

# Hartford Bible Students

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## Who Will Receive Salvation?

### Is Now the Only Time of Salvation?

Many are taught that now is the only time for salvation. However, ever since Adam disobeyed, his children have been plagued by sin and sorrow, and billions have never heard the good news of salvation through Christ. Some live in countries where preaching Christ is forbidden. Furthermore, the great majority of mankind, plagued by inherited weakness and greatly influenced and deceived by Satan, are not capable of responding to God's counsels now.

But the fact is that Jesus Christ "tasted death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9) It would simply not be fair for God to withhold salvation from the billions who have never had a favorable opportunity to receive it. But, how can we harmonize this with the clear statement that Jesus is the only means of salvation? The reality is that now is the time for the selection of a few with ears to hear the message of salvation — the Church. But there will be an opportunity, in due time, for all others "to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

Paul confirms these two opportunities for salvation in 1 Timothy 4:10 where he says "...we trust in the living God who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe." Note the two different salvations: 1. for "all men," and 2. "specially for those that believe." Jesus himself stated that this present age is not the due time for the majority when he spoke to the people in parables and symbols so that the majority would not be converted at that time. "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." (Mark 4:11-12)

If now is the only time for all to be converted, we would ask, why did Jesus not give a clear message so that all could have an equal opportunity to understand his words of salvation? Again, to clarify, God's merciful plan of salvation is in progressive stages. The first stage offers salvation now to Christians who will make up the Church. The second stage offers salvation through Christ and his Church to the remainder of mankind — all the families of the earth. "After this [after selecting the faithful of the Christian Age] I will return and build again the tabernacle of David [set up the kingdom of God]... that the remainder of men might seek after the Lord..." Acts 15:14-17; Genesis 22:18

### The Future Day of Salvation

In the future day of salvation, billions will be brought forth from their graves ready to learn of the only name whereby they might be saved. (Acts 4:12; Isaiah 26:9) Those who were faithful now will be their teachers. The Apostle Peter clarified in 2 Peter 3:7,8 that this day will be a day of judgment, one thousand years in length. Satan will be restrained during this thousand-year day, and righteousness will become the rule rather than the exception. Every stone of stumbling will be removed, and every individual will then have a fresh start in life — a new life. Isaiah 32:17; 35:8; 62:10; Revelation 20:2

With Satan bound during this thousand-year day, mankind will have, for the first time, a reasonable and favorable opportunity to exercise obedience, and to gain everlasting life. Jeremiah 31:34 says of that time, "...they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest." Verse 29 also shows that they will no longer die for the inherited sins of their fathers but, if they refuse God's generous mercy during this reign of righteousness, they will then die for their own iniquity. Anyone who is not willing to learn righteousness during that educational and restorative period, after

having been given the perfect environment in which to learn, will receive the verdict of second death, and will be denied everlasting life. Yes, and by the end of this time of opportunity, every reformed sinner will have the law of God written in his heart and will be granted life everlasting. Jeremiah 31:29- 33; Acts 3:23; Ezekiel 11:19

### **The Judgment Day — A Day of Blessing**

The Apostle Peter states that Jesus' second advent brings about judgment, but it also brings about "the times of restitution [restoration] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21) In contrast to what Adam lost by sin, note what will be restored by salvation. Adam was given an earthly home to exercise his dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, etc. (Genesis 1:26,28) He had food, shelter, health, happiness, perfect life and communion with God. But, being barred from his perfect home, he began to lack the nourishment needed to sustain perfect life, and this, along with distress of mind, initiated the long dying process.

Adam lost health, happiness, life, dominion over his home and fellowship with his Creator. As a result of being cast out of the perfect environment in Eden, Adam, and all of his children since then have had to endure the dying process in an unfriendly earth — all in consequence of the penalty for disobedience. But, by means of salvation, mankind will one day be restored to life, health, happiness, freedom from fear, dominion over the earth, and communion with God. Luke 19:10; Revelation 22:17

It will take the entire thousand-year kingdom to restore everything that was lost by disobedience in the Garden of Eden. And this is the very purpose of Christ's reign. Together, he and his Church will bless, educate and "judge the world in righteousness." (Acts 17:31; 1 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 20:6) Having lived faithfully through this difficult life, they will be compassionate and sympathetic teachers. Under their benevolent reign, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 11:9

### **All Tears Shall be Wiped Away from All Faces**

This wonderful plan of salvation was not only the greatest gift ever given, but it was also the greatest demonstration of fatherly suffering in history — watching His only begotten Son suffer the agony of being vilified and crucified. Is there any doubt what great love God has for the human race? "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

In summary, by permitting the privilege of free-will, God has taught Adam and all of his children the severe consequences of disobedience. This experience with sin and selfishness will so thoroughly teach the wages of sin, that all mankind will never again want to take the wrong course, nor will they desire sin. "This sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith." (Ecclesiastes 1:13) God's just arrangement, then, has been to teach this broad principle—"...the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23; Galatians 1:4

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