

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Why I Believe

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- 4 -- God's Plan of Salvation**
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Lesson One

"The Bible as the Word of God"

Many who called themselves Christians may have what is called a “shallow faith” or a “hand-me-down faith” that may not stand the test of reason, facts, evidences, trials or ridicule. They can become an easy prey for those who would destroy what “faith” they seem to have. It seems to be quite obvious from Scripture that there are different kinds or levels of faith:

- a) Faith can be increased (2 Corinthians 10:15).
- b) Faith can be built up (Jude 20).
- c) A person can be rich in faith (James 2:5).
- d) A person can be full of faith (Acts 6:5).
- e) A person needs to be sound in faith (Titus 2:2).
- f) A person needs to be steadfast and grounded in faith (1 Peter 5:9; Colossians 2:5-7).
- g) A person’s faith needs to be perfected (1 Thessalonians 3:10; James 2:21-22).
- h) A person needs to have full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22).
- i) A person needs to have great boldness in faith (1 Timothy 3:13).

All of this is in contrast to a “little faith” or a “weak faith” that definitely needs to be improved to make it better (Matthew 14:31; Romans 14:1).

It is important for all of us to realize that there is an abundance of evidences upon which to base our faith and make it strong and full. We need to become aware of such evidences and build a strong faith correctly. The purpose of this study is to briefly look at the different areas of evidences that can be easily understood. If the Christian religion is trustworthy, it will stand whatever tests are placed upon it. But a person may have to have some help in order to find the many areas of evidences for belief. And...we are encouraged to do so by God (John 8:32; 1 Thessalonians 5:21). Any beliefs that cannot stand under careful scrutiny should be dropped, but true beliefs will prosper under honest, open-minded inquiry.

The truthfulness of Christianity depends upon historical evidences that can be counted on to be dependable. Since we did not live in the time when Jesus was upon the earth, we must depend upon eye-witnesses as a basis for our faith. Three factors have to be involved:

- 1. These witnesses must be honest, trustworthy.
- 2. They must be competent witnesses.
- 3. There needs to be a sufficient number of witnesses.

Why the Bible?

What if someone ask you: *“Do you believe that the Bible is true and comes from God?” “What are your reasons for believing such?”* How well could you deal with the questions? Are you prepared to give solid and logical evidences for why you believe such? We are encouraged to be ready with an answer and to do so with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15). It is hoped that this study will offer some answers for you to use in talking with others.

The fact of the existence of the Bible is obvious! Since there are many religious books that exist, it is important to determine whether **one** or **all** or **none** are from the Divine Being we call God. To those who have read some in various religious books, it is obvious that all of them have some good things in them. But the important question is—are they from God or are they the thoughts of men? World Religions have their “sacred” books, such as: Hinduism (**Vedas**); Shintoism (**Ko-Ji-Ki, Nihon-Gi**); Zoroastrianism (**Avesta**); Taoism (**Tao-Teh-King**); Jainism (**Angas**); Buddhism (**Tripitaka**); Confucianism (**Classics**); Mohammedanism (**Koran**); and Sikhism (**Granth**). Even those who claim to believe in Christ have their so-called “**inspired writings**” or “**Creeds**”, such as: “**The book of Mormon**,” “**Christian Science Key to the Scriptures**,” etc. Why pick out the Bible as being the One Revelation from God among all of these other writings?

It claims to be from God! And, if it is from the true God of Heaven, it should be "perfect" or "complete!"

- Rom. 7:12** _____
- 2 Pet. 1:3** _____
- Jas 1:25** _____
- 2 Tim. 3:16-17** _____

It would be expected that a revelation from God would make such claims as the above. It would also be expected that warnings would be given not to change what has been given!

- Deut. 4:2** _____
- Rev. 22:18-19** _____

It is one thing to make the claim and quite another to give evidences to support such a claim. The following will be evidences for believing this claim.

Internal Evidences for Believing

1. The Bible's ability to give good guidance. Humans seem to be made by a Creator that places a consciousness of Right and Wrong in our hearts. But we still need help or guidance from above.

- Jer. 10:23-24** _____
- 2 Tim. 3:16-17** _____
- _____

It should be obvious that if Deity wants His creatures to live a certain way that He has to reveal this to us. The Bible claims to be that revelation and means of guidance.

2. Its Contents and Teachings are Rational! What the Bible says about God, Man, and Man's need for redemption is profound and far superior to what would be expected to come from mere men. It presents a very exalted conception of God not found elsewhere.

Isa. 55:8-9 _____

It's teachings about Man is elevating and consistent throughout.

Ps. 8:1-9 _____

Gen. 1:26 _____

It's teachings about Man's redemption reveals a loving God who was willing to make the great sacrifice to make salvation possible.

Rom. 3:21-26 _____

3. Its Moral Standard! Biblical morals are the highest and most challenging to be found anywhere. The theme of Scripture throughout is for man to be holy as God is holy.

Lev. 19:2 _____

1 Pet. 1:16 _____

Immorality is strongly condemned and righteousness upheld.

1 Tim. 5:22 _____

Rom. 6:16-18 _____

4. Its Unity clearly indicates the work of Deity and not man! The Bible was written down over a period of about 1600 years and by some 40 (?) different men that came from all walks of life. Yet, it is in complete harmony with itself and has one main theme—*"The Redemption of fallen men!"* There is no way that such a unified book could be produced by one man—much less many men!

Psa. 119:97-104 _____

External Evidences for Believing!

1. Its Historical Accuracy! The Bible mentions people, places, events, etc., that lived or happened in time. Where these are also mentioned in the writings of society at large, there is mutual agreement. In fact, they often supplement each other—giving additional information. Archaeologists have been very helpful in providing much evidence for the accuracy of the Bible—but it also helps to provide a general background for the Bible events, and helps with translation of the Bible. An example is the "World-wide flood (**Gen. 6-8**).

2. Its Scientific Accuracy! While the Bible is not a "Science Book," its content is scientifically accurate! Where people disagree, it usually comes from a poor understanding of the Bible or poor science (or theories) on the part of men. Examples:

Isaiah 40:22 _____

Job 26:7 _____

There is no way that men could have known about the above two things without a revelation from God!

3. Its Fulfilled Prophecies! This is one of the strongest proofs of the Bible being from God. Man cannot know the future—he can only "guess" about what might come to pass. The Old Testament in particular is filled with prophetic foretelling of future events that deals with individuals and nations.

Isa. 45:1-7 _____

Deut. 28:63-67 _____

Dan. 2:36-45 _____

But the obvious area of prophecy is about the coming of the "Messiah!" There are over 300 prophecies that have been fulfilled in great detail.

Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:2 _____

Isa. 53; Jn. 1:29 _____

Psa. 22:1; Matt. 27:46 _____

Psa. 16:8-10; Acts 2:25-32 _____

Concluding Thoughts

We have only touched the "hem of the garment" of the material that is available to uphold the truth that the Bible is from God. If you have a need or sufficient interest, there are many sources that are available to help you in your study.

Lesson Two

"The One God of the Bible"

"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" (Psalm 53:1). More and more people in the so-called "Christian Nations" have not only come to no longer believe in the God of the Bible, but are openly speaking out about such. Many college professors openly try to undermine a belief in God among their students. We are seeing militancy on the part of "unbelievers" in our societies more and more advocating ***"There is no God!"*** Why does the Bible call such people foolish? In many places in the world another question can be easily raised: ***"Which God are you talking about?"***

It would seem obvious that man's most profound question is concerning the existence of God! Have you noticed that the Bible begins with the assumption of God? No real attempt is made to prove His existence. Why is this question so important? May we suggest at least four basic reasons:

- 1) Such a belief determines man's responsibility.
- 2) His Salvation (Relationship to God) and eternal destiny is involved.
- 3) His moral and social behavior is involved.
- 4) His happiness here and now, as well as eternally is involved.

How can man know that God exists? If such a Being exists it is certain that he cannot be ascertained with certainty by our five senses? He cannot be detected and tested like physical things. God must be detected by the perceiving mind. It is by the process of the formulation and compiling of knowledge, evaluating the evidences, and drawing reasonable conclusions that we come up with a rational belief in God or not.

There are two fundamental areas of study that we must turn to for establishing our belief in the God of the Bible: (1) Natural Revelation of God and (2) Supernatural Revelation of God. Is there sufficient evidence in the natural realm for an intelligent person to accept the idea of God? We believe the answer to be yes. We believe the evidence is conclusive and that which is beyond any reasonable doubt.

Logical Reasons for Believing

1) Because it is reasonable to believe in the existence of God and not matter being eternal. Atheism is forced into believing that matter is eternal. If it had a beginning, then there has to be a God who created it. Both Romans 1:20-21 and Psalm 19:1-3 says that man is without excuse for not believing in Him.

2) Because Atheism cannot be proved. For an atheists to disprove the existence of God would mean that he would have to be a “god.” He would have to be omniscient or the one thing he did not know might be that God exists! But look at the insuperable difficulties that Atheists have:

- a) They assume that matter is eternal.
- b) They assume that the universe exists as a result of chance, not orderly creation.
- c) They assume matter produced living organisms.
 - That non-living created the living;
 - That non-conscious created the conscious;
 - That non-religious created the religious;
 - That non-rational created the rational;
 - That non-moral created the moral;
 - That non-hearing created the hearing;
 - That non-speaking created the speaking;
 - That non-feeling created the feeling.....etc.
- d) The Atheists actually believes in a “miracle-working creator,” but refuses to call him God!
 - His creator is dead matter, which created in the past, but not now—which concept cannot be explained in terms of present day laws and it cannot be proven with evidences.
- e) He must assume that our orderly and beautiful Universe came into being:
 - By chance, not design.
 - That the human body with all its detailed and unexplainable workings came into existence by chance.
 - That the small things of nature exist by chance.
 - That the make-up of the atom, etc., all happened by chance.
 - That the cycles of nature in all her glory all happened by chance.

But a belief in God’s great creative power makes all of this very reasonable. But without belief in God, these are just a few of the great assumptions that Atheists call upon us to believe and accept because he said so!

3) Because our orderly Universe demands an explanation. Our Universe exhibits marks of intelligent causation. The works of man are examples of causation. Someone had to design and build the house we live in, etc. And the same can be said of the Universe; it had to be design and built by a great Power!

Benjamin Franklin was visiting in Paris and was displaying his model of

our planetary system showing the earth and planets nearest to it. A person asked him, "Who made this?" Mr. Franklin replied: "No one, it just happened!" "What," cried the man, "you must be joking!" And Mr. Franklin's reply to him was: "And so is the man who says the Universe just happened." The existence of our Universe by chance is a mathematical impossibility. Look at the following observations:

- 1) If the Universe exhibits Design, there must be a great Designer.
- 2) If it exhibits or show Thought, there must be a great Thinker.
- 3) If it runs by Laws, there must be a great Lawgiver.
- 4) If it operates with Mathematical Precision, there must be a great Mathematician.
- 5) If it gives us important Chemical Combinations, there must be a great Chemist.
- 6) If such is a great Engineering Feat, there must be a great Engineer.

4. Because concepts of right and wrong require an explanation. We are faced with two choices:

- 1) Man has evolved and his moral standards have evolved with him. No one man can set the standards. Each is a law unto himself.
- 2) Or, God created man and gave him the ability to understand right from wrong.

Let's notice some things about morality:

- 1) All men draw lines between good and bad.
- 2) Lines are not exactly in the same places, but they are there in general.
- 3) Good and evil exists to all men.
- 4) Man is convinced that he is obligated—that a sense of duty exist—a sense of ought or ought not.
- 5) Man often justifies doing wrong in order to bring about good.
- 6) Man has the power to respond to moral law.
- 7) Moral potentialities are great within our lives.

If a moral realm exists, then certain things must follow:

- 1) Man has the power to choose between good and bad.
- 2) There is no final moral justice in this life in many situations.
- 3) There must be a just Judge that someday will render perfect justice.
- 4) If not, what is the point of being moral????

The Bible Teaches the following:

- 1) Man can choose his master (the good or the bad) (Rom. 6:16-18).
- 2) This life is not the end of man (1 Cor. 15).
- 3) God will judge all men fairly someday (Rom. 2:14-16).

The belief that morality comes from God is not childish, nor a shallow form of escapism. It is not unreasonable, nor against the evidences under consideration. Such belief actually elevates man. It causes him to recognize community responsibilities and serves as a strong standard and guide for the individual, the home, the community, and the nation. But....without belief in God, there is no real purpose for being “moral!”

Concluding Thoughts

In addition to many other evidences that could be given are the personal reasons for believing.

- 1) It is obviously the safer course to pursue. If there is a God:
 - a) We must come to know Him and obey Him.
 - b) There will be a Day of Judgment.
 - c) There will be punishment and reward.
 - d) I want to be ready for that day.
 - e) If there is no God, I haven't really lost anything worthwhile by believing.
- 2) Atheists have nothing to offer to answer all the perplexing questions of life—he can only offer greater doubt.
- 3) The Christian life is by far the greater way of living over what Atheists have to offer.
 - a) It is greater and better.
 - b) It produces the most happiness, peace, and contentment for this life.
 - c) It motivates man to accomplish the most good for all mankind.
 - d) It offers hope after this life is over—Atheists offer nothing.

There are many other reasons that could be given and discussed, such as:

- 1) God's Greatness;
- 2) The terms that describe the God of Heaven;
- 3) Three terms that describe His moral Nature:
 - a) Just (Deut. 32:4; Rom. 3:26)
 - b) Holiness (Num. 23:19; Matt. 5:48; 1 Jn. 1:5, etc.)
 - c) Goodness (Matt. 5:45; Jas. 1:17; Lk. 18:19).

Do you believe that God exists—what have you done about it? Can you give good reasons for your belief in God?

*Lesson Three****"Jesus as the Son of God"***

Jesus of Nazareth is certainly the central person in "Christianity!" The Apostle Paul stated that God had raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named. And he added that all things have been put under His feet and He has been made head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:20-22). Belief in Jesus' Messiahship and His Deity is critical to the existence and spread of Christianity. There was a time when critics questioned whether Jesus actually lived, but no longer. The evidence for a real person named Jesus is too overwhelming for an honest person to doubt that He lived and evidently had a great influence on people then and now. The two areas that are critical are the two that must be confessed by one wanting to become a follower of Jesus—that He is the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 8:37 NKJV; Romans 10:9; Matthew 16:16).

GENERAL STATEMENTS ABOUT JESUS

The writers of the New Testament books were either the brothers of Jesus (James and Jude) or close disciples or Apostles of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, John, Peter). Only two writers did not have the privilege of being associated with Jesus (Luke & Paul), but their conversions to Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, give us reasons for believing what they believed. These writers portray Jesus in the following way:

He was Sinless (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21-22, etc.). No man could lay claim to such with honesty or integrity—but Jesus could and did (John 8:46)! His life has undergone great scrutiny and He has come away without fault. The necessity of His sinlessness was that He had to be without sin in order to die and take the place of sinners.

The people were astonished at His teachings (Matthew 7:28). He is recorded as having said that what He taught came from His Father in Heaven (John 8:28). There are no greater teachings found anywhere in the world.

His ultimate influence upon his close disciples and others (Matthew 19:27-29). After Jesus' resurrection, their lives were changed drastically. They gave up all to follow Him and even gave their lives to preach the Gospel of Christ around the world.

He performed supernatural acts (Miracles) (Matthew 4:23-25). Jesus'

close disciples witnessed these miraculous events over and over for some three and one-half years. But, they also were given the power by Jesus to do the same (Matthew 10:1).

He manifested the Love of God to all men (John 15:9-13; 1 John 3:16). Jesus showed in word and deed the pure and unselfish love of God for mankind (John 3:16). He exemplified unconditional love even in His sacrificial death toward his persecutors (Luke 23:34).

JESUS, THE CHRIST (MESSIAH)

One of the strong evidences for Jesus is the prophecies of a coming Messiah that He fulfilled. The Jews were in expectation of the coming of the Messiah as well as the Samaritan people (John 1:41; 4:24). Daniel had used this term to identify the person that was to come to be the deliverer (Daniel 9:25-26). This Messiah is described in various ways in the Old Testament:

- 1) He was to be the seed of the woman that would bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15).
- 2) He was to be the seed of Abraham to bless all nations (Genesis 12:3; 22:18).
- 3) He was to come from the tribe of Judah to be ruler (Genesis 49:10).
- 4) He was to be a king over the new kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-14; Daniel 2:44).
- 5) He was to be a suffering servant to die for the sins of the people (Isaiah 53).

Additional things could be added to the above. Not only did Jesus fulfill every one of these many Old Testament prophecies, but He Himself said He came for that purpose (Luke 24:44).

JESUS, THE SON OF GOD (DEITY)

The material that we have already briefly looked at should indicate that Jesus was not a mere man among other men, but someone greater. The confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God certainly indicates that we should believe Him to be Deity! There are four different approaches that can be taken to show evidences for Jesus' Divinity.

1) His claims to be equally Deity with the Father. To claim to be the Son of God was enough to cause the Religious Leaders of the Jews to say that Jesus blasphemed (John 10:30-38). Mark's Gospel records Jesus forgiving sins and the Religious Leaders again said that He blasphemed because only God could forgive sins. Jesus' reply to their criticism was, "which is easier: to forgive a

person or heal him of his deformity?" He healed the man before their very eyes (Mark 2:5-12). For Jesus to make the claim of being Deity shows one of three things: (1) He was a fool and self-deceived; (2) He was a deranged person—did not know what He was doing; or (3) He was who He claimed to be—the Son of God. Jesus made the statement to His close Apostles that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father also (John 14:9).

2) His immediate disciples' belief in Him as the Son of God. They not only confessed their belief in Him as being the Messiah, but as well as that He was the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). Upon one occasion, when many disciples were turning from following Jesus, He asked the disciples would they also leave Him. Their reply was: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* They had to have some basis for believing this astounding concept! The final clincher to the Apostles' believing in Jesus was after His resurrection from the dead. Thomas had not had the benefit of seeing the resurrected Jesus with the other Apostles, but later was able to see Him and be convinced that He was *"my Lord and my God!"* (John 20:26-31). The writers of the New Testament constantly make reference to the Deity of Jesus (Romans 1:4; 5:10; 8:3; 8:32; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:19; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:14; Hebrews 1:2; 2 Peter 1:17; 1 John 1:3; Revelations 2:18, etc.).

3. Old Testament prophecies that indicate His Deity. Isaiah foretold of One to come that would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23) which would indicate that his conception would not be by man, but God Himself. And then, it was added, that his name would be called "Emanuel" which means God with us. Also Isaiah's prophecy in 9:6 certainly indicates Deity as well. Micah's prophecy of the one to come that his decendency is from eternity (5:2). Even the Old Testament indications that God is multi-personal would lend evidence to Jesus' Divinity: Elohim—plural word for God used; *"Let us make man after our image..."* (Genesis 1:26), etc. In a sense, these usages are all foretelling about the one to come to be Deity. Jesus, Himself, makes reference to such in a prophetic statement by David: *"The Lord said unto my Lord..."* (Matthew 22:43-46).

4. The Resurrection of Jesus. Nothing is more critical to Christianity than the question of Jesus' Divinity—can He fulfill His promises of life after death. And nothing is more critical in proving His Deity than the question of His resurrection. The Old Testament foretold, not only of His sacrificial death for the saving of mankind (Isaiah 53), but as well of His resurrection from the dead (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:29-32). Jesus also foretold of His own death and resurrection (John 2:19-22; Luke 9:22).

He even uses the experience of Jonah to foretell of His coming death and resurrection (Matthew 12:39-40). His disciples had a hard time accepting His death, but they rejoiced greatly over His resurrection (John 16:22). The Apostles were changed and became Apostles to the world of a Savior that can give them eternal life (Matthew 16:21; 20:18-19). The resurrection of Jesus was given a primary place in their preaching because without it there was no hope for life after death.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The chosen Apostles were so thoroughly convinced of Jesus' Messiahship and Deity that they gave their lives preaching it to the world. They had nothing to gain in this world from doing so, but they were promised life with God after this life was over. Our belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior is just as critical if we want to see Him someday.

It should be quite obvious that we have only touched on all the various forms of evidences for believing in Jesus. But this does give sufficient information to be used in helping others come to a belief in Him. Spend the time looking over and studying about these things. Find other writings that go more in detail on these matters. Strengthen your faith in the "One Lord" (Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God). There is no other "Lord" to whom we can turn that can fulfill such promises that Jesus made.

*Lesson Four****"God's Plan of Salvation"***

Over 2000 years ago a group of Shepherds in Palestine were startled by the appearance of an Angel. He assured them that there was no need for them to be afraid for he had come to bring a message of good tidings that would bring joy to all the people. He said: ***"There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord..."*** (Luke 2:6-14). Then a multitude of the heavenly host began singing praises to God for such an event. Why should men believe that the birth of Jesus made possible the Redemption of mankind?

In order for God to provide salvation for His creatures, some very important things needed to take place so that mankind would believe and accept this salvation. God's plan to save man was not something trumped up at the last minute that caught God by surprise, but it was planned before the foundation of the world was laid (Ephesians 1:4-6). So, in the mind of God the Redemptive process was already an accomplished fact (Revelation 13:8), but not yet accomplished in TIME. God even planned for the right time to accomplish man's redemption (Galatians 4:4). The following **four great events** were necessary for God to JUSTLY forgive and accept men back unto Himself.

1) The foretelling of a Redeemer to come. Even though God had promised to Eve that her seed would bruise the head of the Serpent (Genesis 3:15) and to Abraham that one of his descendants would bless all nations (Genesis 12:3; 22:18), it was not clearly stated that this seed (descendant) would be man's Savior until the Prophet Isaiah made it fairly obvious in His Messianic prophecies found in chapter 53. (Read verses 5, 10-12). He was clearly saying that this suffering servant would be man's deliverer—a Redeemer is coming!

2) The Miraculous conception and birth of the Redeemer. If this Redeemer was to suffer for our sins, it is needful that He comes to earth in a human body (Hebrews 10:4-10). An Angel came to Mary (a virgin) and let her know that she would conceive a child by the Holy Spirit and that He would be called Jesus because he will save His people from their sins—and His name will also be called Immanuel—that is, God with us (Matthew 1:18-23; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2). Thus, the birth of Jesus was a necessity on God's part before redemption could be provided for mankind. Hope now emerges from the stable in Bethlehem. God freely emptied Himself and became a man so He could identify with His creatures and provide a way for them to escape the just penalty of their sins. It is only in this "God-Man" that man can be reconciled to God.

3) The 3rd great event was the perfect life that Jesus had to live in order to offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. If he had been disobedient and sinned even once, He would have died for His own sins. But He did not sin and became the provider for God's just forgiveness of our sins (Hebrews 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Romans 3:23-26; Matthew 26:28). Jesus was God's sin-offering ("Lamb of God") for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29). Nothing in all of history can compare with the Son of God dying for the sins of men. Nothing reaches the heart of the sinner, nor warms the heart of God's people any more than the telling of the love of God for mankind (John 3:16). This is the event that Jesus said would draw men to Himself (John 12:32-33).

4) The 4th great event was Jesus' resurrection from death and Hades. They could not hold Him and He now has the "keys of death and Hades" (Revelation 1:18). All who have died have gone into Hades and could not get loose, but Jesus has the keys that will open the gates so that all mankind can be resurrected. This is our assurance that His promise of a resurrection can be trusted—believed in—because He has been resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 35-58). While all will be raised not all will be raised to the same destiny (John 5:28-29).

All four of these great events were necessary for God to provide a just means for His forgiving us and allowing us to have a relationship with Himself. How grateful we ought to be for His unspeakable love and mercy!

Four Things Man Must Do!

If salvation was only dependant upon what God has done, then all men would be saved. But that is not the picture that the Bible paints!! Scripture clearly shows man what he MUST do if he is to receive the gift of salvation through Christ Jesus. There are four things clearly spelled out for man if he desires to be saved by God's grace.

1) He must believe the Gospel Message. He must not only believe in God (Hebrews 11:6), but also in the plan of God to save man through the death of His Son. His heart must be open to the message from God so that he can evaluate it and either believe it or disbelieve it (Acts 17:11; Matthew 13:13-17). If he wants what God offers, he must believe that God can and will save him when he does whatever God requires of him.

2) He must be willing to repent. The message must prick his heart (Acts 2:37) that God had to go to such lengths to be able to forgive his sinfulness and save him. For sin is the great separator between God and man (Isaiah 59:1-2). Man is said to be spiritually dead in his trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5), and the wages

of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The removal of this sin and the penalty attached to it can only be done by God through Christ's sacrificial offering (1 Peter 1:18-19). Man has no means by which to remove or atone for his own sins. Until man comes to recognize this fact, he will see no need of the grace and mercy of God. But upon a realization that he is lost without Christ, he has to make a DECISION to turn from a life of disobedience to a life of obedience. This is called repentance. The process is: (1) Godly sorrow for sin (2 Corinthians 7:10); (2) Conviction that leads to a change of mind or heart about sin in his life; and (3) The actual fruits of repentance that shows his faith and repentance.....a changed life.

3) He must be willing to obey the Gospel message. In reality, man obeys a form of that message. The good news is that Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead for our justification and hope (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). We obey a form of that teaching (Romans 6:16-18) by: (1) We die to sin (repentance) (Romans 6:1-2); (2) We are buried by baptism (in water) with Christ upon our confession of faith (Romans 6:3-4; Romans 10:9-10); and (3) We are raised up with Him to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:5-6). The old man is buried, and the new man rises from the watery grave---forgiven, cleansed, and justified by the blood of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 1:22).

4. He must continue in a life of obedience to God as a child of God. It is not "once saved, always saved," but it is "once saved, we must continue to walk in the light to maintain that saved state (1 John 1:7-10). We are admonished to be faithful unto death if we want to receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). Our eternal salvation depends upon our faithful obedience to the will of God (Hebrews 5:8-9).

REASONS FOR BELIEVING

If man believes or does something, he must be motivated. Motivation comes from seeing and understanding good reasons for so doing. Among the many reasons that might be given, we believe the four below are ample to motivate a person to be obedient to God.

1. Because it promises an opportunity for a newness of life (Romans 6:5). Most of us make many mistakes in life and would like to be able to put them behind us. God's forgiveness is "the" way for sins to be covered (Romans 4:7-8). Our past has been made right and we begin anew to live for God. This in and of itself is a great blessing.

2. Because it offers a special relationship with Deity (1 John 3:1). When we are forgiven, the barrier of sin has been removed and we now can approach unto God through our Savior, Jesus Christ. We can now have open fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-7). We have been brought into the family of God and can truly

be called His children—His sons and daughters!

3. Because it promises God's providential care over our lives (Romans 8:28-39). His Angels are sent forth to minister unto God's children (Hebrews 1:14). He promises to listen to, answer, and give us what we ask of Him in prayer, nothing doubting (1 John 3:22). He promises that He will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13). Even His Holy Spirit makes intercessions for us before the throne of God (Rom. 8:26-27).

4. Because it promises a Resurrection unto life (John 5:28-29). All will be raised, but all will not be given life. Man has wanted to know for centuries whether there was life after death. He believed that there was such in some form, but had no way of knowing for sure and certain (2 Tim. 1:10). It is no longer a guess, but a certainty (1 Cor. 15:51-58).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A person would be very foolish not to want to believe in the Gospel Message because it makes good sense, it is believable and logical, and it is certainly desirable. If we believe that God exist and that the Bible is His Word, then we have all the assurance we need to believe the message of salvation in Christ. The significant thing about all of this is....it works! It produces much better people, much better homes, and much better circumstances in which to live.

*Lesson Five****"The One Church of the Bible"***

People often reject the church and their need to belong to it for various reasons. Possibly, some do so out of ignorance of the true church that Jesus said He would build (Matthew 16:18). Others may do so because they do not see the purpose for it nor their need of it. Still others may do so because they see so much apathy, hypocrisy, arrogance, selfishness, inconsistency, unkindness, immorality, greed, and weakness in those who claim to belong to a church. But in spite of the above, it is not only possible, but a necessity to believe in and be a part of the "one church" that Jesus built. Just because some people who are connected to a church do not live up to the teachings of Christ should be no reason for rejecting the church of Christ. We hope in this study to show why everyone should believe in the one church of the Bible.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

It is important to understand that the church did not originate with man, but with God. In fact, the church was planned by God before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). God purposed to save man before He ever created man. The salvation of man was provided through the death of Christ upon the cross (2 Timothy 1:9-10). When Jesus said He would build His church (Matthew 16:18), He had in mind to place all of those who were saved in His church. The church had its beginning (recorded in Acts 2) when the 3,000 obeyed the Gospel and were added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47 (NKJV)). Or, as the Apostle Paul writes in Colossians 1:13-14—that those who were forgiven were translated into the "kingdom of His dear Son."

When one looks at the literal meaning in the Greek (ekklesia), the purpose of the church becomes obvious—they are the "called out" people of God (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). They are the separated ones (2 Corinthians 6:14-18) from the world. So, in reality, if a person understands correctly when He obeys the Gospel, he automatically becomes a member of, a part of, the body or church of Christ. Upon being baptized, he is baptized into the one body or one church that Jesus built (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

Scriptures use different terms to identify this body of people. Each of these terms can help us to more fully appreciate what we have become a part of.

1) The church is like a constructed building. It is something to be built (Matthew 16:18). It has a builder—Jesus Christ. It has a foundation—Jesus

Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). It has a door into it—Jesus Christ (John 10:9). Of course, it is a spiritual building, not physical (1 Peter 2:5).

2) It is like a Temple. It has living stones (saved people). It has a sure foundation and corner stone—Apostles, Prophets, and Jesus Christ. It is a holy temple unto the Lord. It has become His dwelling place (Ephesians 2:19-22).

3) It is like a human body. Jesus is the head of His body (Ephesians 1:22-23). The Body of Christ is made up of many members (the saved)...but only one body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). God's Spirit dwells in His Body to animate it (James 2:26; Ephesians 2:22; Romans 8:9).

4) It is like a family. God is our Father (Matthew 6:9). If we are not in His church (family), He is not our spiritual Father. We are born anew into this family (John 3:3-5). We become the heirs of God (Romans 8:17) conditioned upon faithfulness (Revelation 2:10).

5) It is like a kingdom. Jesus is king (Luke 1:32-33). Saved people are “fellow-citizens” in this kingdom (Ephesians 2:9). We are added to this kingdom when forgiven (Colossians 1:13-14). We have hope of entering into that everlasting kingdom after death (2 Peter 1:5-11).

JESUS ONLY BUILT ONE CHURCH

He said that He would build His church—not churches (Matthew 16:18). The Apostle Paul stated that there was only “one body” which is the church (Ephesians 4:4-6; 1:22-23). If Jesus only built one, then why do we have so many different churches in existence today? It looks as though a lot of people have tried to imitate what the Lord did, but changed their churches to fit their ideas. They are in control—they are the people in charge—not Jesus (Matthew 28:18). If you wanted to know what the church of Christ should be like, where would you go to find the answer—the Bible, of course! Why not compare the Biblical description with what you see about you; and then, make a decision about which church you want to belong to.

WHY SHOULD I WANT TO BELIEVE IN THIS CHURCH?

Again, man needs to have a reason for what he believes—and those reasons should be based upon facts, evidences, or what the Bible teaches. Let's look briefly at four reasons for believing in the church of the Bible.

1) Because of the value that God places on the church. The very fact that He planned it before creation should show us the importance of the church (Ephesians 1:4). The fact that the church had to be brought into existence by the shed blood of Jesus should also show its importance (Acts 20:28). Jesus told two parables that stressed the great value of the church: (1) The man who bought land by selling all he had because there was a great treasure on it (Matthew 13:44); (2) The man who sold all his pearls because he had found the pearl of great price to buy (Matthew 13:45-46).

2) Because the saved make up the church. The church doesn't save, Jesus does. But the saved make up the church because they are added to it upon being saved (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Corinthians 12:13; John 3:3-5; etc.). We have a choice to make—(1) Become saved and added to the church; or (2) Not be a part of the church and not be saved! I want to be saved and become a member of the body of Christ.

3) Because the Lord is coming back for His church. He loves the church and has sanctified and cleansed the church so that He might present her to Himself as a glorious church—not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and that she should be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27). It is the church, the saved, that He is coming to take back to Heaven with Him. We need to be in the church and be a faithful bride at His coming.

4) Because all other churches are man-made, not God-made. They have been started, guided, named, and organized by men. They do not respect God's arrangement, nor do they respect His authority. Unfortunately, they also have no power to save anyone. Just suppose that some eligible bachelor should announce that tonight he is getting married, and that tomorrow he is going to start looking for a wife; and that furthermore, it doesn't make any difference which one he chooses, since one wife is as good as another. You would either laugh at his joke, consider him really stupid, or you would think that somebody ought to call the men in white coats with the net and put him away. Yet, this is the view spiritually taken towards the church by religious people. You are "saved" (but not the Bible way); then, you pick out a church among the many that you want to join because "one church is as good as another." Everyone understands that when you are "married" you have a wife, right then and there, and you'd better not look further. He is not married to just any woman or women, but to one woman, his wife that he loves. If we want to go to Heaven someday, we need to be in the right church—be in the church that Jesus built, bought, sanctifies, and is coming back for someday.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The great wisdom of God has been unfolded and fully revealed in Christ. The church is the product of the great planning of God. It was established, set up, among men through the work of the chosen Apostles. The church will come into existence everywhere in the world when the pure Gospel is preached in its fullness and people believe and obey that Gospel. God is glorified in the church (Ephesians 3:21).

*Lesson Six****"A Judgment Day!"***

A preacher went to talk to a person who was a member of the church, but was deeply involved in his business. He told him that he came to try to interest him in a matter of great importance to his soul and the cause of Christ. The business man replied that he was terribly sorry, but that he was much too busy to attend to that matter today or anytime soon. The preacher went away disappointed and with a heavy heart. A few days later, a disagreeable stranger stepped into the busy business man's office and laid a cold hand on his brow and said, "Come with me!" The man went home feeling dizzy, faint, and sick. A cold chill settled on his heart. His eyesight became cloudy and his tongue became thick. The stranger's name now was known—it was "death!" The man was too busy to make proper preparations for this hour, but one is never too busy to die!

Man has been given the great privilege of choice in this life. However, this privilege is not without great responsibility as well; because, someday, we will all die and come into judgment to give an accounting of our life and choices (Hebrews 9:27; Galatians 6:7-8). Do you believe this? Why should any one want to believe that there will be a judgment day? After looking at some basic teachings from the Bible about judgment, we will look at some reasons why we should all believe in a Judgment Day!

SOME FACTS GIVEN IN THE BIBLE

If we believe in God and in the Bible as the Word of God; then, shouldn't we go to the Bible to see what God has said about a Judgment Day? Upon what other basis can we be sure of a Judgment Day?

1. God says that it is coming for all. All who are in the graves will one day be raised to judgment (John 5:28-29; Hebrews 9:27). All must appear before the Judge (2 Corinthians 5:10). No one will escape it. Even fallen Angels and Satan will be there at this great Day (2 Peter 2:4).

2. The Judgment will occur when Jesus returns. Both the living and dead will be brought into judgment at His return (2 Timothy 4:1; Matthew 25:31-33). Some believe that all are judged at their death and go to their final place, but Scriptures like these certainly seem to say different. The return of Jesus is not given, so we can never know when that Day will come.

3. The basis for this Judgment is two-fold. (1) On God's part, His judgment

will be in Righteousness (Revelation 19:11), Justice (John 5:30), and by His Word of Truth (John 12:48). On man's part, we will be judged according to our Works (Revelation 20:12), our Words (Matthew 12:36), the Secrets in our lives (Ecclesiastes 12:14), our Failure to do right (James 4:17), whether we know God or obey the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9), and whether we are faithful or not (Revelation 2:10).

WHY HAVE A JUDGMENT DAY?

It is quite obvious to all that in a limited sense at least we are already judged as to whether we are saved or lost in this life. But in reality, whether we are saved or lost is a matter of faith on man's part—it is not an absolute certainty. For example, Jesus told about some people who claimed to believe, who had (according to them) performed miracles in His Name, but Jesus said that He never knew them (Matthew 7:21-23). It is very possible that people can believe that they are saved when they are not. A Day of Judgment will determine that matter for certainty.

A Judgment Day is certainly not for the purpose of extending Grace and mercy. Such is extended by God in this life only (Titus 2:11-14). If men reject God's gracious offer here; at their death, their destiny is sealed (Luke 16:26). Even if we beg and plead, there will be no grace extended to any at judgment. Justice alone will prevail at that time. Receiving the benefits of God's Grace in this life by our obedient faith makes it possible for us to be ready for the Judgment Day!

Three suggestions can be offered for the "why" of a Judgment Day. There may be many more thoughts that could be added, but these three seem to be logical and reasonable. When we are dealing with Timelessness, we are forced to use concepts that involve Time. This is our limitation, not God's however. So, we need to be careful in what we say about things that take place after this life.

1) It is to vindicate God's Righteousness. God already knows fully the conditions of all His creatures. Men make all kinds of wrong judgments in this life. Many are falsely accused, while others believe that they are on God's side. In the Day of Judgment, God's actions will be completely upheld as being righteous to all. As the Apostle Paul stated in Romans 3:4: ***"Let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged.'"*** God's judgment will be upheld as being right (Romans 2:5-6).

2) It will be a complete judgment. In the courts of men, mistakes are made—the righteous are made to suffer as though they were wrong—and the unrighteous are turned loose as though they were innocent. But in God's

Judgment, all the facts will be brought out completely and a just judgment made on the basis of all the facts (Revelation 20:11-15). It will be clearly obvious why men received the judgment they received. All mis-conceptions and all wrong judgments will be corrected then.

3) It is a final passing of sentence for man's final destiny. It will be somewhat like our court systems. A person is arrested and placed in Jail until his case comes up. He is then brought to trial. The evidence is heard by the jury and is found guilty or innocent. The Judge officially pronounces the sentence. The final verdict belongs to God! It is a consigning of man to his final destiny (Matthew 25:46). There will be no appeals—no 2nd trials—no second chance—the sentence will be final!

SO... WHY BELIEVE IN A DAY OF JUDGMENT?

Those who believe the Bible to be the Word of God realize that there are those who are lost and those who are saved; those who believe and those who do not—and in a sense are already judged. And we can go even further, after death, we all go into the Hadean realm of the dead. But we are placed either in a place of comfort or a place of torment (Luke 16:25) evidently awaiting the final judgment. The following four thoughts are suggested that may help to answer this question for you.

1) We want all the injustices done on earth corrected. That requires that God be the Judge so that it will be done correctly. His judgment will be righteous (Romans 2:5-6). So God has appointed a Day in which He will judge the world (Hebrews 9:27).

2) If we are accountable human beings, then there has to be a final judgment. We must be brought before God's judgment bar to give an accounting of our deeds, words, and actions. The Bible refers to this as the Judgment Day (Revelation 20:11-15).

3) This Day has been made certain by an indisputable fact—Jesus' resurrection! The Apostle Paul stated this concept in Acts 17:30-31. And upon the basis of this fact, he called upon all men to repent so they can be ready for this great Day.

4) Old Testament examples of God's judgment make a Day of Judgment certain. The Apostle Peter uses these examples to give us a good reason for believing that there will be a Judgment Day—God spared not Angels that sinned; He destroyed the world by a flood in Noah's day; and turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes (2 Peter 2:4-6). He struck two sons of the High priest dead in the Tabernacle (Leviticus 10:1-3). Even though He does not strike

everyone dead who disobeyed Him, He gave us an example of what to expect in the Day of Judgment.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Of course, the very fact that the Bible states that there will be a Judgment Day is sufficient proof to those who believe in God. But the terror created at the thought of a Day of giving an account of our lives when we are not ready is sufficient to cause a person not to want to believe that such a Day will occur (2 Corinthians 5:11). For those who are prepared for that Day, it does not need to be terrifying.

