This is Not the Only Time of Salvation

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Most people on earth today have not accepted Christ as their personal savior. Billions more, who lived before our time, have never even had the opportunity to know Him. What will happen to these countless numbers of people? What is the fate of the teeming millions in China, Japan, Indonesia, Africa, and the jungles of South America or Australia who have not heard of the Messiah? What is destined for those who have heard of Christ, but never understood the message He preached? What will become of the children who died only days after being born or those killed by abortion? Are all these doomed to eternal damnation? What does the Bible tell us?

This is Not the Only Time of Salvation

A young girl sobbed uncontrollably over the recent death of her father. Her hands trembled as she held a photo of the two of them together. Over the years she had pleaded with him to accept Christ as his personal Savior, but he had shown no interest. Now he had died seemingly unsaved. The emotionally distraught girl agonized over the death of her father. Because he had not accepted Christ, she was convinced that she would never see him again. Even more devastating was the belief that her father was now doomed to endure endless torture in an ever-burning fiery furnace commonly referred to as hell.

Tragically, this young girl is not alone. Millions of professing Christians have been taught that those who do not accept Christ in this life have lost all hope. They believe that the vast majority of mankind is destined to experience the tortures of hell fire. As a result, untold numbers of people have anguished over loved ones who have died seemingly unsaved.

Let's put this concept into its proper perspective. Consider all the people who have lived since the time Christ walked the earth. The vast majority has not known or accepted Christ as their personal Savior. From Adam until the time of the Messiah's ministry, millions never even heard his name spoken. What will happen to all these people? What about the children who may have died only days after being born, and the infants killed by abortion? Are all these doomed to eternal damnation?

Most professing Christian leaders would answer yes to this question, but is that what the Bible says? No! This is an outrageous belief, and nothing could be further from the truth!

An Outrageous Belief

Down through the ages, the false belief that billions are doomed has spread around the world. It has become the primary view of the professing Christian community. Dr. Henry Morris expresses this outrageous belief:

> In every age there have been only a small number of people who were approved of God... Therefore, when Christian preachers and evangelists preach that most people are lost and warn them to "flee from the wrath to come," it is not because they are unloving and self-righteous, but rather because they could not be truly Christian and do otherwise. (*The Bible Has the Answer*, p. 118).

Morris claims that most men are lost, forever cut off from God. Could he possibly be right? Would the great holy God, create a magnificent universe, populate this one tiny planet with billions of humans, only to have the vast majority of them die and then suffer for all eternity—simply because they were somehow unaware of His Son? Most would agree with this distorted view that Morris continues to describe.

> There are therefore two distinct categories of inhabitants of eternity, the saved and the unsaved, those who have received everlasting life and those upon whom God's wrath must abide forever. It is sobering to realize that most people are in the second category (p. 240).

Could this statement be true? Is most of mankind going be tormented forever with no chance of salvation? Are the faithful who have died currently in heaven? Was this belief taught by Christ, and can it be found in your Bible? Would our loving God design such a callous plan? Has He created human beings in His own image only to destroy the majority of them? NO! Absolutely not! Instead, the Scriptures indicate a plan altogether different than most believe.

The Abuse of a Doctrine

The belief that this present time is the only chance man has for salvation is not only wrong; it has led to horrifying abuses. Holy wars, the Crusades, and the terrifying Inquisition found their origin in this belief that now is the only chance men have for salvation. During the Middle Ages, religious leaders were confident that unbelievers were destined to burn forever in a torturous fire. They felt that such punishment was ordained by God and that it was far worse than any suffering that man could devise.

Armed with this terrible false belief, and filled with a sense of self-righteousness, a religious man could justify virtually any action against an unbeliever. Believing that nothing was worse than God's wrath, the religious community concluded that the most humane thing to do was to torture the infidel until they recanted. Then, after being forced to accept Christ, the victim would then be "mercifully" killed before they had a chance to change their mind. As a result, thousands of men and women were tortured and murdered during this dark time in man's history.

This distortion of truth eventually led to murder on a grand scale in what the Roman Empire claimed to be a holy war. The crusades were a terrifying example of this belief in action. In like manner, today we see Muslim extremists taking the same belief and using it to motivate their terrorist movement. Believing that man only has this present chance to be saved, some adherents of this false doctrine advocate forcing others to either convert or die!

During the time of the Crusades, not only did their church teach that it was noble to torture and kill those who did not believe in Christ as prescribed by the papacy, they taught that those who carried out the judgment earned special favor with God. This belief is recorded by James A. Brundage in his book *Holy Wars and Medieval Lawyers*:

> By the eleventh century Christian warriors who worried about the salvation of their souls could avail themselves of another reassurance: under certain conditions they might march into battle under a sacred banner... those who died in battle on behalf of righteousness were automatically and deservedly freed from their sins...

> where active expansion of the Christian world and aggressive activities on behalf of papal interests were at issue (pp. 104-105).

Expansion of the papal interests was their motive, and the unjust killing of tens of thousands was the result. In his book, *The First Crusade*, Thomas Asbridge gathered many first-hand accounts describing the army of crusaders as they attacked Jerusalem. Notice the brutality of crusaders who targeted anyone who opposed Catholic orthodoxy:

> Some of the pagans were mercifully beheaded, others pierced by arrows plunged from towers, and yet others, tortured for a long time, were burned to death in searing flames. Piles of heads, hands, and feet lay in the houses and streets, and men and knights were running to and fro over corpses.
>
> After a very great and cruel slaughter of Saracens, of whom 10,000 fell in that same place, they put to the sword great numbers of gentiles who were running about the quarters of the city, fleeing in all directions an account of their fear of death: they were stabbing women who had fled into palaces and dwellings; seizing infants by the soles of their feet from their mothers' laps or their cradles and dashing them against the walls and breaking their necks; they were slaughtering some with weapons, or striking them down with stones; they were sparing absolutely no gentile of any place or kind (pp. 316- 317).

Tragically, holy war against those who did not accept Christ was not limited to pagans and Jews. They even made war against true Christians.

The Albigenses were a group who professed Christ, but followed the literal teachings of the early apostles. They were known to keep the Ten Commandments and also rejected the pagan observances that had crept into the Roman Catholic Church. A book documenting the Massacre at Montségur sites an example of

what happened to many innocent people who accepted Christ, but not in the way set by the Catholic authorities:

> They hurried into the town, waving sharp swords, and it was now that the massacre and fearful butchery began. Men and women, barons, ladies, babes in arms, were all stripped and despoiled and put to the sword. The ground was littered with blood, brains, fragments of flesh, limbless trunks, hacked-off arms and legs, bodies ripped up or stove in, livers and hearts that had been chopped to pieces or ground into mash. It was as though they had rained down from the sky. The whole place ran with blood streets, fields, river-bank. Neither man nor woman, young or old, survived; not a single person escaped unless they remained in hiding. The town was destroyed also; fire consumed it (*Chanson de la Croisade*, 212.9306-21).

Shocking as this may sound, literally millions of men and women have been killed in the name of Christ down through the ages. Most of these horrific acts have been predicated on the belief that now is the only time of salvation. In fact, Christ warned His true followers to be prepared as this would even happen to them.

> They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service (John 16:2).

Christ prophesied that the religious community would persecute and kill God's true people. These words should alarm us! We should be warned that the popular doctrine regarding heaven and the saved is not from God. If it is not from God, where did it come from?

The Devil's Doctrine

The Bible reveals that God is not trying to save all mankind at this time. In fact, His Word shows us that He owns everything, but this present world is not ruled by Him. Paul addressed those

who were antagonistic to the truth of God, and he mentioned who the ruler of this world is:

> But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

God is sovereign over all things, but for now He has allowed the devil to have rule over the earth. This fact is evident by the sick and depraved acts of mankind. This world is in a terrible state of existence as ignorance, squalor, false teaching, wars, famine and disease run rampant. Our planet is engulfed in turmoil and the terrible state of this world is an obvious indicator that it is not God's world!

This truth is also demonstrated in the gospel of Matthew. There the 40 day and night fast of Christ and His temptation by the devil is recorded. During the final phase of this epic confrontation, Satan offered Christ the kingdoms of this world.

> Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:8-9).

The devil offered Christ the empires of this earth and Satan could do so because the nations are his to give! Christ did not deny this fact. Instead, He defeated Satan's efforts to sway Him by quoting a statement from the book of Deuteronomy.

> Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve'" (Matthew 4:10).

This is a fact! While we are instructed to worship and serve God, it is Satan who rules over the earth deceiving mankind. He

influences governments, educational systems, and yes even the religions of this world. His attitude of selfishness and hatred is broadcast throughout the earth—filling people's minds with impure thoughts that ultimately result in harmful actions. He is the one who has deceived the entire world in one way or another, and this shocking truth is clearly stated in the book of Revelation. There, the Apostle John wrote:

> So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9).

Have You Been Deceived?

Bible students have read the verse above, and they avidly agree. They believe that Satan has deceived the entire world, but are reluctant to believe that the devil has deceived them! They might realize that Satan's deception has led tyrannical leaders to exploit their people. They see how he has led nations to war and how he has produced poverty, sickness, and disease. They may even understand how Satan has influenced the educational systems to teach evolution—a creation without a Creator. But they often fail to see that the devil has also influenced professing Christian leaders to lead people astray. He has caused hundreds of heretical teachings to flourish in the religious community.

Much of this heretical propaganda is widely accepted by unsuspecting believers. They naively accept that their church teachings are based on Scripture because they simply trust the instruction of their leaders. However, by not proving these things for themselves, church-goers are duped. They do not realize that they are actually being taught the doctrine of devils and that Satan has deceived them into believing incredible lies.

While this may seem extreme at first, consider some of the following examples. Satan has misled the majority of Protestant churches to believe that the commandments of God are no longer binding on us today. As a result, many have furnished their homes and churches with statues and pictures of Mary, Jesus, and various saints. They kneel before these images and pray to them instead of

God! Such a practice directly violates the second commandment which states:

> You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth (Exodus 20:4).

Under the guise of celebrating Christ's birthday, the devil has charmed the modern church into observing pagan holidays. Professing Christians unwittingly observe the winter Saturnalia. In this celebration, believers drag an evergreen tree into their home and decorate the branches with bright, colored ornaments. They gaze at the tree in admiration as they kneel to place gifts under its branches. These professing Christians think that this practice is for Christ, but God never commanded us to do any such thing. In fact, He condemns such behavior (Jer. 10:2).

The worship of Ishtar, the goddess of fertility, is condoned in modern Easter celebrations. Here professing Christians ignorantly worship this false goddess of sex and reproduction with the symbols of painted eggs and bunnies. Sunrise services also reflect the ancient worship of the sun, not Christ's resurrection.

In addition, millions of professing Christians condone Halloween, a holiday which honors the lord of the dead. Images and costumes of the devil, demons, witches, goblins and skeletons make this holiday's origin clearly unholy, but that seems to be no deterrent in the widespread observance of this Heathen day. For more on these subjects please read our free booklets—*The Truth about Christmas* and *The Truth about Easter*.

All these observances are rooted in Pagan practice—that which God forbids. Most of these holidays are actually encouraged and exploited by professing Christians. They try to mix their observances with the worship of God and yet, the Eternal condemns such practices. God commands His people to:

> Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did

> these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods (Deuteronomy 12:30-31).

Clearly the evergreen tree, Santa Claus, Easter eggs, and Jack-o-lanterns are deceptions fostered on unsuspecting believers in Christ. In like manner, Satan has also deceived men into the false belief that this is the only time of salvation. This terrible heresy has led people to torture and murder the innocent while claiming to be Christians—doing so in the name of God.

The Doctrine in Perspective

Take a moment to view this doctrine from God's perspective. Satan would like mankind to believe that he is just as powerful as the Almighty God. Therefore, he influences religious teachers to propagate the false idea that God is still at war with Satan. They picture God and Satan in a great contest; a battle for the souls of men. They believe that Satan is trying to get everyone lost while God is trying to get everyone saved, but please consider the conclusion of such a scenario.

If God and Satan were in such a war, who appears to be winning? Upon considering the state of the world today, it is Satan who appears to stand triumphant. Obviously, this cannot be the case or God is not who He claims to be. Isn't it obvious that there is something wrong with the picture that this teaching presents?

Consider the state of the world today. There is the constant threat of wars and rumors of war. Disease, ignorance, and poverty are growing globally. Famine continues to spread in third world countries, while the industrialized nations are becoming hopelessly polluted. The modern world faces a constant threat of carnage as Muslim extremism infects nearly every nation on earth.

The vast majority of mankind has not known or accepted Christ, and the world is filled with sin. If this life was the only time of salvation then Christianity would be a tragic failure. Though there are many sects, the Christian faith accounts for only 1/3 of all religious adherents in the world, and most of those people are

being led astray by the inclusion of Pagan influence. This would seem to indicate that Satan has the upper hand against God, and this is exactly why it is the devil's doctrine. It makes him to appear equal to, or even mightier than God.

This is the very reason that Satan has inspired this kind of false doctrine into the professing Christian community. If this were the only time of salvation, and God were in a great contest with the devil, then it appears that God is losing the contest, and He would then be incapable of saving the majority of mankind.

Believers must not be fooled. God is the Almighty! He can save man any time He desires and in any way He chooses. As Luke stated, "with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). The prophet Isaiah also confirms God's omnipotence as he recorded these powerful words.

> Remember the former things of old, For I *am* God, and *there is* no other; *I am* God, and *there is* none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *things* that are not *yet* done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure (Isaiah 46:9-10).

This verse should be enough to convince Bible students that this is NOT the only time of salvation. God is greater than we can imagine. He is a God of enormous love and strength. He has not created billions of human beings only to consign the vast majority of them to the torment of eternal fire. He did not create us in His own image, empty Himself of power to come to the earth and die to save us, only to ultimately destroy the majority of mankind. This is an outrageous belief that completely contradicts the teaching of the Bible that God is love! It makes our Creator appear to be some sort of horrible monster!

Instead, the Bible indicates that God has an altogether different plan. The Almighty God is a Savior not a destroyer! He will save the majority of mankind, but He is going to do so according to His time table. It is this timing that has remained a mystery to most of mankind.

God is Not Calling Everyone Now

Is God desperately trying to save everyone in the world, but unable to do so? Or, is there something that most people have simply not understood? To answer this question, it is important to realize that Christ is infinitely more powerful than Satan. The Bible declares that when Christ comes back to this earth, He will forcibly take over all nations of the world (Rev. 19:11-16). When He does, He binds Satan for a thousand years (Rev. 20:2). He then sets up His government and brings peace to the earth. At this time all will come to know Him. As the prophet Habakkuk explained:

> For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

God has all the power in the universe. Nothing is impossible for Him, including saving mankind. When Christ returns as the King of kings, He will set His hand to save the vast majority of mankind, but He is not attempting to do so at this time.

To help us to understand this, consider man's history with God. The Eternal originally created man to live in harmony with Him in the beautiful Garden of Eden. When our first parents sinned, God forced them out of this perfect paradise. From that time forward, the majority of mankind has been denied access to God and the tree of life. The only people who have been given access to this tree are a few chosen prophets and the holy men and women who were called for His unique purpose.

Consider the fact that before Christ came to earth, very few people truly knew God. The ancient Israelites whom God called out of Egypt did not know Christ. They were never truly converted, and most of Israel was not offered spiritual salvation at this time. The Israelites were only offered a physical covenant with physical blessings. God was not trying to save them during their lifetime. Instead, God used them expressly for the purpose of providing examples for those who would live at the end of the age (1Cor. 10:11).

Then, at just the right time, Christ was sent to this earth. While he was here, He instructed mankind during a three-and-a-half-year ministry. Did He teach that God was trying to save all men right now? Absolutely not! Christ often hid His intended message from the general public—only later revealing it to His disciples and those who would be called.

Christ did not attempt to save the Pharisees or the Sadducees when He walked the earth. Instead, Christ said "let them alone, they are blind leaders of the blind" (Mat. 15:4). He explained that God had actually hidden the truth from these individuals who considered themselves wise. As Matthew wrote:

> At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes" (Matthew 11:25).

God actually hid the truth from the wise, and it has been hidden from the vast majority of mankind to this very day. Clearly, when Christ walked the earth, He taught mankind the truth and He explained the destiny of mankind. However, He concealed this wonderful truth by speaking in parables. As a result, many falsely believe that Christ used such stories to make the meaning clear to the common folk, but this is not the case. The truth is that Christ taught using parables so that His listeners would NOT understand Him, and they would not be converted. Christ made this point clear while speaking to His disciples.

> And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that 'seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them'" (Mark 4:11-12).

These verses make it clear that Christ was not trying to save all of humanity during His ministry. The Scriptures continually reveal that He did NOT attempt to convert everyone. Christ came

to the earth to perform His vitally important redemptive act. He also came to instruct those called to be foundational leaders in His Church. Then, on the day of Pentecost, 31 A.D., God sent the prophesied Holy Spirit to His fledgling group of followers. Salvation was offered, but only to those whom God would call. The Holy Spirit has not been made available to everyone.

In fact, absolutely no one can even come to know Christ on their own. They must be called by God, the Father. So important is this truth that Christ stated it on more than one occasion. Notice the words of Jesus:

> No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day… Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" (John 6:44-65).

Astounding as these words are, they are absolutely true! No man or woman can come to Christ unless they are specifically called by God the Father. He blinded the vast majority to the truth while Christ walked the earth. He did not call the wise and noble during Christ's ministry, and He is not calling the great and powerful in this lifetime either. The Apostle Paul spoke this divine truth when he wrote:

> For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called* (1 Corinthians 1:26).

This verse makes it clear that God has restricted who will be saved at this time. He is not attempting to save all of the mighty and noble people on earth. In another example, the Scriptures state that God actually blinded the Israelites in Paul's time so they would not understand this truth. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

> For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened

> to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (Romans 11:25).

Israel has been blinded by God. Even today the lost tribes vastly reject the true teachings of Christ. However, that does not mean that they will have no chance for salvation. In the very next verse Paul wrote that they shall be saved:

> And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:26).

These Scriptures make it absolutely clear. God has blinded many to the truth during this lifetime. However, the good news is that they will be saved in the future.

There is no other conclusion that can be reached. God is not calling everyone at this time. Christ warned us that even those who are called must overcome great temptations, tests, and trials in order to obtain salvation. He bluntly told us that, of those who are called, only a relative few will qualify and be chosen for the first resurrection at His return "For many are called, but few *are* chosen" (Mat. 22:14).

Will the Ignorant Perish?

Some may wonder, would God allow doers of great evil to have a chance of obtaining salvation. Could a holy, righteous being such as God give this opportunity to murderers and child molesters? The answer is that, while voluntary evil-doers may be subject to punishment, great shame and guilt for acts committed in this life, God will not permanently extinguish the lives of these people until they have had a chance to understand the truth and know the Savior.

God is more merciful than men can imagine, and to help Timothy understand this; Paul made note of the goodness and mercy of God in a letter to the young evangelist. Speaking of himself, Paul stated:

> I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life (1 Timothy 1:13-16).

The Apostle Paul's conversion from ignorant antagonism to passionate belief is a pattern for those who will come to believe in the future. God will not destroy men simply because of their ignorance. Most who continue to practice sin do so because they do not understand the truth of God the Father and Christ. They are ignorant of God's plan for man and the destructive nature of sin. They do not know the real meaning or purpose of life.

God will reveal this to them in His time. Then, once they have been given the opportunity to know the truth, the vast majority will repent just like the Apostle Paul. However, if they then refuse to repent and follow Christ, they will have chosen their final path. In such cases, God will simply remove their existence from the universe in what the Bible calls the second death (Rev. 20:15). However, that final judgment will not take place until 1,000 years after Christ's return. Today, the world continues living in ignorance of the true God, His laws, and His plan for humanity.

Some Absurd Misinterpretations

Why is there so much confusion over this teaching? Since God is not the author of confusion (1Cor. 14:33), the answer to this question comes from man's insistence of not following what God says. For example, men have attempted to interpret the Bible, yet, God expressly forbids us to do so. As the Apostle Peter wrote to the Church:

> knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the

> will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Whenever we attempt to interpret the meaning of the Scriptures, we will always misinterpret them to some degree. This is what men have done with this doctrine of salvation. They have concluded that Christ only saves people in this lifetime by reading their private interpretation into the Scriptures instead of letting the Bible interpret them for us.

For example, the Bible clearly teaches that all men must accept Christ in order to be saved. The Apostle Paul stated this divine truth when he wrote:

> Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

This Scripture reveals that all men must accept Christ to be saved. However, men have assumed that they only have this present life to do so. Therefore, they interpret this verse to mean that we only have one opportunity to know Christ and accept Him. In another example, Paul wrote:

> For there is no partiality with God. For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (Romans 2:11-12).

As this verse points out, God does not show favoritism. Those who are ignorant of the truth will not be exempt from His judgment. While this is true, men have read these verses and assumed that all men are receiving a final judgment now. Believing this, they conclude that anyone who does not accept Christ in this lifetime has lost his or her chance for salvation.

Then, making matters even worse, the religious community makes another error. They presume that the fate of ignorant nonbelievers is to spend the rest of eternity burning in fiery torment. But, this is NOT what your Bible says! In fact, it is an

absurd belief—one that contradicts God's entire purpose and plan for mankind.

God told Adam and Eve that sin would result in death (Gen. 3:3). The prophet Ezekiel stated that the soul who sins shall die (Eze. 18:4, 20). And, in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul also confirmed this truth. He wrote that the wages of sin are death—not burning forever in some kind of torturous hell fire (Rom. 6:23).

In another example, men have interpreted 2 Corinthians 6:2 in such a way that they actually believe now is the only time of that people can be saved. Notice the wording of this verse.

> For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

This verse is absolutely NOT saying that our present age is the only accepted time and therefore the only time of salvation. Instead, Paul is quoting the prophet Isaiah and the King James translators did not actually reflect what Isaiah wrote. Note the verse Paul is quoting from.

> Thus says the LORD: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you; I will preserve you and give you as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit the desolate heritages" (Isaiah 49:8).

Isaiah did not say that now is the ONLY acceptable time. Instead, he is stating that now is AN acceptable time and therefore now is a day of salvation for some. However, our time is not the only time for people to be saved. The Bible clearly speaks of another time—one that is yet to come! Both Isaiah and Paul are declaring that those who are called during this life should take full advantage of their calling. Why? Because this is THEIR time for salvation! This is a time of salvation for some, but not for all.

A final verse that sometimes confuses Bible readers is found in the epistle to Timothy. There it is written:

> For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

Paul wrote that it is God's desire that all men would be saved, but he does not say when this will take place. It is His will that all people be given a chance for salvation, but the exact time for each individual's opportunity "to come unto the knowledge of truth," is not disclosed in the above Scripture. Instead, Paul refers to the fact that, in the future, God will give everyone a fair chance to be saved.

In addition, when Timothy refers to "all men," he includes those who lived before Christ, as well as all those who would live after Him. Everyone who has not had a chance to truly know Christ will one day be given this wonderful opportunity, but now is not that time.

An obvious question must now be prodding the mind of readers. It is a question whose answer has been hidden from most of mankind for thousands of years. When will God save all these people who never had a chance?

God's Timetable

We live in a time in which our busy, driven lives are filled with so much to do that it seems like there is simply not enough time in each day to accomplish everything. Further, man is impatient. His focus is generally the present, and his tendency is to view God as being like himself—urgent, insistent, and with a need to do everything right now! God is not like man however. He inhabits eternity, is longsuffering, and will offer mankind salvation according to His timetable. It is this timetable that has remained a mystery for thousands of years. The Apostle Peter gave us insight into God's timing as he explained:

> But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (2 Peter 3:8).

This statement shows us that God is patiently working out His plan over a vast span of time. In addition, this verse also speaks of something far greater. When put alongside similar statements by Moses, John, and the author of Hebrews, it reveals an important prophetic relationship. If a thousand years are like one day, (Psa. 90:4; 2Pet. 3:8), then Peter's inspired words connect us directly to God's creation of the weekly cycle containing seven days.

With this in mind, we can see that God gave man six days to do all his labor, and then commanded him to rest on the seventh day and to keep the Sabbath holy (Exo. 20:8-10). This seventh day of the weekly cycle actually foreshadows the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. It will be a thousand-year rest for mankind (Heb. 4:1-11; Rev. 20:6). Thus, if one day is like a thousand years, and the millennial rest is one thousand years, this becomes a key to unlocking our understanding of prophecy. A connection can now be made to the seven-day week and the mystery of God's timetable is revealed. God has a 7000-year plan for mankind!

After Adam and Eve chose to reject God by deciding for themselves what was right and wrong, the Eternal gave mankind a period of six thousand years to go their own way. For nearly six thousand years now, man has toiled at the ground, built vast cities and governed enormous civilizations. He has constructed homes, skyscrapers, amazing machinery, and electronics. And yet, with all these awesome inventions, mankind cannot solve the monumental problems that he has created such as war, famine and disease. Therefore, God gave man six prophetic "days," or six thousand years to toil at having his own religions, economies, governments, and philosophies.

Finally, the seventh day of the weekly cycle foreshadows Christ's triumphant return to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. It will be the restitution of all things, and a thousand-year rest for mankind (Acts 3:21; Rev. 20:2).

During this first six thousand years of man's rule, God has only called a few people out of this world. He is not only calling them to salvation, however. They are being called for specific responsibilities in the coming Kingdom. When Christ returns He

will raise these faithful believers, and give them positions of leadership in that Kingdom. God is specifically working to prepare these people to be His personal assistants in the very Government of God. They will have unique positions literally ruling with Christ in His Kingdom that will be established on the earth (Rev. 5:10, 20:6).

The Bible speaks about those who will be a part of this unique leadership team. The Scriptures reveal that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will rule with Christ after His return (Mat. 8:11). David will be raised and God will coronate him as a king over Israel (Jer. 30:7-9). The apostles will also be raised and each will rule over one of the twelve tribes. Matthew recorded this truth when he wrote:

> Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:27-28).

God is neither calling everyone now, nor is He pronouncing a final judgment on the entire world at this time. The Bible reveals a truth altogether different and far greater. God is presently only working with those in His true Church—those He has called to assist Him in His coming Kingdom. These chosen few will be Kings and Priests ruling on the earth with Him. As the Apostle John wrote:

> And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:10).

Thus, we can see that God is not trying to save everyone right now. At this time, He is preparing those who will be His Son's Bride. He is calling and preparing them to be a leadership team that will personally assist Him as He rules in the wonderful world to come.

God's Holy Days Provide Insight

Most professing Christians know and have heard little regarding God's sacred holy days. And yet, these days are a vital key to understanding God's plan of salvation. Besides the weekly Sabbath, the Eternal God commanded seven annual feasts to be observed as times of worship (Lev. 23). These days are prophetic in nature, picturing the various stages of God's ultimate plan for mankind. For this reason, they were set in the astronomical calendar at the creation.

> Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years" (Genesis 1:14).

God positioned the sun and moon for the purpose of giving us signs in their seasons. The word "seasons" is the Hebrew *moed* referring to:

> An *appointment*, that is, a fixed *time* or season; specifically a *festival*... by implication, an *assembly* (as convened for a definite purpose); technically the *congregation* (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, H4150).

This is a clear reference to annual days of worship. The word "signs" is *oth* and this word means "a *signal* (literally or figuratively), as a *flag*, *beacon*, *monument*, *omen*, *prodigy*, *evidence*, etc.: - mark (*Strong's*, H226). So, we see that God's holy days are His mark. They not only identify who the people of God are, they are a sign pointing the way to His coming Kingdom.

Many have misunderstood God's holy days, thinking that they are only a part of the Old Covenant. Believing this, many feel they are not binding on us today, and therefore are no longer required to be observed. Contrary to this belief, the same passage outlining their observance also reveals that they do apply today. They are to be observed throughout all generations (Lev. 23:14, 21, 31, 41). This is also evident in the fact that Christ kept the holy

days and the New Testament Church kept them as well (Acts 18:21, 20:6; 1Cor. 5:7). Further, God's holy days will be strictly enforced after Christ returns. As Zechariah stated:

> And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16).

God's holy days are vital to Christians. They are prophetic, foreshadowing pivotal events in the plan of God. Paul pointed out this truth when writing to the Colossians stating:

> So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ (Colossians 2:16-17).

Paul told the Gentile Church not to let others judge them in their keeping of the Sabbath or holy days. Ironically, the majority of Christian denominations reject both the Sabbath and God's holy days. That is a grave mistake. They are not a sign of things that are to be forgotten!

The reason they are to remembered and observed is because these days foreshadow things to come. When you see the shadow of a man, it is clear that someone is coming. Likewise, God's holy days picture events that are absolutely certain to occur. They must not be forgotten, or regarded as insignificant. Each one portrays a pivotal point in God's master plan.

For example, Christ was our Passover Lamb. Therefore, He died on the very day of the Passover. This is the beginning of God's holy days. This day has always pictured His redemptive sacrifice and Christ fulfilled the profound meaning of the Passover.

Following the Passover is the Days of Unleavened Bread. By removing leaven from our homes and our diet, we act out the Christian striving to remove sin from our life. And by eating

unleavened bread during these days, we portray our need to put Christ in us every day.

Next is Pentecost—a Greek word meaning "fifty." It is also called the Feast of Weeks where "firstfruits" are offered to God. On the day following the weekly Sabbath that fell between the two annual Sabbaths during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Israel would cut a sheaf out from among the spring harvest. The sheaf was brought to the high priest who would lift it up to God and wave it as an offering to be accepted by the Father. Until that first sheaf was cut and waved before the altar for God's acceptance, none of Israel's first crops could be eaten.

The wave sheaf pictures Christ who was the first to be raised from the dead and accepted by the Father. The fact that no grain could be eaten until after this offering was made reflects the fact that Christ's death and resurrection would make it possible for others to be saved.

The people were to count 50 days, and then celebrate the Feast of Weeks aka as Pentecost. They would then offer a portion of their first harvest to God. Additionally, the high priest would bake two loaves of bread from this first harvest and offer them to God. Those loaves picture those who will be raised from both the Old Covenant and the New Testament. These are those who will be in the first resurrection. They are God's first harvest of humanity. For more on this please see our book—*the Magnificent Meaning of God's Holy Days*.

These ancient ceremonies depict Christ as the focus of God's plan. The Messiah was the reality of the wave sheaf offering—killed on Passover day, buried in a tomb, and then raised three days later. He then ascended to the throne of the Father, and was accepted by Him on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath. Only after He was cut off and raised in a resurrection to be accepted in heaven, could other men be harvested. James spoke of this truth stating:

> Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures (James 1:18).

Those who are called, and qualify to be chosen, will be the spring harvest of souls. The holy day following Pentecost points to the sound of the trumpets. This refers to the plagues of Revelation and ultimately the last trumpet. After which those who are dead in Christ will rise to meet Him in the air (1Cor. 15:51-52). These events are foreshadowed by the Feast of Trumpets.

The next holy day on God's calendar is the Day of Atonement. This day pictures the binding of Satan and a time when the whole world will finally be given the opportunity to be at-one with God.

Following this is the feast of Tabernacles which takes place during the fall harvest in Israel. It actually portrays God's later harvest of souls. This latter harvest is the time when the vast majority of people who have ever lived will finally be offered a chance for salvation. And the Last Great Day foreshadows a new beginning for mankind, a new heavens and earth, after Christ has ruled the earth for a thousand years (Isa. 65:17).

These two holy day seasons, one taking place in the spring and the other in the fall, picture God's two harvests of mankind. There is a small harvest in the spring and a large harvest in the fall. The spring harvest is comprised of those who will be in the first resurrection. The fall harvest represents the rest of mankind who will be raised in a latter, second resurrection.

To most professing Christians God's holy days and their meaning are quite shocking. Surprising as it may be, these days are part of God's creation and show us the purpose for our existence. They were set in the astronomical calendar before man was created. Therefore, they are valid for all of us today. Their symbolism is prophetic, depicting the exact chronology of events that will occur through the unfolding of God's plan.

Understanding their meaning grows with the practice of observing them. However, most people do not know or celebrate them as commanded by God. Without keeping them, people cannot fully comprehend what they mean, and without this knowledge, it is impossible to fully understand God's plan. Thus, millions have not realized that NOW is NOT the only time of salvation.

God Is Not Judging the Entire World Right Now

Those who believe that this is the only time of salvation are convinced that God is judging everyone in this lifetime. The Bible reveals a truth altogether different. God is presently only working with those He has called to rule with Him in His Kingdom. Of those who are called, only those who qualify will become Kings and Priests (Mat. 22:14, Rev. 5:10). The Apostle Peter explained this important truth stating:

> For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17).

God is not judging everyone in the world at this time. Instead, He is only judging those who have been called. He is determining who will obtain the first resurrection, what leadership role they will attain, and what rewards He will give to them. Those who have qualified and are in the grave are not in heaven at this time. They are awaiting a future resurrection. For more on this subject please read our booklet—*The Truth about Heaven*.

Once raised as incorruptible and immortal spirit beings, those who are chosen will appear before Christ's throne. At this time a formal judgment will be pronounced. As Paul explained:

> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Those who are called now will be judged and rewarded at Christ's return, but does this mean that the rest of the world is lost? No! They must wait for their time to come unto the knowledge of truth (Rev. 20:5, 1Tim. 2:3-4). Only then will they receive a final judgment.

During Christ's ministry, He made reference to a future event in which various generations of men and women will appear before God for judgment. Matthew recorded Christ to say that

there would be a time when different peoples from various ages would exist together. He chastised those who would not repent, and then revealed this magnificent truth:

> Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:20-24).

Christ spoke of a time when the people of ancient Tyre, Sidon and Sodom will coexist with the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum—those who lived during His time. Why would Christ make such a statement if the vast majority of mankind were going to perish with no chance for salvation? Obviously, He would not! This is further evidence that there will be a second resurrection—a time when those who are ignorant of the truth will have their chance. But when exactly does this second resurrection occur?

First, Christ will return to this earth and take over the nations; establishing the Kingdom and government of God (Rev. 11:15). He will rule for a thousand years, and the resurrected saints will rule with Him. This is stated by John as he wrote:

> And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their

> foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

Those who live through the impending tribulation, and those born during the millennial reign of Christ, will experience the wonderful way of God. They will witness the result of Christ and the saints governing the world—ushering in worldwide peace and prosperity for all. They will come to see the wisdom of God's law, His enormous mercy and His love. Many millions will be converted during this time as they come to know Christ, realizing that God's way is the only right way to live.

But, would God give these who live during the millennial rule such a wonderful chance for salvation and not give this same opportunity to the untold billions who lived in generations past? Absolutely not! God is not a respecter of persons. He is absolutely fair and infinitely merciful. After Christ has ruled on the earth for a thousand years, the rest of those who ever lived and died without knowing Christ will be raised. At this time, they will be given the opportunity they never had—a chance to know the truth and to know their Savior. Notice the simple and profound revelation of Christ:

> But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished (Revelation 20:5).

Who are the rest of the dead spoken of in these verses? They are those individuals who were never called by God, as well as those who were called in this life, but were not chosen. It will be the countless billions who ever lived not knowing Christ. It will include all those who died in the flood, the Israelites who came through the Red Sea, the Jews of Christ's time who rejected Him, those people who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah, the people under the rule of King David. It will be the Mayans, the Incas, and the ancient Egyptians. There will be great kings and presidents of the earth, paupers, tyrannical rulers as well as those leaders who were fair and just, but unknowing of the truth. Children who died from starvation, illness, and disease will be brought back to life. Unborn

aborted babies will see the light of day. The oblivious African, Asian, Caucasian, Latin, and Indian people will finally come to know the only true God! Everyone will have an opportunity to learn the truth about the Eternal. The prophet Ezekiel described this second resurrection when prophesying of Israel.

> The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it *was* full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and indeed *they were* very dry. And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD.'" So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but *there was* no breath in them. Also He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army (Ezekiel 37:1-10).

The vast numbers of Israelites who lived throughout all ages will have their chance for salvation. Just as Christ said, the people of those cities existing during His time will one day live at the same time as the people of Sodom (Mat. 11:20-24).

In addition, all races and people from every age will have their chance to be saved. They will finally have an opportunity to know the truth, and make their decision to follow Christ, or not.

All people will be judged by the way they live, but only AFTER knowing God and being taught the right way to live. Then, as with those in the first resurrection, these too will appear before the throne of judgment for a final pronouncement. God will then raise those who lived and died during the millennial reign of Christ and beyond. He will also raise all those who have known Christ and rejected Him. This is the third and **final** resurrection. The Apostle John recorded a vision of this final judgment for man.

> Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book* of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

All people will be given a chance to obtain salvation. Joyfully, the vast majority will choose life, and they will be brought into the Kingdom and family as sons and daughters of God. Tragically, there will be some who reject Christ and will perish (Rev. 20:15). For more about this subject, read our booklet—*Three Resurrections of the Dead*.

God's Wonderful Plan of Salvation

The Almighty is working out an absolutely magnificent and perfect plan of salvation. The depth of God's love stirs Him to desire that all men be saved, but only after they have come unto the knowledge of truth (1Tim. 2:3-4). Therefore, God's infinite wisdom compels Him not to save everyone at this time.

When Eve and then Adam chose to eat from the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden, they chose to reject God's rule over them. As a result, the Eternal has allowed man to go his own way for a period of six thousand years, and man has been writing his lesson in human suffering ever since he was thrust out of Eden. The result of man's way has brought pain, suffering, sickness, war, and death. Every generation has experienced the failure of making our decisions without God. And, every generation will continue to experience this mistake until Christ returns.

There is a grand purpose to all of this, one that should fill each one of us with enormous hope. In our individual lifetimes, each one of us will have learned the tragic, but vital lessons from the sins we commit and the sorrow we create. God's inspired Word tells us:

> There is a way *that seems* right to a man, but its end *is* the way of death (Pro. 14:12).

Most people today do not understand why God is allowing such sorrow in the world. In God's good time, however, they will. One day all creation will be rescued from death and decay (Rom. 8:20-22). This includes the myriad of past generations, and all those who have not yet known Christ. One day, everyone will have a chance to share in what now only belongs to those who are being called to salvation in this age.

At this time, it is God's purpose that the vast majority of people live according to their own will and desires. During this time people are unknowingly learning the lesson of the results from disobedience to Him. Then, in God's time, the various peoples throughout the ages will be raised to life again and given a chance to know their Creator, and the happiness and truth in His Word. They will eventually realize that the ways of man, without God, do not work.

During this life however, God is only calling a few to be the first to receive salvation. He is choosing those who may seem weak, but are strong in faith and love. God's reason for choosing

these people is explained by Paul in a letter to the Church in Corinth stating:

> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are (1 Corinthians 1:27-28).

God's divine purpose for using the meek and the weak is as follows. If the weak of the world are able to attain the Kingdom of God first, then those who come later shall clearly see that they CAN succeed in their quest for salvation.

This is good news indeed! God is the Almighty one! There is nothing He cannot accomplish. Satan is not winning a contest over men's souls. The vast majority of mankind will not perish because they did not know Christ in this life. They simply have not yet been called. Their chance will come. God is in complete and total control. He sits on the throne of the universe. He is a loving God who is fair and just and He will give everyone an opportunity, but now is not the time for everyone.

This is an absolutely wonderful and inspiring truth! The young girl mentioned at the beginning of this booklet, whose father had died seemingly unsaved, has enormous hope. Her father is not lost. He is not in an ever-burning fiery furnace. Your friends and loved ones who have not accepted Christ, infants who have not lived a full life, and virtually all of those who never had a chance, are asleep in their graves. They are awaiting a unique resurrection during the millennial reign of Christ and His saints. They still have an opportunity and await their time of salvation.

Now is not that time for the vast majority of mankind. However, it is the time for some. Is it possible that this is your time of salvation? If you have read this booklet and understand this truth, there is a good chance that God is calling you. You may be receiving God's invitation to join the magnificent quest for His Kingdom right now (Mat. 6:33).

The Eternal Church of God offers a variety of books, booklets, articles, audio, and video to help people better understand the Bible. Some of the printed material available includes:

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

The Truth about Heaven

What it Means to be Born Again

The Magnificent Meaning of God's Holy Days

Are the Ten Commandments Required Today?

The Truth about Easter

The Truth about Christmas

The Truth about Mardi Gras

Three Resurrections of the Dead

Why the Unclean and the Clean?

The Truth about the Cross

Understanding the Mark of the Beast

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