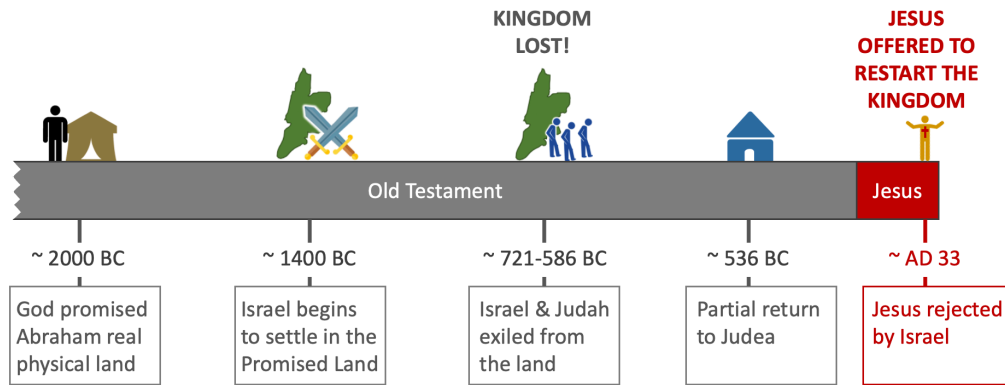


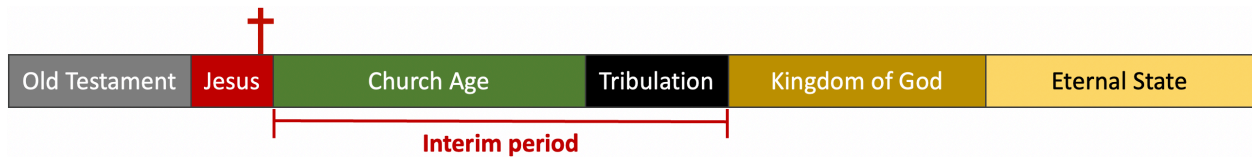
20. The Present Age – Part 2

Previously...

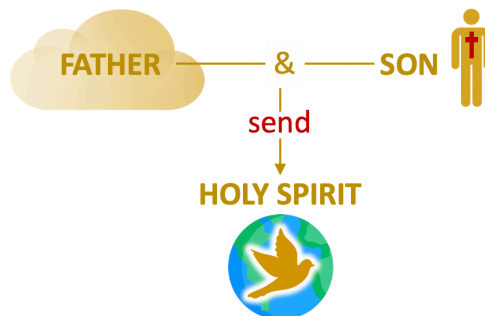
When Jesus came to earth, He offered to restart the Kingdom of God with Himself as king and with the nation of Israel fully back and in control of the land that Yahweh had given Abraham. However, national Israel rejected Jesus even though He was their promised Saviour.



So Jesus told His disciples that He would delay the return of the Kingdom and instead, introduce an interim period.

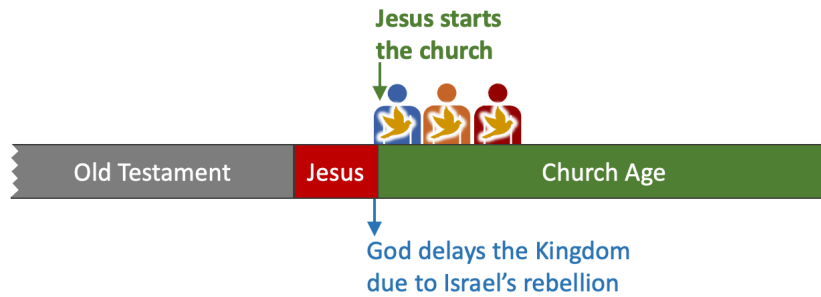


At the beginning of the interim period, after Jesus ascended into heaven, He and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to start the church.

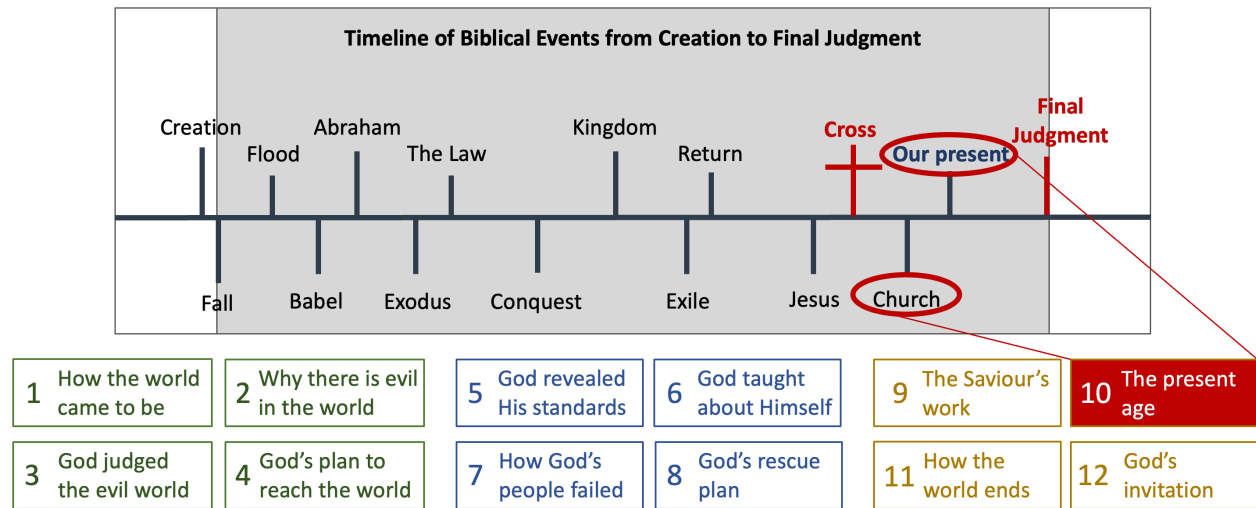


The church is made up of believers in Jesus, all of whom have the Holy Spirit living in them. Individual Jews and Gentiles who put their faith in Jesus would become part of the church.

In place of rebellious national Israel, Jesus gave the church the temporary job of being missionaries to the world. The church was to share the good news of salvation with everyone.



The Holy Spirit living in believers is not the only change that happens to those who believe in Jesus for salvation. The Bible talks about a totally new spiritual reality for every believer living in this present church age. In this lesson, we will explore what this looks like.

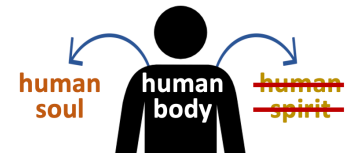


WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE TRUSTS IN JESUS

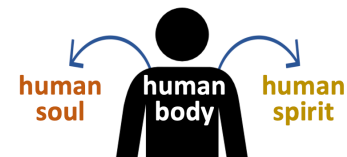
The Bible tells us that many amazing things happen the moment someone puts their trust in Jesus for salvation. We will look at a few.

1. New life through the Holy Spirit

Since the Fall, every person is born spiritually dead. They have a physical body and human soul, but no human spirit. They are unable to have a relationship with God.



When a person comes to faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit creates, or births, new spiritual life in the new believer. This is often called being “born again”, “new birth”, “new life”, “born from above” or “born of the Spirit”.



The human spirit is now able to have a relationship with God and have eternal life. This is how the Bible explains it.

Titus 3:4–7

⁴ But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, ⁵ he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. ⁶ He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. ⁷ Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.



This new birth is a one-time miracle, not a continuing process. And this cannot be reversed. A person cannot become “unborn” from this new life.

2. Indwelling and sealing of the Holy Spirit

The Bible says that once the Holy Spirit enters a person, He never leaves. He “indwells” the person forever. This is true for everyone who believes in Jesus. This is how the Bible describes a believer in Jesus.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

¹⁹ Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, ²⁰ for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.



Jesus paid a high and painful price—His suffering and death on the cross—to save mankind. As such, believers in Jesus have been “bought” by Him. He purchased freedom from eternal death for believers.

So, believers now belong to Jesus—they owe their eternal lives to Him.

To show that He owns what He has bought, Yahweh puts a seal on believers. This is a mark or a guarantee that they belong to Yahweh forever. This “**seal**” or “**mark**” is actually a Person: the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 1:21–22 (NIV)

²¹ Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.



But what exactly is God guaranteeing?

Yahweh guarantees believers that they will get eternal life (they will be “glorified”).

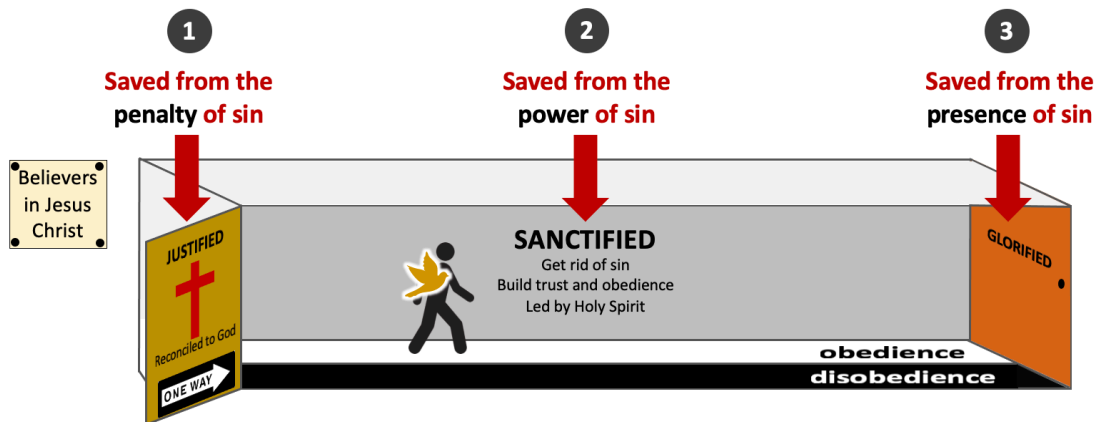
Actually, being saved by Jesus is not just being saved from eternal death. Yahweh wants to save mankind from sin entirely. So the salvation that God gives actually comes in three parts:

- **Part 1:** Saved from the **penalty** of sin (justification).
- **Part 2:** Saved from the **power** of sin (sanctification).
- **Part 3:** Saved from the **presence** of sin (glorification).



Justified: Saved from the penalty of sin

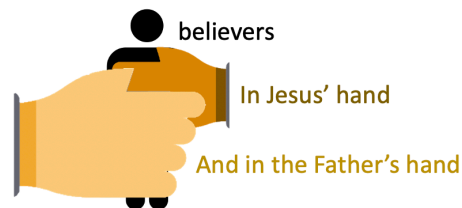
The moment a person puts their faith in Jesus, they are saved from the penalty of sin. It is immediate. And they can never lose this justification.



Jesus Himself assured believers of this. He said that believers are in His grip and in the grip of God the Father too. This is often called God's "double grip" on believers. This is what Jesus said.

John 10:27–30

²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, ²⁹ for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. ³⁰ The Father and I are one."



This means that when Yahweh justifies a person, that person is saved from the penalty of sin forever. Yahweh takes away the believer's penalty of sin and places it on Jesus. And Yahweh also deposits Jesus' righteousness into the believer. Whenever Yahweh looks at the believer, He sees the believer covered by the righteousness of Christ.

Glorified: Saved from the presence of sin

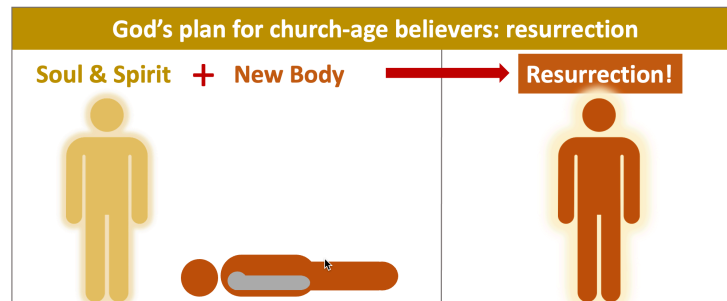
In addition, Yahweh says that everyone who has been justified, will also be glorified. This is what God is guaranteeing.

Romans 8:30b (ESV)

those whom he justified he also glorified.

This means that all believers will definitely get their glorified resurrection bodies in the future. When a believer dies, their physical body decays, but their soul and spirit live on. Yahweh guarantees that He will give the believer's immaterial side a new physical body so that they can be a complete person once more.

And this glorified body is like Jesus' resurrection body. It can never die. It will not get sick or ill. It is a perfect body.



3. Baptised by means of the Holy Spirit

Another thing that happens the moment people trust in Jesus is that they get baptised by means of the Holy Spirit. Earlier on, we saw that Jesus told His disciples to remain in Jerusalem because He would be sending the Holy Spirit. And He would baptise them with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:4–5

⁴ Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. ⁵ John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."



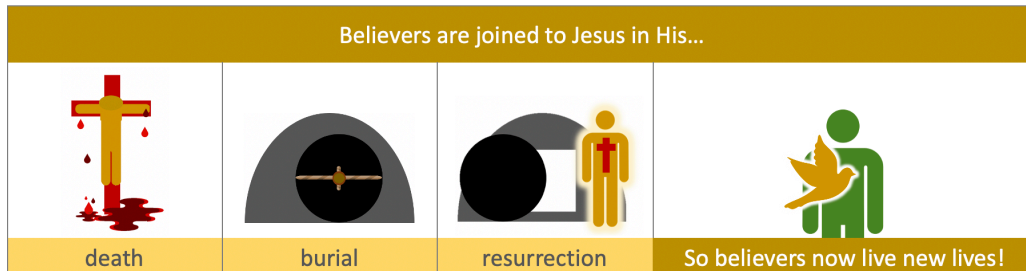
But what exactly does it mean when Jesus baptises believers with the Holy Spirit? Two things.

A. **First, Jesus uses the Holy Spirit to join believers to Himself** in a supernatural way:

- Jesus' death on the cross becomes the believer's death payment for sin and
- Jesus' resurrection gives the believer new spiritual life.

Romans 6:3–4

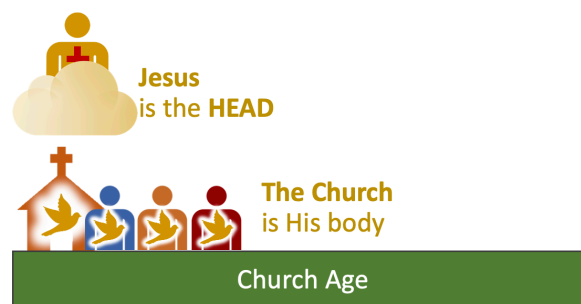
³ Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? ⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.



B. **Second, Jesus uses the Holy Spirit to also join believers to other believers.** All believers are brought together as the body of Christ, or the church.

1 Corinthians 12:12–13

¹² The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³ Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.



This is why Christians often call other Christians “brothers- or sisters-in-Christ”. It is because Jesus made all believers in Him a family through the Holy Spirit.

This two-part work of Jesus is called the baptism by means of the Holy Spirit. All believers immediately receive this baptism when they believe.

WHAT DOES THE BELIEVER'S LIFE LOOK LIKE?

Some people wonder if justification and glorification are all there is, meaning that once a person believes in Jesus and gets their “ticket to eternal life”, then they can then live however they want. Is this true? No. Not at all.

First, we need to understand what a believer in Jesus looks like. Actually, the believer looks internally like a “battleground”. This is because there are two natures in a believer.



The Holy Spirit is in the believer. He is God and being perfectly righteous, He cannot sin. This part of the believer is the “new creation” or “seed”. This means that there is one nature in the believer that cannot sin.

This is what the Bible says:

1 John 3:9 (NKJV)

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

However, while believers are still living on earth in their fallen human bodies, they still have their sin natures. Yahweh will remove their sin natures completely later on.

This means that the sin nature in believers will continue to be attracted to sin. This is how Paul, a faithful disciple of Jesus, described this internal battle.

Romans 7:18–23

¹⁸ And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. ¹⁹ I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. ²⁰ But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²² I love God's law with all my heart. ²³ But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.

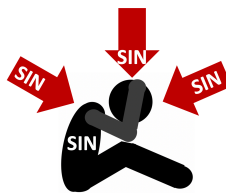
Paul was saying that his real identity and real new nature was the Holy Spirit living in him. But when he sinned, it was his sin nature that was causing him trouble.

These two competing natures are not mixed: they are fighting with each other.



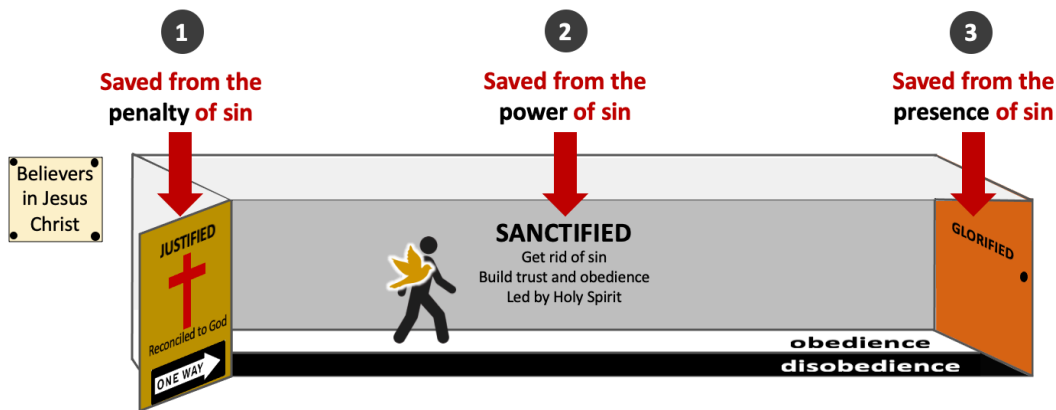
While it is true that Yahweh saves believers from the penalty of sin, He also wants to save them from the power of sin their lives now.

Why? Because sin always destroys people and relationships. And Yahweh does not want believers to live like that.



The journey of sanctification: getting rid of the power of sin in the believer’s life

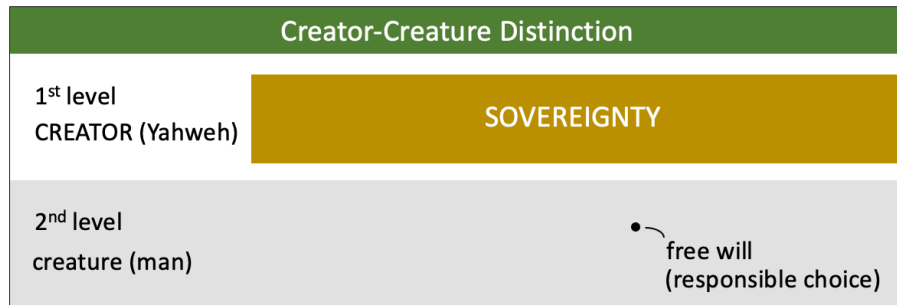
Being justified (saved or freed from the eternal penalty of sin) is only the first step in the believer’s journey with God. After that, Yahweh wants to get rid of the influence or power of sin in every believer’s life. This is the second part, or second phase, of salvation: sanctification.



Once a person believes in Jesus, their justification and glorification are guaranteed by God. These are entirely God’s work. Believers do not need to do any work. They only need to have faith in Jesus.

However, the believer must cooperate with God’s work of sanctification in their lives. Why?

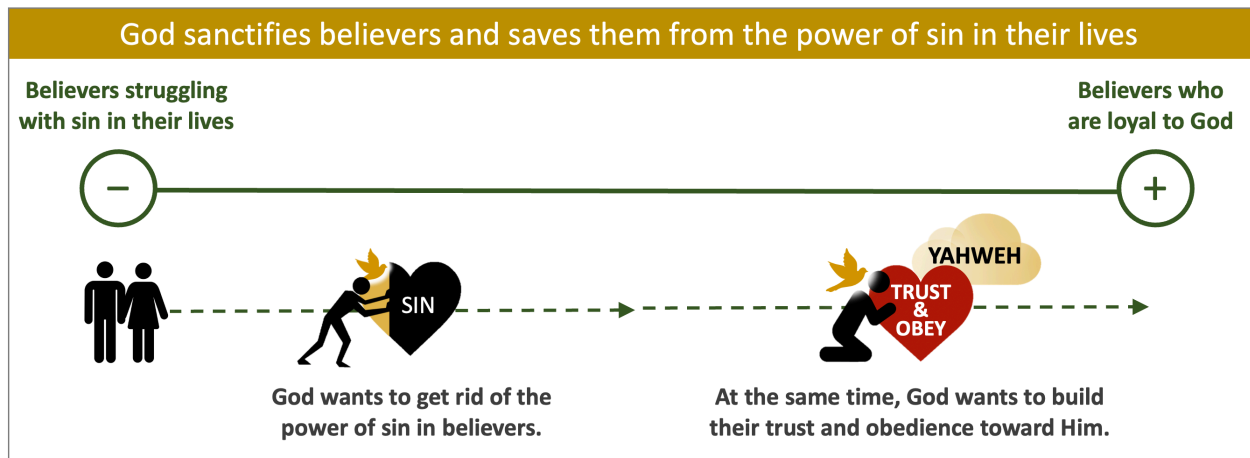
Again, we need to remember what Yahweh is like. He is not a computer programmer who pre-programs humans to behave a certain way. God created mankind with responsible choice. This means that believers also have free will to make decisions and they will then be accountable for the choices they have made.



So, in this case, the believer must also want to overcome the influence of sin in their life. They must choose to cooperate with God in pushing out the power of the sin nature.

This journey of sanctification starts the moment believers are justified and goes on for the rest of their lives.

But what exactly is sanctification? “Sanctification” is related to the word “saint”. It has to do with building up more and more trust and obedience toward God. Christians also call this “spiritual growth”. This is a picture of “sanctification”.



There are two aspects to sanctification and they both happen concurrently. But this work of sanctification is not done by human willpower or resolution.

This is a supernatural work that is led by the Holy Spirit.

How does sanctification happen?

Sanctification happens when believers cooperate with the Holy Spirit's work in their lives. What does this mean? Here are some ways believers cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

1. Be filled with the Holy Spirit

The Bible tells believers to be “filled with the Holy Spirit”.

Ephesians 5:18

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit,

The Bible contrasts two things here. When people drink a lot of wine, their thoughts, words and actions would be under the influence of the alcohol. God says not to do that.

Rather, God says to choose to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so that the believer's thoughts, words and actions would be under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

But how does a believer get “filled with the Holy Spirit” or come under the influence of the Holy Spirit? A believer gets filled with the Holy Spirit by spending time reading and learning from what the Holy Spirit wrote: the Bible.



When believers choose to cooperate with the Holy Spirit by reading Yahweh's words, they will get to know God and His good will for their lives more intimately. And if they read with a heart of submission to God, the Holy Spirit will work in them to cause God's righteous standards to influence their attitudes and the way they think and behave. This is how Paul explained it.

Galatians 5:16–25

¹⁶ So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

Cooperating with the Holy Spirit through studying the Bible is one way the Holy Spirit will push out the influence of sin in a believer's life and grow the believer's loyalty to God.

Some people may wonder how this is possible. It is because the Bible is not an ordinary book, like a novel or a textbook, written solely by humans. Rather, the Bible is alive and powerful. It was written by Yahweh Himself through His appointed prophets. When believers have a submissive, trusting heart towards God, the Bible and the work of the Holy Spirit will change their lives.

Hebrews 4:12–13

¹² For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.



Believers also cooperate with the Holy Spirit when they spend time with Yahweh through prayer. Having a personal, intimate relationship with Yahweh is not just about Him communicating with believers through the Bible. It is also about believers speaking to Him.

Yahweh desires to have a personal relationship with mankind. That was why He spent time in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve.

And this is why He desires for all believers to relate to Him intimately. When the disciples asked Jesus how they should talk to God, that is, how to pray, this was how Jesus began His teaching:

Matthew 6:9a

Pray like this: Our Father in heaven,

Jesus said that the believer's relationship to Yahweh is very close: it's that of a father and child. Yahweh is the righteous, sovereign Father, and the believer is a dearly loved and treasured child. This is a warm, comforting, close personal relationship. This is an intimate family relationship. It is not a master-slave, employer-employee, contractor-client, stranger-stranger relationship.



2. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit

Believers cooperate with the Holy Spirit by not grieving Him or bringing Him sorrow.

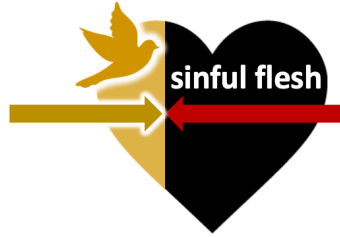
Ephesians 4:30a

And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live.

How does a believer grieve the Holy Spirit? Believers grieve Him by living in a way that is sinful and against God's ways, or by having bad attitudes.

Because of the two natures in believers, each day is a "battle".

The reality of being justified is that believers have new life and sin has no power over them.



However, because believers still have the sin nature in them, they need to choose each moment to live for God and not give in to their sinful desires.

When believers do sin, they are to acknowledge their sin and confess to God.

1 John 1:8–9

⁸ If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. ⁹ But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

God says a lot in the Bible about how believers are to love Him and love all people. And He also teaches a lot about how believers need to be humble and teachable.

Cooperating with the Holy Spirit means humbly acknowledging to God when we sin. The Bible tells us God will forgive our sins because of what Jesus has done at the cross. And wherever possible, we should make peace, to the best of our abilities, with those whom we have hurt.

3. Do not quench the Holy Spirit

Believers also cooperate with the Holy Spirit by not stopping, stifling or quenching what the Holy Spirit wants to do in their lives.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (ESV)

Do not quench the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is in charge of the “curriculum” of how to sanctify believers. Believers who humbly and submissively follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and do not fight Him will become more and more sanctified, or holy.

Ultimately, Yahweh’s plan is to make each believer’s character more like His.

Colossians 3:10

Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

This journey of sanctification takes a whole lifetime. Believers have a choice in the sanctification journey. They can choose to obey God and become more like Jesus or they can choose to disobey God and live wicked lives. This means that some believers will be more successful in this journey than others. (There are consequences to these choices which we will discuss later on.)



However, even very cooperative believers will not be able to achieve full sanctification in this life. But Yahweh promises that at the end of believers' lives, He will do something extraordinary to achieve full sanctification for all believers.

Importantly, whether believers choose to do good or do evil in this life, their justification and glorification are secure. Through faith alone and not through any work of their own, Yahweh saved them from the penalty of sin and will save them from the presence of sin.

Believers can't earn their justification through works and they will not keep their justification through works.

WARNINGS ABOUT THE CHURCH AGE

After the Jews rejected Jesus and He delayed the return of the kingdom for national Israel, Jesus told His disciples what the church age would be like. He was actually preparing and warning them about what to expect.

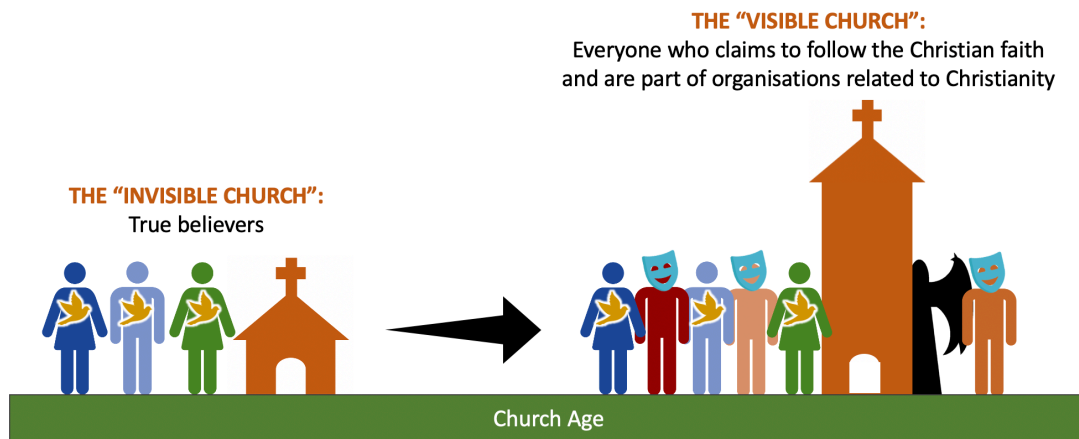
After Jesus' ascension into heaven, His disciples also wrote more about what to expect in the church age. What did they all say?



1. There will be fake believers

Jesus said that there would be the true or **“invisible church”**, made up of true believers in Christ. And this group would grow throughout the church age. (It’s “invisible” because only God can see into the hearts of people and know who are truly believers.)

But Satan would gradually corrupt this group by bringing in religious unbelievers who claim to follow the Christian faith and are parts of organisations related to Christianity. This corrupted mix of true believers and religious unbelievers is often called the **“visible church”**. The religious unbelievers would distract the church from its main mission of taking the gospel to the world. And they would also cause chaos and division in the church.



Jesus told His disciples a parable (a simple, illustrative story) to help them understand this.

Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

²⁴ Here is another story Jesus told: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. ²⁵ But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away. ²⁶ When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew.

²⁷ “The farmer’s workers went to him and said, ‘Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?’

²⁸ “An enemy has done this!’ the farmer exclaimed.

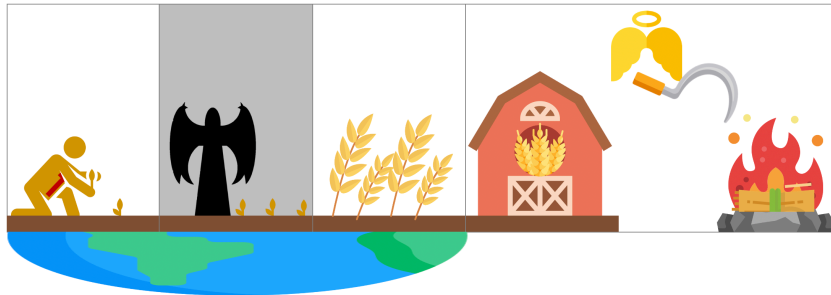
“Should we pull out the weeds?’ they asked.

²⁹ “No,’ he replied, ‘you’ll uproot the wheat if you do. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.”

³⁶ Then, leaving the crowds outside, Jesus went into the house. His disciples said, “Please explain to us the story of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷ Jesus replied, “The Son of Man is the farmer who plants the good seed. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed represents the people of the Kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one. ³⁹ The enemy who planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the harvesters are the angels.

⁴⁰ “Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!



What Jesus was saying was that He was planting wheat (believers). But Satan was actively planting weeds (unbelievers) among the believers. The weed mentioned was the darnel, a type of ryegrass that looked just like wheat!

Jesus was saying that these unbelievers would look and behave like believers, but they were not. And He would tolerate this mix for a time.



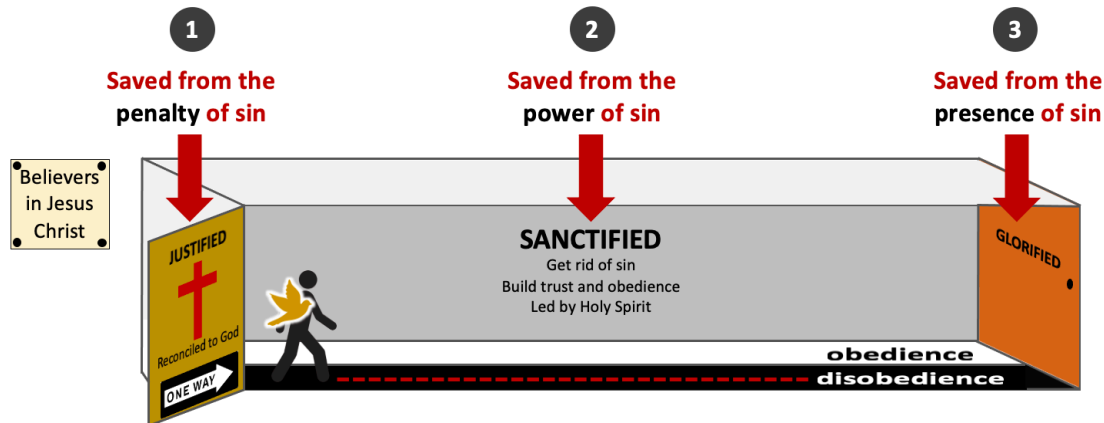
So, people must not be surprised to discover evil and unbelievers mixed in with believers. People need to be aware that not every person who claims to be a believer is actually one.

At the end, Jesus will return again, at the event known as His second coming, to judge and save. He will separate believers from unbelievers. Believers will be with Him while unbelievers will be removed from the earth and thrown into the lake of fire.

2. There will be failed believers

Another feature of this church age is that there will be “failed believers”. What are failed believers?

Failed believers are people who trust in Jesus for justification, but they choose to ignore the Holy Spirit’s sanctification work in their lives. They constantly grieve and quench the Holy Spirit. They live a life of disobedience to Yahweh.



God says that He disciplines and punishes His children. Speaking as a father addressing His children, God the heavenly Father says He will faithfully discipline His children, the believers. He uses many ways to get His children to grow and mature spiritually.

Hebrews 12:5–11

⁵ And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said,

“My child, don’t make light of the LORD’s discipline,
and don’t give up when he corrects you.

⁶ For the LORD disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.”

⁷ As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? ⁸ If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. ⁹ Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn’t we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

¹⁰ For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

God’s discipline is meant for both obedient and disobedient believers. For obedient believers, discipline will spur more growth in their sanctification journey to help them become more and more like Jesus. For disobedient believers, discipline is meant to stop them from acting, speaking and thinking in sinful and wicked ways. For failed believers, God’s discipline may be severe!

3. It will be an age of battle

Satan loves fake believers, because they disrupt the church and confuse people. Satan also loves failed believers, because they help turn mankind away from God. How so?

Oftentimes, when people see those who claim to be Christians behaving in sinful, wicked ways, they believe that Christianity is worthless, the God of the Bible is powerless, or the way these “Christians” are behaving is reflective of what the Bible teaches.

What these people often don’t realise is that this is an age of battle. Battle for what? Their lives.

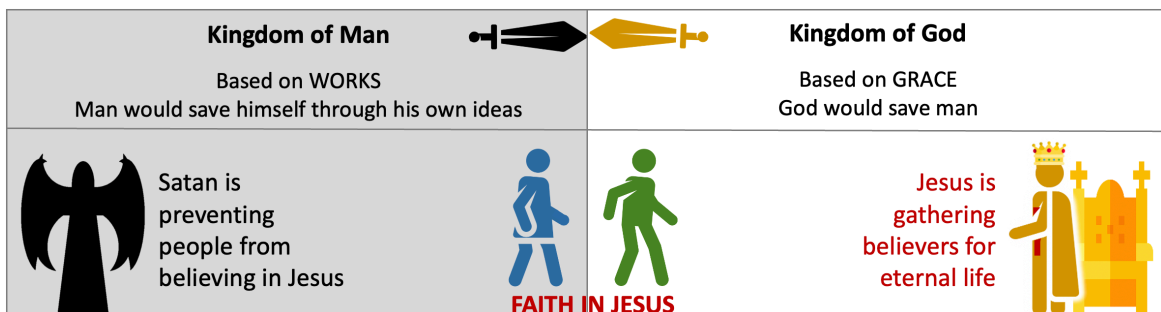
Satan does not want mankind to know or worship Yahweh. He hates God and will try to take as many humans as possible to the lake of fire with him. This is what the Bible says about him.

2 Corinthians 4:4

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe.

They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

Satan wants to keep people who don’t know or believe in Jesus blinded, so that they won’t believe and be saved.



4. There will be false teachings

The Bible says that false teaching is the biggest problem that the church will face. Jesus’ disciples spent a lot of time writing against false teaching. They warned believers to be aware of it and to guard against it because many churchgoers would be fooled by these teachings.

This is what Peter said:

2 Peter 2:1–2

¹ But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. ² Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered.



False teachers add their own ideas to the Bible or remove what the Bible really says. Sometimes, they teach things that are totally not from the Bible at all, but they pretend that it is.

God does not want people to be fooled and tricked. This is why right from the start, He planned and executed the recording of His history and truth in the Bible.

He wants everyone to be able to read His word for themselves. He wants all mankind to know Him, regardless of what language they speak.



By reading His word for themselves, they will then know His truth. They can also compare anything that people say with what the Bible actually says to see if that person is teaching the word of God or not.

5. There will be different responses to God’s invitation

Yahweh wants all mankind to believe in Jesus and live with Him eternally. However, there will be different responses to the good news of what Jesus has done for all mankind.

Jesus told this parable to His disciples.

Matthew 13:3–9, 18–23

³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed.

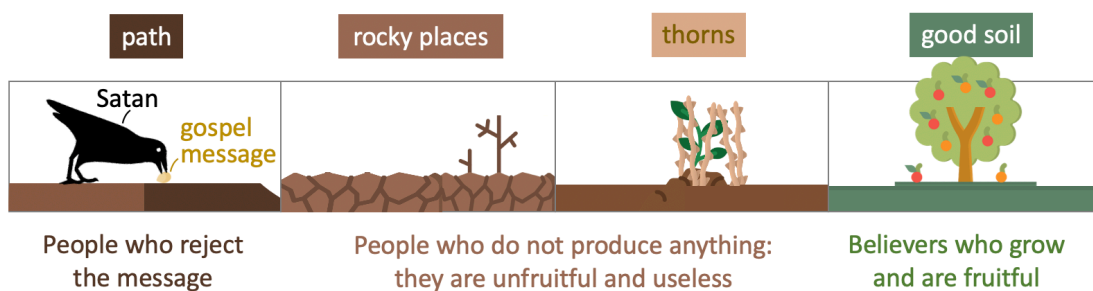
⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

¹⁸ “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

- Jesus was saying that He was the farmer or sower.
- The seeds referred to the gospel message.
- The “farmer went out to sow” referred to how the gospel would spread beyond Israel to the whole world.

But there would be various responses to the gospel.

- The “**good soil**” are believers who grow and produce a crop (good works). They are all fruitful but to different degrees (100 times, 60 times or 30 times the crop).
- The “**hard path**” are people who reject the gospel. The birds are agents of the evil one (Satan) who take away the gospel message because the person has rejected it.
- Both the “**rocky ground**” and the “**thorny ground**” do not produce anything. Trouble, persecution, worries of life and the distraction of wealth cause them to be unfruitful and useless. They might be fake believers or failed believers, but the point of the parable is that they are unfruitful.



Jesus was saying that the gospel would go out into the world but most people would not respond positively. It would have different impacts on different people. Some would reject the gospel and some would believe. But only one group would be fruitful. And even within this fruitful group of believers, there would be different levels of fruitfulness.

Jesus and the disciples shared all these things about what to expect during the church age because Yahweh wants people to be prepared. He wants all to know that He is sovereign. He knows and sees the future and can tell people these things way before they happen.

What happens next?

Up till now, we have been studying the past and present as recorded in the Bible. In the next lesson, we will look at what Yahweh shares about the future. How will the church age end?



Bible reading for review
Galatians (whole letter)

Background to Galatians

A disciple of Jesus named Paul was the one who wrote this letter. It was addressed to the churches in the region of Galatia which would be part of what is now Turkey.

Paul addressed the issue of some Jewish believers claiming that he was teaching falsely about the good news of Jesus. These Jewish Christians were insisting that in order to be saved, it was still necessary to follow the law that God had given the nation of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai.

In the letter, Paul first defended his authority to teach the good news. And then he went on to tell the early Galatian Christians not to go back to trying to obey God's law in an effort to be made righteous before God. Rather, he reminded these Christians that a believer was made righteous, or justified, by faith in Jesus alone. Paul also taught that a Christian's sanctification journey should be lived by the power of the Holy Spirit (that is, under the influence of the Holy Spirit).