

A coastal town built on a hillside overlooking a beach and ocean at sunset. The town is densely packed with houses of various colors, and the ocean is calm with gentle waves washing onto the shore. The sky is a clear, deep blue, and the overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

# OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL

*Biblical Research Library*  
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## OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL

A preacher once stood up before a hundred church leaders, held up a copy of the Bible and shouted, “**Is this the gospel?**” In unison they all responded, “Yes!” The preacher then said, “Wrong! The Bible is not the gospel!” Was the preacher a heretic, or a knowledgeable “gospel preacher”?

It is the natural quest of people of faith to seek out God. In their search they thirst for acceptance and peace of mind with their Creator. If their faith is true, they will not turn from their search until they have satisfied their souls that they are right in the eyes of God. Nothing is more crucial to this search and acceptance than knowing with certainty that one has fulfilled the will of the Father, especially in establishing his or her initial relationship with Jesus.

People of faith who call themselves after Christ are driven to live Christ-centered lives. They seek to walk with Christ. They seek to follow Him through the trials of life, being assured that they are in Him and with Him in this earthly walk. Ask any Christian and he can tell you when his Christ-centered life began. It began at a cross and tomb. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of confusion in the religious world as to when the Christ-centered life begins. Conflict and confusion seem to reign concerning what should be a simple biblical answer concerning the beginning of the Christ-centered walk with King Jesus.

The assurance of our faith is based

on our objective knowledge that we are Christ-centered in our walk with God. Our knowledge must be based on the Christ-like life that is objectively learned from the word of God. It is as plain as John stated, “*And by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments*” (1 Jn 2:3). We can know that we are living the Christ-centered life only by our knowledge of and obedience to what Christ commanded. From the beginning of our walk with our Lord Jesus Christ, to the time of our death, we must be assured that we are walking in the commandments of Jesus. This certainly sets aside our own religious inventions or traditions as to how we would begin and end our life with Jesus. The agonies that are in store for those who do not seek and follow the commandments of Christ are a terrifying deterrent to following after our own religious inventions.

It is for the preceding reasons that God knew that we needed a specific time or event in our lives when we could confidently affirm that our walk with Jesus began by His forgiveness of all our past sins. He knew that we would have little faith in a subjective experience that emotionally originated from within ourselves. He knew that we would have doubt if His answer to our desires was abstract rather than concrete. Therefore, **God commanded a specific event in our lives to which we could continually refer the rest of our lives concerning when our walk with Jesus began.** It would be time

when our past sins were washed away and we could confidently affirm that we were in a right relationship with God.

It would be inconceivable to claim that we walked with Christ, while at the same time, we based our walk on our own religious inventions. Knowing that religious traditions continually plague our religiosity, we would never take the chance of beginning our relationship with Christ on the foundation of the traditions of our fathers. As the Jews of Jesus' day, our fathers may have walked away from the commandments of God (See Mk 7:1-9). In order to reassure ourselves of our relationship with Jesus, all of us must dig

through our religious traditions and subjective experiences in order to make sure that we have not sought to establish a relationship with God that is based on something of human origin. Any relationship with God must be based on His conditions. And the only way we can determine and discover His conditions, is in His word. With this challenge, therefore, we would assemble around an open Bible in order to define, reassure, or simply discover the great news that God has for all people in reference to beginning a lifetime relationship with His Son that will end in eternal life.

## Chapter 1

### Obedience To The Gospel

Paul's reference to "**obedience of the gospel**" in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 is crucial to our understanding that the gospel, and our obedience thereof, are the beginning of our relationship with Jesus. His statements in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 are in the context of the final coming of Jesus. Since Jesus is the coming King before whom we must make peace (see Lk 14:31-33), then it is imperative that we understand how to make peace with Him.

*For it is a just thing with God to repay tribulation to those who trouble you, and to give you who are afflicted rest with us when the Lord Jesus will be **revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those***

*who do not know God and **WHO DO NOT OBEY THE GOSPEL** of our Lord Jesus Christ. These will be **punished with everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord and away from the glory of His power ....***"

Frightening? We must never forget that it is the LORD Jesus Christ who will be our final judge. This is not baby Jesus in the manger. It is not the Jesus with the disciples along the Galilean road. This is King Jesus who is coming as the just judge of all humanity.

The coming King Jesus is the One into whose hands God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have given all rights to be our judge (At 17:30,31). "*For we must all appear before **the judgment seat***

*of Christ, so that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad”* (2 Co 5:10).

Now here is a very important question every reader of 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 must ask and answer: **Is Paul saying that if one does not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that he cannot be saved?** If you answered “No”, then you need to read the passage again. Jesus is coming to condemn to eternal destruction those who have not obeyed the gospel. The statement is right there in your Bible.

Is preaching and obeying the gospel important? The importance of understanding and preaching the gospel is based on Jesus’ mandate to “*go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mk 16:15). And this is exactly what happened in the first century. Throughout the book of Acts the gospel is proclaimed in every recorded address of the disciples to the people. The gospel was the first thing that Paul preached when he went to every city of his missionary journeys (1 Co 15:3,4). From Jesus’ mandate to the example of the evangelistic outreach of the early disciples, the gospel was made the “first page” on which any Christ-centered life must begin and be sustained. If one bypasses the gospel, he has bypassed Jesus. He is not living a Christ-centered life.

Paul emphasizes the importance of preaching the gospel first because of what he states in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9. He is definitely talking about Jesus’ final coming. Jesus is coming with His angels in

flaming fire. He is coming to take vengeance. He is taking vengeance on those who refused to have God in their knowledge, and thus, seek to find the one true and living God (See Rm 1:20). And those who have found God, but refuse to respond to the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, these He will punish with everlasting destruction. The punishment will be destruction forever away from the eternal life-giving God. The passage is talking about damnation forever.

If you do not believe that there will be an eternal punishment for those who do not respond to God, then it will be useless to continue reading this plea. In fact, it will be useless to continue reading the Bible, for throughout the word of God there is a clear message that all men will be held accountable for their behavior. The New Testament is saturated with commands and examples that enjoin upon all men the necessity of obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter stated this as a question. “*For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. And if it first begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?*” Peter knew that the Christians to whom he was writing knew the answer to the question. And the answer is 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.

It takes no interpretation of the Bible to understand clearly the consequences of not obeying the gospel. Those fundamentals that are necessary for our salvation are not written in obscure language or figurative statements. Bible texts that speak of those things that are essential

for our salvation are written in passages that “mean what they say, and say what they mean.” And in the two texts that we have just read, **the Bible states that every person must obey the gospel in order to escape the coming vengeance and eternal judgment of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Since one must obey the gospel in order to escape a destiny of eternal hell, then there are two very important questions that must be asked and answered.

## WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? HOW CAN ONE OBEY THE GOSPEL?

### Chapter 2

## What Is The Gospel?

Remember the audience of one hundred people who said that the Bible was the gospel? Yes, they were all wrong. At the conclusion of this one chapter of study you too will agree that they were wrong.

David needed to kill a giant. In order to do so, he took with him five smooth stones to meet Goliath. However, he only needed one to do the job. And so it is with clarifying our understanding of the gospel. We need only one passage of scripture that goes right to the heart of the gospel message. God began His plan of redemption from the first sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. He continued working His plan throughout the history of national Israel, until eventually coming to the fullness of time in the event of

Our eternal salvation depends on a correct answer to these questions. And in answering these questions we must be cautious that we do not slip in our own religious traditional theologies of the past or any emotional experiences we have used to validate our relationship with God. We must not be influenced by some charismatic evangelist, or the preacher down the street who has also been confused. Our answers to the questions must be based on an objective reading of God’s definitions in the Bible.

the cross and resurrection of Jesus two thousand years ago (See Gl 4:4). Paul explains the consummation of the plan of redemption in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4.**

### A. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4:

Since there is a great deal of misunderstanding concerning the gospel, it is imperative that we work through Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 in order to be very specific and definitive. We begin with verses 1 & 2.

*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the **gospel** which I **preached** to you, which also you **received** and in which you **stand**, by which also you are **saved**, if you hold fast to that **word** which I*

*preached to you, unless you believed in vain.*

These words are in the Bible because of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:16,17). However, **these words are not the gospel**. They are only words that talk **about** the gospel. The following are important points that Paul explains in verses 1 & 2 concerning the propagation of the gospel to the world:

**1. Declare:** The gospel is a message that can be declared. The Greek word in the text means “to make known.” Unless Christians assume their duty to be evangelistic, the gospel cannot be made known to the world.

**2. Preached:** The medium through which the gospel is made known is through the words of preaching. The words are not the gospel. Words are only used to communicate the event of the gospel.

**3. Received:** The gospel is received as true when those who read their Bibles believe that the gospel event really happened. Unless one believes what is communicated through the words of the Bible, he will not respond to the event of the gospel. Need we say that receiving the gospel is something that babies cannot do. Receiving involves making an adult choice, and babies cannot make choices. Individuals must make the choice of accepting as true the event of the gospel.

**4. Stand:** The word “stand” is used as a metaphor in reference to believing the gospel event. As we have emotional

assurance because the foundation upon which we physically stand, the gospel brings emotional stability to all those who receive it as true. When one responds to the gospel, it brings him peace of mind (See Ph 4:6,7).

**5. Saved:** This is the reward when one responds to the event of the gospel. One is saved from his inability to justify himself before God, and thus be rewarded with eternal life. If one would seek to live forever, therefore, the gospel event stands between him and eternity.

**6. If:** This is subjunctive, and thus, conditional. One is saved by the gospel only if he continues to believe the event of the gospel. If one stops believing any event of the gospel, as some in Corinth did, then he will lose his salvation. The remainder of 1 Corinthians 15 is discussing the event of the resurrection of Jesus. If one stops believing that Jesus was raised from the dead, then the gospel will profit him nothing in reference to his salvation.

**7. Word:** In order to continue believing, and thus inherit the salvation of eternal life, we must continue to believe our Bibles that report the event of the gospel. The gospel is communicated to us through the written word of God, though the Corinthians originally heard it through the spoken words of Paul. The gospel event happened before the New Testament was written. But if we do not study and continue to believe the recorded news of the gospel in the New Testament, we will lose our salvation.

The first four verses of 1 Corinthians

15 are as a newspaper. A newspaper is the record of events that happened in history. When a particular event happens in history, a reporter may go to where the event took place. He interviews those who experienced the event. He talks to witnesses. He returns to his office and writes a report of the event. The newspaper, therefore, becomes a **report of events** that took place in history. The newspaper is not the event. It is only the report of the event. **The Bible is not the gospel. It is only the Holy Spirit inspired report of the event of the gospel.**

Verses 1 & 2 of 1 Corinthians 15 are only a report concerning the gospel in relation to Paul's original delivery of the good news to the Corinthians. He used words to communicate facts about the gospel. However, the words he used were not the gospel. He only reported about the gospel. In verses 3 & 4 he explains the central events of the gospel that the Corinthians received as true, and by which they were saved.

*For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that **He was buried**, and that **He rose again** on the third day according to the Scriptures.*

Now this is the great news! This is the event of the gospel! The gospel was an historical event that took place outside Jerusalem many years ago. Christ historically died for our sins. He was buried. He was historically raised from

the dead to give us hope of being raised to a new life in this life, and eternal life to come. **The gospel is the historical event of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.** We read about this historical event in the inspired word of God. The Bible, therefore, is not the gospel. It is the inspired report of the gospel event.

And herein are many people confused. Unknowledgeable preachers have for years held up their Bibles and proclaimed, "This is the gospel." They were wrong. They also taught, "Obey the gospel" when referring to the countless commands of the Bible. But they were teaching an impossibility that brought guilt, and not assurance and hope. If the Bible were the gospel, and we had to obey every command perfectly in order to be saved, then no one could be saved, for no one can obey the law of God perfectly. No one could thus be saved because "*there is none righteous, no, not one*" (Rm 3:10), "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rm 3:23).

No one can perfectly obey all that is written in the Bible. And because no one can obey everything that is written in the Bible, then no one can be saved. If the Bible were the gospel, then the proclamation of the preacher is a message of doom, not salvation and hope. The truth is that the gospel event happened in order to deliver us from our inability to keep God's law perfectly. The gospel event brings confidence and assurance. We have hope because we are delivered from sin because of the cross. The Bible is God's means by which the saving event

of this good news is communicated to us. If we respond to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, then we will be saved as the Corinthians who received (believed) and obeyed the report of the gospel that was preached by Paul.

## **B. Our two great problems:**

We need salvation by the gospel because of two great problems that we have in our lives, problems for which we need good news.

### **1. Our problem of spiritual death:**

There is no person alive who has not sinned, for no one can live the perfect life (Rm 3:23). The problem with sin is that it separates us from the One against whom we sin. *“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear”* (Is 59:2). It is for this reason that the wages of sin is death (Rm 6:23). If God will not hear our pleas for mercy, then we will suffer the consequence of eternal separation from Him when Jesus comes again (2 Th 1:9). We are thus without hope and condemned to hell if we do not find good news for our problem of spiritual death. No man can be saved without responding to God’s solution for our problem of sin. It is God who must determine the conditions for our spiritual death problem, not man.

### **2. Our problem of physical death:**

When Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, he spiritually died in being separated from God because of his sin. However, his disobedience also had consequences that affected all mankind. After Adam’s sin, God said, *“Behold, the man has become as one of Us, to know good and evil. And now he must not be allowed to put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever”* (Gn 3:22). So God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever. The problem was, not only was Adam driven from the tree of life, he also took with him all humanity. Therefore, because of the consequences of the sin of Adam, all men must physically die (1 Co 15:20-22). In a few years we will all be physically dead. Do we have a problem? Certainly!

**The gospel is good news for our spiritual and physical death problems.** Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and rose again the third day in order to give us hope. It is as Paul wrote, *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead and has become the first fruits of those who are asleep [dead]. For since by man [Adam] came death, by man [Christ] came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all will be made alive”* (1 Co 15:20-22). Do you want to live forever? Then keep reading.

## Chapter 3

### How Can One Obey The Gospel?

Remember 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 and the two questions that were proposed by what Paul said? The first question was, What is the gospel? This question was answered in 1 Corinthians 15:3,4. The gospel is the good news of the historical event of Jesus' death for our sins and His resurrection for our hope.

Paul clearly stated in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 that when Jesus comes again, He will punish with eternal destruction those who do not obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Since this is true, then we must answer the second question that is proposed by 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9: How can one obey the gospel? How can one obey the historical event of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus?

Romans 6 is the answer to how one must obey the gospel. Verses 1-6 answer the question. In verses 1-3 Paul asked three very important questions.

*What then will we say? [1] Will we continue in sin so that grace may abound? Certainly not! [2] How will we who died to sin live any longer therein? [3] Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*

Baptism was a turning point in the lives of those to whom Paul wrote in Rome. They had "died to sin" at the time

they were crucified with Christ. In their subsequent burial with Christ in His death, they were "baptized into His (Christ's) death." In verse 4 Paul began his answer to the three questions he asked in verses 1-3.

*Therefore, we are buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, even so we also might walk in newness of life.*

One is baptized into the death of Christ in the tomb by being buried with Him through baptism into a tomb of water. Paul could not have made this more simple. The Greek word *baptizo* means "to dip," "to plunge," or "to immerse." Two thousand years ago Jesus died, was buried in a tomb, and then resurrected. One today can join with Him in His death, burial and resurrection by going down into a tomb of water. Baptism, therefore, is not simply a reenactment of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It is a response to the good news of the gospel. It is establishing a union with Christ by death on a cross, immersion in a tomb of water and resurrection.

Paul assumed that the Romans did not fully understand the total purpose of their obedience to the gospel. He expands on his explanation in verse 5 with different words.

*For if we have been **united together in the likeness of His death**, we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection.*

Before we are buried with Christ, we must “*have been united together in the likeness of His death.*” In verse 4 he simply explained that we were “buried with Him” in baptism. But in verse 5 Paul takes a step backwards. Before one is “buried with Him through baptism,” he must first be “united together in the likeness of His death.” In other words, **one must die before he is buried**. Paul explains this in verse 6.

*... knowing this, that **our old man was crucified with Him** so that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we should no longer be bondservants to sin.*

Those who want to be buried with Jesus, must first die with Him on a cross. If we would be baptized into His death, then we must first die. Before burial, we must be crucified in the “likeness of His death.” Jesus was nailed to the cross for our sins (1 Co 15:3). We must be nailed to our cross of repentance for our sins. It is not that we must come to the foot of the cross, as we hear so many saying. If the sinner stays at the foot of the cross, he will accomplish nothing in reference to his salvation. The Greek word for “crucified” is passive, that is, the subject is acted upon. The gospel message takes people to the cross, not just to the foot of the cross. As nails were driven into the hands of Jesus, so nails of repentance must be driven into the old man of sin.

The old man must die on the cross as Jesus died on the cross. If there is no death through repentance on a cross, then there can be no burial. If we do not crucify the old man of sin, we cannot bury him. Have you ever tried to bury a living person?

Here is how Paul referred to his own crucifixion with Christ.

*I have been crucified with Christ. And it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**. And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gl 2:20).*

Unless one is “crucified with Christ” Christ cannot live in him. When Ananias said to Paul after the Damascus road encounter with Jesus, “*Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins,*” he was talking to a dead man who had crucified himself with Christ (At 22:16). Paul needed to be baptized in order to bury the old man and wash away all his past sins.

The old man of sin must die on the cross, not in the water. Only the dead are buried. We do not drown living sinners by trying to bury them until they stop bubbling. **Before burial there must be death!** There must be a cry that one receive all that Jesus is into his heart. There must be remorse over sin and rebellion. There is no salvational magic in a “sinner’s prayer,” which thing is never mentioned in the Bible. Too many people have been duped into thinking that all is well once they have cried out for salva-

tion and repented of their sins. What they have done is repent of their wayward life. They have been crucified with Jesus. So now they are dead. What many of the religious world have done is convince thousands of dead men that they are alive without being buried with Jesus in order be raised to walk in newness of life. But there is no life until there is a burial.

The best way to determine if one has truly been crucified with Christ is if he or she is sniffing out a tomb in which to be buried. There is no life in death. If one has died with Christ on the cross of repentance, he is a dead man walking until he finds a tomb of water from which to be resurrected in order to walk in newness of life. This is how the Ethiopian eunuch responded. *“See, here is water! What hinders me from being baptized”* (At 8:36). It is a sad situation to think that you are alive when actually you are a dead man walking.

In order to complete one’s obedience to the gospel in order to escape the coming judgment of Jesus, he must be buried with Jesus and raised with Jesus. The gospel is the good news of Jesus’ death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection to give us hope. Our obedience to the gospel is our death on a cross of repentance, burial and resurrection with Jesus. Now we understand why there are so many recorded cases of people being baptized in the first century. They were responding to the cross of Jesus, His death, and resurrection (See At 2:31-47; 8:5-13,26-40; 9:10-19, 24-43; 16:13-14, 25-34; 18:8; 19:1-5).

As we said before, these are not

things that concern innocent babies. Crucifixion with Christ involves making life-changing decisions. It involves response and commitment, things which infants can never do. We would never degrade the importance of what God calls on us to do with ourselves by making choices in the lives of those who do not have the power to make such choices for themselves. There is no harm in dedicating one’s infant to the Lord, but we would not dare plagiarize or minimize obedience to the gospel by baptism in order to assume that some infant is in sin.

Too many people have degraded baptism to be a legal work of law in order to justify oneself before God. But baptism can never be a legal work of law. It is a response, a response to what Jesus did for us. The legal understanding of some is often expressed in how they seek to move one to be baptized. They say, “Isn’t it time you ‘get baptized’.” If we “get baptized” in response to law, then our response is not in reference to the good news of the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Baptism is not the end of a legal action of hearing, believing, repenting and confessing. Baptism is a response to Jesus and the grace of the cross (Ti 2:11). It is for this reason that Paul reminded the Corinthians, *“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel . . .”* (1 Co 1:17). When we preach the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, people will respond as the Ethiopian eunuch. They will respond as the thousands on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 (See At 2:37,38). They will respond by following Jesus to the

cross, to the grave, and then, in resurrection to a Christ-centered life.

So is baptism important and necessary to establish a relationship with God? 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 answers this question. But consider also the fact that many people want to be **with Jesus** in eternity, but not with Him on the cross and in the grave. Paul expressed his desire to die and be with Christ. *“For I am torn between the two, having a desire to depart and to be **with Christ**, which is much better”* (Ph 1:23). Our question is, When does the “with” begin? If one wants to be with Jesus in eternity, he must begin his journey with Jesus by first being “crucified **with Christ**” (Rm 6:6). If one is crucified with Christ, then he must be buried **with Him** (Rm 6:4). And once one comes out of a tomb of water in the likeness of Jesus’ resurrection, he must walk with Jesus throughout life. If we seek to be with Jesus in eternity, therefore, we must start the “with” on a cross of repentance, and continue it through a burial in water in order to be raised to walk with Him in this life. There can be no being with Jesus in eternity if there is no obedience of the gospel.

Living with Christ is discipleship. In order to determine if one is a disciple of Christ, He must follow the teachings of Christ. Jesus explains this in Matthew 28:19,20. *“Going, therefore, **disciple all the nations**, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.**”*

Discipling people to Jesus means teaching them to the point that they crucify themselves with Christ, and then, they are buried and raised with Christ. But discipleship does not stop at baptism. One must continue to learn the word of Christ. Baptism is only the beginning of the Christ-entered life. If one is baptized, and then terminates his study of the word of Christ, then he is no longer Christ-centered. He is not remaining “with Christ” because he has forsaken the direction of the word of Christ. Jesus said, *“**If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples**”* (Jn 8:31; see 14:15,23).

It is easy to discover a disciple of Jesus. It is the person who continually studies the word of Christ. If one does not continue to study the word of Christ, then he ceases to be with Christ in this life. Therefore, **we cannot disconnect the gospel from the word of Christ**. If one is sincere in being crucified, buried and raised with Christ, then he is sincere about giving his life to a study of the word of Christ (2 Tm 2:15). Crucifying oneself with Christ, therefore, is more than being remorseful over past sins. It is making a change from refusing to listen to the word of Christ to a lifetime commitment of studying of the word of Christ in order to know Him. As Peter said, *“**But grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**”* (2 Pt 3:18). When one obeys the gospel and comes into a relationship with God, it is only natural for that person to seek instruction from the Father.

## Chapter 4

### Baptized Into Christ

The Christ-centered life begins when one joins with Jesus on the cross. It continues into a grave of water, and then in the new life with Christ in life. And “if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn 1:7). Walking in the light with Jesus after baptism brings all those blessings that will eventually result in hearing the words, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34).

In Romans 6:3 Paul spoke of being baptized **into Christ**. These are the same words he used when he wrote to the Galatians. “For as many of you as were baptized **into Christ** have put on Christ” (Gl 3:27). The phrase “in Christ” is unique with Paul in that it explains a relationship that one establishes with Christ at the time of his obedience to the gospel in baptism. This relationship with the Son of God comes with a great deal of spiritual blessings. In fact, all spiritual blessings that will result in our final salvation are found in this relationship in Christ. “Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with **every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places **in Christ**” (Ep 1:3). The following are these spiritual blessings:

- **Redemption and forgiveness:** “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace*” (Ep 1:7; see Rm 3:24).
- **Sanctification:** “. . . to the church of God that is at Corinth, to those who are **sanctified in Christ Jesus**, called to be saints . . .” (1 Co 1:2; 6:9-11).
- **No condemnation:** “There is now, therefore, **no condemnation** to those who are **in Christ Jesus** . . .” (Rm 8:1).
- **New creation:** “Therefore, if any man is **in Christ**, he is a new creature” (2 Co 5:17).
- **Eternal life:** “And this is the testimony, that God has given us **eternal life** and this life is **in His Son**” (1 Jn 5:11).

The result of all the spiritual blessing that one has as a result of being baptized into Christ is salvation. “Therefore, I endure all things for the elects’ sake,” wrote Paul, “that they may also obtain the **salvation that is in Christ Jesus** with eternal glory” (2 Tm 2:10). If redemption and forgiveness of sins are in Christ, then there is no redemption and forgiveness of sins outside Christ. If sanctification by the Holy Spirit is in Christ, then

there is no sanctification outside Christ. If one is not under condemnation in Christ because he has the continual cleansing of the blood of Christ, then one is under condemnation outside Christ. If one is a new creature in Christ, then he remains an old creature outside Christ. And if eternal life is in Christ, then only eternal death is outside Christ. Must we still answer the question as to why one must obey the gospel by immersion into Christ in order to be saved?

**That which is most important for one to do in order to be saved is where Satan will do his best work in deceiving men.** And in reference to obedience to the gospel he has done a very good job in the religious world. He has held people back from the grave of baptism by convincing them that a simple "sinner's prayer" will get them to heaven. He has convinced some that if they have some ecstatic experience of speaking in "tongues," (gibberish), the Holy Spirit has saved them directly, and thus, they can circumvent the cross, grave and resurrection. He has convinced people that they can marginalize the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus by some emotional experience with the Holy Spirit by which they have been supposedly saved directly apart from obedience to the gospel. Satan has kept thousand off the cross of crucifixion with Jesus by making them believe that they can emotionally feel themselves into Christ without baptism for remission of sins. This is the greatest tragedy of Christendom in the world today.

After the event of His death, burial

and resurrection (the gospel), Jesus commissioned His disciples, "*Go into all the world and preach the **gospel** to every creature*" (Mk 16:15). The disciples were to go and preach that He had died on the cross for the sins of humanity. They were to preach that He was buried, but that He was also resurrected in order to give men hope of resurrection to eternal life. Therefore, Jesus stated a truth to the disciples, "***He who believes and is baptized will be saved. But he who does not believe will be condemned***" (Mk 16:16).

True believers will obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. But if one does not believe that Jesus died for our sins and was resurrected, then there is no need to talk about baptism. But for those who believe as Noah, whose family was saved from death by the waters of the flood, "*the like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us*" (1 Pt 3:21). One is saved at the point of baptism because all past sins are washed away (At 2:38). The statement that should now be made to every honest believer is, "***Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord***" (At 22:16).

Those who seek to begin a Christ-centered life must seek out a cross, and then find a tomb of water in which to be buried with Jesus. If there is no burial, there will never be a resurrection to life. If one is not nailed to a cross in repentance, and buried with the Son of God in order to be raised with Him, then he is on his own with the merit of his own religiosity. Just keep the following words

of Jesus in mind: *“Not every one who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven**”* (Mt 7:21).

No miracles were worked in the first century through those who had not obeyed the will of the Father by obedience to the gospel of His Son. The Father would never minimize the cross and resurrection by confirming that the dis-

obedient were saved through some miraculous manifestation of the Spirit. It is not the will of the Father to circumvent the cross of His Son through some supposed work of the Spirit in the lives of unbelievers. To claim such is almost blasphemous in saying that the cross and resurrection of the Son of God can be bypassed in order to be saved. You cannot circumvent the cross and the tomb for the crown.