



A Kingdom

Not Made With Hands

by Randolph Dunn

A Kingdom Not Made With Hands

Introduction

Man was created an eternal righteous being in God's image, not His exact likeness. *"He, God, has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end."* (Eccl 3:13) God prepared a Paradise for them and instructed them to maintain Eden, to be fruitful and multiply and NOT to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil for by doing they would die. It is unknown how long they lived there, but sometime later they ate of the fruit of the tree, consequently, God removed them from Eden. It is believed this is when time began as Adam and Eve could no longer eat of the Tree of Life and live forever.

Many years later God instructed righteous Abraham to go to a place He had prepared for him and his descendants, one of which would bless the world. It was over 400 years before Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, arrived in the land promised to Abraham. While there they were looking for a redeemer that could forgive sins. if they obeyed Him.

By action of the Holy Spirit God came to live on earth as a human to become the only sin offering and *"to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."* (John 14:3)

Following Jesus' death by crucifixion and His resurrection, He returned to Heaven and on Pentecost Day *"pour(ed) out my Spirit on all people ... everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"* (Acts 2:17, 21) not just the Jews. Christ's apostles proclaimed the Good News - forgiveness of sin and salvation is now available to all mankind who put their trust and obedience in Christ by dying to sin and being buried into His blood, immersion in water - baptism. God then raises these obedient forgiven people from their burial putting them in a kingdom not made by hands. You must study God's word for your salvation, and not "rely" on interpretations by others; e.g., BibleWay Publishing, commentaries, priest, pastors or preachers. (Phil 2:13)

"When the Son of Man comes ... He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" (Matt 25:31-34)

God's Promise

Adam and Eve were separated from their loving father and creator, but God had a plan for bringing man back into that perfect relationship. He told the serpent, Satan the deceiver and father of lies, *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* (Genesis 3:15)

Comment "Crush your head" Christ's atoning sacrifice and resurrection put an end to eternal death by providing for forgiveness. Victory over sin and death, Satan's hold on man, to all who call on Christ through faith, belief, and baptism into Him death. "Strike his heel (of the offspring of woman)" is the attempt to take Jesus' life by crucifixion.

Later following Cain's unacceptable offering, God again warned of the consequences of man's rebellious actions, *"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."* (Genesis 4:7)

Comment: Cain did not listen to God's warning. He sinned even more by killing his brother Abel. The consequences of his actions resulted in him becoming a wanderer or fugitive.

During the days of Noah, we read *"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."* (Genesis 6:5)

Comment: God removed all evil before him by destroying by water all people upon the earth, except righteous Noah and his family.

God revealed to Abraham his thoughts about Sodom and Gomorrah. *"And the LORD said, 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.' ... Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So, He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground."* (Genesis 18:20-21 and 19:24-25)

Comment: God heard their outcry indicated God is aware of everything going on among the people of the earth. In this case He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with all their wicked people. These events show that God does not tolerate wickedness, disobedience or sin and will take action against those who practice such, but not always immediately.

From Adam and Eve through Judas, Jesus' betrayer, sin prevailed as it does today. Paul through the Holy Spirit said *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" ... "For the wages of sin is death, but **the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**"* (Romans 3:23; 6:23)

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

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Questions

1. Referring to Satan, woman's offspring would crush his head.
True ___ False ___

2. If you do not do what is right sin is present.
True ___ False ___
3. Sin originates within a man's heart. True ___
False ___
4. God hears man's cry against evil. True ___
False ___
5. All people sin.
True ___ False ___

Chapter 2

The Gift of God – Jesus, The Person

Promises concerning God's Gift

There are many prophecies concerning Jesus in the Old Testament but what were the possibilities of making just 25 predictions about someone who was to be born many years later and having these predictions come true? Dr. Hawley O. Taylor has provided this answer: "Regarding these n cases of events foretold for Israel's Messiah who was to come, if the chances of success were even in the case of each one, that is p (probability) equals n in every case, then the overall probability that all n events would find their fulfillment in one person would be p^n equals $(1/2)^n$. Thus, there would be but one chance in 2^n (33 million, where n equals 25) of all these foretold events coming true if they were mere guesses. Now a glance at these prophecies concerning Christ reveals that they do not all have an even chance of success, for in some instances it is highly improbable that the event could occur at all (as for a child to be born without a human father). A very conservative compromise would be p equals 1/5; and the overall probability for the n prophecies coming true would be p^n equals $(1/5)^n$ or one chance out of a thousand trillion if n equals 25. (Modern Science and Christian Faith, p. 178) Even if the prophecy regarding the virgin birth be excluded, the number remains astronomically large. Too large to assume that this accidentally happened! Twenty-five prophecies concerning Christ and their fulfillment, from Modern Science and Christian Faith, pp. 179-183.

- a. Following Adam and Eve's disobedience God told Satan *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* (Gen 3:15)
- b. Years after the flood God call Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to the land of Canaan stating *"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; ... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"* (Gen 12:2-3) and later God made the same promise to both Isaac and Jacob.

Prophecies concerning God's Gift

Some Specific Prophecies

- a. Daniel interpreting King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue of gold, silver, iron and clay stated - "*And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed.*" (Daniel 2:44)
- b. Isaiah said, "*Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*" (Isa 7:13-14)
- c. "*God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.*" (Luke 1:26-28; 35)
- d. "*The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most-High will overshadow you. So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God'". ... "and to Joseph the angel said 'The virgin (Mary) will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'-which means, 'God with us.'"*" (Matt 1:23)
- e. God proclaimed (to Mary and Joseph) before Jesus' birth that He would be called "*the Son of the Most-High.*" (Luke 1:32)

God intentionally emptied Himself of His divine nature, left Heaven, became flesh and lived among His created beings.

Birth of Jesus

"His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'" (Matthew 1:18-21)

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel - which means, God with us.'" (Matthew 1:23)

The environment into which Jesus was born was a closed society, a people who considered themselves superior to all other people. They were Jews and took great pride in being the Children of Abraham, God's chosen people. '*Abraham is our father*' (John 8:38). They had an immense hatred of the Samaritans as they considered them to be half-breeds, Jews who had forsaken the Law of Moses during the period of Babylonian captivity. Their hatred was so great they would go out of their way to keep from setting foot in the land of the Samaritans. Roman occupiers were no different and any Jew who associated with "those occupiers" was a "sinner;" e.g., Matthew, the tax collector.

They were also legalistic to the highest degree. They made sure they fulfilled the letter of the law, not necessarily the intent, in order to earn God's promises. For instance, Moses required them to tithe and give a tenth. To make certain they gave the tenth but no more, they counted the seeds of plants to give a tenth and only a tenth.

Rome required the Jews to carry a soldier's load for one mile. So, the Jews put down markers to make sure they went no farther. Remember Jesus stated that if someone forced you to go one mile; go with him two. (Matthew 5:41)

Into this culture came the Messiah, The Anointed One, the Christ. The Jews believed that when He came, He would restore the earthly kingdom of Israel to its 'God-given right' to power and honor. Their Messiah would be the King of the Jews and rule like David.

What First-Century Writers Said

Jesus

"The Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me." (John 5:37-39)

The Apostle Peter

Christians wear the name of Christ because Christ is their Lord, Teacher, Guide, Savior, Redeemer, Model, High Priest, Hope, Sacrifice for sin and much, much more. The rock-solid foundation for our faith is the truth of Peter's confession - *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* (Matthew 16:16) Jesus is real and the Bible is true. All that needs to be known about Jesus is found in the Bible. All of human history revolves around Him. Jesus is the central character of the human drama. It is not surprising that the history of the world is divided into two spans of time: before Christ (BC) and after Christ (AD).

The Apostle John

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1:1-13)

"All this was done that anyone who received him, those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1:12-13)

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

John the Baptizer

"He (John) cries out, saying, 'This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' From the fullness of his grace, we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." (John 1:15-18)

"The next day John (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29-30)

The Roman Governor, Pilate

"Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' 'Is that your own idea,' Jesus asked, 'or did others talk to you about me?' 'Am I a Jew?' Pilate replied. 'It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?' Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.' 'You are a king, then!' said Pilate. Jesus answered, 'You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.' 'What is truth?' Pilate asked." (John 18:33-38)

Jews Insisted

"'We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.' When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. 'Where do you come from?' he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. 'Do you refuse to speak to me?' Pilate said. 'Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?' Jesus answered, 'You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.'" (John 19:7-11)

Jesus' Prayer

"Jesus looked toward heaven and prayed Father; the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted Him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." (John 17:1-5)

The eunuch said to Phillip

"And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'" (Acts 8:37)

Thallus

Matthew states *"They had crucified him ... and sitting down, they kept watch over him there ... from the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land."* (Matthew 27:35-36; 4546)

Mark put it this way *"At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour."* (Mark 15:33)

Thallus, a Samaritan-born historian who lived and worked in Rome about AD 52, was quoted by Julius Africanus, a Christian chronographer of the late second century. ¹ "Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun." Africanus stated his objection to the report arguing that an eclipse of the sun cannot occur during the full moon, as was the case when Jesus died at Passover time. The force of the reference to Thallus is that the circumstances of Jesus' death were known and discussed in the Imperial City as early as the middle of the first century. The fact of Jesus' crucifixion must have been fairly well known by that time, to the extent that unbelievers like Thallus thought it necessary to explain the matter of the darkness as a natural phenomenon. ... Ironically, Thallus' efforts have been turned into the mainstream of historical proof for Jesus and for the reliability of Mark's account of the darkness at his death." ²

Mara Bar-Serapion

"A manuscript in the British Museum preserves the text of a letter sent to his son by a Syrian named Mara Bar-Serapion. The father illustrated the folly of persecuting wise men like Socrates, Pythagoras, and the wise king of the Jews, which the context obviously shows to be Jesus. 'What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their king? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the seas; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. ... Nor did the wise King die for good; he lived on in the teaching which He had given.'" ³

Cornelius Tacitus

A Roman historian living from about AD 50 to AD 100 wrote regarding Nero's fire. "Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus." ⁴

Plinius Secundus

A Roman governor in AD 112 wrote to Emperor Trajan "They [Christians] were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wicked deed ... after which it was their custom to separate, and then meet again to partake of food, but food of an ordinary kind."

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Seutonius

An annalist and court official of the Imperial House during the reign of Hadrian wrote about AD 120 in the Life of Claudius. "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he (Claudius) expelled them from Rome."⁶ Edward C. Wharton then states "The reason for the fame of this quotation is due to the fact that Luke, some sixty years earlier, had recorded this same incident as the reason for the apostle Paul yoking up with a Christian Jewish couple named Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1-2). Again, the mention of Christ in the historical context is observed in extra-biblical literature."⁷

Flavius Josephus

Josephus has an interesting observation. "There arose about this time Jesus, a wise man, if indeed we should call him a man; for he was a doer of marvelous deeds, a teacher of men who receive the truth with pleasure. He won over many Jews and also many Greeks. This man was the Messiah. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross at the instigation of our own leaders, those who had loved him from the first did not cease. For he appeared to them on the third day alive again, as the prophets had predicted and said many other wonderful things about him. And even now the race of Christians, so named after him, has not yet died out."⁸

Early Jewish and Gentile Writers

The following quote from F. F. Bruce summarizes this very clearly. "Whatever else may be thought of the evidence from early Jewish and Gentile writers...it does at least establish, for those who refuse the witness of Christian writings, the historical character of Jesus himself. Some writers may toy with the fancy of a 'Christ-myth,' but they do not do so on the ground of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic [self-evident] for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the 'Christ-myth' theories."⁹

Footnotes

1. F. F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents, Eerdmens, p. 113.
2. Edward C. Wharton, Christianity: A Clear Case of History Howard p. 7.
3. British Museum Syriac Mss., F. F. Bruce, Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament, p. 31.
4. The Annals and the Histories, 15:44. From Britannica Great Books, Vol. 15, p. 168.
5. Epistles, 10:96.
6. Life of Claudius, 25:4
7. Edward C. Wharton, Christianity: A Clear Case of History, Howard p. 11.

8. Antiquities, 18,3. 3.

9. F. F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents. P. 119. cited by Edward C. Wharton in his book Christianity: A Clear Case of History

Words and Actions about God's Gift

When Jesus was baptized, immersed, by John in the Jordan river, the heavens opened: *"And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.'"* (Luke 3:22)

"The devil said to him, "If (forasmuch as or since) you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." (Luke 4:3)

"In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.' This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah. A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" (Matt 3:1-3)

John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, *"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29-30)*

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'" (Matt 3:16-17)

"The tempter (Satan) came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.'" (Matt 4:3)

"The woman (Samaritan woman) said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.' Then Jesus declared, 'I who speak to you am he.'" (John 4:25-26)

For several years Jesus taught as one having authority confirming His message by miracles, signs and wonders such as causing the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk and raising the dead to life again.

"Jesus asked his disciples "'But what about you?' he asked 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'" (Matthew 16:15-19)

Comment: "On this rock" - the fact that Jesus was and is the Son of God is the foundation of "My Church." "Hades" is the temporary residence of the souls of the dead. Death will not overcome Christ's Church.

He was more specific about the time His Kingdom would come for *"he said to them, 'I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'" (Mark 9:1)*

Comment: Christ would be establishing his church during the lifetime of some of his hearers. He then intentionally gave his life as the sin-offering, a sacrifice, to atone for man's sin by allowing the Roman government to crucify him. They buried him in a secure grave with guards to prevent the theft of his physical body. But God, the Father, raised Him the third day before his body decayed, conquering death and the grave.

"About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'-which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of those standing there heard this, they said, 'He's calling Elijah.' Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, 'Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him.' And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit." (Matt 27:46-50)

"His disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (John 20:26-28)

Some forty days later His return to Heaven was witnessed by the apostles. The Holy Spirit was sent to guide them in preaching and recording the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation. Initially, many Jews and later many Gentiles acknowledged Jesus as God, the Christ (the Anointed One). Many witnesses in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria who lived while He lived and taught, testified of His coming back to life (resurrection) and His return to Heaven (ascension).

The Foundation of "My Church"

"It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He (Jesus) is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:10-12)

“Who (Jesus of Nazareth), being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (Philippians 2:6-7)

Comment: God, the Son, chose to become a physical body of flesh in the form of Jesus to live among men and face temptations, trials and rejection by the very beings he created. This topic is discussed in The Man Who Was God by BibleWay Publishing.

Christ is the foundation of the church. Ephesians 2:20: *“having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone”*; 1 Corinthians 3:11: *“For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* and 2 Timothy 2:19: *“Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are His.”*

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come – the everlasting age. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:18-23)

Following Jesus' ascension to heaven the apostles returned to Jerusalem as He had commanded them. Many Jews were gathered in Jerusalem, because it was Pentecost. *“And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4)*

The sound of rushing wind brought a great crowd to the assembled apostles. Peter and the other apostles seized the opportunity to remind them of what they and their religious leaders had done, stating, *“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off (all people) - for all whom the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:36-39)*

Comment: “Repentance” is not a mere feeling; it has not the uncertainty of moods and sentiments. It is not a simple change in the weather of the soul. It is a distinct alteration of the

focus of the intelligence; it carries with it a movement of the will; in short, it is a revolution in the very ground of the man's being." (Al Maxey in Reflection)

Comment: "Baptized" was transliterated from the Greek word *baptizo* meaning to submerge, dip, plunge under. *Baptizo* should not be confused with the Greek words; *rantizo*, meaning to sprinkle, or with the Greek word *cheo* meaning to pour over.

"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:11-12)

Many Jews on Pentecost Day, realizing their sinful condition, put their trust in Christ by calling upon God to forgive them by being immersed in water (baptism) into Christ's death after which God raised them from their burial in water and added them to His disciples thereby establishing His body of forgiven sinners, His church.

*"So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were **added that day about three thousand souls**. And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."* (Acts 2:41-42)

"And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." (Acts 2:46-47)

James, addressing those IN Christ, stated: *"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."* (James 1:12-15)

Comment: Knowing there are consequences for sin, you and I need to be forgiven, redeemed, reconciled, and brought back into a righteous relationship with God. Those who are forgiven are put into the Kingdom not made by hands. Following this reconciliation to God's relationship, one must grow into God's likeness They had in the beginning by studying Christ's message, the Bible.

"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

“For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:10-11)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

Comment: “A new creation” is a spiritual creation of forgiven sinners made priests to serve God. The first creation, physical man, was made from earth’s elements. This new creation is made from God’s grace, and man’s faith, trust, and obedience.

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” ... “After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: ‘Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.’” (John 16:33, 17:1-4)

Since Jesus is God’s gift of eternal life, what must one do to accept this gift? On Pentecost Day, 40 days following Jesus’ return to Heaven, Peter answered this question, and the Spirit was poured out on all men. *“God had promised him (David) on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.” (Acts 2:30-33)*

“Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.’” ... “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (Acts 2:36-38, 41)

“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:46-47)

There are many examples of others who accepted Christ by dying to sin, being buried (immersed in water) into Christ's death, raised by God as new spiritual beings, and put in Christ's Body and in fellowship with God.

1. Ethiopian eunuch – Acts 8
2. Samaritans – Acts 8
3. Saul of Tarsus – Acts 9
4. Cornelius – Acts 10
5. People in many in cities of Philippi, Ephesus, Corinth and Rome.

Questions

1. There is only one prophecy about Jesus. True ___ False ___
2. God intentionally emptied Himself of deity to become human and live among His creation.
True ___ False ___
3. There are no non-Christian historians who wrote about Jesus. True ___ False ___
4. John, the Baptist, acknowledged that Jesus was God who could take away man's sins. True ___ False ___
5. The foundation of the Church Christ built was
 - a. ___ The Jews
 - b. ___ Peter
 - c. ___ Jesus as God in flesh
 - d. ___ His church has not been established