

The Heart of Christianity

The Biblical Gospel and the Future of the Church

3 What is the Gospel? Part 2

January 20, 2019

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,
2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.
3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.
6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;
7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;
8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

To the Glory of God

Now, last time, we saw that here in **1 Corinthians 15**, the Apostle Paul gave us the fundamental elements of the true, genuine, biblical Gospel. And there are five separate parts, all of which are of vital importance:

1. Christ died for our sins
2. He was buried
3. He was raised on the third day
4. This is all according to the Scriptures
5. It is of "first importance"

And, last time, we looked extensively at the first part, which says:

1. Christ died for our sins

1 Corinthians 15:3a

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins...

... and today I want to focus on one word that Paul used in the first Element:

Died

... *Jesus died for our sins*, but He actually and, in reality, died. Jesus *physically* died. His Heart stopped beating; His Blood quit flowing through His Veins. His Brainwaves ceased. Jesus died. So, this was not a "swooning"; Jesus didn't take some concoction to make Himself unconscious, so He could *appear* to have died.¹ This was not part of some elaborate scheme by the Apostles to fabricate Jesus' Death, so they could start their new religion. The Christian Church has proclaimed the very same Truth about this, for 2,000 consecutive years:

Jesus died.

But the Question that needs to be answered here is:

Why did Jesus have to die?

Why couldn't God simply issue a "Divine Decree" and forgive all of the sins of all Humanity? I mean, after all, God *is* Sovereign, and He can pretty much do whatever He wants to. So, *why* go through all the trouble and take on Human Flesh, and be virgin-born, and then live 30 years before He begins His Ministry, and then, after about three years of a public, perfect Ministry, be captured, tortured, endure an unjust "kangaroo court", and then be murdered? What was all *that* about? Wouldn't it have been easier to simply part the skies and powerfully and effectually announce from Heaven:

¹ This rumor was started by the unbelieving Jews of the 1st Century, but was revived and made popular to Americans by the author, Hugh Schonfield, in his 1965 book, "*The Passover Plot*".

“You’re all forgiven!”

Now, to their credit, many, who are part of the “Baptist” flavor of Christianity have done a real good job of teaching about the Death of Jesus. In most every Baptist church, the Cross of Jesus is *central* to what they believe and teach. And they are to be commended for that.

Paul taught that Jesus died. And, so, several groups have, *correctly*, set their sights on the fact that Jesus literally died. But by focusing almost *exclusively* on the Death (and Resurrection) of Jesus, many who have attended various Baptist churches either don’t know or have never pondered a few Issues:

1. *Why* did Jesus have to die?
2. What was the Benefit of Jesus’ *Life*?

Now if you were to ask, many would say, *“Jesus died to save us from our sins”*. And that is true. But what does that *mean*? What does the phrase, *“save us from our sins” mean*, and *why* did Jesus have to die to accomplish that?

This illustrates the danger of trying to simplify deep and profound Biblical Issues with “short phrases” or “summary statements”. Many people today don’t want to actually understand Divine Truth, and so, they look for simple statements that *summarize* Eternal Matters. And their mantra is, *“We don’t need to worry about all that, all we have to do is love Jesus”*.

And I agree. All we need to do is love Jesus. From the very beginning, God said:

Deuteronomy 6:4&5

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

... and Jesus Himself said:

Matthew 22:37b& 38

***YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'* This is the great and foremost commandment.**

... so human beings, loving God is the *highest* and *best* thing we can do. And the only Obedience that actually honors God is the kind that flows out from a genuine love and delight of Him. And, after all, while demons may *believe* in God, they *cannot* love Him. And while lost people may seek to *honor* Jesus to some extent, they do not *love* Him either. So, I agree, loving Jesus is the core Issue.

But how do human beings start loving Jesus? How do people, who "love darkness rather than light", suddenly begin to love Jesus? Do we "push a button" or "flip a switch"? So, I hope you can see that it is *horribly* incomplete to try to simplify Christianity by reducing it to a phrase like, "*All we need to do is love Jesus*". We have to actually find out just *how* wicked rebels can love this Jesus.

But then, if we're honest, we also have to find out just *Who* this "Jesus" *is* that we are supposed to love. Because there are several "Jesus'" out there. And to just name a few:

- *The Mormon* Jesus (brother to satan)
- *The Jehovah's Witness* Jesus (not fully Divine)
- *The Muslim* Jesus (not God)
- *The Secular/Humanitarian* Jesus (did good things, but not God)
- *The Hippy/Counter-culture* Jesus (simply promoted rebellion against Authority)

... and then there is the *Biblical* Jesus, Who was:

"Fully God and fully Man, in the same Body, at the same time,
without conflict or contradiction"²

So, our *theological* "phrases" and "summary statements" may be perfectly true and completely in line with Scripture. But unless those "phrases" and "statements" are understood and comprehended, they become almost *meaningless* over time.

² John Chrysostom (AD349-407)

But I would also suggest that the effort to reduce Christianity to simple phrases and summary statements is the very epitome of *laziness*, and it illustrates an almost total lack of concern about the only Issue that really matters. And the reason I say this is because, with rare exception, we only find this “reductionist effort” with Christianity and with “Biblical Truth”, and *not* with almost any other issue. People talk with great clarity about politics and sports and medicine and other issues that they enjoy. And that is fine. We *should* talk in great detail about things that we enjoy. But why don't saved people enjoy talking about God?

So, I am all for us using summary statements or short phrases in our discussion of Eternal Truths. But I am also for us understanding what those phrases and statements mean. For example, the Apostle Paul made it clear that Jesus actually died, when he said:

... Christ died for our sins ...

And then, secondly:

2. Jesus was buried

1 Corinthians 15:3&4a

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried...

Now, from that short summary Statement, we need to ask a very important Question:

Why did Jesus have to die?

Now by telling us that Jesus died and was buried, Paul was setting the stage to teach the Purpose behind it. So, to understand this, we need to begin with *why* Sin is so “bad” that it would require the Death of the Son of God to save us from it.

Now it is true that Sin hurts *us*. Sin actually *destroys* human beings. Sin takes us where we *never* thought we would go. And Sin costs us *more* than we are willing to pay. And Sin keeps us *longer* than we want to stay. Sin hurts. Sin is brutal in how it affects people. Sin

has no Mercy, and it literally destroys people and tears up families and ruins children. Sin kills. So, *part* of why God said Sin is “wrong” is because of the devastating effects that Sin has on Humanity.

Fundamentally, God loves the people He made. And whatever hurts us, God is against. So, *part* of the reason why God is against Sin is because Sin hurts us.

But the negative effects that Sin has on us is *not* the *fundamental* or the *primary* reason why Sin is so “bad” that Jesus has to die. What primarily makes Sin to be “wrong” is that Sin offends God. Sin insults God. Sin belittles God. Look at what the Apostle Paul said from **Romans 3:23**:

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Now, normally, when this verse is read, it is used to illustrate the fact that *everybody* is a sinner. Most people concentrate on the *first* part that says:

For all have sinned....

... and they rightly conclude that God has determined that *all* human beings are “Sinners”, or “*those who engage in sin*”. Jesus used a slightly *different* phrase to describe “sinners”. Jesus said unsaved people were those:

Matthew 7:23

... ***WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.***

... or, those who, as the normal characteristic of their daily life, rebel against God and His Ways. But look at the *last* part of **Romans 3:23**:

... and fall short of the glory of God

So, here, Paul equates Sin with “falling short” of something. And what these sinners “fall short” of is “The Glory of God”. Now *why* did Paul connect the “Glory of God” with “Sin” like this? Why didn’t Paul simply say that sinners were those who “*transgress against God’s Laws*”, or those who “*Rebel against God’s Will*”, or those who “*Act*

contrary to God's Purposes"? Why describe Sin in connection with "The Glory of God"? And just what is "The Glory of God", and why is it important? And what does it mean to "fall short" of it?

The "Glory of God" is the radiant Beauty that we see, or that is demonstrated, when God manifests or displays or makes known one or more of the Attributes or Character traits of Himself. So, for example, when we look at the complexity and vastness of the Universe, we see a Creator that is both Wise and Powerful. So, the display of the created Universe reveals a part of Who God is.

And the Bible tells us that us beholding God's Glory and appreciating it and marveling at it and enjoying it is the single most important reason why God does what He does. And, in the Bible, there are three phrases that God uses to describe why He does what He does. God says, He does things:

For My Glory

... or ...

For My Name's Sake

... or...

So, they will know that I am the Lord

For example, God created Man, "*For My Glory*".

Isaiah 43:7

Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

God forgives Sin, "*For His Name's Sake*".

1 John 2:12

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

God fights for His people against His enemies, "*So, they will know that I am the Lord*".

Ezekiel 12:15

So they will know that I am the Lord when I scatter them among the nations and spread them among the countries.

So, the display of His Own Glory and the recognition by humans that the Glory of God is magnificent and worthy is the prime reason why God does what He does. And that means that the Glory of God means more to God than anything else. *Everything* God does, He does for His Own Glory. And that goes from Creation to Salvation, and everything in-between.

So, when we sin, we choose something *else* besides God to help us, or to make us better, or to enjoy, or to value more than we value God. So, Sin is beholding God in His pristine Perfection and saying, *"No thanks, I'd rather have something else besides You"*. And you simply can't insult God more than that.

So, Sin is not merely the horrendous acts of child-molestation or mass murder or taking advantage of helpless people or using weak people for your own benefit. No, Sin would be a human being finding more genuine delight or personal satisfaction, in their rose garden or their comic book collection, or in sex, or money, or power, or in another person, rather than they do in God. Sin is trading the Absolute Beauty and the Absolute Purity and the Absolute Wisdom and the Absolute Power of God for something that was made and that is passing away. It is finding the full measure of Happiness in what is temporary and base and part of Creation, rather than in the Creator Himself.

So, when we sin, we "fall short" of the Glory of God, We *devalue God's Radiance*, We *belittle what God holds the highest*, We *ignore what God wants seen and delighted in the most*, We *refuse to appreciate what is to be appreciated the most*, and we *find no value* in what is the most valuable! And God takes Personal Offense to that.

So, what does an infinitely Righteous, infinitely Holy, infinitely Beautiful, infinitely Glorious Being do when what He values the *most* is "trampled on with disgust"? He responds³. And the Reason God responds is because His *has to*. Because along with being perfectly Glorious and perfect Love and perfectly Wise and Powerful, God is also

³ By using the word, "Response", I do *not* mean that God waits for us to do something *first* and then He acts in accord with what we do. God is Sovereign and always acts first.

perfectly Righteous and Just. And since God's Glory has been trampled under-foot by our sin, God must defend His Own Glory, or else He would be agreeing with us that His Glory is not worth defending.

But God *does* think His Glory is worth defending. And so, He does. And His Response is in proportion to the Insult. So, the Punishment fits the Crime. Nothing insults God more than His Glory being belittled. And so, the Punishment is eternal Damnation.

Now there are a lot of people, who don't believe in Hell, or who no longer believe in it. And, even among those who say they believe in Hell, many of these people either don't know or don't really understand what Hell is, and why God created it. And one of their biggest complaints is how a Being, Who is pure Love, could cast anyone into a lake of fire to be tormented day and night, forever. To them, God appears to be either unforgiving or much too violent to punish people forever.

So, I probably should do a Study, sometime, on what the Bible teaches about Hell. But for the sake of time, we need to understand just a few elements about Hell that pertain to this Study on the Gospel:

- Hell is a place of torment, of Divine Punishment; there is no rehabilitation in Hell. The people who go into Hell stay there, forever. No holidays, no vacations, no reduction of sentence. Burning in Hell is permanent.
- God is in Hell. It isn't that Hell is absent God's Presence, only His Benevolence.
- God is Sovereign in Hell. Satan is not a king, who rules in Hell. God rules over Hell, and satan is as much a victim as everybody else.
- Hell demonstrates the Glory of God's Justice against unrepentant rebels. So, Hell is not a defeat for God.

But, as Bible-believing Christians, we must get to a place where we not only believe that Hell *exists*, but that Eternal Damnation is the correct and proper Adjudication of the egregious Insult to God's Glory that our sin has made. It is frightening, but Hell is right. Eternal Damnation is God defending the Worth and Honor of His Own Righteousness that has been attacked by our Sin.

So, Sin cannot be simply “forgiven” or “removed” or “swept under the rug”. Sin must be “paid for”. If God simply pardoned the guilty, He would be *complicit* in their guilt. So, there must be some Way developed whereby our Sin and the *guilt* of our Sin is transferred from us to someone willing to take it, and where all Sin is actually and in reality *punished and damned*.

And that Way is that God Himself took on flesh and became Man.⁴ And one of the reasons why God had to become a Man is because as a Man, Jesus had to *perfectly* obey His Father’s Law for 33-1/2 years on the earth, so He could literally *earn* what the Law promised, “Righteousness”.⁵

And then God the Father had to transfer all of our sins onto that perfectly Righteous Man⁶, and He had to then absorb all of the fury and fierceness of God’s Wrath that was against us, *because* of those Sins⁷. And then Jesus had to die with all of the sins of all of God’s people eternally damned by God. But then, Jesus also had to literally and physically rise again, on the third day, *without* those sins, to prove that God the Father was fully satisfied with what Jesus had done.⁸

And that means that, at the end of time, there will be no “outstanding accounts”. Every sinful thought and every sinful act, committed by every sinful person on earth, for all time, will either be “paid for” by Jesus as the Substitute for all who trust in Him, or it will be “paid for” by their *own* eternal torment as they burn without ever dying. But one way or the other, our sins will be “paid for”. And that is why God is so dead earnest about Hell and about damning all unrepentant sinners. And that is what makes the “Good News” of Jesus’ absolute Pardon to unworthy sinners so wonderful.

And that is why Jesus had to *physically and literally* die. Sin had to be “paid for” with a Sacrifice that was *sufficient* for four things to be true:

- ✓ Forgive all sin
- ✓ Forgive all sin, by one Act
- ✓ Forgive all sin, by one Act, for all of God’s chosen

⁴ The Doctrine of the Incarnation

⁵ The Doctrine of Christ’s Sinlessness

⁶ The Doctrine of Imputation

⁷ The Doctrine of Propitiation

⁸ The Doctrine of the Resurrection

- ✓ Forgive all sin, by one Act, for all of God's chosen, for all time

The animal sacrifices, that were commanded by the Old Covenant, simply were *not* "sufficient", no matter how *sincere* the person may have been, who offered up the beast. **Hebrews 10:1-4, &11** says:

For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;

... but the one, single Sacrifice of Jesus *was* sufficient. **Hebrews 9:24-28** says:

For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.

So, when Jesus accomplished all this, He was buried. **Matthew 27:57-60** says:

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given *to him*. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away.

Now there is disagreement about just where Arimathea was in ancient Palestine. But there is almost universal agreement that by indicating that Joseph was from this area (and the fact that he already had his own tomb carved in rock), that this signified that he was a very wealthy man, whom God had touched, who had believed in Jesus.

Now, the fact that it was nearly sundown when Jesus died, prohibited a proper Jewish burial. Jewish Law condemned any Jew being buried after sundown. So, they very quickly took Jesus' Body down from the Cross and hurriedly placed him in Joseph's tomb, and then sealed it with a large stone across the opening. But this explains *why* the women were coming to Jesus' tomb very early on the first day of the week. The Sabbath was from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, and they couldn't properly attend to Jesus' Body with the spices and wrappings that normally went along with a Jewish death until *after* the Sabbath. But all of these amazing details give great credibility to the narrative about Jesus' Death on Friday afternoon and His Burial.

3. Jesus Rose from the Dead on the Third Day

1 Corinthians 15:4b

... and that He was raised on the third day ...

Now there are many people who try to muddy the water about just when Jesus died and rose again. They reason to themselves that Jesus could not be dead for three full "days" if He died on Friday afternoon and then raised early Sunday morning. So, they try to push Jesus' Death back as far as Wednesday or Thursday to try to make this all work out according to 21st Century American logic.

The fact of the matter is that any part of a day was considered to be a "day" to the Jews. Now you may not like that, or you may not accept that, but that is Jewish tradition, not my opinion. The fact that Jesus' Burial was rushed, and the fact that the women didn't come to rub His Body with spices and wrap Him properly for burial until Sunday morning, is all that I need to say without any hesitation:

Jesus died on Friday afternoon and was raised from the dead
early Sunday morning, after the Sabbath

Now I have several, very in-depth Sermons and Teachings on the Resurrection, so I'm not going to repeat those this morning. If you are curious, you can get copies of those Sermons and study them. But I want to make clear certain aspects of the Resurrection that we need to know as it pertains to the Biblical Gospel:

- ✓ Jesus's Resurrection was a literal, physical, and bodily Resurrection (not spiritual or mystical).
- ✓ Jesus was raised from the dead in the very *same* Body in which He died (the wounds, etc., were still there).
- ✓ Jesus had a physical Body that had both "flesh and bones".
- ✓ Jesus talked and taught and ate with the disciples after His Resurrection.
- ✓ Jesus appeared and disappeared after His Resurrection (no sleep or rest).
- ✓ The literal, physical, bodily of Jesus was the irrefutable Sign that God was pleased with all that Jesus did in His Death on the Cross.
- ✓ The Resurrection was the catalyst that stabilized the disciples.
- ✓ The Resurrection has been preached and taught as a "Cornerstone Doctrine" of Christianity for over 2,000 consecutive years.
- ✓ Without the literal, physical, and bodily Resurrection of Jesus, nobody is saved.

At the end of this Passage, the Apostle Paul gave us some information concerning the fact that Jesus is still alive after His Death:

1 Corinthians 15:5-8

and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

So, without a "dead and risen Savior", we don't have Biblical Christianity. And all that God requires of us, and all that we do "in His Name" and "to His Glory", *requires* that Jesus still be alive right now.

4. The Life, Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus is "in Accord with the Scriptures"

1 Corinthians 15:3b&4

... Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Now the Apostle Paul was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to pen down this "Inspired Letter" to the saints at the church in Corinth, while Paul was in Ephesus during the early part of AD55. And at the time he wrote this Book, he had only written two others, **1&2Thessalonians** (AD 52&53). So, at the time he tells the believers of Corinth that Jesus' Life, Death, and Resurrection was "according to the Scriptures", he had yet to write even **Romans** (approx. AD 56). In fact, there is good reasoning to suggest that, besides the two Epistles to the church at Thessalonica, only the **Epistle of James** (AD 46) existed at this time.

And that tells us that the phrase that Paul used here is pertaining to the *Old Testament* Scriptures, not the New. So, Paul is referring here to some of the almost 400 Prophecies that were uttered many hundreds of years before Jesus was ever born that describe Jesus' Birth, Life, Ministry, Death, and Resurrection. And the most well-known one would be **Isaiah 53**, but some others would be:

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity Between you [the serpent] and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head [fatal], And you shall bruise him on the heel [non-fatal]."

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Isaiah 9:6&7

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

Zechariah 12:10

I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

... and, of course, the entire **22nd Psalm**, and many, many more. But Paul's meaning is clear, the Man, Who is the Focus of all of these Prophecies is the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Son of God, and the Savior of the world. And that Man is Jesus.

5. All of this is of "First Importance"

1 Corinthians 15:3&4

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

The "Elements" of the Biblical Gospel, the "historical facts" of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ are of "First Importance." They are "prime". They are the "Basis" or the "Foundation" of the Biblical Gospel. And so, they must be *included* in every Gospel presentation, or the Gospel has not been preached. But these are the Issues that also must be "believed" and "trusted in" and "confessed" in order to be saved. Later on, this same Apostle wrote:

Romans 10:9&10

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

So, the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus are a huge *part* of what makes up the “Biblical Gospel”. And so, *without them*, you don’t have the Gospel. And that means that no one can be “forgiven” or “born again” or “saved” without understanding and believing all of the Issues that we have been going over now for two weeks, that the Apostle Paul put into this Passage here in **1 Corinthians 15**. Let me say this another way: Every single soul, from any nation, tribe, or tongue, who is truly “forgiven and saved”, and who has “become a Christian”, and who is “going to heaven”, must understand and believe:

- ✓ Jesus lived
- ✓ Jesus died
- ✓ Jesus was buried
- ✓ Jesus rose again

... or he is deceived about his Salvation.

But we need to know that every single one of the Truths that I have presented to you are *not* merely “Christian Doctrines”. They also happen to be “Historical Facts”. So, these are Absolute, Objective, Propositional Truths. And that means that they actually happened at some precise point in history.

And that means that these Truths are not simply “Opinions” or “Beliefs” of the Church. These Elements are *not* a matter of opinion. These Facts are a huge *part* of what makes up, the “Biblical Gospel”. And I say, “part” because we still have a very huge problem. Because, you see, those deceived by the Roman religious system, many Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses, and even the demons (fallen angels) believe every single one of the Issues that we have been studying now for two weeks, and yet they are *not* saved. In fact, James said this:

James 2:19

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

... James said that demons believe so much in God that they shudder. And yet, most of the people, who say they believe in God, *never* tremble before Him. So, I can only hope that they would come to believe in God

as much as the demons do. Now look at the Account given to us by Dr. Luke from **Luke 8:26-29**:

Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs. Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me." For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and *yet* he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

Now the Bible says that these demons (Legion) "knew", or "believed", or "accepted", or "trusted", and "confessed" *many* fundamental Truths about Jesus:

- They knew/believed/trusted/confessed that Jesus was "Son of the Most High God".
- They bowed before Jesus.
- They prayed to Jesus.
- They knew/believed/trusted/confessed that their sinfulness separated them from Jesus.
- They knew/believed/trusted/confessed there was a specific time coming for them to be tormented.
- They knew/believed/trusted/confessed Jesus was Sovereign over their future Torment.

... which, according to many Evangelicals, would qualify them for Heaven. And yet these are fallen angels, horrible, evil, vicious demons, who are *not* saved, and who *can't* repent, and who are *not* going to be in Heaven. The Apostle John gave us the Truth concerning satan and demons and Heaven in **The Revelation 12:7&8**:

And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

We have to understand that many secular philosophers, and even conservative Muslims, accept many of the miraculous things that the Bible teaches about Jesus like: the Virgin Birth, and the sinless Life, and the bodily Ascension into Heaven. And yet they will die in their sins, even though they believe all of that.

And this tells us that, while the five Issues Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 15** are true, and while they are of God, and while they are absolutely a *part* of the Biblical Gospel, there is yet *more* we must understand and believe if lost sinners are to be truly saved. And so, we need to find out what the demons are missing. We need to find out *why* the Muslims and the philosophers and the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses and others are off the mark. Because all of these groups agree with **1 Corinthians 15**. All of them trust and accept the historical facts listed in Paul's Epistle, and many of these religious groups could even confess the "Apostle's Creed". And, yet, they are as lost as people who have never heard the Gospel.

And so, we must press still further. And we must *uncover* what is the very "best" about the Gospel. We must get deeper into God's Word and find what is the "highest" and the "most important", and what is the "final" and the "decisive" "Good" about the Good News. And, Lord willing, we will, next week.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729; www.covenantofpeace.net
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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.