

Biblical Advanced Basics
Understanding the Bible and End Times

Part 1

Simple As Can Be
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Yes, the plan of salvation is simple *if* the Scriptures are rightly divided. Otherwise it is far from simple. Hence the grave responsibility upon those engaged in the work of the Lord to obey II Timothy 2:15:

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Let us illustrate:

Here in the heart of a city, let us say, stands a man who has been convicted of his sin. He is miserable as, at last, he sees himself as he really is, a guilty, condemned sinner.

As he stands there brooding, Mr. Average Fundamentalist comes walking down the street. In his lapel he has a button which reads “Jesus Saves.” Seeing this our unsaved friend thinks, “Here is the man for me,” and approaching him says, “I wonder if you can help me. I’m in trouble. What must I do to be saved?”

“Why!” exclaims Mr. Average Fundamentalist, “I’m so glad you ask me. There are some things in the Bible which are hard to understand but, thank God, the way of salvation is as simple as can be. Look here in my New Testament at Acts 16:30,31. When the Philippian jailor asked the same question Paul answered:” **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”**

Isn't that simple! That's all you need to do. Just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation is yours. And here are a few more Scriptures along the same line:

John 3:36: **“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”**

Romans 4:5: **“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”**

Ephesians 2:8,9: **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”**

But while Mr. Average Fundamentalist has been showing our friend the simple plan of salvation a Roman Catholic has been listening to the conversation. At last he can contain himself no longer. Stepping up to Mr. Fundamentalist he says, “Pardon me for interrupting, sir, but you are leading this man astray. Don't you know that James 2:20 says that:” **“Faith without works is dead”** “And I dare you to read James 2:24 to this man.” Turning to the passage Mr.

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Fundamentalist reads: **“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”**

“Could anything be plainer than that?” says the Roman Catholic; and with this he begins to outline all those works which he considers necessary to salvation. Just then a *Campbellite* steps up and says, “I’ve been listening to you gentlemen and if you will pardon me I think Mr. Fundamentalist is making salvation too easy while our Catholic friend here is making it too hard. It shouldn’t be difficult to determine what is required for salvation, for our Lord Himself made it very plain when He commissioned His apostles to preach the gospel. Look, here in Mark 16:15,16 we have it as simple as can be:

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

“Isn’t that plain? If this Scripture means anything, then those who believe and are baptized and those alone, are saved. And notice how carefully Peter carried out this commission at Pentecost. When his hearers were convicted of their guilt and began to ask what they must do to be saved, what did he say to them?”

Acts 2:38: **“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”**

“It seems to me that anyone who really wants to know the truth should see that, - it’s so simple.” But now a Pentecostalist steps into the circle, almost exploding: “Why didn’t you read those next verses in Mark 16, Mr. Campbellite? Why did you stop right in the middle of the passage? The rest is plain too, only you won’t receive it. See what it says here:”

Mark 16:17,18: **“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;
“They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”**

“Isn’t that perfectly plain?”

“So according to the same *Great Commission*, if you do not have miraculous powers you are not a true believer. You can’t make it mean anything else, for it distinctly says:” **“these signs shall follow them that believe;”**

“None of you can deny that under the *Great Commission*, which practically all Christians claim to follow, faith and water baptism are the requirements for salvation while miraculous powers are the evidences of salvation.”

Finally one more person joins the company, saying, “Haven’t you men all forgotten something?” “What?” they all ask.

“Why, apparently you have forgotten that there is an Old Testament in the Bible! And the Old Testament is three times as large as the New!”

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The speaker is a Seventh Day Adventist, and he presses his point home:

“Don't you know the terms of God's holy law? Let's turn to Exodus 19:5 and see what it says:”

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine:”

With Scripture after Scripture the Seventh Day Adventist seeks to prove that the observance of the ten commandments is essential to acceptance with God. Especially does he stress sabbath observance as the very sign of relationship to God. To prove this he quotes Exodus 31:13 and 17:

“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I *am* the LORD that doth sanctify you.

“It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever...”

Poor, unsaved man!

All this began with his simple question: “What must I do to be saved?”

Mr. Fundamentalist's plan had seemed so simple until the others had begun challenging him, - and each other. And strangely each of the others seemed to think his particular view was “so simple” too!

But our poor unsaved friend! What can he make of all this as he stands there, guilty and condemned? Certainly the way to peace doesn't seem very simple to him now.

And no man had better say the plan of salvation is simple if he does not “rightly divide the Word of truth.”

No man had better say it is simple who claims to be working under the *Great Commission*.

No man had better say it is simple who teaches that Pentecost marked the beginning of the Body of Christ, the Church of this age.

No man had better say it is simple who denies the distinctive ministry of the Apostle Paul. The way of salvation for sinners today can only be simple when we recognize our place in history and acknowledge that to Paul, by special revelation, God made known His message for the world *today* and His program for the Church *today*.

It should surely seem significant to the careful student of Scripture that after our Lord had given the *Great Commission* to His apostles, another apostle, Paul, should dare to say:

Romans 11:13: **“For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:”**

Did God then raise up Paul because the twelve were unfaithful in carrying out the *Great Commission*? Indeed not. It was Israel's rejection of the kingdom message and God's infinite grace to a lost world that brought about the conversion and commission of Paul.

See Paul's own words to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, some years later:

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Acts 13:46: **“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”**

We have but to read Galatians 2 to learn that it was by the will of God and under the direction of the Holy Spirit that the leaders of the twelve finally handed over their Gentile ministry to Paul who went to them with another message, **“That gospel which I preach among the Gentiles,”** - **“The gospel of the grace of God.”** (Read carefully Galatians 2:1-10).

We must not forget that when Israel rejected the glorified King and His Kingdom, the last and only nation which still had a relationship with God was alienated from Him. The very channel of God's blessing to the nations (Genesis 22:17,18) was stopped up, as it were.

Romans 5:20: **“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:”**

In the crisis God acted to make known His eternal purpose in Christ, raising up Paul to proclaim the glorious news that in response to Israel's rebellion He would dispense grace to a world of lost sinners.

Salvation to the Gentiles through the fall of Israel! What grace! The favored nation temporarily cast out that individuals everywhere might find peace with God through the blood of the cross. See what Paul writes to the Gentiles in Romans 11:30-33:

“For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

“Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

God is having mercy upon all today and RECONCILING both Jews and Gentiles unto Himself in ONE BODY by the cross.

Ephesians 2:16: **“And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:”**

Salvation has come to the Gentiles, then, not through Israel's instrumentality but through her obstinacy, - not according to any covenant but by grace, - not through the ministry of the twelve, who were (and are) to be Israel's rulers (Matthew 19:28) but through the ministry of Paul, the rebel who **“obtained mercy.”**

And so it is that in the eleventh chapter of Romans Paul emphasizes his commission as the apostle of the Gentiles. Read it again, and remember that it is not merely Paul's word. It is God's Word through Paul:

Romans 11:13: **“For I speak to your Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:”**

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If this does not satisfy the reader as to Paul's distinctive ministry to the Gentiles and his God-given authority as the apostle of grace, surely no more should be needed than the opening verses of Ephesians 3:

Ephesians 3:1-3: “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,”

So important is this matter that even before the sentence of judgment was pronounced upon Israel and the kingdom hopes of that generation were fully withdrawn, Paul, with double emphasis, pronounced a curse upon any who dared to proclaim anything but the gospel of the grace of God to the Gentiles.

Galatians 1:8,9: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. “As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

How these words should cause every sincere man of God to tremble and to make sure that his message conforms with that which the Lord of glory, from His throne in heaven, revealed to Paul!

Observe this and the plan of salvation is simple!

Do you ever find Paul proclaiming salvation by works? Does he ever command sabbath keeping, circumcision or water baptism? Not once. True, he practiced all of these during his early ministry, but that is what he came out of, - what he emerged from. Paul lived in a transition period. He was saved under the Jewish economy but raised up to bring in a new dispensation, - the dispensation of the grace of God.

And, note well, Paul was raised up to make known the very **“mystery (secret) of the gospel.”** (Ephesians 6:19). When all mankind had demonstrated its utter sinfulness, God saved Saul of Tarsus, making known through him the riches of His grace, - showing how it was that anyone ever had been saved! Now it was revealed that it had not been the blood of beasts, the waters of baptism or any other physical ceremony that had saved the saints of ages past (though these were required under law) but the infinite grace of a loving God.

Read Paul's majestic words to the Romans:

Romans 3:21-28: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

“Even the righteousness of God *which* is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

“Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

“To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

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“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

Yes, see this and the plan is sublimely simple. Today, NO works are required for salvation. Indeed salvation is offered to those who will stop working to get it, for today God wants us to see and acknowledge our utter ruin and His infinite grace.

Romans 4:4,5: **“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”**

Romans 5:1: **“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”**

Titus 3:4,5: **“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,**

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”

Ephesians 2:8-10: **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:**

“Not of works, lest any man should boast.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Ephesians 1:6,7: **“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.**

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”

Colossians 2:9,10: **“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.**

“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:”