CHURCH OF CHRIST BIBLE STUDIES

1. How do you separate the Old Testament from the New Testament?
2. What Church should I become a member?
3. What is the plan of salvation?
4. Women in the church.
5. Can one fall from grace?
6. What is inspiration?

**THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

***Introduction***

For many it becomes complicated on how to divide the Old and New Testaments. Are we still under the Old Testament? If not, how should we use the Old Testament? First, the Old and New Testaments were inspired of God. The Old Testament gives a detailed description of the creation of the heavens and the earth. It unveils to us the fall of man, and God’s divine plan being erected to save mankind.

When dividing the Old Testament, one begins with the first five books of the Bible (***Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy***), which has been termed the **Pentateuch**. Moses wrote these first five books covering the creation to the Law being given to Moses.

Next, the historical books are identified as ***Joshua, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther***. These books share a prophetic view of history with emphasis on the blessings and curses of God in direct correlation to His covenant.

Third, the Old Testament is divided into the poetic and wisdom books. These include ***Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon***. These books focus on obedience and trust in God. They also center on godly wisdom, and the advice and information on how to raise children; treat your fellowman; and worship God acceptably.

Fourth, the Major Prophets are introduced. These include ***Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentation, Ezekiel, and Daniel***. The Major Prophets center on prophecy and God’s redemptive means of disciplining His people.

Fifth, **The Minor Prophets** include ***Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi***. The books of the major and minor prophets were considered to be part of the "classical prophecy" era of the Old Testament. The prophets rose up to deliver God’s message to the faithful and unfaithful. The emphasis was on a coming Savior, and a new people who would worship God in spirit.

Between the Old and New Testaments, is a period of three hundred years of silence. During this period the great empires had passed from Asia to Europe. When Christ is born, it is the Roman Empire ruling most of the known world. The Grecian Empire had crumbled, and yet their influence remained in Roman culture.

The Jews were a major influence in Asia, but yielded little political or religious power throughout Europe. To the Romans the Jewish populace was a great hindrance. Those Roman politicians who were assigned positions throughout Asia did their best to appease the Jewish rulers.

When Jesus appears onto the scene in the gospels, God’s plan of redemption is magnified, and a new kingdom is about to be established.

***How Should I Treat the Old Testament?***

*First*, one must note that from the very early years of history, before the law was given to Moses, a system of faith was set in order. Men like Able, Abraham, Isaac, and even Moses were men of faith (Heb. 11; Rom. 4:1-16; Gal. 3:6-29).

*Second*, the Old Law given to Moses to the Israelites was simply used as a “school master” to bring us into the New Covenant. “*Wherefore the law was our* ***schoolmaster*** *to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a* ***schoolmaster* (Gal. 3:24, 25)**.”

The New Testament remarks often about the Old Law being abolished and a New Law being established (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:14-16; 2 Cor. 3:7-18; Heb. 8:6-9; Heb. 10:1-10).

**Comparison of Old and New Covenants**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Feature** | **Old Covenant** | **New Covenant** |
| **When established** | at Exodus | at crucifixion |
| **Parties: God and** | national Israel ([Ex. 19-24](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod.%2019-24)) | Christians ([Luke 22:20](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%2022.20); [John 3:16-21](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%203.16-21)) |
| **People redeemed from bondage** | in Egypt ([Ex. 20:2](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod.%2020.2)) | in sin ([Heb. 9:15](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%209.15)) |
| **Mediator of the covenant** | Moses ([Ex. 20:18-19](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod.%2020.18-19); [Heb. 9:19-20](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%209.19-20)) | Jesus Christ ([Heb. 8:6](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%208.6); [9:15](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%209.15); [12:24](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%2012.24)) |
| **Ratified by blood of** | animals ([Ex. 24:8](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod.%2024.8); [Heb. 9:19-20](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%209.19-20)) | Jesus Christ ([Matt. 26:28](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt.%2026.28); [Rom. 3:25](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%203.25)) |
| **Promises offered** | prosperity, national security, become God's treasured nation ([Ex. 19:5](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod.%2019.5); [Lev. 26](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev.%2026)) | eternal life ([John 3:16](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%203.16)), children of God ([Rom. 8:14-17](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%208.14-17), [29](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom%208.29)), know God, law in heart, forgiveness ([Heb. 8:10-12](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%208.10-12)), with God forever ([Rev. 21:3-7](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev.%2021.3-7)) |
| **Initiation sign of the covenant** | circumcision ([Gen. 17:11](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen.%2017.11); [Ex. 12:48-49](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod.%2012.48-49); [John 7:22-23](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%207.22-23)) | conversion of the heart ([Matt. 5:8](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt.%205.8); [Acts 15:8](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts%2015.8); [Rom. 2:28-29](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%202.28-29)) |
| **Continuing sign of the covenant** | observance of the Sabbaths ([Ex. 31:16-17](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod.%2031.16-17); [Ezek. 20:12](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek.%2020.12)) | new life of faith in Christ ([Eph. 2:4-10](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph.%202.4-10); [4:17](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%204.17); [5:1-2](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph%205.1-2)) |
| **Obligations** | obedience to the law that was given through Moses ([Ex. 24:3](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod.%2024.3); [Lev. 26](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev.%2026); [Deut. 28](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut.%2028)) | be perfect ([Matt. 5:48](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt.%205.48)), believe, obey Christ ([Gal. 6:2](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal.%206.2); [1 John 3:23-24](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%203.23-24); [Rom. 12:1](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%2012.1); [2 Cor. 10:5](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor.%2010.5)) |
| **Duration of the covenant** | during time of national Israel, temple and Levites ([Heb. 8:13](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%208.13)) | eternity ([John 5:24](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%205.24); [6:54-58](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%206.54-58); [Heb. 9:15](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%209.15); [12:22-28](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%2012.22-28); [Rev. 21:3-7](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev.%2021.3-7)) |
| **Priesthood** | Aaron and sons ([Ex. 29:9](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod.%2029.9); [Lev. 8](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev.%208)) | Jesus Christ ([Heb. 4:14-16](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%204.14-16); [5:5-6](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%205.5-6)), believers ([1 Pet. 2:5](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Pet.%202.5), [9](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Pet%202.9)) |
| **High Priest entered presence of God** | symbolically once a year on the Day of Atonement after offering the required blood sacrifices ([Lev. 16](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev.%2016); [Heb. 9:7](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%209.7)) | sat down at God's right hand forever, after offering his own blood for all ([Heb. 7:20-8:2](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%207.20-8.2); [9:11-14](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%209.11-14)) |
| **Holy place where God can be worshiped** | tabernacle in wilderness ([Deut. 12](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut.%2012)), temple in Jerusalem ([1 Kings 8:29-30](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Kings%208.29-30)) | temple of the Spirit ([1 Cor. 3:16](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor.%203.16)), wherever believers are ([John 4:21-24](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%204.21-24); [Matt. 18:20](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt.%2018.20)) |
| **Commemorations** | weekly Sabbath ([Ex. 20:8-11](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod.%2020.8-11), [Deut. 5:12-15](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut.%205.12-15)) and seasonal festivals ([Lev. 23](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev.%2023)) | Lord's Supper ([Luke 22:19-20](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%2022.19-20); Cor. 11:26-28) |
| **Sacrifices** | continual offering of animals and food offerings ([Lev. 1-7](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev.%201-7); [Heb. 10:1](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%2010.1)) as a reminder of sins ([Heb. 10:30](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%2010.30)) | Christ's one sacrifice ([Heb. 9:26-28](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%209.26-28); [10:12](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%2010.12)) forgave sins, perfects the worshipper, clears conscience ([Heb. 8:12](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%208.12); [10:1-2](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%2010.1-2), [22](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%2010.22)); Christian's life of service is to be a living sacrifice ([Rom. 12:1](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%2012.1)) |
| **Law** | Ten Commandments ([Ex. 20](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod.%2020); [Deut. 5](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut.%205)) and 603 additional laws governing moral, civil and religious affairs, fulfilled by adherence to the letter of numerous rules (Ex., Lev., Deut.) | Sermon on the Mount reveals Christian attitude and way of thinking ([Matt. 5-7](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt.%205-7)), law of Christ fulfilled by loving God and humans ([John 13:34-35](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2013.34-35); [Rom. 3:8-10](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%203.8-10); [Gal. 5:14](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal.%205.14); [6:2](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal%206.2); [1 John 2:3-6](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%202.3-6); [3:7-10](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%203.7-10), [21-24](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20John%203.21-24)) |
| **Contrast** | the letter kills ([Rom. 4:14-15](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%204.14-15); [2 Cor. 3:6](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor.%203.6)), slavery ([Gal. 4:24-25](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal.%204.24-25); [5:1](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal%205.1)) | The Spirit gives life ([John 6:63](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%206.63); [2 Cor. 3:6](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/2%20Cor.%203.6)), freedom ([Gal. 4:26](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal.%204.26); [5:1](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal%205.1)) |
| **Main feature** | the law was a shadow of the good things to come ([Heb. 10:1](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%2010.1)) | Jesus Christ, God in the flesh ([Isa. 42:1-7](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa.%2042.1-7); [49:5-13](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa%2049.5-13); [Heb. 1](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%201); [9:11-15](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%209.11-15); [10:5-10](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb%2010.5-10)) |
| **Contact with God** | through priesthood ([Lev. 1-7](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev.%201-7)) | individual comes to God's throne ([Heb. 4:16](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb.%204.16)) |

***The Better Covenant***

First, the New Covenant is based upon **better promises**. “*But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah*” (Heb. 8:6-9).

Second, the New Covenant is based upon a **better sacrifice**.

“*For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those* ***sacrifice****s which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect*” (Heb. 10:1). In the Old Testament, the High Priest would have to make a sacrifice every year for the sins of the people. Under the New Covenant, Christ becomes that one time sacrifice for all the sins of mankind. “*But this man, after he had offered one* ***sacrifice*** *for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God”* (Heb. 10:12).

.        Third, the New Testament is centered on a **better priesthood**.

“*If therefore perfection were by the Levitical* ***priesthood****, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the* ***priesthood*** *being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law*” (Heb. 7:11, 12).

**WHAT CHURCH SHOULD I BECOME A MEMBER?**

**History**

When one looks at all the churches today it becomes confusing on why so many? There are over 4,000 denominations in this present age. Sadly, they are separated because of doctrine. In other words, they can’t agree upon the necessities to become a Christian, and what to believe when it comes to Christ and God the Father.

Many of the denominations were seeded in the *reformation*. In other words they branched off of Roman Catholicism. The basic idea of the reformation by Martin Luther, John Wesley, and many others was to enhance Roman Catholicism and not destroy it. In other words they wanted to keep their Catholic roots but change some of the beliefs that they felt were contrary to scripture.

Going back further to the roots of Catholicism, Boniface III became the first recognized pope of the east and west in about 606 A.D. The people wanted a head on earth as well as a head in heaven to rule them religiously. Imagine if you were to see an animal with two heads and one body today? That would be a freak of nature. Keep this thought in mind when we discuss the restoration.

The early leadership of Roman Catholicism had the belief that the people could not understand the Bible. Therefore, they did their best to keep the Bible out of the hands of the populace. As history records, the Bible was not printed until the 1400’s when the first printing press was created by Johannes Gutenburg. Since its creation, the Bible has been the most printed book in the world.

In the 1500’s, men like Martin Luther, who was a Catholic priest, presented the fact that there was only one head of the church, and that was Christ. Others began apostatizing against Catholicism, yet differing in some of their beliefs from Luther. Hence there arose factious groups that broke away from Catholicism and started what we call today, denominationalism. They were guided by the principle of ecumenicalism. This is based on the premise of “we agree to disagree!” In other words, you have your understanding of God, and we have our understanding of God.

Do you remember when we discussed Roman Catholicism creating a freak by believing in one body, and yet having two heads? Denominationalism went even further. They erected this monster with one head and many bodies. In other words, God was this head over many churches.

In the early history of the United States, many religious people fled to America for a new beginning, and to get away from the influence of Catholicism and denominationalism. In the 1700’s many denominational ministers saw that some of the understandings of the Bible were wrong. Several came together at Cain ridge, Kentucky to talk about a “restoration.”

They understood that a reformation was simply a way of changing Catholicism. The idea of “restoration” was based upon restoring something to its original state. In other words, “speak when the Bible speaks, and be silent when the Bible is silent.” These trained ministers decided to throw away their creed books, and use the Bible as their guide. Let us note some of the basic tenants that they viewed in the Bible: There was **one body**, which was the church (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:13-20; Eph. 4:4; Col. 3:15; Eph. 1:22, 23).

1. There was only **one head** of the church, Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; Matthew 16:17-19;; Eph. 4:15; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18)
2. There was only **one book** to follow, the Bible (Gal. 1:8, 9; Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 1:8-10; 2 Tim. 3:16).
3. There was **one entrance** to the church: (a) Hear, Rom. 10:17, (b) believe, John 3:16, (c) Repent, Acts 2:37, 38, (d) Confess, Romans 10:9, 10, (e) Baptism in Water, Mark 16:15-16.

**Guidelines When Choosing a Church**

***The Right Name***

What’s in a name? Some believe it doesn’t matter what name the congregation goes by. How do you feel when someone gets your name wrong? If Christ has given names for the church to wear, why do we need to create other names? In the New Testament the church is called the ***church (es) of God***, twelve times (Acts 28:28; 1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:16; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; l Thess.2: 14, 2Thess.1: 14; 1 Tim. 3:15); ***churches of Christ***, one time (Romans 16: 16); the ***church*** (s), seventy four times; ***my church***, one time (Matthew 16: 18). The collective noun church is used, I believe, one hundred and ten times in the New Testament. Many times it is used to identify the locality in which a congregation exists: the church of Ephesus, Rev. 2: 1; churches of Galatia, 1 Cor. 16:1; Gal. 1:2; churches of Macedonia, 2 Cor. 8:1; churches of Judea, Gal. 1:22, etc. These passages illustrate the statement in Romans 16: 16. The churches of Christ salute you. The above churches were ***churches of Christ*** in those places.

***The Right Savior***

There is only one Savior of the world. (Acts 4:12; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9; 1 Jn. 3:23). His name is Jesus! So many individuals try to find salvation through false prophets and false religions. Many of them may believe that Christ was a good person, and even a holy prophet; but they refuse to recognize Him as God and the Savior of all mankind.

***The Right Doctrine***

The Hebrew writer exclaims, “*Be not carried about with divers and strange* ***doctrine****s. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein*” (Heb. 13:9). Paul wrote, “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them*” (Rom. 16:17). And let us not forget what Paul wrote to the brethren at Galatia, “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed* (Gal. 1:8, 9).

**The Right Leadership**

In denominationalism, as well as Roman Catholicism, leadership varies. The minister if often called a pastor, and looked upon as the shepherd of the flock. Others select a committee to run the church; while some create what is called a diocese to oversee the work. Yet, what does the Bible say? Was there a type of leadership that God established to oversee the local congregation?

First, one must recognize the Divine side of leadership and human side. On the Divine side, Christ is the head of the church:

“*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the* ***head*** *over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:22).*

*“For the husband is the* ***head*** *of the wife, even as Christ is the* ***head*** *of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23).*

*“And he is the* ***head*** *of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18).*

*Let the* ***elders*** *that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17).*

*For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain* ***elders*** *in every city, as I had appointed thee (Titus 1:5).*

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some,* ***evangelist****s; and some, pastors and teachers; (Eph. 4:11).*

*Second, each individual congregation was to select elders to oversee that the Lord’s work was being done, and His words were being followed.*

*And when they had ordained them* ***elders*** *in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed (Acts 14:23).*

*For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain* ***elders*** *in every city, as I had appointed thee (Titus 1:5).*

**What qualifications were necessary to become and elder?**

“*This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in care of the church of God?)Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil*.” (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

*“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers*.” (Titus 1:6-9)

As you can tell by Paul’s address to Timothy and Titus, the word “bishop” is used for the office. There are several terms used for elders in the church:

“*Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the* ***presbytery*”** (1 Tim. 4:14).

“*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some,* ***pastor****s and teachers*;” (Eph. 4:11). The word “pastor” carries with it the same meaning as “bishop.” One who watches over the souls of others.

“*Let the* ***elders*** *that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine*” (1 Tim. 5:17).

One must note that according to 1 Tim. 5:17, a minister can only be called a “pastor” if he holds the office of an elder. The true pastors of the local autonomy are the elders.

Under the leadership of the church, the elders appoint **deacons.** These men are the one’s charged with different duties in the local congregation. Paul mentions them with the elders in his letter to the Philippians, “*Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and* ***deacon****s*” (Phil. 1:1). A deacon may be appointed over the youth, or to take care of benevolence. In other words wherever there is a need in the congregation. Let us view the biblical qualifications of a deacon:

“*Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

**WHAT IS THE PLAN OF SALVATION?**

One of the most confusing things today for people to grasp is the plan of salvation. There are some who say that all you have to do to be saved is to ask Jesus to come into your heart. Others suggest you have to go through some type of catechism to receive salvation. In other, people are confused on exactly what they have to do to enter the church.

We do not have one single Bible example of someone asking Jesus to come into their hearts to be saved. If this were true, why did Cornelius have to go through a process in order to receive salvation (Acts 10, 11)? In that instance, God told Cornelius that he had to send to Joppa for Peter who would come to him and teach him WORDS, whereby he would be saved (Acts 11:14).

What we do know about the plan God established for salvation in the New Covenant is seen by the examples of conversion in the book of Acts. Let’s note a few:

“*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:37-38). Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls*” (vs. 41).

“*But when they* ***believed*** *Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women*” (Acts 8:12).

“*And as they went on their way, they came unto certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be* ***baptized****? And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he* ***baptized*** *him*” (Acts 8:36, 38).

“*And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were* ***baptized*”** (Acts 18:8).

In these examples we see people hearing the gospel message, believing in what they hear, and then being baptized in water. We view further in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost; the people were pricked in their hearts, and they were told to **REPENT** and be BAPTIZED.

So then, it becomes obvious that the first thing one must do in order to be on the road to salvation is to *believe* the *gospel*. The writers of the New Testament made it very clear that through obedience to the gospel, one could find eternal life.

“*And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the* ***gospel*** *in many villages of the Samaritans*” (Acts 8:25).

“*And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the* ***gospel****, and believe*” (Acts 15:7).

“*For I am not ashamed of the* ***gospel*** *of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*” (Rom. 1:16).

“*And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the* ***gospel*** *of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! They have not all obeyed the* ***gospel****. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?”* (Rom. 10:15, 16).

The emphasis no doubt is Christ. But is belief enough? James tells us that even the “devils believe and they tremble” (James 2:19). We viewed on the day of Pentecost that when the people heard the gospel, they were told to repent and be baptized. So it becomes clear that after one believes in the gospel message, his or her next step is to ***repent.***

The word “repent” was a Roman military term which meant to turn an “about face.” This is important to grasp. Repentance goes much further than “saying you’re sorry.” It involves making restitution; it involves turning away from evil and doing what is right (Matt. 21:27-32; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Pet. 3:9).

Let’s stop for a moment. So far we have viewed the necessity of belief and repentance in order to gain salvation. What if I were to stop at this junction, would I be saved? We must not forget that salvation comes from Christ. Jesus said in John 14:15, “*If ye love me obey my commandments*.” What commandments? Those commands orated by Him in the gospels. Whether they be those directives given to us in the *Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7),* or the *Great Commission* given by Christ after His resurrection (Mk. 16:15, 16; Matt. 28:18-20); we are to obey all His commands.

In the gospels, the Lord does not stop at belief and repentance; He further states that one must confess Him before men in order to be granted salvation. *“Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall* ***confess*** *me before men, him shall the Son of man also* ***confess*** *before the angels of God” (Lk. 12:48). “That if thou shalt* ***confess*** *with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth* ***confess****ion is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9, 10).”*

One’s confession is like an oath of office. One is professing before all that Christ is your King and Savior. You are pledging loyalty to Him and His Word. Like any soldier, this confession is a commitment. It does not progress for a little while and then one quits! It is recognizing that this is a lifelong commitment.

“Am I saved yet?” This is where most people conclude that they have been granted entrance into the Kingdom, and salvation has taken place. Sadly! They would be wrong.

In the Word of God there are only two passages that tell you how to put on Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-6). The scriptures state that one must be baptized into water in order to be saved. Note these various passages that speak of baptism for salvation:

*“He that believeth and is* ***baptize****d shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mk. 16:16).*

*“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be* ***baptize****d every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).*

*“Then they that gladly received his word were* ***baptize****d: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).*

*“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were* ***baptize****d, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).*

*“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be* ***baptize****d?..And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he* ***baptize****d him” (Acts 8:36, 38).*

*“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be* ***baptize****d, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).*

*“Know ye not, that so many of us as were* ***baptize****d into Jesus Christ were* ***baptize****d into his death?” (Rom. 6:3).*

*“For as many of you as have been* ***baptize****d into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).*

When viewing baptism in the New Testament several questions arise. First, “Why water?” There is no earthly reason for water to be chosen. One is baptized into water because God said to do it.

Second, “Why is immersion the only means of baptism?” There are several religious groups that utilize sprinkling and pouring as the way in which they baptize. However, this is easily disproven. The term *batpizmo* is from the Greek word, “*to immerse*.” There is also the fact that when Jesus was baptized He *went up straightway out of the water* (Matthew 3:16).

Also, John tells us that John the Baptist was baptizing near Salim *because there was* ***much******water*** *there* (Jn. 3:23). Now it does not take much water to sprinkle or pour water upon someone. It does take a great deal of water to immerse someone in.

Finally, note the remark made by Luke when he speaks of Phillip baptizing the eunuch. *“And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they* ***went down both into the water****, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38).*

Okay! Once one establishes that water baptism is immersion, how are we sure that baptism in water is what puts us into Christ? Some state that the baptism that is meant for all Christians is Holy Spirit baptism. In Acts chapter eight, Phillip went to Samaria to preach the gospel to the masses. The Samarians were very receptive. According to Luke those that received the word of God were baptized (Acts 8:12). Was this water baptism or Holy Spirit baptism? Luke writes, “*Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money*” (Acts 8:14-18).

What about Cornelius? The story is found in Acts chapter ten and eleven. It tells us a Gentile by the name of Cornelius who was a proselyte. In other words, he was very active in the Jew’s religion. Yet, he had not heard the gospel and was not a Christian. God sent an angel to him to guide him to truth. Yet, truth would not come through the angel telling him what he needed to do to be saved, but by sending to Joppa for one Simon Peter that would come and preach unto him “words whereby he would be saved” (Acts 10:6; 11:14). At the same time while Cornelius was having his vision, God sent a vision to Peter. This was meant to motivate Peter to go and preach to Cornelius. God showed the vision to Peter three times which emphasizes the distaste the Jews had for Gentiles. When Peter came to Cornelius, he began preaching to him about Christ, but as soon as he began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his household (Acts 11:14). I want to place great emphasis on the fact that God said it was going to be obedience to the word that would save Cornelius! However, the word was not even preached. So, then, why did Cornelius receive the Holy Spirit before receiving the word? The answer is found in Acts 11:18, “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” This tells the reader that the Holy Spirit did not fall on Cornelius to save him, but to show the Jewish Christians that the Gentiles were to accepted into the kingdom also.

**WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**

Women are valuable assets to the Lord’s church. Elders and deacons cannot be leaders without them; and the work of the church would suffer greatly if not for their abilities. Throughout the history of the church, women have played important roles. Whether it is the heroics of Deborah the great judge, or Ruth in contributing that Gentile blood to the lineage of the coming Messiah; women have found great favor in the eyes of God.

However, everyone in the Lord’s Kingdom has his or her part to play in enlarging the borders of the kingdom. Not every man can be an elder, or even an evangelist. Likewise with women, they can do many things, but they cannot hold any position that would usurp authority over a man (1 Tim. 2:12).

Though we live in a world that fights for women rights, and tries to prove that women are equal to men in every way, this is not so! The Bible says, “*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the* ***weaker*** *vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered*” (1 Pet. 3:7). Being weaker vessels does not mean they are inferior in intelligence, or even in talents; it simply implies that God made them to be feminine.

Further, when it comes to preaching in pulpits, the Bible forbids women from doing such. “*Let your* ***women*** *keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for* ***women*** *to speak in the church*” (1 Cor. 14:34, 35). “*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence*” (1 Tim. 2:11, 12).

Forbidding women to preach to mixed audiences is a command from God. It is not about personal prejudices, or masculine superiority; it is about God speaking and His creation obeying. Don’t forget that Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, would often commend women for the allegiance to Christ (Rom. 16:1, Acts 18:1, 2; 1 Cor. 1:11; Phil. 4:2). Though he was an apostle, he could never be an elder or a deacon. He was limited in many ways because he was not a married man. Yet, this did not deter him from commanding that widows be taken care of (1 Tim. 5:3-16), and that husbands were to treat their wives with dignity (Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Cor. 7).

**CAN ONE FALL FROM GRACE**

***1 Sam. 10:10, “****And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the* ***Spirit*** *of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.”*

***1 Sam. 16:14,******“****But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.”*

***Gal. 5:4,*** *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”*

***Hebrews 6:4-6****, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”*

***2 Thess. 2:3-5****, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?”*

***Revelation 2:5****, (church at Ephesus)“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will* ***remove*** *thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”*

***1 Cor. 10:12****, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he* ***fall****.”*

***2 Pet. 2:20-22****, “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”*