans 8:29, 1 Peter 1:2, II Timothy 2:19, and I Corinthians 8:3, can be shown to have another meaning. The verse in Romans states, *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, etc.”* All of these verses actually mean God “foreknew” those He chose from before the foundation of the world, as follows: *“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.”* (Ephesians 1:4) Foreknowledge in the above verses means these individuals were the objects of God’s love, as a man “knows” his wife. God’s seeing into the future, does not mean He knew who would accept Him in faith. Notice the words of Jesus, *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (Matthew 7:22-23) Jesus, as God manifest in flesh, knows everything. He knew about these people. He knew these wicked people were not the object of his love. The “foreknowledge” of God simply is God “knowing” the elect individuals He loved from before the foundation of the world, as given above in Ephesians 1:4.

Another problem exists with this line of reasoning, which says since God can see the future; He has looked down through time to see if any would seek after Him (even though we have shown above that the dead cannot seek God). The following is God’s statement on what He saw when he looked down from heaven, through time.

- *“The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not*

one.” (Psalms 14:2-3) God states no one will seek after God. No one will “accept Him as their personal saviour” unless they are already born again. No verse in the Bible says that man accepts God. The elect of God are, “*made accepted in the beloved*” as stated in Ephesians 1:6.

Apparently, if a person is not born again, it is not possible for him to please God. God chose His children from before the foundation of the world. (Ephesians 1:4) One might question if God is unrighteous to hold this position. The unborn have had no chance to exercise their “free will.” Notice what Scripture says on this subject.

- *“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; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, 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.”* (Romans 9:11-16) Man’s will makes no difference! Only God’s will matters, as follows: *“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”* (John 1:13) This verse could not be clearer!

Unregenerate man cannot understand, hear or believe

Apparently, the natural man (not born again) will not seek after God. This condition is further confirmed, as follows:

- *“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 Corinthians 2:14) Spiritual discernment is not a matter of their decision.

The above verse states the natural man (not born again) cannot understand spiritual things. Also, we have seen as quoted above that the natural man will not seek after God. However, some people still contend that if given the chance, some will accept Christ if they hear the gospel (good news of Christ) and believe what is preached. Jesus states otherwise,

- *“Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.”* (John 8:43-44) There is a huge difference between “cannot” and “will not” hear. Clearly, Jesus is speaking to people who are not born again (not born of the Spirit of God). Jesus continues speaking to these unregenerate people, *“Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”* (John 8:46-47) Jesus says they do not have the ability. It is not a matter of their decision.
- *“Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”* (John 10:25-26) Jesus says they do not have the ability. It is not a matter of their decision.

From the above, we hear from the mouth of Jesus why the unregenerate (not born again) do not understand and believe Him. They do not understand because they cannot hear His word. They do not believe, because they are not of His sheep. They were not chosen by the Father before the foundation of the world, as stated in Ephesians 1:4-6. They were not born of the Spirit of God, as described in John 3:8 and Ephesians 2:1. God, and God alone, saves one eternally for heaven. The unregenerate hate God and do not want to be saved. Their *“carnal mind is enmity against God.”* (Romans 8:7)

It appears a person who is not born again cannot go to Jesus (they have no such desire) and accept Him as their personal saviour. Is there a verse that clearly states this fact? Yes! Consider the words of Jesus.

- *“And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come to me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”* (John 6:65) This verse may offend some people. It did even in the day when Jesus himself made that statement. Notice the very next verse: *“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”* (John 6:66) Jesus’ disciples left Him even after they saw the miracles (described a few verses earlier) performed by Jesus, as when He fed the five thousand. (John 6:10) After this event, they would have taken Him by force, and made Him a king. (John 6:15)

Other total depravity verses

There are other verses that clearly state the “total depravity” of man. Please consider the following:

- *“How can man be justified with God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” (Job 25:4)*
- *“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous....” (Psalms 10:4-5)*
- *“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)*
- *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” (Jeremiah 13:23)*
- *“For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” (Ecclesiastes 7:20)*
- *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 14:12)*
- *“As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Romans 3:10-18)*

- *“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”* (Romans 8:6-8)

Conclusion

The natural man (not born again) is totally depraved and spiritually dead. He is completely unable to save himself in any way and does not desire to be saved. He does not seek God (Psalms 10:4-5 & 14:2-3). Spiritual matters such as “preaching of the cross” are foolishness to him (1 Corinthians 1:18), and he cannot discern spiritual matters (1 Corinthians 2:14). His carnal mind is at enmity against God (Romans 8:7); he cannot please God (Romans 8:8), and he does not fear God (Romans 3:18). He is not subject to the law of God (Romans 8:7). He is vanity and less than nothing to God, and his righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). He is hated (Romans 9:13 & Malachi 1:3) and abhorred by God (Psalms 5:6).

If one is to be saved eternally, obviously, salvation is only possible by God alone and unaided. There will be no paradox between man’s free will and God’s sovereignty when the above Bible verses on total depravity are remembered. Our religious practice can have no place in securing eternal salvation. It is easy to remember that until we are alive in Christ from the sovereign work of God in regeneration, we are simply spiritually dead. The dead can do nothing to help themselves.

Once alive in Christ, and therefore eternally saved, the gospel is sent to offer the child of God the possibility of conversion unto salvation, to become a disciple of Christ in

the Lord's church. Becoming a disciple involves belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and then one must be obedient to the commandments. This aspect of salvation occurs during one's lifetime, so it may be referred to as conditional time "salvation." The term "conditional" is used because the condition that must be met is obedience to God's commandments. A regenerate child of God may reject it or embrace it. Once embraced to become a disciple in the Lord's church, it may later be lost through sinful living that will result in the chastening rod of God as given in Hebrews 10:26-31. One may not "persevere" in gospel obedience, and even die in this condition. However, fortunately for God's children, each and every one is "preserved" in Jesus Christ by God. Notice Jude 1:1, "*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:*" If they are preserved in Christ Jesus, and called (effectual call), then heaven is their home regardless of what happens in this life. We are saved by sovereign grace.

Section II

Theology Problems

This section will consider theology “problems.” A rebellion within the Roman Catholic Church had been brewing for some time; however, beginning with Martin Luther in the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation was well underway. By the time these early leaders were all dead, the Protestant movement was widespread across Europe. In 1618 the various Protestant churches faced what must have been their first major doctrinal challenge from within.

Chapter IV, The Five Points of Calvinism, beginning on page 29, gives the history of this challenge in which the Synod of Dort was convened to deal with the matter. Leading non-Roman Catholic theologians from all across Europe were present in the proceedings. Out of this Great Synod, a proclamation was issued May 9, 1619. This proclamation later became known as the “five points of Calvinism.” The beliefs of Arminianism were all rejected. The terms “Calvinism” and “Arminianism” originated from this Synod. For this reason, I believe all Bible students should study to learn for themselves, what beliefs were rejected, and which were confirmed as Scriptural.

Chapter V, Baptist Five Doctrines of Grace, beginning on page 34, contrasts the beliefs of ancient Baptists with those of Calvinism. Scriptural proof is offered to support the Baptist understanding. While these beliefs are very similar, the small difference in interpretation has a big effect on the meaning of both Bible verses and parables.

Chapter VI, Salvation, beginning on page 42, gives the five stages of salvation. They are made up of four unfailing phases, and one conditional aspect. This chapter is most important if one is to understand the various aspects of the salvation of God’s elect children.

Chapter VII, Regeneration versus Conversion, beginning on page 50, explains the difference in regeneration, and the salvation a child of God can experience in this lifetime based on obedience to the commandments (conversion).

Chapter VIII, Justification, beginning on page 66, gives an explanation of this important subject. Justification is a legal term, so if it is to be “rightly divided,” one must first determine the jurisdiction of the court being considered. The premise is a Supreme Court exists in heaven to settle eternal matters. Two lower courts exist in earth to determine the “born again” sinner’s fate while alive in this present world. The Lord Jesus Christ presides as Judge over all three courts. This important doctrine is overlooked by many. Without a proper understanding of this doctrine, one may miss important advice the

Lord has preserved for His children which was intended for their benefit during their lifetime. Too often, the religious world thinks justification deals only with eternal matters, or that efforts in this area will have only eternal consequences. I suggest that this assumption is incorrect.

Chapter IX, Letter to a Roman Catholic, beginning on page 80, considers the doctrinal beliefs of this religious denomination. An effort is made to offer proof as to why these beliefs are not Scriptural.

In summary, I would like to suggest there are four major doctrinal groups within Christian churches: Roman Catholic, Protestant Calvinist, Protestant Arminian, and Primitive Baptist. Protestant churches were essentially all “Calvinist” in 1619 as proven by the Synod of Dort. Over the years, Protestant denominations were made up of a mix of both “Calvinist” and “Arminian” theology. Today they are mostly pure “Arminian,” as the Presbyterian reference states in Chapter IV. Primitive Baptists have been called by various names over the years, but their doctrine is unique.

Chapter IV The Five Points of Calvinism

If one intends to use the label “Calvinism,” or “Arminianism,” it is most important that the person first define the particular term. To do this, one should go to the origin which in this case happens to be the proclamation that was published following the Synod of Dort, May 9, 1619. My source is the excellent little book by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas entitled *The Five Points of Calvinism*, as published by Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, NJ. Much of what will be given in this chapter is from the above book by Steele and Thomas, as well as from my book *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, Chapter III, beginning on page 46.

Synod of Dort history

First, we need to consider a very brief history that explains what this Synod of Dort actually was, and why it took place. The doctrine believed by Martin Luther, John Calvin and the other great men of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century is called Reformed Theology. A brief outline of this doctrine is called “the five points of Calvinism.” It should be pointed out that at the time this synod first met, November 13, 1618, John Calvin, Martin Luther and the other great men that played such a vital part in the Protestant Reformation were then already dead. Those that met at the Synod of Dort were non-Roman Catholic leading theologians in Europe at that time.

The following history of the Protestant beliefs is given by Steele and Thomas beginning on page 13 of their book as follows:

- “In 1610, just one year after the death of James Arminius (a Dutch seminary professor), five articles of faith based on his teachings were drawn up by his followers. The ‘Arminians,’ as his followers came to be called, presented these five doctrines to the State of Holland in the form of a ‘Remonstrance’ (i. e., a protest). The Arminian party insisted that the ‘Belgic Confession of Faith’ and the ‘Heidelberg Catechism’ (the official expression of the doctrinal position of the Churches of Holland) be changed to conform to the doctrinal views contained in the Remonstrance. The Arminians objected to those doctrines upheld in both inability, unconditional election or predestination, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. It was in connection with these matters that they wanted the official standards of the Church of Holland revised.”

Steele and Thomas outline the “**Five Points of Arminianism**” as follows:

- “Roger Nicole (Baker’s Dictionary of Theology, p. 64) summarizes the five articles contained in the Remonstrance as follows: **‘I. God elects or reprobates on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief. II. Christ died for all men and for every man, although only believers are saved. III. Man is so depraved that divine grace is necessary unto faith or any good deed. IV. This grace may be resisted. V. Whether all who are truly regenerate will certainly persevere in faith is a point which needs further investigation’** ...The last article was later altered so as to definitely teach the possibility of the truly regenerate believer’s losing his faith and thus losing his salvation.”

- “A national Synod was called to meet in Dort for the purpose of examining the views of Arminius in light of Scripture. The Great Synod was convened by the State-General of Holland on November 13, 1618. There were 84 members and 18 secular commissioners. Included were 27 delegates from Germany, the Palatinate, Switzerland and England. There were 154 sessions held during the seven months that the Synod met to consider these matters, the last of which was on May 9, 1619. The Synod, Warburton writes (Ben A. Warburton, Calvinism, p. 61) had given a very close examination to the ‘five points’ which had been advanced by the Remonstrants, and had compared the teaching advanced in them with the testimony of Scripture. Failing to reconcile that teaching with the Word of God, which they had definitely declared could alone be accepted by them as the rule of faith, they had unanimously rejected them. They felt, however, that a mere rejection was not sufficient. It remained for them to set forth the true...teaching in relationship to those matters which had been called into question. This they proceeded to do, embodying the Calvinistic position in five chapters which have ever since been known as ‘the five points of Calvinism.’ The name ‘Calvinism’ was derived from the great French reformer, John Calvin (1509-1564), who had done so much in expounding and defending these views.”

The “**Five Points of Calvinism**” expressed by the Synod of Dort can be summarized as follows: **1) Total depravity, 2) Unconditional election, 3) Particular redemption or limited atonement, 4) Irresistible grace, and 5) Perseverance of the saints.**

The above paragraphs attempt to provide a brief outline and history of how the five points of Calvinism came into existence and obtained that particular label. It also gives the origin of the system of theology that is called Arminianism. On this point, Steele and Thomas made other very good observations. On page 15 of their book they state:

- “No doubt it will seem strange to many in our day that the Synod of Dort rejected as **heretical** the five doctrines advanced by the **Arminians**, for these doctrines have gained wide acceptance in the modern Church. In fact, they are seldom questioned in our generation. But the vast majority of the Protestant theologians of that day took a much different view of the matter. They maintained that the Bible set forth a system of doctrine quite different from that advocated by the Arminian party. Salvation was viewed by the members of the Synod as *a work of grace from beginning to end*; in no sense did they believe that the sinner saved himself or contributed to his salvation. Adam’s fall had completely ruined the race. All men were by nature spiritually dead and their wills were in bondage to sin and Satan. The ability to believe the gospel was itself a gift from God, bestowed only upon those whom He had chosen to be the objects of His unmerited favor. It was not man, but God, who determined which sinners would be shown mercy and saved. This, in essence, is what the members of the Synod of Dort understood the Bible to teach.”

We have given a brief review of the history and origin of the term “Calvinism” and “Arminianism.” The Protestant Reformation all across Europe in the year 1619 believed the doctrine expressed in the Five Points of Calvinism, and acknowledged the Belgic Confession of Faith (written in

1561) as being the standard of faith for all churches to embrace, and declared Arminianism to be heresy. However, as noted above in the Presbyterian publication by Steele and Thomas, today we have most Protestant Churches that embrace Arminianism doctrine.

Any child of God that loves God's Word, and wants to know the message God has preserved for His children to benefit them in this lifetime, should study Bible doctrine. It is only through sound doctrine that one can determine for themselves which position is Scriptural, and which is not. For their own benefit, God's children need to be able to defend their beliefs.

Chapter V Baptists Five Doctrines of Grace

It is my humble belief that these great men of God at the Synod of Dort in 1619 made one small error that created the so called “paradox” of God’s sovereign grace versus man’s free will that is admitted to today by many respected theologians. In four of the five points, the work of God in the eternal salvation of His elect (God’s sovereignty) is combined with the works a regenerate person must perform (man’s responsibility) to become a disciple of Christ in the Lord’s church. If God is truly sovereign in eternal salvation, and the Bible clearly teaches this fact, then man can play no part at all in assuring himself a place in heaven. Consider the following Bible verses that clearly teach this principle:

- Titus 3:5 *“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;”*
- 2 Timothy 1:9 *“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,”*
- Ephesians 2:1 *“And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins;”*
- Ephesians 2:8-9 *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*
- Romans 9:15-16 *“For he saith to Moses, 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.”

This means that the expression “the responsibility of man” (free will) applies only to God’s regenerate children, and it has to do only with their obedience unto discipleship in the Lord’s church for a blessing (salvation) available during their lifetime. Peter admonished in Acts 2:40, *“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”*

Not all of God’s children who will be in heaven will become obedient church members, and some that have followed Christ in baptism will later fall away (in time, not eternally). Many of God’s regenerate children will die as infants, some will have mental problems to prevent them from understanding the gospel message, and then some will live in remote locations so as to never hear the gospel message preached. Further, some of His regenerate children who are blessed to hear the gospel message will be sinful, rebellious, and refuse to follow Christ as a disciple into His church. In addition to this, as noted above, some of God’s children in the Lord’s church will fall away, and some will even die in this awful state. Notice the warning the Lord is giving Laodicean Church members in the following Bible verses:

- Revelation 3:15-19 *“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be*

clothed, and [that] the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

While these rebellious children will suffer the chastening rod of God during their lifetime that could even lead to physical death, even these will be in heaven after death. Notice this very clear warning for God’s children.

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which [temple] ye are.”*

God is totally sovereign, and does according to His own will! God holds His children accountable for their actions, or inaction, during their lifetime.

Five Doctrines of Grace

To set forth the Scriptural five doctrines of grace that express the historic doctrine that has been believed by Baptists from the past until today, these beliefs will be presented by an unusual method. The five points of Calvinism as first published by the Synod of Dort, and as given in the book by Steele and Thomas will be copied exactly. The few words that must be changed in order to express Primitive Baptist doctrine correctly will be typed in **bold** letters. The suggested changes will be offered below with a reason given for each change. Notice that the changes eliminate the actions (works) of man to make effective his eternal salvation! This distinction is very important! Only these few words need to be changed. Please note how close to complete agreement these

Protestant doctrinal beliefs from 1619 actually are to those believed by Primitive Baptists. While the change is slight, the effect of the change is great!

The five points of Calvinism from the Synod of Dort in 1619 (as taken from Steele and Thomas, pages 16-19) with suggested changes (as noted in **bold** letters) are the five doctrines of grace that are historic Baptist beliefs, and these are Primitive Baptist beliefs today. Consider the following:

1) Total Depravity

“Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not---indeed he cannot---choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit’s assistance to bring a sinner to Christ--it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation, but is itself a part of God’s gift of salvation---it is God’s gift to the sinner, not the sinner’s gift to God.”

- [Note: No change needed from the Synod of Dort.]

2) Unconditional Election

“God’s choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God’s choice.

Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. **Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ.** Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation."

- [Note: The sentence to be omitted is "**Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ.**" The principle expressed in this one sentence is carried over into the succeeding three points to produce a heresy by creating the seeming paradox of God's sovereignty in eternal salvation versus the child of God's responsibility to follow Christ as a disciple. Also this doctrine is incorrect because it forgets that some of God's regenerate children die as infants, have mental afflictions, never hear the gospel, or reject the gospel message in unbelief, as 2 Timothy 2:13 states, "*If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*"]

3) *Limited Atonement*

"Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, **including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.**"

- [Note: The one and a half sentences that should be omitted are as follows: "**including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by**

the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.” This erroneous thought that the Holy Spirit will bring a child of God to “a willing acceptance of Christ,” noted above is implied here as being evangelical faith rather than the vital faith that it actually is. It fails to recognize that man’s faith received at regeneration is vital faith (fruit of the Spirit—Galatians 5:22-23), and can be neglected by the sinner to the point of unbelief as Romans 3:3-4 *“For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar,”* Even so, the sinner who neglects his God given faith is still saved eternally.]

4) Irresistible Grace

In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that **inevitably** brings them to salvation. **(Sentence to be added³)** The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in **conversion⁴**. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man’s will, nor is He dependent upon man’s cooperation for success. **The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ.⁵** God’s grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is **extended⁶**.”

- [Note: Words to be changed #1 **“In addition to”** should be changed to **“Rather than.”** Suggested word change #2 is **“inevitably”** to **“immediately.”** One sentence that should be added as noted #3 to make clearer is **“This**

inward call made between conception and death does not involve the gospel in any way.” Word suggested change #4 is **“conversion”** to **“regeneration.”** (See Chapter VII, page 50, for the difference in these two words that have reference to two completely different events.) The following sentence #5 should be omitted: **“The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ.”** This should say **enables** the sinner to cooperate for a possible salvation in this lifetime since some of God’s regenerate children die as infants, have a mental deficiency, live in a remote place and never hear the gospel message, and then some that do hear the message will not be obedient unto church membership. Many of God’s born again children are rebellious, being guilty of the sin of unbelief, and while they are eternally saved, they will suffer in this life for their rebellion as stated in Hebrews 3:1-19 and Jude 5. Word #6 that should be changed is **“extended”** to **“intended.”**]

5) *Perseverance¹ of the Saints*

“All who were chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given **faith²** by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in **faith³** by the power of Almighty God and thus **persevere⁴** to the end.”

- [Note: Suggested word change #1 is **“perseverance”** to **“preservation.”** Word #2 is **“faith”** to **“spiritual life.”** Word #3 is **“faith”** to **“spiritual life.”** Word #4 is **“persevere”** to **“are preserved.”** The word “persevere” implies the effort of the sinner in this life will never fail. This principle originated above in Unconditional Election, and we know it is erroneous based also on Romans 3:3 and 2 Timothy 2:13 that were quoted previously.

“Preserved” is a Bible term as in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, *“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.”* Also Jude 1 states, *“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.”* It is only the effort of God that will never fail in providing and preserving eternal salvation for His elect.]

Summation of thoughts on five doctrines of grace

Notice how the above changes solve the seeming paradox already noted where the sovereignty of God in eternal salvation is separate from the aspect of salvation that is available in this lifetime to the obedient child of God who becomes a disciple of Christ in the Lord’s church. Primitive Baptist elders would label the above noted error adopted by the Synod of Dort as absolute predestination, because it has God predestinating events in this life as well as eternal destiny. One who believes this heresy may be considered to be an “absoluter,” rather than as a Calvinist. In truth, as seen above, a Calvinist is an “absoluter.”

The above should prove God never intended His church and the ministry of the gospel to be the “means” of making eternal salvation effective. The church is a hospital for sinners, a place of healing and comfort, a place for God’s children to be fed for spiritual growth, and a place to worship our Lord Jesus Christ in fellowship with Him and His children. What a great deliverance or salvation for God’s children to experience while alive during this “time” world!

Chapter VI Salvation

A broad view of the word “save” and “salvation” was presented in Chapter II, entitled Multiple Salvations, beginning on page 6. For now, we will outline the five stages of salvation involved in the salvation of God’s children.

The reader most likely has been introduced to a concept never before considered...the possibility that regeneration and conversion are two completely separate events. Even though this doctrine resolves the paradox of grace and free will, and fits Scripture in a very logical fashion that gives all the honor and glory to God, still it may be something new for one to digest. To confirm if this concept is supported by Scripture, a more extensive study will be required. Chapter VII entitled “Regeneration versus Conversion,” beginning on page 50, will attempt to further explore this subject.

One must heed the advice given in the following Bible verse:

- Acts 17:11 *“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.”*

Salvation is a very interesting subject. The word “salvation,” when applied to the salvation of the elect children of God, is an inclusive, all-embracing word that gathers into itself all the redemptive acts and processes, such as foreknowledge, election, predestination, adoption, justification, redemption, grace, propitiation, imputation, conversion, sanctification, and glorification. This chapter will attempt to break down the various stages involved in the salvation of God’s people.

Salvation has five stages--four phases and one aspect

There are five stages involved in the salvation of God's people--four unailing phases that are by God alone, which always take place for the elect of God, and one aspect of salvation, which may or may not occur. Consider the following:

- (1) Phase one is the election phase. 1 Peter 1:2 *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,"* Ephesians 1:4-5 *"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: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."*
- (2) Phase two is the redemption and justification phase. This was accomplished by Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago-Romans 4:25 *"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."* Romans 5:9 *"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."* Ephesians 1:7 *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."*
- (3) Phase three is the regeneration phase. Titus 3:5 *"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;"* John 3:8 *"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and wither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."* Ephesians 2:1 *"And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins;"*

- (4) Phase four is the final glorification phase for entire conformity to Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:52 *“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.”*
- (5) The conversion aspect of salvation for the child of God to become a disciple of Christ is called a Christian in Acts 11:26 *“...And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”* Discipleship in the Lord’s church is sometimes referred to as conditional time “salvation.” It may, or it may not, take place for the child of God during their lifetime. Some of God’s regenerate children die as infants, some may have a mental affliction, and others live in a remote part of the world. Some may hear the gospel, but refuse to follow Christ as a disciple, or some that do become disciples may then backslide and lose this salvation. Even so, nothing in this life can affect their eternal salvation to heaven. Conversion to discipleship in the Lord’s church will be of great benefit to God’s children during their lifetime. Many works are required for the child of God to press into the kingdom (Luke 16:16) to become a converted disciple of Christ. They must repent (Acts 3:19), confess Christ as their saviour (Romans 10:9), and as a believer to submit to baptism (Mark 16:16).

To see the four phases of salvation (for heaven that cannot fail) as given above, consider the following:

- Romans 8:28-31 *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 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. 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. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The conversion aspect is omitted in Romans 8:28-39 because only a few of God's people are ever converted to become disciples of Christ, so as to receive a salvation in time. Time "salvation" (conversion) offers a salvation from this wicked untoward generation, as declared by Peter in Acts 2:40. If a born again person is ever converted (remembering that some of God's born again children die unconverted), this aspect (conversion) of salvation can then be lost by the person through "backsliding." Again, to see more on Conversion, refer to Chapter VII, entitled "Regeneration versus Conversion," beginning on page 50.

The tenses of salvation

The above five stages of salvation occurs in three tenses of time...Past....Present (between conception and death)...and Future, as follows:

- Past tense. The Elect of God chosen before the foundation of the world (phase 1) are redeemed and justified by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (phase 2). As a result, the elect of God have been saved from the eternal penalty of sin (death in Adam) and are safe regarding their home in heaven at the end of time.
- Present tense (between conception and death). The elect of God are regenerated, or born again (phase 3), at some time between conception and death. The born

again person may or may not be saved during their physical life from the power or habit of sin through the aspect of salvation called conversion (5), so as to become a disciple of Christ (called a Christian in Acts 11:26) in the Lord's church.

- Future tense. The glorified child of God is saved from the presence of sin (essence of sin in their body known as their carnal flesh nature) in the sense of entire conformity to Christ (phase 4).

Conclusion

There is only one salvation for God's people; however, it incorporates five stages in three tenses of time: past, present (from conception to death), and future. There is a verse that gives the three tenses of time:

- 2 Corinthians 1:10 *"Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver [us];"* (So great a death must mean death in Adam, doth deliver must refer to timely events, and yet deliver us must refer to heaven in the future.)

The salvations mentioned in 2 Corinthians 1:10 have been expressed as a past deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin (death in Adam), a present deliverance from the power of sin through conversion into the Lord's church, and a future deliverance from the presence of sin, or essence of sin in the human body by receiving a glorified body.

May we all praise God, and thank Him for His amazing grace and mercy in the salvation of His people....all five stages of salvation, with four unfailing phases that assure heaven for the Elect of God, and one aspect for a possible blessing during this lifetime.

As has been mentioned, the one aspect of salvation (stage five) available to the obedient child of God is a temporal blessing that incorporates gospel conversion unto discipleship in the Lord's church, and this aspect of salvation can be lost through backsliding in rebellion against God. Primitive Baptists would call this aspect (stage five) of one's deliverance conditional time "salvation." Conditional time "salvation" resolves the paradox between God's sovereign grace in eternal salvation (assures heaven for the elect) and man's will made free by regeneration as exercised in obeying (or not obeying) the gospel that affects the person's quality of life and length of life.

Elder Harold Hunt wrote an excellent little book titled *I Have Set Before You Life and Death*. He opens with a speech God gave Moses to deliver to the children of Israel before they possessed the Promised Land. The Promised Land was a picture (or type) of the Lord's church in our day. After the gospel has been preached to God's people, the New Testament preacher should then read to them (possible future church members) this same speech, because it applies as much today as it did in the day of Moses. Please notice the conditional time "salvation" God is offering His people (Israel or us) available by obedience:

- Deuteronomy 30:15-19 *"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish,*

and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.”

This is a warning by God to His people commanding them to obey His Laws and thereby choose life, which means the abundant life mentioned by Jesus in John 10:10 *“I am come that they have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,”* or the life (free of destruction) as noted in Matthew 7:13-14:

- *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”*

For another example, if we defile our bodies by committing sinful acts, God will destroy us (physical death):

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”*

The failure to be obedient means suffering in this life and death (not eternal damnation) as we are also warned in the Hebrew letter:

- Hebrews 10:26-31: *“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there*

remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance [belongeth] unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. [It is] a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Notice the last verse quoted above. Hebrews 10:31 states, *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* While this is not referring to eternal damnation, suffering in this life, and maybe losing our physical life is bad enough. The above is very good advice that we should heed. One should choose life!

Chapter VII

Regeneration versus Conversion

The five stages involved in the salvation of God's people were covered above in Chapter VI, entitled "Salvation," beginning on page 42. This particular chapter will contrast the difference between "regeneration" (third stage) and "conversion" (fifth stage). "Conversion" is gospel conversion unto discipleship in the Lord's church for a blessing in this life that can later be lost by committing sins. It is an aspect of salvation one might call conditional time "salvation."

Regeneration

To review, regeneration (phase three) by God is not conditioned on any act or action by man, as this is the work of God alone. Regeneration produces spiritual life (being born again) which is part of the process of eternal salvation provided for the elect of God as Jesus mentions to Nicodemus in the gospel of John:

- 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."*

For a person to be born of the Spirit of God, he cannot possibly assist God in any way, or perform any action of any type that will be used by God in this occurrence. Nicodemus did not understand Jesus' saying that a person must be "born again," as evidenced by his statement:

- John 3:4 *"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?"*

Jesus gives the answer several verses later:

- John 3:7-8 *“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 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.”*

Notice that Jesus compares being born again to the action of the wind. No one can tell where the wind comes from or where it will go. Jesus says further, *“so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”* This means everyone is born of the Spirit in the same way, and there are no special cases or exceptions. A popular misconception is that if you will accept Christ as your personal saviour, and invite Him into your heart, then you will be “born again.” The position that man must accept God not only contradicts what Jesus told Nicodemus in the eighth verse above, but also is not supported by any Bible verse. In fact, Jesus says no man could go to Him unless the Father gave him the ability to do so:

- John 6:65 *“And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”*

The above statements by Jesus should settle this issue, but if there are still some doubts about the actions of man helping or hindering God in giving the spiritual birth, consider the following verses:

- Titus 3:5 *“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;”*

- II Timothy 1:9 *“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,”*

Notice what Jesus prays just before He is crucified:

- John 17:1-2 *“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 thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”*

If Jesus has power over all flesh, then He could do anything He wanted to do. Jesus next tells us what He wants to do. He says He will *“give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”* As many as means not one more and not one less than was given Him by God the Father.

Spiritual life is given directly by Jesus Christ as He said He would do in the above verse John 17:2. Notice the words of Jesus concerning spiritual life in the following verse:

- John 5:25 *“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.”*

Spiritual life is not given through the words of Jesus repeated by a man or a preacher, since flesh and blood (humans) can add no profit to the process. Only the words spoken by Jesus Himself through the Holy Spirit matter in regeneration. Notice what Jesus said in this next verse:

- John 6:63 *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”*

God is the only giver of spiritual life. When a person is dead, either physically or spiritually, he can do nothing. Also, he cannot receive any form of help from any other human to assist God in giving life.

As a matter of fact, God gives a number of different expressions to explain to us how we receive this spiritual life. While talking to Nicodemus Jesus compared it to our physical birth. We learned from the above quoted verses that it came from the voice of the Son of God through the Holy Spirit. Next, we find that it is a translation. Notice this verse:

- Colossians 1:13 *“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”*

In addition to this, the obtaining of spiritual life is described as a quickening in the following verse:

- Ephesians 2:1 *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:”*

After considering the above descriptions of how we receive spiritual life, as by being born again, regenerated, the voice of the Son of God, quickened or translated, we realized that for each of these expressions to describe the same thing, it has to be an event which happened in an instant. If the event took place over some period of time, like nine months, then it could not be described as a translation or quickening.

Further, we learn that the decision to cause one to be born again was made by God and was not made by any human. Consider this verse:

- John 1:13 *“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

The above Bible verses clearly show that our good works have no favorable influence on God, nor do they play even the smallest role in achieving spiritual life. The event happens in an instant, and we can do nothing to prevent God from giving us the spiritual birth. In fact, every elect child of God receives the spiritual birth at a time when he hates God and is an enemy of God. Notice the following:

- Romans 5:10 *“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”*

Before we receive the spiritual birth, our carnal mind hates God:

- Romans 8:7-8 *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”*

In the unregenerate state, the gospel can be of no help since this person cannot hear, understand, or believe spiritual things, as follows:

- John 8:47 *“He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”*
- I Corinthians 2:14 *“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.”*

- John 10:26 *“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”*

Conversion

Conversion is a process in which the regenerate child of God (already saved eternally) turns from sinning against Christ to attempting to follow Christ. This conversion has to do with the child of God becoming a disciple of Christ by being obedient to the gospel message. Conversion also involves the form of worship he must follow. The child of God has much work and many actions to perform. He must repent of his sins:

- Acts 3:19 *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;”*

The child of God must confess Christ. The reader should be aware that to confess Christ is not the same thing as to accept Christ. Notice the following verse:

- Romans 10:9 *“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.”*

The child of God, as a believer, must submit to baptism, as below:

- Mark 16:16 *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*

Notice that our belief of the gospel unto baptism by following Christ as a disciple into His church yields salvation, as stated in the above verses. This salvation is

not eternal, because the child of God already possesses eternal life, but rather is an aspect of salvation that can be enjoyed in this life, so it is called conditional time “salvation.” This aspect of salvation is from this “*untoward*” (stubborn or unruly) generation, and is one that a person can achieve for himself, as Peter preached in Acts:

- Acts 2:38 *“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.”*
- Acts 2:40 *“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”*

The number of Bible verses already quoted obviously demonstrates that we cannot save ourselves eternally. Also, considering all the righteous works a person must perform in the conversion process, as given above, the verses show that conversion is not the same thing as regeneration or the spiritual birth. We remember the following Bible verses already quoted above:

- Titus 3:5 *“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;”*
- II Timothy 1:9 *“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,”*

Clearly, the value of religious conversion and the method of worship have to do with benefits or suffering in this life for God's born again children. For this reason, it is called conditional time "salvation." We learn from Scripture that, as children of God, we have set before us the opportunity of obeying God's commandments and enjoying a life with blessings from God. On the other hand, if we rebel against God and do not obey His commandments, we will suffer in this life. This suffering will not be eternal in hell, but temporal in this life, possibly resulting in death. Notice the warning given below:

- Hebrews 10:26-31 *"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

The above warning for God's children in the New Testament was nothing new, because God's people in the Old Testament (the children of Israel), were given a similar warning. This warning was given by Moses before the children of Israel crossed over the river Jordan to possess the Promised Land. To see this fact stated clearly by God, notice the following:

- Deuteronomy 30:15-19 *“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:”* (Verse 31:1 says *“And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel.”*)

God is not telling His people they will suffer eternal damnation. God’s people already have spiritual life or eternal life. Eternal means it is non-ending. God makes it clear He is referring to things in this life by saying *“ye shall not prolong your days upon the land,”* as opposed to eternal damnation. This refers to “time” by living a longer life. When God begins a work in the heart of one of His elect children, He will finish it to the end, as stated below:

- Philippians 1:6 *“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:”*

The Role of Religion

The above Scripture and other previous arguments clearly show that our religious practices have no affect at all on

whether we will go to heaven or go to hell. If nothing we do in this life can affect our eternal destiny, then why do we work so hard in an effort to follow God's commandments? I will attempt to answer this question.

If we love the Lord and believe that we are His children, we should live good, God-honoring lives out of appreciation for what He did for us. The motivation should be from love. Regardless, before we reach this point, I believe in many cases we learn that we are one of His children at the time we break God's commandments. When we break God's commandments, all hell breaks loose, everything goes wrong, and we suffer. We feel we are being punished for something, which, in fact, is exactly the case. Notice the following Bible verses:

- Hebrews 12:5-11 *“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”*

The regenerate child of God who has never heard the gospel message may first become aware of God's presence through the chastening rod of God, as given above. Also, we know God (without being told about Him) because God puts His laws directly into our mind at regeneration. Notice these verses:

- Hebrews 8:10-11 *"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: 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."*

God has a way of dealing with His regenerate children who have not actually heard the gospel message or God's laws. These regenerate children include those who have died by abortion, died at a young age, or even those who may have lived a full life in a remote location without ever having heard the law of God or the gospel message, as follows:

- Romans 2:12-16 *"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 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: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."*

Notice the process of sanctification by God that takes place even without the gospel and religious conversion. Even so, for a born again child of God, one of the greatest gifts we have in this life is the gospel. It offers the child of God comfort, healing, and spiritual nourishment to grow in grace and understanding, and best of all, fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ in His church. (Revelation 3:19-22)

Based on the above brief explanation, we see that while our religious practice (our worship of God) has nothing to do with obtaining eternal life for God's elect children, it has everything to do with our welfare in this life. Elder Harold Hunt, Maryville, Tennessee, has said, "Gospel salvation has nothing to do with our eternal destiny, but it has everything to do with our welfare in this life. The well being of individuals and nations, of entire civilizations and cultures, are impacted by the influence of the gospel. Every other consideration fades into nothingness compared with the influence of the gospel." The obedience of God's people within nations affects these lands, as clearly pointed out in the following verse:

- 2 Chronicles 7:14 *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."*

Even though the nation of Israel was warned by God (Deuteronomy 30:15-19, quoted on page 58) concerning the necessity that they be obedient to God's Laws before they possessed the Promised Land, in the opening chapters of Judges we find that they violated this warning time and time again, and suffered the consequences (timely suffering, not eternal damnation), as follows:

- Judges 2:13-14 *“And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.”*

The tremendous benefit to nations that occurred during the Protestant Reformation as a result of gospel preaching and the gospel conversion of God’s people is interesting to study. Those nations that embraced the Reformation were blessed to enjoy the Industrial Revolution. Nations like Spain that did not, also did not enjoy the Industrial Revolution. America has been tremendously blessed since our beginning. Notice the nations of Central and South America over the past two hundred years. These nations are rich in natural resources, but the argument could be made that their religion is the problem. This can be seen in nations all over the world today where various different pagan religions are worshiped. As Elder Hunt observed, “every other consideration fades into nothingness compared with the influence of the gospel.”

Now, let’s review briefly three periods of time and the three forms of worship God established for these periods. The method of worship that God established for the period from Adam to Moses was the sacrifice of a lamb on an altar by the head of the family. This sacrifice pictured the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the (elect) world, as stated many years later by John the Baptist:

- 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.”*

Next, the Levitical priesthood began with Moses. To make it clear to God's people that God was introducing a change in the worship service, God performed miracles through Moses covering a period of forty years. These miracles began when the plagues against the Egyptian people set the children of Israel free from Egyptian bondage. Next, Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and God parted the Red Sea with a wall of water on either side as they passed through. The walls of water later collapsed and drowned the entire Egyptian army (Exodus 14:29-30). God then provided the children of Israel food and water, and ensured that their clothes and shoes did not deteriorate (Deuteronomy 29:5). These miracles showed that God was the author of this change in the worship service or priesthood. The Levitical priesthood with all its rituals was a pattern (Hebrews 9:23-24) that pictured what Christ would actually do for the elect of God in all ages (since Adam).

The appearance of Christ ushered in the Melchisedec priesthood as the final change in the form of worship acceptable to God and is explained in great detail in Hebrews Chapters 7-10. To show God initiated this change, He provided another period of miracles lasting forty years, which began with the miracles of Jesus. In performing the miracles, Jesus demonstrated He was God manifest in flesh, and He also claimed to be God, as in the gospel of John:

- John 10:30 *"I and my Father are one."*

The forty years of miracles performed by God through the apostles included their raising the dead, and healing the sick. To note the end of this forty year period, at the time the New Testament book Philippians was written, we notice that Paul thanked God that the life of Epaphroditus was spared

when he was sick *“nigh unto death.”* Paul’s God given ability to heal the sick during the forty year period of miracles had ended, as made clear:

- *Philippians 2:27 “For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.”*

Conclusion

Hopefully I have shown the difference between regeneration and conversion. These terms are not the same thing. Regeneration is by God alone and achieves eternal salvation for the elect of God, without the loss of one. Conversion is for conditional time “salvation,” and it is a process the child of God should perform and maintain so as to be a disciple of Christ. Not all of God’s regenerate children will be blessed to hear the gospel message. Many will die young or have a mental deficiency to prevent the necessary understanding. Some will hear the gospel and choose to reject it. As a result of this disobedience they may suffer, they may have their lives shortened, or they may wish their lives were ended. As Hebrews 10:31 says, *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

A disciple of Christ is called a Christian, as noted below:

- *Acts 11:26 “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. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”*

As noted above, not all of God’s regenerate children will become disciples of Christ, or as they are called, Christians.

Predestination is not involved in conversion. God has many children who are not Christians since they are not in the Lord's church. They may have heard the gospel, but have rejected it. The ones that rejected the gospel may have chosen to follow other religious orders, as with the Jews or other eastern religions. In this case, these children of God are regenerate, but they have not been converted to a knowledge of the truth. They are not Christians, but they are still God's children. Some may have even been Christians at one time, but have backslidden and fallen away from the truth to other religions or to no religion. Unlike eternal salvation, the aspect of salvation gained by conversion, called time "salvation," which offers great benefits in this life, can be lost.

We need to keep in mind that regeneration is by God alone for His elect children chosen before the foundation of the world (predestinated), and nothing in this life can prevent or alter the outcome intended by God. There is no paradox, since man is not involved. Eternal salvation is by the grace of God!

Chapter VIII Justification

This chapter on Justification is copied from my book *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, Chapter XV, beginning on page 181. Justification is a legal term, so if it is to be “rightly divided,” one must first determine the jurisdiction of the court being considered. The premise is a Supreme Court exists in heaven to settle eternal matters. This court is involved with the work of Christ on the cross for the elect of God, which results in regeneration and eternal salvation for the elect.

Further, two lower courts exist in earth to determine the “born again” sinner’s fate while alive in this present world. These lower courts are involved with judgments relating to the regenerates belief and obedience to God’s commandments, which leads one to conversion to discipleship in His church, and yields blessings in one’s lifetime. Jesus Christ presides as judge over all three of the above courts.

The above mentioned courts must exist because of Adam’s sin. The law of God that Adam violated and the penalty to be suffered are first mentioned in Genesis 2:16-17. These verses state, *“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 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.”* The margins of many Bibles state that the Hebrew language literally means, “dying thou shalt die.” Three types of death are involved. Adam immediately suffered death to fellowship with God. Next, he began to physically die, ending in physical death. Finally, except for

the grace of God that provides eternal salvation for the elect of God, Adam would have then suffered eternal damnation (known as the second death).

Notice the sin of Adam, as clearly stated in the Roman letter, *“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.”* (Romans 5:12) The human race has inherited Adam’s sinful and sin prone nature. The three courts of justice, which must deal with the sin of Adam, are covered in the three sections that follow.

Justification by Blood

1) The “Divine Court,” or Supreme Court in heaven, is the court that operates under the law of sin and death. Jesus, the Surety, paid what the law demanded, as follows: *“Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”* (Romans 4:25) Jesus paid the price for every elect child of God. The elect are as follows: *“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.”* (Ephesians 1:4) Also, we remember, *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Hebrews 9:22) Our justification is through Jesus’ blood (His death on the cross) as follows: *“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”* (Romans 5:9) Also, this same message is repeated in Ephesians, *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of his grace.”* (Ephesians 1:7) This justification relates to eternal salvation, and only involves heaven for God’s elect people, noted above in Ephesians 1:4.

Justification by Faith

2) This court is the “court of one’s conscience,” and it is an earthly court that involves conditional time “salvation.” When God gives spiritual life (John 3:8 & 6:63) to His elect children (Ephesians 1:4-7), He puts His laws in their mind and heart as follows: “...saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.” (Hebrews 8:10) As a result of this work of God, they become aware of their sins and their consciences condemn them (Romans 2:15). The children of God feel a deep sense of guilt. They “labor and are heavy laden” as Matthew 11:28 states, since their consciences condemn them as being guilty of God’s laws. They feel that, unless a remedy is found, they have no hope in this life or after death.

Along with receiving the law of God “into their mind” (Hebrews 8:10), they also receive nine manner of fruit called “fruit of the Spirit” as listed in Galatians 5:22-23. The seventh fruit listed is faith. When a born again child of God hears the gospel message, obeys its commands, and trusts by faith that a sovereign God alone and unaided has saved him eternally, he then will feel secure. Justification by faith satisfies the conscience and offers peace of mind in this life. Galatians 2:16 states, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:9 refers to the work of Jesus Christ, His faithfulness), even we have (in obedience) believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified (in our own minds) by the faith of (which we received from) Christ (as a fruit of the Spirit...Galatians 5:22-23), and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Also, consider a similar statement in Romans 5:1-5, (the first verse refers back to the preceding verse 4:25, “Who

was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.”), as follows: “Therefore being justified by faith (the faith of Christ--not our faith--and His faithfulness in keeping the terms of the everlasting covenant), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (justification by blood): By whom also we have access by faith (the sinner’s faith) into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Justification by faith (the sinner’s faith) is often called “time salvation,” because the benefits and penalties are experienced by God’s people only in this life.

Justification by Works

3) This is the “court of our acquaintances.” Like the “court of one’s conscience,” the “court of our acquaintances” is also an earthly court. This court deals with how God’s people conduct themselves in this life as a witness for Christ. It deals with how God’s people are “judged” by others who observe their conduct as a witness for Christ. God expects His children to “bare fruit” by obeying His laws during their lifetime; therefore, God holds them accountable through chastisement when they fail (Hebrews 10:26-31). If their light shines before men in such a way that observers are forced to conclude that these individuals are children of the Heavenly King, then one could say that they have been justified by works. The book of James clearly explains this principle. James 2:14-26 uses Abraham as an excellent example and explains that faith without good works is dead (James 2:17, 20, and 26). James also states, “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*”

(James 2:24) Justification by works could also be called “time salvation,” since God’s people only experience its benefits or penalties in this lifetime. Notice that good works and the exercising of our faith are necessary for salvation in time (in this present world), through the lower earthly courts. If the above verse from James concerned eternal salvation, then it would contradict Titus 3:5, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he has saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”*

Comments on the three courts

Notice that, unlike the other two earthly courts, the child of God is totally and completely passive in the Divine Court. Nothing in this life can alter the outcome or actions by the Divine Court. There is no paradox in salvation. However, God’s born again children are active in the other two lower courts, and must be obedient to God’s commands and laws if they are to be justified by faith and justified by works. Notice as follows: *“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed: And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* (John 8:31-32) The benefits and blessings a child of God obtains by obedience can be enjoyed or lost in this lifetime by disobedience and sinful acts. This fact is clearly stated in Hebrews 10:26-31 which begins, *“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation”...*

God holds his children accountable for their actions, or lack of action, in this life. If in doubt, read Hebrews 12:5-11, which begins, *“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which*

speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth”...

The child of God does have trouble in this life as Paul made clear in Romans, as follows: *“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”* (Romans 7:15-17) God’s children have two different natures, one is carnal and the other is spiritual.

Declare to be just

There is another use of the word justify that may surprise some Bible believers. Elder Sonny Pyles preached on Justification at a meeting in the fall of 2001. He pointed out that this term does not always mean a change for the better or a spiritual improvement. God pronounced a woe against some individuals who justified certain things, as follows: Isaiah 5:20, 23 *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! ...Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!”* To justify the wicked (to declare them just) is a justification that God condemns. It is not for the better. Also consider this verse: *“And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.”* (Luke 7:29-30) These people that heard Him could not make God more just than He already was. Justify in these verses mean “declare to be just.” Those who were obedient unto baptism were by their actions declaring

God's commands as being just. As with other words in the Bible, justification has several different meanings.

Proof that God has faith

For one who believes in cause and effect, God is the first cause in both creation and salvation. A born again person has been given nine manner of fruit, as listed in Galatians, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."* (Galatians 5:22-23) Man's faith is the seventh fruit listed. God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, possesses these same nine fruits, but to an infinite degree. God's faith, or belief in Himself and belief in all decrees by the Holy Trinity, is faith to an infinite degree.

If eternal salvation is by the faith of Christ and God's faith, then one might say there is a problem with this doctrine since the word "faith" may imply imperfect knowledge. God's knowledge is perfect (Isaiah 46:10), so this position may at first only appear to be inconsistent with the doctrine of omniscience.

In a letter from Elder Harold Hunt, Maryville, Tennessee, he gave a number of reasons why it is possible for God, an infinite being, to have faith. Following are some of the points he made:

- "W. E. Vine and J. H. Thayer are, perhaps, the two most respected authorities with regard to the Greek language. W. E. Vine defines faith as: "firm persuasion, a conviction, trust, etc." Thayer defines faith as, "conviction, belief, trust, confidence...." Neither of them finds the principle of limitation in the word itself. God the Father has faith in His Son; He trusts His Son; He has confidence in His Son. And God the Son has faith in His

Father. When the Father sent His Son into the world, He had confidence in His Son that He would do the work that was appointed Him. When the Son laid down in death, He had confidence in His Father that He would raise Him from the dead, and that He would accept His sacrificial death as a full payment of the sin debt of His people.”

Several verses clearly state we are saved eternally by the faith (or work) of Christ or by God’s faith in His blood (or His certain belief that Christ would submit to death on the cross), which are as follows:

- *“And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”* (Philippians 3:9)
- *“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”* (Romans 3:22-25)
- *“For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar;”* (Romans 3:3-4)
- *“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* (1 Peter 1:5) This faith must be God’s infinite faith (or certain

belief in the work of Christ and that He would preserve His children blameless until the end), since eternal salvation is kept by God until "...*the last time.*" This verse refers to the faith of God, or faithfulness of God.

Man's faith compared to faith of Christ and the faith of God

We should compare man's faith to the faith of Jesus Christ (in His humanity as son of Mary). Man's faith is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) as defined by Hebrews 11:1 which states, "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" Jesus stated many times, "O ye of little faith" as in Matthew 16:8 and Luke 12:28. Man has only a little faith, and many times, the born again man neglects this faith in acts of rebellion, as stated in Romans 3:3 and 2 Timothy, "*If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*" (2 Timothy 2:13)

The following are good examples of many born again people who lost their physical life (not eternal life) by rebelling against God through sinful acts called "unbelief" (man chooses to neglect their God given faith):

- "*I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.*" (Jude 5) God would not destroy the unregenerate for unbelief because they believe not because they are not one of His sheep (as John 10:26 states). The unbelief of the unregenerate is the result of God's choice because God did not elect them from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Now compare this verse with 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 and John 6:54 as follows: "*Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye*

should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” (1 Corinthians 10:1-5) To prove all were children of God, compare the wording above to John 6:53-54: *“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”* The above verses prove that all the Jews who Moses led out of Egypt were born again. Even so, many were *“overthrown in the wilderness”* for the sin of unbelief. This particular event referred to in Jude 5 is also referred to in Hebrews 3:7-19. Our faith can fail to such an extent that it costs us our physical life, but not eternal life, as stated in Romans 3:3 and 2 Timothy 2:13.

On the other hand, Jesus in His humanity (as the son of Mary) had great faith. Jesus in His divine nature is God; therefore as God, He has infinite faith...or certain and infinite belief in Himself and all His decrees.

Let's consider Jesus Christ as completely man as well as God manifest in flesh as given by John 1:1-4, 14. In His humanity (son of Mary-Mary's egg was fertilized by God through the Holy Spirit as in Matthew 1:20), Jesus has a sin-free nature, and a sin-free mortal mind similar to Adam before the fall. The spiritual mind of Jesus Christ is God.

In contrast to Jesus, a born again person has a sinful carnal mind, which is at *“enmity against God”* (Romans 8:7) and is prone to sin (Romans 7:14-25). This born again person also has a pure spiritual mind (2 Peter 3:1) which cannot sin, as clearly stated, *“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”* (1 John 3:9)

Jesus in His humanity, as the son of Mary, *“increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favor with God and man.”* (Luke 2:52) God’s wisdom cannot increase, since it is infinite. Jesus in His humanity could grow in wisdom, as He grew from childhood as the son of Mary, and He could be tempted as in Luke 4:1-13. Also, He prayed to God the Father, as in John 17:1-26. (There are many other references of Jesus praying to the Father.) Jesus, in His humanity (as the son of Mary) had great faith or belief in God by offering Himself to die on the cross (Romans 4:25) in order to pay the price acceptable to God, and thereby save all of the elect of God eternally. Jesus (the son of Mary) knew He would suffer alone, separated from the presence of God...separated from His Divine spiritual mind. Matthew 27:45-46 notes that darkness was over all the land from the sixth to the ninth hour, then finishes by saying about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* Jesus, (as the son of Mary, the second Adam) was suffering the wrath of God all alone.

Human brain compared to a computer

In considering the possibility of a person having two natures, or two minds, refer to Bible examples of people who are indwelled by unclean spirits. Our fleshly brain is like computer hardware that can be loaded with more than one

software program. Remember the Gadarene man who lived in the tombs? (Mark 5:1-19) This Gadarene man was indwelled by many unclean spirits. When Jesus asked the man his name, the unclean spirits said, *“My name is Legion: for we are many.”* (Mark 5:9) Mark 5:13 states, *“they were about two thousand.”* The software program that all humans are born with is called our carnal nature, which was inherited from Adam. God gives the born again person a pure spiritual mind (2 Peter 3:1) at the time of regeneration (Titus 3:5-7). This spiritual mind cannot sin (1 John 3:9). As with the Gadarene man mentioned above, and many others mentioned in Scripture, the human mind can also be indwelled by one or more unclean spirits.

The occurrence of unclean spirits (fallen angels) indwelling human beings is a clear fact of Scripture. However, how this event occurs is less clear. We do know that, regarding the Holy Spirit, Christ is knocking on the “door” of the heart of born again people. This fact is clearly stated to the Laodicean church, beginning at Revelation 3:14, and extending to the end of the chapter. Notice as follows: *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”* (Revelation 3:19-22) Christ is addressing the “lukewarm” (Rev. 3:16) regenerate church members, asking to be invited into their hearts. If this case applies with the Holy Spirit, surely it must also apply with unclean spirits. Unclean spirits would not be able to enter uninvited into the human mind. It is possible that Satanist and secret society rituals, as well as religions which worship false Christ’s, are the

means of this invitation. To understand this last possibility, consider the following: *“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.”* (2 Corinthians 11:4) The worship of a false Christ, or anti-Christ, may be very dangerous. The Christ we worship is defined by the doctrine we believe. Therefore, Bible doctrine is extremely important.

Justification in the Divine Court

Our legal justification before God by Jesus Christ (yielding eternal salvation for the elect of God) is clearly stated, *“Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”* (Romans 4:25) This justification was effected by the infinite faith, or certain belief by God, that Jesus in his humanity (as the son of Mary, as the second Adam), would submit to death on the cross. Jesus, in His humanity (as the son of Mary), could have refused (in theory), or He would have had no humanity.

Further, because of His great faith, (not infinite faith or belief), Jesus Christ (as the son of Mary) believed that at His death His soul would go immediately to God. Also, Jesus (the son of Mary), had great faith (not infinite faith or He would not have had a human nature) that God would raise Him again from the dead three days after His death on the cross, to accomplish legal justification--Romans 4:25.

God had *“faith in His blood,”* (Romans 3:25) which meant that Jesus had to die as further stated *“without shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Hebrews 9:22) In Christ's death on the cross, God had faith (infinite faith and certain belief) that Jesus, the man (the son of Mary), would submit to death.

We know that Jesus, the son of Mary, prayed as follows: *“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.”* (Luke 22:42 see also Matthew 26:39, 42 and Mark 14:36) Jesus, the man, desperately wanted to avoid separation from the presence and fellowship of God. While Christ was still alive, hanging on the cross, God’s hatred and wrath was poured out on Him (because He was bearing our sins, even though He was Himself without sin). Jesus, the man, at the ninth hour (it was dark over all the land from the sixth hour until the ninth), cried out, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46) Jesus, the man (the son of Mary), was alone and separated from God, suffering the wrath of God for God’s elect children.

Conclusion

Thus, we see justification in three courts. We see the amazing grace of God in saving His chosen people without the eternal loss of even one. Our religious practice is not involved here. However, God has preserved the gospel and His church so as to offer a “salvation” for His children in this life (based on their obedience) from this untoward, unruly and wicked generation (Acts 2:38-40). We call this conditional time “salvation.” One can only say, “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!”

Chapter IX

Letter to a Roman Catholic

The following is a modified version of a letter (additions and revisions made in March, 2005) that was sent to a Roman Catholic friend in the fall of 2002. After reading one of my books, this particular friend loaned me a small book entitled *Rome Sweet Home* by Scott and Kimberly Hahn. Scott and Kimberly are both Presbyterian seminary graduates that converted to Catholicism. After reading this book, I tried to offer for consideration several beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church that in my opinion involve major doctrinal issues that are not Scriptural. In the original letter I did not deal with the Eucharist (Catholic mass), in which they cite John 6:53-56. I have now added a section on the Eucharist. Please consider the following letter to my friend (referred to as Adam in order to keep the name confidential).

We remember from Chapter IV (beginning on page 29) that the Protestant theologians who met at the Synod of Dort (November 13, 1618 through May 9, 1619) declared the beliefs of "Arminianism" as heresy (page 32). The Presbyterian publication *The Five Points of Calvinism* by Steele and Thomas (page 15) reminds the reader of this fact. It then points out that "these doctrines have gained wide acceptance in the modern Church." This publication contends that wide spread beliefs accepted by today's Protestant Churches are heresy. Without doubt the Synod of Dort in 1619 would have also declared many beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church to be heresy. Hopefully one can consider these Bible doctrine issues as being a search for truth as taught in the Bible, and not be offended. It is my sincere desire that God's children will become more aware of the need to study God's Word on a doctrinal basis.

Dear Adam,

Thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity to read about the conversion experience of Scott and Kimberly Hahn from Presbyterian to Roman Catholic. Regardless of their religious beliefs, they provide an excellent example of how two of God's children, who with much prayer, suffering and study, changed from one religious belief to another one which was quite different in doctrine and in practice.

While I do not agree with their decision, I have tremendous respect for the way both of these children of God conducted themselves during this transition. They were willing to give up everything that meant anything to them in this life to follow Christ as they understood Scripture.

It is really hard to understand how highly intelligent children of God (many with Th.D.'s, Ph.D.'s and other degrees) could interpret the Bible so differently requiring the formation of many different religious denominations, but this is the actual case. These strong beliefs not only separate God's children regarding their fellowship, but in many cases over the years it has resulted in religious wars. While the Catholics, Protestants and other religious orders (as Eastern and Middle Eastern religions) have made war against each other, at least I can say to my knowledge no Baptist group has ever fought anyone even though they have suffered persecution.

Comments on *Rome Sweet Home*

A number of things make me uneasy when considering the Catholic Church. Scott did a good job in rationalizing these problems for himself. However, still a number of things concern me. Consider the following subjects.

Idolatry

It was explained to Scott that the images, statues and the like are similar to family photographs in our home. They are not worshipped, but represent those who are loved. In the case of Jesus, it represents the one they worship. This satisfied him, but it does not satisfy me considering the history of idols and God's commands against idolatry. Humans are too quick to go from the position of being reminded of the ones they love, to trusting and worshipping the object or idol. Notice the following Scripture:

- Exodus 20:4-5 *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;"*
- Deuteronomy 29:17 *"And ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them:"*
- 1 Samuel 4:3 *"And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies."* (They suggest the ark of the covenant may save them rather than the Lord.)
- 2 Kings 18:4 *"He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan."*

- Acts 17:16 *“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.”*
- Colossians 3:5 *“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”*

Even “covetousness” is called idolatry in Colossians 3:5. In my words, idolatry is our trusting in objects, images, money or material things rather than trusting in the Lord. I think it is easy for humans to trust in a “good luck” piece rather than trust in the Lord. Christ wants us to look to Him and not center any of our attention on objects...it’s an age old problem with humanity.

Baptism

On page 123 of *Rome Sweet Home* Scott answers a question as to how he knows he is born again. He says he knows he is born again because of what Christ did for him through the Holy Spirit when he was baptized. For a proof text he referred to John 3:5, *“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.”* I disagree that this Scripture supports the theory that regeneration occurs at the time of baptism because of John 3:8 (three verses later). In this verse Jesus compares being born again to the action of the wind, as follows:

- John 3:8 *“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.”*

Unlike the wind, you know and can control when a person is to be baptized. Baptism cannot be involved with a person's being born again. Also, notice what the following verse says about baptism:

- 1 Peter 3:20-21 *"Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 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:"*

How were the eight souls (Noah and his family) saved by the flood waters? Their fellowship with God and their physical lives were saved by a timely deliverance. They were saved from the wickedness and violence in the world while all the other people drowned in floodwaters at the time of the flood of Noah. Likewise baptism offers us a way to save ourselves, a timely deliverance, or salvation in this life, by way of our entrance into the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). We can save ourselves by baptism as Peter says:

- Acts 2:38, 40, *"Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."*

We know we cannot save ourselves eternally by our works (baptism would be works) based on the following:

- 2 Timothy 1:9 *"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,"*

- Titus 3:5 *“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;”*

To see how we are born again, it is by the voice of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

- John 5:25 *“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 6:63 *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, [they] are spirit, and [they] are life.”*

Being born again occurs sometime between conception and death (or aborted babies would not be saved) for the elect of God referred to by the following verses:

- Ephesians 1:4-6 *“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: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”*

Before we are born again we hate God:

- Romans 8:7, *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”*

Before we are born again we cannot hear, understand, or believe things of God, so only God unassisted can save us eternally. This is proven by the following Bible verses:

- John 8:47 *“He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear [them] not, because ye are not of God.”*
- 1 Corinthians 2:14 *“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.”*
- John 10:26 *“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”*

Mary

On pages 143 through 146 of *Rome Sweet Home*, Scott gives us his understanding about Mary, the mother of Jesus. I like the statement by Dr. Miravalle that the Catholic Church does not consider Mary a goddess—she was worthy of honor but not worthy of worship. I did not know, and still do not believe that Catholics hold this position. I do agree with that statement. However, they do pray to Mary as well as to other dead saints of God who are in heaven today. I would never do that since Jesus is our only mediator with God the Father, as follows:

- 1 Timothy 2:5 *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”* This leaves out dead saints as well as Mary, the Pope, any Priest, or any other human.

Next, I believe Mary was a sinner like every other descendant of Adam. The primary proof for this can be found in the following statement by Mary herself:

- Luke 1:46-47 *“And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”*

Notice Mary refers to the Lord as being her Saviour. If Mary was sinless, she would not need a saviour.

Further, the only way Jesus could be born a sinless human (even though His mother was a sinful human) is that His father was God. The sin nature of Adam comes from Adam only and not from both Adam and Eve. This fact is based on the following verse:

- Romans 5:12 *“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:”*

Notice it does not say “as by one man and by one woman sin entered into the world,” but only by one man. Eve ate the forbidden fruit first, but if Adam had not eaten it, only Eve would have died and not Adam nor their descendants. Also Mary had other children. Consider the following:

- Mark 6:3 *“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”*
- Galatians 1:19 *“But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.”*

Mary inherited the sin nature from Adam exactly like every other human. There was nothing wrong with Mary having other children by her husband Joseph. It is just that her first child, when she was still a virgin, occurred by way of God through the Holy Spirit fertilizing her egg. As Scripture makes clear, Jesus was born of a virgin mother (but not a sin free mother).

Peter and the Catholic Pope

I do not believe Peter was the first Pope. The following verses are used by Roman Catholics:

- Matthew 16:15-18 *“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 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.”*

In the above verses Jesus tells Peter that his belief that Jesus is the Son of God is only possible by direct revelation from God, and was not from man. This belief is the foundation, or rock, that the Church of God is built on (not on Peter). Our belief that Jesus is the Christ is evidence (and is not the cause) of our being a child of God. 1 John 5:1 states this fact, *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”* John 5:24, John 6:47 and Acts 13:48 state the same thing. Our faith comes from being born again. Faith is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us. The “fruit” produced as a result of being “born again” is listed in Galatians 5:22-23. This principle is the rock foundation on which God has built His church. I believe Primitive Baptists may be the only church order that believes the above. We believe no human on his own, or with the assistance of a preacher and gospel preaching, is able to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. It takes direct revelation from God. Hebrews 8:10-11 also states this fact as follows:

- Hebrews 8:10-11 *“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: 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."

Next, the Pope in Rome is called the Holy Father, and appears to accept worship as people bow before him. Notice the story of Cornelius in Acts 10. When Peter went to preach to Cornelius, his kinsman and near friends, it states:

- Acts 10:25-26 *"And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man."* The Pope in Rome would not have said stand up.

Next, we are not to call any man father, as Jesus said in the following verse:

- Matthew 23:9 *"And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven."* Catholics call their Priest Father and the Pope Holy Father. In my opinion, this is a very bad practice.

Finally, no man should be called holy or reverend (as with Protestant preachers). Proof is found in the following Bible verses:

- Psalms 111:9 *"He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name."* This is the only verse in the Bible where reverend is used and it refers to God.
- Mark 10:17 *"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit*

eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.”

If Jesus would correct the young man in Mark 10:17 for calling Him good, since Jesus appeared as only a man (but was God manifest in flesh--a fact unknown to the young man), then surely the much stronger titles of Holy Father, Father and Reverend would also be condemned by Jesus. God does not share His glory with anyone.

Holy days

Primitive Baptist do not respect any days as being holy days. Based on Romans 14:5-6, I would say it should be left to one's conscience. Consider the following Scripture:

- Galatians 4:10-11 *“Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”*
- Romans 14:5-6 *“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.”*

The Eucharist or Catholic mass

The first communion service took place at the time of the Last Supper before Christ was crucified. The Last Supper was actually the last Passover under the Jewish Law period. The Passover began after God through Moses led the children of Israel out of bondage from the land of Egypt. The Passover was established by God to remind the

children of Israel of the night before Moses led them out. The blood from the Passover lamb had been placed on either side of the door and overhead thus forming a cross that pictures Christ on the cross. When the Angel of Lord saw the blood, He would “pass over” the house sparing the first born of both man and beast as follows:

- Exodus 12:5-7 “Your ***lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.***”
- Exodus 12:11-13 “*And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.*”

The above pictures Jesus Christ, the true Passover Lamb of God, whose blood saves the elect of God (Ephesians 1:4-7) from eternal death. The Jewish Passover was observed once each year and was for the purpose of remembering what the Lord had done for the children of Israel.

The Communion service is similar to the Jewish Passover in that God’s children are to remember what Christ did for

them by dying on the cross of Calvary. Notice what Scripture says concerning the Communion service:

- 1 Corinthians 11:25-26 *“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**. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.”* Notice it says “as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,” meaning there is no specific frequency in which we are to observe the Communion service. Normally, Primitive Baptist churches observe it once or twice each year. Similar to the Passover, the purpose is to **remember** what Christ has done for us by giving His life on the cross that we may be spared eternal death and damnation.

Now let's consider the Catholic mass, called the Eucharist. Based on *History of the Church of God* by Elder Sylvester Hassell, beginning at the bottom of page 285:

- “The idolatrous doctrine of transubstantiation was first explicitly taught by Paschasius Radbert, A. D. 831, and was first decreed as an article of faith at the instance of Pope Innocent III., by the fourth ‘Lateran Council,’ A. D. 1215. This was more than a Millennium too late for it to be a doctrine of the apostolic church.”

Catholics use John 6:48-58 as a proof text for the Eucharist. Consider the following Scripture:

- John 6:48-58 *“I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. **I am the living bread** which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my*

*flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. **Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.** For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”* Notice the grammar above. Whosoever eateth and drinketh hath...is already in possession of...eternal life. Eternal life **is not obtained** or **sustained** by the Eucharist. If this were the case, the church priest, a sinful human, would have the power of giving and taking away eternal life from a child of God.

In the above verses, Jesus starts by making reference to the children of Israel Moses led out of Egypt. Jesus then says that those people who already have spiritual life are described as eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Notice this same description is given to the children of Israel Moses led out of Egypt in the following verses: (Note: No Catholic mass or Eucharist is involved here, yet it is described in the same way as given in John 6:53-56.)

- 1 Corinthians 10:1-12 *“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that **all** our fathers were under the cloud, and **all** passed through the sea; And were **all** baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; **And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of***

that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”* While these children of God suffered in this life and died untimely deaths for the evil things they did, they were still God’s children who are in heaven today. This is a warning to us that our conduct can affect our quality of life, or even prematurely end our physical life!

The above Bible verses describe **all** the children of Israel led out of Egypt by Moses as being God’s children. This description includes the fact that as children of God they **“did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink,”** and this refers to the body and blood of Christ. These individuals are covered by the blood of Christ. They have Christ in them as also stated in the following verses:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye**

are.” Christ through the Holy Spirit is in these children of God. In the same way, God destroyed the children of Israel for sinful acts (committed in the wilderness as given in 1 Corinthians 10:5 above). We are warned in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 that we could lose our physical life if we defile our bodies, described as the temple of God.

Now let's look at more verses used to describe the communion service:

- Matthew 26:27-29 *“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 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.”*
Notice that Jesus is referring to wine and not his literal blood.

Then consider the following verses:

- 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 *“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? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”*

The word communion means an act of sharing in common the thought of what Christ did for us. We are to drink the wine and by so doing, to remember that Christ shed His blood in order to redeem us from our sins and thus save us from eternal separation from God in the flames of a literal everlasting hell. We are to remember the death of Christ and the fact that He gave His life for us that we may be with Him in heaven some day. As already noted, this ordinance of the church is fulfillment of what the Jewish Passover

pictured when the children of Israel observed this service **once each year** as a remembrance of what God did for them under Moses. In the same way, most Primitive Baptist churches observe the communion service once or twice each year. Again, the frequency for observing communion is not given in the Bible.

The Catholic Eucharist or mass is usually observed by Catholic churches **once each week** or more frequently. To quote from Systematic Theology by Dr. Morton H. Smith, “the Roman view calls for the **idolatrous** practice of worshipping the elements. Many a Protestant refused to receive the elements from a priest, because he had to kneel as he received them. In addition to this, the idea that the Supper is a continual re-sacrificing of Christ goes counter to what Jesus himself said when he said, *“It is finished.”* (Chapter XLVIII, IV F. 1. on page 692) As above, the Eucharist bread and wine could become an idol in which one places his trust for eternal life. It becomes a “works salvation” and ignores Titus 3:5: *“Not by works of righteous which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”* Also it forgets Romans 5:19 that states: *“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”* Eternal salvation is only from Jesus Christ to those chosen by God before the foundation of the world, as follows:

- John 17:1-3 *“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 thee: As thou hast given him **power over all flesh**, that **he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him**. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou*

hast sent.” As many as means not one more and not one less.

- Ephesians 1:4-6 *“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: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”*

If the bread and wine were the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ, then Christ is essentially being offered every communion. Hebrews 10:14 states: *“For by **one offering** he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* If Christ perfected forever, then there is no adding to that. Certainly partaking communion does not add to salvation, nor does any other work performed by man. Notice the following Scripture:

- Hebrews 9:13 *“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit **offered himself without spot to God**, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* Christ never has been offered to man as would be the case if the wine and bread were the literal blood and body of our Lord.

Finally, Hebrews 9:28 states *“So Christ was **once offered** to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”* Simply put, one offering, one time, and to God only. As with the Passover, we are to remember by way of the communion service what Jesus Christ (the true Lamb of God) did for us by making the offering of Himself to God.

Historically the Catholic Church takes the position that through the Eucharist service, the bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Christ, properly called transubstantiation. Participation in this service is necessary for a church member to maintain his eternal life. If a person is put out of the church, or excommunicated, they are to understand that this is a sentence of eternal death in the flames of hell. This doctrine gives the church tremendous power over its members. As I understand it, the Roman Catholic Church still holds to this position. Based on this doctrine, the Roman Catholic Church must believe that only its members will be in heaven.

The Church

In some ways Primitive Baptists view the church similar to the way Roman Catholics view it, and in other ways it is the opposite. Roman Catholics and Primitive Baptists both believe their beginning dates back to the apostles in an unbroken chain. Baptists were never part of the Roman Catholic Church; therefore, they had nothing to protest as did Protestant Churches, which reformed from the Roman Church following the Protestant Reformation. The Lord's church has been named by its enemies over the years, so it has been identified by many different names. The disciples of Christ in the early church were called Christians:

- Acts 11:26 *“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. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”*

At the time of Martin Luther, the reformers saw the Roman Catholic Church was in such gross error that it was obvious (to the reformers and their followers) that the Lord had not

preserved the Roman Catholic Church free from error and untruth. The verse used by the Roman Church and referred to by Scott Hahn as to the authority given by God to the church is the following:

- 1 Timothy 3:15 *“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.”*

The above verse is also believed by Primitive Baptists since Jesus said the following to Peter:

- Matthew 16:18 *“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.”* We believe “the gates of hell” have not prevailed against the true church of God. The question one should ask is where is this church that God has preserved in truth for over 2000 years?

Regarding truth, we do not believe the Roman Catholic Church ever had truth due to the many pagan Roman customs they adopted in 300 AD under Constantine. These errors are being pointed out in this chapter. One church God has preserved in truth, we believe, is called Primitive Baptist today, but has gone under many names over 2,000 years. We date from the time of John the Baptist and we believe no material change in our doctrine or practice has taken place. Or at least, that is our firm conviction.

Only God decides when to remove the candlestick, which makes a church no longer God’s church. By removing the candlestick, a church would no longer be a light unto the world. They would still be God’s people, but to some extent they would lose the light of the gospel, and other benefits

like the warmth, comfort, and security of sovereign grace. See the warning the Lord gave to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:4-5, *“Nevertheless I have [somewhat] against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”* Unless God’s church members repent, and return to their first love, the church at Ephesus may continue to meet, but Christ would have removed the candlestick.

I feel sure just about all Christian denominations believe they have truth, and are God’s church; however, this is a decision that only God can make. While the Lord has many born again children in these churches, all the various Christian denominations, with different doctrines and practice, cannot all be right. It is up to us, if the Lord is in the matter, to compare the doctrine believed by the various churches, and find the one that fits Bible verses without contradictions.

One action any member of a church should take is to obtain the Articles of Faith for the particular denomination. Does the church teach and preach based on these Articles of Faith? Do these Articles of Faith present a systematic theology that is consistent with Scripture? Only a study of the Bible on a doctrinal basis can answer these questions.

One important difference exists between Primitive Baptists and Roman Catholics. We believe God has many children in all the various denominations, and they do not. We believe just the churches are in error and do not have the truth (doctrine and practice) as preserved by God. For this reason, the study of Bible doctrine is extremely important.

The way we are the opposite of the Catholic Church has to do with how simply we are organized. We also have a very simple worship service. We refer to the following Bible verses:

- 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.”* The Roman Catholic worship service and its organization is not simplistic. Also, another Jesus is preached by the Roman Catholic Church.

One may find it hard to believe, but there is no hierarchy in the Primitive Baptist Church. We have pastors (titled Elders) and deacons. We believe Christ through the Holy Spirit has direct authority over each individual church. The pastor of the church is the church leader as long as he follows Scripture. All decisions of any importance are based on majority vote of the individual church members. If a Primitive Baptist Church slips into gross error, this fact will become known and the particular church in error would not be considered a church in our fellowship. In other words, there are churches called Primitive Baptist that we do not recognize in fellowship. But in all this, there is no national or international organization to rule over the churches. Each church stands alone under the authority of God based on Scripture.

Conclusion

I know that I have had much to say in this letter that one may take as meddling in someone else's religious practice.

However, the study involved has been of great benefit to me, and hopefully it will also prove to be of some value to the reader. I guess you would say studying Bible doctrine is my hobby. Also, I respect the beliefs of others and feel they should follow the Lord in the way they believe is right. For this reason, I left the Presbyterian Church in 1974, and feel the Lord helped me to lead my family to the Primitive Baptist Church. I believe I have been greatly blessed in my life for this action. Regardless of what any of us believe, and this includes me, I think it is always good to review our doctrinal beliefs, and continue to insure these beliefs are fully supported by Scripture.

If we ever believe a church is in error scripturally, we should simply leave the church and search for one that follows doctrinal beliefs that harmonize Scripture without contradictions. This was one purpose for my book entitled *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, published in the spring of 2003, and this book, *Unlocking Bible Truth*, published two years later. Hopefully, this effort will benefit other of God's children as they search the Scriptures. I believe they will find Primitive Baptist doctrine as presented honors the sovereignty of God and His Bible.

Based on this brief study, I do not believe the Roman Catholic Church has been preserved by God "the pillar and ground of the truth," as quoted in 1 Timothy 3:15. Doctrinal beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church violate commandments of God on too many key issues. It is easy to read in the Old Testament the judgement of God against Israel for many of these same errors. Remember, a religious denomination is defined by the doctrine they believe. Hopefully God's children will follow the example of the Bereans, as follows:

- Acts 17:11 *“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.”*

Brother Adam, and all others that read this public letter, please forgive me if anything I have written has been offensive. My desire has only been to offer for consideration the true Bible position, as I understand it, on the various doctrines examined.

Sincerely

Tom Hagler

Section III Problem Bible Verses

This section will consider some “problem” Bible verses that at first reading may appear to teach one thing, but after a closer study they teach something altogether different.

A closer study includes considering the context, the grammar, and sound doctrine which includes a comparison with other Bible verses so as to harmonize the meaning. We must remember 2 Peter 1:20, “*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.*” Scripture contains no contradictions. In 2 Timothy 2:15 we read, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” But if Scripture is not rightly divided, and it appears to be divided against itself, this interpretation cannot stand. Jesus taught this message in Matthew 12:25, “*And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:*” The Bible is the Word of Truth; therefore, it could never be divided against itself.

The Bible verses that follow may not have been a problem for some of our readers, because they may not have known that the meaning they assumed to be correct was actually in conflict with other Scripture. For this reason, it is so important to study Bible doctrine. Think of doctrine as the steel girders which support a sky scraper. In a similar manner the proper doctrine provides a structure which supports all Bible verses in a way that harmonizes Scripture without contradictions.

Chapter X

What the Gospel is not

The above chapters have attempted to show that the eternal salvation of God's elect children (Ephesians 1:4 *"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:"*) was settled by God before the foundation of the world and is assured (Romans 8:28-31) without the use of the gospel. The gospel and gospel preaching are involved with the conversion to discipleship of the obedient child of God during their lifetime if they are blessed to hear it preached. However, it is important to remember that many of God's children (saved eternally) are either not obedient to the gospel or they may never hear the gospel preached as in the case of infant deaths, those with mental afflictions, and those in remote parts of the world.

While the above arguments presented in the previous chapters do seem to be conclusive, there are still some Scripture references which appear to teach that God uses the gospel (for man's religious practice) as some type of divine instrument infused with a God given power of its own so as to achieve eternal salvation. Many of God's children believe the gospel must be coupled with the "work of the cross," in order to make the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus....effective unto eternal salvation.

In this chapter, we will examine what we believe are the principle passages which appear to teach that God uses the gospel and man's religious practice as a "means" for the child of God to obtain eternal salvation. We must explain the meaning of each verse in light of all other Scripture on the subject. Every passage must be taken in context, and

the grammar taken exactly as written in the AV 1611 King James Bible. This exercise is necessary if we expect to show there are no contradictions in the Bible concerning these particular verses.

Notice: Most of the material which follows is found in the booklet "Utility of the GOSPEL" by Elder Conrad Jarrell...printed 1977.

Four problem verses for the doctrine presented

Consider the following Scriptures that appear to teach that God uses the gospel as a "means" in the spiritual birth.

- *"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."* (James 1:18)
- *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever....And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."* (1Peter 1:23 and 25)
- *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* (Hebrews 4:12)
- *"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."* (1 Corinthians 4:15)

The above verses may lead one to consider that a person is "born again" by the preached word (or the gospel) even

though we have given compelling arguments to the contrary. If we remember 2 Peter 1:20, *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation”*...we understand there are no contradictions in the Bible. With this fact in mind, let us examine the above four verses.

To begin, most of our problems are resolved if we understand which “word” is under consideration in the above Scripture. As 2 Timothy 2:15 states, we should be *“...rightly dividing the word of truth.”* Many words will have more than one meaning.

Now, let us examine the word “word.” There are three kinds of “word” used in the Bible...there is the written word, the spoken word, and the living Word. Jesus Christ is the living Word of God. If we can prove the above “word” verses refer to Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, and not to the spoken word, or written word, then, to a great degree, we will have been successful in reconciling these verses.

The fact that Jesus Christ is the Word being referred to in the following two verses is rarely disputed:

1. *“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)
2. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made....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 1:1-3, 14)

The following should also be obvious: *“Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the Word.”* (Luke 1:2) One cannot be an eyewitness of the written or spoken word, but can be an eyewitness of the living Word. The word *eyewitness* in the original Greek language was used to mean a direct vision of deity...such as in Greek mythology, a character claims he saw Zeus. Jesus was deity. Also, in this context, *“ministers of the Word”*...would mean “body servants” of the living Word...Jesus.

Comments on James 1:18

Using the above logic, James 1:18 is resolved, *“...Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth....”* Jesus did say, *“...I am the way, the Truth, and the life....”* John 14:6. Jesus is the living Word of Truth. James 1:18 could be quoted as follows: Of His own will begat He us by Jesus Christ.

Comments on 1 Peter 1:23, and 25

The verses in 1 Peter can be resolved in the same way as above. In verse 23, we have, *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word (Logos in the original Greek language) of God, which liveth and abideth forever.”* How could a written or spoken word be living? Jesus Christ does live and abide forever. Jesus Christ is also referred to as the Seed of God, as follows:

- Galatians 3:16 *“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”*

- Galatians 3:19 *“Wherefore then [serveth] the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.”*

Now, back to the passage we were considering, but two verses later, in 1 Peter 1:25, we have, *“And this is the word (rhema in Greek) which by the gospel is preached unto you.”* Since the word preached is a different Greek word, this difference should make it clear we are born again by the living Word (Logos), Jesus...and informed of this “good news” by the gospel...the written word (rhema). This principle is plainly stated as follows:

- 2 Timothy 1:9-10 *“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, 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.”*
Could this principle be any clearer? Jesus Christ, the incorruptible Seed of God, gives spiritual life. In John 5:25, Jesus says: *“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.”*
The gospel makes manifest, or brings to light, what Christ has done for His regenerate children.

Only God can give life, and this is without help from the dead, alien, and unregenerate sinner. After all, the spiritually dead are dead. Ephesians 2:1 states, *“And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...”* This good news is brought to light through the gospel.

Comments on Hebrews 4:12

The next bullet quotes Hebrews 4:12 which in part states “...*the Word of God is quick...*,” or alive. The written word cannot be alive. This “Word” must be the living Word of God--Jesus Christ. Also, this verse says that the Word of God is a “...*discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*” How could this be the written word? The living Word...Jesus Christ...is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Finally, in Hebrews 4:14, we have absolute proof as follows:

- “*Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*” (Hebrews 4:14)

If one reads Scripture in context and reads all the Scripture on the subject, there should be no problem in reconciling any seeming contradiction.

Comments on 1 Corinthians 4:15

The final verse above to consider states, “*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.*” This verse seems to have the apostle Paul claiming that he is their spiritual father. However, we remember Jesus said in Matthew 23:9, “*And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.*” Now, since Paul is an inspired apostle, he could not say anything contrary to the teachings of Jesus.

Also, in Galatians 4:19, Paul appears to say he is a spiritual mother. This verse states, “*My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.*” We cannot believe that Paul thought he was spiritual father to

the Corinthians, then later tell the Galatians he was their spiritual mother. The answer to this dilemma is found in the verse before the one under consideration... 1 Corinthians 4:14, which states, *"I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you..."* The apostle Paul was using figurative language. He was the spiritual father to the Corinthians in the same way that one would say George Washington is the father of our country. No one in the United States seriously considers this statement to mean George Washington is their literal ancestor.

Summation of comments

Hopefully, the above explanation has proven through Scripture what the gospel is not. The gospel and gospel preaching is not used in any way by God to assist man to secure a place for the sinner in heaven. God is sovereign and all powerful. He is not hindered in any way by weak and sinful man. However, the gospel is most important for the born again child of God during this lifetime. The gospel makes conversion possible, offering the penitent sinner fellowship with Jesus and salvation during this life from the wicked world...or as Peter said in Acts 2:40, *"...Save yourselves from this untoward generation."* We know we cannot save ourselves for heaven.

Conclusion

If the above four verses are the most persuasive in the Bible which appear to take the position that the gospel is used by God to offer eternal salvation to the whole human race (and it is my sincere understanding these are the best on this subject)...then it must be obvious these verses teach us something altogether different. The voice of Jesus

Christ through the Holy Spirit, the living Word of God...and not the gospel ... calls to life (born again) the elect of God.

- John 5:25 *“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 6:63 *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”*

God, alone and unaided, gives spiritual life (being born again):

- John 3:8 *“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 everyone that is born of the Spirit.”* Man cannot control the wind...nor can man control the Spirit of God.

To those He chose before the foundation of the world:

- Ephesians 1:4-6 *“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: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved.”* In the above passage it states God makes us accepted in Himself, not that we accept God. No Bible verse says we accept Christ! Not even one! Where did this popular misconception originate from?

God performs this directly without man’s assistance.

- John 1:13 *“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

....through the Spirit, by the voice of the living Word of God....Jesus Christ.

- John 6:63 *“It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”*

The sovereign God of the universe, who created all things in the universe, is also sovereign regarding who He will have in heaven. The elect of God (Ephesians 1:4-6), whether an unborn baby, the mentally handicapped, those in remote parts of the world, or those who in rebellion reject the gospel, every elect child of God is safe as regards eternal salvation. This doctrine is predestination.

To better see God’s sovereignty and predestination, consider the following verse:

- Romans 9:15-16 *“For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on who I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on who I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”*

God has pre-determined the final eternal destination of His elect children. He will not lose even one. Even so, God’s born again children are responsible and held accountable by God in this life for their own actions. Through the providence of God, events may or may not be changed as a result of prayer. Many examples in Scripture prove this fact. *“...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* (James 5:16)

God has provided the gospel for conversion, to call his children to repent (Acts 3:19), in belief to confess Christ (Romans 10:9), and be baptized (Mark 16:16)... so as to enjoy the comfort of the Holy Spirit (Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Comforter in John 14:26) in fellowship with Jesus Christ through the Spirit. What a wonderful salvation for God's people while in this life!

Restated, in regeneration God gives His children a new nature called "*a new creature*" in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" In 2 Corinthians 1:22, this new nature, or "new creature," is referred to as follows: "*Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.*" This down payment (earnest) is referred to in Ephesians 1:14 as follows: "*Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession...*"

The gospel is for conversion and makes it possible for God's obedient children to be added to His church (Acts 2:41) to enjoy the "*earnest of our inheritance*" by experiencing a "little bit of heaven" (our inheritance) while still on earth, by being in fellowship with Jesus Christ (as Rev. 3:20-21), through the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

Hopefully this chapter has shown what the gospel is not, as well as, the purpose God actually intended for the gospel. The gospel and our religious practice is for conditional time "salvation." It brings to light, or makes manifest, what Christ has done for us, as stated in 2 Timothy 1:10, "*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.*"

Chapter XI For God so loved the World

This Bible verse, John 3:16, is misunderstood by most of God's people. It is generally taken as giving us the way in which we can be born again. They would say that God loves the entire human world, and if one will only believe that Jesus is the Christ (the eternal Son of God), invite Him into your heart, then this person will become born again. The purpose of this chapter is to look much deeper into this important Bible verse, and based on the actual grammar and Bible principles already established, determine the actual meaning.

We will consider John 3:14-18. These verses as they appear in the King James AV 1611 Bible are as follows:

- John 3:14 *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:"*
- John 3:15 *"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."*
- 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."*
- John 3:17 *"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."*
- John 3:18 *"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*

Note: The words above that are underlined, world and believe, are for emphasis.

The following consideration will primarily provide Bible based definitions for the words “world” and “believeth,” and will show which “*world*” obviously is under consideration in John 3:16. However, the expression “*whosoever believeth*” may not seem so straightforward at first. Even so, in light of the actual grammar, as well as the way in which the Bible uses “believeth” in a number of Bible verses, the meaning of this phrase will become clear.

World

Let’s first consider “world.” One must know which “world” is the object of God’s love. We know that in the in the 9th verse of the 17th chapter of John, Jesus prayed just before He was crucified: *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.”* This prayer clearly demonstrates that a world exists that God does not love. In fact, in the 17th chapter of John, “world” is mentioned 19 times, and refers to at least four different “worlds.” (as shown later, beginning on page 122) One should verify this fact for himself.

Further, consider the “world” mentioned in Luke 2:1. This verse states as follows: *“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.”* Does this verse refer to the whole human world? Of course not! It means the whole Roman world. However, many people make this mistake regarding John 3:16. In light of John 17:9, John 3:16 clearly has reference to the “elect world” which God chose before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1:4 states: *“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.” The elect world is the object of God’s love in John 3:16.

Now, let’s look closer at the “elect.” Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:2, *“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.”* “Foreknowledge” is also mentioned by Paul in Romans 8:29, *“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.”* Foreknowledge means God “knew” the elect before the world was created. God “knew” them in the same way a man “knows” his wife. God has an intimate love that He has had for His elect since before the foundation of the world, as in Ephesians 1:4.

Now, notice another comment by Jesus. In Matthew 7:22-23, Jesus states: *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* Jesus being God manifest in the flesh knew about these people. Jesus obviously means He never knew these people intimately. They were never the objects of His love (foreknowledge) from before the foundation of the world. God only loves the “elect world.”

Believeth

Next, the phrases *“whosoever believeth in him,” “believeth on him,”* as well as *“believeth not”* will now be considered. The main point to remember is that one’s belief that Jesus

is the Christ cannot be both the cause as well as the effect of eternal life. In the real world, we always consider if something is the cause of a problem (or occurrence), or if it is just the effect, symptom, or evidence that points us back to the cause of the problem.

Cause and effect has already been covered in detail in Chapter I. Even so, let's review a real world example of cause and effect. Imagine that an electric lamp does not work. The fact that the lamp does not work is the symptom, or effect, that points you back to the cause of the problem. The cause may be a burned out light bulb, not plugged into the socket, faulty wiring, popped circuit breaker, etc. You could not say that the lack of light is the cause of the problem.

“Believeth” (as “*whosoever believeth*”), based on the actual grammar, is interpreted “whosoever is in the state of believing.” Our belief is always given in the Bible as an evidence, or effect that has resulted from one being already born again as given in 1 John 5:1, John 5:24, Acts 13:48, John 10:26, Galatians 5:22-23, etc. Notice the reading of the above mentioned verses:

- 1 John 5:1 *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”*
- John 5:24 *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word (John 8:47), and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”*

- Acts 13:48 *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”*
- John 10:26 *“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”* (Jesus did not say if you will believe, you will become one of God’s sheep. He said the opposite.)
- Galatians 5:22-23 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*

The following is a review from previous chapters on being born again, (as stated by Jesus in John 3:3 *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,”*). The 8th verse of John 3 states *“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.”* No man can control where or when the wind will blow (which is the reason that Jesus gave us this example), or, similarly, where or when the Holy Spirit will act in giving spiritual life. In John 6:63, Jesus states: *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”*

Jesus also states in John 5:25: *“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.”* This verse refers to the actual voice of Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, as when Jesus called Lazarus from the grave in John 11:43. The words from Jesus, as repeated by man, do not lead one to become born again, rather, the voice of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit accomplishes this purpose. Man is not involved in this action in any way,

since the unregenerate man is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1) and hates God (Romans 8:7). Ephesians 2:1 states: *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”* The dead can do nothing for themselves. Only God can give spiritual life.

Another verse that shows God’s sovereignty in eternal salvation is John 6:44: *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”* This principle is repeated by Jesus in John 6:65: *“And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”* Jesus is the way, as: *“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* Those chosen by the Father (Ephesians 1:4) are given (not offered) eternal life by Jesus, as stated in John 17:2-3: *“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”* Notice the limitation (to whom Jesus will give eternal life) strongly expressed by Jesus in praying for *“as many as,”* which means not one more and not one less. Only those God the Father gave Jesus will be given eternal life, as in John 6:37-39: *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 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.”*

As stated before, belief in Christ is the evidence of spiritual life. Many people today say that belief in Christ is the cause of spiritual life. Something cannot be both the cause as well as the effect of an occurrence. The Bible always takes the

position that belief is the effect. This faith is a *"fruit"* of the Holy Spirit that dwells within them. (Galatians 5:22-23)

We will now consider the phrase *"believeth not"* in John 3:18. Refer to John 10:26, since Jesus was speaking to some unregenerate people. He stated: *"But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you."* In other words, they do not believe because they are not a child of God. They do not believe because they are not of His sheep. Someone not born again is totally unable to believe that Jesus is the Christ. The unregenerate cannot understand spiritual things, as stated by 1 Corinthians 2:14: *"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."* The unregenerate cannot hear spiritual things, as Jesus stated in John 8:47: *"He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."*

Purpose of the GOSPEL

Bible verses like Romans 10:13, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,"* are not referring to eternal salvation, but rather to the aspect of salvation that is available for God's children in this life resulting from obedience unto discipleship in the Lord's church. This salvation is from this wicked *"untoward generation,"* as in Acts 2:40. This salvation is in addition to eternal glory, as Paul stated in 2 Timothy 2:10: *"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."*

Conclusion

Rather than to teach how one is to be born again, these verses assure a child of God that his eternal salvation is secure. Based on the explanation above, John 3:14-18 could be rewritten so as to clearly show which world is the object of God's love. Further, a person that does believe that Jesus is the Christ is already a child of God. The phrases "*believeth in him*" or "*believeth on him*" could obviously be replaced with the phrase "a child of God." The phrase "*that believeth not,*" could be replaced with "is not a child of God," or "is not of His sheep."

John 3:14-18 could then be rewritten as follows:

- And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up on the cross of Calvary: That whosoever is a child of God should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the elect world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever is a child of God should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the elect world; but that the elect world through Him might be saved. He that is a child of God is not condemned: but he that is not a child of God is condemned already, because he is not of His sheep.

World Verses

C = Created world: H = Human world: NE= Non-Elect world:
E = Elect world

John 17:5 "*And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world^C was.*"

John 17:6 *"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world^H: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word."*

John 17:9 *"I pray for them: I pray not for the world^{NE}, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."*

John 17:11 *"And now I am no more in the world^H, but these are in the world^H, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."*

John 17:12 *"While I was with them in the world^H, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled."*

John 17:13 *"And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world^H, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."*

John 17:14 *"I have given them thy word; and the world^{NE} hath hated them, because they are not of the world^{NE}, even as I am not of the world^C."*

John 17:15 *"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world^H, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."*

John 17:16 *"They are not of the world^H, even as I am not of the world^C."*

John 17:18 *"As thou hast sent me into the world^H, even so have I also sent them into the world^H."*

John 17:21 *“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^E may believe that thou hast sent me.”*

John 17:23 *“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world^E may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”*

John 17:24 *“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world^C.”*

John 17:25 *“O righteous Father, the world^{NE} hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.”*

Chapter XII

God chose us to salvation for belief of the truth by the gospel

It has been suggested that 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 may give the strongest argument of any Scripture supporting Calvinist theology, and further, these verses supposedly refute the theology of a Primitive Baptist which has been presented above. Besides this, an argument can even be made that these verses favor Arminian theology. An effort will be made to see what position is correct.

To begin the study, we must first define again briefly the theology of these three groups. This was given in the Foreword.

1. Calvinists believe in total depravity so only a sovereign God can save. That election (Ephesians 1:4-6) is unconditional, and the atonement of Christ on the cross is limited to the elect only by irresistible grace. These elect of God will hear the gospel preached, they will be obedient unto discipleship, and will persevere in faith so none will be guilty of unbelief at the time of their death. Those who die as infants, or who are mentally impaired, are saved in a different way.
2. Arminians would say God's election is based on His foreseeing they would respond in a positive way to the gospel call; therefore, man's free will is the determining factor. God's grace is available to all humans, but this grace can be resisted. Most Arminians would say those saved by gospel preaching would be saved eternally only if they are disciples of Christ at the time of their

death. Those who die as infants, or who are mentally impaired, are saved in a different way.

3. Primitive Baptists believe a sovereign God unconditionally elects a people (limited atonement, or particular redemption...Ephesians 1:4-6) for eternal salvation. In Psalms 14:2-3, God sees the future in which no one will seek Him; therefore, all are saved in the same way...infant deaths, mentally impaired, etc. In John 3:8 Jesus compares being born again to the wind. No one can control either the action of the wind or the Spirit of God in giving spiritual life to the elect of God. Most heaven bound children of God never hear the gospel preached, many of those that do hear the gospel message will not be obedient unto discipleship, and some disciples of Christ will backslide and die in a state of rebellion. God's children will suffer in this lifetime for their sinful acts, but never eternal damnation in hell. The church is a hospital for sinners, and is not used by God to save people for heaven. The church is the place where God's people can be comforted, healed, and receive spiritual food through the preached word...so as to grow and mature spiritually. All of the elect of God will be born again by direct action of the Son of God through the Holy Spirit sometime between conception and death, and these will go to heaven after death. Jesus confirms this fact in John 5:25 and John 6:63. Primitive Baptists believe there are many who will suffer in the flames of hell for an eternity; however, by the grace of God alone, *"...a great multitude, which no man could number..."* (Revelation 7:9) will spend an eternity in heaven.

This chapter will not deal with the consequences God's people will suffer if they fail to obey the commandments

unto discipleship in the Lord's church. Neither will we deal with the many great blessings God's people will enjoy if they are obedient and take up their cross and follow Christ into His church. These are important subjects already considered in other chapters of this book, and in my book *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*. Also, there is available from other sources a considerable volume of excellent written material that deals with these important subjects.

We will now consider the above Bible verses that at first reading appear to only support the Calvinist system of theology, and see if after closer consideration they may be more compatible with Primitive Baptist beliefs, or even Arminian beliefs. Notice closely the reading of these two Bible verses as they appear in the AV 1611 King James Bible.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 *"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

From the beginning

As suggested by Elder Sam Bryant (pastor from Hoover, AL), the key to understanding Bible verse 2 Thessalonians 2:13 is in knowing the meaning of *"from the beginning."* This expression appears 23 times in the New Testament. It means "from the beginning" of the ministry of Jesus in 12 verses (M of J), "from the beginning" of the world (or creation) in 8 verses (C), and "from the beginning" of the period of the apostles in 3 verses (P of A). A Calvinist would say the phrase "from the beginning" as appears in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 means from before the foundation of

the world when God the Father chose the elect of God for eternal salvation (Ephesians 1:4-6), He also chose these same individuals (all of the elect) for "*belief of the truth*" (to hear the gospel during their lifetime and to be obedient to gospel commandments). This may be one possible meaning as the verse is written (if we ignore the rest of the Bible); however, not one of the 22 other verses mean from before the foundation of the world, and I do not believe that is the meaning intended for this verse. I hope to show it has reference to the period of the apostles.

Many other Bible verses reject the thought that "*belief of the truth*" was expected by God for all of the elect. For instance, some of God's children die very young, some have a mental affliction to prevent their understanding the gospel message, there are those who live in a remote part of the world and never hear the gospel preached, and then there are even some of God's regenerate children who hear the gospel preached, but because of worldly cares they are not obedient to the commandments and may even die in unbelief. At least, this is what a Primitive Baptist would argue.

But for now, let's consider "*from the beginning*" Bible verses: (C) = Creation (M of J) = Ministry of Jesus (P of A) = Period of Apostles

1. Matthew 19:8 "*He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but **from the beginning** it was not so.*" (C)
2. Mark 10:6 "*But **from the beginning** of the creation God made them male and female.*" (C)

3. Mark 13:19 *“For [in] those days shall be affliction, such as was not **from the beginning** of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.”* (C)
4. Luke 1:2 *“Even as they delivered them unto us, which **from the beginning** were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;”* (M of J)
5. John 6:64 *“But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew **from the beginning** who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.”* (M of J)
6. John 8:27 *“Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even [the same] that I said unto you **from the beginning.**”* (M of J)
7. John 8:44 *“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.”* (C)
8. John 15:27 *“And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me **from the beginning.**”* (M of J)
9. Acts 11:4-5 *“But Peter rehearsed [the matter] **from the beginning**, and expounded [it] by order unto them, saying, I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:”* (P of A)
10. Acts 15:18 *“Known unto God are all his works **from the beginning** of the world.”* (C)
11. Acts 26:5 *“Which knew me **from the beginning**, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.”* (P of A)
12. Ephesians 3:9 *“And to make all [men] see what [is] the fellowship of the mystery, which **from the beginning** of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:”* (C)

- 13.2 Thessalonians 2:13 *"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath **from the beginning** chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:"* (P of A in my opinion.)
- 14.2 Peter 3:4 *"And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as [they were] **from the beginning** of the creation."* (C)
- 15.1 John 1:1 *"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;"* (M of J)
- 16.1 John 2:7 *"Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had **from the beginning**. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard **from the beginning**."* (M of J)
- 17.1 John 2:13 *"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] **from the beginning**. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father."* (M of J)
- 18.1 John 2:14 *"I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] **from the beginning**. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."* (M of J)
- 19.1 John 2:24 *"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard **from the beginning**. If that which ye have heard **from the beginning** shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."* (M of J)
- 20.1 John 3:8 *"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth **from the beginning**. For this purpose the*

Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” (C)

21.1 John 3:11 *“For this is the message that ye heard **from the beginning**, that we should love one another.” (M of J)*

22.2 John 1:5 *“And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had **from the beginning**, that we love one another.” (M of J)*

23.2 John 1:6 *“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard **from the beginning**, ye should walk in it.” (M of J)*

Based on the above, it appears more likely that Paul is stating in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 that “from the beginning” when the Holy Spirit led Paul to enter Thessalonica (Acts 17:1) and preach the gospel, that God was pleased to have chosen to bless a number of His already regenerate children in Thessalonica. God had set these blessed individuals apart so as to establish a church by way of “*sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*”

After all, only those who have been born again have the ability to hear, understand or believe the gospel, as follows: John 8:47 *“He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear [them] not, because ye are not of God,”* 1 Corinthians 2:14 *“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.”* John 10:26 *“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”* Therefore, the preaching of the cross (gospel message) is not the power of God through “*sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*” for the unregenerate. For these it is only foolishness

as 1 Corinthians 1:18 states: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*

This shows that God has blessed the effort of God’s obedient children in Thessalonica to “press into the kingdom.” This occurrence is stated in Luke 16:16, *“The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it,”* by adding them to the church (church kingdom) as also noted by Peter in Acts 2:38-41, 47. To better understand the various “kingdoms” taught in Scripture, see Chapter XVI, “Three heavens and three kingdoms of Scripture,” beginning on page 180, and the kingdom verses page 195.

Primitive Baptists would say that the obedience of the child of God to the gospel unto discipleship in the Lord’s church yields a salvation that could be referred to as conditional time “salvation.” Conditional time “salvation” is a convenient label to describe gospel conversion unto discipleship in the Lord’s church for a salvation to be enjoyed (or later lost by rebellion against God) by the child of God during this lifetime. It is a salvation *“from this untoward generation”* referred to by Peter in Acts 2:40. This salvation is in addition to eternal glory, as stated by Paul in the following verse:

- 2 Timothy 2:10 *“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”*

Notice the construction of the above sentence: “may” let’s us know something is only a possibility, and the words “also” and “with” makes it clear that it is “in addition to.” Therefore, *“salvation in Christ Jesus”* mentioned above is in addition to eternal glory. All the elect of God will enjoy

eternal glory, including those who die as infants, have a mental affliction, live in a remote place and never hear the gospel, and even those of the regenerated elect who through sinful living, hear the gospel preached, but rebel in unbelief. Three verses later, in 2 Timothy 2:13, we see proof that God knew many of His regenerate children would be guilty of unbelief, as follows: *“If we believe not, [yet] he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.”* Another verse that says the same thing is Romans 3:3-4 *“For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar;”* These last two verses teach eternal security for God’s children.

To see many examples of God’s children who are heaven bound, but are guilty of unbelief, see pages 27-39 in my book *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* under the section “God’s children guilty of unbelief.”

This should reject the Calvinist understanding of the phrase *“belief of the truth”* in 2 Thessalonians 2:13. Many of God’s children who have faith (fruit of the Spirit...Galatians 5:22-23) rebel against God and are guilty of unbelief, and they may even suffer and die in this awful state. “Belief of the truth” in this verse means God’s children believing in the preached gospel and being obedient to gospel commandments unto discipleship in the Lord’s church.

Obtaining of the glory

Now let’s consider 2 Thessalonians 2:14. As Elder Harold Hunt (pastor from Maryville, TN) mentioned concerning this verse, first we need to understand more about *“glory.”* This verse states *“Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Exactly

what is that “*glory of our Lord Jesus Christ,*” and where and when do we as children of God obtain it? Is he talking about the glory of eternal heaven or is he talking about that glory with which God adorns the life of His obedient child right here in this world?

Elder Hunt states further, “Whatever this glory is, it is obtained by the saints. The various dictionaries define *obtain* as ‘to acquire by effort,’ or ‘to acquire by trying.’ If we make the glory under consideration to be the glory we will receive in eternity, it is hard to see how that fits either the Primitive Baptist point of view or that of the Calvinist.” That would support Arminian theology. He goes on to say, “On the other hand there is a sense in which Christ is glorified in the life of His obedient children in this time world, and that glory does come in connection with our *trying* and our *effort*.”

Elder Hunt gives proof of the above by the following Bible verses:

- John 15:8 “*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*”
- Galatians 1:24 “*And they glorified God in me.*”
- 1 Peter 4:14 “*If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy [are ye]; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*”
- 2 Corinthians 4:15 “*For all things [are] for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.*”
- Ephesians 1:12 “*That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*”

- Ephesians 3:21 *“Unto him [be] glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”*

As stated above, Elder Hunt observed that this *“glory of the Lord Jesus Christ”* the child of God receives is the result of their *effort*, their *trying*, to live in such manner as to reflect (1st) the sanctification of the spirit, and (2nd) their belief of the truth.”

Elder Hunt then states the following: “There is no text in the Bible that—at first reading—appears to support the Calvinist’s position more clearly than these two verses do; but if the Calvinist insists on putting the salvation under consideration on an eternal footing, he will serve the Arminian cause much more than he does his own. This glory—this salvation—is obtained by *effort*, by *trying*. Primitive Baptists call this salvation conditional time “salvation.”

The Calvinist is entirely correct in insisting that salvation for heaven is wholly and solely of grace. It is not based on man’s effort, as Titus 3:5 states: *“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;”* In this the Calvinist far surpasses the Arminian. No consistent Calvinist can claim that we gain eternal heaven by our own effort—by our own trying. Notice 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 again:

- 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 *“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

We must keep it always in mind that this salvation, this glory, is obtained by effort, by trying. Remember Arminian theology? The Arminian would ignore Psalms 14:2-3 (*"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."*), and Romans 3:10-18 (which essentially says the same thing, but in more detail). The Arminian would say God looked down through time to see who would respond in a positive way to the gospel message, and based on man's free will, God elects these individuals *"to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:"* The Arminian would say the 14th verse above explains that God did this by way of the gospel. The Arminian in this case is also forgetting 1 Corinthians 1:18 *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* The gospel is of no benefit to the unregenerate, or *"them that perish."*

Now, let's return to Primitive Baptist theology. With regard to the expression that *"God hath....chosen you to salvation,"* Paul introduces the concept expressed by Peter in Acts 2:47, in which case Peter preached to these early Christians admonishing them to repent and be baptized. In the 47th verse, it states *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* Notice that God adds these obedient children of God (heaven bound already) to the church such as should be saved (this "church" or "gospel" salvation is in addition to eternal glory as the above quoted 2 Timothy 2:10 clearly states). It is not only the obedient child of God requesting baptism and the agreement of the church congregation to receive the

individual, but also God makes the decision to add “*such as should be saved*” to the church. After all, God “*is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*” (Hebrews 4:12) For reasons satisfactory to God alone, all of God’s children who will be in heaven after death are not blessed to be added to His church while alive in this time world.

Elder Harold Hunt made some good observations on the above subject. He stated, “The text tells us that God has *chosen* these people. That is, perhaps, the easiest part of the text. If God blesses somebody with gospel benefits, you can be sure that it pleased God to bless them. Everything that God does, He does according to His will, according to His purpose or choice; He does not do anything by accident.” Elder Hunt gave as a reference the experience of King Nebuchadnezzar in the Old Testament as follows:

- Daniel 4:34-35 *“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion [is] an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom [is] from generation to generation: 35 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?”*

Unless we are willing to conclude that every lukewarm Christian is bound for eternal damnation, we have to admit that many truly born again children of God are less interested in studying their Bibles. They are less interested in knowing the truth it contains, and in applying those principles to their lives. Luke warmness characterizes all

they do. Even in “time salvation,” God blesses, because He *chooses* to bless. Conditions are *connected* with “time salvation,” but that does not mean God is obligated to bless, simply because we met *conditions*. God is never indebted to anybody. Every blessing we receive, whether in time or eternity, springs from the sovereign good pleasure of God. Consider the following: “*But rather seek ye the kingdom of god; and all these things will be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*” (Luke 12:31-32). But then these blessings can be lost. Notice the possibility of loosing conditional time “salvation.” Revelation 3:14-22 is addressed to the Laodicean church, and to lukewarm Christians that “*art neither cold nor hot,*” and so the text says “*I will spue thee out of my mouth.*” This means church benefits may be lost; thus, the loss of conditional time “salvation,” not the loss of eternal salvation.

Conclusion

My conclusion is that the two Bible verses in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 do not support Calvinist theology. Further, I believe these verses do fully support Primitive Baptist theology. Arminian theology was also briefly rejected. Many Bible verses could be offered to reject Arminian theology, as was done at the Synod of Dort in 1619 by Protestant theologians from several European countries. Under Section II, Theology Problems, see Chapter IV, The Five Points of Calvinism, beginning on page 29 for a brief history concerning the Synod of Dort. This will give the origin of the labels Arminianism and Calvinism. In the next chapter, Chapter V, Baptist Five Doctrines of Grace, beginning on page 34, will explain the difference in theology between the Five Points of Calvinism

and the Baptist Five Doctrines of Grace (Primitive Baptist beliefs). While these two doctrines are very similar, the difference has a big affect on the meaning of a number of Bible verses and parables.

Chapter XIII Can a child of God commit sin?

The following will be thoughts on the very interesting Bible verse which states as follows:

- 1 John 3:9 *“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”*

A proper interpretation 1 John 3:9 makes it possible to understand how God could say in Romans 9:11-13, *“(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;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”* God hated Esau even before he was physically born!

First, let’s consider more closely what 1 John 3:9 is actually saying. This verse is clearly stating a born again person cannot sin... because his seed remaineth in him. I believe the seed that generates spiritual life is Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, and not the written word (Bible). Consider the following:

- 1 Peter 1:23 *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”*

Word verses

Now, let us examine the word “word.” There are three kinds of “word” used in the Bible...there is the written word, the spoken word, and the living Word. Jesus Christ is the living Word of God. If we can prove that “word” in 1 Peter 1:23

refers to Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, and not to the spoken word, or written word, then we will be able to correctly understand 1 Peter 1:23 and 1 John 3:9.

The fact that Jesus Christ is the Word being referred to in the following two verses is rarely disputed:

- 1 John 5:7 *“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”*
- John 1:1-3, 14 *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made....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.”*

The following should also be obvious:

- Luke 1:2 *“Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the Word.”*

One cannot be an eyewitness of the written or spoken word, but can be an eyewitness of the living Word. The word *eyewitness* in the original Greek language was used to only mean a direct vision of deity...such as in Greek mythology; a character was an eyewitness that claims to have seen Zeus. Jesus was deity. Also, in this context, *“ministers of the Word”*...would mean “body servants” of the living Word...Jesus.

It is Jesus Christ, the living Word of God that calls (the effectual call) an elect child of God to spiritual life through

the Holy Spirit. The Bible and gospel preaching are not involved as 1 Corinthians 1:18 makes clear, as follows: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*

Consider the following Bible verses in which it is Jesus that gives spiritual life. Jesus Christ is the incorruptible “seed” that generates spiritual life:

- Galatians 3:16 *“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”*
- Galatians 3:19 *“Wherefore then [serveth] the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.”*
- John 5:25 *“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 6:63 *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, [they] are spirit, and [they] are life.”*

Purpose of the Gospel

Let’s consider the born again person who lives and dies without ever hearing the gospel preached. In order to see the effect of regeneration on this person, and how God deals with him, consider God dwells within the person and puts His laws in the person’s mind:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16 *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”*

- Hebrews 8:10 *"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."*

Notice the way in which God judges:

- Romans 2:12-15 *"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 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: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)"*

The extent of God's judgment:

- Luke 12:47-48 *"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."*

We next remember the warfare between man's carnal nature and his born again spiritual nature:

- Romans 7:14-17 *"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."*

The above outlines how God deals with His born again children who have never heard the gospel preached. At regeneration, God's Holy Spirit dwells within them (1 Corinthians 3:16), His Laws have been written in their heart and mind (Hebrews 8:10), then God allows *"their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another"* (Romans 2:12-15) so that through chastening based on the understanding they have (Luke 12:47-48), God has begun a process of sanctification through the Holy Spirit even though these people have never heard the gospel preached or even know God's name. Regeneration makes a big difference in the life of a child of God even without the gospel ever being heard by the individual.

Regeneration (eternal salvation) by God for the elect of God (Ephesians 1:4-6) is not a process. It does not involve the gospel or require the obedience of the child of God. Regeneration is something that is instantaneous and occurs between conception and death. It is referred to as a translation:

- Colossians 1:13 *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."*

Regeneration is referred to as a quickening:

- Ephesians 2:1 *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."*

After regeneration, God's children have the ability to hear, understand and believe things of God. Since God's children are human and not robots, they have the ability to either be obedient to God's commandments (written in their heart at regeneration and in some cases also verbally by gospel preaching, if one is so blessed) or to rebel and be

disobedient. While disobedience will be chastened by God as in Hebrews 10:26-31 and Hebrews 12:5-11, the child of God will still be in heaven after death.

To say God, who *“is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12), cannot make His presence known to a regenerate person just because he has never been exposed to the gospel, is insane. God does not need the help of any human to achieve His desire in saving the elect of God for eternity as well as a timely deliverance for the obedient. If we were involved in eternal salvation, then some of the nicest people would spend eternity in hell, and some of the worst and most evil “politically correct” people would be in heaven.

Two natures or two minds

Now, to review again some of the above, once a child of God has been given spiritual life, Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit dwells within the mind of this child of God, as follows:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16 *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”*

In affect, the child of God has two minds, or two natures. Consider the following verses:

- Romans 7:15-17 *“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that [it is] good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”*

In the above verse, Paul is saying *“then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”* There is an “I” that does not sin.

The born again person has two minds, or two natures, that are referred to as follows:

- Galatians 5:16-17 *"[This] I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."*

The born again person has a pure sinless mind (in addition to his evil carnal mind). The pure sinless mind is referred to in the following Bible verse:

- 2 Peter 3:1 *"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in [both] which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:"*

Notice the clear description of these two minds, or two natures, described as 1) works of the flesh (carnal) and 2) fruit of the Spirit (spiritual) in the following verses:

1. Galatians 5:19-21 *"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are [these]; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told [you] in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."*
2. Galatians 5:22-23 *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."*

The Spirit and the flesh are referring to the spiritual nature or mind that is indwelt by God, and the carnal mind, or nature, is referred to as flesh. Every human receives at birth the carnal mind as a result of the original sin of Adam. A

child of God has both natures, or both minds, and they are contrary one to the other.

Chastisement

When we sin, it is our carnal nature that sins. If we do not bring the carnal mind, or nature, under control...then God will surely chasten us. This chastening only affects our physical life (not eternal life), but it can be so severe as to cost us our physical life. Notice the following Bible verses:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which [temple] ye are.”*
- Hebrews 10:26-31 *“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance [belongeth] unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. [it is] a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*
- Hebrews 12:5-11 *“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint*

when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected [us], and we gave [them] reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened [us] after their own pleasure; but he for [our] profit, that [we] might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Summation

Now, let's return to Jacob and Esau, and the fact that God loved Jacob and hated Esau even before these twin boys were physically born. Remember that our bodies are the temple of God, because Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit dwells within us. While Jacob was a sinful human, guilty of more sins than we are told about concerning Esau; even so, God loved the born again nature, or pure mind, of Jacob that could not sin. Esau was not chosen before the foundation of the world as was Jacob, so Esau only had a sinful carnal mind. This should now make it clearer. Remember the following Bible verse?

- Ephesians 1:4 “*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:”*

Now it should be clear that God only loves the “pure mind” (2 Peter 3:1 as quoted above) He gives us at regeneration. Since God dwells within this pure mind (1 Corinthians 3:16), it cannot sin as stated in 1 John 3:9, *“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”* This seed that remains in the child of God is Jesus Christ, the incorruptible seed (Galatians 3:16, 19, 1 Peter 1:23) that gives spiritual life, as clearly stated in John 5:25 and John 6:63, all of which have already been quoted above.

Hopefully the reader now understands that while the pure mind of a child of God received in regeneration cannot sin, he still has the old carnal mind that hates God and loves sin. We must keep under our bodies (carnal mind or flesh nature), and bring it into subjection so as to not become a castaway by losing the fellowship of disciples and of our Lord Jesus, and as a result, to suffer chastisement from God. Paul stated this exactly in 1 Corinthians 9:27, *“But I keep under my body, and bring [it] into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”* Paul did not worry about being cast into a flaming eternal hell, but rather to lose fellowship with his Lord and Saviour, and to lose the joy of his salvation, as David prayed in Psalms 51:9-12, *“Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me [with thy] free spirit.”* David had lost the joy of his salvation because of his sins associated with Bathsheba.

Section IV

Problem Parables

This section will consider some “problem” parables. As with problem Bible verses, after a closer study, some parables may teach something altogether different than what one at first thought. The particular doctrine a person believes will change the meaning of parables. Even so, the Bible can prove which interpretation is correct, and by doing this, also show which doctrine is Scriptural and which is not.

The parables that follow may not have been a problem for some of our readers, because they may not have known that the meaning they assumed to be correct was actually in conflict with other Scripture. For this reason, the study of Bible doctrine is so important. As Elder Cayce mentioned in Chapter XV, on page 177, “*We only ask our readers to consider the thoughts we have given. If they are not in harmony with the Bible, do not receive them.*” If one does not agree with the interpretation given, please contact me with Scripture references that support another meaning. I am sincere in this request. I need and want constructive criticism.

Chapter XIV The Parable of the Sower

This chapter will consider the familiar parable Jesus taught concerning the parable of the sower, as given in Matthew 13:3-23. In my opinion this parable is not fully understood by many Bible believers. Based on Bible doctrine as given in previous chapters of this book, hopefully the lesson taught by the parable of the sower will now be much easier to understand. In this chapter, I will quote a number of points as suggested by Elder Harold Hunt, Maryville, TN.

In the parable of the sower, the subject is hearing and understanding the *“word of the kingdom,* (Matthew 13:19)...the preached gospel. The misunderstanding by many concerning this parable is they consider the *“seed sown in good ground”* (Matthew 13:8) to be the only example in the parable representing children of God. Arguments will be made in this chapter to hopefully prove that the seed sown *“by the wayside,” “into stony places,”* and *“among the thorns”* are also examples of God’s children who, after hearing the preached gospel, for various reasons, do not bear fruit. They are regenerate, but they are not obedient unto discipleship in the Lord’s church so as to “bear fruit.” They do not enjoy the great blessing in this life from gospel “salvation.” This is a salvation from *“this untoward generation,”* as Peter declared in Acts 2:40. They are still God’s people, but because of their rebellion, they may suffer chastisement in this life unless they become obedient to God’s commandments. God chastens His rebellious children as noted in Hebrews 10:26-31 and Hebrews 12:5-11.

This parable does not have to do with hearing the “*holy calling*” (2 Timothy 1:9, “*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,*”) that is given by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit to the elect of God in regeneration. Jesus Himself describes this “*holy calling*” in the following Bible verses:

- John 5:25 “*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.*” The dead cannot help in this process...they are dead!
- John 6:63 “*It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*”

In the parable of the sower, the hearing can be hindered by stony ground, thorns, etc. The spiritual life giving “*holy calling*” by Jesus Christ, the Seed of God that produces regeneration, cannot be hindered or resisted. This incorruptible Seed of God that always produces spiritual life unto eternal salvation is described as following:

- 1 Peter 1:23 “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*” This “*word of God*” is the second person of the Holy Trinity as given in 1 John 5:7, “*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*” Jesus is referred to as the Seed of God in Galatians 3:16: “*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*” Physical life comes from the corruptible seed of man, while eternal life comes from the incorruptible Seed of God, Jesus Christ.

Concerning how one is born again, Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:8, *“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.”* Jesus compares regeneration to the wind which blows where it listeth...wherever it pleases. Stony ground, thorns, etc. have no effect regarding regeneration. However, there are many things that can prevent the gospel from bearing fruit.

In the parable of the sower, all four examples *“received seed.”* The unregenerate *“natural man”* cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God according to 1 Corinthians 2:14, *“for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* As Elder Harold Hunt has said, the key to understanding the text is in making a distinction between that *fruit* that comes from being born again, and the *fruit* that comes from hearing, understanding, and obedience to the preached gospel. For gospel fruit, consider the following:

- Colossians 1:5-6 *“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.”*

The preached gospel does not always bear fruit in the lives of its hearers. Some truly born again people reject the truth of the gospel, and so do not bear gospel fruit. In contrast to this, the Spirit of God dwelling within a born again person (1 Corinthians 3:16: *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”*) always bears fruit...whether one ever hears the preached gospel or not. In some it bears much fruit, and in others it bears less

fruit; however, the Spirit of God in a born again person's heart always bears fruit, as described in the following Bible verses:

- Galatians 5:22-23 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*

The above fruit from the Spirit of God that is most clearly recognized is compassion for our fellow man. That is the one identifying mark of the children of God in the final judgment as described in Matthew 25:31-46. In the final judgment what the Lord says to those on His right hand He says to all His children. A person may reject the truth of the gospel, but if he manifests no compassion for his fellow man, there is no reason to believe he is a child of God.

With the above principles in mind, and the foundation of the Bible doctrine established in previous chapters, we can now begin our study.

The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-23)

The “parable of the sower” teaches us some interesting principles about how God's children receive the gospel message. After giving us the parable in Matthew 13:3-8, Jesus then in the 11th verse answers His disciples' question as to why He spoke in parables: *“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”* Jesus is rebuking God's children within the nation of Israel who have drifted away from God and His laws, as had happened many other times in their history. This could also happen to us today, and I believe it actually has. Even though Jesus has explained the parable, many today have misunderstood the true lesson being taught.

Jesus says further: *“And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear (the unregenerate cannot hear, as John 8:47), and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing (only dull, not devoid or dead), and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”*

This saying must refer to God's rebellious “born again” children who are not yet fully converted, and is similar to the case of Peter in Luke 22:31-32: *“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”* Peter was born again (as proven by Matthew 16:16-17 compared to 1 John 5:1), but had not yet been fully converted.

The unregenerate are spiritually dead. Ephesians 2:1 states: *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:”* The dead can hear nothing, so parables would be unnecessary.

Finally, Jesus explains the parable to the disciples, beginning at Matthew 13:18:

- Matthew 13:18 *“Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.”*
- Matthew 13:19 *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in*

his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.”

- Matthew 13:20 *“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;”*
- Matthew 13:21 *“Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”*
- Matthew 13:22 *“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”*
- Matthew 13:23 *“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”*

Notice that in each case, whether *“by the way side,”* *“into stony places,”* or *“among the thorns,”* Jesus always starts by saying they hear the word. Therefore, we know these individuals are children of God because of what Jesus told some who were unregenerate, as follows:

- John 8:44 *“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.”* Then a few verses later Jesus said the following:
- John 8:47 *“He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”*

Jesus would not need to use parables with these people who are “*not of God.*” Jesus tells them they have no ability to hear.

Next, notice in Matthew 13:19, that the one who received seed “*by the wayside*” had the seed sown in the heart. We remember 2 Corinthians 3:3: “*Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.*” The unregenerate have a heart of stone, which would make sowing seed impossible, but the fleshy heart of a born again person would be able to receive the sown seed.

Furthermore, in Matthew 13:20, the one that received the seed “*into stony places*” received it “*with joy.*” Only God’s children can receive God’s Word with joy. Joy is one of the nine fruits listed as fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. Obviously, Matthew 13:20 is also referring to a child of God.

In Matthew 13:22 the seed was received among the thorns, and this is described as one who hears the word (only a born again person can hear spiritual things...John 8:47), but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches chokes the word so the person becomes unfruitful.

Finally, those that received the “*seed into the good ground,*” are those of God’s children who hear the Word, understand it, and bear various amounts of fruit. God expects all of His children that are blessed to hear the gospel message to bear fruit as disciples. Even so, many are rebellious and refuse to become disciples of Christ.

Regardless, God deals with His rebellious children according to their understanding, as shown in Luke 12:47-

48: *“And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”* God is merciful and patient, but He expects His children to obey His commandments and bear fruit as disciples of Christ.

Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-27)

The story of the “rich young ruler” as recorded in the gospel of Mark also teaches us some interesting lessons that relate to the parable of the sower overlooked by many. These verses are as follows:

- Mark 10:17 *“And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”* (Eternal life is the subject under consideration.)
- Mark 10:18 *“And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.”*
- Mark 10:19 *“Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.”*
- Mark 10:20 *“And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.”*

- Mark 10:21 *“Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.”*
- Mark 10:22 *“And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”*
- Mark 10:23 *“And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!”*
- Mark 10:24 *“And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!”*
- Mark 10:25 *“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”*
- Mark 10:26 *“And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?”*
- Mark 10:27 *“And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.”*

First, notice that the rich young ruler wanted to know how to obtain eternal life, as he made clear in Mark 10:17. However, notice the remark by Jesus in Mark 10:25: *“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”* The disciples then ask the question *“Who then can be saved?”*

In Mark 10:27 we have the answer: *“And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.”* This verse should make it very clear that it is impossible for man to do anything to obtain eternal salvation. God is totally sovereign in eternal salvation.

Even so, another most important point is made in Mark 10:21: *“Then Jesus beholding him loved him.”* It appears that this rich young man is already a child of God. One who seeks God does so because he is already a child of God as in 1 John 4:19: *“We love Him because He first loved us.”* Christ knows the children chosen by the Father from before the foundation of the world, including the rich young ruler. If Jesus loves a person, this love goes back to before the foundation of the world...Ephesians 1:4, *“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:”*...and extends on into the future into heaven itself at the end of time.

Further, we remember that Jesus has power over all flesh to save eternally any that God the Father has given Him to save. This point is clearly stated in the prayer Jesus prayed before His crucifixion in John 17:2, *“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”* As many as means not one more, and not one less.

Since the rich young ruler is already a child of God, Jesus is using this account to explain the duty of a child of God, as well as the impossibility of the non-elect to obtain eternal salvation by their own efforts. The non-elect do not love God or want to know His ways. Notice how the unregenerate are referred to in Job 21:14-15: *“Therefore*

they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" The unregenerate hate God as given in Romans 8:7, *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."*

Now, let's return to the rich young ruler. Because the rich young ruler has too much trust in riches to become fruitful as a disciple of Christ, Jesus says he must first sell all that he has, give to poor, and then follow Him as a disciple. These actions are necessary if he is to be fruitful. In this parable, after the gospel seed is sown, being fruitful is the result Jesus desires.

Also, this rich young man fits the case in the parable of the sower which *"received seed among the thorns,"* as stated in Matthew 13:22. This verse states: *"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."* He is a child of God who is unfruitful as a disciple of Christ.

The rich young ruler went away grieved in Mark 10:22. An unregenerate person would not react in this way (to go away grieved). If he was unregenerate, he would have reacted as in Acts 7:54: *"When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth."* The rich young ruler must have suffered later for his disobedience; however, I believe he is in heaven today. God's laws are commandments for his children in this life. Disobedience will be punished in this life as given in Hebrews 10:26-31 and 12:5:11.

Conclusion

God commands His children to take up their cross and follow Christ, which is not just an invitation, but is a command we should gladly follow. God expects His children to bare fruit as disciples by being witnesses. To be a disciple of Christ is to enjoy the comfort of the Holy Spirit in fellowship with Jesus Christ in His church. In the letter to the Laodicean Church, Revelation 3:14-22, Jesus warns this church that because they are lukewarm, and are *“neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”* This is loss of fellowship with Christ in His church. Jesus then says in verses 3:20-21, *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”* There are many great blessings available to God’s children that bear fruit as a witness for Christ in His church.

Our religious practice is most important. One’s “salvation” during this lifetime can then be lost sometime later if the gospel seeds have been sown *“by the wayside,” “into stony places,”* or *“among the thorns.”* Our disobedience to the gospel commandments are sinful acts of rebellion against God...even so, eternal salvation can never be lost. When God quickens (Ephesians 2:1 *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;”*) the elect of God to spiritual life, this eternal life will last forever, even though the body is subject to physical suffering and physical death. Our obedience unto salvation in the Lord’s church offers us the abundant life, as described by Jesus in John 10:10, *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”*

Chapter XV The Ten Virgins

The parable of the ten virgins given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 25:1-13 is really not easily understood. This chapter will compare the opinion of two Primitive Baptist elders who differ in their explanation of the parable with the hope of gaining a little more insight into its meaning. First, we will go to Elder W. A. Chastain, proprietor and editor of *Message of Peace*, Springville, Illinois. Elder Chastain first wrote an editorial on this parable November 15, 1922, and then reprinted it by request in the September 1938 issue of his publication. He began this editorial by stating the following: *“Many of our dear brethren will differ with me on my understanding of the parable, but we are not writing for argument, but that we may arrive at the truth.”* (All quotes are in italic letters.)

Next, Elder C. H. Cayce (1871-1945), Thornton, Arkansas, also acknowledged the problem faced by some in understanding this parable. As owner and editor of his publication *The Primitive Baptist*, in an editorial dated November 10, 1914, he observed, *“There is a difference among the brethren concerning the teaching of this parable, and we cannot understand why brethren insist on having differences discussed, when those differences are not vital.”* He goes on to say one who has been rather harsh in promoting a particular position on this parable should exercise a little more patience.

The above statements made by two elders is mentioned before we begin this study in order to alert the reader that careful consideration will be necessary if one is to gain a

proper understanding...and even then we may fall short of our goal. We will need to heed Biblical advice as given in 2 Timothy 2:15, and “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” In order to understand what God intended for us to receive through this parable, it must be “rightly divided.”

Before we begin, it seems appropriate to quote this parable exactly as it appears in the King James Bible. Consider very closely the following, and notice especially the portions underlined:

- Matthew 25:1-13 *“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2 And five of them were wise, and five [were] foolish. 3 They that [were] foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, [Not so]; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. 13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”*

Elder W. A. Chastain's position

We will begin with the views expressed by Elder Chastain. He stated that he believes *“the whole use and application of the parable is to show that Christ is coming the second time, and at a time when we may not be watching for Him. It teaches we should pray privately and publicly, and attend to the ordinances of the Lord’s house...that our hearts, and thoughts, and affections, conversations, and actions should all be to the glory of God, and that we should be ready for the Bridegroom’s coming. That He will come is certain, but we neither know the day nor the hour.”*

Elder Chastain summarizes the key points as follows:

- 1. I do not think it has reference to disobedient Christians, for I think it refers to the end of the world, or to the second coming of Christ.*
- 2. The foolish virgins are told, ‘I know you not,’ and found the door shut. There was no mercy shown them, while to disobedient Christians, mercy is shown.*
- 3. So far as a profession is concerned, they all came with their lamps; they all slumbered and slept; the difference seems to be in the oil---some had oil and some had none.*
- 4. The foolish thought they could buy oil, or salvation, which shows their vain, natural ideas of salvation.*

The above approach to this parable seems almost logical, but then I have some second thoughts because all ten are referred to as virgins. I cannot imagine in what sense an unregenerate, wicked, natural man could ever be referred to by God as being a foolish virgin. Also, I am not sure the oil represents the oil of grace. Further, I do not agree with the notion that the five wise virgins were eternally saved because of implied actions they took in being “wise.” They

made sure they had oil (as supplied by Christ), trimmed their lamps, and suggested to the foolish virgins in verse 9 that they should go to them that sell and buy oil for themselves. You cannot buy grace, it is unmerited favor. That interpretation appears to me to be an eternal salvation by works. Eternal salvation is not by works of righteousness we perform according to Titus 3:5-6 *“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; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;”* More study of Elder Chastain’s editorial is needed if we are to understand what he actually means. Let’s now consider Elder Chastain’s expanded arguments in an effort to see how he justifies these assumptions.

In the preceding Chapter (Matthew 24), mention is made of the second coming of Christ, the joys of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked, and a good description given of the last judgement, and I believe it best and right to view this parable as looking forward to that.

Some might ask, were not all ten, virgins? Yes, it is true, but they were virgins for quantity, and this number has reference to the Jewish forms of worship. It took ten persons to form a congregation and enjoy the blessings of service under the Jewish forms. The blessings of the Bridegroom, which consisted of seven blessings, was not said except in the presence of ten persons, etc., and the whole alludes to the solemnities of a marriage among the Jews.

The design of the parable is to show what will be the standing of professors of Christianity at the second

coming of Christ; to show the real Christians from the nominal professor; to show just how far a person may go in profession only, and yet be shut out of heaven. It shows, too, the certainty and suddenness of Christ's coming and the necessity of being ready for it, and that sometimes before this or at that time, then shall the church or kingdom be like ten virgins.

Elder Chastain's warning sounds too much like the effectiveness of our eternal salvation is conditioned upon our successful efforts and work to insure that as disciples we have sufficiently persevered in faith until death.

The Bridegroom evidently is Christ. He is represented as their Husband, King, and Priest, and provides for them rich food, and clothes them in a robe of righteousness, and nourishes and cherishes them as His own flesh, and holds sweet communion with them, and makes them heirs to all He has. He saw them and knew them in all the purposes and decrees of God, and loved them, and asked them of His Father to be given Him as His spouse and bride---and the Father did give them to Him in the everlasting covenant.

I believe the lamps represent the external profession of religion. Now, both the wise and foolish virgins had lamps. The lamps are distinct from the oil of grace, and the vessel of the heart in which grace is, and is that into which the oil is put, and burns so as to become visible; and must be daily trimmed and filled with oil as fresh supplies from Christ. Unless this is true, the profession may go out and be dropped and lost, as some of these lamps.

If he is saying the daily trimming and filling of the oil of grace Christ gives us in regeneration (and Christ replenishes it?) is a work we must perform as wise virgins, then we are assisting Christ in making, maintaining, and securing our eternal salvation. This notion is doctrinal error according to Titus 3:5-6, Ephesians 2:8-9, and 2 Timothy 1:9 that states: "*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.*" We also remember Galatians 3:1, 3, "*O foolish Galatians, ... Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*" Our work in the flesh makes nothing perfect! Increasingly, I do not believe the oil in this parable represents the oil of grace.

These virgins all took up a profession of Christ and His gospel; some upon the experience of the grace of God, and others without an experience and without considering the nature and importance and consequences of a profession. So they all went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Some loving, desiring and longing to see Him; the others only in the way of a visible profession of religion and outward service. "A lamp without oil will not burn long; so a profession without grace will not last long," says Brother J. H. Oliphant.

The wise virgins were not especially wise in the things of the world, nor in their own conceits, which rather is often the case with natural men and empty professors, but they are such as are wise unto salvation, realizing that salvation is all of the Lord. They not only know how a sinner is saved, but they feel the need of being saved and are sensible of their sins. They appeal to Christ for salvation, and trust in Him and commit their souls into His care. They look to Him for pardon, and to His blood

for atonement, and to His fullness for daily supplies. They know Him, prize Him and value Him as their Savior, rejoice in Him and give Him all the glory. They are wise in the profession of religion and take it up aright---upon the principles of grace---and hold fast without wavering, and walk and live as becometh saints.

“And five were foolish.” Not in the things of life, nor in the judgments of others, nor in the things of the world; but they were so in the business of salvation, as all are who build their hopes upon their own works, or on birth privileges, or on carnal descent from good men, or on a religious education. They were such as know not themselves and the impurity of their hearts and natures. They know not Christ and His salvation, and are altogether strangers to grace and spiritual experience; and consequently foolish in their profession, which they take up without the work of the Holy Spirit of God; and in a little while wholly drop their profession or wholly lean upon it.

“Took no oil with them.” By oil, is evidently meant the Spirit of God Himself, who is the oil of gladness and the anointing which teacheth all things, and the regenerating and sanctifying grace of the Spirit. It may have respect to the precious oil or ointment poured on Aaron’s head, which was emblematical of the grace of God, which was poured forth without measure on Christ. The foolish virgins, though they took up the lamp of profession, yet were unconcerned for the oil of grace to maintain their lamps. They were ignorant of the nature and use of true grace. They saw no use for it and made light of it, therefore, neglected it.

But the wise saw the need of grace, and felt it in their hearts. They saw it as a principle of light, life and love, and as a holiness wrought in a man's heart by the Spirit of God. This oil of grace was not naturally in them, nor was it obtained by the power of their free will; but was freely given unto them and powerfully wrought in them.

"They slumbered and slept." The foolish virgins were in a dead, lifeless and sleepy frame of the spirit. They were indifferent about the things of Christ and His kingdom, and were unconcerned about the omission of duty, or commission of sin, and entirely easy in their sad state. The wise virgins are children of the day, and though they sleep, their hearts wake, and they sleep with grace in their hearts. This cannot be said of the foolish virgins or formal professor.

At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh." This proves to us the certainty of His coming to judge the quick and the dead. "Go ye out to meet Him." Both wise and foolish virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.

The foolish virgins betrayed their ignorance of grace and salvation in asking it of the wise ones. They did not seem to realize that salvation came through Christ alone. They thus betrayed that they were in the same darkness that Nicodemus was in when he asked if a man could enter his mother's womb a second time and be born again. Men of the world may, I believe, see the grace of God in others and be convinced of it, and acknowledge it, as these foolish virgins did. Such persons may also be desirous of this grace of God; not because of the intrinsic nature and worth of it, but from a mere principle of selfishness. It seems, too, that the

world would go anywhere for it rather than to Christ. The foolish virgins here betray their folly by coming to the saints for it. Grace comes only through God, and is never to be had from men nor from the angels. The reason for their asking was that their lamps had gone out, which would indicate the inefficiency of a mere profession of external religion to meet the Bridegroom. This mere profession had now become useless and unprofitable, because they had not the oil of grace---they had only the profession of it.

The above refers to Matthew 25:8 in which the lamps that once had been lit, had now gone out. If the lamps of the foolish virgins had once been lit, then they had already been born again to receive the "oil of grace." How could the supply of oil run out and they lose eternal salvation? Romans 8:38-39 states, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Again, the oil must not be the oil of grace.

"The wise answered, No." Not from a narrow spirit or a careless one, but from indignation at the honor put upon them and the slight put upon God and Christ and the Spirit of grace. The wise knew that all grace comes from God and could not bear such application to them for it. But go rather to them that sell, and buy. "Yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price."

The foolish virgins did really and actually go out to buy grace. They did not go to Christ, for they would have met Him, but they went elsewhere. They thought they could obtain grace by their own efforts. Though they went to

buy, they could not buy, and their efforts were in vain. While they were trying to buy, the Bridegroom came---in person---to judge the world and to raise the dead; and they that were ready, went in. Not ready by mere profession, but ready in that they had the wedding garments on, washed in the blood of Christ and having the oil of grace in their hearts---a spiritual knowledge of Christ, faith in Him and an interest in Him. Such are ready for death and eternity. They shall go in with Him and be forever happy.

“The door was shut.” Afterwards came the other five virgins. They were foolish, and virgins in name only. They were unprepared ones. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. “The door was shut.” They said, “Lord, Lord, open unto us.” But the Bridegroom answered, “I know you not.” He knew their voice and knew them as creatures, but as to His covenant of grace, He did not know them in that. He knew they were only graceless professors, who had trusted to and depended upon their own righteousness and their external profession of religion. They were none of His people whom He foreknew, or that were embraced in His choice or election; hence, He says, “I know you not.” He knew them not in His covenant of grace.

The door being shut, the state of the wise will be everlastingly settled, their communion with Christ will be free and uninterrupted, and that forever; no enemy of their soul can follow them to give them any disturbance, and they shall never return to a state of sin, sorrow, nor death; but shall forever be happy with God and the Lamb.

The doctrinal position of Elder Chastain seems to be consistent with Reformed Theology in which God's children supposedly will persevere in faith as disciples until death. This position teaches God's children may backslide, but before death, God will insure they are restored to discipleship. If this does not occur, a Calvinist would say this backslidden person was a false professor, a foolish virgin, "who had trusted to and depended upon their own righteousness and their external profession of religion." (See above) Elder Chastain takes the position that "heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people." This is only true if one understands that it is God that makes the preparation in both the place and the people. If Elder Chastain means we had best be prepared by way of our good works in discipleship if we want heaven to be our home, then he is taking an unscriptural position consistent with Reformed Theology.

Elder C. H. Cayce's position

A key question to resolve in this parable is exactly when did the *Bridegroom come*? In a book entitled *The Writings of S. A. Paine*, page 88, additional light is shed concerning the question as to the time when the Bridegroom mentioned in this parable came (or will come) to the wedding. Elder Paine (1874-1910) was acknowledged to be one of the ablest preachers the Primitive Baptists have had in recent years. He stated the following on the marriage of the Bridegroom:

While John was teaching and baptizing in Jordan, making people ready, he was then fulfilling the prophecy concerning him. Malachi 3:1, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye

delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts." Who is this but the Savior coming to John on the bank Of Jordan? And in coming to him He comes to, or confronts those whom John has made ready. He calls this, coming to His temple. Here is where the marriage occurs. We hear John exclaiming: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Here is the midnight cry: "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him." Those who were ready, who were prepared in heart, and had obeyed the teachings of John, were admitted to the marriage. Hence Christ suddenly comes to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant "whom ye delight in." This was fulfilled in Jesus' approach to John and those whom he had baptized, here the union of bride and Bridegroom was effected, and the church, there began in its incipiency--- began to be builded. That is just how near the kingdom was, as expressed by John, when he says: "The kingdom is at hand." (Matthew 3:2)

Elder Cayce is in agreement with the position that Elder S. A. Paine presented above. He believes the time the Bridegroom comes to the wedding in this parable is referring to the first appearance of Christ, and not to the second coming as believed by Elder Chastain. Further, Elder Cayce believes the method of worship...law service versus gospel service...that God would accept from His people determines which of His regenerate children were wise virgins and which were foolish.

While the article by Elder Cayce does not summarize his argument similar to the four points made initially by Elder Chastain, it is possible to obtain his position on these four points based on what he wrote. I will take the liberty of doing just that for the purpose of providing an initial

overview of how Elder Cayce will approach this parable. The reader will then know what to look for, and as a result, may be better prepared to compare the two interpretations.

If Elder Cayce had given the four points as did Elder Chastain, they would be paraphrased as follows:

1. The kingdom of God is likened unto ten virgins, five were wise and five were foolish, but all ten were virgins, or God's regenerate children among the Jews. The wise believe the gospel message and follow Christ into the gospel kingdom (church). The foolish virgins (God's regenerate Jews) rejected the gospel message and clung to the old law service.
2. The foolish virgins who were told "I know you not," and found the door shut, were being told that God would no longer respect and accept the law worship service, since the law service had ended.
3. The oil in the parable represents the form of worship God would accept from His people, whether it is the law service or the gospel service.
4. The purchase of oil mentioned has to do with worship, not grace (regeneration), and is explained in Isaiah 55:1-2 "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for [that which is] not bread? and your labour for [that which] satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye [that which is] good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*"

Elder C. H. Cayce wrote the following:

The word "then," the first word in the chapter, is used here in the sense of therefore. It denotes a reason; for

this reason "shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins." The kingdom of heaven is likened unto ten virgins, not likened unto five virgins. Five of the virgins were wise and five of them were foolish; and the kingdom of heaven was likened unto all of the ten. They all slumbered and slept---both the wise and the foolish. At midnight the cry was made, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." Midnight denotes a time of darkness, and all were slumbering. So, at the closing out of the law dispensation, at the time of the coming of Christ into the world, it was a time of darkness---gross darkness---and all were slumbering.

The foolish said, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out"---or, "our lamps are going out." Their lamps had been burning once; but they are going out now. There was a light in law worship and law service in the law dispensation; but as the law dispensation is going out, the light of that worship and service is also going out. The light was only a borrowed light, it is true; but it was needed then. In the night time, we need the light of the moon, which is a borrowed light; but when the day has come, and the sun has risen, the light of the moon is not needed, and goes out. The day of gospel worship has now come; the sun of gospel light is shining; the light of law worship is no longer needed, and it has gone out.

"But the wise said, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." We do not presume that the wise virgins would tell the foolish ones to go and buy that which was necessary for them to have in order that they have a home in heaven. The grace of God in the eternal salvation of poor sinners is not for sale. If it is, we cannot

imagine who keeps a supply on hand for sale. But there is something for sale without money and without price. See Isaiah 55:1-2 "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for [that which is] not bread? and your labour for [that which] satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye [that which is] good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." This language was addressed to Israel, the Lord's children. There was something they could buy; but they could not buy redemption or regeneration. Again, Revelation 3:18: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and [that] the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." This language was for the church at Laodicea. They were the people of God. There was something for them to buy; and they could buy it in no other way than in rendering the service to the Lord which He required of them, and in being diligent in the same. The Lord does not require law worship or service; but He requires gospel worship and service. The light of law worship and law service has gone out.

"And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage; and the door was shut." The readiness here, we think, is the engaging in gospel worship and service. The door is shut on law worship and law service. That is closed out. It is not admitted in the gospel kingdom or church of Christ. The Lord has closed the door against that, and no man has the power or authority to open the door and admit law worship and law service into the church.

“Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” He does not recognize law service. The light of that service is gone out. He now requires gospel service. Law worship and law service is not acceptable to Him. Those who engage in that kind of service are not recognized by Him. He will not receive them or their service. If the church engages in it, the candlestick will be removed.

“Watch therefore.” For the reason that all this is true, we should watch. How necessary it is that we watch, and not engage in law worship and law service. If we do engage in such, we may be assured of the fact that the Lord will not recognize it, and that He will not receive us into the manifestation of His presence here. “For ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.” He comes in the manifestation of His Spirit often; we know not when He will thus come. We should be diligent in rendering the service He requires, so we may be ready for Him when He does thus come. “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Revelation 22:12) He comes quickly, or often.

The final and great lesson taught in the parable is that we should watch. It teaches the necessity of doing this. The reason for doing this is that the law dispensation is at an end, and the light of the law worship and law service was going out. Hence, the great lesson taught is the closing out of the law dispensation, law worship and service, and the ushering in of the gospel dispensation, gospel worship and service.

This finishes the explanation by Elder C. H. Cayce on the parable of the ten virgins. He then states, *“Now, in closing, we only ask our readers to consider the thoughts we have given. If they are not in harmony with the Bible, do not receive them. We do not want, and neither will we have, controversy on the matter. We give our views only because so many have requested us to do so.”* That is wonderful advice.

Conclusion

When the marriage of the Bridegroom takes place is the most important question determining which interpretation is Scriptural. Did it take place at the first appearance of Jesus Christ, or will it take place at the second coming of Christ? My personal belief is that it took place at the first appearance of Christ as explained by Elder C. H. Cayce and Elder S. A. Paine.

As noted at the beginning under the heading of Elder Chastain’s position, and a number of times later, I have mentioned points that do not appear Scriptural to me. I know Elder Chastain must have been a wonderful soldier of the Lord that was sincere in what he believed; however, I feel he embraced Reformed Theology as expressed in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith closer than most Primitive Baptists today will accept.

Hopefully, I have not been unfair by questioning Elder Chastain’s work. He is not alive now to defend himself, and for this I apologize. However, from reading a number of old copies of the *Messenger of Peace*, Elder Chastain has included a number of Calvinist articles. For example, in the January 1938 issue, he included an article from *The Presbyterian*, entitled “John Calvin in 1937.” A sub heading

states, "An appreciation and Tribute by Professor W. Harvey-Jellie, Presbyterian College, Montreal, Canada. This was not the only Calvinist article he published, even though there were many excellent articles that were doctrinally sound as seen by most Primitive Baptists.

First, I noted the parable refers to all ten as being virgins. This being the case, I cannot imagine in what sense an unregenerate, wicked, natural man could ever be referred to by God as being a foolish virgin. It is logical for God to refer to a born again person as a virgin in the sense that he has a pure mind, as Peter noted 2 Peter 3:1, "*This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in [both] which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.*" This spiritual mind cannot sin according to 1 John 3:9, "*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*" We know our carnal mind received at birth from Adam does sin. The warfare of our two minds is mentioned in Romans 7:14-25. The unregenerate person only has an evil carnal mind.

Further, I am uncomfortable with the notion that the position Elder Chastain is taking has the five wise virgins being eternally saved because of implied actions they took in being "wise." They made sure they had oil (as supplied by Christ), trimmed their lamps, and suggested to the foolish virgins in verse 9 that they should go to them that sell and buy oil for themselves. That sounds too much like works a child of God performs for salvation from this untoward generation (Acts 2:40) so as to join the Lord's church. One cannot buy grace for eternal salvation. Eternal salvation is not by works of righteousness we perform according to Titus 3:5-6 "*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;*"

To repeat my comments on page 177, the doctrinal position of Elder Chastain seems to be consistent with Reformed Theology in which God's children supposedly will persevere in faith as disciples until death. They may backslide, but before death, God will insure they are restored to discipleship. If this does not occur, a Calvinist would say this backslidden person was a false professor, a foolish virgin, "who had trusted to and depended upon their own righteousness and their external profession of religion." (Page 170) Elder Chastain takes the position that "heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people." (Page 170) This implies we had best be prepared (our good works) if we want heaven to be our home. I would say no to that. Our preparation for heaven was by the blood of Christ alone. He paid it all!

While I favor the explanation given by Elder Cayce over that which was given by Elder Chastain, it is left to the reader to study each article, and decide for himself which of these two (or another) is more logical, Scriptural, and God honoring. I believe most Primitive Baptists will favor the interpretation of this parable as that given us by Elder C. H. Cayce. His explanation in affect warns us of the need to study Bible doctrine so as to not let the legalism of the law service creep into the church, because if it does, Christ may remove the candlestick. This would mean a loss of the blessings of the church in this lifetime, but not a loss of our eternal salvation. The warning to the Laodicean Church in Revelation 3:14-22 is a good example.

I pray that this study has been of some benefit to God's people, and will bring them closer to a knowledge of the truth, and the comfort of better understanding the eternal security of God's sovereign grace.

Chapter XVI

Three heavens and three kingdoms of Scripture

Although not a parable, this interesting chapter will consider the possibility that there are actually three different “heavens” taught in Scripture. I chose this subject after reading a booklet published in 1956 by Elder A. E. Richards (formally from the West Texas prairie country) entitled *Why I Am A Primitive Baptist*. Next, an effort will be made to show there are three aspects of kingdom taught in Scripture (kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven, and kingdom of His dear Son). This subject came from a sermon by Elder Sonny Pyles, Graham, Texas, entitled *Three Essential Facts*. An effort will be made so show that the three kingdoms correspond exactly to the three heavens, and that an aspect of salvation is connected to each of the three.

Three heavens

I believe most Christians would say the first “heaven” is within the earth’s atmosphere, the second “heaven” would be outer space where we have planets and stars, and the third “heaven” is the eternal paradise of God. In Gill’s commentary, after mentioning the third “heaven,” he refers to “the airy and starry heavens.”

There are Primitive Baptists that believe there is a spiritual application. My dictionary gives one definition of heaven as “the abode of God.” We hope to prove there is a spiritual application in which the child of God after regeneration is called the temple of God for the first “heaven” (as noted in 1 Corinthians 3:16), and the church would then be the second “heaven.” In addition to the eternal heaven, or paradise, God has also taken up residence in both the first “heaven,”

and the second “heaven,” which should justify the use of the non-Biblical label of “heaven” in these cases.

We know “kingdom” is mentioned many times in the New Testament. Three aspects of this “kingdom” tie in with the above mentioned three “heavens.” There is some degree of salvation connected to each of the three “heavens” and three “kingdoms.” By definition a “kingdom” is a territory ruled by a king. Jesus Christ is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15), and He is present in each of these heavenly abodes, or kingdoms. “Kingdoms” will be dealt with next.

Elder Richards introduces the subject of three heavens by stating the following:

*I know that when Paul used the term “**third heaven**,” he recognized the existence of the first and the second heaven. And this leads me to this question, “**what are the first and second heavens?**” Are we going to forget about them, or are we going to examine these things and thus, by harmonizing the Scriptures, come to a realization of the truth?*

Before we see how Elder Richards deals with this subject, we should first quote the following Bible verses.

- 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 *“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”*

We know this man Paul referred to was himself, based on his comments a few verses later, as follows:

- 2 Corinthians 12:7 *“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”*

First Heaven

In an effort to find a Biblical answer to the possibility there are three different “heavens” taught in Scripture, Elder Richards begins with two more questions:

*We read about the “**first resurrection**” and the “**second death**,” and these lead us to ask another question or two. **What about the “first death” and the “second resurrection?”** All of these are pretty well connected in with heaven, and hell. Unless we know the meaning of these expressions, we cannot be expected to know very much about the truth of the Bible.*

Let’s see the Scripture Elder Richards is referring to, as follows:

- Revelation 20:6 *“Blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the **first resurrection**: on such the **second death** hath no power...”*
- Revelation 20:14 *“And **death** and hell were cast into the **lake of fire**. This is the **second death**.”*

Elder Richards then continues by offering a solution to some of these questions, with the following:

Let’s see if we cannot study this a little closer and get a clear and beautiful picture of the whole matter. When the

*first man (Adam) violated God's law, he died. And of course, this was **the first death...all mankind died with Adam in this first death.***

We have good Bible verses to make the point that the sin of Adam brought death to the whole human race:

- Romans 5:12 *"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:**"*
- Romans 5:17 *"For if by **one man's offence death reigned** by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of **the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.**"*

By establishing what the "first death" means, we can now see that whatever overcame this first death must be the "first resurrection." The first man Adam brought death, so the "second Adam," the Lord Jesus Christ, brought a new life, or "spiritual life" (being born again), by way of the first resurrection.

Elder Richards continues:

*Jesus says "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25), and of course when Christ arose from the grave following His crucifixion, death, and burial, **that was the first resurrection.** And all those who have a part in the first resurrection, then the second death hath no power over them. (Revelation 20:6 says exactly that, as quoted above.) When Christ shed His blood on the cross and then was resurrected, all those for whom that blood was shed had part in that (first) resurrection. If Christ died for you, then He was also raised for you. In John 5:25 we read,*

- *“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.”*

*The “dead” of this text are those who were in the **first death**, and those who “live” are those who have part in the **first resurrection**.*

To be resurrected is to be elevated, to be lifted up to a higher place, or higher order or standing. And this resurrection puts people into a new life (or spiritual life). This is the first “heaven” in which he is placed. We sometime refer to it as the spiritual kingdom...this is the place of light a person is translated out of darkness into.

- Colossians 1:13 *“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated [us] into the kingdom of his dear Son:”*

This heaven knows no denominational bounds, no race, no creed or color. This is the body spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “by one spirit are we all baptized into one body.” This is the Holy Spirit baptism. You get the first heaven by the precious blood of Christ being shed for you, and it being sprinkled upon your heart; by His free grace, which is unmerited on your part.

Every person who lives on earth, from the first man until the last one to ever be born of woman, who has had or will have his heart tendered by the grace of God, becomes a member of this body....enters into this “heaven.” He might not have ever been taught about Jesus Christ, and he might not know anything about the apostle’s doctrine; in fact he may be worshipping a golden calf or a frozen pumpkin, but if he is one of the

beneficiaries of the blood of Christ, he is a member of the Kingdom of God, in what we term the spiritual phase (spiritual life) for the lack of a better word....this is the first "heaven." That inner spirit of man, one born of God, is just as pure and holy as God Himself, and does not sin.

Elder Richards has shown us the first "heaven" into which an elect child of God is translated. This new life is called spiritual life (regeneration). Think of this new nature, or new mind, as if it was computer software. We are born with a sinful carnal software mind we inherited from Adam. In regeneration, God loads a new software package into our brain (the fleshly computer hardware). This new spiritual life we receive in regeneration (new nature or new mind), is one that is elevated into a totally pure and sinless state. This new nature, or mind, cannot commit sin, and it dwells in the presence of God Himself!!! God has written His laws into this sin-free mind, and even though no gospel message has ever been heard, this child of God shows evidence of regeneration through the fruit he bares in his life. The child of God now has the ability to understand spiritual things, unlike the unregenerate natural man.

If all the above can be proven by Scripture, then we may be justified in labeling this new spiritual life where God abides the first "heaven." Consider the following Bible verses that I believe do prove this point:

- 1 John 3:9 *"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."*
- Romans 7:15-17 *"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I*

do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that [it is] good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” There is an “I” that cannot sin, even though our carnal mind does sin.

- 1 Corinthians 3:16 *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”*
- Hebrews 8:10 *“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:”*
- Galatians 5:22-23 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*
- 1 Corinthians 2:14 *“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.”*

While the Bible does not call it the first “heaven,” one may say it surely must be somewhere between earth and heaven! God’s children feel they are from another world, and are strangers in this earth, as follows:

- Hebrews 11:13 *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of [them], and embraced [them], and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”*

To finish our discussion on the first heaven, Elder Richards further explains the extent to which this new spiritual life in Christ Jesus has been elevated.

*Romans 8:2 states, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." He is no more under the law of sin and death. The **second death** has no power over him or her. That person is now under the law of the Spirit of life.*

Second Heaven

Elder Richards now continues with an explanation on what he calls the second "heaven." He states the following:

We now come to a discussion of the "second heaven." This is a "new plateau of life." The second heaven is what we refer to as the church here in the world, the visible kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every child of God is under commandment to obey the law of Christ and to keep His Word. It is conditional on our part whether or not we enter this heaven. In Luke 16:16 we read, "The law and the prophets [were] until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." The only way a person can get into this kingdom is by pressing into it. Jesus once told a man "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matthew 19:17) The life we get by keeping the commandments is in the church, and we begin to live it as soon as we enter (by baptism).

Let's pause and consider the benefits of the church, being labeled here the second "heaven." Peter preached to some of God's people shortly after the day of Pentecost, and told them of the following "salvation:"

- Acts2:28-41 *"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. 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. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [unto them] about three thousand souls.”

We know we cannot save ourselves for eternal salvation, so this salvation must be something available for God’s obedient children who have been converted to the truth in this lifetime--a “now” salvation. We notice Peter mentions more on this subject later in his First Epistle, as follows:

- 1 Peter 3:20-21 *“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 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:”*

The salvation available from baptism is compared to the salvation of Noah and his family by the floodwaters. The floodwaters drowned the sinful violent people that could have brought physical harm as well as sinful temptation to lead Noah and his family to the broad way of destruction instead of the strait and narrow way that leads to life and peace in fellowship with God. Noah’s family was saved from that “untoward generation” before the flood. The church offers us this salvation today, if we “press” into the kingdom (Luke 16:16), or this second “heaven,” for a now salvation from today’s untoward generation (Acts 2:40).

Elder Richards now continues his discussion:

We read in Revelation 12:1-9, where there appeared a great wonder in heaven (verse 1), that old serpent called the Devil and Satan was cast out into the earth (verse 9). Of course this is figurative language, but we all know, if we know anything about the truth of God, that Satan has never been in heaven and immortal glory, or paradise, the third heaven, for no sin of any kind is allowed there. The "heaven" mentioned in these verses is surely something else (and not the third heaven, or paradise). God's justice and holiness guards the portals of glory against anything evil, and certainly the things mentioned as happening in this twelfth chapter of Revelation could not ever take place in that celestial home above.

But it is different in the church here on earth, or in the second "heaven" (sometimes called the kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven). The guard and the protection of this heaven is placed with men, and men sometimes make mistakes. We read in the second chapter of Revelation of a church that made a mistake. And God told that church "repent or I will remove the candlestick." (Revelation 2:5)

Local bodies sometimes go wrong to the extent they lose their identities, or in other words, God removes the candlestick, or takes their light away from them. Sometimes God's people are deceived and Satan appears to them in the form of "a wonder," or "an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). But they can repent and cast Satan out of the church, or cast him out of "heaven" (second heaven).

Satan is ever lurking to get in, many times he goes to the church with you, and if you are not careful he will go

right into the church with you and “his tail will cast you to the earth.” Satan is wroth with the Lord’s people and he is making war against them. He will do, and is doing everything he can to destroy the church, and he knows the best way to do that is from within. So, if permitted, he will go in and take the topmost seat. It is a perpetual job to keep him and his angels cast out.

We hear much said about the strait and narrow way, and also about the broad way (Matthew 7:13-14). Both of these paths are open to the child of God. One of them leads to the church, and a life of Christian devotion, and the other leads to a misspent life. If you take the broad way, Satan will cast you to the earth, and you will miss the joys and happiness of a life in (fellowship with) Christ, and in His service.

This road to life is hard to find because Satan will camouflage the entrance...he will try to hide the true beauties of this way. He will erect huge signs, bearing false literature, to the so called beauties in the broad way. He makes it as difficult as he can for you to find the way of life, and then once you do find it, he tries every conceivable way to lead you astray, or cast you to earth.

Luke 12:32 says, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Only a very few of God’s people are blessed to experience gospel conversion by entering His church in this life. Only God decides if one or more of today’s Christian denominations are actually His church. God may remove the candlestick from any church so as to make it no longer God’s church, as He warned the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:5.

Third Heaven

Elder Richards now considers the third heaven:

Who is it that will enter this heaven? How do they get there? How many will be there? We hear a lot said about the “judgement day,” and this is supposed to be at the final consummation of time, when people will enter into life eternal, according to the way they pass the judgement.

Well, Primitive Baptists believe in a final judgment day, but we will take it like it is taught in the Bible, rather than the way so many people erroneously describe it. I think we have a pretty good description of the “judgement day” in the 20th chapter of Revelation. Let me give you this in my words and then you turn and read it and see if this is not what it teaches.

There is to be a judging that takes place, and John who was allowed to see this in a special vision saw it this way: the dead small and great were delivered up. And before the judgement throne there was the Lamb’s Book of Life, and also the books (in the plural). In the Lamb’s Book of Life are written the names of all those the Father gave the Son. All of them will be kept by the blood of the Lamb (Colossians 3:3 and John 10:28-30) and none of them is lost. But those who are not found in the Book of Life will be judged out of the books according to their works.

Any person who is judged according to his own works, will certainly be condemned, and it so states in Revelation 20:12-15. All whose name was not written in the Book of Life were judged according to their own works, and were cast into the lake of fire.

Also, we learn here (Revelation 20:14) what the second death is. It says, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

John in his holy vision saw the people in the third heaven singing praises unto the Lamb for redemption out of every nation, kindred, people and tongue...an innumerable host that no man could number. This is stated in Scripture as follows:

- *Revelation 7:9 "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;"*

The third heaven is the eternal heaven, or paradise. This is where God's children will spend eternity at the end of time.

Summation of Thoughts

The first "heaven" is the "new" heart or mind of a born again child of God. Two good Bible verses, one of which was quoted above, prove that God has taken up residence in the child of God so as to justify calling this the first "heaven." Consider again the following:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16 *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"*
- 2 Corinthians 13:5 *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"*

These born again children of God have been raised by God (first resurrection) to life in Christ:

- Revelation 20:6 *“Blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power...”*

Those children of God who died with Adam (first death) at the dawn of time were included by God in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and are beneficiaries of His blood. This first resurrection that raises us from death in Adam into divine life is not only called a “translation” as in Colossians 1:13, as quoted on page 184, it is also called a quickening, as follows:

- Ephesians 2:1 *“And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins;”*

This first resurrection is also referred to as the new birth, or regeneration, as follows:

- Titus 3:5-7 *“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; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

The above verses should make it very clear that man cannot assist God in the first resurrection, or this first “heaven,” and it occurs at a time of God’s own choosing. This new spiritual life (regeneration) takes place sometime between conception and death.

The elect of God are brought into this first “heaven” by the sovereign work and grace of God. It does not involve any religious denominational practice or any effort by man. This salvation includes all of God’s elect children...those who have died before physical birth or died at a very young age,

those who are mentally impaired, as well as all others. The gospel message is not involved...it is by the voice of the Son of God (John 5:25 and John 6:63). As Revelation 7:9 describes, this includes *“a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.”*

As Elder Richards explains it, the second “heaven” is the local church (not brick and mortar, but the people), the place of rest for the faithful Christians who attempt to obey the commandments, and who worship *“in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:23-24) We know we can call this place heaven, because God also abides in the church, as follows:

- 1 Peter 2:5 *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”*
- Matthew 18:20 *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”*

Only a few of God’s people are blessed to hear the gospel preached, and are then obedient unto **conversion** and discipleship, by entering into this strait and narrow way that leads to abundant life in Christ Jesus. Luke 12:32 says, *“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* But those who do enter live an abundant life, or as Jesus said in John 10:10, *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have [it] more abundantly.”* It is a life of inner peace and comfort in fellowship with Christ and His people.

As already noted and clearly stated by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, the third “heaven” is paradise itself, in the presence of God for eternity. This second resurrection

takes place when the Lord returns at the end of time, and His children, whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, are raised up to paradise in glorified bodies so as to spend eternity with the Lord.

To review again, there are three heavens for an elect child of God to experience. Regeneration provides the first heaven. Conversion unto discipleship into the Lord's church offers God's obedient children the second heaven, if they are so fortunate as to hear the gospel preached, and if they obey the commandments (this can be later lost by sinful living). Finally, at the end of time, all of God's children will enjoy the third heaven in glorified bodies.

Regeneration, conversion, and glorification are the means God employs for a child of God to enjoy some degree of salvation in each of the three "heavens."

Three Kingdoms

This portion of the chapter will explore the meaning of verses that contain the expressions "kingdom of God," "kingdom of heaven," or "kingdom of His dear Son." These phrases were dealt with as the third essential fact taught in the sermon by Elder Sonny Pyles entitled *Three Essential Facts*. The first two essential facts were covered in Chapter I and Chapter II. As you read this concerning the three kingdoms, please notice the similarity of each kingdom to the three heavens previously studied. I believe they are essentially the same thing, and some degree of salvation is connected with each of the three heavens and three kingdoms.

As Elder Pyles stated, if one assumes that in every case these "kingdom" expressions have reference to the eternal

heaven, then this assumption will lead to endless confusion. However, it is also wrong to assume that in every case they have reference to the Lord's church. He stated that the Bible uses these expressions in several different senses. An attempt will be made to deal with three senses that the Bible refers to when using the word "kingdom."

To begin the study, and better appreciate the problem, let's compare a number of different Bible verses that appear at first to contradict each other. First, let's notice the following two Bible verses:

- Luke 17:20 *"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:"*
- 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."*

Further explanation is needed regarding the kingdom of God that comes without observation, and the kingdom of God that can only be seen if one is born again.

Now let's compare two other verses, as follows:

- Colossians 1:13 *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:"*
- Luke 16:16 *"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."*

Obviously the kingdom into which one is translated is somewhat different than the kingdom into which you must press. We remember the Bible verse concerning Enoch, as follows:

- Hebrews 11:5 *“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”*

Enoch did not have to perform any action when God translated him into heaven. In the same way, the person being translated into the kingdom of His dear Son is passive, and does no work such as *“pressing”* into this kingdom. However, Luke 16:16 refers to the kingdom of God being preached, and *“every man presseth into it.”* The obedient child of God must press against the world, the flesh and the devil. Obviously, these two verses (Colossians 1:13 and Luke 16:16) are not referring to exactly the same thing. We will explain later what these two “kingdoms” actually are.

Finally, consider two more aspects of the kingdom that seem to be at odds with each other:

- Matthew 11:12 *“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”*
- John 18:36 *“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”*

Notice that in Matthew 11:12 quoted above, the kingdom of heaven can suffer violence...or can be abused by the world. History is filled with examples of God's church and its members being persecuted. However, when Pilate asked Jesus in John 18:33 "*Art thou the King of the Jews?*" Jesus stated in John 18:36 (quoted above) that if His kingdom were of this world, then His servants would fight. Obviously the kingdom that can suffer violence in this world is not the same aspect of the kingdom that Jesus told Pilate was "*not of this world.*"

As Elder Sonny Pyles explains further, if you try to compare these kingdom verses side by side, they will never make sense. The above examples should make this point clear. He suggested the following analogy to gain a better understanding. Consider a Texan is walking down a street in Paris, France. If someone approaching him would ask if he was from North America, he could answer yes. If another person would ask if he was from the United States, he could also answer yes. Finally, if a third person would ask if he was from Texas, he could again answer yes. In each geographic location, the smaller is contained in the larger, so he is truthful in answering yes to each question. This principle can also apply to the various kingdom verses.

Kingdom of God = Kingdom of heaven

The terms "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" are two names for the same thing. These expressions are used interchangeably in the gospels. The mother country of this kingdom is heaven, and God is the King. To prove this fact, consider the following parallel verses in Matthew and Mark:

- Matthew 4:12, 17 "*Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;..... From*

that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

- Mark 1:14 *"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."*

Further, both terms are used together in two succeeding verses:

- Matthew 19:23-24 *"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."*

Regenerate Elect of God (first heaven)

First, we will deal with a very large group of people in this present world who are the elect of God, as described below: (In the analogy, this is the United States.)

- Ephesians 1:4 *"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:"*

These elect individuals will be given spiritual life by regeneration as described below:

- Titus 3:5 *"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;"*

These individuals have been given spiritual life:

- Ephesians 2:1 *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”*

All of the above actions are performed by God alone, without any effort being performed by the individuals involved, since the dead can do nothing for themselves. You might say these individuals have been translated into the kingdom of His dear Son, as follows:

- Colossians 1:13 *“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”*

The translation of the child of God comes without observation, as Jesus stated. This kingdom is within the regenerate child of God.

- Luke 17:20-21 *“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: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”*

The Pharisees were expecting that when the Messiah came, He would establish a political kingdom in which the Jews would overthrow all their enemies. Jesus is explaining that the kingdom God would establish at His coming would be one you could not see physically, but rather would be located in the hearts of His children. These are spiritual things only a child of God could understand. Furthermore, the Pharisees Jesus was speaking to in Luke 17:20 must have been unregenerate. In this state these Pharisees cannot hear spiritual things:

- John 8:47 *“He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”*

The unregenerate cannot understand spiritual things:

- I Corinthians 2:14 *“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.”*

The unregenerate cannot believe:

- John 10:26-28 *“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”*

In this condition, they cannot see, or observe, the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven. To the unregenerate human world, the Lord's church and preaching of the cross is only foolishness:

- I Corinthians 1:18 *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*

Further, Jesus says this kingdom of God is within you; therefore, it cannot be seen by human eyes. Consider the following verse that states the Spirit of God dwells within the regenerate child of God whose body is called a temple:

- 1Corinthians 3:16-17 *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall*

God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

The unregenerate human world could never see the kingdom of God described above concerning regenerate children of God. The kingdom of God is within them as is also stated above in Luke 17:21, “*Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*” A salvation or deliverance is enjoyed by the born again child of God, even though they may have never heard the gospel message.

- 2 Timothy 1:9 “*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...*”

This holy calling is the voice of the Son of God as stated in John 5:25, “*...the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.*” This calling is unto regeneration. This kingdom is sometimes called the invisible church.

The Lord’s Church (second heaven)

Next, we will deal with the smallest group of people, the Lord’s church. The church consists of God’s born again children who, through their obedience to gospel commands, are disciples of Christ. (In the analogy, being a disciple of Christ is likened to being a citizen of Texas.)

The Lord’s church is referred to as the kingdom in many Bible verses. The Lord’s church is the smallest kingdom group, and is referred to as only a “*little flock*,” as the following:

- Luke 12:32 *“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”*

God's born again children must press into this kingdom actively, as follows:

- Luke 16:16 *“The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.”*

John the Baptist proclaimed this kingdom, as follows:

- Matthew 3:1-2 *“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* At hand means this church kingdom is soon to be established. It does not mean the eternal heaven, or some kingdom that will be established at the second coming of Christ thousands of years in the future.

Jesus preached this same message:

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

To demonstrate that the church and the kingdom of heaven as given above are one and the same, notice that Jesus refers to both as if they are the same. Consider these verses:

- Matthew 16:18-19 *“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. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in*

heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

The Lord’s church is the kingdom of heaven that is persecuted, or suffers violence, as follows:

- *Matthew 11:12 “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”*

In order for a person to see the kingdom of God, or that aspect which is the Lord’s church, then this person must already be born again. Jesus confirms this fact to Nicodemus as follows:

- *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.”*

In this state of possessing spiritual life, the children of God, if they are ever blessed to hear the gospel preached, are now able to see the much smaller aspect of the kingdom of God that is the Lord’s church. After hearing the gospel, they may or may not choose to press into the Kingdom of God:

- *Luke 16:16 “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.”*

For children of God to “press into the kingdom of God,” or church, they must repent of their sins:

- *Acts 3:19 “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;”*

They must confess Christ (notice the verse does not say “accept” Christ) as their saviour:

- Romans 10:9 *“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.”*

As believers, the children of God must submit to baptism:

- Mark 16:16 *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*

If the children of God do not “press into the kingdom,” in the church, they will miss receiving the salvation “*from this untoward generation*” as preached by Peter in Acts:

- Acts 2:38-40 *“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. 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. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”*

Even if these children of God do not “press into the kingdom,” as outlined above, they are still regenerate children of God. Their rebellion will be punished by God in this life as stated in Mark 16:16 above...*“but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* Other excellent verses on damnation in this life (chastisement) are given in Hebrews as follows:

- Hebrews 10:26-31 *“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there*

remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

- *Hebrews 12:5-11 "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."*

As stated above, many born again people who are regenerate, for one reason or another, have not "pressed

into the kingdom” by obeying the gospel message. Many reasons exist as to why only a few of God’s people are in the Lord’s church. They may have died in infancy or at a young age. They may have a mental handicap. They may not have been blessed to ever hear the gospel message preached. Or finally, they may have heard the gospel preached, but have not wanted to give up some of the “pleasures” of this world. As a result, many born again people are not in the Lord’s church. They are sons of God, but they have not been converted to a knowledge of the truth, and through obedience unto baptism, they have not become disciples of Christ in His church. They are regenerated, but not fully converted.

Those individuals who are blessed to be in the Lord’s church, (kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God, as it is called), come to realize that they are out of place in the world. They love the gospel and they love the Lord’s people. They feel as if they are strangers in a far country. Notice again this Bible verse quoted earlier:

- Hebrews 11:13 *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”*

The kingdom described by the various verses given above is sometimes referred to as the “visible” church.

Eternal Kingdom (third heaven)

Finally, we will deal with the eternal kingdom that is based in paradise (heaven and immortal glory). It is the mother country, so to speak. (The mother country would be North America in the analogy given by Elder Sonny Pyles.)

Before the crucifixion of Jesus, Pilate asked Jesus if He was King of the Jews. Jesus answered as follows:

- John 18:36 *“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”*

Obviously, Jesus is referring to the eternal kingdom that is in paradise, or heaven and immortal glory. Another example of verses that refer to the kingdom of God as being the eternal kingdom is as follows:

- I Corinthians 15:50 *“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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.”*

As stated above, this kingdom is based in heaven, and God is the king. (Paul was caught up into this third heaven as saw things he could not repeat, as given in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4.) However, many members of this kingdom are in this present world. They are strangers and pilgrims from a far country, as in the following verse that has been quoted before:

- Hebrews 11:13 *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”*

Kingdom Prophecy

Prophecy in the Old Testament concerning the Kingdom of God can be found in 2 Samuel as follows:

- 2 Samuel 7:12 *“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. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 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:”*

The house noted above is the heart of each “born again” person. As Luke 17:21 says, *“for behold, the kingdom of God in within you,”* as well as, I Corinthians 3:16 *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”*

This kingdom was declared and established at the time of the apostles. To prove this fact, consider the sermon preached by Peter *“when the day of Pentecost was fully come,”* in the second chapter of Acts:

- Acts 2:29-35 *“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. 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; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 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. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool.”

The kingdom was declared and established at the time of the resurrection of Christ (see above), when David was still in the grave. Contrary to the premillennial belief, Christ will not be brought back at the “second coming” to set up the kingdom. At the second coming of Christ, both the just and the unjust will be raised (including David), those which are alive will be caught up together, and Christ will deliver up the Kingdom to the Father. Consider:

- I Corinthians 15:24 *“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.”*

At this time, Jesus has been reigning on the throne of David for about 2,000 years. The one thousand year reign spoken of in Revelation 20:2-5 is a large precise number and is used in the same sense as “thousand” spoken of in Psalms 50:10, Psalms 105:8 and Deuteronomy 7:9.

Let’s look at a second analogy with the hope of better understanding what has been presented above. Consider that the church of Jesus Christ is an embassy in a foreign land (the world). The embassy property in the foreign land is owned by the mother country (heaven). The pastor would be similar to the ambassador of this embassy. The one who rules the embassy is the president of the mother country...in this case it is God the Son (our Lord Jesus Christ) through the Holy Spirit. When a citizen of the mother

country is traveling in this foreign land (the world) and visits the mother country embassy (the church), he feels that he is back home. Even so, many of these citizens of the mother country traveling in this foreign land may never enter the embassy, yet they are all still citizens of the mother country. Not all of God's regenerate children will be converted disciples of Christ, in His church.

As you consider the comparison of the church being an embassy in a foreign land, you realize that the Lord's church actually offers the child of God a little taste of heaven (the mother country) while still on earth. The church member enjoys fellowship with Jesus Christ Himself, as Jesus declared to the Laodicean church. This verse is addressed to church members who are guilty of sins that could cast them out of the church.

- Revelation 3:20-22 *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."*

The above verse was addressed to the Laodicean church, not to dead alien unregenerate sinners, as some people think. Remember, only God's born again children can hear God's words:

- John 8:47 *"He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."*

To repeat, God's church offers the child of God a small taste of heaven on earth. In church, they have their *"pure*

mind" (2 Peter 3:1) stirred up, which is a mind that cannot sin (1John 3:9). This "pure mind" is the earnest of our inheritance (heaven is our inheritance) that is sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). Children of God "*labor and are heavy laden*" (Matthew 11:28) until through obedience they press into the kingdom (Luke 16:16) to become converted disciples of Christ in His church and find rest for their souls. This "rest" one receives (Matthew 11:28) in the church offers healing...the church is a hospital for sinners. The church is the place where God's people can receive spiritual food through the preached word, and as a result they can both grow and mature spiritually. Notice this verse:

- 1 Peter 2:2 "*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*"

Many of God's children today are still spiritual infants who are suffering and do not know why. They need to heed this warning given in Hebrews 3:7, "*as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness.*" Conversion unto discipleship in the church is the only way God's people will ever be truly happy in this life on earth. No amount of material success and worldly recognition can fill this need. Hopefully, God's children today will understand this truth, turn back to the Bible, and "save" themselves "*from this untoward generation*" (Acts 2:40). A Primitive Baptist would call this conditional time "salvation," because this deliverance is provided by God to be enjoyed during this lifetime.

Summation of Thoughts

The kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of His dear Son is wherever God is ruling. Whether it is...

1. in the heart of each of God's regenerate (born again) children...
2. in His church that is a small group of God's born again people who have been obedient unto the gospel message and have become converted disciples of Christ, or finally...
3. in glorified bodies in the eternal heaven itself...

in all the above kingdoms, God is ruling. In each "kingdom" we find God in the person of Jesus Christ dwelling, so this qualifies it to be designated also as "heaven," and the child of God enjoys some degree of salvation in each. Wherever God is ruling, this place is surely heaven.

Conclusion

An effort has been made to show that the Bible makes reference to three different "heavens," and these are the same as the three "kingdoms." Too often the Bible student takes one particular meaning of a word, and then assumes the Bible always uses the word in this one sense. There are many examples other than the words "heaven" and "kingdom" to disprove this assumption. One must always consider the context and grammar, as well as a comparison of how the word is used elsewhere in the Bible.

One of the best examples of a word having multiple meanings that could lead to confusion is the word "world." Consider the following verse, and how "world" is used:

- 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 dealt with in Chapter XI, beginning on page 115. The point made is that when Jesus prayed to the Father before He is crucified, in John 17, Jesus mentions “world” 19 times to refer to 4 different worlds. These nineteen verses are given in the above chapter beginning on page 122. Salvation is another example. It does not always mean eternal salvation as pointed out in Chapter II, entitled Multiple Salvations, beginning on page 6.

In the case mentioned in this book, I believe “heaven” and “kingdom” have at least three different spiritual applications. Hopefully, all three applications have been proven. The following is a summary.

Application one is regeneration

Regeneration (Titus 3:5) is the first “heaven,” or “kingdom.” The new nature, or pure mind (2 Peter 3:1) of the born again child of God cannot commit sin (1 John 3:9), has God’s laws written into this pure mind (Hebrews 8:10), and has been proven to be an abode of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). When an elect child of God is quickened (Ephesians 2:1) into spiritual life, he has been translated into the “kingdom” of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13), for a salvation as mentioned in the following verse:

- 2 Timothy 1:9 “*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.*”

Notice above in this first case we have the 1st heaven in the 1st kingdom, obtained by regeneration, which insures the child of God eternal salvation.

Application two by conversion is God's church

The church offers the child of God the second “heaven,” or “kingdom,” being considered. God dwells within the local church, since the body of believers are a spiritual house built of lively stones (1 Peter 2:5). In the church where two or more are gathered together in His name (Matthew 18:20), Jesus did say He would be in their midst. If the child of God presses into this church kingdom, as mentioned in Luke 16:16, they can save themselves. Peter preached this fact in the following verse:

- Act 2:40 “*And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, **Save** yourselves from this untoward generation.*”

Notice above, we have the 2nd heaven in the 2nd kingdom that offers the obedient child of God salvation during their lifetime by way of conversion.

Application three is glorification in paradise

When the Lord returns at the end of time, we look forward to glorification in the third heaven. God allowed Paul to be caught up into the eternal heaven as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. When Jesus told Pilate His kingdom was not of this world, He was speaking of paradise (John 18:36). Everyone agrees that God dwells in this kingdom we have called the 3rd kingdom, or paradise, as called the 3rd heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2), and the salvation in paradise for God's glorified children is for eternity.

Summation of thoughts

Hopefully the case has been made to demonstrate Scripture supports the proposition that there are three heavens that are an abode of God, which are also called

kingdoms. In each the child of God will experience some degree of salvation, or deliverance.

We have also shown three different aspects of salvation provided for by God for His elect children based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The means God employs to accomplish these deliverances are regeneration (sometime between conception and death), conversion (conditional based on obedience) and glorification at the end of time.

The above three aspects of salvation, past, present, and future, are mentioned in one Bible verse. Consider the following Bible verse:

- 2 Corinthians 1:10 *“Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver [us],”*

The deliverance from “*so great a death*” must refer to death in Adam, as opposed to mere physical death. The expression “*doth deliver,*” must refer to the possibility of conversion for conditional time “salvation.” Finally, “*in whom we trust that he will yet deliver [us],*” must refer to our eternal salvation in glorified bodies at the end of time.

By understanding there are three heavens, or three kingdoms, that provide three aspects of salvation, we have solved the so called doctrinal paradox regarding the sovereignty of God in eternal salvation...versus...the exercise of man’s “free will” that provides a salvation in this lifetime.

God is totally sovereign in regeneration; thus securing eternal salvation for His elect children (Titus 3:5). Man’s “free will” is only involved in gospel conversion unto discipleship for a child of God (already born again) into the

Lord's church for a salvation as noted by Peter, "*save yourselves from this untoward generation.*" (Acts 2:40) This aspect of salvation is conditional based on hearing and understanding the gospel, and then by obedience to the commandments (that can be lost later by sinful rebellion). In other words, regeneration and conversion are two separate things (covered in more detail in Chapter VII, beginning on page 50) made clear by the three different aspects of the "kingdoms," or "heavens," as shown in this chapter to be supported by Scripture. It presents a beautiful picture of what God has done for His children.