**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***Ekklesia Series***

***Why Is It All About Jesus?***

 **January 20th, In the Year of Our Lord 2019**

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**(Unless otherwise noted, CSB17 text is quoted)**

This title is meant to call a person to make a decision. When a person hears the name of Jesus, there is a decision to be made. This is true for Believers and non-believers. Those who have not surrendered to God know that they have a choice to make. For Believers, there is a constant presence to bring forth all for which He stands.

Moving forward into the second century and beyond, the Believer’s Church was called by God to bring forth a unified message accurately identifying Jesus.

WHY?

John 6:39-40 NAU

39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

 40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

2 Peter 3:8-10 NAU

8 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.

 9 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.

 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

To accomplish His desires, God moves forward in history with His plan.

 There are main attributes of Jesus that must be witnessed which distinguish God’s message of salvation from any other religion or faith in the world. To some degree, many will find this technical, but this is the message that went forward from the 1st century. Eventually, the Believers Church produced the Nicaea Creed of 325 A.D.

 The teachings of God as Jesus, the talking points, the understandings, the truth, went forward. This is what captured peoples’ hearts and minds. This is the truth that empowered people to live their lives for God. For many, their unyielding faith led them to die as martyrs.

We cannot emphasize enough how we, like the saints of two thousand years ago, need to understand these teaching points. This is what distinguishes The God-Jesus from Muhammad, Buddha, and the whole Hindu system and any others. This is where there is an exclusive claim to the right path to eternal life with God. It is not that someone has to know all the theological points about God as Jesus to be saved; however, we are responsible for what we know, and therefore, it is our responsibility, as Believers, to witness what God did in the incarnation and who Jesus is.

The perspective, I believe, that broadens the attractiveness of the Gospel Message is to see how God saved people from the beginning. We need to keep in mind that Abel is the first biblical example of a person humbling himself to God as noted in Hebrews 11. Jesus’ Cross is the greatest sign of humility in history. Abel was just as saved as Paul or Peter or you and me. There isn’t any biblical text declaring that Abel knew Jesus, but he knew God and that is the same relationship (John 1, 1 John 1). Abel is not considered to be a Hebrew. Yes, a bloodline from Abram can be traced back to Abel, (Son of Adam is Seth, Abel’s brother, to Noah to his son Shem to Abram). Abram is accepted as the first Hebrew (Genesis 12). If Abel would have been asked who his father was, he would have said Adam, but Abel knew that his Spiritual Father was God. Adam could not approve Abel as righteous, but God did. Abel did not bring a firstling sacrifice to Adam. Abel brought his sacrifice to God. We can see that the Jews in Jesus’ day considered Abraham to be their father (Luke 1:73), meaning that their people started with Abraham and God’s covenant through him. So, Abel, not a Hebrew, is saved because he humbled himself to God, his Spiritual Father, bringing forth a firstling sacrifice (Genesis 4:4), and God approves him as righteous.

By faith he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith (Hebrews. 11:4).

This proclaims to us what is exclusive is the path to God.

 Humbling Surrendering Faith Changes the Heart

Paul highlights the same truth in Galatians 3:7-9.

6 Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."

 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

 Skip to. . .

3:17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

 18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

 19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

Here are seven observations about Jesus.

1. God, as Jesus, lived the perfect path to gain eternal life. Perfect humility and sacrificial life to God exampled in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36ff).
2. God, as Jesus, taught that He was the Way to the Truth to Eternal Life (John 14:6).
3. God incarnated Himself to be one of us to pay the price for sin.
4. God, as Jesus, defeated sin and death by rising from the dead proving that life exists beyond our bodies’ ability to sustain life.
5. God, as Jesus, lived among sin, before and after the Cross, and still was victorious. Jesus lived a sinless life (1 Peter 2:22; 1 John3:5).
6. God, as Jesus, spiritually empowered people to go forth in His name with His exclusive eternal life plan. We call this plan Salvation (John 20:19ff).
7. God, as Jesus, will bring an end to this world as we know it. He will bring an end to sin and death and separate for an eternity those who love and those who hate (Revelation 20:11ff).

It is not that a person living in the Amazon basin one thousand years before Jesus lived has to know all about Jesus, but the person in the Amazon basin has to humble himself to God as Abel did. God has revealed himself to all people from the beginning through the creation, and they are without excuse (Romans 1:18ff).

So, in the “name of Jesus” is the claim that all paths to God other than the one Jesus taught is a dead end. They do not work. The leaders of these other teachings are powerless. The only power they have is what fallen man gives them and that is temporal. Their power ends in this life. Their power is not eternal, and the grave buries it.

**Isaiah 41:7** The craftsman encourages the metalworker; the one who flattens with the hammer encourages the one who strikes the anvil, saying of the soldering, "It is good." He fastens it with nails so that it will not fall over.

**Habakkuk 2:18** What use is a carved idol after its craftsman carves it? It is only a cast image, a teacher of lies. For the one who crafts its shape trusts in it and makes idols that cannot speak.

**Psalm 115:4** Their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands.

**Isaiah 44:10** Who makes a god or casts a metal image that benefits no one?

**Isaiah 2:20** On that day people will throw their silver and gold idols, which they made to worship, to the moles and the bats.

**Isaiah 46:6** Those who pour out their bags of gold and weigh out silver on scales they hire a goldsmith and he makes it into a god. Then they kneel and bow down to it.

Man cannot save himself from eternal darkness. (Another way to say man cannot save himself from being separated from God.) Man cannot create his own path to God. History is full of examples of fallen man attempting to create his own path to God. We are fighting a world war right now against a manmade path to God. It only brings death and destruction. Satan is the destroyer, and he works through these self-made groups.

So, the crucial points that went forward from the 1st century.

**Who did Jesus say that He was?**

Jesus often referred to Himself as “The Son of Man”.

This self-designation, “**The Son of Man**” by Jesus, is worthy of discussion. In all four Gospels, the phrase can be found. If you have a computer and can do a search for the title, you will find that it is used about 80 times. Except for John 12:34, where the crowd refers to Jesus as the Son of Man, Jesus speaks this term himself. We find an Old Testament reference. In Acts 7:56, Stephen uses the term. In Daniel 7:13, we also find the term.

13 "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him.

 14 "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed. (NAU)

 Erickson makes the observation that there are three roles of the Son of Man: Servant, Suffering, and Return.

 Reference: Millard Erickson, “The Word Became Flesh”

(Baker Book House Company 1991; page 18,19; ISBN 0-8010-3208-3)

Through this study, it can be determined that the title “**Son of Man**” can be assigned to three categories.

1. A **servant** role on earth.

Matthew 9:6, 12:28; Mark 2:10, 2:28; Luke 5:24, 6:5

1. **Suffer, die and rise** from the dead.

Mark 8:31, 9:9,31, 10:33,34; Luke 9:22,44, 18:31-33; Matthew 17:19, 22-23, 20:18-19

1. **Return** in Eschatological glory.

Matthew16:27; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26

Anyone, after reviewing Jesus’ self-designations in the Bible, can easily conclude that Jesus is proclaiming that He is the long-awaited Messiah and is fulfilling Old Testament Scripture.

Erikson continues the study with an examination of the phrase “**Son of God.”** This title is used in Mark 1:1, 15:39. Notable use of the address is by Satan in Matthew 4 during the test in “The Test in The Wilderness.” In Mark 3:11, the evil spirts refer to Jesus as the Son of God.

The “**Son of God”** designation combined with the “**Son of Man”** leaves no doubt that Jesus is the incarnation of God as prophesied in the Old Testament.

 These titles only provide part of the understanding concerning why God is successful with His incarnation mission. **God was also one of us in that He contained full humanity as Jesus but did not sin.** From the Gospel accounts, we see that Jesus was birthed into the world just like we were; he grew up in a common family of his day. They were of the working-class people. Jesus’ earthly parents took Him to the Temple on a yearly basis as was the custom of the community. Like many of us, Jesus grew-up attending spiritual services in His local community. Jesus saw the world around Him. He, no doubt, made observations of the Roman occupation.

Example: It was impressed upon me at a young age that the Roman world was brutal. What I understood as a youth I verified as an adult through study of the Romans.

 When I was a boy and first saw the movie Ben-Hur, I was captivated. We saw the movie for the first time on the big screen. There was a theater at Memorial City Mall in Houston off of I -10 and Gessner. This was in the day when theater screens were huge. A movie like Ben-Hur was made to be seen on such a screen. It is reported they spent 15 million to make the film in 1959. I saw the movie in 1969 when I was in Junior High. If your grandchildren have not seen this movie, they need to see it. There are some violent scenes, so, a child needs to be perhaps the age I was.

 Why do I mention this movie? People in the world are oppressed. At times, they cannot see relief. We know that in the 1st and 2nd centuries life was hard, cruel and oppressive. There is a scene in the movie when Charleston Heston, who plays Ben-Hur, was being carried to prison. He was dressed in fine clothes that were torn due to being whipped. The precession of prisoners stopped in a village, and the locals approached the chain gang, because they were allowed to give them water. However, the Roman in charge of the prisoner platoon barked to the person giving Ben-Hur water, “No water for him!” Ben-Hur fell to the ground in exhaustion. He called to God, “God help me!” Jesus, who, at that part of the movie, was an unknown to the authorities, came from the onlookers and knelt down and gave Ben-Hur water. Ben-Hur looked into the eyes of this man who dared to show him kindness in the face of oppression. The Roman soldier saw this unknown man giving Ben-Hur water and said, “I said, no water for him!” The soldier walked toward Jesus, but then was stopped by a spiritual force. He looked at Jesus as if stymied. The soldier stopped barking commands and turned away.

As a Junior High boy, I was somewhat taken by the movie and years later remembered that scene. What made it even more powerful is that after Ben-Hur regained his freedom, he sees Jesus on the road to the Cross after his trial, and his role is reversed. He went to Jesus and gave him water in the face of the Roman guards.

 These scenes are not noted in the Bible, but they represented realities in Jesus’ day and today. As a boy, I was taken by the strength and resolve to act for those that are being oppressed in the face of the oppressors. The message that I received from the movie was very powerful. There was a power greater than I, greater than any power on earth that would prevail. I knew that the story I watched on the big screen was deeply rooted in the Bible. No one had to put the pieces together for me. I got it.

 There were other movies that we saw that were about the Bible. You know them: The Greatest Story Ever Told, The Ten Commandments, and The Robe stand-out. These movies furthered the witness of God, of Jesus, of the Gospel to a country that needed to hear.

 **Transitional Pieces**

 **Jesus is Fully God, Fully Man,**

**Sinless, Fulfills all Righteousness.**

We looked at the titles that Jesus claimed or were assigned to Him. We have noted His full Humanity and full deity. Then there is His sinlessness. Jesus never gave a prayer of confession for Himself. Jesus gave us the model prayer in Matthew 6, but that was for us not Him. Jesus’ baptism was to fulfill all righteousness as fulfilling Old Testament prophecy.

**Matthew 3:11-17**

11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove his sandals. He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

 12 His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn. But the chaff he will burn with fire that never goes out."

 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to stop him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?"

 15 Jesus answered him, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John allowed him to be baptized.

 16 When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him.

 17 And a voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

**Isaiah 40:3** A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert.

**Matthew 5:17-18**

 17 "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.

**Psalm 89:26** He will call to me, You are my Father, my God, the rock of my salvation.

**Psalm 2:7** I will declare the Lord 's decree. He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

**Acts 13:33** God has fulfilled this for us, their children, by raising up Jesus, as it is written in the second Psalm: You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

**Hebrews 1:5** For to which of the angels did he ever say, You are my Son; today I have become your Father, or again, I will be his Father, and he will be my Son?

**Hebrews 5:5** In the same way, Christ did not exalt himself to become a high priest, but God who said to him, You are my Son; today I have become your Father,

**Matthew 3:17** And a voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

Below, I have added a section about the difference between the Baptism of John the Baptist of Jesus. This also details why water-baptism in not a biblical requirement for salvation. Many denominations require water-baptism for salvation. They are carrying out their own tradition. When they point to Scripture to support their case, they take it out of context. I will meet with anyone to discuss this. What can you add to the Cross that can save you? Did Jesus leave something out of the Cross that you need to add for salvation?

**Baptism of John (water) – Baptism of Jesus (Holy Spirit)**

**John 1:19-34 ESV**

19 And this is the testimony of John,

when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

 20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed,

"I am not the Christ."

 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."

 22 So they said to him, "Who are you?

We need to give an answer to those who sent us.

What do you say about yourself?"

 23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'

as the prophet Isaiah said."

 24 (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.)

25 They asked him,

"Then why are you baptizing,

if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

 26 John answered them,

"I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know,

 27 even he who comes after me,

the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

 28 These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan,

where John was baptizing.

 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

 30 This is he of whom I said,

'After me comes a man who ranks before me,

because he was before me.'

 31 I myself did not know him,

but for this purpose I came baptizing with water,

that he might be revealed to Israel."

 32 And John bore witness:

"I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove,

and it remained on him.

 33 I myself did not know him,

but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me,

'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain,

this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' (Isaiah 11:2, 42:1)

 34 And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

**Therefore,** after we read the testimony of John the Baptist and all four related passages in the Gospels, we see that they say the same thing (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 26-34). There isn’t any variance in the text.

There is a distinct difference between the Baptism of John and the Baptism of Jesus. The Baptism of Jesus was spiritual. No water involved. This is the connecting point. The spirit-point. No works of man (Ephesians 2:18) can you be saved by, no, not your own. The Jesus-spirit-baptism for salvation removes man and his efforts from a man-centered salvation-equation. Only people who surrendered their own spirit to God, not man, surrendering their own heart to God, are eligible to receive God’s Holy Spirit. (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 26-34). The baptism of John was for repentance (Mark 1:4) and with water. The people repented (turned) towards Jesus. Remember, John’s purpose was to prepare the way for the Messiah who saves. John did not, does not save. Only Jesus saves. Only by one name under Heaven can people be saved: Jesus the incarnate Lord our God.

Acts 4:11-12 NAU 11 "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, *but* WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*. 12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

 John’s water baptism is preemptive. John states that he does not know Jesus, but the One (God) who sent him told him to baptize the One that “The Spirit” descends upon and remains (John 1:33). John then calls Jesus the “Son of God”. Specifically, John’s baptism of Jesus was to identify to Israel that Jesus was the Lamb of God (Messiah) who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29, 31). In contrast to John’s baptism, the baptism of Jesus was with the Holy Spirit to indwell/inhabit a person with the Spirit of God, therefore, creating a spiritual rebirth just as Jesus told Nicodemus (John 3). Looking back at the language Ezekiel uses to witness how God is going to change His people, we see the same indwelling.

Ezekiel 36:26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart

and put a new spirit within you;

No doubt, that incorporated into this spiritual rebirth, there was a turning from sin (repentance) as seen in Acts 2:38. Their hearts were cut; they felt their hearts cut, because at that point they surrendered to Peter’s preaching to them that they were responsible for crucifying God in the flesh, the Messiah, Jesus the Christ. Therefore, the disciples carried-out water-baptism after a person had surrendered to God’s Spirit. Thus, water-baptism is the symbolic act of a person’s spiritual saving experience. Water-baptism is a sign of Spiritual baptism by the Holy Spirit which had already taken place. The meaning of the Greek word *baptize* is ‘to dip or sink’.

**Baptize ~ Strong’s 907 βαπτίζω** *baptize* **Meaning:** to dip, sink

**Origin:** from *911* **Usage:** Baptist(3), baptize(9), baptized(51), baptizes(1), baptizing(10), ceremonially washed(1), undergo(1). **Notes:** The Greek here can be translated *in*, *with* or *by* Mark 1:4,8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26f; Acts 1:5; 2:3,4; 8:36,38; 11:16; John 1:33; Titus 3:5

 We see an example of this in Caesarea with Cornelius in Acts 10. The Gospel writers did not write that the important act was to be baptized by water. They distinctly wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit (which is God/Jesus/Holy Spirit). Jesus taught **He** would be baptizing with and by the Holy Spirit, because He was the Holy Spirit (Trinity). In fact, Paul writes for God in Romans5:5,“and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts (circumcised Deut. 30:6 Ezekiel 36) through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Therefore, we see that without the Holy Spirit we cannot receive God’s love, for by it, we receive God’s love which is saving. Always remember that God started this love initiative. 1 John 4:19 **“**We love because he first loved us.”

Matthew 3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Mark 1:8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Luke 3:16 John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

John 1:26-34 26 John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, 27 even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." 28 These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, **the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!** 30 This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." 32 And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

 In the book of Acts (written by Gospel writer Luke), we see the first baptisms by the apostles. The resurrected Lord tells the apostles in Acts 1:4-5 the same baptismal charge declared by the Gospel writers.

Acts 1:4-5 4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Note: See John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

ESV **John 14:16** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.

In Acts 2:37, the people listening to Peter, who was speaking filled with the Holy Spirit (from John 20:22 and from Acts 2:4) responded from their heart.

Acts 2:37 37 Now when they heard this they were cut (pricked, pierced Strong’s 2660) to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Strongs 2660 katanu,sswkatanusso {kat-an-oos'-so} Meaning:1) to prick, pierce 2) metaph. to pain the mind sharply, agitate it vehemently 2a) esp. of the emotion of sorrow

The condition of the heart is what God wants. God said that His desire was for a person’s heart to be transformed, to be circumcised (Dueteronomy 30:6), so they could love Him and their neighbor (Deuteronomy 6:5 [Love God] and Leviticus 19:18 [Love neighbor], Luke 10:27-28; 1 John 4:20-21). In Acts 2:37, through Peter, the Holy Spirit had convicted (John 16:8) those present to the point that they knew their guilt and that they had the blood of Jesus on their hands. They were guilty and could not cure themselves, nor remove the guilt on their own power or through any works of the Law. They did not possess the ability or knowledge of how to remove the price of their guilt. They pleaded to Peter from a heart position of total unconditional surrender and capitulation. They knew that they could not be redeemed/made right/saved through any work or merit of their own. They were convicted and dead on their feet. Therefore, God’s Holy Spirit conviction came to them through His messenger Peter, just as He did through His messenger Moses, and called them to surrender (John 3:14,15; Numbers 21:6-9). The rebellious people in the wilderness after the Exodus cried-out, “We have sinned against the Lord!” Many of them had died, and the rest were facing death and begged intercession through Moses to God. This is why (in John 3) Jesus tells Nicodemus that spiritual rebirth is necessary to gain entrance into the kingdom of God. He did not say “water baptism.” Jesus could have very easily have said “water baptism,” especially when Nicodemus compared Jesus’ rebirth to entering a second time into the womb and a reference to the breaking of birth water. Jesus could have said, “no”, I mean like John’s water baptism in the wilderness. Nicodemus, as the teacher of Israel, surely knew of John the Baptist (John 1:19) as a member of the leadership group.

 The next sentence (Acts 2:38) is very important to understand what took place. Remember, the whole creation is fallen (Romans 8:22) and mankind is totally depraved (Romans 3:10, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Job 14:4). Without God lovingly reaching-out to people, they would never turn to Him on their own. The Holy Spirit knocks on everyone’s heart-door. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). This means that Jesus is communing with a person. Peter said to them in Acts 2:38, "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. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." Repentance is a work and gift of God. The spiritual ability to repent is given to a person by God who has surrendered to God’s Holy Spirit conviction. This person opens the door to Jesus. This is the only ability of “free will choice” a person has. Once God’s Holy Spirit indwells a person then they have the ability to repent. Man cannot repent until he has surrendered. This avails the heart to receive God’s power to operate in them. Ephesians 2:8 tells us, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

 Like Luke in the above Acts passage, Paul states clearly in Romans and Ephesians that salvation is a result of God’s gift of grace and faith. Paul did not write this as a result of water-baptism.

Romans 1:16-17, 16 For I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, for it is the **power of God for salvation** to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Paul did not write that the righteousness of God is revealed from “water-baptism to water-baptism”. Water-baptism is a product of faith. Water-baptism does not produce salvation for salvation is of faith itself. Water-baptism is an act of man in the sanctification process of being obedient to God at work in the life of a Believer. In the book of James, works are a product of faith, and James states clearly in James 2:18, **“**But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” This is clear that faith produces acts of merit and functions within the life of the Believer as in the act and witness of physical water-baptism.

To further God’s direction in Paul’s teaching that the Gospel saves (1 Corinthians 15) and not the act of physical water-baptism, we read in 1 Corinthians 1:17“For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.” If physical water- baptism saved, why did Paul not emphasize that it did? In fact, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul witnesses that the Gospel is the work of Jesus Christ as He died on the Cross for our sins and rose from the tomb. Obviously, this is all the work of Jesus. Paul never discussed water-baptism in this passage to describe the Gospel that saves, which is a work of God.

Paul even stated that he only baptized a few, and he appears to have second thoughts about people making an issue of water-baptism over the Gospel of acceptance of God’s grace and faith in the previous verses leading up to verse 1:17. Paul even stated that he does not remember all that he baptized. If water-baptism was the gate to Heaven, it stands to reason that Paul would have remembered this eternal moment for all he water-baptized. It is not that water-baptism is not important as a witness of salvation, but, here, Paul makes the point that it is already being used by men to associate the legitimacy of their salvation. They had begun to associate their water-baptism to someone other than God/Jesus Christ. This is the problem throughout history and today. People saying or being directed to be sure they are water-baptized in the right church; how ridiculous. This is why God **did not make** the physical act of water-baptism the act of salvation. As we can see, left to be in the hands of men, they then quarrel over its contrived power and contrived saving effect of which they they claim that they have selective control (1 Corinthians 1:11-16).

**THE APOSTLES CREED**

I believe in God the Father Almighty,

Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord;

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; Born of the Virgin Mary;

Suffered under Pontius Pilate;

Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into Hell;

The third day He rose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven;

And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit;

The Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints;

The Forgiveness of sins;

The Resurrection of the body;

And the life everlasting. Amen.

**THE NICENE CREED**

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,

begotten of the Father before all ages, God of God, Light of Light,

very God of very God,

begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father,

through Whom all things were made:

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven,

was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man:

Who for us, too, was crucified under Pontius Pilate,

suffered, and was buried:

the third day He rose according to the Scriptures,

ascended into heaven,

and is seated on the right hand of the Father:

He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life,

Who proceeds from the Father and the Son:

Who together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified:

Who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy, Christian, and apostolic Church.

I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins,

and I look for the resurrection of the dead and life of the age to come. Amen.