

Salvation

The Complete Look from Genesis to Revelation

Introduction

Salvation is undoubtedly the most important issue and decision anyone will ever make in their lifetime, but what is it, and how does one obtain it? As you read through this study please remember that we are of no denomination, sect, organization, or religious affiliation, and the only profit we gain is unsaved people being saved and the spiritual growth of the Body. We are members of the Body of Christ, ambassadors of Christ, and believe that God's Word is absolute Truth. Although we may point out some teachings or thinking of others, we will not give you our opinion or what we think or feel. There will be no doctrines of men (denominational teaching) given here; only sound doctrine from the mouth of God. We will simply look at what He says about salvation in the context in which it is given because we believe God for what He says.

Our attempt here is to get the clearest and most accurate view of salvation allowed by the Scriptures from the beginning to the end. Today, about the only thing people understand about salvation or being saved is that "we don't have to go to hell" and "we will go to heaven when we die and be with God forever," but there is far more involved with salvation than that, and for the student of the Scriptures to have understanding, we need to know how it all works and fits together within the context in which it was given. Example: what happened to Enoch and Elijah? Are they in heaven with the Lord or somewhere else? What about a Jew under the Law, how were they "saved," by believing in Jesus as today or something else? What is "heaven" to a Jew under the Law? What about a Jew today, is he still under the Law or is it different now? How was a Gentile saved before the cross? How am I saved today? If I'm saved, can I still sin, and what happens when I do? We will address these questions and others in this study as we attempt to cover the whole picture of salvation, not just for today, but from the Creation through The Great White Throne Judgment.

The biggest problem that exists with understanding salvation is not with God, but with all of the false gospels that are being heralded to the world, and man mixing the Gospel of Grace (found in *Acts* and the Epistles) with the Gospel of the Kingdom in the accounts of Christ coming in *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* or the so-called Gospels. Israel was one specific nation created through one man, redeemed from slavery in Egypt, under a covenant of Law that was a righteousness for them, with a specific purpose; their sins were atoned for through sacrifices, and all promises and prophecies were of earthly nature, and when it was time, they were given the Gospel of the Kingdom to announce its birth being near. The Body of Christ is presently being gathered from all nations (including Israel), whereas, before the cross, Gentiles "*were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world*" (*Ephesians 2:12*). But now, as the Body, we are a new creation, neither Jew nor Gentile, a heavenly people, our citizenship is in heaven, we are under a new covenant, all promises are heavenly, and we are given the Gospel of Grace, not the Gospel of the Kingdom.

I have personally handed out a piece of paper, in a congregational assembly, that had on it only one question: "What does God require of me to be saved?" They were asked to write their answer on the paper without conferring with anyone, then pass the paper back in. In this assembly there were about 25 people, and I received back about 8-9 different answers. What if there had been 200 people in that room? How many different answers would there have been? By mixing requirements of the Law for Israel's entrance into the kingdom (in *Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, including being born of the Spirit in *John*) with the Gospel of Grace given to all of mankind, one can come up with any number of combinations of things one must do "to be saved." So who is right, God or man? With so many different things being told to people and different beliefs developed within the Christian denominations, it's no wonder that there is so much confusion about how one is saved and even what salvation actually is. By not rightly dividing the Word and not applying context to the Scriptures, we open the door wide for all sorts of confusion and irreconcilable problems. Also, Satan is very effective at his effort of deception, because we know that he "...*masquerades as an angel of light...*" and "*his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness...*" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Are there many ways to God, as man says and Satan wants us to believe, or is there only one as the Scriptures declare?

Before we get started on the study there are a few words and phrases we need to define so we will all be on the same page as we come across them. These can be found on the definition page of the toolbox:

- *Gospel - good news or good tidings.
- *Repent - to change one's mind and turn from wickedness to God.
- *Justified - acquittal from guilt (of sin).
- *Righteous - holy, free from accusation (of sin).
- *Wrath - anger, judgment, God's sentence of unforgiven sin.
- *Reconcile - to change, exchange, to be changed as from enmity to friend, to bring together again.
- *Redeem - to buy or buy out; to purchase out of slavery, never to be sold again into slavery.
- *Man - capital "Man" refers to all of mankind where "man" generally refers to individuals.

The Study - How Sin Started and the Problem

In the beginning God created a man and a woman "*in the image of God*" and placed them in a garden. He then gave them one command and a penalty for not obeying it: "*And the Lord commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (the command), for when you eat of it you will surely die (the judgment)*" (Genesis 2:16). Adam - the first Adam (which means "man") was, at this time, sinless. He was not God or a god. He was created "*in the image of God*" with a spirit and free from sin. Then came Satan with a lie, and the woman, Eve, turned to Satan from God and believed him instead of believing God. Adam, then, knowingly chose to disobey God (rebelled/sinned) and also partook of the fruit. Eve was deceived, while Adam knowingly rebelled; clear evidence that Man has a choice. This is the defining point of Man being separated from God as he "died" spiritually. Note: remember this, as later Man will have to be reborn.

By their turning to Satan through disobedience (rebellion) of God's command, a pattern of all mankind to come, God executed judgment on all three parties: Satan, the man, and the woman, with different judgments given to each (see *Genesis Chapters 1-3; Romans 5:12-18*). Note: even though the man (Adam) sinned, God Himself provided a "covering" or "atoned" for their sin from the skin of an animal. We will see this again later.

Mankind has now turned away from God to Satan by believing Satan instead of believing God. The consequence of that disobedience is reflected in the "nature" of the man and the Scriptures call this rebellion or sin, and Man now faces God's judgment and penalty for his sin. The Man now has an "inclination to produce" or a "leaning toward" sin, as he is now a slave to sin. Note to keep in mind: God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt; Jesus rescues all mankind from the slavery to sin. This sin nature becomes the problem for mankind because he is now spiritually dead, condemned, and separated from God and can now only produce similar fruit out of this nature. If we compare this to the fruit God produces we find a stark contrast, as God only produces what is just and righteous. Out of this sin nature nothing can be done or produced to change that condition. No righteousness can be made from sin. As we will see, God, at different times throughout history, will provide a way for man to be deemed "righteous" with relation to the judicial system He has in place at that time. An example: before the cross sin was atoned for; after the cross sin can be forgiven/removed. Before the cross, man believed God and lived out righteous works per God's will; after the cross, man, by faith, receives a righteousness from God.

Sin is defined as rebellion against God, in whatever form it is committed and is the corruption within the man that is judged by God, with a penalty attached to the verdict of guilt. If the student will take notice when studying the Scriptures, one will find that God does not judge man as being a man; He judges the sin within the man or that the man commits, then holds the man himself responsible for his choice of committing the sin. Mankind is in peril or danger of facing the judgment of God for the penalty of sin and being sentenced to His wrath, either on the earth and/or eternal separation from God, including eternal punishment. Man needs to be rescued. So, what is salvation? **Salvation is defined as rescue from the wrath or judgment of God.** This definition, as we will see, will remain consistent from Genesis through Revelation.

Genesis 5:1-3 says, "When Adam had lived 130 years he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image..." with a "sin nature" the exact opposite of God, whereas, His nature is that of righteousness and holiness (without sin). Now man is faced with two problems: 1) he is born with a sin nature that separates him from God, and 2) out of a sin nature, nothing can be done or produced to change that nature. Man is now in a state of condemnation and is helpless to change his nature or reconcile himself to God. Man's freedom from slavery to sin requires a blood sacrifice (*Hebrews 9*, note vs.6).

The stage is now set for all of mankind who follow: God is righteous and holy, man is by nature sinful and separated from God, condemned; but praise be to God that in His love for mankind He has a plan that provides a way for man to be reconciled (to change from enmity to friendship) to Him. As we go through this study we will watch this plan of God unfold, which: 1) gives a way for mankind to be freed from the penalty

of and slavery to sin, and 2) causes reconciliation to God Himself as a result of the redemption price paid, which is Jesus' shed blood.

Before the Flood

God has, throughout history, judged mankind at certain points in time and His wrath has then been executed on that group of people or individuals for the penalty of their sins actually committed during their lifetime while in the flesh. Examples: the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Israel, kings, prophets, and others. By these we can see that His wrath is thorough, and all found guilty were and will be consumed by it.

The following is a chronicled list of people, events, and judgments. To get the whole picture you will need to read each event for yourself, as here we will only list them, some with limited comment. What needs to be observed is that God gives a command, people either obey or disobey (sin), and either blessing or judgment follows.

Adam and Eve: given a command, disobeyed, and judged (*Genesis Chapters 1-3*), exiled from the garden.

Cain and Abel: one murders the other (*Genesis 4:1-16*) "*went out from the Lord's presence,*" separated from God.

Note: "...At that time men began to call upon (or proclaim) the name of the Lord" (*Genesis 4:26*). These are Gentiles before the Law was given.

In *Genesis 5* we see a lineage of men from Adam to Noah and that they all died, except Noah (who died later) and one other - Enoch, a man who "*walked with God*" (*5:21-24*). It is assumed by every person that I can recall hearing talk about this that God took Enoch to heaven, but the text does not say that. It simply says that "*God took him away.*" To assume that Enoch went to heaven where God abides would be a direct and irreconcilable conflict with what Jesus said in *John 3:13* where He states, "*No one has ever gone into heaven except the One who came from heaven-the Son of Man.*" So, if by Jesus' Words, no one has ever gone into heaven, where did Enoch go? Here, assumptions can be made, but the text does not say and we will leave it at that, for now.

Now we come to the flood where God's wrath is poured out on the entire unrighteous world and why He did it. In *Genesis 6:1-7* the Scriptures tell us why God carried out this judgment against mankind: "*The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on earth had become and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*" For this, God destroyed all life on the earth except: "*only Noah was left and those with him in the ark*" (*7:23*). God "saves" them from this destruction because He says, "*Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time and he walked with God*" (*7:9*). In this case what we see is not eternal salvation being granted by "new birth" (which has not been addressed yet), although it can conceivably be a type, but salvation from a judgment of God where His wrath is being poured out on the earth. We do know that Noah was "*a preacher of righteousness*" (*2 Peter 2:5*) and an "*heir of the righteousness that comes by faith*" as stated in *Hebrews 11:7*, which does have eternal meaning. This is the

first example of a “righteous” man, as declared by the Scriptures, being “saved” from a judgment of God; although God did try to reach Cain while sin crouched at his door - it desired him (see *Genesis 4:7*).

Notice man is not told to believe in The Christ at this time, he either does what God tells him to do or faces judgment. Also, note that God did not give a message of warning to the people about the flood (see *Matthew 24:37-39* and *Luke 17:26-27*). He prepared and rescued only eight persons, even though Noah was preaching righteousness.

After the Flood to the Law

The Tower of Babel: after the flood, God told Noah and his sons to: “*Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth...*” (*Genesis 9:1-7*). But Man had a different idea and he decided to “*make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth*” (*Genesis 11:1-9*). So God came down, took a look and judged their disobedience. He then used this time to create different languages and scatter the nations of people around as He chose (*Acts 17:26*).

Abraham is the next to observe. In *Genesis 12:1-13, 18* God told Abram to: “*go to a land that I will show you*” and gave him a promise. Abram, at age seventy five, packed his belongings and went to where the Lord told him to go (*Genesis Chapters 12, 15, 17; Galatians 3:16*). God made certain promises to him and *Genesis 15:6* states: “*Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.*” God changed Abram’s name to Abraham in *Genesis 17:5*. Notice Abraham believed the Lord, not Satan, and God “credited” righteousness to him, but it does not say that all of his sins were forgiven. As a matter of fact, Abraham’s sins were not brought up by the Scriptures. Abraham is the example of how **God wants man to trust and believe in Him**. God’s definition of faith is found in *Hebrews 11:1* where it states: “*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*” This is how Abraham believed God and how He wants us to, also (see *Romans Chapter 4*, note vs. 18-22). Note: to this point we have no record of Abram ever having spoken with God before. Possibly there was more conversation than recorded, but we have no record of it and any assumption of that is purely speculation, at best, and cannot be supported by the Scriptures, but we do know that God was still speaking audibly with man.

Through Abraham, God gave a promise that “*all nations will be blessed*” (not just Israel), gave him the land for the kingdom inheritance of Israel, and used the example of Abraham’s faith as the foundational element of all salvation to come.

Now a question: did Abraham, the man of faith, go to heaven when he died? Be careful with your answer because Scripture does supply us with an answer. Read *Luke 16:19-31* very carefully, and you will find that at the time Jesus was telling this, Abraham was in a place of comfort, but it does not say he was in heaven, and to assume that he was is an inaccurate assumption. He tells of a place where a chasm separates two spaces; one of comfort (sometimes referred to as Abraham’s bosom); the other torment (referred to as hell). These two places together are referred to as Sheol in Hebrew and Hades (place of the dead), the Greek equivalent

(remember *John 3:13*). We will see more on this later. Note: some teachers refer to this as a parable, but this text contains personal names and places, where a parable does not.

Sodom and Gomorrah is another example of God's judgment being executed on man's sin. Scripture states in *Genesis 18:20*: "*the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous...*" Read *Genesis 18:16-33* where God agrees to Abraham's request of not killing the righteous with the wicked whom God is about to destroy. Interesting note here - Lot, his wife, and two daughters were sent on their way with two instructions: flee to the mountains, and don't look back. Lot didn't think he could make it to the mountains so he asked to go to the town of Zoar. All four reached the town safely, but Lot's wife, after reaching Zoar, looked back and became a pillar of salt. Here again is God's judgment on disobedience of His command. Note: again God gave no warning to the cities He destroyed.

Abraham had a son (Isaac), who had a son (Jacob), whose name was later changed to Israel, who had twelve sons and hence the twelve tribes of Israel with one slight variant. Skipping forward a bit we find that God placed Israel and his family in Egypt in order to grow the nation. Many people say that they were placed "into" slavery, but that is untrue. Read *Genesis 41-49* then read *Exodus 1:1-22* where we find that God increased and blessed them while in Egypt, and it was the Egyptians (Man) who eventually enslaved them.

Up to this point in time, salvation or being saved is not even mentioned in the Scriptures. Man either did what God told them to do and God blessed them, or he rebelled by disobeying and God judged them. The things we do know is that men worshipped God, men built alters to God, God spoke audibly to men, and gave them His commands or what he wanted from them. There were preachers who proclaimed God's Word (Noah); men "*walked with God*," meaning that they obeyed God when He spoke to them; some "*pleased God*" again by obeying Him; and "*righteousness was credited to him*" again obeying what God said by faith/belief. Examples are Noah, Abraham, Job, Melchizedek, and others.

Before we go on to Israel and the Law we need to be reminded of a very important factor in God's plan: the Gentile nations. God did not forget the nations of the world; He just created a nation of people (Israel) out of the Gentile nations, from one man, to accomplish certain things in His plan. He commanded, blessed, and judged them according to a Law or a righteousness by works that He gave to them. Just because Israel had entered the plan does not mean God neglected the rest of the Gentile world. He had already made provision for them in the way they worshipped God, and that provision continued on, all the way to the cross, after which a Gospel was given to the entire world. See *Romans 1:18-20*, note v.20: "*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-His eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse*" and *Romans 2:14-16*: "*...they are a law for themselves...*" So the Gentile nations have never been neglected or deemed less important by God, as every soul born on the earth is just as important as any other, and He has and will make provision for all who seek Him. God's plan from Genesis to Revelation is to save Man (mankind) which includes every single individual member of Man to be born, but unfortunately not all seek Him and not all will want to be saved. Those who reject God's salvation will not be saved.

Israel under the Law to the Cross

Now God came down to rescue Israel and rose up a man named Moses to bring Israel out from slavery (*Exodus 3:8-11*), and by doing so He redeemed the Nation through the blood of a lamb. Because of sin He gave them the Law, which was God's commands and instructions on daily life, including covering their sins and worshiping God, the revealing of what sin was, to lead Israel to the Christ, and as stated in *Deuteronomy 6:25*: "*and if we are careful to obey all this law...that will be our righteousness*" (see *Galatians 3:17-19, 23-24*). Why was the Law their righteousness? It was the mind and will of God given to these people by way of the written Word or later referred to as "the letter" of the Law. It was righteous, holy, and perfect in its essence, and when a man followed it completely he too would be deemed as righteous because he was conforming to the will and ways of God; but Man had a problem - he was by nature sinful, produced sin out of that nature, and could not keep the Law completely, so God provided different kinds of sacrifices to "atone" for or "cover over" their sin (we see this again). Note: the Law was given exclusively to the nation Israel after they were redeemed from Egypt. The Gentile nations were never given the Law, nor were they judged by it (see *Romans 2:14-16; Ephesians 2:11-12*). God made a covenant with Israel but made no covenant with the Gentile nations. Gentiles could live in Israel and live under the Law to a large degree.

Just like the nations have a purpose, God used Israel to reveal what sin was through the Law and a specific lineage for the Christ to be born through. It is important to remember that a promise was given to Abraham and his seed (Christ, see *Galatians 3*) that all nations would be blessed through Abraham, the man of faith, and through this man's lineage, Israel, came the Son of God into the world who would pay the penalty of sin for all of mankind (all nations and people past, present, and future) and appease God's wrath by the perfect blood sacrifice where sin could now be totally forgiven/removed, which was not possible before the cross. Before the cross sin was atoned for or covered over (which we see from Adam and Eve, through Israel under law, up to the cross), not forgiven/removed.

Now back to Israel in Egypt: Pharaoh had multiple opportunities to obey God when Moses told him to "*Let my people go*" and even told him what was going to happen if he did not, but Scripture states that "*Pharaoh's heart was unyielding*" and "*he (Pharaoh) hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron.*" Each time God gave Pharaoh a command and a judgment (if he disobeyed). He refused to obey and the plagues (God's judgment on his disobedience) came upon them just as God said they would. Then, after multiple attempts and plagues, because of Pharaoh refusing to obey, in *Exodus 11:10* God finally hardens him. The point to be learned here is God gave Pharaoh a command, and he refused to obey, so God judged his disobedience. God provides opportunity for all men who seek Him to be reconciled to Him, but Pharaoh neither sought nor obeyed Him and was left to his own destruction. This was true then and is true today. Note: in *Exodus 3:19* God told Moses that unless Pharaoh is compelled he will not let His people go.

Not until the last plague (the death of the first born son) does Pharaoh let Israel go, as God "redeems" or purchases them out of slavery in Egypt by the blood of a lamb, a type looking forward to the cross, and to this day the nation Israel remains redeemed as a nation but not as individuals. As history continued God

“saved” them from Pharaoh through the parting of the Red Sea, as Pharaoh, including his army, paid the price for his disobedience.

There are too many instances and examples of Israel obeying and disobeying God to comment on, but here is a list of a few where you will find that God told them to do something and they either obeyed and were blessed or disobeyed and were judged.

*God told Israel to go in and take the Promised Land. They disobeyed and wandered in the wilderness for thirty eight more years, “... *By then, that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp...*” (*Deuteronomy 2:14*). Read *Deuteronomy Chapters 1-3; Numbers 14*.

* Moses told by God to “*speak to the rock*” but struck it twice with his staff. He was judged and not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Read *Numbers 20:1-13; Deuteronomy 3:21-29*.

*Because of their grumbings God sent venomous snakes into the camp. He told Moses to “*make a snake and put it on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.*” All who did lived and all who refused died (*Numbers 21:4-9*).

*Jericho - After entering the Promised Land they came to Jericho. God told them what to do, they did it, the walls fell, and they conquered the city (*Joshua Chapter 6*).

*Jonah - God sent a Jewish prophet (Jonah) to a Gentile city (Nineveh) with a message: “*Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed (overthrown)*” (*Jonah 3:4*). Now 3:5, “*The Ninevites believed God*” and now to 3:10 where “*God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways... and did not bring upon them the destruction He had threatened.*” Notice that here God’s message to them was that they were going to be destroyed in forty days, and they believed that God would do what His message declared. They chose to repent even though they were not commanded to, and: “*When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring on them the destruction He had threatened.*” The importance of the book of Jonah is not about a whale swallowing a man (by the way, Scripture says a “*great fish*” not a whale) but is an outstanding example of a people whose: “*...Wickedness has come up before Me*” (*Jonah 1:2*) and how God sent them a message, they made a choice, and God either does or does not destroy them according to the choice they made, and by the way, they were not under the Law of Moses, they were Gentiles. Read *Jonah*, it’s only two pages. Then read *Jeremiah 18* very carefully, where God deals with nations the same way a potter handles clay.

The Judges - Men and one woman who God raised “...who saved them (Israel) out of the hands of these raiders*” (*Judges 2:16*). As long as there was a judge in place, Israel was saved from their enemies, but when that judge died they would be attacked and plundered until the next judge was in place, which sometimes took years. Read *Judges* to see the many examples of blessing and discipline, according to Israel’s obedience or lack thereof. Notice how Israel, without a judge, consistently turned to evil.

* The Kings - Many kings were before the 70 year captivity (*Jeremiah 25:11*) and a few after. Some “*did evil in the eyes of the Lord*” and others “*did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord.*” Israel was either blessed or disciplined accordingly. Begin in *1 Samuel Chapter 8* to see the origin of the kings of Israel. To see the whole picture of the kings read *1 and 2 Samuel; 1 and 2 Kings; 1 and 2 Chronicles*.

* In *2 Kings 2* we find the “*taking*” of Elijah where the Lord, as the Scripture says: “*and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind*” (*2:11*). Here we must understand that “*In the beginning God created the heavens*

(plural) *and the earth*" (Genesis 1:1) which would indicate there is more than one space of heaven. If Jesus was correct in *John 3:13*, and we know He was, when He said "no man has gone into heaven..." we either have a contradiction in God's Word or there is another explanation for this statement. Elijah was either taken to a place in heaven other than the heaven where God abides or he was taken to Sheol, Abraham's bosom, and it was simply stated here as "heaven." We don't really know, but when we find statements like this that seem to conflict, always go with the clear, definitive statements because there are no contradictions when we put all Scripture in the context in which it was given. Here we must go with what Jesus said and conclude that Elijah is with Abraham awaiting Israel's resurrection and judgment for entrance into the kingdom (see *2 Corinthians 12* where Paul is caught up to the third heaven).

* In *1 Samuel 28* we see a reference to where Samuel was after he died. Saul consulted a medium "so I may go and inquire of her" (*1 Samuel 28:7*), which he was expressly forbidden to do by the Law. In verse 13 the woman said, "I see a spirit coming up out of the ground." Notice he was coming up not down from heaven. All indications are he was in the place of comfort with Abraham, not "in heaven" with God. Read *1 Samuel 28* for context.

* Prophets were sent to Israel with messages. There are too many to mention here, but one of their messages was to repent. Read the Prophets for details; many times they would follow the false prophets and outright reject the true prophet.

* After many years of idolatry and disobedience, God finally "...removed them (Israel) from His presence" (*2 Kings 17:18*) and exiled them to Assyria, out of the Promised Land. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were left (*2 Chronicles 11:12*). But later, He sent them into Babylonian captivity for the same reasons. Read *2 Kings 17-25* for details of their disobedience. For their sins God caused all of Israel to be defeated, captured, and scattered into the nations of the world (God's judgment on their sin).

* Approximately 20-30 years before the 70 weeks of Israel's prophetic time began, King Xerxes issued a law for all Jews to be killed. God, through Esther, countered this law and saved Israel from total annihilation. Read the book of *Esther* for details; note Chapter 3.

Note: it is of vital importance to understand Christ had not died on the cross and sin could only be atoned for - not forgiven/removed. The reason no man had gone to heaven, as Jesus said, is that the provision, or sacrifice, for their sin to be removed had not yet been made. God is righteous and holy and He expects no less of any to whom He grants eternal life and the glory of being in His presence. For a man, this can only be done through the blood of the Lamb of God. This place of Sheol or Hades is a holding pen of sorts where those who died before the cross would go and await judgment. Some wait in great comfort and others in torment. See the chart in the toolbox.

After the 70 years of captivity Israel was released and began to make their way back to Israel as they were partially regathered. Now, after being scattered and ruled by others for so long, the time came for the Messiah to come and lead them into the promised/prophesied kingdom that they have so long been waiting for: their kingdom from heaven that God will bring down and set up on the earth, the fifth kingdom of *Daniel 2:44*.

Israel's "salvation" was now at hand as we see a Gospel message being announced to them by John the Baptist, Jesus, and His disciples: "*Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*" They now had a choice to make: obey the message and enter, or disobey and face the penalty for their sin, and as prophesied, they rejected the Christ, and God placed Him on the cross.

We have a tool in the toolbox titled "*Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heaven*" that explains their entrance or denial, and there is no need to repeat the work we have already done. When you have time please refer to this paper, as you will find the requirements for entrance into the kingdom and what salvation meant to a Jew under the Law of Moses. Notice it is quite different for those saved under "the Law" from those saved by "*grace through faith*" in-between the 69th and 70th weeks of years (today), which is a mysterious, hidden through the ages, undetermined period of time.

The most important thing to understand when studying the Scriptures about salvation is that it is not always exactly the same, as we have already seen, and we must never combine elements of the "Gospel of the Kingdom" given to Israel, under Law, for entrance into the "Kingdom," with the Gospel of Grace given to the entire world after the death, burial, and resurrection of the Christ for the forgiveness/removal of sin now available to all of mankind.

Israel was a redeemed nation of people under a covenant of Law that was their righteousness, if they kept it completely; their sin was atoned for by animal sacrifices, and they had earthly promises. The Messiah (God the Son) came to them with the offer to lead them into their "Heaven," the Kingdom. He brought a command and good news in the form of a Gospel message from God: "*Repent for the Kingdom of/from Heaven is at hand.*" He taught them in preparation for entrance into their inheritance, the "Kingdom," but they as a nation rejected His coming to them. The 69th week of years closed at the cross and the 70th still remains because God is not done with Israel. They are still a major player in God's plan, but a "new creation" is about to come into play.

Note: after the rejection and crucifixion of Christ, God caused the Romans to completely destroy the temple, as Jesus states, "*...not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down*" (*Matthew 24:1-2*). This was a judgment on Israel for their rejecting the Messiah; no longer do they have a temple where God's Spirit resides or a place to make sacrifices. As the Body of Christ, we are the temple of God because we are indwelt by His Spirit (see *Daniel 9:24-27* for an explanation of the 70 weeks of years determined on Daniel's people, Israel). Prophecy says Israel will reject Christ and God says in *Acts 2:22-24* this is according to His plan and foreknowledge. Christ would die, but He did come with the offer. Scripture prophesies His rejection and return. All of this accords with the plan of God to sacrifice His Son, the heavenly or last Adam, as Man's redeemer.

The Cross to the "Catching Out" Time Period between the 69th and 70th Week

On the cross Christ was crucified as the sacrificial Lamb of God (notice God supplies the sacrifice) for the sins of all mankind, and through the shed blood of the Christ, God offers His grace to all of mankind where through His grace, sin can now be forgiven/removed, not just atoned for. Through the blood of His Son, God's wrath against the sin of Man can now be appeased, and Man can now be "justified" through the righteousness of Christ, not through the Law of Moses.

God used this time to create another group of people out of all the nations of the world that are "*neither Jew nor Gentile,*" a "*new creation,*" and called them the "Body of Christ" and "Bride of Christ." This group, like Israel, God will use to accomplish certain things in His plan. As the student of the Scriptures largely leaves the Old Testament and the Gospels and gets into the Epistles, it will be quickly obvious that there is a marked difference between Israel under the Law and the Body under grace. There are many differences in the two and some similarities, but we will mainly look at the command and the message given to those after the cross. Remember we are discussing salvation.

After reading *Romans 2-3; Galatians 3; and Ephesians 2*, it could not be more abundantly clear that Gentiles were never given, nor under, the Law, and it is a grievous error by anyone today to go into the accounts of Christ coming (the Gospels - *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*) and make attempts to give a person of today elements of the Law as a means of salvation. This deception only causes tremendous confusion resulting in the person possibly not being saved, or remaining a spiritual infant and never maturing in Christ as our Lord wants us to do. *Romans 3:19-20* states, "... whatever the law says it says to those under the law... therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law..." We must remember, of course, God has provided a means of salvation for us today, but to take Scripture out of context is an error and deceptive.

Now, the question we've all been waiting for: "Today, what must I do to be saved?"

Let's observe three passages of Scripture before we answer the question, noticing where in the Book they are: after the cross – the Acts; the Epistles – *Romans* through *Jude*.

-*Acts 17:30* states: "...But now He commands all people everywhere to repent."

-*Ephesians 2:8* states: "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith..."

-*Acts 16:31*, Paul in response to the question, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" answers, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved..."

So which is it? Do we repent, have faith or believe? Do we have to confess our sin? What about the ABCs (Admit Believe Confess), is that it? Do we have to be baptized in water? The answer is surprisingly simple because we just need to remember to stay consistent with what Scripture says, and keep it all in the proper context. God does not change, but He does change the way He deals with different groups of people to accomplish certain things as His plan advances through time.

So, what is the answer to the question? The quick direct answer is what Paul told the Philippian jailer: ***“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved”*** (Acts 16:31). Now, after the cross, we are to believe ***“in Jesus the Christ”*** by believing the (Gospel) message of the death, burial, and resurrection for the forgiveness of sin that God has sent to all mankind, but there are more elements mentioned in other places so we need to understand how all these elements fit together. Read *Romans 3:21-26; Romans 1*, note vs. 4-5 and 16-17; *Acts 26:12-18*, note vs. 18. Today, after the cross, we are under a command of God given to all mankind in Acts 17:30: ***“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent.”*** Note: remember, in the beginning, that man turned to Satan; now God commands all people to turn to Him, and believe Him. Just as the Gospel of the Kingdom and the command to repent was given to Israel, the Gospel of Grace is given as the command to repent and is now extended to all of mankind because the Christ has come, died, was buried, and was raised, so now, all of mankind can have their sin forgiven/removed. Again, as in the past, God tells man to do something and supplies the way to do it. The question now becomes: how do we repent or ***“change our mind and turn to God from wickedness?”*** The answer is: **by believing the Gospel or message of good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ to eternal life for the forgiveness of sin.** Upon our belief in the message we have put our faith in God that He will forgive our sin through the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ on the cross, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit ***“into Christ”***, not through water but by the Holy Spirit, and ***“born again”*** spiritually by His Spirit that He places within us as a guarantee of eternal life. By being placed in Christ we receive His righteousness (not by way of the Law but by way of grace through faith); God gives us the gift of eternal life because we obeyed the command and have turned (repented) from wickedness to God by believing the Gospel message. God has then forgiven our sin. We are no longer condemned, but stand justified (acquittal from all accusation of guilt) before a Holy God and have been thus rescued from the penalty of sin because Jesus paid the redemptive price on the cross. We are saved from the wrath of God by the grace He extends to all who would believe on His Son, and no, we will not go to hell, and yes, we will be with Him forever. In between the 69th and 70th weeks of years, during the proclamation of the Gospel of Grace today, this is what is meant by salvation and how it is obtained. *Hebrews 7:25* states: ***“Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him...”***

The following is a list of the Gospel of Grace being proclaimed. This is not an exhaustive list, as we only listed a few, and as you study for yourself, more Scripture will be revealed. Notice as you read Acts and the Epistles that the Gospel of the Kingdom is not proclaimed.

Gospel of Grace:

Acts 2:23-24, 3:15, 4:10-12, 5:30, 10:39-40, 13:28-30, 13:39, 14:26-30

Romans 1:1-6

1 Corinthians 15:2-4

In the letter to the Galatians, Paul gives a stern rebuke to any who preach a gospel other than the one ***“we preached to you.”*** Read *Galatians 1:6-9* where he says, ***“let him be eternally condemned”*** (vs. 7 and again in vs. 9). Some translations say ***“anathema”*** which means accursed or condemned for preaching anything different than the gospel they gave.

The next list demonstrates salvation by belief/faith. There are way too many to list, but here are a few. Please read through these passages, as it is vitally important that we understand what we must do to “to be saved” because if we don’t, we cannot accurately tell someone else who is seeking God.

Salvation by belief/faith:

Acts 2:41, 4:4, 5:14, 9:42, 10:43, 13:38-39, 16:31, 16:34, 20:21, 26:15-18

Romans 1:5, 1:16-17, 3:21-39 (note vss. 22, 26, 28), all of Chapter 4-5:1, 9:30-31, 10:4

1 Corinthians 1:21, read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 where we see the Gospel and in vs. 11, “this is what you believed.”

Galatians 2:15-16, 3:1-5, 3:22-26

Ephesians 1:13, 2:8; Philippians 1:28-29, 3:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15; 1 Timothy 1:16; Hebrews 10:39;

1 Peter 1:7-9, 1:21; 1 John 5:13

Paul states in *2 Corinthians 5:6-8*, “...would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” Notice he doesn’t say in “Abraham’s bosom” but “at home with the Lord.” We don’t go to Hades as those before the cross; we go directly to be with the Lord. And where is He? At the right hand of the Father interceding for us (*Romans 8:24*). Also, by way of the catching out (rapture), we are saved from the time of wrath of the 70th week “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath...” Read *1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11; 1 Corinthians 15:35-58*, note vss. 42-43 and 50-54 where this is described. By the grace of God we are not only rescued from His wrath that He pours out on the disobedient (remember we are not disobedient; we obeyed the message) of the earth during the 70th week, our spirits are also rescued from His eternal wrath, which is the second death or the lake of fire. By putting our faith in Jesus the Christ we are saved!

One may ask, “What about when I sin after I’m saved; what happens now? Do I lose my salvation?” The answer is “NO.” For Adam and Eve, God provided a covering for their sin; with Israel (a redeemed and covenanted nation) He provided priests who made sacrifices for not only the sins of the nation Israel but also for the individual people. For the Gentile nations, He must have instructed them also: examples - Cain and Abel, Job, and Melchizedek. These animal sacrifices, again, “atoned” for or “covered” their sin because total forgiveness/removal of sin had not yet been provided for. But now the Christ, the Lamb of God, has come; the sacrifice was made, and sin can now be forgiven/removed, brought to mind no more, for all of mankind (before and after the cross, read *Hebrews 9:10-18*) who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Priests and animal sacrifices are no longer required, as we are now priests and have direct access to the Father through Jesus the Christ. God foreknew and still knows that we will still commit sin, as a member of the Body, and like before, He has made provision for us too. Read *1 John 1:5-2:2* where the Spirit through John addresses this. As we, the Body, walk in this earthly tent (our bodies), we will from time to time sin and sometimes more often, at times intentionally and at times not. Since our salvation is eternal, it now becomes an issue of fellowship, us with the Father, and when we sin that fellowship is affected. Remember that sin separates us from God just like a disagreement does between a parent and a child, but they are still parent and child. So, for us, we are to confess our sin (acknowledge or come into agreement with God) that we have sinned, as Scripture states: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins

and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God then purifies us and the relationship between Father and child is now back in order, our prayers are not hindered, and we keep on walking with God our Father. What about those who do not confess, out of either not knowing or refuse to? With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we have no excuse for not knowing what sin is because it is His job to teach us and convict us of all unrighteousness in us. The Holy Spirit has given us God’s Word, by the writers He personally controlled, for our knowledge of sin and righteousness. We are to gain knowledge and understanding of God’s Word and to mature as God’s children. For those who refuse, they, or we, come under the discipline of our Father, just as an earthly father and son. Read *Hebrews 12:1-13* for context. Note: most believers are not taught to confess their sin but to ask for forgiveness, which is not taught in the Epistles addressing the Body of Christ.

Today, in this age, between the cross and the catching out (rapture), this is what we mean by salvation, but it does not mean that we will not have to suffer, get sick, or have accidents and tragedies happen. As long as we are in this earthly tent (body) we will not be immune to the effects of life and age, but our spirit is secure with God forever. Now, in Christ, we have peace with God; thus the phrase “joy in the Lord” which has no relation to emotional “happiness” that goes up and down as it is influenced by our emotions, feelings, and situations. We are saved by His grace; we now stand in His grace, walk in His grace and are to now grow in His grace as one body, one mind, and one Spirit in Jesus the Christ, and even though we will still sin, our estate or position is in the Spirit not in the flesh (*Romans 8:1-9*) because we are born again by the Spirit of God.

A very common question of believers and unbelievers alike is, “What about those who have never heard about Christ?” Since God commands all people everywhere to repent, **He must provide** the opportunity for them to obey. God is God, and nothing is impossible for Him. The Holy Spirit will see to it that all who seek Him will have opportunity to hear the Gospel, but there has been and will continue to be those who do not seek Him and do not want to be saved. For those who have heard the Gospel and reject it, they are not only unsaved but also disobedient to the command of repentance; where those who never seek Him and have never heard the Gospel are just unsaved; both destined to the same fate, as there is only one way to the Father - Jesus Christ. The disobedient are also referred to as unbelievers, an unbeliever is one who refuses to believe.

1) *John 14:6* Jesus answered: “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” This is Jesus addressing the nation Israel.

2) *Acts 17:16-32*, note vs.26-31: “*...that men would seek Him and perhaps men would reach out for Him and find Him though He is not far from each one of us.*” This is Paul addressing Gentiles about God’s command for mankind to repent.

3) *Romans 1:16-20*: “*I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*” “*...since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*” Man is truly without excuse.

Side note question/comment: in *Philippians 1:27* the Holy Spirit tells the Body through Paul: "... you stand firm in one Spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the Gospel... This is a sign to them (unsaved) that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved - and that by God." How are we to contend as "one man for the faith" if we all believe different things and "agree to disagree" about what God says, especially about salvation?

With every denomination giving different combinations of how to "be saved" or gospels and different doctrines of teaching, it is no mystery why people are so confused and don't know who to listen to or what to believe. When we, of the Body, have differences of ideas, why can't we sit down, with the Book open, and search for what God has to say about the subject in the context in which He gives it and leave what "I think" out of it? Then the Holy Spirit has opportunity to guide us into all truth and teach us the meaning of God's Word, not application or feeling. God is very direct and precise about what He says, and means only one thing when He speaks; it is man's pride and opinion that gets in the way of understanding the Father's will. So, what sign are we, as the Body, sending to those who "will be destroyed" if we "agree to disagree" and yet all claim to be Christians? This is blindness and deception at the highest level, and this is within the Body. The result is we begin to gather in places with people who we don't want to offend with the Truth, and who make us feel good regardless of whether the teaching is sound (from the mouth of God) or false (from man), and the Body as well as the unsaved world will not know what to believe, and Satan, by deception, will continue to have his way (see *2 Timothy 4:3*).

The 70th Week/Tribulation

In *Daniel 9:24-27* God announces a prophetic time for the nation Israel and includes some of the things that are to happen during that time. We won't discuss them all now, but we do need to observe that "seventy sevens are decreed for your people" (Daniel's people Israel). These 70x7s (490 years) are a specific time period given to Israel and are broken up into 7x7s, 62x7s and 1x7 and referred to as prophetic time because this is literally 490 years, with certain things to be accomplished in God's plan for Israel that He announces in advance. In each of the time periods through Daniel's prophecy certain things would be accomplished. The first two have been completed (7+62=69 weeks of years), and today we are in between the 69th and 70th weeks of years with the 70th still to come; remember this is Israel's prophetic time, not mankind's, even though, the end of the age of the nations corresponds with the end of Israel's time or age.

This last week (7 years), through God's prophets to Israel, is known as a "time of wrath" where God pours His wrath out on an unbelieving/disobedient world (read *Ephesians 2:2, 5:6-7; Revelation 6-19*) through war, famine, plague, and catastrophic events which are described by Jesus as, "great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equaled again" (*Matthew 24:21*) and also describes the time as "birth pains." Have you ever thought about why He describes this time as birth pains? If birth pains are present, something is surely about to be born, but what? The answer is the 5th world empire or "Kingdom" of *Daniel 2:44*. The world is about to change from Satan having evil dominion over the earth, which includes "the time of the Gentiles" to one where Jesus is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" and reigns

with righteous rule over the entire earth, and the world as we know it is resisting this change with all its might. Satan is using everything at his disposal to prevent this from happening and will exhaust all available resources to destroy as many people as possible before his “dominion of darkness” comes to an end, and he is chained and imprisoned for 1000 years. Paul refers to this present age as the “*mystery of iniquity* (lawlessness)” (2 *Thessalonians* 2:7).

During this 70th week we see the rise of the “*wicked one*” referred to by the Apostle John in *1 John* 2 as the Antichrist, as Satan attempts to set up his counterfeit kingdom on the earth, like Jesus will do after the 70th week ends. Interesting note: the Antichrist is an antitype of Christ (the Son) and Satan wants to be God. The Antichrist proclaims to be God, sets up an image that is to be worshipped, and places his mark on those who follow him (the mark of the beast), but there will be those who seek God, and He makes provision for those who would believe Him, as His plan advances (see *2 Thessalonians* 2; *Revelation* 6-18).

In *Matthew* 24 Jesus describes signs, wars, famines, and other events and defines all as “*the beginning of birth pains.*” Verse 14 says: “...*this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as testimony to all nations, and then the end* (the end of the age) *will come.*” This is the same Gospel, command, and message given to Israel by John, Jesus, and His disciples in the 69th week of years but is now extended to the whole world during this time (probably the first 3 1/2 years), whereas before it was given strictly to the nation Israel. The 70th week is 7 years long, the kingdom is about to be born, and the whole world is now commanded to repent. There are those who do, as we see in *Revelation* 6:9-11 and *Revelation* 7:9-16. It is important to notice the Gospel they are given: the “Gospel of the Kingdom,” not the “Gospel of Grace,” and they are not the same. The Gospel of Grace seems to be reserved to the period of time that the Body of Christ (His Bride) is gathered. Those we see here around the throne of God are not part of the Body, but they are in heaven (remember Jesus has died and been raised), and “*standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.*” There is no doubt, as evidenced in *Revelation*, that there will be multitudes saved through their obedience of the Gospel of the Kingdom given to them during the “...*great tribulation...*”

We also see in *Revelation* 14 the 144,000 standing with the Lamb “*who had been redeemed from the earth*” (vs. 3) as consistent with, by their obedience to whatever God commanded them (does not state their role or message, but it can be reasonably concluded - preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom during the 70th week).

Then another Gospel message is proclaimed, the Eternal Gospel, to “*those who live on the earth - to every nation, tribe, language and people*” by an “*angel flying in mid air.*” This Gospel is notably different from the other two: “*Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of judgment has come. Worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and springs of water.*” We must realize when this takes place - during the 70th week, probably the last 3 1/2 years, the time Jesus referred to as “*great tribulation.*” He also said, “*If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive...*” (*Matthew* 24:22; read 24:1-25 for context). As in every case throughout history we see a command, “*worship Him*” from God, and a message, “*because the hour of judgment has come.*”

At this time the world will go through the worst distress and tribulation imaginable. God will pour His wrath out full strength, as *Revelation* says, and the Antichrist will destroy all who do not worship him in his attempt to set up his own kingdom. This Eternal Gospel is mankind's last call of salvation before Christ judges all people who have lived up to that point in time: the judgments of *Matthew 24* and *25*. Again there is no doubt that there will be many who do obey this Gospel and will be saved from eternal punishment.

The earth will be going through "birth pains" and a new kingdom is about to be born, where all who enter must be deemed "righteous" through judgment and "born again" or be sent to their destination and eternal punishment - the lake of fire.

The Kingdom - 1000 Year Reign of Christ on the Earth

We need to understand, the kingdom will be on the earth and probably similar to the way it is now. Those alive during this time will have families, a job, and live their lives doing whatever they choose to do, just like we do. The difference is that Jesus will be sitting on the throne in Jerusalem, and all nations of the earth will be held accountable to Him. He will have righteous rule and all judgments He makes will be just, very much different than today. Today, as in the past, in this "dominion of darkness" where Satan has dominion, greed, corruption, and the pursuit of power dominates all forms of government. In the kingdom there will be no war because righteousness, not darkness, will have dominion over the whole world. Israel will be in the glory of the Promised Land and the nations will be in blessing. Satan will be chained in the abyss during the 1000 year reign, eliminating his deceit and temptations of man, and his Antichrist and false prophet will be in the lake of fire; no more "mystery of iniquity" and mankind growing worse. The Body of Christ (His Bride and consort) will co-reign and she (millions and millions) will be pure and righteous with glorious bodies like the Lord's body - she cannot be corrupt.

During the time of the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth we are given very few details about salvation, but there are some things we do know about it:

All who are left alive on the earth and in the kingdom will have been judged, deemed righteous, born again, and given the Spirit at the judgments of *Matthew 24* and *25*; note *John 3:3*.

- A. Leadership of Israel judged - *Matthew 24:45-51*
- B. The house of Israel (people) judged - *Matthew 25:1-30*
- C. The Gentile nations judged - *Matthew 25:31-46*

These judgments are either salvation or eternal punishment for all not judged as righteous and born again. The righteous go into the kingdom; the unrighteous go to the lake of fire. This is salvation for an Israelite under the Law of Moses. They will be resurrected, judged, and either allowed entrance or cast into the lake of fire. Their "heaven" is the 5th kingdom of *Daniel 2:44* and this is it! Notice they did not go to heaven; it was brought down to them. We are not told when or where Gentiles, from the flood to the cross, are judged as we have no text to support the assumption that they are resurrected at this time (it is possible, but we are not told), but we do know that God made provision for them as "*they are a law unto*

themselves." The Gentile nations gathered at this judgment are judged by how they treated Israel during the 70th week (*Matthew 25:31-46*), where the sheep go into the kingdom and the goats to the lake of fire. "The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (*Matthew 25:40*).

Those who obeyed the Gospel during the 70th week we see in heaven standing before the throne of the Lamb (*Revelation 7:9-17*, note vs.14) and under the altar in *Revelation 6:9-11*.

Notice the Body of Christ is not present at these judgments to be judged. Why? We were given the Gospel of Grace, and upon our belief in it our sins were forgiven/removed, and we were "saved" at that point: "For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (*Colossians 1:13-14*). Since Christ is presently in heaven at the right hand of the Father, that is also where the kingdom is (where the King is), and not in our hearts that so many now teach. Upon our belief in Christ, we are "born" into that kingdom (spiritually), in heaven, and we will return with Him when He returns, and the kingdom is brought down from heaven and established on the earth. There is no longer a need to judge our sin, only the works that we allowed the Holy Spirit to do through us after we were born again; thus the judgment seat of Christ where there will be "reward" or "loss" given for them. Read *2 Corinthians 5:10* and *1 Corinthians 3:10-15*. Please note here that this is not for salvation, for: "...it is by grace you have been saved through faith... not by works..." (*Ephesians 2:8-9*) as every member of the Body of Christ is born a heavenly citizen (*Philippians 3:20*), and we are "... to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (*Ephesians 2:10*). This reward or loss is attributed to our works, and we are not given all the details of it. In *Ephesians 1:13-14* we are told that we have the Holy Spirit in us, as believers, as a down payment or deposit of our inheritance. Other verses say the same thing in the Epistles.

We too go into the kingdom, on the earth, but as the Bride of Christ and enter with Him a heavenly people in glorious bodies, not earthly as all of those who enter through the "narrow gate" or judgment in *Matthew 7:13-14*.

- 1) There will be those in the kingdom who do not enter by judgment but are physically born to parents, just as children are today. Those who did not enter by judgment will be judged according to the judicial system that Christ sets up and eventually the Great White Throne.
- 2) We know that man will still be of the "sin nature" because at the end of the 1000 years Satan is released from his prison, allowed to deceive the nations for a short period of time, and gathers a very large army by deception (the way Satan works). Read *Revelation 20* for context and *Ezekiel 40-48* for a detailed look at how the kingdom is divided and set up concerning the land of Israel.
- 3) We know the people still sin because sacrifices will be made for the sins of the people and the House of Israel (*Ezekiel 45*).
- 4) Micah, a prophet of God, states a very interesting prophecy when describing how the nations will be in the kingdom. Read *Micah 4:1-5* and pay attention to verse 5 which states: "All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk in the name of our God for ever and ever." This is a clear statement

that the 1000 year reign of Christ, the 5th Kingdom, is not heaven (the place where God abides), but it is physically on the earth, and people still sin and worship other gods. For Israel, this is their promised heaven, but for the nations they are free to worship whatever god they choose; however, the nations are required to go and worship the God of Israel at various times, as stated in the Prophets. This is further proof that the kingdom is not in heaven, as sin has not been totally purged from man. Christ's eternal rule and Israel's so called heaven on earth only begins with the 1000 year reign, just as the present time, since the day of Pentecost, is only the beginning of the New Covenant and people entering Christ's kingdom. Christ begins with His mysterious Bride, taken out of the nations; then He addresses the nations, including Israel.

Remember, Jesus prayed, "*your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" (Matthew 6:10-13, note vs.10). This prayer should never be prayed by a member of the Body of Christ. Jesus was specifically telling Israel to pray that God bring the kingdom down right then and set it up on the earth - their heaven. But we, the Body of Christ, are a heavenly people, not earthly, "*...but our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Philippians 3:20), and we long to be with Christ forever wherever He is. We are waiting for the "catching out" (rapture) and subsequent rescue from the wrath of the 70th week which comes on the whole world, as told through Israel's prophets. Remember what salvation is: rescue from the wrath of God. The kingdom will not be set up until after the 70th week is completed.

Eternity: After the 1000 Years

After the first 1000 years, the 5th kingdom is closed (it is an everlasting kingdom and never ends). At the Great White Throne, those who are born physically in the kingdom will be judged, and all judgment of the sin of mankind is then complete. Those who are deemed righteous will enter eternal life with God; those not righteous will enter the lake of fire. We now see the new heaven, new earth and the New Jerusalem "*coming down out of heaven from God*" (Revelation 21:1-2). All sin and unrighteousness has now been judged and purged from man. Satan is now placed in his eternal place, along with death and Hades, the lake of fire, which removes any external influence of deceit and temptation of man. Man no longer will have any desires of wicked nature but only desire that which is righteous and pleasing to God, "*Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them.*" Read Revelation 21:1-4. With all sin gone God can now come down to the earth and make His abode among the creation He so dearly loves. To be with God forever "in heaven" is in fact a wonderful thought, but to be with God on the earth in the heaven that He brings down is an even better one, because that is what the Scriptures actually teach. It should go without saying, but in this time there is no mention of salvation because all who are there, after the Great White Throne Judgment, have no need of it. There remains no sin, nor the penalty for it, and all present have turned to God by believing Him, been spiritually "born again" with eternal life (not death), and are justified before Him because of the sacrifice of the Christ, and all will dwell eternally with God giving Him glory and praise forever. The plan of God and His salvation is now complete, as far as we are told in the Scriptures.

Summary

In the final analysis of salvation we find from the Scriptures that the wrath of God has, and will come to all who disobey Him and refuse to obey, and that there is only one way to be rescued from His wrath - turn to God and believe Him (remember in the beginning, man turned to Satan and believed him). To be saved, man must obey whatever command God gives by believing the message given to man at any given time in history. Keep in mind that we don't mix them all together. Before the cross, sin was not forgiven; after the cross it was and is. Before the flood and up to the giving of the Law, man "walked with God" by obeying what God told them to do. For Israel the Law was a righteousness for them, where Jesus the Christ is our righteousness, etc. Although many people try to make everything the same from beginning to end, it very clearly is not, and to take things out of context is an error and misleading. It is true that God has one plan and it is very clearly outlined in His Word, but that plan has different phases and groups of people for different purposes that do eventually come together after the Great White Throne; all share in the same glory: eternal life with God. This is why it is so important to rightly divide the Word and place all people and events in their proper context, or we wind up with a confused mess that no one can figure out and all sorts of false teaching being presented to the world, as well as to the Body. Many may be very sincere in what they preach and teach, but sincerity does not always present or equal truth. Most all false teachers try to prove their teachings by taking the Body of Christ into Israel's Mosaic covenant of works under law, for everything from salvation to entering the kingdom.

For those who think that sin is not that big a deal, well, we obviously don't believe in the same God and don't read the same Bible because the one I read says sin separates Man (mankind) from God and that God has and will judge all sin. Today, a man who has heard the Gospel message and rejects it may or may not ever hear it again, and if he rejects it and never puts his faith in Jesus the Christ for his salvation, like Pharaoh who heard the message and rejected it, he will be left to his own desires and eventual destruction by the choice he made. See *2 Corinthians 4:3-4*; *Romans 1 and 2*; *2 Thessalonians 2:9-12*; *Psalms 81:11-12* for some examples of God giving groups of people over to their own desires, including blindness of His Truth altogether for rejecting Him or not believing His Words, at different periods of time within His plan to finally dwell with His creation on the earth. To worship God is the very message God has been giving to mankind since the beginning, but Jesus said, "...men love the darkness..." (*John 3:19-22*).

A man in any place, in any time, truly had/has no excuse for not seeking God except for his own ignorance, foolishness, and pride; and any man who has sought God in the past, now, or in the future, God will provide a way for him to receive what he needs to be saved. It then becomes the man's choice to turn to and believe God, or not.

We pray that this tool will be helpful in your studies as we all grow in Christ together.

Grace be with you