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# The Unity of the Spirit

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*A Newsletter of the Foundation for Translation of Biblical Studies, Inc.*



Dear Fellow-believers,

The central theme of the entire Bible is God's plan of salvation which he brings to fulfillment through his Son, Jesus Christ. This plan, which was foreknown by God before the creation of the world and foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament, is to bring about a family of children who will live in intimate fellowship with God as their Father and share in the glory of his goodness forever. The working out of this plan of salvation is the thread which ties the whole Bible together from beginning to end. It brings unity to its diversity and meaning to its action and thought. The Gospel of John summarizes this plan in words that are known by many the world over:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*

The Bible consistently teaches that there are only two possibilities for the final destiny of man: to receive "eternal life" or to "perish." Since man is "mortal" - subject to death (Rom. 1:23; Rom. 5:12; Heb. 9:27), he has no hope for a life that lasts forever apart from receiving the gift of eternal life from God, who alone is "immortal" (Rom. 1:23; 1 Tim. 6:16). For those who reject God's way of salvation, Jesus Christ (John 14:6), the final end or destiny will be to perish after the final judgment. For those, however, who accept Christ there will be a very different destiny - eternal life. For the believer in Christ this eternal life begins in the present life with the "firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23) and will be brought to its final completion in

the paradise of the kingdom of God after Christ's second coming (I Cor. 15:20-28).

In the Bible the terms "salvation," "eternal life" and "kingdom of God" are closely related to each other and are often used as almost interchangeable expressions (cp. John 3:5, 16, 17). The word "salvation" is a comprehensive term. It includes the idea of deliverance from something as well as the result of that deliverance. When speaking of the eternal salvation of man it refers to being saved from sin, its consequences, and the final condemnation of the ungodly at the last judgment. As a result, instead of being condemned to perish, the believer in Christ will receive the gift of eternal life.

Biblically, the term "eternal life" means the "life of the coming age." The Bible speaks of this present period of time in which we live as the "present evil age" (Gal. 1:4). It is influenced for the most part by the "god of this age," Satan, and his spiritual kingdom of darkness (II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:10-12; I John 5:19). Though God is still ultimately sovereign over all (Psalm 103:19), the Bible teaches that this world is fundamentally in rebellion against God (Eph. 2:1-3). After Christ's second coming, however, God's enemies will be destroyed and a new age will be ushered in - the age of the kingdom of God.

In this new coming age God's righteous and loving rule will be established "on earth as it is in heaven" for God's kingdom will finally have "come" (Matt 6:10). This kingdom will be a "paradise" (Rev. 2:7) consisting of "a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1ff). It will be everlasting in duration and those

who live within it will have the "eternal life" of the coming age. This eternal life will be a life that is "immortal" and "imperishable" (I Cor. 15:53-54), for it will be life in a kingdom whose origin is "not of this world" (John 18:36) - a paradise where all of God's people will enjoy forever "the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21).

Understanding the biblical concept of salvation should enable the Christian believer to live this present life within the proper spiritual framework that the Bible presents. Our central point of focus should be Christ's future second coming and the final establishment of God's kingdom. As believers in Christ our daily lives should be lived with the certainty that godly living in this life will be rewarded at Christ's future appearing (Col. 3:23-24; Titus 2:11-14). For though the Bible offers the believer in Christ promises for the present life (I Tim. 4:8), it remains true that the fullness of eternal life will only be received in the life that is to come after Christ's second coming (I Tim. 6:18-19).

Until that time Christians are still subject to the sufferings of this world - even death - because we have mortal, perishable bodies and live in the midst of a great spiritual battle (Eph. 6:12). Though Christians have the assurance of ultimate victory, it is only at Christ's second coming that the "perishable" will "clothe itself with the imperishable" and "the mortal with immortality" so that death will finally be "swallowed up in victory" (I Cor. 15:50-57). Until that time, the believer in Christ can enjoy salvation with the "firstfruits of the Spirit" and with the full assurance that "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

Although our understanding is limited today, the Bible promises that after Christ's second coming we will no longer "see but a poor reflection as in a mirror," but, instead, we will see Christ "face to face" (I Cor. 13:12). Then we will no longer know only "in part" but "fully even as we are fully known" (I Cor. 13:12). Then, and only then, we will enjoy "God's salvation" in all its fullness - eternal life in the paradise of God's kingdom forever.

The Book of Revelation offers us a pictorial glimpse of this future "kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" that "will reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15; Eph. 5:5). When this comes to pass the final

goal in the out-working of God's plan of salvation will have finally been fulfilled (cf. I Cor. 15:20-28).

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

*He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

*He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son (Rev. 21:1-7).*

Who, then, is the one who "overcomes" so as to "inherit all of this"? Only those who through faith in Christ "overcome by the blood of the lamb" (Rev. 12:11). The Book of I John confirms this truth:

*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and ... everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God ... I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life (I John 5:1-5, 13).*

*Richie Temple*

## Salvation in No Other Name

by Chuck LaMattina

Chicago, Illinois

In Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* the question is asked, "What is in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet." I whole-heartedly agree with Shakespeare's sentiment here. It really matters little what we call a rose. Call it whatever you will and it will still look beautiful and smell beautiful. But when it comes to spiritual matters the question "What is in a name?" begs a totally different answer. The name means everything especially when it comes to the name by which we are saved! Concerning the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle Peter proclaims that,

*... there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12, all verses are from the NKJV).*

The name and titles of our Lord Jesus Christ are all God given, and they reveal to us much about who Jesus is and what he has accomplished. In fact God declares what His Son's name is to be even before he is born. An angel is sent to Joseph and says to him,

*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:20-21).*

Jesus, the name of our Lord, is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Joshua, meaning "Yahweh is salvation" or "Yahweh saves." The very name "Jesus" stamps our Lord as our Savior. Jesus is God's divinely sent and appointed Rescuer, whose job it was to deliver us from the power and penalty of our sins. He came to die on a cross as the payment for our sins, sins that alienated us from God. Now, through him we have peace with God and victory over the power of sin. It was no accident that our Lord was called "Jesus."

Nor was it an accident that he was called "Christ." At one point in his ministry Jesus asks his disciples,

*"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man am?" Peter replies, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16: 13, 16).*

"Christ" is not Jesus' last name, it is a title. It is from the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word for "Messiah" which means "the anointed one." In the Old Testament the practice of anointing someone set him apart for a special job or office. The anointing was connected with the role of the prophet, priest and king.

Elijah was instructed to anoint Elisha as prophet in his place (1 Kings 19:16). The prophet was anointed with oil symbolizing that God's Spirit was upon him and that he spoke for God. Jesus Christ is God's ultimate prophet. A prophecy in Isaiah concerning Christ says,

*"The Spirit of the LORD GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD..." (Isaiah 61:1, 2).*

This is exactly what Jesus Christ did (Luke 4:16-21). The writer to the Hebrews said,

*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ... (Hebrews 1: 1, 2).*

Jesus is God's ultimate prophet who brings to us the good news of salvation.

The anointing was also connected to the office of the priest. God commanded that the priests should be anointed and consecrated, and sanctified so that they should minister to Him (Exodus 28:41). Jesus Christ is God's final High Priest. Hebrews 9:11 says,

*But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come...*

As our High Priest Jesus Christ brought us eternal redemption. As High Priest he not only offered up a sacrifice to God for sins, he was the sacrifice (Hebrews 9:12-14)! And even now he constantly intercedes for you and me.

*But He, because he continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since he always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:24, 25).*

Jesus Christ is always interceding for you! What a comforting and encouraging truth.

Above all else, the anointing was connected with the office of the king. When the prophet Samuel saw young David, God told him, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" (1 Samuel 16:12). Our Lord Jesus Christ is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Revelation 19:16). When the angel went to Mary he said of Jesus,

*"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David ... and of His kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:32, 33)*

Our Lord Jesus Christ is God's ultimate prophet, priest and king. He makes known the way of salvation. He opens it up to all by his sacrifice on the cross. And he will return again in glory to set up the kingdom of God forever!

All of the names and titles of Jesus of Nazareth reveal to us his person and work and accomplishments. Jesus is "the Lamb of God." He is "the bread of life." He is "the light of the world," and the "resurrection and the life." Jesus is the "Prince of life," the "Judge of the living and the dead." Our Lord is the "Apostle" and "forerunner" of our faith. Christ is the "Beloved" and the "Head." Jesus Christ is the "Mediator" between God and men. He is the "Bright and Morning star," and so much more!"<sup>1</sup> But most of all Jesus Christ is "Lord."

*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).*

What is in a name? The answer is that in the name and titles of our Lord Jesus Christ there is the knowledge of forgiveness of sins, true love, joy and the hope of eternal life for all who put their trust in him for salvation. As the song says,

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know,

Fills my every longing, keeps me singing as I go.

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## **Report**

### ***The Unity of the Spirit***

With this issue *The Unity of the Spirit* completes its sixteenth issue. During these four years it has been a great personal blessing for me to edit *Unity* and especially to communicate with so many wonderful believers through its publication. I would like to thank everyone who has helped with *Unity* through submitting articles, financial contributions and especially prayers and spiritual support.

Beginning with the next issue *The Unity of the Spirit* will be jointly published by Grace Ministry USA and Foundation for Translation of Biblical Studies, Inc. The editors remain the same: Chuck and Marilee LaMattina, Richie and Dorota Temple and Scot Hahn. However, Chuck will be serving as co-editor in chief beginning with the Spring issue.

We also invite you to check out our new joint web-site, designed and administered by Adam Kleczkowski, at:

[www.unity-of-spirit.org](http://www.unity-of-spirit.org)

Please be patient with any problems that may come up with the web-site; it is still a work-in-progress.

*Richie Temple*

<sup>1</sup>John 1:29; 6:35; 8:25; 11:25; Acts 3:15; 10:42; Hebrews 3:1; 6:20; Ephesians 1:6; Colossians 2:19; I Timothy 2:5; Revelation 22:16.

## Jesus Christ our Savior

By Sarah Waite

Holly Springs, North Carolina

Who is Jesus Christ? He is many things according to the Bible: Savior, Son of God, Son of Man, the Lamb of God, the King and our High Priest. In this article I would like to look at just a few of these things.

First, Jesus is our Savior. He saves us from sin and its consequences. The Book of Romans states:

*For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).*

We have been in the state of sinfulness since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were perfect when they were created. But they did not stay this way. Eve was tempted by the serpent and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which God commanded them not to eat of. Then she gave some of the fruit to Adam and he ate. This was their sin and from that time onward the human race was sentenced to death because,

*“the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).*

To atone for sin and escape the sentence of eternal death, people before the time of Jesus were commanded to sacrifice animals. But this could only atone for their sins for a short time and had to be done again and again because animals were imperfect.

But God had a better way. Jesus was perfect and unblemished. By dying on the cross he was sacrificed as the final sacrifice. His blood washes our sins away. He was the final Passover Lamb.

*I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life (John 5:24).*

Thanks to Jesus our Savior, we have eternal life even now!

Jesus is our High Priest. As the Book of Hebrews states:

*Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in*

*matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people (Hebrews 5:1-3)*

The role of the high priest was to represent the people in matters related to God and to atone for sins. But just as the sacrifices of the Old Testament were imperfect, so the High Priest of the Old Testament, no matter how godly he might be was imperfect.

*For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak ... (Hebrews 7:28a).*

The same verse goes on to say,

*... but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever (7:28b).*

Jesus is now our high priest. Because he is perfect and is the Son of God he is able to intercede for us. He does not have to intercede or atone for himself because he is perfect. The earthly high priest could only enter God's presence in the Holy of Holies once a year. Jesus, however, lives eternally in God's presence.

Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus was the Son of God and Mary.

*And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased (Luke 3:22b).*

That God would send his Son for us shows his great love for us.

*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*

Because we are also God's children we are Jesus' brothers and sisters. We are heirs together with Jesus.

*... because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God ... Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share*

*in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Rom. 8:14, 17).*

As co-heirs with Christ we share in Jesus' sufferings and glory.

Jesus is our Savior, High Priest and the atonement for our sins. He is also the Son of God and our brother. These are just some of the many things that the Bible says about who Jesus is. The important thing to remember is that we should always check the Scriptures to see if what people are saying about Jesus is true.

[Sarah Waite, who just turned 14 this past October, attends home school and has a special interest in both the Bible and History. She has also helped me a great deal on the last few issues of this newsletter, for which I thank her]

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## History and Redemptive History

Few Bible believing Christians would dispute the fact that the study of history is meaningless apart from a realization that God, the creator and sustainer of the universe, is guiding and over-ruling history to his own appointed ends. This does not mean, of course, that all that happens is according to the will of God. God has clearly given man freedom of will and the very fact that there will be a final judgment means that man is responsible for the choices that he makes. However, God's rule over, and in, history does mean that he has a sovereign plan that he is working-out which has a purpose and goal which he is able to fulfill. The scriptures from Genesis to Revelation witness to this plan (e.g. Acts 1:7; 2:23; 17:24-31; Rom. 8:28-30, Eph. 1:3-10; etc.) and without an understanding of it history itself is meaningless.

The New Testament literally abounds with passages of Scripture which describe God's redemptive or salvific plan in a nutshell. One example is from Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians:

*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a*

*man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all (I Cor. 15:20-28).*

These verses describe redemptive history. Their focus is on God's plan of salvation which he achieves in, and through, Christ. In his commentary on chapter 5 of the Book of Revelation G.E. Ladd summarizes the Christian perspective of history:

Here is a simple but profound biblical truth which cannot be overemphasized: apart from the person and redeeming work of Jesus Christ, history is an enigma. For centuries since Augustine and his City of God, a Christian view of history as having a divinely ordained goal which was inseparable from the redemptive work of Christ has colored western thought. Since the enlightenment, many philosophers have rejected the Christian view of life, and for them history has become a problem ... Christ, and Christ alone, has the key to the meaning of human history. It is not therefore surprising that modern thinkers are pessimistic; apart from the victorious return of Christ, history is going nowhere [A Commentary on the Revelation of John, p. 82, Eerdmans].

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## God's Salvation to the Ends of the Earth:

### The Story of Luke-Acts

By Richie Temple

Cary, North Carolina

One of the chief focuses of this newsletter has always been to emphasize the continuity of God's plan of salvation throughout the Bible. Specifically, we have emphasized that in the Bible there is one God, one people of God and one hope of salvation for all of God's people. Though the background of this story-line can be seen in the Old Testament Scriptures themselves, the only sure method for correct biblical interpretation of these OT Scriptures is to allow the New Testament writers to be our guides in properly understanding them. For, as has often been stated, the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. It is only by focusing on the New Testament message of salvation - as accomplished through Christ - that we can see the whole Bible in proper perspective.

One of the best ways to do this is to follow the New Testament story of "God's salvation to the ends of the earth" in the two-volume work of Luke: the NT Books of Luke and Acts. These two books provide a continuous account of the NT fulfillment of the OT promise of salvation in Christ and then its proclamation to the ends of the earth. Let's look at Luke's own stated purpose for writing both Luke and Acts:

*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of things you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4).*

Luke states clearly that his purpose in writing is to show the certainty of the things that had

been taught: i.e., the "word" concerning the fulfillment among them of God's OT promises of salvation to his people. One of the key OT sections, against which Luke frames his two-volume work, is the "servant of the Lord" passage of Isaiah 40-55. Luke understands these verses to foreshadow the salvation which is fulfilled in Jesus, the ideal Israel and the true "servant of the Lord." His account from beginning to end aims at the fulfillment and proclamation of "God's salvation to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:5-6 provide the central background passage for this theme:

*And now the LORD says –  
he who formed me in the womb to be his  
servant  
to bring Jacob back to him  
and gather Israel to himself,  
for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord  
and my God is my strength –  
He says:  
"It is too small a thing for you to be my  
servant  
to restore the tribes of Jacob  
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.  
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,  
that you may bring **my salvation to the ends  
of the earth**"  
(Isaiah 49:5-6).*

In short, this OT section of scripture provides the background for Luke's framework of his two-volume work about the announcement, fulfillment and proclamation of "God's salvation to the ends of the earth."

The continuity of this theme can best be seen by comparing the references in Luke and Acts about God's salvation in Christ that tie the two books together as one continuous whole. The Book of Luke begins by several announcements about the meaning and significance of the birth of Jesus, the Messiah. He is the "horn of **salvation**" (1:69) through whom comes "the **forgiveness of sins**" (1:77) and who will "**reign** over the house of Jacob **forever**" since his "**kingdom will never end**" (1:33). In short, this "**Savior ... Christ the Lord**" (2:11) embodies in himself the fulfillment of God's OT promises of salvation for all peoples of the world. As Simeon concluded in Luke chapter 2:

*Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you  
now dismiss your servant in peace.*

*For my eyes have seen **your salvation**, which you have prepared in the sight of all people,*

*a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of your people Israel (Luke 2:29-32).*

The rest of the Book of Luke goes on to announce and demonstrate “God’s salvation” in the ministry of Jesus the Messiah as well as to show its accomplishment through his life, death and resurrection. This, of course, sets the stage for its proclamation throughout the Book of Acts as can be seen in three sections of Scripture in Acts. First, chapter one begins by tying the two-volume work together.

*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day he was taken up into heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about **the kingdom of God**. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*

*So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore **the kingdom** to Israel?”*

*He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be **my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and **to the ends of the earth**” (Acts 1:1-8).*

It would be hard for Luke to be any clearer as to the purpose of the Book of Acts.

## God’s Salvation

There are two sections of scripture that set forth in detail the message of salvation that was preached in the Book of Acts, and indeed, in the

entire New Testament from Pentecost onwards. First, Acts 2-4 with Peter and then Acts 13-14 with Paul. The two detailed accounts should be compared with each other but for the sake of space we will focus on the “good news” or “message of salvation” (Acts 13:26) which Paul preaches in Acts 13-14 on his first missionary journey. First, he speaks to the people of Antioch of Pisidia:

*“We tell you **the good news**: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:*

*“‘You are my Son;  
today I have become your  
Father.’*

*The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:*

*‘I will give you the holy and sure  
Blessings promised to  
David.’*

*So it is stated elsewhere:*

*“‘You will not let your Holy One see  
decay.’*

*“For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.*

*“Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that **through Jesus the forgiveness of sins** is proclaimed to you. **Through him everyone who believes is justified** from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you:*

*“‘Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe.’”*

*As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.*

*On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear **the word of the Lord**. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.*

*Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak **the word of God** to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of **eternal life**, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us:*

*I have made you a light for the Gentiles,  
That you may bring **salvation** to the ends of the earth.*

*When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored **the word of the Lord**; and all who were appointed to **eternal life** believed.*

*Then **the word of the Lord** spread through the whole region (Acts 13:32-49; cp. Acts 2 with Peter).*

Shortly after this speech, Paul preached the word of the Lord to other parts of that same region including Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. After this he returned to each of the churches he established in those cities in order to strengthen them and to appoint elders to oversee them. Acts 14:21b-23 summarizes the message he taught them:

*Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to **remain to true to the faith**. We must go through many hardships to **enter the kingdom of God**” (Acts 14:21b-23).*

No better summary of the “good news” which Paul and the other apostles preached can be found in the entire NT. The teachings in the NT Letters to the churches should constantly be compared with these historical accounts in Luke-Acts so as to put them in their proper historical and conceptual context. In short, Paul’s message was “good news” about the fulfillment of the OT theme of salvation. It focused on Jesus the Savior, whom God had vindicated as Lord and Christ by raising him from the dead. Those who accept him in faith have the assurance of forgiveness of sins, or justification, and eternal life<sup>1</sup>

in the kingdom of God to come.

As can be seen from these verses, Luke-Acts gives us a complete picture of the biblical concept of salvation: *what* salvation is, *how* it is to be attained and *whom* it is for. “Salvation,” “eternal life” and “entering the kingdom of God” are all eschatological terms which speak of the same reality in regards to the biblical concept of salvation, but each are from a somewhat different perspective and with a different emphasis. In sum, we could summarize the whole message about “God’s salvation” in Luke-Acts with the following chart:

**Whoever:**  
**Jew or Gentile,**  
**repents/believes/accepts**  
**the good news/word of God/message of salvation**  
**that:**  
**Jesus is the (risen) Lord/Christ/Son of God,**  
**will be saved:**  
**that is,**  
**be justified/receive eternal life/enter the kingdom**  
**of God**

In Luke-Acts the *basic* “good news” of salvation is always the same: those who accept Jesus as God’s Messiah will be saved. But from Pentecost onwards the message of salvation takes on a new perspective of *fulfillment*. The salvation that had been foretold in the OT has now been fulfilled in Jesus, for God has vindicated him as the Lord Christ by raising him from the dead. Everyone who accepts him as the (now risen) Lord, Christ, Son of God will be saved (cp. Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:9-17).

### To the Ends of the Earth

In the Book of Acts, the believers’ mission is to take the good news of *this* salvation “to the ends of the earth.” Note carefully that this is the *same* salvation that was first foreshadowed in the Old Testament; then preached to Israel; and finally, is preached to the ends of the earth. Simply put,

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life” literally means “life of the coming age.” As F.F. Bruce states, “ ‘eternal life’ (*zoe aionios*) reflects Heb. *Hayye ha olam habba*, ‘the life of the age to come’” (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Book of Acts*, p. 266, Eerdmans).

<sup>1</sup> It should always be remembered that the term “eternal

there is *one* salvation in scripture that God accomplishes through our Lord Jesus Christ for all people; not different salvations for different peoples.

All of these truths are confirmed and established in the concluding chapter of the Book of Acts. Luke sets forth Paul as an example for all who would follow him in the mission of proclaiming the “good news”. Upon arriving in Rome – the center of the Roman empire – Paul met together with the Jews who were living there in order to explain the message of salvation that he had been proclaiming wherever he went:

*Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: “My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar – not that I had any charge to bring against my own people. For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is for **the hope of Israel** that I am bound with this chain.”*

*They replied, “We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of the brothers who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.”*

*They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning until evening he explained and declared to them **the kingdom of God** and tried to convince them about **Jesus** from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement, “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet:*

*“Go to this people and say,*

*You will be ever hearing but never Understanding;  
You will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”  
For this people’s heart has become calloused;  
they hardly hear with their ears,  
and they have closed their eyes.  
Otherwise they might see with their Eyes,  
Hear with their ears  
Understand with their hearts  
And turn, and I would heal them.’*

*“Therefore I want you to know that **God’s salvation** has been sent to the Gentiles and they will listen!*

*For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached **the kingdom of God** and taught about **the Lord Jesus Christ** (Acts 28:17-31).*

In Paul’s final address in Acts he summarizes the “good news” that he proclaimed wherever he went. It is a message about the fulfillment of “God’s salvation”. This was foreshadowed in the OT Scriptures and has now been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in him that God’s ultimate plans for his people and creation are now proclaimed “to the ends of the earth.”

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## The NT Perspective: Living in the End-times

It is impossible to study the New Testament without at the same time studying about the “end-times” or “last things.” For, in a sense, that is what the New Testament is all about. Christian believers are those “upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (I Cor. 10:11) because in Christ, God’s purposes for his people are fulfilled and the new age of salvation has already begun (II Cor. 5:17). In fact, the whole point of the New Testament is to show how God’s purposes for his people and creation are brought to fulfillment in, and through, Christ. As R.J. Bauckham states,

In contrast to cyclical conceptions of history, the biblical writings understand history as a linear movement toward a goal. God is driving history towards the ultimate fulfillment of his purposes for his creation. So biblical eschatology is not limited to the destiny of the individual; it concerns the consummation of the whole history of the world, towards which all God’s redemptive acts in history are directed (“Eschatology”, New Bible Dictionary, p. 342, Eerdmans).

Biblically, of course, the final resolution of history takes place with the return of Christ, the last judgment and the final establishment of God’s kingdom in a renewed and glorious earth (I Cor. 15:20-28). However, the unique perspective of the New Testament is that “the last days” or “the end” actually began with Christ’s death, resurrection and giving of the Spirit on Pentecost. Therefore, like it or not, we already live in “the last days” and our lives should be conducted in that light.

For Christians this should be cause for joy since with every passing day Christ’s return is closer and so “now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed” (Rom. 13:11). In short, every generation of Christian believers, including the first century church, lives in the last days and in the light of Christ’s return. This makes for a simple deduction: to study the first century church, as recorded in the NT, is to study an example of how we – or any generation of Christians – should live in “the last days.” Our responsibilities as Christians are *always the same*. They can be broken down into two broad responsibilities, which *never change*:

(1). Christians in every generation are responsible to live Christ-like lives of love and service to others as encapsulated in Gal. 6:10: “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

(2). Christians in every generation are responsible to help in proclaiming the good news of “God’s salvation to the ends of the earth.” This is made crystal clear in Acts 1:6: “So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

As the Book of Acts shows, these responsibilities do not change even in the midst of persecution, economic depression, or tribulations or hardships of any kind. These Christian responsibilities are simply part and parcel of what it means to be ambassadors for Christ in a world that is under the corrupting influence of Satan’s kingdom – while, at the same time, having our true citizenship, and hope, in heaven.

As with most students of the Bible, my present beliefs about end-times haven’t come easily. They are the result of much study and many experiences with many Christian groups and individuals from childhood until today. Along the way I’ve learned that sensationalism, special “revelatory” insight, or “scoops” on current events are almost always wrong. By far, I’ve learned the most through my own personal reading and study of the Bible, history, etc. as well as from the works of recognized biblical scholars from a wide variety of denominations throughout the world. Amongst such scholars there is actually a wide consensus of agreement on most matters about eschatology. Disagreements that do occur among such scholars are primarily over details that do not affect the big picture. The following list presents principles for studying and living in the “end-times”, i.e., for any generation of Christians, that I’ve drawn from my own studies and from the works of scholars whose expertise far surpass my own. I recommend them and present them for your consideration:

1. The “end-time” began with Christ’s first coming. Specifically, the life, death and

resurrection of Christ were the most important eschatological events in God's plan of salvation. Through what he achieved, salvation is now available to all who will accept him; and, his resurrection and glorification are the prototype for all who are to follow.

2. Christ will return, raise, gather together and transform all his people, and then reign in life with them forever in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Before that time we must be willing to continue in the faith and to endure the sufferings of this age, because it is only through much tribulation that we will enter into the kingdom of God.
3. Passages such as Acts 1:6-11; 3:18-21; 14:21-23; Rom. 8:16-25; I Cor. 15; Eph. 1:9-10; Phil. 3:20-21; I Thess. 4:13-18; II Thess. 1-2; I John 3:1-3; I Peter 1:3-9; II Peter 3:1-13; Rev. 21:ff.; etc., which are clear and easy to understand, form the basis of my understanding. These truths are confirmed over and over throughout the NT and by every NT writer. No passage of scripture should be allowed to break the truth of their consistent witness.
4. The fulfillment of OT prophecies must be understood in accordance with the interpretation of the NT writers. Normally, this fulfillment was understood in the light of progressive revelation and in typological terms (rather than either a strictly literal, or else, allegorical way).
5. Sections of Scripture such as the Olivet Discourse in Matt. 24-25; Mark 13; and Luke 21 are clear in what they teach in broad terms. However, the details should not be pressed since it is notoriously difficult to be sure of what pertains, for example, to the first century destruction of Jerusalem, etc. and what might pertain to a time immediately preceding Christ's return. By the same token, the Book of Revelation is loaded with symbolism, etc. and it is not always possible to be sure of the precise interpretation of individual passages. In all such cases, believers should focus on that which is clear throughout the rest of the NT. Those who claim "special" or "revelatory" insight about biblical passages, or current events, or date setting in regards to the last days – beyond what the scriptures clearly teach - should be rebuked and shunned.

6. The first century church as recorded in the pages of the New Testament should be our prime example as to how to live in the end-time. The primary Christian responsibilities of living a Christ-like life of love and service towards others, and of bearing witness to Christ to the ends of the earth, never change no matter what the circumstances may be. They should be the primary focus of action for every generation of Christians.

After many years of dealing with this subject it is my conclusion that "simpler is better." In short, it is better to focus on the simplicity of what Christ has already accomplished, the certainty of his future return, and how to live in the light of this as a child in God's family. What may or may not happen in-between is of comparatively little significance in the overall scheme of things. A pre-occupation with possible end-time scenarios seems more often than not to cause believers to miss the mark in regards to their Christian responsibilities and often cause hurt and divisions. Below, is a recommended list of works on biblical eschatology by first class biblical scholars for those who are interested in more information:

1. The article "Eschatology" by R.J. Bauckham in the *New Bible Dictionary*. This is a first-class article and a good place to begin, as well as to use as a constant reference. It defines, frames and explains all aspects of the biblical topic of eschatology .

2. The works of George Eldon Ladd including: *The Gospel of the Kingdom*; *The Presence of the Future* and *A Theology of the NT* (Eerdmans). Ladd has a thoroughly biblical grasp of all the issues of eschatology. He is always clear in his presentations and his godly and irenic manner always makes him a joy to read.

These works are a good place to start. Beyond them I would suggest the commentaries recommended in the last issue of "Notes & Quotes" for help in understanding individual passages of Scripture.

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## Notes & Quotes On the Bible

### The Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ

#### “And He Shall Reign for Ever and Ever”

Every year just after Thanksgiving I pull out my tape of Handel’s *Messiah* and pop it into the cassette player of my Mazda truck. As I drive around I’m serenaded by the awe-inspiring melodies of this justly famous musical composition put together by one history’s greatest composers. Some of my favorite words come from the famous “Hallelujah Chorus”:

*Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

*The Kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

*King of kings and Lord of Lords. Hallelujah!*

I doubt if there is more awe-inspiring music in the whole world. It resonates with truth, hope and reverence for the living God and his Christ. The hope of mankind – towards which the whole biblical record marches - is here announced in anticipation of its imminent fulfillment. Few believing listeners can fail to be impacted at the deepest level of emotion.

Not surprisingly, this has been the reaction of listeners from the very beginning as the brochure in my CD of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir’s rendition of *Messiah* makes clear:

One of the greatest works ever conceived by man is *Messiah*, by George Frederick Handel (1683-1759). In its pages can be found music that is, at the same time, the simplest human utterance and the most complex religious statement – all expressed in terms of the highest inspirational beauty ...

*Messiah*, based on texts from the New Testament, was composed in just 24 days, between August 22 and September 14, 1741...

For the first public concert, on April 13, ladies were requested not to wear hoops in their skirts and gentlemen to refrain from sporting swords, so

great was the expected crowd. The event was a huge success, and Faulkner’s “Dublin Journal” reported the pleasure of all who heard the “Sacred Grand Oratorio”:

“Words are wanting to express, the exquisite Delight it afforded to the admiring crowded Audience. The Sublime, the Grand, and the Tender, adapted to the most elevated, majestic and moving Words, conspired to transport and charm the ravished Heart and Ear.”

When *Messiah* received its London premier, legend has it that Handel’s old patron, King George II, was so moved by the Hallelujah Chorus that he rose and remained standing until its very conclusion. Protocol demanded, of course, that everyone remain on his feet when the King stood, so thus was born the custom of the audience standing during the singing of this most inspired chorus.

The famous words above from the Hallelujah Chorus are found, of course, in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Revelation in the second part of verse fifteen. They express the fulfillment of the hope and goal of the entire biblical record from Genesis to Revelation:

*The kingdom of the world has  
become the kingdom of our  
Lord and of his Christ,  
and he will reign for ever and ever  
(Rev. 11:15b NIV).*

When these words finally come to pass believers from all ages will be “caught up” to meet our Lord Jesus Christ in the air. From that point on we will “be with him” and “reign with him” in God’s kingdom -

*“for ever and ever”*

(I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:20-28, 50-58; Rev. 22:5; cp. Rom. 5:17; II Tim. 2:12; etc.). This, is the ultimate biblical hope!

### The Christian Hope: Reigning with Christ For Ever and Ever

Let it be stated clearly: the ultimate biblical hope is not for a disembodied life in heaven after death; nor is it for a bodily life in heaven after a secret rapture of the church; nor is it for a life in an imperfect world in the millenium after Christ's return. Any of those could debatably be intermediate stages along the way. But the simplicity of the Christian hope for the future is clear: it is the personal return of our Lord Jesus Christ at which time believers – whether dead or alive - will be caught up and transformed so as,

“to be with the Lord forever” (I Thess. 4:13-17).

It is the simplest logic to conclude that if we are going to be “with him forever” then our final home is the “new heaven and new earth, the home of righteousness” towards which all biblical revelation points and culminates (e.g. II Pet. 3:13 and Rev. 21:1ff). In other words, it is in “the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” - in a renewed and glorious earth – that Christian believers will live and reign with Christ,

“for ever and ever” (Rev. 22:5)!

It is of course common for sincere Christian believers to speak of spending “eternity” in heaven. But this is simply based on misunderstandings of biblical language that have been caused by importing Greek ideas about salvation and eternal life into the Bible. Though the New Testament was originally written, at least for the most part, in Greek, the ideas behind the Greek words that are used are not Greek but Hebraic, i.e., based on the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. Older translations of the Bible such as the King James Version have helped to propagate these ideas widely in the thought of the common churchgoer, indeed, in the common man at large.

The Bible does of course speak of the Christian hope being “stored up” or “kept” in heaven. However, in biblical the thought this doesn't mean that believers will go there to get it. Instead, with Christ's return, God's kingdom will come, so that God's will is finally done “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). New Testament scholar George Eldon Ladd explains about the NT concepts “heaven” and “eternity”:

In popular Christian idiom, we often contrast the life of the present with that of the future by use of

the words earth and heaven. We live our bodily life here on earth, but the future salvation will be consummated in heaven. A more philosophical approach contrasts time and eternity as though they represented two different modes of existence. Our present life is lived “in time” while the future will be “beyond time” in eternity. This concept is reflected in our popular religious idiom in the song:

“When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound  
and time shall be no more, When the  
morning breaks eternal, bright and fair ...”

One of the most brilliant recent discussions in Biblical Theology is that of Oscar Cullman in which he successfully demonstrated that such concepts are foreign to the Biblical view. His book, *Christ and Time*, has shown that the Biblical world-view involves a *linear concept*, and that “eternity” as it belongs to redemptive history is simply *unending time*. [*The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 25, Eerdmans].

Throughout the entire Bible, the ultimate destiny of God's people is an earthly destiny. In typical dualistic Greek thought, the universe was divided into two realms: the earthly or transitory, and the eternal spiritual world. Salvation consisted of the flight of the soul from the sphere of the transitory and ephemeral to the realm of eternal reality. However, biblical thought always places man on a redeemed earth, not in a heavenly realm removed from earthly existence.

The New Testament conceives of a heavenly Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God, the true homeland of the saints, and the dwelling of “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22; see Gal. 4:26; Phil. 3:20) ... In the consummation after the resurrection ... the heavenly Jerusalem will descend from heaven to take up its permanent location in the new earth. [*A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, p. 275, 276, Eerdmans].

In short, whenever the Bible speaks of eternal life in “the Kingdom of God” it is *always* speaking of life in the coming reign of God – through his Messiah - in a renewed and glorious *earth* which lasts “for ever and ever.”

The common practice of speaking of “the kingdom of heaven” as the place where a believer will enjoy “life in heaven after death” is simply erroneous. The term “kingdom of heaven” is simply a Jewish way of avoiding uttering the (over) revered name of “God” when speaking of the “kingdom of

God". The terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are synonymous – as any competent biblical research work will confirm.

But, it is also true that the terms "kingdom of heaven" or "kingdom of God" (and similar terms) never refer specifically to the millenium which the Book of Revelation places immediately after Christ's return. No other biblical writer shows any knowledge whatsoever of a *millennial* reign of Christ with his saints and it is a travesty of biblical interpretation to pretend that they do. It may very well be that the millenium will be the first stage of God's kingdom on earth but this is only mentioned in the Book of Revelation and even there it is not the final goal. The term "the kingdom of God" – as used everywhere in the Bible in its future sense - always refers to the coming reign of God and his Messiah that will last "for ever and ever."

This truth is not hard to see if we would allow the Bible to speak for itself instead of reading things back into it. Let's look first at the vivid Old Testament background to the concept of "the kingdom of God." Examples can be found in the Old Testament Books of Isaiah and Daniel. Isaiah spoke of a coming ruler whose righteous kingdom would reign *forever*:

*For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever (Isaiah 9:6-7).*

The prophet Daniel also spoke of a coming everlasting kingdom. A kingdom to be brought to pass by "one like a son of man" and which would replace all other kingdoms and rule so as to establish God's righteous rule *forever*:

*In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed ... it will crush all those kingdoms*

*and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever (Daniel 2:44).*

*In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven ... He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed (Daniel 7:13-17).*

Nothing could be clearer than that the Old Testament hope for God's future reign on earth through his Messiah would be "forever"! Recognition of this truth would remove a lot of confusion from biblical studies.

But does the New Testament confirm this same understanding? Absolutely, as the angel's announcement of the Messiah's birth in the first chapter of Luke vividly shows:

*"Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:30-33).*

This Old Testament background together with the announcement of the birth of Christ are *prima facie* evidence for what the New Testament means by the term "the kingdom of God." It should be built into our understanding of what the term means. In short, no amount of exegetical gymnastics can escape the clearness of the biblical words "forever" and "never end" which are associated with the term "the kingdom of God".

This should bring pause to those who teach that Jesus' teaching about "the kingdom of God" in the Gospels is in reference to a millenium as well as to those who teach that the believer's ultimate destiny is life in heaven. As we have seen, there is no biblical proof whatsoever for these positions. Instead, the ultimate biblical hope about which Jesus, Peter, Paul and John constantly speak, is "the universal restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21

NRSV). It is not for “life in heaven” or “life in a millennium”; instead, it is the restoration of man to his intended rule over God’s created and restored earth (Acts 3:17-21; cf. Gen. 1:26-27; Psalm 8; Heb. 2:5-8). In short, it is the culmination of the entire biblical plan which is for man to “reign in life” (Rom. 5:17),

*... for ever and ever (Rev. 22:5)*

“in a new heaven and new earth, the home of righteousness”(II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1ff).

For, as Handel’s Messiah echoes, the day is coming when it can truly be said:

*The kingdom of the world has  
become the kingdom of our  
Lord and of his Christ,  
and he will reign for ever and ever.*

Hallelujah!!

[For a precise study on the meaning of the terms: “the kingdom of God,” etc., I highly recommend chapter two “The Kingdom is Tommorrow” of George Eldon Ladd’s book *The Gospel of the Kingdom* or his *A Theology of the NT*. Both are published by Eerdmans and can be ordered from CBD.]

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Foundation for Translation of Biblical Studies, Inc.  
P.O. Box 473  
Cary, NC 27511