

INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

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Cover art by Betty Choate

**J.C. Choate/Louis Rushmore Publications
P.O. Box 72
Winona, MS 38967**

**662.283.1192
www.WorldEvangelism.org
www.GospelGazette.com**

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CHAPTER 1: CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is one of several major religions of the world. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism each claim hundreds of millions of loyal followers, and collectively they represent most of the world's population of over 6 billion people. About one-third of the people of the world claim to be Christians. Each religion has a system of worship and beliefs, sacred texts, prophets, contemporary provision for leadership, and teaching, as well as impact on value systems and cultural effects. Each major religion claims to answer fundamental questions about the source and purpose of life. Each deals to some degree with the concept of life after death.

All of the major world's religions provide teaching that ultimately provides some guidelines and principles for everyday life and behavior. From each religion, a simplified code of ethics can be defined. All major religions have persuasive leaders and teachers that result in preservation and perpetuation of their doctrines, leading to the conversion of their youth and non-believers.

Some religious scholars believe that the world's major religions are all variations of a single religious doctrine. This doctrine encourages belief in a Supreme Being, purpose, or force that results in respect and reverential followings. These scholars believe a common or universal code of ethics could be developed, and life after death can result in either a better or a worse afterlife, depending on one's compliance with the code of ethics.

Other religious scholars believe the opposite of a universal code inclusive of all religions. They promote acceptance of their particular religion, and require exclusion of all others. Often, acceptance of the religion of others is viewed

as being absolutely unacceptable and in violation of the religion's fundamental behavioral requirements.

What should one believe? The stakes are high, if we believe in an afterlife. (Actually, the stakes are high irrespective whether one believes in life after death.) Choosing a religion that is not true could cause one to fail in preparation for an acceptable afterlife. In addition, can one's religion result in help with life on earth today? Selecting the true religion may make a difference in our day-to-day well being.

A key word to consider in answering these questions is the word truth. One's religion should be based on truth. Are there proof, evidence, and truth to support the doctrine, system of belief, worship, and claims of our religion? The proof is available to establish that the demands of Christianity are based on unquestionable truths. When everything is considered, Christianity provides a powerful basis of belief for living one's life and for preparing for life after death.

Christians believe that Jesus Christ lived about 2000 years ago in Israel. They follow His teachings. Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God. God is believed to be the Supreme Being that created the universe, including man and all life. The text of Christianity is the Bible. Can the Bible be believed and trusted? Facts can be considered to answer this question. Since the Bible is the single, concise, complete, and the original text revealing Christianity, it should be evaluated before anything else that discusses Christianity is considered. Everything else written about Christianity has some basis or root in the Bible. This book must be understood first.

CHAPTER 2: THE BIBLE

Part One

The entire basis of Christianity is found in the Bible. If one does not believe the Bible, it is impossible to define and understand Christianity. If one believes the Bible, then he can accurately define and determine the requirements of Christianity. What do we need to know to believe the Bible? There are several proofs of the Bible's authenticity as the book of books provided through supernatural means for the benefit of mankind.

First, upon study of the Bible one will learn that even though it was written by about 40 men over a period of about 1600 years, there is perfect unity of thought and agreement throughout the Bible's 66 books. The writers spoke several different languages, lived in different places, and came from different social and cultural backgrounds, yet they wrote nothing that was inconsistent with the writings of all the others. When a detailed study of the Bible is conducted, one finds a single theme and purpose that runs throughout its 66 books. Every book contributes to this theme. Man was created by God when He created everything, and God desires for man to dwell with Him in His eternal domain (heaven) when man's life on earth is over. The provision for man's eternal life with God is the dominating subject of the Bible. God wants man to submit in obedience to His sovereign power and authority as his maker and sustainer. The Bible reveals God's will for man's existence. The plan for saving man from his own failings and weakness is unveiled from the beginning of the Bible to the end. There is perfect unity of thought and purpose. Without the guidance and superior intellect of a Supreme Being, such unity is not possible.

Second, the Bible is filled with accurate predictions of future events that deal with both physical and spiritual matters. The Bible is not a history book, but any reference to historical events in the Bible is always accurate. Numerous predictions were made about future societies, cities, and nations. These predictions were made for events sometimes several thousand years into the future. Archeologists continue to uncover evidence of the accuracy of these predictions. Not one prediction has been found to be in error.

Bible predictions regarding the coming of a Savior for man, named Jesus, are found throughout the Bible. There is not one credible argument that Jesus did not live in Palestine about 2000 years ago. The Bible describes Jesus as the Son of God, sent to this world by God to save man from sin and its consequences. Scores of prophecies about Jesus were fulfilled. The circumstances, place, people, and time of His birth were predicted accurately in the Bible. The purpose of His coming to earth as the Son of God is the subject of many publications. The time and detailed circumstances of His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead were predicted by prophets living hundred of years before Christ. These predictions were fulfilled in every detail.

The Bible provides the only logical explanation for the existence of everything. The Bible states that God, who is said to be all-powerful and of superior intelligence, created the heavens, earth, and every living thing. Man has proposed numerous theories about the existence of the world and man. Even if these statistically impossible theories were true, where and when did matter and energy originate? Something cannot come from nothing. The Bible says that God has always existed and that for Him there is no beginning. He created everything. If there was proof of life someplace else in space, where did this life begin? The Bible's explanation of the beginning is the only logical answer.

Next, the Bible, although not a science book, is always

accurate when referring to anything of a scientific nature. We can read numerous references to scientific principles or facts. Often the Bible disagrees with modern science, but it is always found to be true. This has been proven over the centuries. Man's scientific knowledge base is constantly changing. Scientists once believed the earth was flat and that the sun revolved around the earth. The knowledge of how the human body functions has been an evolving science. Reference in the Bible to the earth and man, although thousands of years old, are always accurate. The Bible refers to the place of earth in space, to its shape and rotation, to the systems of the human body, and to numerous other specific and detailed pieces of scientific information. Every detail is accurate. Man has not and cannot write a book in any area of science that is totally accurate.

The Bible provides teaching, guidance, and instructions that relate to a moral standard for man. This information has proven time after time to be superior to anything man can produce. The principle encouraging honesty, truthfulness, personal responsibility, love and compassion, hard work, etc. have never failed. Man fails when he departs from the moral, behavioral, and social principles of the Bible.

A final proof or evidence of the Bible's authenticity as the work of a Supreme Being is its survival throughout the ages. The Bible declares that man cannot destroy it. Man has tried to destroy it many times over the centuries. Entire nations and empires have dedicated themselves to this task. All have failed, and we have the Bible today, both in currently spoken languages and in preserved copies of ancient languages from thousands of years ago.

Man cannot guarantee the preservation of the Bible. Only a Supreme Being can perform such a task. The very existence of the Bible is proof of its divine purpose and authenticity.

The Bible reveals Christianity. Every evaluation con-

firms the believability and authenticity of the Bible. The Bible gives sound, accurate, logical answers to life's most important questions. Christianity provides the answers to questions about the way for man to live the best possible life on earth and prepare to live forever after life here is over. Men cannot make any meaningful promises about life after death.

CHAPTER 3: THE BIBLE

Part Two

External evidences alone can provide sufficient proof that the Bible is of divine origin and inspiration. Evidence not directly based on proclamations in the Bible about its inspiration include (1) the unity and agreement from book to book, writer to writer, country to country, and language to language, (2) accuracy of medical, scientific, historical, and archaeological information, (3) fulfillment of prophecy, and (4) durability and indestructibility. These proofs are external and require no prior belief or trust that a divine source is involved in the writing of the Bible. Internal evidences are also available to support the conclusion of external evaluation that the Bible is the product of a Supreme Being.

The Bible claims to be the inspired word of God. Consider the following passages from the Bible:

- **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
- **2 Peter 1:20-21**, “...knowing this first that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”
- **John 17:17**, “...Your word is truth.”
- **Hebrews 4:12**, “...the word of God is living and powerful...”

The Bible provides answers to some of life’s most dif-

ficult questions. From where did we and everything that exists come? Why are we here? Where are we going? These important questions should be answered. The Bible provides credible, believable, and logical answers. First, from the very first verse of the Bible we can read, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This straight forward, easy to understand statement answers the most basic question. Next, in Ecclesiastes 12:13 the Bible states, “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all.” Finally, we know what to expect when our life in this world is over by considering Hebrews 9:27, which reads, “...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” After judgment, one can expect to live forever in one of two places. First, those who have been faithful to obey God will be rewarded with an eternal home in a place of peace, happiness, and rest called heaven. Read what the Bible says in John 14:1-3, Philippians 3:20, and Revelation 21:3-5. The second place of eternal abode is called “hell.” Read of this place in the Bible of pain, sorrow, and suffering for those who refuse to obey God (Matthew 25:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 21:8).

The Bible provides the guidance and instruction needed to prepare for eternal life. We cannot find our way without the Bible. We read in Jeremiah 10:23, “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”

Man needs the Bible to know how to live on earth and prepare for judgment and eternity. The Bible says in John 12:48, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in that last day.”

The Bible is not just one book, but sixty-six books. These books can be divided into two primary groups. The first group, called the Old Testament, first written in the Hebrew language, includes 39 books, and covers God’s deal-

ings with man from the beginning (Genesis 1:1), until the coming of Christ. The last book in the Old Testament is Malachi. The next major division is called the New Testament, which includes 27 books. The New Testament was first written in Greek, and it begins with four books that tell the story of Jesus. The New Testament closes with the book of Revelation.

Each book, when studied in detail fits into a story of man, from his beginning until his departure from life on earth to his eternal place of existence. There is a historical timeline that can be followed, but the main theme and message of the Bible deals with the expectations of God for man. The Bible, again, provides a believable, logical, and credible explanation of man's reason for being and future.

CHAPTER 4: THE BIBLE

Part Three

The Bible is described by its writers as “inspired of God” in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. This means that God was involved in the writing of the Bible in order to provide His perfect message to man regarding His will for him. In the past, according to Peter in 2 Peter 1:21, God spoke through prophets who were guided by the Holy Spirit. They were inspired, which means, influenced by God as they wrote. The inspired writer of the book of Hebrews says in 1:1-2 that God “...has in these last days spoken to us by His son...” Jesus reveals God’s will to us, as we live in the last days. Jesus empowered His apostles to write the message for man to hear from Him throughout the ages. In John 14:26, we can read, “... The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

Upon examination and detailed study, one can understand the structure, organization, and overall message of the Bible and its 66 books. The two general divisions of the Bible are the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament, with 39 books, begins with the creation of the world and all life. It closes with the writings of the prophet Malachi. The Old Testament covers a period of about 4000 to 5000 years.

The New Testament’s 27 books begin with the birth and life of Christ in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The New Testament ends with the book of Revelation, written less than 100 years after the birth of Christ.

The 39 books of the Old Testament were written by several men in the Hebrew language. These 39 books can be divided into four major groups. The first group contains the

first 5 books, all written by Moses. Some call this group the “law,” based on the extensive discussion of the Law of Moses in four of the books (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). It is here we find the widely known “ten commandments.” Genesis is the first book, and begins with the creation of man and the world. It closes with the death of Jacob, the father of the sons and grandsons who would become the heads of Israel’s 12 tribes. Genesis covers a period of time often called the Patriarchal Age, because of the way God dealt with father figures of the period. These men, beginning with Adam, continuing through others such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were given instructions from God regarding worship and the direction for life. The Patriarchal Age can be divided into 6 periods:

1. The creation period (Genesis 1-5)
2. The flood period (Genesis 6-9)
3. The tower of Babel period (Genesis 10-11)
4. Abraham and the promise period (Genesis 12-23)
5. Isaac and Jacob’s period (Genesis 24-36)
6. Joseph and the captivity period (Genesis 37-50)

The book of Job is also from this first age.

The next section of Bible history is called the Mosaic Age. These next four books of the Old Testament, beginning with Exodus and continuing through Deuteronomy, tell about the nation of Israel (descendents of the twelve sons of Jacob). The book of Exodus begins the history of Israel, with Moses being chosen to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity. The book of Deuteronomy closes with the death of Moses as Israel occupied the “promised land.” The first major covenant or law for God’s people is given to Israel in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy with portions in the book of Numbers. This law is commonly called the Law of Moses and was the rule of life for these people until the coming of Christ.

The next major section of the Old Testament is a group

of twelve books that cover the history of the nation of Israel from their leader after Moses, until they were overcome and became captives of Babylon. These books are Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Leaders of distinction during his period begin with Joshua, and continue through the judges, including Ruth, Samuel and the first kings, Saul, David, and Solomon.

The group of books often called Hebrew Poetry or Wisdom literature was written during the time of David and Solomon, except for Job, written earlier. These books are Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

The last group of books is called the Major and Minor Prophets. The Major Prophets, being longer than the other books of Old Testament prophecy, include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel, were written at various times during Israel's history. These books provide scores of predictions of the future and are filled with warnings for those disobedient to God.

The other group of 12 prophetic books called the Minor Prophets include Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. These books were written through the final period covering Israel's history. The prophets were men that were guided to speak for God, and were filled with warnings for Israel; they also contain predictions of future events, with much emphasis on the coming of the Savior and King called Christ. After 120 years, the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the northern kingdom (often referred to as Israel) and the southern kingdom (referred to as Judah). The Old Testament must be read and studied to understand (1) God and His nature, (2) the purpose of Israel, (3) the kingdom (church) of Christ, and (4) the hope of salvation for all men in Christ.

The 27 books of the New Testament cover the third

major period of biblical time division. This period, which follows the Patriarchal and the Mosaic Ages, is called the Christian Age. This period began with the ending of the Mosaic Age, when Christ established His Kingdom to begin an era for all men to follow God under a common covenant called Christianity.

The first books of the New Testament are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which deal with the birth, life, death, and teachings of Christ. The next book is Acts, which is the only history book in the New Testament. This book begins with Christ's return to heaven following His resurrection. Shortly afterwards (Acts 2), the kingdom of Christ was established, and a history of its first century beginning follows.

The next books of the New Testament consist of the letters of early church leaders to various individuals and churches. These include Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude. The last book of the New Testament is Revelation, a book of prophecy.

CHAPTER 5: THE GOD OF THE BIBLE

The Bible can be accepted and believed to be truthful and accurate. The evidence of this book's credibility has been reviewed and sufficient reason to believe its teaching has been well established. What does the Bible say to us? First, the Bible reveals God as the Supreme Being that created and sustains everything. In the very first verse of the Bible, Moses states, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." If we believe the Bible, then we can believe in God. From study of the Bible, we can learn that God is:

- **Spirit** – John 4:24, "God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship Him in spirit and truth."
- **All-Powerful** – Acts 17:24, "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands."
- **All-Knowing** – Hebrews 4:13, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."
- **Everywhere** – Psalms 139:7-12, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me. And your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me,' Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide

from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.”

- **Just** – Psalms 89:14, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face.”
- **Holy** – 1 Peter 1:16, “...Be holy, for I am holy.”
- **Unchangeable** – Ecclesiastes 3:14, “I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it. God does it, the men should fear before Him.”
- **Loving** – John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”
- **Good** – Psalms 145:9, “The Lord is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works.”
- **Merciful** – Ephesians 2:4, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.”
- **Perfect** – Matthew 5:48, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

God created the world, and put man on earth with the capacity to live, experience love, know his purpose, and choose to believe and trust God. Man, from the beginning, has struggled with temptation to transgress the will of God. God, because of his love for man, has always provided man with a way to be reconciled to Him, even though he violates God’s will.

The Bible states in Psalms 19:1 that, “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.” Another writer states in Romans 1:20, “for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without ex-

cuse.” The existence of a visible, tangible world proves the existence of God. Man’s existence is dependent upon God. The writer states in Acts 17:28, “for in Him we live, move, and have our being.” God desires that man know and understand Him. The writer of Psalms 14:1 states, “The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.”

God is described in the Scriptures as “three persons” in nature, yet one in purpose. The Bible reveals God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. We refer to those three as the Godhead. In John 20:17, Jesus refers to God the Father as he states, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” In Genesis 1:26, the writer states, “Let Us make man in Our image.” The plurality of Creators refers to the Godhead, Who were present at the creation.

The second person of the Godhead is Jesus, the Son of God. He is described as such in Matthew 16:16, which states, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” In John 1:1-2 the Jesus is described as follows, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” In John 1:14 we read, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus was sent to earth and lived, died, and was resurrected from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Hebrews 1:1-2).

Finally, the third person of the Godhead is the Spirit (or Holy Spirit). In John 14:16-17 Jesus says, “And I will pray the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth...” Also read Jesus’ words in John 16:13-14, “...when He, the Spirit of Truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will

glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” All three members of the Godhead are referred to in Matthew 28:18-19 when Jesus commanded His followers saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...”

God is the Creator of the world and “the Supreme Being.” He is our Heavenly Father and demands that we recognize His superior being. Jesus is the Son of God, present in the beginning, and born of woman to live on earth for a short period of time to compensate for man’s inability to satisfy God the Father. The Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus to guide His early followers to understand “all truth” regarding man’s submission to God. The wisest man of all time, Solomon, states in Ecclesiastes 12:13, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all.”

CHAPTER 6: GOD AND MAN

The Bible states that man is the creation of God, and is accountable to him. The account of God's creation of everything including man is provided in the book of Genesis. "Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26-27).

From the beginning, man was different from other living beings. Man was made in God's image. He has the capacity to know, to understand, to comprehend, and to make decisions. These are things that none of God's other creations can do. He has freedom to choose between alternatives in every aspect of life. God wants man to respect, love, honor, and obey Him. Man can choose to do as God desires, or he can choose to do otherwise. Unfortunately, the very first man and woman, Adam and Eve, chose to disobey God. The third chapter of Genesis gives the account of their disobedience.

God continued to love Adam and Eve, and God provided a way for them to be reconciled to Him. They were punished and suffered the consequence of their disobedience the remainder of their lives, but they were provided a way to renew their relationship with God. Man has always been provided a means to maintain a relationship of favor with God. This is possible if we are willing to submit to His will and conditions. It is possible for man to continue in his favored relationship with God in spite of his weakness and failure. Some important Bible passages that deal with God and man's relationship are summarized below.

- **John 3:16**, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”
- **Romans 12:1-2**, “I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of you mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
- **Romans 8:28**, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”
- **Romans 8:38-39**, “I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- **John 14:15**, “If you love Me, keep my commandments.”
- **2 Timothy 4:18**, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly Kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever.”
- **Jeremiah 10:23**, “...I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his owns steps.”
- **Matthew 10:28**, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”
- **Mark 10:27**, “...with Gold all things are possible.”
- **Deuteronomy 4:24**, “For the Lord your God is a con-

suming fire, a jealous God.”

- **Psalm 46:1**, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”
- **Psalm 116:5**, “...our God is merciful.”
- **John 4:24**, “God is Spirit, and those who worship him, must worship in spirit and truth.”
- **Psalm 68:20**, “God is the God of salvation.”
- **Romans 8:31**, “...If God is for us, who can be against us.”
- **1 John 4:8**, “...God is love.”

God loves man, wants him to be saved, and provided a way for salvation to occur. Salvation is necessary because of man’s inability to be sinless. The Bible states in Romans 3:23, “All sin and fall short of the glory of God.” The Romans writer further states in Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death.” Our sin condemns us. We need help to escape from this condemnation. If we fail to deal with sin, we face God in a final judgment with our sins. The Bible says that we are all certain to die and after death face judgment (Hebrew 9:27).

The soul of man is described in the Bible as a part of man that will continue to live after physical death. The soul has the capacity to think, reason, experience joy or pain, experience consciousness, and remember life in the physical realm (Luke 16:19-31). Salvation of the soul for everlasting life after God’s final judgment is the most important matter in life for one to achieve. We read in Matthew 16:26, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul...” God has specific expectations of man (Matthew 7:21), and being religious alone is not adequate to please God. God provides a way for man to please Him and to be ready for judgment when life is over.

CHAPTER 7: GOD'S PLAN TO SAVE MAN

The theme of the Bible from beginning to end is that God loves man and desires every man's respect and obedience, which will result in man being able to go to be with God when his life on earth ends. Experience reveals that man is subject to failure as a result of transgressing the will of God as found in the Bible. Man cannot save himself. Transgressing the will of God is sin. Sin causes one to be condemned, without God, and lost. Some key scriptures that support the need for God's help are as follows.

- **Jeremiah 10:23**, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps."
- **Psalms 119:105**, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
- **Romans 3:23**, "For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God."
- **Romans 6:23**, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- **Isaiah 59:1-2**, "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save, or His ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sin's have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear you."

God is willing to help man. He has provided a way for man to be made acceptable to Him. This was planned from the beginning. In Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, thousands of years before the beginning of Christianity, Moses said,

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like Me from your midst”, and “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.” Even before Moses, a promise is recorded in Genesis 22:17-18 regarding a Savior and Leader when God said to Abraham, “blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the seashore and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

The Old Testament contains hundreds of predictions about the Savior that God will send to save man. Many provide graphic details about events in the life of the Savior. Consider passages from Isaiah 53:

“Who has believed our report... For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness... He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities: The chastisement for our peace was upon Him. And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted. Yet he opened not His mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment. And who

will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living: For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked – But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth... Because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and he bore the sins of many, and made intercessions for the transgressors.”

The prophet Isaiah was writing hundreds of years before Christ. He foretold the life and death of one approved of God to “bear the sins of man” and make intercession with God on man’s behalf. His description of the death and burial of Jesus Christ was accurate in every detail. God’s plan was for Jesus Christ to be the Savior of man. Jeremiah predicted Christ in Jeremiah 23:5 as follows, “Behold the days are coming says the Lord, that I will raise up to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.”

Jesus is a gift to man. John 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 1:1-2, “God who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets; has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds...”

Man, with his own offerings and efforts, cannot please God and be saved from sin. Man can be saved by accepting God’s terms of salvation. These terms are provided by Jesus, the Son of God. Salvation is through Christ. When Christ was born, the writer of the book of Luke stated in 2:10-11, “... Do not be afraid, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all the people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

CHAPTER 8: JESUS THE SON OF GOD

The greatest truth of the entire Bible is that Jesus, the Christ, is the Son of God. Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of a Savior for man. Jesus was the fulfillment of these prophecies. He was sent to earth by the Father to be offered as the sacrifice for man's sin (Ephesians 5:2). Jesus lived a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15), making Him the only man born of woman to be acceptable to God as a perfect sacrifice for man's sin. He willingly gave Himself to save man (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). The Bible describes Jesus as the Savior of the world (Luke 19:10), the Son of God (John 9:35-37), man's Advocate (1 John 2:1), Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:1), High priest (Hebrews 3:1), anointed of God (Matthew 3:17), the beginning and the end (Revelation 1:8,11), King (John 18:37), Christ (Acts 2:30), the Author of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), and Teacher from God (John 3:2).

The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament provide accounts of the life of Christ. His birth in Bethlehem is described (Matthew 1:22-23). His genealogy is provided by Matthew and Luke, with both showing His link to men and women of prophecy. The life of Jesus is an amazing story. Jesus had supernatural powers. He stilled the winds and waves. He healed the sick of all types of diseases and infirmities. He cast out demons. He brought the dead back to life. Jesus foretold His own death and circumstances leading up to the end. Masses followed Him and believed His teachings. He clearly described the doctrine that all men can follow and please God. Jesus promised to return from the grave and did so as He predicted. He demonstrated His supreme being and His willingness to use His place with

God for our benefit. Jesus is alive and reigns over His kingdom, called the church. His throne is at the side of God, His Father. He taught and prepared his apostles for the beginning of a new era of relationship between man and God. Forty days after His ascension from the earth and return to heaven (Acts 1-2), the Holy Spirit came to the apostles as Jesus had told them (John 14:17; 16:13). With the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of Christ was begun in Jerusalem. Those who believed the teachings of Jesus and yielded their will and way of life to His will were added to His kingdom.

The first 40-60 years that followed the beginning of Christ's kingdom were filled with continued proof of His power as His apostles performed miracles in His name. During these years, the Holy Spirit was guiding men to write accounts of events taking place, the story of Jesus' life, and letters of instruction and prophecy to establish the church and its doctrine. The church belongs to Christ. Through His power, sacrifice, and love it was created. All men are free to belong to the church established by Jesus. Jesus promised that He would someday return to redeem His church (John 14:1-5). Jesus will fulfill His promise to reward those who have been faithful until death or who are alive at His coming and are living according to His will. Judgment of all men that have ever lived will follow the second coming of Jesus. The faithful will be rewarded, and those that reject Christ will be punished. The eternal home of God, Jesus, and the faithful of mankind will be heaven.

CHAPTER 9: CHRIST AND SALVATION

The Bible says that all men sin and transgress the will of God (Romans 3:23). Sin separates man from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). Man needs Jesus to be saved from his sin. The blood that Jesus shed as He did on the cross is the cleansing agent for man's sin (Hebrews 9:22; 1 John 1:7-9). How is one saved, having full assurance of being ready to die in a state that will be judged favorably at the second coming of Christ?

The first people to be told the answer to this question was the crowd gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish holiday, Pentecost (Acts 1-2). The apostles preached to this crowd. The apostles' message reminded the people of the prophecies concerning a Savior. They were told that Jesus was the Savior, just as the prophets foretold. Upon realizing that they had put to death the very One Who could save them, the Jerusalem crowd asked the apostles what they should do. They were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). They wanted to remedy their situation as lost sinners. As they were baptized, the Lord added them to the church (Acts 2:42). This simple plan is all that is required for one to become saved believers and followers of Jesus. This trust and willingness to obey the teaching of Jesus is faith. Saving faith involves putting one's trust in the unseen (Hebrews 16:15-16), in the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 9:22), in the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-11), and in the authority of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20).

The New Testament provides numerous examples and accounts of men going through the process of becoming a Christian. These accounts all have the common elements of (1) becoming aware of one's lost state and the need of salva-

tion (Romans 10:17), (2) belief that Jesus is the risen Son of God (Hebrews 11:6), (3) willingness to confess Christ (Matthew 10:32-33), (4) turning from man's way to the way of Christ in repentance (Acts 17:30), and (5) baptism (immersion in water) to complete the process of entering the church (Acts 2:38). This is why God gave His Son (John 3:16).

When one obeys these teachings and is added to the church (Acts 2:47), burdens are lifted (Matthew 11:28-30), and one can then enjoy forgiveness (Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9), and blessings (Ephesians 1:3) of God. All our past sins are removed at baptism, and one can begin a new life in Christ (Ephesians 2:13). As we live for Christ according to His will (the Bible), He will forgive our sins as we live (1 John 1:17) from day-to-day.

CHAPTER 10: CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

The Bible, as already stated, is the only authoritative source of information one can use to learn about Christianity. In previous lessons, the plan of God to make it possible for man to be suitable for eternal life in heaven has been discussed. The way to God and heaven is through Christ. We read Christ's own words in Matthew 28:18 saying, "All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth." The Hebrew writer wrote of Jesus in Hebrews 5:9, "And having been perfected He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."

God planned the way of salvation and sent Jesus to establish the church (Matthew 16:18) for the saved. Christ is the answer to man's needs today. Consider Hebrews 1:1-7, which states:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things through whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The writer of Acts stated in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Christ is the Head of all things. Ephesians 1:22 states, "... He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head

over all things to the church, which is His body..." Man's hope is in Christ. The power, place, and authority of Christ is described in Colossians 1:13-18, which states:

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His Love in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist and He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead that in all things He may have the preeminence."

How can one be saved? What is the role and place of "church" in being saved or pleasing God? Salvation is in Christ. From Romans 1:16 we read, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth..." Gospel means "good news." From 1 Corinthians 15:17, we learn:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve, After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but

some have fallen asleep, after that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.”

We can be saved because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. We are saved by obeying the teaching of Christ. He has all authority over all things.

What do we do to obey Jesus and to be saved? The Bible provides the answer to this question. During the life of Christ, He prepared the apostles to teach His plan of salvation. Shortly before Jesus ascended back to heaven after His resurrection, He commands the apostles (Mark 16:15-16), “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Matthew’s account of this command in Matthew 28:19-26 reads, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always even to the end of the age.”

A few days later, the apostles preached to the people gathered from across the world in Jerusalem to observe the Jewish day of Pentecost.

CHAPTER 11:

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Almost all religions involve worship, which involves acts of respect, acknowledgment of sovereignty, and love. The Bible provides guidance for Christian worship. One may find a range of traditions, doctrines, and acts in the practices of Christian worship. Care must be given to doing what God wants man to do for worship. The Bible teaching on worship is fully adequate and the only authoritative guide.

What constitutes Christian worship? First, we need to understand the state of mind for worship. Simply following rituals and traditions of man's design are not pleasing to God (Matthew 15:9, 2 John 9-11). Our hearts must be filled with love and respect for God as our Creator, source of being, and Savior. We must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

Christians in the early church, as determined by studying the New Testament met to worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). They participated in five acts of worship. Only these five acts should be practiced today. One involves eating the Lord's Supper. Jesus taught concerning this worship about His death (Matthew 26:26-30). This act involved remembering the death of Christ as unleavened bread representing His body is eaten and fruit of the vine representing his blood is drunk (1 Corinthians 11:23-34). The Lord's Supper is a memorial feast, to reflect on our Savior and His sacrifice for us rather, than a common meal to feed our bodies.

A second act of worship is prayer. Early Christians prayed together (Acts 2:42), and prayed without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer should involve giving thanks, acknowledgment of God's power, mercy, grace, forgiveness, petitions for forgiveness, guidance, and help.

Christians in the first century sang during their meetings on the first day of the week. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He and the apostles sang hymns (Matthew 26:30). Paul's letters to the Ephesians (5:19-20) and Colossians (3:16) gave instruction for the church to teach, and encourage one another as they met by singing. Singing provides an opportunity for our feelings about God, Jesus, our brethren, the Church, the Bible, the Spirit, heaven, grace, mercy, and a host of other relevant subjects. God wants us to sing as worship to Him. Other forms of musical expression are not mentioned or authorized.

Another act of worship is study and meditation. God's word is to be known and understood by Christians (2 Timothy 2:15). Worship includes preaching, teaching, and study of the Bible (2 Timothy 4:1-9). God's will is revealed in His word. We cannot be saved without doing the will of God (Matthew 7:21). Preaching as worship is a common means of communicating the message of the cross, salvation, and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:17-21).

A fifth act of worship authorized by the Bible is the giving of one's means to the church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Christians give out of an understanding of what God has given us. Instructions for giving include, (1) giving feely and cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:17), (2) as prospered (2 Corinthians 9:6-8), and on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:12). God promises to bless the giver when gifts are from a heart of love and understanding. Being able to give to God is a privilege.

CHAPTER 12: CHRISTIAN LIVING AND CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

Christian Living

The Bible not only provides the instruction and teaching needed for one to become a Christian, but it also gives guidance concerning one's life as a Christian. The Christian is living a new life (Colossians 3:1-9), in Christ (John 3:3-5) as a citizen of the kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13-14). The Christian life involves a commitment to become the kind of person that pleases God. Consider Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

The Bible provides instruction regarding the social, moral, and behavioral code for Christians. Christians are called ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). The Christian is characterized by love, compassion, self-control, moral purity, modesty, humility, honesty, integrity, concern for others, acceptance of responsibility, maturity, attitude, and faithfulness to Bible teachings. Christians are to be leaders in doing good.

Christians worship God. They follow the guidance of the Bible in worship. Christians know, respect, and study the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16-17). Prayer is a continuous act of the Christian (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Life as a Chris-

tian is an unreserved commitment to doing the will of God (Luke 9:23-27, 57-62). First priority in every aspect of life for the Christian is to do God's will (Matthew 6:33-34).

As faithful Christians, one can enjoy the care and blessings of God. God promises to bring for those who love Him all things in life together for good (Romans 8:28). All spiritual blessings are provided for God's children (Ephesians 1:3). God will give wisdom to the faithful (James 1:5). Christians are more than conquerors through Christ and cannot be separated from God and His love and care (Romans 8:31-39).

Christian Character

Christian character is developed as one follows the teachings of Christ and the Bible. The new birth that results in one becoming a Christian is the beginning of a lifetime process of transforming one's character to be more like Christ. Consider the teaching of Romans 12:1-2, which reads, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." What characterized the transformed person? Many passages define the Christian.

Love is the dominant trait of a true follower of Christ. Jesus taught in Matthew 22:36-40, "'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'"

John emphasized the requirement that one practice and possess Christian love in numerous passages. Some of these

include:

- **John 14:15**, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”
- **John 15:12**, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”
- **1 John 3:16**, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”
- **1 John 3:18**, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”
- **1 John 4:7-8**, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”
- **1 John 4:19**, “We love Him because He first loved us.”
- **1 John 5:3**, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

The application and incorporation of love into one’s character results in numerous character traits. Consider Peter’s teaching in 2 Peter 1:5-10:

“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to

make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble...”

Another passage that helps define the character of Christians is Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...” Paul encouraged the Ephesians brethren to be of Christian character as he wrote to them in 4:1-3, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” In addition, consider Ephesians 4:32, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.”

Other traits encouraged in Scripture include: (1) honesty and truthfulness (Colossians 3:9), (2) wisdom (James 3:17), (3) an obedient heart (Romans 6:17), (4) the ability to sacrifice for others (Philippians 2:4-5), (5) the wise use of time and talents (Colossians 4:5), (6) compassion and a benevolent attitude (1 Peter 3:8), (7) to be dependable (1 Corinthians 15:58), (8) respect for others (Philippians 2:3), (9) humility (2 Corinthians 3:5; 1 Peter 5:5), (10) prayerfulness (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Philippians 4:6), (11) soberness (Romans 12:3; 1 Peter 5:8), (12) to be responsible (Acts 9:10), (13) to be reverent (Hebrews 12:28), (14) to be knowledgeable of God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15), and (15) to be morally pure (1 Timothy 5:22).

Everyone has the opportunity to grow continuously in Christian character. Study God’s Word, and the application of its teaching fuels the growth process.

CHAPTER 13: CHRISTIAN WORK AND CHRISTIAN HOPE

Christian Work

The Christian is provided biblical guidance for worship, personal development, and work. What is the work of Christians? Jesus instructed all Christians in Matthew 28:18-20 to teach the Gospel to every person in the world. The mission of the church is to provide teaching to every person that will enable every person to decide whether or not to obey the Gospel of Christ. Teaching should be persuasive and serious. The example of the apostles and first century church in spreading the Gospel to all the world is described in the New Testament book of Acts.

Every Christian should use his personal talents and blessings to perform a unique and personal ministry to spread the Gospel. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:7, 11-12 as follows, “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ...And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Also read 1 Cor. 12:12-26.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it

therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which we think to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part that lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Christians work together to accomplish this most demanding and important mission. To teach others, one must (1) know the Bible, (2) be active in teaching every day, (3) be edified and strengthened by brethren, (4) plan and set goals, (5) know one’s personal characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses, and (6) love one’s neighbor as he loves himself.

Church Mission

Jesus commanded the church to go into all the world and teach the Gospel to all who have not heard (Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16). As we read of the response of first

century Christians, beginning in Jerusalem, they went to all the world and every creature under heaven heard the Gospel (Acts 1:8; Colossians 1:23). The mission of the first century church was completed, and we have the same mission today. The New Testament gives good accounts of the missionary efforts of the apostle Paul and a team of coworkers. We can do the same today and will get the same results.

Christian Hope

The Christian hope any person can have is to live forever in heaven. The description of heaven provided by John in Revelation 2:2 is of a beautiful place of perfection, everlasting life, the absence of pain, death, disappointment, fear, or hurt of any kind. There is no sin in heaven. Christians have hope because of the powerful resurrection of Jesus from the dead (2 Corinthians 15:17-19). Christians are saved by hope (Romans 8:24). Christ is our hope (1 Timothy 1:1). The full assurance of hope (Hebrews 6:21) comes through diligently obeying until the end. The end is either death or the return of Christ (John 14:1-3).

There is no hope without Christ (Ephesians 2:12), and with no hope one faces eternal punishment (1 Thessalonians 4:13). God's mercy, love, and grace cannot be fully understood, but we can know that God does keep His promises, and we can achieve the hope of heaven.

Jesus promised to return (John 14:23), and His return will be the greatest event of all time. The greatest hope of any person is that he can be ready for Christ's return, and then be carried by the Lord to his eternal home in heaven.

CHAPTER 14:

CHRISTIAN GOVERNMENT

The Christian is one that has been added to the church upon acceptance of Christ and obedience of Christ's conditions for salvation (Acts 2:38-42). All Christians are in the same church, simply the collective group of those added by Christ to His body. How is the church governed?

First, Christ is the Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). There is no organizational structure given or authorized by the Bible for the universal church. The only authorized organizational and church governance instructions are for individual congregations or groups of Christians who regularly meet and work together on a weekly basis.

Congregations are to be autonomous, meaning fully independent of any oversight or reporting relationship to any other congregation or person outside of their own membership. The oversight of an individual congregation is the responsibility of elders (1 Timothy 3:1-2; Acts 20:28). These men must meet qualifications to serve the church in their role as provided in the Scripture (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-13). The work of an eldership (meaning a plurality, and only a plurality of elders) is to feed the church (Acts 20:28), teach (Titus 1:9), provide examples of faith (1 Peter 5:3), rule (Romans 12:8), protect the church (Acts 20:29-31), watch and tend the flock (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2), and preside over its operation (1 Timothy 5:1). Elders are also called bishops (1 Timothy 5:1), pastors (Ephesians 4:11), overseers (Acts 20:28), rulers (Hebrews 13:17), shepherds (1 Peter 5:2), and presbyters (1 Timothy 5:1). These leaders are responsible for the overall work and welfare of their respective congregations. Congregations can work together on projects, pro-

vided that a subordinate relationship is not developed.

Another special servant authorized for the local congregation of the church is the deacon. These men must meet qualifications provided by Scripture (1 Timothy 3:8-13). They serve the congregation and are overseen by the elders. Their duties vary, and include a full range of ministries to help the congregation as it functions to worship, edify its members, encourage personal ministry, and attend to benevolent needs of members and their community.

Evangelists work under the oversight of local congregations in their work of preaching the Gospel. The work of an evangelist is described in the book of 2 Timothy. These men are given the task of advancing the Gospel to every place in the world where people have not heard the message of God concerning salvation. They are to “preach the word,” everywhere and all the time (2 Timothy 4:2).

WORLD EVANGELISM MATERIALS

• Gospel Gazette Online (www.gospelgazette.com)

Gospel Gazette Online made its debut in January 1999 as a monthly, religious Internet journal. Today, the *Gazette* is read by people all over the world (from all seven continents, including Antarctica). Obviously, *GGO* via the Internet is available even in some places in the world to which one cannot easily go physically with the Gospel of Christ (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Antarctica). Each issue sports articles by Christian men and women on a variety of biblical subjects, questions and answers, plus an audio message. In addition, thousands of articles from past issues appear in the archives and may be selected with the help of the site search engine.

Dozens of brothers and sisters in Christ have lent their studious pens through the pages of *GGO* to an international readership of both Christians and non-Christians. By design, short, teaching articles populate *Gospel Gazette Online*. Thereby, *GGO* purposes to edify both Christians and non-Christians with Bible-based lessons. Response from readers reveals a wide array of religious backgrounds, including members of the church of Christ, denominational bodies and world religions. Most fan mail is positive and encouraging. A couple of the more heartening posts include correspondence about baptisms in Saudi Arabia and the request from a Muslim in Pakistan that I pray for his sick wife. Subsequently, after initial contact through the pages of *GGO*, and later studying with Christians in his country, he put Jesus Christ on in baptism.

Any good that *Gospel Gazette Online* has done or continues to do is owing largely to the many Christian

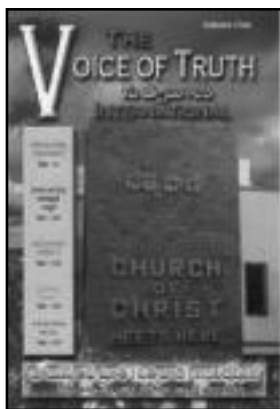
writers whose articles comprise each issue. Periodically, the recipient of lauds from around the globe, if there is anything praiseworthy, let the glory be to God

• **World Evangelism** (www.worldevangelism.org)

World Evangelism is a work of the churches of Christ that has been reaching the masses of the world effectively for 45 years with the Gospel of Christ. World Evangelism reaches the world with the Gospel through radio, TV, Internet, massive distribution of literature, foreign Bible schools and campaigns abroad. These efforts include *The Voice of Truth International* and *Global Harvest* magazines as well as the publication and distribution of thousands of Christian books annually. The impact of World Evangelism is measured in hundreds of responses daily and thousands of conversions annually.

• **The Voice of Truth International**

The most visible aspect of the ongoing labors of World Evangelism to brethren in the United States is *The Voice of Truth International* quarterly magazine. However, what it does overseas speaks to its real importance. Tens of thousands of copies of *The Voice of Truth International* are published in four languages (English, Spanish, Tamil and Telugu). Plans are underway to publish *VOTI* in Hindi and Sinhalese languages, too. Each issue is populated with articles about God, evidences, the Word of God, salvation, the church, the Christian home, Christian living, Bible characters, sermon outlines, etc. to fill the otherwise void abroad for sound biblical, written materials.



The Voice of Truth International is the size and general

appearance of the *Readers' Digest* magazine. Of course, the content of *The Voice of Truth International* is biblical in nature, and it is filled with short teaching articles. Each issue is a veritable library, so important in parts of the world where Christians have few study materials to which they can turn either at home or at church.

Subscriptions to *The Voice of Truth International* for individuals or congregations are available at \$12 for four issues; \$20 for eight issues; \$25 monthly or \$300 annually for a box of 35 copies four times per year. Call World Evangelism for a free sample copy of *The Voice of Truth International* or to start your subscription: (662) 283-1192.

• **Global Harvest**

This magazine is published by J.C. Choate Publications with issues in the Spring and Fall. Articles are included from missionaries that are reaching populations with the Gospel. The magazine is designed to inform, educate, and encourage brethren. For more information or to order a subscription, contact J.C. Choate Publications at P.O. Box 72, Winona, MS 38967 or call 662.283.1192 or email choate@worldangelism.org.

• **Tracts**

World Evangelism publishes approximately 80 tracts, new in 2010. Each pamphlet is full-color, glossy, shirt pocket sized and affordable for mass distribution. The late J.C. Choate authored most of them, but additional writers include Betty Burton Choate, Jerry Bates, and Louis Rushmore. In addition, several tract titles are printed overseas by the tens of thousands in various foreign languages, too.

• **Books**

J.C. Choate Publications is the literary arm of World Evangelism, and it keeps hundreds of book titles in print, as well as continues to bring additional titles to press. Most

of the books pertain to basic Christian teaching found in the Bible, but especially from the New Testament. Still other book titles were written by missionaries about their labors in various countries over several decades.

Some of the most popular and widely circulated titles worldwide include *The Church of the Bible*, *The Gospel of Christ*, *New Testament Worship*, *You Can Be Just a Christian*, *Baptism*, and *What Is a Christian?* While these and many more titles are sold to book stores and individuals primarily throughout the United States, thousands of books are shipped without cost to the recipients around the world each year. Some titles are available in Spanish, German, French, and Russian.