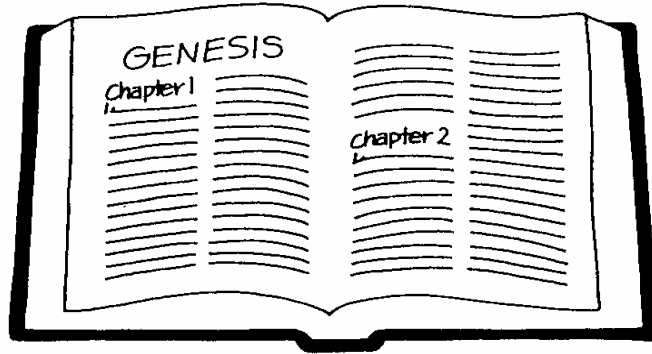


Are you a Christian?

Correspondence Course # 7



Introduction:

By the very existence of the church, we see the reality of Jehovah God. The Lord foretold of the church's existence (Isa. 2:2f), and it has come (Acts 2). Prophecy fulfilled proves the deity of the Lord. He alone is God! The prophet Isaiah recorded an inspired statement from Jehovah who said, *"I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"* (Isa. 46:9-10).

The same Lord who foretold of the church's existence foretold who would be in the church as the saved. The Lord had a specific class of people in mind when he established the church and the terms for admission into that church. This lesson will examine what God's word has to say about individuals becoming Christians. Like the previous lessons, we will want to look only at what the Bible says regarding how people become Christians.

The Eternal Purpose of God:

The apostle Paul told the Ephesians, *"to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the **eternal purpose** which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him"* (Eph. 3:10-12). The Lord's purpose through the ages has been to provide reconciliation through the blood of Jesus Christ (Isa. 53:10). Jesus Christ was to offer himself as a sacrifice for sins so that man may have the opportunity of forgiveness (Heb. 9:11-14).

When man sins, and all do (cf. Rom. 3:23), they are separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2). God's nature is one of holiness, purity and light (I Jn. 1:5). Fellowship with the heavenly Father occurs only when the sin that separates us is removed. This was indeed the very purpose of Jesus coming into the world, i.e., that man

may have the forgiveness of sins (cf. Matt. 1:21). Sin separates man from God because He is light and in Him is no darkness (I Jn. 1:5). The remedy for every man's sin is the blood of Jesus. Jesus said of his own blood, *"this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto the remission of sins"* (Matt. 26:28). The eternal purpose of God is to reveal a message, the gospel, through the church that informs men and women about the saving blood of Jesus!

Who are the saved?

The saved are a class of people that have been known of God before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-4; Rev. 13:8). The apostle Paul said, *"For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also **called**: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified"* (Rom. 3:28-29). The word *"justified"* means to be acquitted of sin. You and I sin (Rom. 3:23), and we are acquitted from that sin by means of a *"call"* from God.

Remember, the eternal purpose of God is to reveal a message of salvation to the world regarding the saving blood of Jesus. We understand that the foreordained (appointed beforehand) and those foreknown (to have knowledge of beforehand) are those who have been called of God. Isaiah the prophet foretold of this very issue saying, *"Behold, thou shalt **call** a nation that thou knowest not; and a nation that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee"* (Isa. 55:5). The point of the prophet is that not only Jews would comprise the saved of God; the Gentiles would be included as well. Note that it is those who are *"called"* that comprise the saved! The saved are the called, and the called have been known of God before the foundation of the world!

How can I recognize and respond to the call of God to be a Christian?

First, please understand that God invites all to become a Christian. Jesus said, *"come unto me, **all** ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matt. 11:28). Whether Jew or Gentile, the Lord desires that no one should die in their sins but that all would come to repentance (II Pet. 3:9). You and I can recognize the call of God by hearing his gospel message. The apostle Paul said *"faith comes of hearing and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). Faith is that factor by which man is justified from sin (cf. Rom. 5:1-4).

As a flag or banner waving in the wind atop a mountain for a signal base, the word of God calls man to its saving message. The prophet Isaiah said, *"Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up an **ensign** for the peoples. Behold, Jehovah hath proclaimed unto the end of the earth, say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation comes..."* (62:10). One hearing the gospel message and responding to its call would find solace in a place that had walls of salvation (Isa. 60:18) and gates of praise (60:18).

The apostle Paul puts the idea of God’s call into clear language. Paul said, *“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that **God chose you from the beginning unto salvation** in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto **he called you through the gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ**”* (II Thess. 2:13-14). Three things are of importance here: First, we see how that God “foreordained” and had “foreknowledge” of the saved (they are a class of people sanctified through belief of the truth). Second, we see how one is sanctified (set apart). One is set apart from the unregenerate of the world and becomes a Christian by answering the gospel’s call. Third, one becomes a Christian and ultimately obtains the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ through the gospel call.

Jesus said, *“All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matt. 28:18-20). The gospel is the truth (Eph. 1:13), the truth is to be learned and understood (Eph. 3:4) and the truth saves by setting one free from sin (Jn. 8:32). The apostles of Jesus Christ went forth and preached Jesus’ gospel message to others and they, in turn, were to teach others as well (cf. II Tim. 2:2).

Learning from Bible examples:

One can only learn Christianity through a thorough study of God’s word. No one would know right from wrong in the eyes of God lest the Bible revealed these facts (cf. Rom. 7:7). Likewise, the instructions for becoming a Christian are revealed in the scriptures. You and I would not know how one becomes a Christian lest the Bible revealed that information. The book of Acts records nineteen specific examples of individuals becoming Christians. If we can examine these examples and learn what they did to become Christians we will have the answer to the grand question, ‘what must I do to be saved?’ Examine the chart below that reveals these examples:

Bible Examples of People Becoming Christians				
Place	Date	Reference	Who	Message Preached
Jerusalem	29 AD	Acts 2	Jews	Peter preached Jesus (Acts 2:22ff)
Samaria	34 AD	Acts 8:5-24	Samaritans	Philip preached Jesus (Acts 8:5)
Samaria	34 AD	Acts 8:10-13	Simon	Philip preached Jesus (Acts 8:12)






Bible Examples of People Becoming Christians Continued

Place	Date	Reference	Who	Message preached
Gaza	34 AD	Acts 8:26-29	Ethiopian Eunuch	Philip preached Jesus (Acts 8:35)
Damascus	35 AD	Acts 9; 22:16	Saul	Ananias preached Jesus (Acts 9:17; 22:16)
Caesarea	40 AD	Acts 10:1ff	Cornelius	Peter preached Jesus (Acts 10:36f)
Cyprus	45 AD	Acts 13:6-12	Sergius Paulus	Paul and Barnabas preached Jesus (Acts 13:12)
Galatia	46 AD	Acts 13:16ff	Galatians	Paul preached Jesus (Acts 13:26)
Philippi	50 AD	Acts 16:14-15	Lydia	Paul and Silas preached Jesus (Acts 16:14)
Philippi	50 AD	Acts 16:30ff	Jailer	Paul and Silas preached Jesus (Acts 16:31)
Thessalonica	51 AD	Acts 17:1ff	Thessalonians	Paul and Silas preached Jesus (Acts 17:3)
Berea	51 AD	Acts 17:10ff	Bereans	Paul, Silas and Timothy preached Jesus (Acts 17:13)

Bible Examples of People Becoming Christians Continued

Place	Date	Reference	Who	Message preached
Athens	51 AD	Acts 17:16ff	Athenians	Paul preached Jesus (Acts 18:5)
Corinth	51 AD	Acts 18:4ff	Corinthians	Paul preached Jesus (Acts 18:5)
Corinth	51 AD	Acts 18:8ff	Crispus	Paul preached Jesus (Acts 18:26)
Ephesus	54 AD	Acts 18:24-28	Apollos	Pricilla and Aquila preached Jesus (Acts 18:26)
Ephesus	55 AD	Acts 19:1-5	12 disciples of John	Paul preached Jesus (Acts 19:4f)
Ephesus	55 AD	Acts 19:8-10	Ephesians	Paul preached Jesus (Eph. 1:13)
Rome	60 AD	Acts 28:23ff	Romans	Paul preached Jesus (Acts 28:23-24)

Jesus was preached in every case of conversion in our Bibles. Jesus had previously told Thomas, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one comes unto the Father, but by me"* (Jn. 14:6). If Jesus is the truth and the way to the Father for salvation, it stands to reason that preaching Jesus is the only information one needs to obtain salvation. But what information is to be received when one preaches Jesus? Again, each of the above examples of conversion tells us what preaching Jesus is all about. Examine the chart below that reveals what preaching Jesus means. Remember, as you look at the chart, that the apostle Paul said that God calls men and women to salvation through the gospel message of Jesus (II Thess. 2:13-14).

What is preaching Jesus?	
Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2)	 <p>Peter preached Jesus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus 2. Repentance 3. Baptism unto remission of sins
Samaritans (Acts 8)	 <p>Philip preached Jesus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kingdom of God 2. Baptism
Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8)	 <p>Philip preached Jesus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kingdom of God 2. Baptism
Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8)	 <p>Philip preached Jesus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baptism
Saul (Acts 9; 22:16)	 <p>Ananias preached Jesus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baptism to wash away sins (22:16)

What is preaching Jesus?

Cornelius (Acts 10:1ff)



Peter preached Jesus:

1. Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus
2. Belief leading to remission of sins
3. Baptism

Sergius Paulus (Acts 13)



Paul preached Jesus:

1. Faith

Galatians (Acts 13:16ff)



Paul and Barnabas preached Jesus:

1. Jesus is of the seed of David
2. Word of God sets forth salvation
3. Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus
4. Justification by faith (Acts 13:39)
5. Baptism (Gal. 3:27)

Lydia (Acts 16:14-15)



Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy preached Jesus:

1. Baptism

Jailer (Acts 16:30ff)



Paul and Silas preached Jesus:

1. Faith
2. Repentance
3. Baptism

Thessalonians (Acts 17:1)



Paul and Silas preach Jesus:

1. Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus

What is preaching Jesus?

Bereans (Acts 17:10ff)



Paul and Silas preach Jesus:

1. Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus

Athenians (Acts 17:16ff)



Paul preached Jesus:

1. Resurrection of Jesus
2. God is the creator of the world
3. Repentance (17:30)

Corinthians (Acts 18:4ff)



Paul preached Jesus:

1. Hearing, believing and baptism

Crispus (Acts 18:8)



Paul preached Jesus:

1. Hearing, believing and baptism

Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)



Priscilla and Aquila preached Jesus:

1. Baptism in the name of Jesus

**12 disciples of John the Baptist
(Acts 19:1-5)**



Paul preached Jesus:

1. Baptism in the name of Jesus

Ephesians (Acts 19:8-10)



Paul preached Jesus:

1. Hearing, believing and Baptism
(cf. Eph. 4:4-5)

Romans (Acts 28:23ff)



Paul preached Jesus:

1. Death, burial and resurrection
(Rom. 1:4)
2. Hearing, believing, confessing, repenting, baptism and faithful living

Notice that in all nineteen cases of conversion, Jesus was preached. As we examine each case of conversion, there are uniform contexts that reveal what preaching Jesus is all about. Preaching Jesus involves convincing the lost about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Preaching Jesus involves teaching the necessity for one to have faith in Jesus and to unashamedly confess the name of Jesus. It also involves teaching regarding repentance, baptism for the remission of sins and faithful living unto the Lord. These ideas can in no way be accepted by the lost unless they hear the gospel preached. Paul said, *"faith comes of hearing and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17).

The prophet Isaiah foretold that the individuals who would receive salvation were to be those who are willing to learn (Isa. 54:13). Jesus quoted from Isaiah saying, *"No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me"* (Jn. 6:44-45). Becoming a Christian is a learned process.

One cannot accept one condition of salvation and leave the others out. Some say that all one has to do to be saved is to believe in Jesus or to accept Him as your personal savior. Dear friend, I find no such scriptures in the Bible. Understand that believing is a condition and people such as Cornelius, the Philippian Jailer and the Corinthians were told to believe. One must also be honest with the scriptures and see that in every case of conversion belief is not mentioned (cf. the two previous charts). If belief in Jesus is not mentioned, does that mean that in some cases people such as Bereans (Acts 17:10ff) were saved without belief? The matter is very simple when one honestly looks to the Biblical examples of how people were saved. They all heard about Jesus dying on the cross for man's sins. They heard of this same Jesus being buried, resurrected and ascending into heaven. These people were told to believe in Jesus and confess his name as Lord of all. They were told to repent of past sins and be baptized for the remission of those sins. Have you obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ?

More about preaching Jesus:

Lesson 8 shall examine the question: "What must I do after I'm saved." This final lesson will look further into the meaning of preaching Jesus. The apostle John said, *"Whosoever goes onward and abides not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abides in the teaching, the same has both the Father and the Son"* (II Jn. 9). There is a revealed way a Christian is to conduct themselves and we will look further into this in the next lesson.

QUESTIONS:

1. What does Ephesians 3:10-12 say that God's eternal purpose is?
2. How does the call of God equate to justification?
3. What is God's tool used to call people to salvation (cf. II Thess. 2:13-15)?
4. What would be the best way for you and I to determine how to be saved?
 - a. Examine examples of how people were saved in the Bible and do the same.
 - b. Go to the local bookstore and read what a 'pastor' has to say about the matter.
 - c. Do whatever makes you feel comfortable.
5. There are multitudes of conversions given in the Bible. How many specific cases or examples of conversion are listed in the book of Acts?
6. Examine the chart entitled "Bible Examples of People Becoming Christians." What was universally preached in every case?
7. Examine the chart entitled "What is Preaching Jesus?" Each of the nineteen examples given has bits of information regarding what was preached to the lost for them to be saved. Please look at the chart and list the consistent message preached (i.e., what were the people told to do?):
8. After examining the chart, would you say that God's salvation is conditioned upon these commands?
9. Have you followed these plain teachings?
10. Are you a Christian?

