

THE NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN PERSEVERANCE

Can a born-again Christian fail to enter heaven? The answer is 'Yes'.

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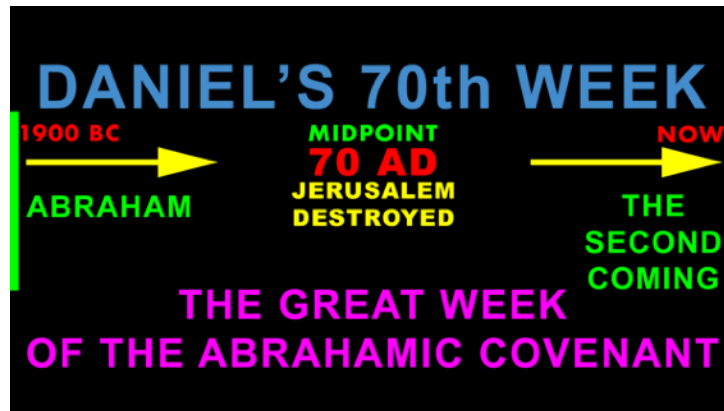
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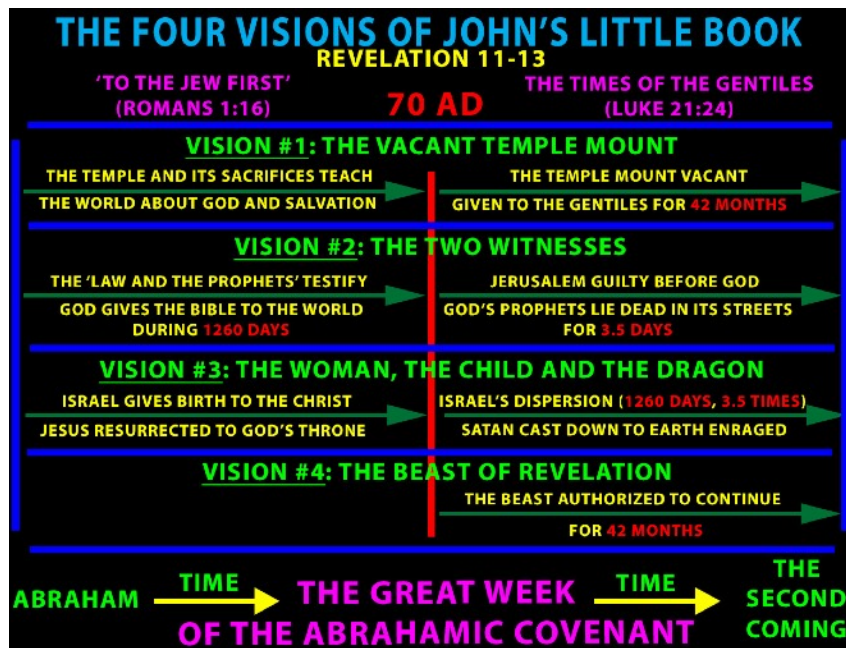
PROLOGUE: THE 'MARK OF THE BEAST' IS HERE!

STARTING: WITH DANIEL'S 70th WEEK

In the past, at the beginning of each page in the Prophecy Section of this journal, I used to ask this question: 'Do you know what time it is?' I then explained the 70th Week of Daniel, and how close at hand the second coming of Jesus Christ truly is.



I explained how that, after examining Daniel chapter 9 and Jesus' Olivet Discourse, we can realize that the MIDPOINT of Daniel's 70th Week is Rome's destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. And then I explained that, after examining the FOUR VISIONS of John's Little Book (Revelation 11-13), we can fully understand the entire Week:



ADDING: CLARIFICATION ABOUT THE 'MARK'

But now after more recent Bible study, and my continued observation of world events, I have concluded that another important aspect of 'the last days' has come; the 'Mark of the Beast'. It is a 'Mark' that the False Prophet will impose upon the entire world:

The False Prophet causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a **Mark FROM** their right hand or **FROM** their foreheads. And that no one may buy or sell except one who has the **Mark**, or an official name from the Beast, or an official number associated with his official name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number from the Beast, for it is the (identification) number of each man. That number is 666. Revelation 13:16-18

Until recently I had suspected that the 'Mark of the Beast' might be a bar code or QR code tattooed upon a person's skin. Or that it might be an RFID chip inserted underneath a person's skin. But with more recent study I have discovered that, in the original Greek of Revelation 13:16 (above), the words 'forehead' and 'hand' were not written in the **DATIVE** case (indicating that something is being done **TO** them). Rather they were written in the **GENITIVE** case; indicating that something is being taken **FROM** a person's forehead or hand.

And the Greek word translated 'mark' can also be translated as an 'image' or 'impression' of something. And so I now believe that the Beast's 'Mark' is actually a scan taken from people's faces and hands. These comprise the biometric data being collected today by many nations. And it will all come together in a worldwide system of human registration.

This registration of people will be comprised of three things; all three of which are described in Revelation 13:17:

- 1) Biometric scans (markings or images) taken from faces and hands.
- 2) An official legal name assigned by the Beast system.
- 3) An official number connected to the person's official name.

And that no one may buy or sell except one who has 1) the scan (mark, image or impression), and 2) an official name from the Beast, and 3) an official number associated with his official name. Revelation 13:17

I have not yet identified the Beast's official numbering system, based upon a 6-6-6 format. But God is just and fair. And so when the Beast's 'number' does come, I trust that it will be obvious.

My concern, however, regards the fact that all of us are already accustomed to using facial recognition and fingerprint technology. And so the Mark (**SCAN**) of the Beast will just seem like a harmless improvement upon the status quo. For a further discussion of the False Prophet and his 'Mark', I refer my visitor to my page titled '**Understanding the False Prophet**'.

In Revelation God has warned that those who embrace this 'Mark' will suffer **never-ending** torment in the 'Lake of Fire and Brimstone'. And so I am placing this message regarding the 'Mark' at the beginning of every page in this web site. What each of us does now in response to the False Prophet's 'Mark' will determine our eternal destinies:

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice “If anyone worships the Beast and his image and embraces his **SCAN**, taken from his own forehead or from his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God; which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever. And they have no rest day or night, who worship the Beast and his image, and whoever receives the **SCAN** associated with his own name.” Here is the patience of the saints. Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Revelation 14:9-12

CONCLUSION: WE NEED TO FOCUS

And so combining a knowledge of **1)** how close the second coming of Christ is, together with **2)** a better understanding of the 'Mark of the Beast', my warning is...

DO NOT SUBMIT TO THE MARK (SCAN) OF THE BEAST!

So what is it that God is calling Christians to do in this hour? To prepare for death. God now calls upon Christians to follow the three young Hebrew men, who went into the fiery furnace rather than deny their God (Daniel 3). And to follow Daniel, who risked the lion's den rather than to cease worshipping the one true God (Daniel 6). God calls upon Christians to hear His word and to understand the choice that now confronts all of mankind:

If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.
2 Timothy 2:12

And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Revelation 12:11

As I explain in my four pages on '**The Beast and its Three Allies**', the rise of Constantine to conquer the world under the banner of the Cross was seen by many as the TRIUMPH of Christianity. It represented God finally exercising dominion over the world; taking His great power and reigning (Revelation 11:17) through people and institutions authorized by Him.

This was the 'great falling away from the faith' that Paul said would accompany the rise of a 'man of sin' (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). And so today some 'professing Christians' portray the coming of artificial intelligence and other technologies as 'God saving the world'. It is hailed as the arrival of 'peace and safety' (1 Thessalonians 5:3), and of diversity, equity and inclusion. But the simple choice still confronts us. Will we embrace Constantine's 'victory'. Or will we go outside of the world's 'wide gate' (Matthew 7:13) and meet the Savior there?

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs. Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Romans 8:16-17

Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate (of Jerusalem). Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

Hebrews 13:12-14

CHRISTIANITY IS A JOURNEY

3,500 years ago, God sent Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt (see the book of Exodus). Their deliverance is symbolic of a Christian's salvation from the penalty and power of sin through the 'new birth'. The penalty of sin (death) 'passed over' the Israelites as they sacrificed their Passover lambs. Then the power of Sin (slavery) was broken as they escaped their Egyptian bondage through the Red Sea, while their slavemasters were destroyed.

The next destination of the Israelites was to be the land of Canaan; promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But before they could enter that 'Promised Land', they had to travel through a wilderness. And God announced that He was going to use this wilderness journey to test their obedience, and to determine whether or not they were truly committed to doing His will.

There (at the bitter waters of Marah) God made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He proved them, and said "If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, and will do that which is right in His sight, and will give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians. For I am the Lord that heals you". Exodus 15:25-26

Then the Lord said unto Moses "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my Law or not". Exodus 16:4

In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and had come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness. And there Israel camped before the mountain.

And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying "Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; 'You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people. For all the earth is mine, and you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation'". Exodus 19:1-6

And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness; to humble you and to prove you. To know what was in your heart; whether you would keep His commandments or not. Deuteronomy 8:2 (see also Exodus 20:20, Deuteronomy 8:16)

Though saved from death and bondage, the Israelites were still in danger of suffering the same judgments that fell upon the Egyptians. They had not reached their destination yet. God loved them, but it was necessary to determine whether or not they would love this God Who had saved them. Though many Christians understand

that Israel's exodus from Egypt is a picture of God's salvation, they often overlook the second part of that salvation:

Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. Exodus 7:16, 8:1,20, 9:1,13, 10:3

Israel's rebellion against God is a matter of history. It is described in Deuteronomy 32, and Psalms 78, 95 and 106. God warns Christians that they need to learn from the experience of the Israelites. Contrary to what many are taught, a Christian's entry into the 'promised land of heaven' is not a certainty:

Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant. How that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. All were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And all did eat the same spiritual meat, and all did drink the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 1 Corinthians 10:1-5

Now all these things happened unto them for examples. And they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world have come. Therefore let him that thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall. 1 Corinthians 10:11-12

Therefore as the Holy Spirit says "Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the provocation; in the day of trial in the wilderness. When your fathers (the Israelites) tested Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was grieved with that generation, and said 'They do always err in their heart, and they have not known My ways'. So I swore in My wrath 'They shall not enter into My rest'".

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called 'today', lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation". Hebrews 3:7-15

I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this; how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. Jude 5

JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS

The baptism of Jesus Christ (by John the Baptist, Matthew 3:13-4:11) is also a picture of Christian conversion, and the Christian experience that follows.

Baptism is a symbol of the new birth through union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (see Christian Baptism). A sinner repentantly condemns himself for his sins, and acknowledges that Jesus' death and resurrection is the only solution for his problem. Then he comes to Christ by faith; the great 'Baptizer' or 'Washer' of sinners. In response to this repentance and faith, the Holy Spirit washes away the penalty and power of sin in the person's life by uniting him with Jesus in His own death, burial and resurrection. This is 'the washing of regeneration':

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us; by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5

Jesus was not a sinner, but He submitted to John's baptism for two reasons:

- 1) To portray God's 'order of salvation' before the world; the 'steps' through which God saves people.
- 2) To show His identification with sinners in this process of salvation; letting Himself be 'treated as a sinner' on our behalf.

What needs to be observed here is that, after Jesus was baptized, had received the Holy Spirit, and had been justified (declared fully pleasing to the Father), He immediately was led into the wilderness to experience the 'trial' of His faith.

In submitting to John's baptism Jesus was portraying the entire process of salvation; from repentance all the way through to 'overcoming' in the faith:

For we have not a high priest (Jesus) which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15

It is this idea of the 'testing of our faith', and the necessity of the Christian's ongoing obedience, that a great many Christian teachers object to and deny. But it is a bedrock truth of the Christian faith:

The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs. Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. Romans 8:16-17

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Whom having not seen, you love. In Whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:7-9

Eight times in the book of Revelation Jesus promises eternal life to Christians who have overcome in the trial of their faith:

He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.
Revelation 21:7

IS THIS UNFAIR?

This message, that a born-again Christian can lose his salvation, ultimately prompts the following question: 'Is it fair that one Christian, who might die soon after his conversion, would go to heaven while another Christian, who lives longer and experiences more temptations and trials, might stray from the Lord and go to hell?'

The Lord Jesus answered this question in the parable of 'The Workers in the Vineyard' (Matthew 20:1-16). He told the story of a landowner who went out at various times of the day to hire workers. Some were hired early in the day, for an agreed wage. Others were hired at midday, and some very late in the day. At sunset they were all paid the same wage. Those who worked little were paid the same as those who worked much. When those who worked longest complained about the seeming unfairness of this arrangement, the landowner replied that they had received the wage that they had agreed to.

This principle also applies to Christians. When a person becomes a Christian, he agrees to God's 'terms of employment'. A true Christian is one who has not only come to Christ for the forgiveness of his sins, but one who has also agreed with God about the wickedness of sin, and that he must no longer practice sin. Whether we live long or briefly, we must continue to honor these terms.

He that covers his sins shall not prosper. But whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy. Proverbs 28:13

Jesus' words to the lame man healed at the pool of Bethesda, and to the woman caught in adultery, are instructive:

Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said unto him "Behold, you are made whole. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you". John 5:14

When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her "Woman, where are your accusers? Has no man condemned you?" 11 She said "No man, Lord". And Jesus said unto her "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more". John 8:10-11

Some people become Christians at an early age, and must live longer lives of faithfulness to God. Others, like the thief on the cross, die soon after their conversion, and enter directly into heaven. The fact that some Christians must 'labor' longer than others does not nullify the 'agreement' they reached with Him at the beginning of 'their day'. God's message is the same to all:

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10

Genuine Christians already know the answer to the question posed at the beginning of this web page; 'Can a Christian lose salvation'. Why? Because every born-again Christian has already confessed that sin is wickedness and rebellion against God, and hatred for one's fellow man. It is evil that merits death, and cannot be ignored. This truth is repeated throughout the Bible:

The soul who sins shall die. Ezekiel 18:4, 20

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

This is a covenant understanding that every born-again Christian has reached with God before being united with Christ. God never saves anybody until they have agreed with Him about the horrid nature of sin. This is why, when the apostle John was admonishing the church, He could say...

Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. 1 John 2:24

Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Revelation 3:3

Both James and Peter describe unfruitful Christians as people who have forgotten the wickedness of their past sins, and as blind to God's priorities.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. James 1:23-25

For he who lacks these things (Christian virtues) is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 2 Peter 1:9

Though some might perceive this message as difficult and demanding, it actually describes a life that is very blessed and wonderful. A true Christian does not find God's commandments overwhelming. Because a Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, 'God's commandments are His enablements'. Jesus is very patient and gentle with His people, and leads them as a caring Shepherd leads his sheep:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside the still waters, He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Psalm 23:1-3

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 1 Corinthians 10:13

Therefore, in all things He (Jesus) had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. Hebrews 2:17-18

Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord - that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. James 5:11

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world- our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:3-5

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He established the Mosaic Covenant with them. That covenant entailed more than a requirement that God's moral Law must be obeyed. It also contained a priesthood and sacrificial offerings by which people who had sinned in ignorance could find forgiveness and restoration to a right relationship with God.

The same two aspects of the Christian's relationship with God continue today. We are obligated to fulfill God's moral Law. But at the same time we have a High Priest in heaven, Jesus Christ, who can intercede for us when we come short. We must realize, however, that there are limitations to what this High Priest can do for us if we disobey God not in ignorance, but willfully and knowingly.

AUGUSTINIAN ERROR

Late in his life a famous Roman Catholic theologian named Augustine changed from teaching that all human beings have complete freedom of choice, and that God deals with each of us upon the basis of our choices, to teaching that God sovereignly controls and predestines everything; that personal human choice has little to do with our ultimate eternal destinies.

Rather than acknowledge God's claim that death has been pronounced upon each of us because we all chose to sin with Adam in Eden (Romans 5:12), Augustine denied our personal presence in Eden and chose to teach that God sovereignly created Adam in such a way that we would inherit his sinfulness biologically.

And Augustine also sowed the seeds of an idea that two of his later disciples, Luther and Calvin (along with other 'Reformed Protestants') would promote. They taught that God also sovereignly chose Adam to be the 'representative' for all of humanity; so that God could then simply accuse all of us of having committed Adam's sin. This is an idea known as the 'Representative' or 'Federal Headship' of Adam.

I discuss these Augustinian errors in my web pages titled [Navigating Predestination and Freedom of Choice](#), and [The Truth About Original Sin](#). In those pages I point out that the Bible teaches BOTH the predestinating sovereignty of God the Father, as well as our complete moral freedom of choice. But God also instructs us regarding what we are to do with these truths. We are to focus exclusively upon our own moral freedom and responsibility.

But this is not what Augustine, Luther, Calvin and 'Reformed Theologians' have chosen to do. They have chosen to emphasize the unseen activities of God the Father, which they cannot see, while ignoring the world that we can see; the visible moral world within which we all interact with God and live out our lives. They have rejected the instructions of Moses and the apostle Paul:

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God. But those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this Law. Deuteronomy 29:29

Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, 'The Lord knows them that are His', and 'Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'. 2 Timothy 2:19

In the original Greek version of these words from Paul to Timothy, the word 'knows' was written in the past tense. Paul was pointing out that the Father has known, from before the beginning of creation, all those who will eventually be His people in His future kingdom. Paul was referring to the invisible sovereign activity of the Father, whose eternal purposes are certain to be fulfilled.

But the second sentence written upon the foundation of God's kingdom tells people how they can become one of the Father's 'elect'; by departing from sin. Both Paul and Moses spoke of secret things that belong to God, and about the visible things that belong to us; our responsibility to obey God's Law.

In his letter to the Christians in the city of Colosse, Paul summed up Augustinian theology very accurately:

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels. Intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. And not holding the Head (Christ), from Whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God. Colossians 2:18-19

This is Augustinian theology. It 'intrudes into things that cannot be seen', and is uselessly and proudly 'puffed up' about what it thinks it knows. It denies the real 'headships' of Adam and Christ; a 'Trinitarian Union' between Adam and humanity through which we all sinned, and a corresponding living 'Trinitarian Union' between Christ and His body, the Church. These unions allow for the simultaneous 'oneness' of many people within one man, while also allowing independent moral choice.

Given their willful blindness to our visible moral world, it is not surprising that these theologians also deny the necessity of a Christian's ongoing obedience to God's Law as the necessary path to eternal life. Their entire theology is a denial of our personal choices (past, present and future), and the just and certain 'life or death' consequences of those choices:

And, behold, I (Jesus) am coming quickly and My reward is with Me; to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Revelation 22:12-14

SATAN'S MAIN LIE

In previous versions of this web page, I have offered many scriptural arguments to support my view. In this version, I have discarded much that I have written in order to make this page shorter and simpler. For those who teach the false doctrine of 'Once Saved, Always Saved', I now offer one simple argument.

When God created Adam and mankind, His entire Law was contained in one simple commandment; 'Do not learn right from wrong' (see Why God Requires Our Faith). And God warned Adam that disobedience would lead to death:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Genesis 2:16-17

Satan directly contradicted God, telling Eve that she would not die. Satan's lie remains the spearhead of his approach to the world, including the Christian church, to this day.

Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die." Genesis 3:4

Those who insist that a Christian cannot lose his salvation are ignoring the fundamental truth which has been the foundation of God's relationship with us from the very beginning; that 'the wages of sin is death' (Romans 6:23). God repeatedly warns Christians about being deceived on this point:

No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 6:8-10

Do not be deceived; evil company corrupts good habits. Awake to righteousness, and do not sin, for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame. 1 Corinthians 15:33-34

For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:2-3

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. Galatians 6:7-8

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 5:3-6

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. James 1:14-16

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. 1 John 3:7-8

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:10

HEALTH AND WEALTH

Today some preachers tell us that God wants us to be healthy and wealthy. This message is filling churches with both people and money; because it tells rich people that their wealth is a sign of God's approval, and it tells poor people that God wants to make them rich. But what does God say about it? He says the exact opposite. He says that a Christian's faith will be tested around the loss of his health and wealth.

Job is the classic example of being tested regarding health and wealth. God authorized Job's trials, and Job ultimately passed them.

And the Lord said unto Satan "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God and avoids evil?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face. And the Lord said unto Satan "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand". So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord. Job 1:8-12

Job lost his wealth, including his family. Because he lost it all in one day, it was obvious to him that God had allowed it to happen. Yet Job did not rebel against God.

Then Job arose, and tore his clothes, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return: the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord". In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. Job 1:20-22

After Job passed this first test of his faith, God and Satan talked again:

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan "From where do you come?" And Satan answered the Lord and said "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it".

And the Lord said unto Satan "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and avoids evil? and still he holds fast his integrity, although you moved Me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the Lord and said "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But put forth your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face". And the Lord said unto Satan "Behold, he is in your hand; but save his life".

So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his head. And he took a piece of pottery to scrape himself with; and he sat down among the ashes. Then his wife said unto him "Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God, and die!" But he said unto her "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job 2:1-10

Jesus' parable of the sower parallels the story of Job. Jesus said that when people hear the message of the Gospel, it is like seed being sown on the ground (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23):

- 1) Some people hear the Gospel, but soon forget it. Satan takes God's word away, and no life happens.
- 2) Some people hear the Gospel, and new spiritual life begins. But that life is choked off by the weeds of wealth and financial concerns.
- 3) Others hear the Gospel and also experience new spiritual life. But that life dies out because its roots are shallow, and the heat of hatred, persecution and the fear of losing one's life kills it.
- 4) Finally, some hear the Gospel and go on to bring forth fruit.

Health and wealth surface again in the lives of Peter and Judas. Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. He was a thief whose lust for wealth cost him his eternal soul (John 12:6). Peter tried to defend Jesus with a sword, but then denied Him three times when he had no sword. He was willing to attack the lives of others, but was unwilling to have his own life endangered for Christ's sake (John 18:10,25).

The two temptations that Judas and Peter succumbed to are a common part of the human experience. All of our lives are dominated by the issues of health and wealth. Many elections here in the United States and throughout the world are determined by economic and health issues.

I have heard that when Latin American drug dealers approach a policeman or judge, they sometimes say 'Take my silver or take my lead'. In other words 'Take my money and be rich, or take my lead bullets and be dead'. This is also the choice that Christians are confronted with; a choice that the Savior has already confronted and overcome.

After being baptized by John, Jesus was led into the wilderness where Satan tempted Him with possession of the entire world; all of its wealth, pleasure and glory. Jesus rejected the offer (Matthew 4:1-11). Throughout His ministry Jesus labored under the realization that He could 'have it all', and yet knowingly embraced a miserable death on behalf of mankind.

When the time for His crucifixion came, Satan made sure that Jesus suffered as brutal a death as was possible, both physically and emotionally. Jesus could have 'called it all off' at any time, and yet He yielded Himself to His Father as a sacrifice for our sins.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich. 2 Corinthians 8:9

Because Jesus has endured death, atoning for our sins, He can turn the bitterness of our own death (even at the hands of violent people) into something sweet and positive, just as He sweetened the bitter waters of Marah:

And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying "What shall we drink?" And he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them. Exodus 15:23-25

Fear none of those things which you shall suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. Revelation 2:10-11

Much of today's 'western world' is dominated by eating, drinking and either playing games, watching games or betting on those games. This emphasis on food and entertainment flows out of an abundance of wealth, and a disregard for God. Obesity is a national epidemic in the United States. These traits also characterized the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah before their destruction:

Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom; pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters. Neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me. Therefore I took them away as I thought good. Ezekiel 16:49-50

The Bible says much about health and wealth, and directly links the salvation of our souls with these issues:

And Jesus looked round about, and said unto his disciples "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again, and said unto them "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God". Mark 10:23-25

And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold". And Jesus said unto him "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost". Luke 19:8-10

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

1 Timothy 6:7-9

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives to the death. Revelation 12:11

And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, except he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Revelation 13:16-17

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb". Revelation 14:9-10

Lastly, compare Jesus' words of praise and warning to the churches at Smyrna and Laodicea. True wealth is not necessarily what we think it is:

I know your works, and tribulation, and poverty, but you are rich. Revelation 2:9

Because you say 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing'; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Revelation 3:17

The biblical definition of a Christian is a person in whom Jesus Christ lives. When Jesus was in the world He was hated and persecuted. If He is living and accomplishing His will within a Christian, that Christian will be hated and persecuted also. Suffering will always be present in a faithful Christian's life.

It is only as a Christian is willing to endure this suffering that he can continue to have Christ supernaturally present within himself; bringing forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit, evangelizing the world, and leading the Christian to heaven.

And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.
Matthew 10:22-23

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. John 15:18

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Romans 8:17

Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 2 Corinthians 4:10-11

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2 Corinthians 4:16-17

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. Philippians 1:6-7

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 2 Timothy 3:12-13

THE REBELLION OF KORAH

In keeping with the theme of this web page, I return to the idea of the Christian's 'wilderness journey'. A little more than a year after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, the Lord led the them to the border of the promised land. They camped in the Wilderness of Paran, and God told Moses to send 12 spies into the promised land to assess it and bring back a report about it (Numbers 13:1-3).

When the 12 spies returned, two of them, Joshua and Caleb, gave a good report of the land and encouraged the people to follow the Lord and to conquer the land. But the other 10 spies said that it was too dangerous. The Israelites listened to the 10 fearful spies, and complained against Moses and accused God of bringing them to the promised land so that He could kill both themselves and their children.

The Israelites were 'cowardly and unbelieving' (Revelation 21:8). Joshua and Caleb pleaded with them to remember all of the powerful things that the Lord had shown them, and to trust Him. In response, they said that Joshua and Caleb should be stoned (Numbers 14:10). And so the Lord declared to Moses that none of the adult leaders of the Israelites (20 years of age and older) would be allowed to enter the promised land. The Lord's response was that these rebels would die in the wilderness, and that He would then lead their children into the land (Numbers 14:29-31).

After the Lord had pronounced His rejection upon the Israelites (Numbers 14:29), He destroyed the 10 spies who had brought the bad report of the land (Numbers 14:38). The Israelites realized that they had sinned, and attempted to go up and conquer the promised land. They were warned by Moses not to do that, but they tried anyway and were driven back in defeat (Numbers 14:44-45).

The author of the book of Hebrews tells us that the Lord swore in His anger that these rebellious Israelites would not 'enter His rest' (Hebrews 3:7-4:11, Psalm 95:7-11). And the author of Hebrews tells us that, when the Lord said this, He was referring to His eternal rest in heaven.

And so those Israelites were abandoned by God to wander in the wilderness; knowing that they were eternally damned (Numbers 14:34-35). It is important to understand this, because it was in this context that the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram arose.

These men challenged Moses' pronouncement of doom upon them. They proclaimed the doctrine of 'Once Saved, Always Saved'. They insisted that, because the people had initially obeyed God, and God had brought all the people out of Egypt through the Passover and the Red Sea, they were all still holy.

Korah, Dathan and Abiram were representing the rebels of Israel, claiming to defend their honor. The basis of their attack is seen in their words. It was a contradiction of the Lord's first warnings about testing them after they had crossed the Red Sea, and His eventual judgment upon them for their disobedience:

They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them "You take too much upon yourselves. For all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" Numbers 16:3

This rebellion was put down by the Lord in several steps. First He destroyed Korah, Dathan and Abiram by opening the earth beneath their tents, and causing them, their families and all their possessions to descend alive into the earth (Numbers 16:31-34). Then God destroyed another 250 men who had challenged the priesthood of Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16:35).

Having witnessed this terrifying destruction of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, on the next day the Israelites unbelievably continued their rebellion against God! They began to accuse Moses and Aaron of 'killing God's people'! In response to this, the Lord began to destroy the remaining people of Israel. Over 14,000 of them died before Moses was able to prevent the plague from spreading (Numbers 16:48).

Finally the Lord demonstrated His authorization of Aaron's priesthood by causing Aaron's wooden rod to come alive overnight; bringing forth leaves, flowers and almonds (Numbers 17).

The Lord fulfilled His words to the rebellious Israelites, and made them 'know' His rejection while they still lived upon the earth (Numbers 14:34). He made the survivors of Korah's rebellion spend every minute of the rest of their lives knowing that they were hopelessly damned. Their words of despair, after God crushed their rebellion, reveal this:

And the children of Israel spoke unto Moses, saying "Behold we die, we perish; we all perish. Whosoever comes anywhere near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die. Shall we be consumed with dying?" Numbers 17:12-13

The lives and dismal deaths of the rebellious Israelites are held up before Christians, in the New Testament, as a warning. It is one thing to escape Egypt and enjoy God's grace in 'the wilderness'. It is another thing to continue to please the Lord and enter into the 'promised land of eternal life'. We are warned not to make the mistakes that the Israelites made.

There are many Christians who reject the Lord's warnings. They repeat the words of Korah:

For all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Numbers 16:3

This is not true. Sin has always been a serious problem within the Christian church, and God has always held Christian leaders responsible for combating it. But sin cannot be overcome if Christians are unwilling to 'work out their salvation with fear and trembling' (Philippians 2:12) and if they are not obedient to the truth that 'the wages of sin must be death' (Romans 6:23):

Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. Jude 11