



Are Christians Supposed to Convert the World?

Matthew 28:19: (NASB) *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the son and the holy spirit.*



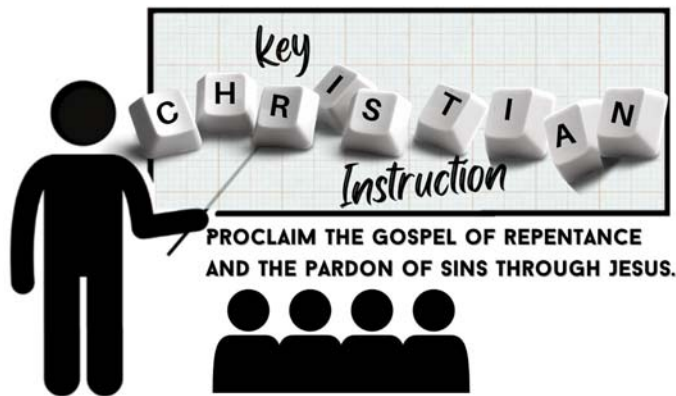
To live a life as a disciple of Christ is to live a life of discipline and focus. We are walking in the footsteps of Jesus and that means there are many things we need to do. After all, Jesus, by teaching and through his example, wrote the book of our faith. What did Jesus expect from his followers regarding his gospel and a world full of unbelievers? When he ascended to heaven and gave us what is known as the Great Commission, what was he instructing? Are we responsible to get the good word of the gospel out or are we responsible to get all the unbelievers in? If we are unsure of what he was instructing, how can we know if we are doing a good job?

Just before ascending to heaven, did Jesus commission his apostles (and us) to convert the world?

The account in which Jesus spoke his last words to his disciples before he ascended to heaven is recorded in [Matthew 28:16-20](#), [Luke 24:44-49](#) and [Acts 1:6-11](#). We will present this account using all three sources as we see them fitting together into one narrative.

Before this ascension narrative, we want to look at a few verses from the teaching of Jesus earlier that day that will help establish his message:

[Luke 24:46-48](#): (NASB) ⁴⁶and he said to them, *Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance for forgiveness<859> of sins would be proclaimed <2784> in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.*



Forgiveness: Strongs #859 *aphesis*; (figuratively) pardon

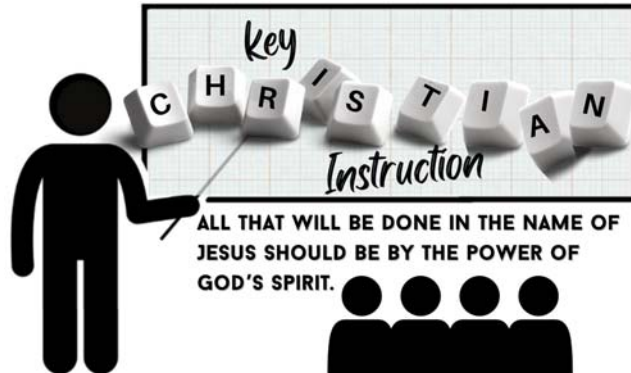
Proclaimed: Strongs #2784 *kerusso*; to herald (as a public crier), especially divine truth



There are four New Testament words regarding forgiveness.

Jesus continued:

Luke 24:49: (NASB) *And behold, I am sending forth the promise of my Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.*



For us this means we sometimes need to watch and wait for God's providence before acting.

Before the ascension of Jesus, he was telling his disciples to stay in Jerusalem until God's spirit came upon them. They knew they were not supposed to do anything in his name until that happened. That took place 2,000 years ago, but we still need to watch and wait to make sure it is God's spirit driving us, not our emotions.

Now the combined accounts of the ascension:

Luke 24:50: (NASB) *And he led them out as far as Bethany... Matthew 28:16:* (NASB) *...the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. Acts 1:6-7:* (NASB) *6So when they had come together, they were asking him, saying, Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel? 7He said to them, It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;*



His disciples were inquiring - *is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?* They were asking for the restoration of the kingdom for two reasons. First, they were under Roman rule and could not govern themselves. Second, Jesus had cast off Israel.

Matthew 23:37-38: (KJV) ³⁷*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* ³⁸*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

He told parables about their desolation and demonstrated this with a withered fig tree. It was obvious that Israel had lost favor.

The disciples were looking forward to the restoration of Israel. For us, this faith-based expectation of restoring Israel is a prophetically-fulfilled fact, but it is still in progress. It is a work under construction. We have seen Israel miraculously brought back to their homeland and we will see God's favor returning to Israel more and more. We live in the time the disciples were inquiring about. This is powerful!

Continuing with the combined account of the ascension:

Acts 1:8: (NASB) *but you will receive power when the holy spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*



This means we are in the latter stages of this commission, as the gospel is worldwide. In this Great Commission he reminds them the holy spirit is coming - *you will receive power when the holy spirit has come upon you* - and then you get to work. The work would begin in Jerusalem where the spirit came to them and would spread throughout the remote parts of the earth. This is dramatic.

Continuing the combined account:

Matthew 28:18-20: (NASB) ¹⁸*And Jesus...spoke to them, saying, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.* ¹⁹*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the son and the holy spirit,* ²⁰*teaching them to observe all that I commanded you...*

We are to make disciples of all nations - this sounds like we are being charged with a massive, earth-wide conversion. Is that true?



It says, *make disciples of all nations*. It does not say "make all nations disciples." We need to be careful as to how we read what is written and not *read into* what is written. The idea is to go out and preach, and to further expand the borders of our preaching. It is about the preaching - witnessing to the world. Preaching or proclaiming to the world does not imply conversion of the world. It simply says what we are being called to do.



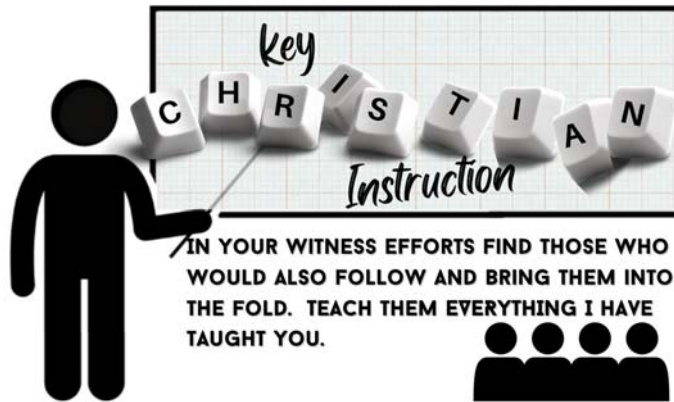
Back in 1861, Bible Societies declared that the gospel had been published in every known language, thereby fulfilling this text. But today there are approximately 1,800 languages for which a translation is still in progress. Some estimates say 165 million people do not have a single verse of Scripture translated into their language.



Has Matthew 28:19 - *make disciples of all nations* - been fulfilled?

We believe it has been fulfilled, and it continues to be fulfilled even as we speak. Preaching in the remote parts of the world has happened already. This does not mean we sit back and say it is done. Instead we should say, it started - what part do I play? Yes, the gospel has been preached all over the world, but we must take responsibility to do whatever we can in whatever part of the world God's providence opens to us. We must continue that work because we are still part of the Great Commission.

After Jesus rose from the dead, he said in Mark 16:15: (NASB) *...Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.* This is another scriptural example of "preach," not "convert." We can understand why missionaries take this on as their life's work - much like we have with Christian Questions. We are trying to *go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.* Our responsibility is to preach, not convert. Conversion is left to God.



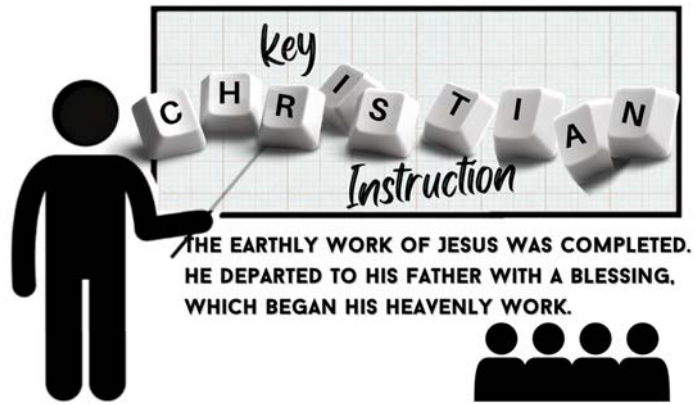
For us the meaning is the same but expanded: We must focus on bringing the truth that Jesus and his true disciples taught to those we nurture as disciples.

Big Point

We are no less responsible than the original disciples because we are given the same responsibilities to get the word out to preach and teach what Jesus and his followers taught.

Acts 1:9: (NASB) *And after he had said these things...* Luke 24:50: (NASB) *...he lifted up his hands and blessed them.* Matthew 28:20: (NASB) *...lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.* Luke 24:51: (NASB) *While he was blessing them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.*





For us this is enormous. Jesus, when he finished his earthly work, blessed those with him and us as well.

In [John 17:19-20](#) Jesus prays that his followers would be set apart for a holy purpose. *I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in me through their word.* THAT IS US. This is very comforting. He also mentioned us when he ascended to heaven and said, *I am with you always, even to the end of the age.* He is with US to the end of the age!

Through applying scriptural principles combined with social activism and political influence, is the Christian supposed to create a heaven on earth, like a Christian kingdom, which will in turn convert everyone to Christianity? There are buzz words out there like “Christian Reconstructionism” and “Kingdom Dominion.” The gist of their point is that Christians are to transform the earth from an environmental, political and sociological standpoint before Jesus can return and take control. Is that what the Bible teaches?

NO! Think about it from this perspective. In the prophecy of [Daniel 2:44-45](#) he is interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the image being crushed by the stone. Daniel says God will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed. And then he says in this prophecy, it will crush these other kingdoms, but this new kingdom will endure forever. The kingdom of God is not built on the previous kingdoms. It destroys them, and it is an entirely new superstructure. The idea of reconstructing the earth is not accurate.



Converging on our Conversion Responsibility:

Jesus provided this key Christian instruction and yet something is missing... there is not one word about converting the world! We are to use God’s spirit to witness, expand the witness and develop disciples from any nation. Jesus does not give us the responsibility to convert the world.

At first glance, this Great Commission seems to be focused on preaching activity and not conversion results.



If we say we are only focused on preaching and not converting, doesn't that leave multitudes unsaved?

Obviously, we need to dig deeper, as we have only examined one specific, very important portion of the gospel account. Let's examine other teachings of Jesus on the matter coupled with other New Testament writings. This will give us a far more comprehensive understanding of truth and our commission.

According to the Pew Research Center as of 2015, the world is about 31 percent Christian, meaning over two-thirds of the world's population is NOT Christian - so billions of people have another religion or no religion at all. The fastest-growing major religious group is Muslim. Combine this with all the people who died prior to Jesus on the earth, and those who died as something other than Christian. It appears that if the goal was to convert the world, then Christianity has been a miserable failure in all timelines.



Let's make it a worse failure. We said 31 percent of the world is Christian. Many profess Christianity but do not live it. Then take that 31 percent and cut it in half or by two-thirds. Really, there are very few who truly follow Jesus. What does this all mean? How do we put all this in perspective? This is what we want to outline as we go through this important question - are Christians supposed to convert the world?

Jesus, in the Parable of the Sower, reveals a profoundly important truth regarding the gospel and to those whom it is exposed. Normally, a parable is left for the listener to interpret, but in this case, Jesus himself does the interpreting.



Check out our CQ Kids video:
WHY DID JESUS SPEAK IN PARABLES?
christianquestions.com/youtube

A farmer sows seeds. Some fall along the path, some onto stony places, some onto thorny places and some onto good ground. We see Jesus and his followers as the Sower.



What is the seed?

Luke 8:11: (NASB) *Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.*

The word of God is sown in all kinds of places.

Looking at one specific aspect of this parable helps us realize the depth of what this parable is teaching.



Here Jesus explains the meaning of the seed falling on or beside the path: Matthew 13:19: (NASB) *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand <4920> it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.*

If we are bound to the responsibility of converting the world now, why does a simple lack of understanding of God’s word give Satan the ability to take it away?

Understand: Strongs #4920 *sunieimi*; (to send); to put together, i.e. (mentally) to comprehend; by implication, to act piously:

King James Version translates as: consider, understand, be wise



People have free will. If someone walks away because they do not understand the message, why is Satan blamed? On the other hand, how can someone be judged eternally if Satan snatched their opportunity away? That’s not fair.

The answer lies in what Jesus explained to his disciples after he spoke the parable to the people:

Matthew 13:10-17: (NASB) *10And the disciples came and said to him, Why do you speak to them in parables? 11Jesus answered them, to you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. 12For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.*

The parable begins - *to you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.* There is an obvious separation of privilege here between disciples and all others - those who are just hearing the parable.

Jesus continues:

13Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, you will keep on hearing, but will not understand; you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; 15For the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them. (This is quoted from Isaiah 6:9-10)

Jesus is clearly saying this Isaiah prophecy is coming true! He is saying the gospel is NOT meant for everyone. He continues:

16But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. 17For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

First Satan keeps people in the dark and now it is Jesus! How unfair is this? Most of earth’s billions never stood a chance.

If we look at this with the viewpoint of it is either now or never, it does not seem fair at all. Jesus himself is saying: I am making it so they do not understand. Why?

The Adversary is on the alert to take away seeds of truth wherever he can. If now was the only time for salvation, why would a simple lack of understanding give Satan the ability to take that salvation away? Is simple ignorance a just cause to NOT give someone salvation? Should someone be held accountable for something they do not understand if they never really had a chance because Satan was more powerful? NO!





The prophet Ezekiel gives further proof of this worldly condition of Israel:
Ezekiel 12:1-2: (NASB) *'Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house.*

One could say this is just about the blindness of the Jewish nation at that time but does not apply to everybody else.

Is that idea supported by 2 Corinthians 6?

Could this parable and explanation be just referring to the Jewish nation at that time?

2 Corinthians 6:1-2: (NASB) *'And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— 'for He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." BEHOLD, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," BEHOLD, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION."*

When we read, *now is THE DAY OF SALVATION*, are we saying that it was fair for Jesus to shut people out during the Day of Salvation?

This was quoted from the Old Testament. When we look at the rendering of this verse, there is a slight difference that makes a profound change in meaning.

This text may make us think that this is the ONLY time for salvation, until we look at its source in Isaiah:

Isaiah 49:8: (NASB) *Thus says the LORD, In a favorable time I have answered you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you; and I will keep you and give you for a covenant of the people, to restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages.*

...the desolate heritages - meaning reassign deserted properties.

This text refers to the Jewish people returning to their land, which we have seen happen in our day.



"A" day of salvation certainly implies there is more than one day for salvation. Now what?



How does "A" day of salvation imply there is more than one?
How does this indicate more than one time period of salvation?

Some would understand this to say that Isaiah prophesied about "a" day of salvation, meaning, there would be a day in the future when salvation would take place. Once Jesus died and was resurrected, 2 Corinthians picks up on that prophecy and says, remember that day of salvation? Well, now is the time. Now is finally THE day of salvation - it has arrived!



We address this later in the program. Salvation (the application of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus, meaning being acquitted from adamic sin) is not applied at the same time for all people. Israel was given a day of salvation to restore to them their inherited land in Isaiah 49:8 - that was one day of salvation. But there are other applicable times - the day of salvation for Jesus' true followers is during their present lives. They receive the benefit of the ransom first. The rest of the world will receive the benefit of the ransom later at resurrection.



Converging on our Conversion Responsibility:

Jesus is plainly teaching that the gospel will NOT take hold in everyone. Even with this message in place, the responsibility to preach - to sow seeds - is still a clear priority.

Now things are getting interesting! The prospect that there is more than one day of salvation provokes questions.

So, everyone is NOT supposed to accept the gospel.
What does that say about their eternal destiny?

The bottom line of any conversation about salvation is eternal destiny. God is love and Jesus was sent to ransom us from sin. Both of those things being true, how can it be that people can have these truths taken from them by Satan? Or, how can someone walk away from the gospel message and still have salvation?



What is the purpose of missionary work? What should churches be doing?

Some believe that those who have never heard the gospel - the "unevangelized" - are lost and go to hell or are in some way eternally separated from God. This is sometimes called "Restrictivism." This says God is not obligated to provide salvation to anyone, as man is sinful and it is a wonder God chooses to save anyone!

RESTRICTIVISM

After all, the Bible clearly says:

John 14:6: (NASB) *Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.*

1 John 5:11-12: (NASB) *¹¹And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His son. ¹²The one who has the son has the life; the one who does not have the son of God does not have the life.*

But even Jesus did not convert everyone he met. If HE could not do it, how can we?

On the flip side, some people believe that if a person does not hear about Jesus but WOULD have accepted the message if they HAD heard, they will be saved. This is sometimes called "Inclusivism." This gives evangelists a big sigh of relief if they miss preaching to someone.

INCLUSIVISM

How do we handle that God WANTS salvation for ALL?

2 Peter 3:9: (NASB) *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

Does this mean that even the unevangelized will be saved? This is sometimes termed "Universalism." Are we advocating for Universalism?

UNIVERSALISM



No, but we believe the Bible teaches “universal opportunity.” We believe God’s plan is inclusive, but in a just way. More on this soon.

What about hell...?

...not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance - God is not sitting on some cloud just hoping that all will be saved. He is our Almighty God! If this is what He wants, we know there must be more to it.



The hellfire doctrine taught by some is not scripturally authentic.

Translators have reflected the many question marks surrounding this teaching:

Psalm 9:17: (KJV) *The wicked shall be turned into **hell**, and all the nations that forget God.*

Psalm 9:17: (Youngs Literal Translation) *The wicked do turn back to **sheol**, all nations forgetting God.*

Psalm 9:17: (New Living Translation) *The wicked will go down to the **grave**. This is the fate of all the nations who ignore God.*

Sheol: Strongs #7585 *sheol*; underworld, grave, hell, pit



Difficult texts explained

Different translations use different words to translate (or leave untranslated in the case of *sheol*) the same Hebrew word.



PLANNED salvation for ALL

Hebrews 2:9: (NASB) *But we do see him who was made for a little while lower (a little lower) than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

...so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone - this is a very inclusive statement!

What about hell...?

This doctrine is based on a gross misapplication of context:

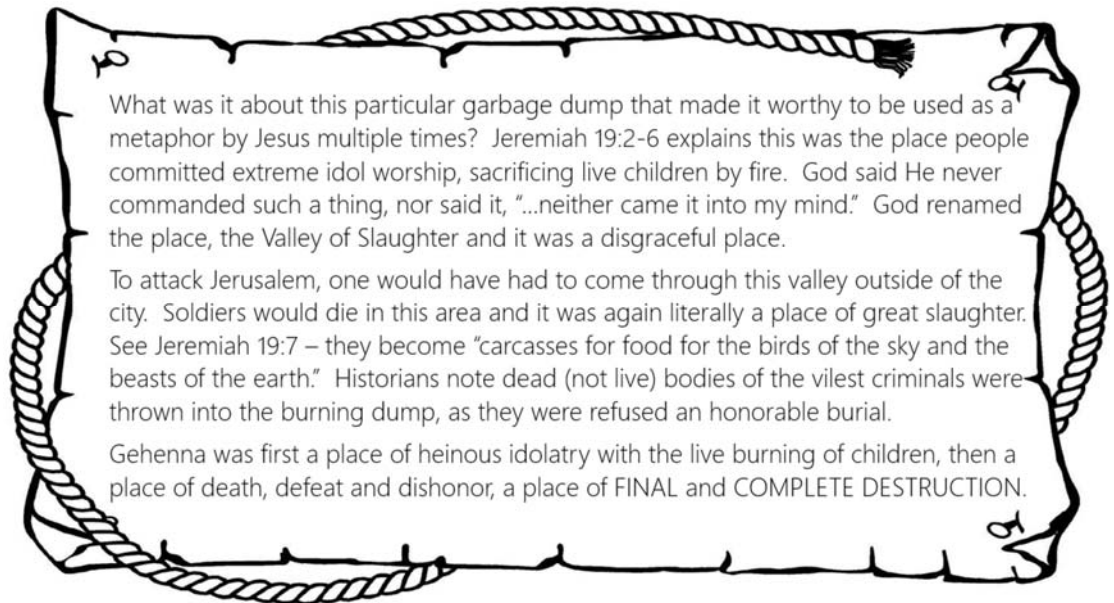
Matthew 5:29: (KJV) *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into **hell** <1067>.*



Matthew 5:29: (Youngs Literal Translation) *But, if thy right eye doth cause thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast from thee, for it is good to thee that one of thy members may perish, and not thy whole body be cast to **Gehenna** <1067>.*

Hell: Strongs #1067 *Gehenna*, of Hebrew origin, valley of (the son of) Hinnom, a valley of Jerusalem

The Valley of Gehenna was a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem. Fires were kept continuously burning. Nothing living was thrown into Gehenna. The context was that of complete destruction, not torment.



(Source: Zavada, Jack. "What Is Universalism?" Learn Religions, Aug. 27, 2020, learnreligions.com/what-is-universalism-700701) Because one of the main arguments for a just but loving God keeping people in hell for eternity is, "...would it be justice for the wicked to enjoy the same rewards as those who were martyred for Christ? ...The fact that often there is no justice in this life requires that a just God impose it in the next. ...Sin is minimized and trivialized in all universalistic teaching."

We strongly disagree, as God's justice prevails and there will be both accountability and punishment for sin after resurrection. In addition, the Bible does NOT teach that the wicked and the martyred receive the same reward. The footstep followers of Jesus are promised a heavenly reward; all others are resurrected on earth for judgment, accountability and rehabilitation.

We are saved from the inherited sin of Adam. Without the ransom price of Jesus, each generation would continue dying without hope of the opportunity for life.



REQUIRED salvation for ALL

Romans 5:12, 18-19: (NASB) ¹²Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. ¹⁸So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous.

Because sin entered the world and affected ALL, the ransom of Jesus satisfying justice gives ALL the opportunity for life.

What about hell...?



This doctrine interprets picture language as if it were literal:

Luke 16:23: (KJV) and in **hell** he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Luke 16:23: (NASB) In **Hades** he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

Hades: Strong's #86 *hadēs*; grave, hell



This Luke 16 account is the famous Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus with its theme of role reversal. Taking a phrase like this literally would mean the other statements in the story must be literal and not symbolic. Such a reading makes the account ludicrous with impossibilities. Therefore, it is important that we be students of the Scriptures. Understanding the definitions of the words and the context is imperative.



Romans 8:19-21: (NASB) ¹⁹For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

...the creation was subjected to futility - the destiny of humankind was futile with no hope. God allowed the experience of sin as a learning tool. The creation was given hope.

...the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery - just like the children of God, all are given hope. There is a freedom for ALL!



1 Timothy 2:3-6: (NASB) ³This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the **knowledge <1922>** of the truth. ⁵For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

Knowledge: Strongs #1922 *epignosis*; recognition, i.e. (by implication) full discernment, acknowledgement: (ac-) knowledge (-ing, -ment)

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) precise and correct knowledge
1a) used in the New Testament of the knowledge of things ethical and divine

It is God's will that everyone will be saved by Jesus and come to the knowledge of full discernment, understanding. Of course, where there is understanding, there is also accountability.

Note the order in the verse above. It is not that all men come to the knowledge of the truth and THEN they are saved; rather, all men are saved and THEN come to a full discernment of the truth! There will obviously be a lot of teaching and instruction going on after the resurrection. Each can then decide if they will continue along a righteous path in God's kingdom or not.

The missing piece to this was answered in the 2-part series, Ep.1174 and 1175: "Did God Make Heaven and Hell Humanity's Destiny?" People may not realize there is a *resurrection on earth* for the majority of humankind. A heavenly reward is for the very few faithful followers of Jesus during this age that the gospel message is shared.



When Jesus said most will not respond in Matthew 13:14, he was referring to that special call to these very few. For the rest of mankind, there are both consequences and rehabilitation after resurrection on earth.



Converging on our Conversion Responsibility:

The New Testament is overflowing with scriptural evidence of salvation for all based on Jesus paying the ransom. While this is a logical and just result of the sacrifice of Jesus, it does require us to think outside the box of our typical Christian response to unbelievers.

According to Scripture, we need to rethink this “typical Christian response.” Salvation is broad and deep. It hangs solely upon the fact of the ransom of Jesus, and we get to be a part of it!

**If we do not have to convert everyone now,
why do we try and how do they find *their* salvation?**

We preach the gospel because it is the greatest news of all time, and God’s call is not limited to any family line or ethnic heritage. We preach not to convert, but to *enlighten*. Those who hear the message and do not understand it - or are simply not interested - are planned for in God’s wise unfolding of salvation. There is a place, an opportunity, for everyone in God’s plan.



Let’s say I own a store. I spend a ton of money on advertising but few buy anything from me. I will go bankrupt. Collectively, Christians have been “advertising” to the whole world since the days of Jesus, but here we are saying we are not expecting many to buy what we are selling? Remember how few Christians there are compared to the total world population? Even Jesus did not convert many during his lifetime!



What is the point of widespread preaching if conversion is not the main goal, or are we only looking for those few footstep followers of Jesus who will make up the bride of Christ?

Our purpose in preaching is two-fold:

1. We ARE looking for those few footstep followers of Jesus, and we do not know where they might be. They may very well be on the other side of the world!
2. We are instructed to spread the gospel far and wide. We want to carry it because it is “good news.” Do we not want everybody to know about it? Do we not feel like shouting, “I’ve got the best news EVER, and it will last for eternity! Would you like me to tell you about it?”

We want to spread the good news for the joy of sharing it with others, as well as to find the remaining followers of Christ. We are commissioned to preach, but we do not have the burden of converting everyone. We know that they are not in a burning hell, they are not lost forever, and they have a place in God’s salvation that He has provided because He is just and loving.

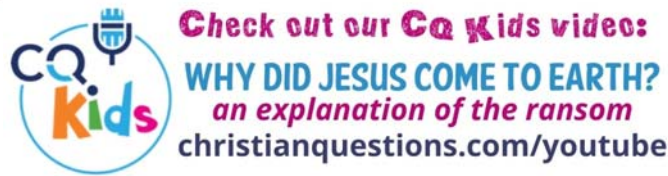


Let's examine and prove the order of salvation:

1 Corinthians 15:20-23: (NASB) ²⁰But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. ²¹For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at his coming (presence),



As in Adam all die - death in Adam is death forever. When we say we are being "saved," that is what we are being saved from - eternal extinction. This is the reason Jesus came to earth. If we all just lived and died in Adam, that would be the end of everything. God's justice required *a life for a life*. Jesus supplied his life for Adam's. This is the justice part!



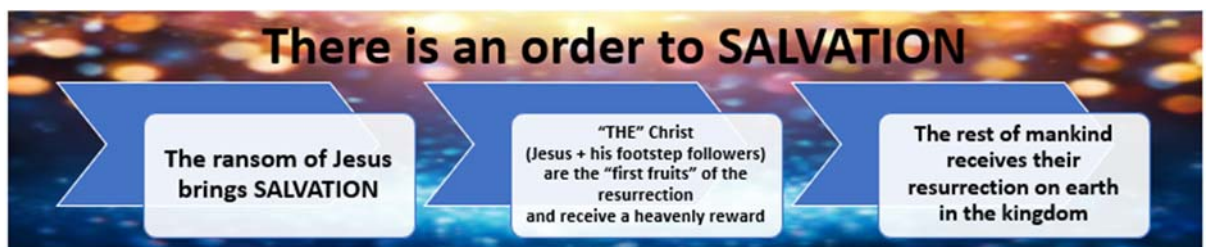
There is also an order to salvation. Everyone does not follow the same path to their opportunity for salvation. True followers of Jesus are labeled as *first fruits* in several other places such as James 1:17-18.

This next text is a further step in understanding the salvation process for unbelievers:

Romans 8:22-23: (NASB) ²²For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

This verse talks about the entire creation - ALL of mankind, even those who have not heard (or have not received) the gospel. They *groan and suffer the pains of childbirth*. Something new and joyful is coming - it is a new life. The whole world shares the same pain that we are suffering to bring forth a new dispensation. All will receive life.

As part of the *first fruits*, the true followers of Jesus will receive that life first. The birth of God's kingdom will bring such joy and life to ALL mankind, which is the focus of this verse. An order is specified here: Christ brings salvation; then the first fruits, the true church; then the rest of mankind - everyone!



How do we know all are included in this?

1 Timothy 4:10: (NASB) *For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.*

1 TIMOTHY 4:10
GOD IS THE SAVIOR THROUGH JESUS
of all men  especially of believers

How is God everyone's Savior? Through Jesus, because God sent His son:

1 John 2:1-2: (NASB) *1My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2and he himself is the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

If this scripture is true and Jesus did satisfy the sins of the whole world, how could billions still burn in hell? It would not make any sense. It negates the sacrifice of Jesus.

Clearly in this verse there are two groups of sinners:

- 1) *our sins* - "our" referring to the faithful followers of Jesus
- 2) *those of the whole world* - meaning the "everybody else"

Remember this text that quoted Isaiah with "A" day of salvation that turned into "THE" day of salvation in the New Testament?

2 Corinthians 6:1-2: (NASB) *1And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— 2for He says, "AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." BEHOLD, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," BEHOLD, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION."*

Now is the acceptable time, behold now is THE day of salvation - this applies to the followers of Jesus NOW. The key to cracking this wide open is that yes, salvation IS only through belief in Jesus Christ, but the TIME to accept that salvation differs depending on which group you are in.

For the true footstep followers of Jesus: their time to accept salvation is now. For the rest of the world: their time to accept salvation will be in the future; after resurrection, after learning about the righteousness of God's plan for them, after rehabilitation, with full discernment and finally under conditions that give them a fair chance at eternal life.

The qualifications needed for salvation - believing in the name of Jesus, coming to Christ, and having accountability - always remain in place.

For the followers of Jesus, these qualifications need to be met now, under adverse conditions, but with the support of the providence of God, the support of Jesus and the guidance of the holy spirit.

For the rest of mankind, these qualifications will need to be met in the future - after their resurrection. They will have ideal conditions in that Satan will be bound and eventually destroyed, and under the support of the completed church with Jesus as its head.



Again, this means *converting* the world now is not our challenge. Our challenge is being faithful to our calling - which includes witnessing to the gospel - so we can play a significant role in the reconciliation and blessing of the world. That is AWESOME!

This comes with a tremendous responsibility on the part of the followers of Christ. However, it is not *more* than we can handle. It is a privilege and a joy to be given this responsibility. This is why the gospel is such good news - it is so comprehensive!

What do we know for sure? First, we know all will be raised:

John 5:28-29: (NASB) ²⁸*Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice, ²⁹and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.*

This is perfect justice. True Christians *will come forth...to a resurrection of life*. Everybody else to *a resurrection of judgment* that can lead to life. Everyone will be given the opportunity to learn and progress towards righteousness after resurrection, if they are willing.

Salvation comes in waves. The *resurrection of judgment* is not condemnation; it is a time of trial. Those raised to life have already had that time of trial in this life. The rest will face that time of trial after resurrection, when they will be given every opportunity for righteousness, including Satan and associates being bound so their influence cannot be felt.

Second, we know all will be held accountable for their deeds. No one "gets away with anything." Actions bring consequences:

Matthew 16:27: (NASB) *For the son of man is going to come in the glory of his Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.*

This is about accountability. 2 Peter 3:8 refers to the day of this judgment lasting 1,000 years. This gives humanity plenty of time to learn of God and Jesus, and to see others around them being blessed as they learn and practice righteousness.

2 Peter 3:8: (NASB) *But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.*

There is no shirking of responsibility, or a lack of accountability; it is all there for every human being. Mankind will need to repent of their actions in this life and apply righteousness going forward to all they may have harmed.

Third, we know that all of this is done to ultimately bless ALL of humanity. It has been set up this way from the start. God did not make this up as He went along. He had it in place from before the beginning of creation.

Because Abraham was willing to offer Isaac to God, he was given a world-changing promise:

Genesis 22:17-18: (NASB) ¹⁷*indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.*





This is the original good news, promising a heavenly AND an earthly salvation that has been forgotten by mainstream Christianity. God and Jesus have given all the opportunity to live forever, without interfering with free will. God's plan is revealed in Genesis in multiple scriptures but is missed by many. Jesus summed it up in the arrangement in the Lord's Prayer - *Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven....*

Fourth, we know that those who are faithful to their calling to sacrificially follow Jesus are an integral and necessary part to this plan for blessing:

Galatians 3:27,29: (NASB) ²⁷*For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* ²⁹*And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.*

Would it not be an incredible privilege to help teach and encourage humanity to be worthy of everlasting life based on our own life experiences in Christ? It will be such a privilege to bless others! These verses say we are part of that promise, and as faithful Christians, part of the blessing and salvation of everybody else.

What does our life look like if we are not tasked with converting everyone here and now?



We are called and chosen to preach the gospel:

1 Peter 2:9-12: (NASB) ⁹*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

We are *a chosen race* - why are we chosen? So that we can proclaim God's excellent plan through proclaiming the gospel. *We are given this privilege so we can speak it!*



We are to live a life that *reflects God's grace* that has been given to us as disciples:

¹⁰*for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* ¹¹*Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.*

How do we qualify? We are to *abstain from fleshly lusts* (desires) that play against godliness. Our lives need to faithfully follow the footsteps of Jesus so we can be part of that blessing. It is not easy work but is so worthwhile!



We are to be living examples of Jesus so those of the world (the Gentiles) who know of us will be able to give God glory in their *future, post-resurrection* experience:

¹²*Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Those who are not converted to Christ now have the opportunity to glorify God later *because we gave them hope* through our example in this life. Think about the beauty of that opportunity!



Converging on our Conversion Responsibility:

Our responsibility as Christians is to preach.
Conversion is left in the hands of God.

Our responsibility as Christians is to be an example of Jesus to those around us. **What people do with that example is beyond our responsibility.**

Our responsibility as a Christian is to be transformed by God's spirit and do HIS will. **How are we doing?**

This is good news! It is *really* good news which is not preached or understood in most Christian churches. The Scriptures, however, show us how this good news unfolds and dovetails together giving us a plan of salvation for all of mankind.

We do not need to carry the burden of converting all unbelievers now, but we do need to be responsible to preach the gospel as widely as we can, gathering all those footstep followers, wherever they may be. We need to grow in grace and become Christlike so that in the future we can help those given life through the ransom of Jesus, to live forever on earth.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.

**So, are Christians supposed to convert the world?
For Jonathan, Rick and Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**



Join us next week for our podcast on August 23, 2021
Ep. 1192: How Can I Effectively Reach Out and
Connect with Others?

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.

Bonus Material and Study Questions

Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility.
— *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

Previous to the ascension of Jesus, he spoke these words to his apostles to prepare them:

Acts 1:4-5: (NASB) ⁴Gathering them together, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, which, he said, you heard of from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the holy spirit not many days from now.



Luke 24:44-49: (NASB) ⁴⁴Now He said to them, These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending forth the promise of my Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

The accounts of the ascension:

Luke 24:50-53: (NASB) ⁵⁰And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they, after worshipping him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³and were continually in the temple praising God.

Matthew 28:16-20: (NASB) ¹⁶But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some were doubtful. ¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the son and the holy spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Acts 1:6-11: (NASB) ⁶So when they had come together, they were asking him, saying, Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel? ⁷He said to them, It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸but you will receive power when the holy spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. ⁹And after he had said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰And as they were gazing intently into the sky while he was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. ¹¹They also said, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched him go into heaven.

It is plain to see, Israel is spoken of as being brought back to favor as a physical nation:

Romans 11:25-32: (NASB) ²⁵For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; ²⁶and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, the deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove ungodliness from Jacob. ²⁷This is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins. ²⁸From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; ²⁹for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. ³²For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

An example of true Christians being called **first fruits**:

James 1:17-18: (NASB) ¹⁷Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. ¹⁸In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.



This verse refers to another age to follow this one and shows the true church as part of Christ in a position of might and power:

Ephesians 1:18-23: (NASB) ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and 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 ²⁰which He brought about in Christ, when He raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far 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. ²²And He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

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Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1191: Are Christians Supposed to Convert the World?

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1191-gospel-message/>

See:  CQ Rewind
SHOW NOTES

1. Did Jesus tell his disciples to convert the whole world? What were his instructions on the day of his ascension? (See Matthew 28:16-20, Luke 24:46-50, Acts 1:6-8)
2. How do those instructions apply to us today? What are our responsibilities as disciples of Christ? Has the gospel been spread to all nations? Does this change our responsibility? (See Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8)
3. What does the Parable of the Sower teach us about how the gospel is received by those who hear it? (See Matthew 13:10-19, Luke 8:5-8, 11-15)
4. Will the gospel be accepted by all who hear it? If not, should we keep preaching it? Is this life the *only* time for salvation? (See Isaiah 49:8, Ezekiel 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 6:1-2)
5. Does God's plan involve sending the "unevangelized" to be tormented? Or, are all those who are unevangelized to be saved, whether evil or good? What are the errors with these beliefs? (See Psalm 9:17, Matthew 5:29, Luke 16:23, 2 Peter 3:9)
6. What is God's plan for the eternal destiny of the world of mankind? How do you feel about this? Is it fair? (See Romans 5:12, 18-19, 8:19-21, Hebrews 2:9, 1 Timothy 2:3-6)
7. What is the order of salvation? What is the process for unbelievers? Why is it important to understand the different *times* to accept salvation? (See Romans 8:22-23, 11:26, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 2 Corinthians 6:1-2, 1 Timothy 4:10, 1 John 2:1-2)
8. What do we know about the resurrection process? What role do the faithful play? (See Genesis 22:17-18, Matthew 16:27, John 5:28-29, Galatians 3:27-29)
9. What should our life look like if we are not tasked to convert everyone here and now? What is our purpose in spreading the gospel? (See 1 Peter 2:9-12)
10. Do you spread the gospel to others? If so, how and why do you preach it?

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4. Will the gospel be accepted by all who hear it? Should we be concerned about the salvation of those that reject Jesus, or who believe in different gods? Why? Did Jesus convert everyone he talked to? (See Isaiah 49:8, Ezekiel 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 6:1-2)
5. Does God's plan involve sending the "unevangelized" to be tormented? Or, are all those who are unevangelized to be saved, whether evil or good? What are the errors with these beliefs? (See Psalm 9:17, Matthew 5:29, Luke 16:23, 2 Peter 3:9)
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