

VICTORY “IN CHRIST!”

Presented by

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Since the beginning of time, God has had law systems in place for His people. Those law systems allowed people to know exactly what God expected of them. When the people obeyed God’s laws, they lived peaceful and productive lives. But when they disobeyed God’s law, they had to endure the punishment that God’s law demanded. Most important of all, however, is the fact that God’s law systems explained to the people what they had to do to find their way back home to heaven to live with Him forever.

At first, God gave His laws directly to the heads of households. These men were known as “patriarchs.” Thus, this period in human history is known as the system of “Patriarchal Law.” Eventually, God instituted a more-specific law system that was **just** for the people of Israel who were known as Hebrews or Jews. Because that law system was given to the Jews through God’s prophet Moses, it became known as “the Law of Moses.” Later, after Jesus came to the Earth, God instituted what we today call “the Christian Age,” at which time He set aside the Patriarchal and Mosaical Law systems. Today, there is only one law system that is acceptable to God. It is the law system that He has given us in the New Testament.

The New Testament makes it clear that when it comes to salvation, there are **three** groups of people living on the Earth. The first group would include those people like small children or those who are mentally disabled. These people are neither saved nor lost. Rather, they are in a “**safe**” condition because, due to their current mental ability, they cannot tell the difference between right and wrong. Thus, they cannot understand God’s Word. They cannot believe in Jesus as His Son. And they cannot respond in obedience to the Gospel. People who are mentally disabled will **always** be in a safe condition and will get to go to heaven. Children, however, will eventually grow up and become teenagers and then adults. As they do, they will need to be taught what to do to be saved so that they, too, can obey God and go to heaven.

The second group of people is composed of those individuals who are “**lost**” because they are outside of Christ. These people can tell the difference between right and wrong. And they have all broken God’s laws at one time or another. How do we know that? We know it because the Bible tells us in Romans 3:23 that “**all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” **Every** person who is old enough to know the difference between right and wrong, and who is not mentally disabled, has sinned. If a person does not do what God says to do to be forgiven of his sins, then he will remain in a lost condition and will not be able to go to heaven. In Romans 6:23, Paul said that the wages of sin is spiritual death.

The third group of people is composed of those individuals who are “**saved.**” These people are Christians because they have done **exactly** what God commanded them to do to be saved, in **exactly** the way God commanded them to do it. In Romans 3:24, Paul spoke of them as being “**in Christ.**” Paul told Tim-

othy: “I endure all things for the elect’s sake, **that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus**” (2 Timothy 2:10). The apostle Peter said that Christians are people who have “purified their souls in obedience to the truth” (1 Peter 1:22-23). Jesus said that they have been “born again of the water and of the spirit” (John 3:3,5). The apostle John observed that Christians are people who continue to “walk in the light as Jesus is in the light” (1 John 1:7). As a result of their relationship with God and His Son, the people in this group have access to all spiritual blessings—which are found only “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

But how does a person get “into Christ” so that he can have his sins forgiven? Is it enough for a person to “just have faith” in God and Christ? **No**, it is not! James said, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!” The demons believed in God and Christ, but they refused to obey God’s Word. Thus, they remained in a lost condition. This teaches us that we must do something more than “just believe” or “just have faith.” So what else must we do to be saved?

Romans 10:17 says that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” This makes it clear that we must hear what God is saying to us. John 3:16 tells us that we also must believe in Christ as God’s Son. Luke 13:3 explains that we then have to repent of our past sins. Jesus said, “Unless you repent, you will all perish.” And we must confess Christ’s name before others. Paul said in Romans 10:10, “With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Finally, we must be baptized for the forgiveness of our sins. In Acts 22:16 Saul of Tarsus was told, “Arise and be baptized, washing away your sins.” All of these steps are important. But according to the Bible, baptism is the one step that actually puts us “into Christ.” Paul wrote in Galatians 3:27, “For as many of you as were baptized **into Christ** have put on Christ.” It is only when we are **in Christ** that we then can enjoy the spiritual blessings that God gives Christians. Those blessings include things like the forgiveness of sins, the ability to pray to God and have Him answer our prayers, and the hope of going to heaven.

The choice is ours. Will we choose to be rebellious sinners who live “outside of Christ” and thus are destined to be lost? Or will we choose to be obedient Christians who live “in Christ” and thus get to go to heaven to live with God forever? The decision we make on this one point is the most important decision we will ever make in our entire lives. What will our choice be?