

WHAT WE BELIEVE

compiled by Rachel Cory 11/29/08

1. **The Bible is the inspired word of God. It is the only standard of doctrine.** All prophets, all preachers, all those who work miracles, are to be examined and their doctrines compared with the Bible. Those teachings which do not agree with the standard must be discarded (Isaiah 8:20, 2Peter 1:20-21).

The truth is promised to all who seek God in sincerity of heart (James. 1:5, John 8:32, John 7:17, Jeremiah 29:13, Jeremiah 33:3). **Each individual must study the Scriptures for himself** and should never simply take another's word for what is truth, no matter how religious or knowledgeable he/she appears to be (Acts 17:11, John 16:13).

2. **There is one Supreme Being called "God our Father."** Jesus called His Father "the only true God" (John 17:3). Paul said, "There is One God - the Father, of Whom are all things" (1Corinthians 8:6), "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:6). The whole family in heaven and earth is named after the Father (Ephesians 3:14-15). He is the ultimate Creator - the source of all life (1Corinthians 8:6, Hebrews 1:2, John 1:3, Ephesians 3:9, John 1:10, Colossians 1:16, Revelation 4:9-11). The will of the Father was presented by Christ as supreme (Matthew 6:10, Matthew 7:21, Matthew 12:50, Matthew 26:42, John 4:34, John 5:30, John 6:38-39). [Study at this site: "The Trinity Questioned."]
3. **God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are two distinct beings .** (Rev. 5:13, Lk 22:42) **Christ is God's literal son** (John 17:8, John 5:18). He is divine because He was begotten out of God, in the exact image of His divine Father (2 John 1:3, Hebrews 1:3). He was begotten, or came forth from the Father, before anything was created (John 16:27, John 17:8, Proverbs 8:22-30, Colossians 1:15, John 17:1-5, 1John 4:9, 1John 4:14, John 3:16). He is therefore called God, and is to be worshiped. (Philippians 2:9-11).

NOTE: Proverbs chapter 8 is a parody on "wisdom." I believe that this is Christ speaking.
Paul says that Christ is wisdom from God (1Corinthians 1:24,30).

The Father and the Son were equal in the same sense that an earthly son may be equal to his father (Philippians 2:5-6), yet God the Father is and always will be the "head of Christ." (1Corinthians 15:24-28, 1Corinthians 11:3, John 14:28). The Father is the God *of* Christ (Revelation 3:12, John 20:17, Romans 15:6, 1Corinthians 11:3, 2Corinthians 1:3, 2Corinthians 11:31, Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 1:17, Revelation 1:6). "The kingdom of Heaven" was called by Christ, "my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 13:43, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, Matthew 26:29, Matthew 6:13, Luke 22:29).

4. **The Father, through His Son created all things.**
(1Corinthians 8:6, Revelation 4:9-11, Ephesians 3:14-15, Ephesians 3:9, Hebrews 1:1-3, John 1:3, John 1:10, Colossians 1:12-16)

THE REBELLION

5. **Lucifer was created by the Father, through His divine Son.** He was a mighty spirit being, and was called "the anointed cherub who covers," holding a position very close to God in Heaven. (Ezek 28:11-19, Isa. 14:12). He rebelled against God, taking one third of the angels with him. (Rev. 12:7-9) He became Satan - the adversary, and has been at war with the government of God. He has claimed this earth as his empire because of the sin of Adam (Job 1:6-11). His greatest deception is to lead us to believe that God is like himself, a manipulative, selfish, score-keeping, despot. Only evidence could answer Satan's charges against the character and government of God. That evidence is the 6000 year

history of this world, and the life and death of Jesus Christ.
[Study at this site: "Angels and Demons - Who are they?"]

- 6. Intelligent beings were made for the indwelling of the Creator.** On the first day of their existence, Adam and Eve were thus indwelt and experienced a oneness with God. Satan and his angels had long ago resisted the Spirit of God, until they were no longer indwelt. Satan deceived Eve, the first woman, into open rebellion against God's expressed will. Adam could not bear to lose Eve, and he chose to share the fate of his wife (Genesis chapter 3).

God will not overpower our will. He will not stay where He is not welcome. Adam and Eve, and all of their descendants, lost the indwelling Spirit. Death was - and will be - the sure result. **Mankind was alienated from God.** A night of gloom settled down upon the world. Because man had been given the dominion of the earth with its plants and animals, the whole earth would suffer from this loss of the Spirit. (Genesis chapter 3)

THE RECONCILIATION

- 7. "We are reconciled to the Father, through the Son** (Colossians 1:19-20, 2Corinthians 5:18-19, Ephesians 1:1-12). When mankind was separated from the Father, Christ became the only connection between Heaven and earth. He would try to bring about a reconciliation.

The work of reconciliation began long before the incarnation. The Son of God appeared to patriarchs and prophets, giving a revelation of the plan of God and of things to come. He taught. He comforted. He guided. He empowered. Then "in the fulness of time," He came as a man.

[Study at this web site: "The Mediator - He was there all along."]

The Son of God came to the world to reveal the true character of His Father, so that men might come to worship Him, "in spirit and in truth" (with complete trust and love). Men are reconciled to God through the revelation of Him, which was given in the life and death of His Son (John 1:18, John 14:8-9, 2Corinthians 5:18, John 5:43, John 17:1-5). Christ was the vehicle through Whom the Father could pour out His love upon the world (John 3:16).

- 8. Before Christ came to earth as a man, He surrendered His divine power. He must live as a man among men** (Acts 8:3, Philippians 2:5-8, Hebrews 2:17, Galatians 4:4-5, Romans 8:3-4). He became totally dependent upon His heavenly Father (John 5:19, John 6:57, John 19:11). The miracles which Christ performed while He lived upon earth, were done through Him by the power of God the Father (Acts 2:22, John 14:10, John 5:26, John 5:30, John 17:7).

The Father gave His Spirit without measure to His Son (John 3:34) - "It pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell" (Colossians 1:19, Acts 10:38). It was this complete indwelling of the Spirit of God, which enabled Christ to triumph over sin (Hebrews 9:14). He referred to His own body as the Temple of God (John 1:16-21). After His death on the cross, He was raised to life by His Father (Galatians 1:1, 1Peter 1:3, Ephesians 1:17-20).

Christ came to earth as the representative of the Father. His every act was directed by the Father. His teaching came from the Father, not from Himself (John 14:10, John 15:15, John 7:16, John 8:28, John 10:18, John 10:32, John 12:49).

On the cross, the Spirit of the Father was withdrawn from His Son. He was treated by God, as a sinner. (Matthew 27:46, Romans 8:32, Isaiah 53:10). Even so, "He was obedient unto death" (Philippians 2:8).

- 9. Human nature without the indwelling of the divine nature is carnal (self-serving). Only God is**

love. The carnal mind cannot comprehend unselfish love, much less keep the Law of God (Romans 8:7-8).

[Study at this web site: "Grace and the Law" - series]

- 10. Only when the omnipresent Father dwells in us through His divine Son, can we then live the law of God** (Titus 3:4-6, Acts 2:33). **This is the salvation experience** (Ephesians 4:6, Ezekiel 36:26, Philippians 2:13, Romans 8:8-11, Ephesians 3:14-18, John 17:21-26, Titus 3:4-6, Luke 11:13, Philippians 2:13, Hebrews 13:20-21).

The Holy Spirit is the vital presence of the Father, which comes to us through His Son. The restoration of the Spirit is the covenant of grace (Ezekiel 36:26, Psalm 51:11-12). We are saved by grace (the work of God in the heart) through faith (worshipful belief) in Christ (Ephesians 2:5,8).

Christ died so that we may be restored to oneness with God, through the indwelling Spirit (1John 4:12-13). Forgiveness is not merely a legal transaction. Forgiveness is healing. Only God can forgive sins, because only God can heal the damage done by sin (Mark 2:3-12).

The "new birth" is a miracle of God, a change of heart, and a reconciliation with God (John 3:3-7). Man, of himself, has no desire to come to God. We are drawn to Him as we are made aware of His great love for us, love so great that He gave His only Son to become a man, and then to die a cruel death (John 3:16, John 6:44, John 12:32).

Because Jesus was tempted just as we are, He is able to help us overcome if we depend upon Him, just as He overcame by depending upon His Father. (Hebrews 2:18, Hebrews 4:15).

- 11. Confession, repentance, and turning from sin, do not cause any change in God's attitude towards us, for God has always loved us.** Confession and repentance are the result of a change in our attitude towards God (John 16:26, John 3:16). We are not lost because we have sinned, for "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). We are lost if we will not come to the Father through Christ and be healed (John 5:40).

NOTE: "All have sinned," would include Mary the mother of Jesus, for He took the likeness of "sinful flesh" not sinless flesh, and He inherited His human nature from Mary. (Romans 8:3-4) He was the promised "seed of the woman" (Gen 3:15, John 3:17-19). Mary herself said, "and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47). If she was sinless, she had no need of a Savior.

- 12. God has promised that He will "cleans us from all unrighteousness"** (1John 1:5). When we first give our hearts to God this cleansing is only legal - forensic, but as we grow in Christ He will bring about a complete cleansing of the heart and the life. We will be set free from the power of sin. We will no longer be slaves of Satan, or slaves of our own selfish desires. "To them gave He power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). "What He has promised He is able to perform." "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (1John 1:9, Romans 4:21, Jude 24; Luke 1:37; Philippians 4:13; James 1:4). Christ said "without me ye can do nothing," but "with God all things are possible" (John 15:58). God is "able to keep us from falling" in this evil world, even while we yet possess fallen, weak, sinful, human nature, but the process by which we come to this perfect faith takes a lifetime.

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). **THIS IS THE NEW COVENANT PROMISE.**

Notice the context of the passage just cited from Ezekiel 36 - also that of Deuteronomy 30:6, Ezekiel 11:19, Jeremiah 32:38-40 and Hebrews 10:16. The context is Israel restored. "For I will take you from

among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land” (Ezekiel 36:24). The final perfect healing and reconciliation will not be fully accomplished until after Jesus returns, and His kingdom has been restored.

[Study at this web site: “The 8th Day”]

Remember that every promise given to Israel also belongs to each Gentile who comes to faith in Christ (Galatians 3:29, Ephesians 2:12-13).

[Study at this web site: “Israel”]

We only begin the process here. The scars - the stains of sin, go so deep that it will take many years in a safe and loving environment before every trace of defensive and selfish thinking is erased. But God has promised - and His word cannot fail (Galatians 5:5).

DOMINION LOST

- 13. Man was given dominion (rulership) of the earth, under Christ, under God the Father (Gen. 1:26-27, 1Corinthians 11:3). Satan stole that dominion through deception.**

[Study at this web site: “Dominion”]

- 14. Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father became a human being.** As a human being He obeyed God’s will, even to the agonizing death of the cross. He never rebelled against the will of His Father. (Phil. 2:8) Because of this He can now petition the throne of God and ask His Father to forgive and bless His fellow human beings. Satan cannot point to any rebellion in Christ to justify a claim to dominion over Him. He cannot claim that Christ was ever one of his subjects. Christ lived in a world dominated by Satan but never yielded in the slightest degree to the will of Satan. Legally the Father may give to His Son the dominion of the earth and everything in it. Satan has no grounds upon which to base any objection (John 3:35, Matthew 28:18, Daniel 7:13-14, John 17:2). With the dominion of earth and its citizens, “the Father has committed all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22). **Christ will rule - therefore Christ will judge.** Having shared our experience of weakness, of dependence, of submission, He is fit for this role.

[Study at this web site: “Dominion”]

- 15. “There is only one mediator between God and man - the man Christ Jesus” (1Timothy 2:5).** Christ is the only one who represents us before God’s throne in heaven today (1Timothy 2:5, Matthew 10:32, Romans 8:34, 1John 2:1, Hebrews 7:25, Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 6:19-20, Hebrews 8:6). We receive forgiveness from God the Father through Christ His Son. No saint, not even Mary the mother of Christ, intercedes for us in Heaven.

THE LAW OF GOD

- 16. Faith, which does not result in changed behavior, is not true faith but a dead counterfeit (James 2:17,26).**

- 17. The law of unselfish love is as old as God Himself.** This law is a revelation of God's own character. It was immortalized in stone and will stand forever. **The Ten Commandments are the standard for all people in all time.** (James 2:10-12; Exodus 20:3-17; Malachi 3:6; Matthew 5:17 & 18; 1John 3:4; Romans 7:12; Luke 16:17).

[Study at this web site: “Grace and the Law” - series]

18. The 7th-day Sabbath (Saturday) of the fourth commandment is a gift of God to man. He has used the dimension of time to draw us into a closer relationship with Himself. Christ, as Creator is “Lord of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8). The Sabbath was instituted at the end of creation week, before the fall of man, long before Israel existed (Genesis 2:2-3). It points back to the six literal days of creation and forward to life in the earth made new (Exodus 20:11-12, Isaiah 66:22-23). It is a symbol of our belief in Christ's power to create in us new life. The Sabbath is God’s chosen sign of His everlasting covenant (Ezekiel 20:12, 20; Exodus 31:13).

[Study at this web site: “The Sabbath - The Sign”]

THE PLAN FORETOLD

19. The Law of sacrifices and festivals given to Israel by God pointed forward in symbols to Christ as Lamb of God and Heavenly High Priest, to the final judgment, and the final harvest of this earth. When Christ became our High Priest in Heaven, the earthly Temple with its Aaronic priesthood became obsolete. Because the reality had come, the symbol was no longer needed. This is why we no longer sacrifice lambs (Hebrews 9:13,14; Matthew 27:51; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14-17; Hebrews 9:13,14).

The ceremonial festivals are prophetic. They symbolize the greatest events in the plan of redemption. Christ Himself was the true Passover Lamb (1Corinthians 5:7, John 1:29). The “Feast of First Fruits” symbolized His victorious ascension with the first fruits of His work (those saints whom He resurrected on that morning after He was raised from the dead by His Father - Matthew 27:51-53). The Law given from Mt. Sinai (on the first Pentecost) is written in the heart by the Spirit which was poured out on the Pentecost after the resurrection (Acts chapter 2, Exo. 19:1, Leviticus 23:5, 15-16).

I believe that the prophecy of the Fall festivals will be fulfilled at the very end of time. These festivals tell of a final warning that God’s judgment is at hand (the Feast of Trumpets), of a Day when God’s own are counted and those who have persistently and knowingly rebelled against Him are cut off (The Day of Atonement). On that Day, Satan the “scape-goat” will be banished to “the uninhabited place.” The last trumpet - the Jubilee trumpet will sound, proclaiming liberty and resurrection for all the Israelite captives of suffering and death. Then will come the celebration of the harvest (the Feast of Ingathering). [Leviticus Chapter 23, Revelation 14:2, Leviticus chapter 16, Revelation 20:2, Leviticus 25:8-15]

20. After His ascension to the Father’s right hand, Christ became our High Priest in Heaven (Hebrews 4:14-15). The Sanctuary built in the wilderness (later the Temple in Jerusalem) was a copy of the Heavenly Sanctuary of God (Hebrews 8:2, 5; Hebrews 9:8-9, 11, 23-24). **Christ’s work of atonement (at-one-ment) - the complete reconciliation of man to God - was not finished on Calvary.** At Calvary He was the Lamb who shed His blood. After He ascended to Heaven, He became our High Priest, to minister His blood in our behalf. In the ancient type, the sinner was not forgiven when the lamb was sacrificed. The sinner received “atonement” (meaning covering) only after some of the blood from the lamb was taken into the Sanctuary, or when some of the meat from the sin offering was eaten by the priest, who then entered the Sanctuary tent (Leviticus 4:6, 25).

21. Each time the sinner brought a sin-offering for sacrifice his sin was “covered.” The record of that sin was transferred to the Sanctuary. Every morning and evening the priest would offer a lamb for the sins of Israel. Yet, even then, if the sinner failed to fast and search his heart on the Day of Atonement, he would be cut off from his people, no matter how many lambs he had sacrificed or how many times he had sought forgiveness prior to that day (Leviticus 23:28-29). A human being may be “right” with God at one point, only to “fall away,” returning to sin. He may resist some new light or some new conviction. There are many reasons why **I do not believe in the doctrine of “once saved - always saved.”**

[Study at this web site: “Once Saved Always Saved - Is this the security of the Believer?”]

THE DESTINY OF MAN

- 22. Man is mortal.** Immortality is a gift of God, received only through Jesus. **The dead are in an unconscious state.** (Romans 6:23, Ecclesiastes 9:5, John 11:11-14, John 5:28-29, Daniel 12:2, Job 14:12,)

[Study at this web site: "What Happens When We Die?"]

- 23. Jesus will return soon. His coming will be visible, literal, and personal** (Mat. 16:27, 25:31, Mark 8:38, Mat. 24:27-31, Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27, 1Corinthians 15:52, 1Thess 4:16, 2Thess. 2:8, Revelation 1:7) The "dead in Christ will be raised from death to eternal life and the righteous living will be translated without experiencing death (Luke 9:26, Matthew 24:27-30, Revelation 1:7 1Thessalonians 4:16-17, Revelation 6:14-17). All of those "left behind" will die. They - with all "the rest of the dead," will remain in the unconscious sleep of death for 1000 years (Isaiah 24:21, Revelation 20:1-6, Jeremiah 25:33, Isaiah 66:15, Zephaniah 1:2-3, Isaiah 24:1-6, 13, 19-23; Revelation 6:14-17).

[Studies at this web site: "When Jesus Returns," "The Rapture of the Saints?" - also - "Two Resurrections and a Thousand Years" - series]

- 24. The Israel of the New Covenant includes all of those who have entered into covenant with God thru Christ .**

God chose Abraham, to be the father of all those who believe. Abraham's grandson Jacob became the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Through this nation the written word of God, and the prophecies were preserved. The Messiah came physically through this line. Because of His promise to Abraham, God chose the nation of Israel, to be His instrument, to show forth His will and His way. His character was revealed to men, and the way to salvation. Jesus said, "Salvation is of the Jews." Even the New Testament is a Jewish book. It is a book written by Jews, about a Jew (Jesus).

There are many who believe that only those who are Jews by race can be considered "Israelites." I do not agree with this view. In Christ, "the wall of separation is broken down" (Ephesians 2:14-15). Those things which separated Jew and Gentile have been "abolished" in Christ. **Gentiles who were once "foreigners" and "aliens" from the commonwealth of Israel have "come in"** (Romans 11:25, Ephesians 2:12-15). **The borders of Israel have been enlarged.** Wild branches (Gentile believers) have been grafted in to the olive tree, while some (not all) of the natural branches (native Israelites) have been broken off (Jeremiah 11:16, Romans 11:17-25).

{Study at this web site: "Israel"}

- 25. The Israel of God will be raised on the day that He returns.** They will be judged on that day. As in the ancient prophecy type, on Yom Kippur - the Day of Atonement, some will be "cut off from the people." They have knowingly persisted in rebellion against the covenant. Their names will be "blotted out" of the Book of Life on that day, and they will be left behind to die in the plagues. Israel will go with Christ to the place He has prepared in the "Father's house." This place will be an ark of safety, while the plagues are poured out on the earth.

[Study at this web site: "Two Resurrections and a Thousand Years - Part One : The First Resurrection"]

- 26. In the seven last plagues, "the earth and the works therein will be burned up."** (2Peter 3:10) **The earth will be completely destroyed - with no life remaining. The earth will then rest for 1000 years.** (Lev. 25:2-7) Satan will be bound for this 1000 years - to an uninhabited place - most likely the desolate earth. (Jeremiah 4:23-30, Revelation 20:1-6, 1Corinthians 6:2-3, Jude 6, Isaiah 24:21-23).

[Study at this web site: "Two Resurrections and a Thousand Years" - Part Two: Absolute Destruction and an Ark of Safety"]

The dominion of earth is given to Christ and the “saints” at the conclusion of the judgment in heaven (Daniel 7:9-10-14, 27). The people of earth have not rested on the 7th day Sabbath originally set up by the Creator. During the first 1000 years of His restored dominion, the earth will keep Gods Sabbath. For 1000 years it will rest completely - desolate and uninhabited. (See II Chron. 36:21)

During the 1000 years in the Father’s house, the Israel of God will prepare to be “priests of God and of Christ.” (Rev. 20:6) They will examine the evidence and judge for themselves that God has been just with men and with angels. In the ancient type, those chosen for the priesthood, did not begin to serve as priests until the 8th day. (Lev. 8:33-35) “With God a thousand years is as a day, and a day is as a thousand years.” (2 Peter 3:8). The Israel of God, will begin their service as priests on the 8th Day, after their preparation of 1000 yrs. The second resurrection takes place on the earth after the 1000 years. (Revelation 20:5)

[Study at this web site: “Two Resurrections and a Thousand Years” - series]

27. Christ, with His “kingdom of priests” will return to the earth at the end of the 1000 years. The earth will once again respond to the touch of man. They will build Ezekiel’s Temple, and as the life-giving river flows forth, the earth will come back to life. (Ezek 47, Jude 14-15, Zechariah 14:4-5, Revelation 21:2). The “rest of the dead” will be raised to life (Revelation 20:4-5, John 5:28-29). Christ will rule from Mt Zion, and the truth will be taught through His priesthood. (Isaiah 2, Isa. 61:4-9) Each person raised to life at this time, will be given the chance to choose his/her king. Satan will go out to deceive the nations. He will finally gather together his followers, and they will attempt to take the kingdom from Christ. They will be arrested in their attack upon the Holy City, and devoured by fire which comes down from Heaven (Revelation 20:7-9).

[Study at this web site: “Two Resurrections and a Thousand Years - Part Three : The 8th Day”]

- 28. I believe the Bible presents three different judgments. First, a judgment of Israel. Second, a judgment of the nations. Third, a final judgment of all those whose names have been blotted out of the Book of Life.**

When “the dominion” of earth is restored to Christ, He will become the judge of all the earth. The Father has committed all judgment to the Son. (John 5:22) All of those “in Christ” have “passed from death to life” and “will not enter into judgment.” (John 5:24) Jesus said, “I know my sheep.” They “hear my voice.” The Scripture is clear that there will be a judgment. I believe that Israel - that is anyone who has entered into covenant with God through Christ - will be judged at the great Day of Atonement, on the day that Jesus returns. On this day, all of those who have “forsaken the covenant” will be “cut off from the people.” Their names will be blotted out of the Book of Life.

“The nations” I believe, are raised to life after the 1000 years. They will be judged by Christ after they have heard the truth clearly for themselves. Some who have come to “know” the Father and His Son, will be invited to “enter the kingdom.” (Matthew 25:34) The rest will be turned away. They will rebel and try to take the City by force. God will defend His City and destroy the rebels in fire. (Rev. 20:7-9, Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39)

After this final battle, all of “the dead” will again be “judged according to their works.” (Revelation 20:11-15). The dead would include the Israelites who did not remain faithful to the covenant, and those of the nations who tried to take the City by force. Their names are not found “written in the Book of Life.” The Father will preside over this final judgment, and will carry out sentence. (Rev. 20:11) These people are “dead” when this judgment is carried out. They are “standing before God” only in the sense of the record of their “works.” The question to be answered is whether any of these people should ever again be raised to carry on their life. The answer is “No!”

Until the “second death” in the “lake of fire” God retains the essence of each person. To Him they are not yet dead - because He can raise them to life at any time. (Luke 20:38) After this essential essence is destroyed in the special “lake of fire” - nothing remains. These people can never be raised to life again. This “lake of fire” is not fire as we think of it. It is the glory of God - who IS a “consuming fire” and IS eternal. This fire is everlasting because God is everlasting.

Satan and his angels are thrown into this lake of fire after the Gog-Magog battle for the City.

“Death and Hades” are “cast into the lake of fire” and are now gone. (Revelation 20:10, 14) Evil will be no more.

[Study at this web site: “Two Resurrections and a Thousand Years” - series]

- 29. God Himself is the fire which is eternal.** His presence is light and joy to those who love Him, but a consuming fire to those whose hearts are full of hate and rebellion (Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29, Isaiah 43:2, Isaiah 33:10-16). The “sea of glass, like crystal” before God’s throne (Rev. 4:6) is also, I believe, the consuming “lake of fire.” The righteous will “walk through the fire” while the wicked will be consumed. (Isa. 43:14-15)

[Study at this web site: “Two Resurrections and a Thousand Years” - Part Four - “Lake of Fire”]

- 31. The earth - restored and made new again, will be the home of the redeemed for all eternity**
(Psalm

THE CHURCH

- 32. What is the church? Which is the true church?**

The apostle Paul wrote, “all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26). How can this be, when we know that those who died in rebellion during the wilderness experience of Israel will not enter His rest? (Hebrews 4:5) The answer lies in another statement of Paul, “They are not all Israel, who are of (descended from) Israel (Jacob)” (Romans 9:6). Race alone does not make one a faithful servant of God - a true Israelite. So today, there are many who join a church, are baptized, making vows because they believe this will give them entry into the kingdom - when their heart is not truly given to God. These people are not true followers of Christ. They are hangers-on, Christians in name only. Just as there was a visible, physical nation of Israel, so there is a visible church in the world. The true Israel consisted of those who maintained an obedient heart relationship with God. **So the true church consists of those individuals who have a heartfelt relationship with their Lord - no matter which church roster contains their names.** They may not espouse every true doctrine, as God sees it, but their hearts belong to Him, and that is what counts.

The Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, teaches church (congregational) organization. Each member of the body is called upon to exercise his special gifts for the benefit of all.

- 33. Through His Son, the Father has given special gifts to men, for the blessing of His people** (Ephesians 4:7-8). During the Old Testament period, “the Spirit of the Lord” came “upon” or “filled” certain individuals giving them extraordinary power to lead Israel to victory over her enemies, wisdom to judge, to teach, (Jude. 3;10; 6:34; 11:29; 1Samuel 13-14) or to prophesy (Ezekiel 11:5, Numbers 11:17, 25:25; 2Samuel 23:2; Numbers 24:5). For the building of the Sanctuary, God gave special gifts of artistic ability (Exodus 28:3; 31:3; 35:30-35).

After Christ ascended to Heaven and poured out His Spirit (Acts 2:33, Titus 3:6), individuals were once again

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. . . . But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He [God] wills”

(1Corinthians 12:4-11 NAS). [Also see: James 1:17-18; Romans 8:32; Ephesians 5:20; Hebrews 2:4.]

Some of these gifts are listed in 1Corinthians 12:4-31:

1. The Spirit of wisdom
2. The word of knowledge
3. Faith
4. Gifts of healing
5. Working of miracles
6. Prophecy
7. Discerning of spirits
8. Different kind of tongues (languages)
9. Interpretation of tongues

God appointed the members of the body (Church) to different roles: 1. Apostles 2. Prophets 3. Teachers

4. Workers of miracles 5. Healers 6. Helpers 7. Those who administer government 8. Interpreters (for those who speak another language).

The point Paul makes in 1Corinthians 12, is that not everyone receives the same gift or gifts. God is the one who decides how the gifts will be distributed, so do not complain about which gift/s you have received. All members work together to strengthen the church, winning souls to Christ.

Paul does make one exception. He says, “Desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy” (1Corinthians 14:1).

“Spiritual gifts” must be distinguished from spiritual “fruits.” Every believer will bring forth “the fruits of the Spirit”(more and more as he/she grows) whose heart has been submitted to Christ. These fruits are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22).

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

- 34. Prayer, and Bible study, are the pillars of personal growth for the Christian.** Prayer may be formal, with a congregation but should most often be informal, between one soul and his/her God. Prayer should be constant and conversational - talking to God as to a very loving father (Galatians 4:6, Matthew 6:6-13, 32). Christ gave us a model prayer, but it is not necessary to repeat that one prayer over and over (Matthew 6:7). Each child of God should pray from his/her heart in many different ways to express his/her own daily praises, and to ask for His blessing. We are to pray to the Father, in the name of His Son (John 15:16, 16:23). When we pray, “in Jesus name” we are expressing faith in Jesus Christ as Intercessor, Advocate, and High Priest before God’s throne. It is because of His perfect righteousness and His perfect death, that our prayer is heard.
- 35. Fellowship together with those who also believe, for the purpose of worship, study, and mutual encouragement is of great value in the Christian life** (Hebrews 10:25). As members of the Body of Christ - the Church, we are to love each other and care for each other as brothers and sisters.
- 36. Baptism** (The word means “immersion.”) **is the symbol given by Christ to represent our death to sin and our resurrection to a new life.** In baptism, we are buried with Christ, and as He was raised from the dead, so we are raised to a new life. (Romans 6:4). Only those capable of making a free will choice can enter into the experience of baptism.

Peter said repent and be baptized. Infants cannot repent. They cannot receive His word, or believe with all their hearts (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:1-9; Acts 2:38, 41-47; Acts 8:35-38; Acts 16:32,33; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 3:1-3). Infant baptism is based upon a belief in something call “original sin.” (The expression is not in the Bible.) This doctrine says that sin is inherited. Because Adam sinned, he passed this sin on to his descendants. I do not agree with this

doctrine. I do not believe that sin is something which can be inherited. I believe that we inherit a strong tendency to sin, but not the sin itself.

- 37. The Passover meal was instituted by Christ, through Moses. This symbolic meal pointed forward to Christ the Lamb who was sacrificed for us.** The unleavened bread and wine are symbols of the body and the blood of our Lord. Christ bade His disciples remember Him by partaking of this memorial meal. At His final Passover, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. Following His example, we will humble ourselves in service to others, even to those who “betray us” (1Corinthians 11:23-29, John 13:1-17).

[We recommend the book: “The Feasts of the Lord” by Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal” available from amazon.com]

- 38. All that we have is a gift from God. In token of this, we return to God His own** (Leviticus 27:30-32, Malachi 3:8-11). **The tithe (meaning 10th) is used to support the teaching of the gospel message.** During the Old Testament period, 1/3rd of the tithe was used to help the poor. In addition to our tithe, as we are blessed of God, we are to give thank offerings. (Matthew 23:23).

- 39. The Christian will practice modesty, humility, and thrift in lifestyle, dress, and deportment** (1Timothy 2:9-10, Matthew 24:37-44 , James 1:27).

- 40. Believing his body to be a temple for God’s indwelling, the Christian will embrace a healthful lifestyle.** (Proverbs 23:29-32, 1Corinthians 3:16-17, Deuteronomy. 14:3-20, Isaiah 66:15-17).

The dietary laws given in the Old Testament concerning clean and unclean meats were given for health reasons and are still valid today (Leviticus 11) as is the prohibition against eating or drinking blood (Acts 15:19-20,29; Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 17:12). [I do not share the view that blood transfusions for the saving of life are a violation of the dietary laws, given for health.]

- 41. Marriage between one man and one woman is ordained of God** (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:6). As Christ has one “wife” - the church (Ephesians 5:23, Revelation 21:9), so a man is to have only one wife. The sexual union within marriage is something to be enjoyed and treasured (Proverbs 5:18,19; Hebrews 13:4).

Divorce, “except for the cause of fornication,” was forbidden by Christ (Matt. 5:32; Matt. 19:9). Some believe that remarriage was allowed by Paul, for those believers who had been deserted by unbelieving spouses (1Cor. 7:15).

Fornication is condemned in the New Testament. (The word “fornication” means “unlawful sex.” The only “law” available to the Israel of Christ’s day was the Old Testament.) The term fornication included: **1.** sex outside of marriage **2.** adultery - sex with the spouse of another (1Corinthians 6:9, 13, 18; Gal 5:19; 1Thessalonians 4:3; Exodus 20:14) **3.** incest (Leviticus 18) **4.** homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; 1Corinthians 6:9; Romans 1:26-28) **5.** bestiality (Leviticus 18:23) and **6.** cross-dressing (Deuteronomy 22:5). Also, sex with a woman who was menstruating was forbidden (Leviticus 18:19, 29).

THE GOSPEL COMMISSION

42. Each person is held accountable only for the truth which has been revealed to him. Only Christ will judge the heart. Only God knows what truth He has brought to the awareness, what truth has been received, and what truth has been rejected. The saved of God will be come from all churches and all cultures, but they will be those who have responded to the light which they received. They will be those who responded to the Spirit of Christ, even if they did not know His name (James 4:17, John 9:41, Hosea 4:6, Acts 17:30, Proverbs 28:9).

While it is true that every person is convicted by the Spirit of Christ - his conscience receiving or rejecting this conviction, it is the great love of God which draws men to render true worship and service. We love Him because he first loved us. This love was fully revealed in the gift of His Son. **The story of Jesus should be told to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people just as our Lord commanded** (Matthew 28:19-20). This missionary work will hasten the return of our Lord, for He must endeavor to save every lost sheep before His work is done (Matt. 24:14).

What is the gospel?? Gospel is a Greek word meaning “good news.” So we might rightly ask, “What is this good news?”

Is THE good news, that Christ has died to save men from death? Well - yes. But if we are going to live for eternity with a Dictator called God, in a place where we will be miserable, then eternal life really isn't good news. Is it?

Maybe the good news is that Heaven will be wonderful, and the new earth just as blessed. But what is it, or Who is it, that will make our eternal home a place where we will be happy? Is it not God Himself? He is the one Who will provide this home for the saved. So we've come back again to the character of God Himself.

I believe the “good news” is that God is exactly as Jesus portrayed Him - our loving Father. He is the most wonderful, most glorious, most loving Being we could ever imagine, and more.

**THE GOOD NEWS:
GOD REALLY IS, LOVE.**