

# SALVATION IN CHRIST

“Ye are mine if you do my commandments”

## Genesis Chapters 1 thru 3

“In the beginning God created...and God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good”. When God finished His work everything was not just good, but **very good**, including the man who He made “of the dust of the ground”. God placed the man in a well-watered garden with plentiful provisions and gave the man dominion over His creation. Although Adam and Eve were made good, **God did not make them do good!** From the beginning the man and the woman had “FREE WILL”, and for an unknown period of time they were **very good**.

As noted, God did not create robots. He created living creatures (beings) who had the capacity to willfully obey Him or disobey Him. “In the midst of the garden” among the many trees, God caused to grow, were 2 special trees...“the tree of life, **and** the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”. Of these 2 trees, Adam received instruction concerning one, “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” (Lit. Hebrew for “Thou shalt surely die” is “**Dying, thou shalt die**”).

As we consider these things it is very important to note that Adam and Eve believed in God...**BUT**...when put to the test **they did not believe God**. The precedent set “in the beginning”, to please God, it takes **Faith & Obedience**. How serious was disobedience? It’s not a hard question to answer when you consider God’s punishment. God did as He said...”In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”. The consequence of sin, as God had warned, was becoming **Mortal Beings** (Dying, thou shalt die) and passed on to all born thereafter. God puts it in Romans 5:12 that “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”. Even the best of men, in God’s eyes, met the same fate.

Consider the following men of great faith:

**Abraham** - Gen. 15:15” And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age”.

**Moses** – Deut. 34:5-6” So Moses the servant of the LORD died...according to the word of the LORD...and He (God) buried him in a valley”.

**Joshua** – Josh. 23:1&14 “And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel... that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age...And, (Joshua said) behold, this day I am going **the way of all the earth**”.

**David** – 2 Sam. 7:12 “And when thy days be fulfilled... thou shalt **sleep** with thy fathers”.

Acts 2:29&34 “Men & 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...For David is not ascended into the heavens”.

**Daniel** – Dan. 12:13 “But go thou thy way till the end be: **for thou shalt rest** (sleep), and stand in thy lot **at the end of the days**”.

Paul records in Hebrews 11:39-40”all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they would not be made perfect”.

## **“The Knowledge of Good and Evil”**

Man’s “beginning” was good, in fact it was “very” good or as the Hebrew word very expresses “exceedingly good”. The Hebrew word “good” is the same word used by God in His description of the tree of **“the knowledge of good & evil”**.

The Hebrew word “evil” is obviously not good, in fact, it is the exact opposite of the word good. When used in Scripture expressing “bad”, the opposite of good, it means “exceedingly bad”. The idea is both are present in one’s mind, “good and evil”, in “opposition” to each other. Once again, God did not create robots but created living beings with the capacity to obey or disobey Him. This is very clearly shown by God in the thought process of Eve **before** she partook of the fruit of the tree of **“the knowledge of good and evil”**.

Gen. 3:6 “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, (then) she took of the fruit, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat”.

This obviously was not the first time Eve “saw” the tree. Once again this is a record of Eve’s thought process and we are shown 3 mental steps that lead to her disobeying God. Note the following:

- 1) “the tree was good for food”
- 2) “it was pleasant to the eyes”
- 3) “a tree...desired to make one wise”

This capacity to disobey had been there, but it had been dormant up to this point. “Good” **ruled** in their minds. In the garden both Eve and Adam enjoyed the presence of God (harmony) in their daily activities, but as soon as they both had partaken everything changed!

We see this clearly in the next verse...”the eyes of them both were opened, and **they knew that they were naked**; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons”. This obviously is not in reference to their physical eyes being opened, but expressing the fact that things had changed mentally. You can see the vivid change when you compare the prior chapter in Genesis noting verse 25” **And they were both naked**, the man and his

wife, **and were not ashamed**". They were ashamed now, and they immediately sought to be covered.

Everything changed for the man and the woman. They were now mortal beings with minds that had been awakened with evil, and the changes were not temporary! They were driven from the garden and blocked from any chance of partaking of the tree of life, and things were going to get worse.

Understanding what is meant by "**the knowledge of good and evil**" may be hard to grasp as it is abstract. It becomes easier to understand when you consider their first 2 sons, Cain and Abel, and the different paths in life each one took. Adam and Eve raised them both to know God, and they both **believed in God**. When it came to **believing God**, following His commands, their mindset was different. Abel humbled himself and did things God's way, and God accepted his offering (worship) but did not accept Cain's offering. God warned Cain to change his way of thinking and humble himself to His way, but Cain absolutely refused to repent. There was an **enmity** that grew within Cain towards his brother, and he eventually killed Abel.

The Apostle John also helps us to further understand this in his 1<sup>st</sup> epistle, comparing Brethren who are truly **sons of God** vs. those who claim to be Brethren, but have not truly changed. The example of Cain and Abel is used.

1 John 3:7" Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth (practices) righteousness (Abel) is righteous, even as he is righteous...V.10" whosoever doeth (practices) not righteousness (Cain) is not of God". (note v. 12)

The difference between the two is one puts down the natural thinking (mind) of the flesh (Abel) as it is in opposition to God's ways and the other (Cain) lives their life doing what comes natural to them. "**The knowledge of good and evil**" is not a 50/50 outcome chance. Once again, the Hebrew word "evil" means exceedingly evil and it's working within man is very strong.

To help illustrate this look at the history of men from Cain and Abel's day to the days of Noah, a period of about 1,500 years. There were **sons of God** who followed God's ways, but gradually they diminished to almost zero...

Gen. 6:5 "And God saw that the wickedness (**evil**) of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only **evil** continually". The same Hebrew word "**evil**" is used by God (2x) in this verse.

Gen. 6:11-12 "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth".

The fact is there was only one Godly man (who practiced righteousness) left, a man named Noah. God spared him along with his family as He destroyed all the rest with a flood. We can see from the ungodly state of things "in the days of Noah" that the tendency for man to think, and do **evil** is a strong overwhelming force within men. It is a formidable foe to following God's ways, and what comes natural to man (if unchecked) puts him in opposition to God. The Creator did not leave it unchecked. He shortened man's lifespan.

Gen. 6:3 "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh (fleshly minded): yet his days shall be an 120 years".

Putting it in perspective God shortened man's life span from 900 years on average to 120 years (an 87% decrease), and then reduced it to an average of 70 years. Man's life span today is only 8% as long as of those who lived before the flood! Man having "**the knowledge of good and evil**" is not a good thing. The fact is, man must be an overcomer of his natural fleshly thinking and tendencies in order to please God and receive the gift of eternal life. That is an uphill battle, and our Lord Jesus Christ put it this way...

Matt. 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way (**Natural man's**) is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way (**God's way**) is narrow that leads to life, **and there are few who find it**".

## **A Promise of Change...The Provision Made**

Adam lived 930 years which to us is an incredible life span. Yet as God warned Adam death came and he returned to dust. What a wonderful start and what a sad ending not only for Adam but all to follow! Yet, even while pronouncing the ill fate of the man and woman, brought on by sin, God showed them both He was going to provide. We note again "they knew they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons". A manmade cover which God deemed inadequate. God slew a lamb and provided a covering:

Gen. 3:21" the LORD God made coats of skins, and clothed them"

Obviously there was blood shed in the process of providing this covering, and a precedent was set by God. The sacrificial offering of a lamb which **faithful men did**, beginning with Abel, and continuing 4,000 years.

Yet even with sacrifice the **law of sin & death** continued. "For the wages of sin is death" and nobody was able to defeat that formidable foe, **the mind of the flesh**. Would that ever change? The answer is yes, for God promised Adam & Eve that it would change. God also told them how it would change:

Gen. 3:13-15 "The LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it (He) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel".

Eve was promised a seed (Heb. "seed" is singular), **a son**, who would bruise (crush) the head of the serpent. Interestingly, Abraham was promised "a seed" singular, **a son**, note (Gal. 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". Again, David was promised "a seed" sing., **a son**, who would sit upon his re-established throne in the age to come. All 3 promised "a seed", **a son**, a very special "human being" Jesus Christ. God gave 2 genealogies of Christ to illustrate both aspects (promise/a son). The first in Matthew 1, of promise which goes forward, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham". The second in Luke 3 which goes backward to Eve/Adam, **a son**, born of the woman.

The question is what is meant by God that Jesus Christ would "crush the head of the serpent"? What is meant by "the seed of the serpent"? Did the serpent have children? The point of these questions is to illustrate God is using figurative language when speaking of the serpent. What is a serpent known for? Of course, for its poison, and when a serpent bites someone they eventually die. The serpent is metaphorically used by God to represent the mind (the knowledge of good and evil) and the result of its poisoned thinking being sin and death (**Dying thou shalt die**). The promise was Jesus Christ would be victorious over the mind of the serpent, crushing it in his death!

Our Lord spoke specifically about this promised victory and the crushing of the serpent's head when talking to Nicodemus about **his crucifixion**:

John 3:14-15 "as **Moses lifted up the serpent** in the wilderness, **even so must the Son of man be lifted up**: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life".

The incident referred to by Christ is recorded in Numbers 21. We read, the people were complaining, "speaking against God", as they did over & over!

Num 21:6-9 " the LORD sent **fiery serpents** among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died... The people came to Moses, and said, we have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD... pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed... the LORD said unto Moses, make thee **a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole**: and it shall come to pass, **that every one that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live**. Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived".

This event in the wilderness is used by Christ as a teaching parable, and he clearly identifies himself as being that serpent of brass. A human being (born of the woman) with the "**knowledge of good and evil**" (the nature of all born of flesh). These words of Christ are also a prophecy. In the wilderness incident the serpent was fastened upon a stake. Christ's prophecy is about his soon coming death when he too would be fastened upon a stake.

The question is, how could a human being having the formidable foe that opposes God "**the knowledge of good and evil**" (the nature of man) just like Cain and Abel and all who were born thereafter....**NEVER DISOBEY GOD?** A human being who lived for 33 ½ years and never committed a sin in word or deed...**Plus** Christ never committed a sin of omission, failure to do something God had commanded ! How???

Understanding this enormous accomplishment begins with the fact his Father was God. The Christ (Messiah) was both **DIVINE** and human, in birth, which made a big difference in his genetic makeup. As God in Isaiah foretold:

Isa. 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel".

God also foretold that He would be with His Son from birth instructing Jesus:

Isa. 11: 1-3 “there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse (David’s father), and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: **the spirit of the LORD** shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD and shall make him **of quick understanding** in the fear of the LORD: **he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither** reprove **after** the hearing of **his ears**”.

It is important to reconsider that “in the beginning” God did not make robots but created individuals with FREE WILL having the capacity to obey Him or disobey Him. His Son, Jesus, was not a robot either! In fact, not only did he have the capacity to obey or disobey, Jesus had the additional burden of the “awakened” state of mind “**the knowledge of good and evil**” metaphorically called, by God, the mind of the serpent! Yet, what God is telling us here is that Jesus would not judge after how his natural mind saw things or react to things as his natural mind dictated to him. Instead, His Father would raise him with:

- 1) “The spirit of wisdom and understanding”
- 2) “The spirit of counsel and might”
- 3) “The spirit of knowledge & the fear of the Lord”

In fact, Jesus would be “of quick understanding” well equipped to deal with that formidable foe that had defeated all of mankind for 4,000 years!

This prophecy (Isaiah) is seen fulfilled in the record of Christ’s upbringing:

Luke 2:40 “And the child (Jesus) grew (baby to a young boy), and waxed strong in spirit (mind), filled with wisdom & the grace of God was upon him”.

The idea expressed by the Greek word “filled” is crammed full. What follows in Luke’s record shows us that Jesus was filled with the Word of God (the Old Testament) with a correct understanding of what God’s Word meant:

Luke 2:46-47 “... that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors , both hearing them, and asking them questions. **All** that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers”.

The idea expressed by the Greek word “astonished” is to stand out. The young lad (12 years old) had drawn quite an audience over the 3 day period. As they



watched, they heard Jesus' ability to quote, tie together, and explain God's Word at a level, head and shoulders, above the masters (aged teachers) of his day! Also, note Jesus' answer to his mother Mary when they finally found him, "I must be about my Father's business". He was ready in **his eyes** (righteous zeal) but he was not ready in His Father's eyes! Carefully note the timing of this event in Jesus' life, 12 years old, and think about the changes that occur in a boy's life at this age. The development of Christ (Messiah) was well on its way but there was still 18 more years to go before "going about His Father's business" would begin. He returned home and "was subject" to his parents...

Luke 2:52 "And Jesus increased (to drive forward) in wisdom and stature (maturity), and in favour with God and man".

When the time came at the age of 30 there were 3 things His Father did, with 2 of them being at his baptism (obedience to God) in the Jordan River by John:

Matthew 3:16-17 "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, (#1) he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; (#2) lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".

Till this point it had been the spirit of God working upon his mind and heart. Now, he was filled with the power of God. Secondly, God declared He was "well pleased" with him, recognizing his son's development in character and perfect obedience (30 years without sin) to Him! The 3<sup>rd</sup> thing God did was...

Mark 1:11-12 " And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (#3) **And immediately** the spirit driveth (thrust) him into the wilderness".

The 3<sup>rd</sup> thing was God led (thrust) him into the wilderness without food or water for 40 days to be put to the test in 3 ways. What is this test all about? Could Jesus fail the test? Obviously, he could fail because if he couldn't fail (sin) then how was it a test! To get the full picture lets go back to the garden. Eve, when put to the test, experienced 3 thought processes (mental vision)...

- 1) "the tree was good for food"
- 2) "it was pleasant to the eyes"
- 3) " a tree...desired to make one wise"

The result of her testing was disaster. Disobedience (sin) and then mortality. That became the realm of reality (**The World**) for all mortal men for the 4,000 year period preceding Christ. God puts it this way in John's 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle:

1 John 2:16 "For all that is in **the world**, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of **the world**".

Our Lord was about to enter **the world** and begin His Father's business. Was he ready for the huge task ahead? The test (40 days) challenged Jesus in all 3 ways and he did not fail (sin) and for the next 3 ½ years under unbelievable pressure he did not waver. God puts it this way:

Heb. 4:15 (NIV) "we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted (tested) **in every way**, just as we are—yet he did not sin".

Our Lord at the end of his life puts it this way...

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome **the world**".

Our Lord was never alone in this process of overcoming **the world**. His Father was always with him in spirit and power working in him & with him:

John 5:19 "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise".

2 Cor. 5:18-19 "all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ... that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,"

This harmony with his Father was not broken from his birth to his death, because he was perfectly obedient to his Father's will even to the crucifixion. Jesus knew his end from the Old Testament record. He knew all the passages speaking of his fate including (Dan. 9) "the Messiah would be cut off," (Isa. 53) "a lamb led to the slaughter", (Psa.22) "all my bones are pulled out of joint" yet when the appointed time came to die "he set his face to go to Jerusalem". God strengthened and comforted His Son as Jesus approached the day of his cruel death, by 3 wonderful events. The transfiguration of Christ on the mount, then the resurrection of Lazarus after 3 days in the grave and finally his triumphant

entry of Jerusalem on the “foal of an ass” as foretold in Zechariah. God puts it this way, Heb.12:2, “ For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross”.

Finally, the night came he was to be taken to be crucified. Jesus knew what lay before him and he prayed earnestly 3 times with beads of sweat like blood dropping off him. Once again His Father sent comfort.

Luke 22:42-43 “Saying, Father (3<sup>rd</sup> time), if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless **not my will**, but thine, be done. **And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him”**.

The promised seed (**a son**) did crush the head (mind) of the serpent all the days of his life. Then in harmony with his Father’s purpose he willingly was nailed to the pole. He had been about His Father’s business, pleasing Him in all ways, and then with his last breath proclaimed “it is finished”!

## **Salvation in Christ**

Our Lord, in the dominion of sin (**the world**), battled with that formidable foe (**the mind of the flesh**) defeating its persuasive power every day. Jesus Christ overcame **the world** “tested as we are in every way”. He finally **won the war** as he obeyed His Father, willingly taking his flesh to the cross, and “crushing the head of the serpent”. Everybody before him had died because “the wages of sin is death”, but Christ in his death was victorious over sin! God declared “he (Jesus) was without sin therefore the grave could not hold him”. God did not allow “His holy one to see corruption”. God raised His son **from the dead**, after 3 days, and he now “sits on the right hand of God”. This harmony of purpose between God and His son, on the Earth, continues in Heaven with “all things under the feet” of Christ.

Mark 16:19 “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God”.

1 Peter 3:22 “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him”.

God also expresses something else, very important, that began with His son’s resurrection **from the dead**...

Col.1:18 “who (Jesus) is **the beginning**, the **Firstborn** from the dead”.

The question is “**the beginning**” of what? Our Lord was not the first human being to come back from the dead. Think about Lazarus who Christ called forth from the dead after 3 days in the ground. The same power (God’s) from above, the same result being restored to life... but, a very different end. Like those before him raised from the dead, Lazarus died again! Our Lord was the first of creation to be restored to life and live eternally! The good news (The Gospel) is, there is **a day coming** when many more will experience the power of a resurrection to life eternal...

1 Cor. 15: 20-23 “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them **that slept**. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so **in Christ** shall all be made alive. Every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits (firstborn): **afterward** they that are Christ's **at his coming**”.

There is **a day coming**. Christ taught his disciples about that glorious day of their resurrection at the time of **his coming**, his return to the Earth...

John 6:39-40 “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 (disciples) up again **at the last day**. And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth (Greek - to be “fixed on”) the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up **at the last day**”.

It is important to note that the resurrection **at the last day** was not a new teaching. Consider again the promise God made to Daniel before his death...

Dan. 12:13 “But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot **at the end** of the **days** (last day)”.

Daniel is one of many **faithful individuals** who died “not having received the promise”, but await that glorious day of resurrection to life eternal at Christ’s return. They are asleep and their names are written in that “Book of Life” which Moses referred to...

Exo. 32:31-33 “Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, **blot me**, I pray thee, **out of thy book** which thou hast written (record of names). And the LORD said unto Moses, whosoever hath sinned against me, **him will I blot out of my book**”.

“These things are left on record for our admonition” (1 Cor. 10:11) and we need to carefully note that a name can be written in the “Book of Life” and blotted out by God as He determines. In fact, whether an individual is in the “Book of Life” or not is a determination that will be made **at the last day**...

Dan. 11:40 “**at the time of the end** shall”...

This section of scripture lists events that will occur **at that time** including...

Dan. 12:1-3 “And **at that time** shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people...and **at that time** thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be **found written in the book**. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, **some to everlasting life**, and **some to shame** and everlasting contempt (thrusting away)”.

Note the contrast, “they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament” and they that were not wise will be thrust away! Christ taught his disciples that he was the one who would make the final determinations...

John 5:27-29 “And (God) hath **given him** (Christ) **authority to execute judgment**... for **the hour is coming**, in which all that are **in the graves** shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have **done good**, to the resurrection of life; and they that have **done evil**, unto the resurrection of damnation”.

Note Christ’s warning repeated over and over to his disciples in Matthew about **that day** of judgment... “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”

It is very important to see that judgment will occur at Christ’s return and the deciding factor to be used by Christ at the seat of judgment will be... “those that have done (practiced) **good**” will receive life eternal and “those that have done (practiced) **evil**” will receive death. This is the difference noted “in the beginning” between Cain and Abel. They both believed in God, but Cain lived and served God his way (**evil**) while Abel believed God and chose to follow God’s commandments (**good**). Understanding the difference is a matter of life and death. Our Lord made this very clear to everyone...

Matthew 5:20 “For I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed (Greek is “to super abound”) the righteousness (right-ness) of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven”.

Christ made it clear, early in his ministry, to those he addressed that they were **not** on course to receive eternal life **at that day** of judgment! They

believed in God, but what the religious leaders taught the people was not a **"saving truth"**! The masters (teachers) had failed to heed God's warning in Deut. 12:32... "What thing so ever I command you, observe to do it: **thou shalt not add** thereto, **nor diminish** from it". Christ goes on to say, over and over, in Matthew 5 "ye have heard that it was said by them of old...but, I say unto you", exposing the teacher's manipulation of God's Word to serve their own purpose. The people were being taught the "traditions of men which made the word of God of none effect". They were "blind leaders of the blind". Christ spent the next 3 years "sowing the seed" and when the seed (God's Word) fell on "good ground" (those that heard intelligently) "it bare fruit an hundredfold". There were a few that repented and chose to "follow that narrow way (path) that leadeth unto life". What changed in these few individuals? Did they all of a sudden believe in God? No, that's not it as they already believed in God. What changed was their mental vision. They no longer saw or heard things "after their own eyes or ears", but in word and action they became obedient to God's ways. As God puts it...

1 Peter 1:22-23 "Seeing ye have purified your souls **in obeying the truth** through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart... **Being born again**, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by **the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever".

When you read the Old Testament God clearly illustrates that it took both **faith and obedience** to please Him and to have one's name remain in the Book of Life. And, for 4,000 years up to Christ's day there were names from every generation added to the Book of Life. God also clearly illustrated in the Old Testament record that it took the **shedding of blood** for the remission of sin. The faithful of old, beginning with Abel, humbled themselves before God obediently (willingly) following God's instructions. **But**, the shedding of an animal's blood was not enough!

After the fall in the garden God made it clear that He was going to provide! The manmade coverings Adam and Eve provided for themselves were not adequate, and a lamb was slain by God, blood was shed by God, and adequate covering was provided by God. The Book of Life (those **faithful & obedient**) and the adequate provision promised by God, "in the beginning", both come

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together with the words of Christ in the book of Revelation when encouraging the faithful to “endure to the end” ...

Rev. 1:5 “Jesus Christ... the first begotten of the dead... Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood”.

Rev. 3:5 “**He that overcometh**, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the **book of life**, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels”.

Rev. 13:8 “written in the **book of life** of the **Lamb slain from the foundation of the world**”.

Rev. 17:8 “written in the **book of life** from the **foundation of the world**”

Rev. 20:12 “I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, **which is the book of life**: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works”.

Rev. 21:27 “there shall in no wise enter into it...but they which are written in the **Lamb's book of life**”.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, was God’s adequate provision, but he was not offered up at his birth. He was offered up after 33 ½ years of perfect obedience to his Father. He did what no other man before him did. He crucified the mind of the flesh every day of his life and then crushed the head of the serpent on the cross. This is what it took to satisfy God, and **in Christ and only in Christ, is there hope of salvation!**

Acts 4:10-12 “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead...This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner (house made without hands). **Neither is there salvation in any other**: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”.

2 Tim. 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”.

There are a multitude of references in the New Testament proclaiming the message of **Salvation in Christ**. This was the message of Christ's Apostles, to both Jew and Gentile, to look faithfully upon that man raised up on that pole who crushed the head of the serpent. They taught "repent" (completely change one's thinking) and be "baptized" (be **in Christ**). The record in Acts tells us many did, in fact, 3,000 individuals repented and were baptized in one day (Acts 2:41). A little further in Acts 2:47 we read "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved". Then, further in Acts, we read of the efforts of Paul and others who followed the command of our Lord taking the message of "repent and be baptized" throughout the Gentile world. God blessed these efforts and communities of believers began to form all over. What a great start!

**Sadly, many who began in Christ did not remain faithful to (in) him.**

In Acts 2 it is also recorded "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart". Yet, God addresses these same Hebrew Brethren and Sisters in Heb. 10:24-25 "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: **Not forsaking** the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching". The fact is, as expressed throughout the Book of Hebrews, these Brethren and Sisters no longer had faith in the sacrifice of Christ. They **no longer were in Christ**. They wilfully had returned to "dead works". Sadly, they had lost salvation through willful disobedience of God and Christ, and now faced a resurrection to damnation!

Another example of unfaithfulness is seen in the Gentile church in Ephesus. In 2 Tim. 2:16-18 "But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness... their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; **Who concerning the truth have erred**, saying that the resurrection is past already; **and overthrow the faith of some**". These 2 Brethren opposed the teaching of Jesus Christ, the promised resurrection of "those that are his", at his return. Not only were they facing a resurrection to damnation, but sadly those also whose faith they had "overthrown". When the New Testament record is carefully read it becomes very clear, that to be saved (**in Christ**) an individual must "repent and be baptized", and then walk in faith



obediently following the commandments of God and Christ. When addressing the church at Colossae God states...

Col. 1:12-14 "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers (**qualified in Christ**) of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, & hath translated us into (Grk. preposition meaning... "**toward**") the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins".

God then states all the things accomplished by the "promised seed", His Son, and goes on to say something that must be carefully understood by those who want to live forever....

Col. 1:23 "**If ye continue** in the faith grounded and settled, **and be not moved away** from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven...".

This was the message of Christ to his Apostles just before his crucifixion...

Matt. 24:9-13 "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, & shall hate one another...But **he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved**".

Note, Christ again in the upper room the night he was to be taken away...

John 15:1-4 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch **in me** that beareth not fruit **he taketh away**: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken... **Abide in me** (continue), and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, **except ye abide in me**".

Christ knew that his apostles had a very rough road ahead of them. Eleven of them did **continue in him** to the end of their lives and they sleep awaiting the resurrection to life eternal. One, Judas, did not remain faithful, forsaking the salvation in Christ for the love of this world. Christ empathized that abiding in him included keeping his commandments as he had kept His Father's...

John 15:8-10 "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue

ye in my love **If ye keep my commandments**, ye shall abide in **my love**; even as **I have kept my Father's commandments**, and abide in **his love**".

Christ not only kept all His father's commandments but also denied himself everything that flesh desired! At the end of his ministry the people wanted to make him king but he chose (agonizing in the garden) to continue to follow His Father's will even to the cross. The fact is, his whole mortal life was one of **self sacrifice**. He put down the flesh and manifested God's character in word and deed. This attitude of Christ, giving of himself, and His Father, giving His only begotten son, is proclaimed in one Greek word used by God in the New Testament. That word is "agape" (translated "love"). Certainly we should be thankful "God so loved ("agape") the world that He gave His only begotten son". Unfortunately, what is missed by so many, is **this is the "love" that Christ expects of those that are his!** To follow him, putting down the flesh, living in a way that manifests the character of his Father and following his Father's commandments. A life of **self sacrifice**, lovingly (agape) serving our Lord every day of our life "enduring **in Christ** to the end"...

Romans 12:1-2 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies **a living sacrifice**, holy, **acceptable unto God**, which is your reasonable (logical) service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed **by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God".

The phrase "**by the renewing of your mind**" is extremely important. God's message is we are "born again by an incorruptible seed", His Word. The verse quoted is from a letter written to individuals who were **in Christ** at Rome. The point God made to them is that regularly partaking of His Word is the key step in remaining "grounded and settled" **in Christ**. Repentance and Baptism is the starting point on **that path** that leads to life eternal. God's Word working on our hearts and minds brings the necessary transformation in us so we can **overcome** that formidable foe within us. This is the love, grace, and mercy of God that He has preserved His Word so we can even have a chance to know of Him and His Son, His gift of love, the Lord Jesus Christ. The challenge **we all** face in this busy world filled with many distractions is applying our hearts and minds to the vital study of God's word. We all have FREE WILL how we spend our time & the choice is ours to make. **But**, when making our choice we need

to reconsider the people of Christ's day who were following the traditions of men and were on a path to death eternal. **It is a matter of life or death that we know what God expects of us.** Yes, it might be difficult to get into the habit of studying God's Word but the **reward of life eternal** on that day of judgment certainly merits the effort on our part...

Hebrews 11:6 "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and **that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him**".

Our Heavenly Father is "longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). God has clearly shown this in the giving of His Son and the preservation of His Word of life so that we might live eternally. God has promised us if we **diligently seek Him**, applying ourselves to learn and live His way, that He will bless these efforts. Christ told his disciples they would never be alone if they continued in him "enduring to the end".

That **hour is coming** when the graves will be opened and Christ will **execute judgment**, and those who lived **faithfully and obediently** will receive eternal life. The tragic state of man, **dying, thou shalt die** and **returning to dust** will be reversed! What Adam and Eve were denied, **blocked from partaking of the Tree of Life**, will be allowed on **that day** as promised by Christ...

Rev. 2:7 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the **tree of life**, which is in the midst of the paradise of God".

In the beginning everything was **very good** on the Earth as God had created it.

**In the end...on the Earth...it will be very good again!**







