

The Book of Life

- A Challenge -

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Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Warning - This one is deep!

This addendum to “The Book of Life” chapter came about because of a challenge. I belong to a forum where theological issues are discussed - sometimes vigorously. A fellow at the forum presented **his belief** that **the name of every human being who would ever exist was written into “the Book of Life” before the creation of this world.** He quoted the ESV translation of Revelation 13:8.

According to the challenger, names are “blotted out” only if those individuals have “failed to overcome evil with good” during their lifetimes (*Rev. 3:5*). **He believes that every person is born in a saved condition.** The only way to get “unsaved” is to fail at overcoming evil.

So - the question: When were (or are) names written into The Book of Eternal Life ? And why does this question matter anyway?

Revelation 13:8 “and all who dwell on earth will worship it, [the image of the Beast] everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world, in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.” ESV

If your name was NOT written in the Book of Life (written there before the creation of the world) then you will worship the image of “the Beast”. **This translation clearly says that some names WERE NEVER WRITTEN into “The Book”.** So I’m not at all sure why the forum challenger quoted this translation. It seriously undermines his argument that every name was written into that Book before the earth was created. The ESV would seem to support predestination. The ESV does not say that some names were once in the Book, but have been blotted out. No. They were never written there - at all.

Compare the Complete Jewish Bible.

Revelation 13:8 “Everyone living on earth will worship it except those **whose names are written in the Book of Life** belonging to the Lamb slaughtered before the world was founded.” CJB

So - people whose names are written (present tense) in The Book, will refuse to worship the Beast’s image. The CJB translation does not say *when* their names were written into the Book of Life. It just says that the names are written in the Book, *at the time* the Beast sets up his image, and demands the world worship it. This translation expresses my belief.

The CJB says that the Lamb (Jesus) was “slaughtered before the world was founded”. I believe this wording refers to the promise, made by both Father and Son, that the Son of God would die for the sins of the world, should mankind fall into sin. Once the promise was made, the Son of God was as good as dead, if any man sinned.

TRANSLATIONS

The NAS, NAU, ASV, & NRS translations of Revelation 13:8, are nearly identical. All say, “whose names **have not been [past tense] written**” in the Book.

The New King James version also uses the wording “have not been written” in the Book, but the timing - “before the world was created” - **is about the Lamb**. It’s not about *when* names were written into that Book. The Lamb was “slain from the foundation of the world”. God’s unchangeable plan, from eternity, was to give His own Son.

Revelation 13:8 “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names **have not been written** in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. NKJV

Revelation clearly says the majority of human beings (alive on the earth when the Beast rules) will worship the Beast, which means (according to the NKJV) that the majority of names were either 1. never written into the Book, or 2. have been blotted out of the Book. The translation which best allows for these names is the CJB.

The KJV, NIV, and CJB, agree that the Lamb was “slain from the foundation of the world” and that it is the Book of the Lamb, but they do not indicate just *when* names were, or are, written into that book. These translations all say the names of those who worship the Beast image, **are simply “not found”** in the Book. Some of these names **could once have been written** in the Book, but were “blotted out”. And some of these names **may never have been entered** there - at all.

I hope this is not all too confusing.....

Every translation is an interpretation! Most remember the doctrine of predestination, put forward originally by Calvin, who posited that the LORD predestined certain individuals to salvation and the rest to damnation. The theory being that God is all powerful, and in control of everything, and we puny humans cannot fight His will. Those He predestined to salvation, He wrote in His Book. (See the study “[Predestination](#)” at this website.) The versions cited by the challenger support Calvin’s doctrine.

Just to be clear, I do NOT agree with Calvin.

Because translations differ, we must look for supporting Scripture, to see where the evidence leads us.

THE CHALLENGER’S ARGUMENT

Before the creation of the world, the Son of God promised to give His life, if human beings transgressed the law of God. According to the challenger, Jesus carried (or paid the penalty for) all sin - for all time - for all human beings. Therefore the name of every human being who would ever exist, was written into “the Lamb’s Book” for eternal life, WHEN the promise was made.

Ephesians 1:3-4 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as **he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:”

The challenger believes that God chose *every* human being - the entire human race - before they were even created. They were chosen “in him” (“in Christ”) because of what Christ would ultimately do, for mankind.

I’m just going to make one point here. The challenger is taking the statement out of context. When Paul writes that God the Father chose “us” and has blessed “us”, **Paul is writing to believers.** He is writing to “the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus” (Eph 1:1). **He is not writing to the general public!** In this context, God “chose” those who would believe in His Son. He did NOT “choose” the entire human race. Jesus called them “those you (Father) have given me” (Jn. 17:12).

It is perfectly believable that the names of those who would believe in Christ, may have been known to God even before the creation of the world. Their names *could* have been written into a Book. But that does not prove the name of *every* human being who would *ever* exist was written in that Book.

Let’s continue with the challenger’s argument.

Hebrews 2:9 “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

According to the challenger, Jesus tasted death for everyone. He paid the death penalty for everyone, therefore everyone was forgiven in Christ for every sin which would ever be committed.

If that is so, then how can any name be “blotted out” - ever? This makes our God seem very cruel. He accepts the sacrifice of Christ, and every sin is forgiven. But then He reneges, and puts the penalty back on, to those who fail to believe.

God’s desire *is* that everyone be saved. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son” (*John 3:16*). But the rest of the verse says, “that whosoever believes in Him, might not perish, but have eternal life.” We know from other passages, that most will *not* believe.

2 Corinthians 5:14 “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;”

Death is the penalty for sin. Agreed.

The challenger contends that if “all died” then the whole human race symbolically and corporately, when Christ died. Which means that every sin - past, present, and future, for every human being was paid for. Remember. **This is the challenger’s argument.**

Question: If *all* sin was paid for, then how can *any* penalty - *ever* - be imposed upon *anyone*? How can *anyone* be lost? This is the argument for “universalism” - the belief that God will save everyone.

The challenger does not believe that everyone will finally be saved. He is not a universalist. In fact, He believes that most will be lost. According to him, they will be lost because they have failed to overcome evil with good (*Rev. 2:7&11, Rev. 3:5*).

Question: Is not “failure to overcome evil” the definition of sin? And if all sin was paid for, then how can this sin be penalized? I find his argument very unsatisfactory.

The simplest understanding of 2 Corinthians 5:14, is that the death of Christ for all, **is applied to the individual when that person believes**. Jesus has invited *all* to partake of His death. But only a few will accept his invitation.

At the end of World War II, a general pardon was issued to the Japanese, on condition of surrender. Most surrendered. But some did not.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

The challenger argues that all of mankind was metaphysically incorporated into the body of Christ on the cross. Corporately - all stand justified before God's law. All stand forgiven. **He believes** that **mankind is the body of Christ**. But that would mean the entire human race is "His church". Do other passages support this view?

Colossians 1:18 "He is the head of the body, the church" (NRS).

Colossians 1:24 "Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the church."

Ephesians 5:23 "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior" (NIV).

Ephesians 5:30 & 32 "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. . . . This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (NKJ).

Paul says **Christ "gave himself up for her"** - meaning His bride - His church. When Paul says "**we** are members of His body" he is addressing "the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus." Paul is NOT addressing the general public!

Ephesians 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (NRS).

Jesus is NOT the savior of the whole world. He is NOT going to save the whole world. He will save "His church" - His bride - "His body" - all of those who become part of His bride through faith. ONLY those who believe are "betrothed" to Christ. Only those who continue in faith, will partake of the "marriage supper of the Lamb".

2 Corinthians 11:2 [Paul speaking] "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin" (NAU).

Paul says, "I betrothed you." When did Paul do that for the believers at Corinth? Answer: When he preached to them the Gospel, *and* they responded with faith. The New Covenant is a marriage covenant. We enter into that contract when we say "yes" to Christ Jesus. We must consent to that marriage.

No! I do not believe that all of mankind died as "the body of Christ" on that cross. And no! I do not believe that "the church" is (or was) all of mankind.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The challenger cited the above passage, saying that God chose *every* human being “from the beginning”, and wrote *every name* into the Book of Life. **Again, consider the context.** This letter was addressed to “brethren” in Christ, in the faith, who were “called” through the preaching of Paul and others - who responded to that call.

Romans 5:18-19 “Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.” (NRS)

“All” were justified before God when Jesus' life was offered as a substitute for mankind. And more than this, they were justified, even before the world was created - because of Christ had promised. Here again, we have the Universalist argument - the idea that God will save all of mankind.

I agree that salvation has been offered to all mankind. I agree that God loved all mankind. I agree that God has provided the way back to oneness with Himself. That “way” is open to all. I agree that God our Father does not want to see anyone lost. **I do not agree** that every human being stands justified before God. And I do not believe that this standing came about before God created this earth.

Human beings must appropriate Christ's death for themselves, in the eyes of Heaven. They do this through baptism - which is a confession of belief. We “die with Him” *when* we are baptized. Not every human being has believed or has been baptized, therefore NOT every human being belongs to Christ and thus to His Father.

Especially those “baptized” as infants (through sprinkling) have NOT believed, or confessed Jesus Christ as savior. This is why I believe the sacred ordinance of baptism must be confined to adults who can repent and consent.

Romans 6:3-7 “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For **if** we have been united together [with Him] in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be [united with Him] in the likeness of His resurrection. For he who has died [by baptism] has been freed from sin.” [*Words in brackets are mine.*]

Conclusion: The whole of mankind (past/present/future) was NOT fused into the body of Christ on the cross. We are “baptized into Christ”. This is how we partake of His death. This is how we are “buried with Him”. During the period of the Old Testament, a believer partook of the death of Christ, when he brought a sin offering, and confessed his sin over the head of that animal.

Romans 10:9 “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Paul does NOT SAY “you will remain saved”.

THE QUESTION

In the view of the challenger, every human being was placed in a justified, and saved relation to God, by the death of Christ. In order to be “lost” one must knowingly rebel against an express command of Christ, and never repent of that rebellion during his lifetime.

To me this seems very confusing. **To rebel** against God’s express command, **is sin**. But according to the challenger, **every sin was forgiven** when Christ died. So how can sins - already forgiven, **be put back** onto the sinner? And **what about the “unforgivable sin”**? If every sin is already forgiven, there should *be* no such thing.

The big question here is: **Do we begin life in a saved condition?** Are we born “in Christ” and then remain in Christ unless we knowingly rebel against Christ? **Are we born forgiven?**

BORN IN SIN

How are we born? Are we born in a saved, or justified condition? I don’t believe so. Here is Paul’s description of the Gentiles *before* they came to belief in Christ.

Ephesians 2:11 “Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)-- 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world” (NIV).

Doesn’t sound very “justified” or very “saved” - does it?

The Scriptures present mankind as:

- “sinners” (*Romans 3:23, 5:8, 5:12*)
- “alienated and enemies” - of God (*Colossians 1:20*)
- “without hope and without God” (*Ephesians 2:11-12*)
- “gone astray” - like sheep (*Isaiah 53:6*)
- “lost” (*Matthew 18:11, Luke 19:10*)
- “Confined under sin” (*Gal. 3:22*)
- “carnal” “sold under sin” (*Romans 7:14*)
- “by nature children of wrath” (*Ephesians 2:3*)
- “condemned to death” (*1Corinthians 15:21, Romans 5:12*)
- “dead in trespasses and sin” (*Ephesians 2:1,5*)

Psalm 51:5 “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”
(NIV)

I do not believe David is saying that he was an illegitimate child. He is saying that he was born with a carnal - not a spiritual - nature. Paul includes himself in this dilemma.

Romans 7:14 [Paul speaking] “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal [of flesh], sold under sin.”

Romans 8:7 “the carnal mind [governed by the flesh] is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.”

If we are all born with the carnal mind, then we are all enemies of God UNTIL we open our hearts to the indwelling of His Spirit. Parents pray for their children of course, and in so doing bring an influence, but not the indwelling - the baptism of the Spirit.

Galatians 3:22 “But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”

The promise of eternal life is given to “those who believe”. It is not given to everyone.

MY POSITION

I believe that one’s name is written into the Lamb’s Book of Life, the moment that one is “in Christ”. That status change takes place when one genuinely believes in his heart. Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (*Jn 10:27*). The implication being that **there are sheep who do not follow Him, and are therefore not His.**

Romans 16:7 [Paul writing] "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me."

Here Paul says that Andronicus and Junia were "in Christ" before he was. Sounds like an EVENT which happens in time.

John 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:"

By implication, those who do *not* believe in His name (or who do *not yet* believe) - who have not "received Him" - *are not* (or *not yet*) children of God.

Galatians 3:26-27 and 4:6 "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'"

It would seem that only those who have demonstrated their faith through baptism, are considered Sons of God, and "in Christ".

In his letter Paul is addressing believers. He is *not* saying that all men are sons of God. The death of Christ is appropriated or applied to each individual when he/she believes and enters into the death of Christ through baptism.

SINS OF IGNORANCE

I agree that sins "**committed in ignorance**" are covered by the blood of Christ. **Anciently such sins were "covered" by the "continual burnt offering"** at the Tabernacle, *until* the person came to understand that what he had done was a sin. Then he was to bring a "sin offering", and confess his sin over the head of the animal.

The ceremonies performed in the ancient Tabernacle of Israel, symbolized Christ - His sacrificial death and His priestly ministry. **Jesus will never punish someone for doing that which they honestly did not know was sin.** He said, "Father forgive them. They know not what they do" (*Lk 23:24*). Paul wrote that God "overlooked" "the times of ignorance" (*Acts 17:30*).

That being said, the LORD cannot take into His eternal kingdom, one who has NOT chosen to be there. To do so, would be to bypass his free will. He MUST CHOOSE. And that is my point concerning those who will be resurrected to life at the 8th millennium - "the rest of the dead" (*Rev. 20:5*). They are resurrected to continue their lives, for this very purpose - so they may HEAR the truth and then CHOOSE whom they will serve.

Romans 4:15 “because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.”

I believe Paul was saying that an awareness of the law renders one culpable, and therefore subject to punishment (also known as wrath). Where there is no knowledge of the law, transgression is not counted against the sinner. His sin is one of ignorance. This type of sin is “covered” by the blood of Christ, UNTIL such time that the sinner becomes aware of his sin. He may then confess his sin, asking forgiveness in the name of Christ, or reject the offer of grace completely.

John 9:41 “Jesus said to them, ‘if you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.’”

NOTE: *Willful ignorance - in the sight of God - is sin.*

If sins of ignorance are covered by the blood of Christ, then a pagan who NEVER HEARD of Yahweh (His Law or His Son) was only committing “sins of ignorance”. His sins are therefore covered by the blood of Christ. **Under the scenario presented by the challenger, the ignorant pagan will be given eternal life and will live with the saints in the New Jerusalem. He cannot be “blotted out” because he died in ignorance.**

Think about it. In the Kingdom, you might live next door to a Mayan king who worshiped the sun, and cut out human hearts to present as sacrifices, because he did these things “in ignorance”. Millions of human beings have died “in ignorance”. Will they be “saved” and admitted to the New Jerusalem, without any repentance or a change of heart? Do they get a FREE PASS into the Kingdom. I don’t believe so.

My belief is that the people who died in ignorance (whether because of immaturity or because of circumstances) will *not* go straight to Heaven. They will be resurrected at the 8th millennium with “the rest of the dead”, to continue their physical lives, to learn the “ways of God” and then to CHOOSE whether they will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and serve God’s anointed King.

Why the command to “go and preach” (*Lk. 9:16*)? If all sins of ignorance are automatically forgiven, and forgiveness is the only thing necessary for salvation, then it would seem better to leave folks “ignorant” than risk their eternal salvation by presenting the requirement for belief, repentance and baptism.

Matthew 24:14 [Jesus speaking] “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

There are too many small children, for the Gospel to be heard and understood by everyone living, before the return of Christ at the end of this age.

The challenger countered with Romans 1:18-20. Everyone has seen “the things that are made” therefore everyone is “without excuse”.

Romans 1:18-20 “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse . . .”

If that were true - that just looking at the works of creation was enough to tell anyone that God exists, and is a God of love, and has a law which everyone must obey, then **there would be NO SUCH THING as “sins of ignorance”** - not since folks began looking at the stars. But since there *were* “times of ignorance” and God “overlooked” those times, this means just looking at the natural universe does NOT tell everyone about the attributes of God, or make them aware of His law, or tell them of His love.

Acts 17:30 “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (NKJ).

For millennia, just looking at stars, and birds, and bees *was* enough to convince most folks that there was a Divine Designer. Certainly no man could *make* anything like the living wonders of nature. But nature by itself could not teach anyone how to serve that Creator. And now since Darwin, science (so called) has convinced most folks that everything evolved from a bit of planetary dust?

Here’s my take on this verse. Those to whom God did reveal Himself - those who “saw” the truth of God (and of His Christ) - who still “suppress the truth” because they want to continue in unrighteousness - *these* are the people who will feel “the wrath of God”. Why? Because **suppression of truth is a very serious crime against God.** Why? Because HEARING THE TRUTH is necessary for salvation!

1 Thessalonians 3:16 [Persecution by Jews and pagans] “forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved,”

To paraphrase Paul, “If we don’t speak to the Gentiles about Christ, they cannot be saved.” You must HEAR the truth, to BELIEVE it.

INFORMATION IS ESSENTIAL

We must hear it - to believe it.

Acts 16:30-31 “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” v. 33 “And immediately he and all his family were baptized.”

John 6:47 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”

John 11:25-26 “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”

THE NEXT VERSE IS VERY IMPORTANT!!

Romans 10:14 “But how are they to call on One in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in One of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim Him?” (NRS)

Romans 10:17 “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.” (NRS)

Hearing the gospel message - is essential!

There are millions of human beings who have died without any knowledge of God or of His Son. They must be resurrected, so that they can hear.

I Timothy 2:4 God “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

II Timothy 1:9 Grace was “given before time began, but has now been “revealed through the gospel.”

The grace of God was “given before time began”. Yes - God pledged the life of His only Son. Yes - God has protected men from complete control by demons, and from complete annihilation. But that grace is *now revealed* through the telling of the gospel. The “call” to salvation in Christ is information based. The information was/is conveyed through preaching, or teaching, first by Jesus Himself and then by His followers. Upon hearing the gospel, individuals must respond in order to appropriate that grace for themselves. **Salvation is not passive. The LORD will not save you, without a response on your part.**

We are “saved by grace through faith” (Eph. 2:8).

Grace is God’s part. Faith is our part.

We must respond to God's grace, with faith - with belief in who Jesus is, in what He has done, and in what He will do.

God has given to mankind free will - the freedom to choose. He protects that right, not allowing Satan to control us, unless we knowingly surrender to him. **If God were to transport a human being into His eternal kingdom *without that person's consent, that would constitute manipulation.*** That would be the opposite of free will. I do not believe my God would ever manipulate human beings. If He *could* do that, then why didn't He just do it in the first place, and skip this awful mess!

RECONCILED TO GOD

Colossians 1:19-23 "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight . . ."

I hope you caught that. You - Colossian believers - WERE (past tense) "once enemies". But NOW (present tense) you have been reconciled. This verse (*Col. 1:19-23*) is often presented by Universalists who say that God will eventually "reconcile all things to Himself" and no one will be lost. This verse tells me that God the Father provided the means through which "all" *could* be reconciled. We know that most will refuse.

Romans 5:10 "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

The challenger contends that the death of Christ reconciled all of humanity to God. And this reconciliation took place even before the creation of the world, because the Son of God had promised to become a surety for sin. Is this correct? No!

The death of Christ did not, and has not, reconciled every human being to God.

Context! Context! Context! In Romans 5:10, Paul is writing to believers at Rome He is writing to those who "were reconciled" when they heard the story of Christ's death. **Paul is not writing to the general public!**

*** **Why** would Paul write that God is pleading with men to "be reconciled"- if they have already been reconciled? ***

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”

It is important to understand that the death of Christ did not change the Father’s love for human kind. The Father has always loved us. God was not estranged from us. Mankind was estranged from Him. God was pleading with the whole world - through Christ - to come home.

Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

The cross was a message. God our Father was saying, “This is how much I love you. You can come home.” But the reconciliation is not accomplished until the individual responds to the pleading, opens his heart, and is reconciled - to God.

THE MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”

God sent a message - through Jesus. “Reconciliation is possible. Come home. I love you.” We - His ambassadors, repeat this message when we tell the story of the cross. **Hearing this “word of reconciliation” is the first essential step in the salvation process.** Before one can respond to God or be reconciled, he must hear the message, and understand it.

John 5:24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who **hears** My word **and believes** in Him who sent Me **has everlasting life**, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

So - WHEN does one pass from death into life?

Answer: The moment one HEARS and BELIEVES.

THE ORDER OF THINGS

1. Hear
2. Believe
3. Trust
4. Be sealed with the Spirit
5. Confess with your mouth (share the Good News of reconciliation)

Romans 10:9 “**if you confess with your mouth the LORD Jesus Christ and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**”

Step number ONE is hearing.

NOTE: A message can be brought by an angel, or through a vision. The risen Christ appeared to the eleven disciples, and later to James, and to Paul. That appearance was a message.

Ephesians 1:13 “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,”

Heard - believed - trusted - sealed with the Spirit - confessed and shared the good news

AN AMAZING PARTNERSHIP

We absolutely have a part to play. We have been called to confess the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been called as ambassadors. To us has been committed the “message of reconciliation.” Think about it! God designed this partnership. We preach the resurrection, and reconciliation through Christ. The Spirit of Christ draws men and women to this message, and convicts them of it’s truth. God works in us and through us, to win citizens for His kingdom. It is an amazing partnership. Our participation or lack thereof (also called our “works”) will serve as evidence which will determine our reward, or our final loss of eternal life.

The challenger objected that we, of ourselves “can do nothing” (*John 15:5*). We cannot even believe without the Spirit, therefore we must be saved *before* anything - even belief - is required. He called “believing” a good “work”.

My answer: We do not believe “without Him”. **We respond to Him**. His Spirit moves on our hearts as we hear the gospel. He “knocks” (*Rev. 3:20*). He pleads. But He will not “come in” to “dwell in us” without our consent. We must open the door.

And according to Paul, believing is NOT a “work”.

Romans 4:5 “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness” (NKJ).

WHO BELONG TO CHRIST?

Romans 8:9 “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, **if** indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now **if** anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”

The New Covenant promise reads, “I will put My spirit within you” (*Ezek 36:27*). Jesus says, “I stand at the door and knock. **If** any man open the door, I will come in to him” (*Rev. 3:20*). Paul described this experience as “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (*Col. 1:27*). This is the “born again” experience.

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN (*Jn. 3:7*)

John 3:3 “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

John 3:5-6 “Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

1 Corinthians 4:15 Paul calls his converts “begotten” “through the gospel”. They heard the gospel. They responded with belief. They were “born again” when the spirit of Christ entered their hearts.

BORN OF WATER

The word translated “baptism” means immersion. This immersion is a symbol of death - burial - and resurrection. By faith, we enter into His death. We believe that His death has paid for our sins.

Romans 6:4 “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

1. Hear 2. Believe 3. Repent 4. Be baptized 5. Be sealed with the Spirit

Infants cannot hear with understanding. Very young children cannot believe. They cannot repent. And certainly adults who have not heard, cannot believe or repent.

I believe these people will have the opportunity to hear and to repent when they are resurrected at the 8th millennium, with “the rest of the dead.” They will be taught by those who were resurrected first - at the second coming, who will be “priests of God” (*Rev. 20:5-6*).

WHO ARE FORGIVEN?

Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

If every human being began life “in Christ” then we should see every human being walk “according to the Spirit” of Christ within. We certainly don’t!! We see that most are walking “according to the flesh”.

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Sounds like the “born again” experience to me. To be “in Christ” means to be indwelt by His Spirit. And I will repeat my assertion that this a timed event. It happens at a point in time.

Romans 16:7 “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.”

IN CHRIST

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.”

If every human being is “in Christ”, then we should read that every human being will be made alive when Jesus returns. But that’s not what this verse says. It says that “all” who are Christ’s will be made alive.

SHEEP

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (NRS)

Yes - God laid on Jesus, all the sins, of all people, for all time. Does this translate into eternal life for every person who ever existed? No! Why? Because most will not accept the gift. How do we accept the gift? By believing in the Giver. By believing that He is our rightful Lord and King - not just our Savior. By agreeing to serve Him as Lord of our lives.

Ezekiel 20:37 “I will make you pass under the staff, and will bring you within the bond of the covenant.” (NRS)

To herd sheep “under the staff” was a method for counting them. If Christ “will bring you” into covenant with Himself, **then** you did not begin life in covenant.

Once again: You’re out - til you’re in, NOT: You’re in - til you’re out.

John 1:12 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:”

GRAFTED IN

In Romans chapter eleven, Paul represents the Israel of God as an olive tree. (*See Jeremiah 11:10-17.*) The “root is holy and nourishes you”. That root is Christ (*Isa. 27:6*). We are “rooted and grounded” in Him (*Eph. 3:17*). “Branches were broken off” from this tree, so that Gentile believers could be “grafted in”. Branches were broken off “because of unbelief”, and those who believed were “grafted in”. But consider verses 22 and 23.

Remember - Paul is writing to Gentiles who have believed in Christ.

Romans 11:22-23 “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. (NKJ)

There is only one way to eternal life. Jesus said, “No man comes to the Father except through Me” (*John 14:6*). The only way to derive life from Christ, to be grafted into that tree. The **only way** to be grafted in to that tree, is to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord. The only way to stay grafted in, is to continue in belief. No “once saved - always saved” is taught here.

Please see the study “[Who are Israel?](#)” at this website.

CITIZENS

The challenger contends that every man, woman, and child was made a citizen of “the commonwealth of Israel” and a member of “the household of God” by the promised death of Christ (*Eph. 2:19*). Their adoption into the family of God took place in eternity, before this earth was even created. They were citizens of the New Jerusalem, therefore their names were written in the Book of Life.

Again I say, “No!” Only those who come to faith in Christ become sons of God and citizens of Israel. Those who refuse to believe and to be reconciled, DO NOT become citizens.

Those who have not yet heard of God and of His son, have not yet believed, and are not yet citizens of heaven.

Galatians 3:7 “Only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.”

Galatians 3:29 “And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

The implication: Some are NOT of faith, and are NOT Christ's.

Galatians 3:26 “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 1:4-5 “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,” (NKJ)

Predestination to salvation and adoption, does not mean destiny without choice! Every person was predestined to salvation. God's desire was that everyone be saved. The invitation was for everyone. Some would accept the invitation. Some would not.

Philippians 3:20 “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

When Paul writes to “the saints in Christ” at Philippi, saying “our citizenship is in heaven”, Paul is not addressing the general public! He uses the word “our” to include only those who believe in Jesus as the Christ, who have been baptized in His name.

Concerning the Holy City John wrote:

Revelation 21:27 “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.”

My understanding is that **you become a citizen of the New Jerusalem, WHEN you enter into covenant with God thru Christ.** You become an Israelite by faith, and a child of Abraham. You are “grafted in” to the “olive tree” (*Romans Cpt 11, Eph. Cpt 2*). After this, **your name will be retained or “blotted out” based upon your faithfulness to that covenant.** Your reward (not your salvation) will be based upon your “works” in sharing the gospel with others, either in words or in deeds.

RECORDED FOR LIFE

Isaiah 4:3 "And it will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy -- everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem." NAS

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