

Chapter 4

The State of the Believer – His Conversion

Since there are such strong feelings about the issue of salvation among Christians, we must be careful not to allow our emotions to cause divisiveness or any other sin to spring up among us. How do the following passages deal with this issue?

Proverbs 9:7-9

1 Corinthians 3:3-5

2 Corinthians 12:20

2 Timothy 2:14

2 Timothy 2:16-18

2 Timothy 2:23, 24

Titus 3:2

Acts 16:30, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

In answering this question, one must first look at the message preached. We must understand what is being communicated before we can know what is to be applied.

According to Mark 16:15, what is God’s will for the communication of this message?

How is this illustrated in the following passages?

Mark 1:14, 15

Mark 3:14

Mark 6:7, 12

The totality of the message is summed up in Jesus' messages in Matthew 4:17 and 10:7. What was this message?

The totality, however, is far too broad and does not communicate the way of salvation clearly. According to Mark 16:15 and Luke 4:18, what is to be preached?

This message is further simplified in Acts 5:42, which brings the message to its essence – what is this final message?

This gospel of Jesus Christ is made up of a core of basic truths that are presupposed in the phrase – gospel.

According to John 11:25 and 5:24, what must man's response be to the gospel?

According to Luke 7:50, what is the key element to be found in salvation?

Luke 24:45-48 summarizes what the Scriptures teach us to believe in faith about Christ. List this information.

Mark 6:12 gives this message preached in the context of man's response. What is this response?

Read Colossians 1:25-27.

What does Paul see as his role?

What does he do to fulfill his role?

In Colossians 1:25-27, what is the mystery?

What was the message that upset the guards in Acts 4:1, 2 as preached by Peter and John?

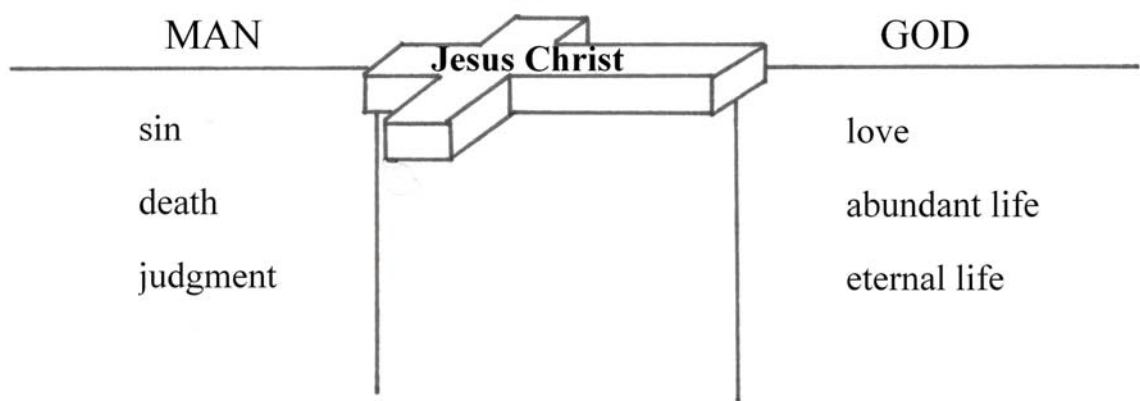
What penalty was Christ claiming victory over in John 5:24?

In the context of Acts 1:8:

What is the gospel?

What is the key for experiencing the gospel?

Chart #1



The above illustration is known as “The Bridge.” It is the tool used by The Navigators to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ. From the core of basic truths of this message as described in the passages above, place the appropriate verse where this truth could best be brought to light in the context of this gospel illustration.

A second way of approaching this issue of what is to be preached is to look at the verses in Scripture which offer an answer to the question of being “saved” or gaining “eternal life.” Use the chart below to gain a full knowledge of the scriptural answers to this question.

Passage	Solution Offered to Salvation/Eternal Life
Mark 16:16	
Luke 7:50	
Luke 8:12	
John 3:15-17	
John 5:24	
John 6:54	
Acts 2:21	
Acts 4:12	
Acts 16:30, 31	
Romans 10:9	
Romans 10:13	
1 Corinthians 1:21	
1 Corinthians 2:2	
2 Thess. 2:10	
Revelation 3:20	

Now, from the work done on the above chart, list the observations you have in the chart below in descending order – begin with the one most often mentioned in Scripture and finish with the one least often mentioned. (Letter each item a, b, c, etc.)

Chart #2

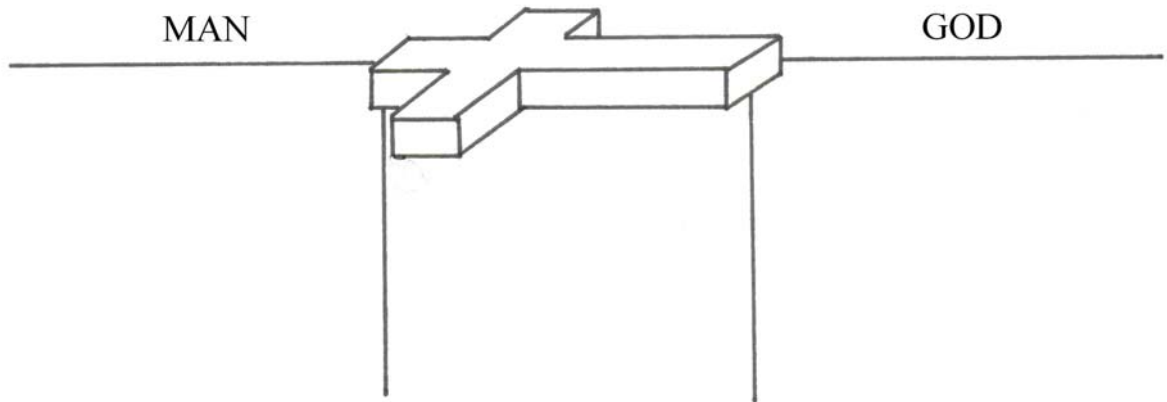
Solution

Times Mentioned

References in Scripture

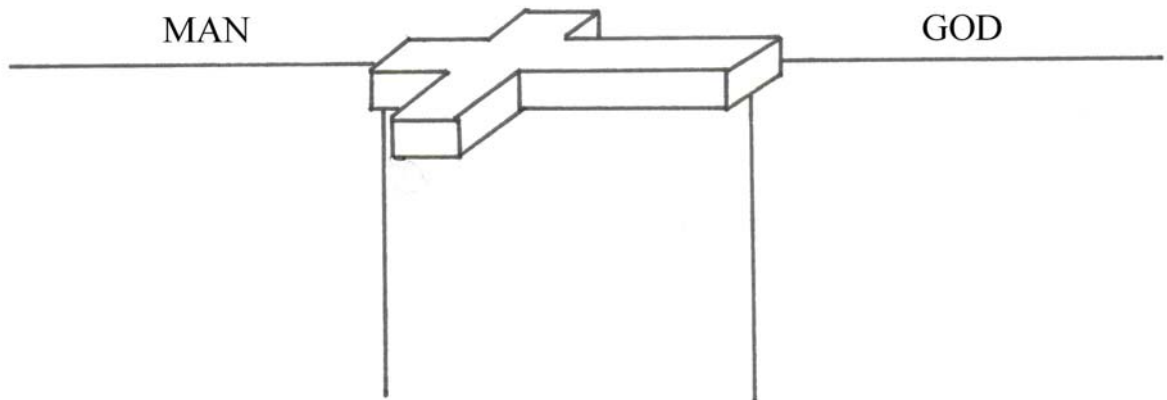
From the chart fill in the bridge illustration below as in Chart #1. From the core of basic truths offered in the solution column of the chart, place the appropriate letter where this truth would be best brought to light in the context of the gospel presentation. Beside the letter write the truth. Include all truths as listed in the chart which you have just completed.

Chart #3



In this last illustration we must construct the “greatest common denominator” for salvation information in the bridge illustration. Combine the information found in the previous illustrations (Charts #1 & #3) into one in the bridge below, and write this in where this truth might best be brought to light. Whenever possible, use a single word or a short phrase to illustrate this truth.

Chart #4



Conversely, what would be the least common denominator for salvation? From the passages below, what is all that is necessary for salvation?

Matthew 9:2

Luke 7:48-50

John 3:16

John 3:18

John 5:24

John 6:47

John 11:25, 26

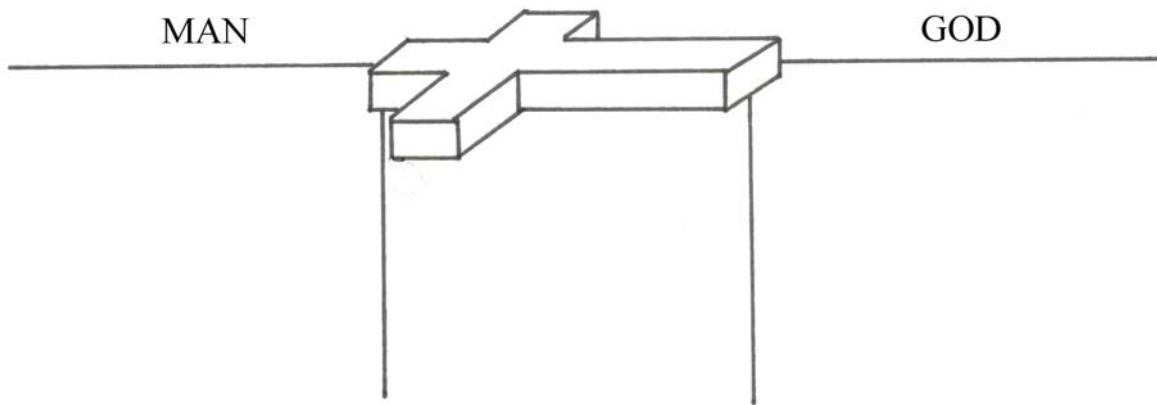
Acts 10:43

Acts 15:8, 9

From this study, which conclusions can be made concerning the gospel message?

On the chart below construct the gospel message you will use, including all verses and pertinent terms.

Chart #5



Once the message, as both preached and received, is studied, one must by necessity deal with the four prevailing doctrinal issues of conversion – that of Water Baptism, Lordship, the Point of Salvation, and Election.

Water Baptism and conversion are the first issues with which we will deal.

Many people are misled by confusing verses dealing with water baptism and those dealing with spiritual baptism. To help with this problem, fill in the chart below.

Passage	How symbolism is used (point sought to be made)
Matthew 3:11	
Luke 12:50	
Acts 1:5	
Acts 11:16	
Romans 6:3, 4	
1 Corinthians 12:13	
Ephesians 4:4-6	
Colossians 2:11, 12	
1 Peter 3:21, 22	

This next chart helps to emphasize the salvation power of spiritual baptism over symbolic water baptism. Fill it in, answering the appropriate questions.

Passage	Work of Spiritual Baptism	Symbolism of Water Baptism
Eph. 5:25-27		
Titus 3:5		
1 Pet. 3:21, 22		

Summarize the work of spiritual baptism.

Fill in the chart below, answering the appropriate questions.

Passage	Situation	Salvation Occurred?	Water Baptism Occurred?
Luke 5:23-26		Y N	Y N
Luke 7:44-50		Y N	Y N
Acts 4:1-4		Y N	Y N
Acts 11:19-21		Y N	Y N
Acts 13:9-12		Y N	Y N
Acts 17:1-4		Y N	Y N
Acts 28:22-24		Y N	Y N

What problem do these passages pose for those who connect water baptism with salvation?

How does 1 Corinthians 1:7 reflect on this?

Read the following passages and give the chronological order of the events which are recorded in each.

Passage

Chronology of Events

Acts 10:44-48

Acts 16:14, 15

What implications do these passages hold for those who believe water baptism is necessary for salvation?

How would conversion through water baptism strike at the root meaning of these central doctrines of salvation?

Doctrine	Passage	How Doctrine Nullifies Salvation via Water Baptism
Faith	Luke 7:50	
Imputation	2 Cor. 5:21	
Grace	Eph. 2:8, 9	
Regeneration	Titus 3:5	
Mercy	Titus 3:5	
Propitiation	1 John 2:1, 2	

What, then, is the proper role of baptism?

What was Jesus' rationale for being baptized? Matthew 3:13-17

The chart below reveals it as the norm for the ministers of the gospel.

Passage	Minister	Person(s) Converted	Believers Baptized?
Acts 2:38, 41			Y N
Acts 8:12			Y N
Acts 9:17, 18			Y N
Acts 16:14, 15			Y N

What light does Matthew 28:19, 20 shed on the discipling ministry and water baptism?

From this study:

Who should be baptized?

What is baptism?

Why are we to be baptized?

The second issue which causes problems is that of Salvation, Repentance, and Lordship. The debate rages strong among Christians as to whether a man can make Christ Savior without making Christ Lord.

One must be careful at this point to distinguish between what is expected of those who are saved, and what is required for salvation. There must be no doubt that it was and is Christ's intent not only to save the world through the agency of His death, but also it was and is His intent to establish His kingdom upon the earth.

Paul makes this very clear in his teachings. Read Colossians 1:13, 14.

What does this passage say in verse 14 that we have in Christ?

In verse 13, from what are we delivered?

Yet it does not stop here. Rather than becoming free moral agents, we have been transferred to another kingdom.

Whose kingdom is this?

What implications does this have for the role repentance and lordship play in the salvation decision?

Christ clearly emphasized repentance and lordship in His messages as well. Read Mark 1:14, 15.

In verse 14, what does Jesus do?

What three components does His message take on when He proclaims, “The time is fulfilled?”

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How does Christ link repentance, lordship and salvation, and what role does the establishment of His kingdom play in this?

If God is then establishing His kingdom on the earth, who are the subjects or members of this kingdom?

What was the result of God’s kingdom of Israel living in sin?

2 Samuel 12:13, 14

Ezekiel 36:19-23

Romans 2:24

How is this also true about God’s New Covenant Kingdom?

How is this inseparability between our salvation and our responsible position within God's kingdom linked in Paul's statement in Acts 20:21-25?

Again, in Acts 24:24, 25, how did Paul link the expectation of lifestyle with God's kingdom and the gospel?

It cannot be denied, then, that there are evidences of salvation which God specifically had in mind when He transferred the redeemed man into His kingdom. Read the passages below and describe the evidence God is looking for:

1 John 2:4

1 John 2:29

1 John 3:14

1 John 3:24

1 John 5:13

1 John 5:18

Yet, at the same time we must never trust in works nor eliminate the free nature by which we are saved by grace.

What do the following verses say about the free nature of the gospel?

Romans 5:15

Romans 5:16

Romans 5:18

Revelation 22:17

What do the following verses say about our lifestyle in terms of works and performance when it comes to salvation?

Ephesians 2:8, 9

Romans 3:21-24

Romans 3:28

Romans 5:8

Romans 11:6

Titus 3:5, 6

The Bible is in fact full of men whose souls were saved, yet whose lives did not evidence this. Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-5.

Who was involved in this sin?

Cross reference this description in verse 1 with 2 Chronicles 33:9. How are these two situations similar?

What action was Paul going to take?

What would happen to the flesh?

What would happen to the spirit?

The spiritual reality of this situation is found in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. Read this passage.

What is the foundation?

What is the gold and silver, etc.?

What is the wood, hay, etc.?

What will happen to each on the judgment day?

Given a hypothetical situation where a man receives Christ and then never does another good thing his entire life, what, according to this verse, will be the result?

There is an inherent danger, then, in setting ourselves up as judges over whose life “evidences” true conversion (e.g., is good enough in our judgment to warrant having been saved), and whose life does not. It would be well for us to remember a key question from the depravity study at this point: how much sin does it take to kill or die spiritually? Having realistically answered this question, we must realize that if Christ is the norm, none of us live lives which justify our claim to having experienced genuine conversion. If it is not our life by which we know we are saved, then what is it?

1 John 5:11-13

Yet, at the same time it cannot be disputed that there are those who have a knowledge of God, who think they are saved and yet are not. How do the following passages speak to this problem?

Matthew 7:21-23

Luke 13:22-27

James 2:19

This is not an uncommon occurrence in Scripture. Read the following passages and write out a short sentence describing how it relates to this problem.

Acts 18:24-28

Acts 19:1-5

Romans 10:1, 2

Whose job is it, though, to evaluate and judge men? James 4:11, 12

What, then, is a Christian to do? The author recommends to:

1st caution – Do not judge.

2nd caution – Do not cheapen the gospel of Christ by requiring works.

3rd caution – Do not presuppose salvation if there is cause for doubt.

The key, then, is love; and if we must err, the stakes being so high, let us err on the side of conservatism, making sure all are saved without a doubt.

If there is doubt about salvation and you pursue the matter and are wrong (the person is saved), what have you lost?

If there is doubt about salvation and you pursue the matter and are right, and the person is saved as a result, what have you gained?

If there is doubt about salvation and you do not pursue the matter and the person is indeed lost and dies in this lost state, what have you lost?

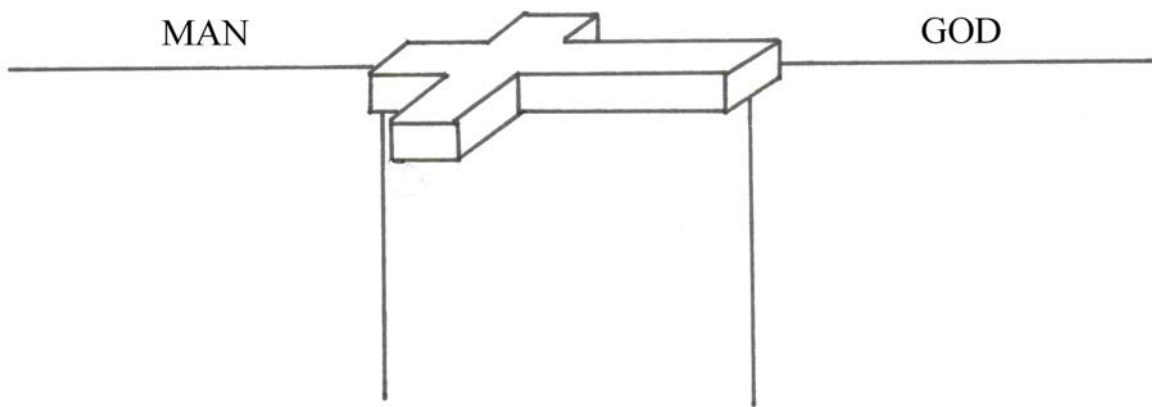
What has he lost?

What has God lost?

Summarize in a short paragraph or outline your convictions concerning salvation, repentance, and lordship.

Chart out the total picture of the message used by Christ in Matthew 4:17. It should include concepts found in the first five charts as well as the salvation, repentance and lordship study.

Chart #6



The third issue which haunts many Christians is the question, “When was the message received?” or “At what point does a person become a Christian?”

For different people the point of salvation drifts from crystal clear to hazy. As for myself, I remember clearly a Saturday afternoon in the first week of October 1968 when I prayed to receive Christ at a retreat with our church. Conversely, my brother puts his salvation somewhere between his junior year of high school and sophomore year of college. During this period he considered the claims of Christ, and at some point trusted Christ, though he does not have the foggiest notion of the exact day. Both of these experiences are equally common, yet the former is espoused for two reasons:

1. There is a sense of security in knowing an exact date.
2. It makes for a tidier testimony.

Although it is important for all of us to know beyond a shadow of a doubt we are saved, the historical progression of saving faith is not crucial, nor is there a correct historical progression that must be adhered to. Filling in the chart on the next page will help illustrate the differences in experience which Scripture allows.

Passage	Message Preached	Response Taken	Evidence of Conversion
Luke 7:36-50			
Luke 19:1-10			
Luke 23:39-43			
Acts 8:27-40			
Acts 9:1-22			
Acts 16:19-34			
Acts 17:22-34			
Acts 18:1-11			

The issue of salvation, then, is not circumstantial but spiritual.

According to Ephesians 2:8, 9, how are we saved?

According to 1 John 5:11-13, can we know we are saved?

According to Ephesians 1:13, 14, what are the issues of salvation?

How this applies to the disciple:

First, if you have been plagued by doubts about salvation, this can be settled right now.

Second, if you know you are saved, yet still doubt, this can be dealt with as well.
According to John 8:44, what does Satan enjoy telling us?

A willful decision can be made to ignore these lies from this day forward. Why is this essential for our stability as disciples?

Fourthly and lastly, a problem which seems to trouble Christians is the issue of election. Since this is usually a very emotional issue, it will be best for us to go straight to the Word. Below, you will find all related terms from the New Testament on this issue. Complete the charts as the instructions direct.

Instructions: Complete the charts in this order:

1. Write the Greek word for the term in the space provided. The number of times this word occurs in the New Testament is provided for you, as well as the reference number for the Strong's "Dictionary of the Greek New Testament" in the back of "Strong's Concordance."
2. Using a Greek New Testament reference work, record the definition of the word.
3. Write out the key thought of the selected passages.
4. Write a thesis statement based on the information about the word. The statement should be one sentence long, summarizing the spiritual truths concerning this word and salvation.

Term	Greek Word	Occurrence
Predestination		6 times; 4309

Reference work and definition:

Selected passages:

Ephesians 1:5

Ephesians 1:11

Romans 8:29

Romans 8:30

Thesis statement:

Term	Greek Word	Occurrence
Election		7 times; 1589

Reference work and definition:

Selected passages:

Matthew 22:14

Matthew 24:22

Mark 13:27

Acts 9:15

Romans 8:33

Romans 9:11

Romans 11:7

Colossians 3:12

1 Thessalonians 1:4

2 Timothy 2:10

Titus 1:1

1 Peter 2:9

2 Peter 1:10

Revelation 17:14

Thesis statement:

Term	Greek Word	Occurrence
Chosen		21 times; 1586

Reference work and definition:

Selected passages:

Mark 13:20

John 13:18

John 15:16

John 15:19

Ephesians 1:4

Thesis Statement:

Term	Greek Word	Occurrence
(Book of Life) Book		32 times; 975
Life		134 times; 222

Reference work and definition (book):

Reference work and definition (life):

Selected passages:

Philippians 4:3

Revelation 3:5

Revelation 13:8

Revelation 17:8

Revelation 20:11-15

Revelation 21:27

Thesis statement:

Term	Greek Word	Occurrence
(Foundation of the World) Foundation		11 times; 2602
World		187 times; 2889

Reference work and definition (foundation):

Reference work and definition (world):

Selected passages:

Matthew 25:34

Ephesians 1:4

Hebrews 1:10

Hebrews 4:3

Thesis statement:

Term	Greek Word	Occurrence
Grace		165 times; 5485

Reference work and definition:

Selected passages:

Romans 3:24

Romans 11:1-6

Galatians 1:15

Galatians 6:1

Ephesians 1:5-8

Ephesians 2:8, 9

2 Timothy 1:9

Thesis statement:

Term	Greek Word	Occurrence
Called		106 times; 2564
Calling		11 times; 2821

Reference work and definition (called):

Reference work and definition (calling):

Selected passages:

Romans 8:30

1 Corinthians 1:9

2 Thessalonians 2:14

2 Timothy 1:9

Hebrews 3:1

Hebrews 5:4

1 Peter 2:9

Thesis statement:

Term	Greek Word	Occurrence
Foreknew		5 times; 4207

Reference work and definition:

Selected passages:

Acts 2:23

Romans 8:29

1 Peter 1:1, 2

Thesis statement:

Write a thesis statement for each of the following passages as they deal with the issue of election and salvation.

Romans 8:29-31

Romans 9:6-26

Ephesians 1:3-12

1 Peter 1:1-5

From your study, write a short paragraph summarizing God and the role of election in salvation.

Application

How will a better understanding of the state of the believer – his conversion – aid us in our worship of God?

How and why will a proper understanding of the state of the believer – his conversion – aid us in our relationships with one another?

How and why will a proper understanding of the state of the believer promote a better self image?

How would a lack of conviction in this area affect a disciple's walk with God? List below the five basic areas which would be affected by a lack of proper convictions in this area.

What extremes might a Christian drift into if he did not fully understand the state of the believer – his conversion?

How would a proper understanding in this area aid in consistency in the basics?