



Time to shine your faith. Would you please share with us and tell us your relationship with God and about your salvation.

Circle one

1. Do you feel you are saved? Yes No

2. When were you saved? _____
Give approximate date or age

3. Where were you saved? _____

At church, home, driving, etc.

4. What were you doing when you were saved? _____

Examples: Praying, singing, watching TV, emotional experience?

5. Have you been baptized? Yes No
If yes, Sprinkled? or Immersed?

6. When were you baptized? _____

Give approximate date or age

7. Why were you baptized? _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Return to: Bible Correspondence Courses
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Camden, SC 29020

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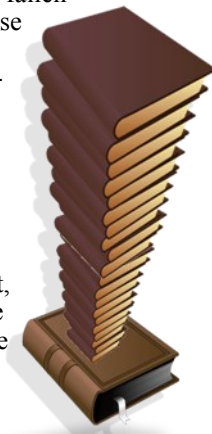
Sometimes we need to step back and get the big picture. Grasping the overall message or theme of the Bible provides direction for deeper study as well as unity in the understanding and application of its teachings.

Consider some amazing facts about the Bible:

- It is not just one book, but a collection of sixty-six books of law, poetry, history, narrative, and prophecy (39 Old Testament —27 New Testament).
- It was authored by over 40 men with varying degrees of education, different nationalities, and diverse cultures.
- It was written in three different languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
- It was developed over a period of about 1,500 years.

There are many strong evidences for the inspiration of the Bible that one could consider in the fields of archeology, prophecy, or even science. One of the most intriguing and convincing evidences of the Bible is the internal evidence of the unified message it contains—God’s amazing plan to redeem His fallen creation. Each book reflects a unity of facts, teaching, and purpose supporting this theme. All of history unfolded to accomplish God’s purpose, and each book of the Bible is a single thread woven into this incredible tapestry. Ordinary men could never have created this book – time, history, and human nature would have prevented its existence and unity unless it was supernaturally directed by God.

If we fail to understand the theme of the Bible it will not matter what we choose to believe or practice in religion. God’s plan of redemption, while anchored in the writings of the Old Testament, obtains its fulfillment in the New Testament. Here it is called the “gospel” or “good news.” We must consider and comprehend the importance of this gospel message.



1 There is only One Gospel

THE GREAT COMMISSION: As Jesus prepares to leave earth He gives His final verbal instructions to His followers. His final instructions must have represented something of critical importance to Him. Nothing trivial here. These words contain His parting command known as “the great commission.” He instructed His followers to “*go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*” In His last words on earth, Jesus commanded His followers to go and tell His story—the gospel (good news).

“Go into all the world and *preach the gospel to every creature...*”
Mark 16:15

GOD’S POWER TO SAVE: Jesus’ instruction certainly elevated the importance of the gospel and **Romans 1:16** tells us why. “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation...*”



The gospel is the means God uses to save people. It is a *message* that is to be preached to people that will save them - a message from God that stands between man and salvation. Because the gospel is so important, a special warning is given to the well meaning Christians in Galatia who were beginning to change the gospel message...

BEWARE OF FALSE GOSPELS: Paul is amazed that the Christians in Galatia are already following “*a different gospel.*” This means that the Galatians were preaching a different way to be saved than what they were originally instructed! Paul strongly teaches that there is only one gospel (and they must know it!) by declaring that even if he (an apostle) “*or an angel from heaven teach a different gospel*” they will be condemned (**Gal. 1:6-9**). **2 Thes. 1:7-8** stresses that this gospel message must be obeyed or we will be condemned.

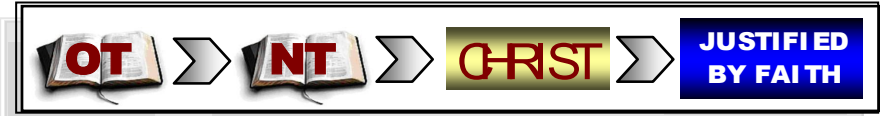
What Christians are being warned about in **Gal.1** has happened! Observe:

- Different gospels (what people are told about *how to be saved*) exist today. This is the reason there are so many churches today, each church is based on a different gospel, a different way of extending salvation.
- Good, sincere people, believers, or churches, can teach *or* follow a different gospel (just like the churches and Christians in Galatia!).
- Different gospels may be taught by those with considerable knowledge, education, and influence (even apostles or angels!). Just being religious, even sincerely religious, provides no assurance. As Jesus Himself taught: “*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven*” (**Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 6:46**).
- It is the responsibility of the individual Christian to discern between the one gospel and false gospels by fully recognizing the one true gospel.
- The gospel belongs to God therefore we are not to mess with it, at all!

Knowing, and responding to the one gospel is *critical* to the believer for salvation

depends upon it! Likewise, believing, teaching, or following a false gospel will cause one to be condemned, no matter how educated, famous, religious, or sincere they are—or what church they attend. How can we be sure of the one gospel? Where do we start to find out?

WILL THE REAL GOSPEL PLEASE STAND UP? The New Testament provides a pointer for where to begin our search for this one gospel in **Gal. 3:24**, “*Therefore the Law has become our teacher to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith*” (see also **Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:15**). The NT



points us to the Old Testament. The OT is to bring us to Christ so that we can learn the things we need to know in order to be saved—the gospel.

A PROGRESSIVE REVELATION: The Bible is a progressive revelation. If you skip the first half of any good book, you will have a hard time understanding the characters, the plot, and the ending. The NT is only completely understood when it is seen as being built upon the foundation of the events, characters, laws, sacrificial system, prophecies, covenants, and promises of the OT. In this manner *all* of OT history was a teaching or training period to prepare us for the arrival of Jesus Christ and His role in the plan of redemption.

WHICH GOD? Is there a NT God that is all love and forgiveness, while the God of the OT is a harsh God of justice and punishment? God *does* behave differently during the “training period” of the OT, much like a parent that lovingly disciplines a small child so that it will learn the things needed to be a productive adult. The God of the OT and NT is the same God.

What do we need to learn from the OT that would “lead us to Christ”?

1 Questions to Consider:

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| Gal. 1:6-9 —Would teaching a gospel message not found in the Bible please God? | Y N |
| • Did the apostles have the right to teach something different? | Y N |
| • Does God curse anyone who teaches a gospel message not found in the New Testament? | Y N |
| Matt. 7:21-23 —Will some people who are sincere in their faith be lost because they are not doing the will of the Father? | Y N |
| Gal. 3:24 —Did the O.T. law serve an important part in bringing us to Christ? | Y N |
| 2 John 9-11 —Should we ever follow after a gospel message that is not in the Bible? | Y N |
| • Should we tolerate, have fellowship with or condone those who teach a perverted gospel? | Y N |

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