**Appendix 10. God’s Promise of Salvation**

**[[This Appendix is currently being updated]]**

Through the centuries of the Christian era there has been debate about whether Christians can lose their salvation. The position of Spirit and Truth Fellowship is that Scripture teaches when people are born again of God’s gift of holy spirit, their salvation is guaranteed and they are not in danger of the “Second Death” (Rev. 20:12-15). Salvation is of ultimate importance to every human being, since those who are saved will live forever and those who are not will die in the Lake of Fire. Therefore, God has spent considerable time on the issue of the permanence of salvation in the New Testament Epistles and approaches it from many different angles to emphasize it. It behooves students of the Bible to study this issue carefully and meticulously. The purpose of this appendix is to provide a resource for this task by expounding on the permanence of Christian salvation.

This appendix focuses on the verses that show the permanence of Christian salvation. It does not explain verses used to argue that Christians can lose their salvation. Those explanations are found in the commentary on those individual verses. A list of some of these verses can be found at the end of this appendix.

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**1) General Background: Administrations in the Bible**

One of the greatest truths of Scripture is that, for the accomplishment of His purposes and the benefit of His people, at different times in history God changed the “rules” He directs people to live by. In other words, God has administered His people differently at different times in history. Although God did not generally name the time periods governed by the different rules (although a couple are named), for ease of discussion theologians call the set of rules associated with a specific time period an “administration” or “dispensation.”

The systematic theology that acknowledges the importance of these different administrations or dispensations is referred to as “Dispensationalism.” It should be noted, however, that even theologians who do not consider themselves dispensationalists realize that God has changed His rules for mankind from time to time. Thus, under the entry “Covenant Theology” in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (W. Elwell, editor), one finds the comment, “...the covenant of grace includes various dispensations” (p. 280).

Overlooking or misunderstanding the administrations in the Bible causes confusion and makes Scripture seem to contain significant contradictions. There are many examples of rule changes in the Bible. For example, in the Garden of Eden, God commanded that Adam and Eve eat only plants (Gen. 1:29). God changed that rule after Noah’s Flood and allowed people to eat meat (Gen. 9:3). Then the Mosaic Law stated that only certain meats could be eaten (Lev. 11:4-24). Later, Jesus changed the rules given by Moses and made all meat clean to eat (Mark 7:19). Other examples of God changing the rules include rules about sacrifices and offerings, requirements about going to Jerusalem three times a year to worship (Deut. 16:16), not working on Saturday (Exod. 20:8-11), the rule that if a woman’s husband died she had to marry her husband’s brother (Deut. 25:5-6), and the rule that under the Law no one could be a priest unless he was a lineal descendant of Aaron.

The potential problems that arise in not recognizing God’s rule changes become evident when the commandment in Genesis that descendants of Abraham must be circumcised is compared with the New Testament statements that Christians are spiritual descendants of Abraham (Gal. 3:29) but if a man is circumcised Christ will be of no benefit to him (Gal. 5:2). Which is the truth, Genesis or Galatians? Recognizing the administrations in Scripture allows for both Genesis and Galatians to be true, they just apply to God’s people at different periods of time. Another potential contradiction that comes from not recognizing how God’s laws changed is that under the Mosaic Law, God allowed a man to have multiple wives. This explains why King David and many other men had multiple wives without being in sin and why God had to give specific laws about the wives, such as that a man could not marry both a woman and her daughter or have two or more sisters as wives (Lev. 18:17-18). But for the New Testament Church, God forbids multiple wives (1 Cor. 7:2-3). The bottom line is that if these rule changes are not considered in view of different administrations, the Bible becomes confusing and contradictory. Almost 100 years ago, Bible scholar Martin Anstey wrote: “…the golden rule is, ‘Distinguish the dispensations and the difficulties will disappear.’” (*How to Master the Bible,* p. 23.).

About 50 days after Jesus died and was raised, on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), God started a new administration with some wonderful new rules. The death and resurrection of Jesus paved the way for many wonderful changes that benefit Christians. There is so much goodness and grace in the administration in which Christians live today that God calls the current administration “the administration of God’s grace” (see commentary on Eph. 3:2). Some of the things God changed when the Church Age started on the Day of Pentecost concerned salvation. The death of Christ on the cross and his payment for the sins of humankind was such a world-altering event that it only makes sense that it brought huge changes in how God dealt with people. One such major change is that today, in the Administration of Grace, salvation is a one-time event with everlasting consequences. Note that salvation was not guaranteed during the times of the Old Testament or the Four Gospels, but it is guaranteed for Christians. Indeed, a huge part of the “grace” of the Administration of Grace is that salvation is guaranteed. There are significant and substantive evidences in Scripture that in the Church Age, which stretches from the Day of Pentecost to the Rapture, people who believe and are “born again” become part of the Body of Christ and receive permanent salvation.

**2) The Evidences**

There is plenty of scriptural evidence that salvation is permanent for Christians. To see the permanence of Christian salvation, it is vital that one pays attention to things that are new and unique to the Christian Church and that are not stated in the Old Testament or Gospels. The Bible communicates truth by the words that it uses. To learn the truth, close attention must be given to the words and phrases used in the Bible, including when and where they are used. If salvation is guaranteed for Christians but was not guaranteed before the Day of Pentecost, then that should be reflected in the vocabulary that is used in the Bible. A careful study of the subject of salvation reveals that specific wording and statements made in the New Testament Epistles do not appear in any form in the Old Testament or Gospels, and furthermore, that certain statements about salvation in the Old Testament and Gospels do not appear in the Church Epistles. The unique expressions about salvation that are found in the New Testament Epistles, which apply to Christians, serve as a beacon to call attention to the truth that the salvation achieved by Jesus Christ’s sacrifice is special and different from what people had before he died.

**a) New Way to be Saved**

The New Testament Epistles reveal that Christians have a new, simple, and straightforward way to be saved: Romans 10:9 (NIV84) says, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” This verse agrees with others in the Church Epistles, such as Romans 3:22, Galatians 2:15, 16, and Ephesians 2:8, which state that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and “not by works.” The way Romans 10:9 is worded is very important. It says that you will be saved “if you confess…and believe.” In the Greek text the verbs are in the aorist tense, which indicates a one-time action; i.e., a singular event. Romans 10:9 does not say “keep confessing and keep believing.” The wording about salvation in the New Testament Epistles shows that Christian salvation is a one-time, instantaneous event. Furthermore, Romans 10:9 finishes by saying “you will be saved.” The person who confesses and believes “will be saved.” That is a promise, and God will make it happen. Throughout history, people have often been uncertain about their futures. God’s promises take away such uncertainty. For as Romans 10:9 states: people who confess and believe “will” be saved.

Faith has always been the way to salvation, but before the Administration of Grace there was no new birth or guarantee of salvation, so a person’s faith had to continue throughout their life (cf. Ezek. 33:11-20). That is why Moses said that righteousness came by being careful to obey the Law (Deut. 6:25) and why there are verses in the Old Testament and Gospels that say a person had to be faithful until death to be saved (e.g., Matt. 24:13). The difference in how people were saved before and after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is shown by the different responses given by Jesus and the apostle Paul regarding this subject.

Jesus and the apostle Paul both taught the way of salvation, and both were asked the basic question, “What must I do to be saved?” Jesus was questioned by a young ruler, and he answered by saying, “If you want to enter life, obey the commandments” (Matt. 19:17). In contrast, Paul answered the Philippian jailor: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). When Jesus answered the young ruler, he had not yet died for the sins of humankind, so people still had to be faithful until death to be saved. But after Jesus died for people’s sin, the New Birth became available and salvation became an instantaneous event and permanent for Christians. That is why Paul said to the Philippian jailor that what he had to do to be saved was believe in Jesus. The verb “believe” in Acts 16:31 is in the aorist tense like the verbs in Romans 10:9, indicating a one-time event. Christian salvation is a one-time event with everlasting results.

**b) New Birth and New Incorruptible Seed**

When a person acts on Romans 10:9 by confessing that Jesus is Lord and believing that God raised him from the dead, God our Father puts His gift of holy spirit, His very nature, which is referred to as a spiritual seed, into that person, and he is “born again.” Scripture says, “For you have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23). The New Birth is unique to the Christian Church. No one in the Old Testament or Gospels was said to be “born again.”

Although many English versions have the phrase “born again” in John 3:3 and John 3:7, that is a mistranslation. The two Greek words that are often translated “born again” in John 3 are different from the Greek word translated “born again” in 1 Peter 1:23. In the context of John 3, the Greek *gennēthē anōthen* (γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν), which only occurs in the Bible in John 3, should be translated “born from above.” The birth from above of John 3:3 and 3:7 refers to resurrection from the dead, not the New Birth that Christians experience. A number of English versions accurately translate *gennēthē anōthen*, and read “born from above” instead of “born again” in John 3:3 and 3:7 (GW, NAB, NET, NJB, NRSV, YLT, *Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible*, Charles Williams’ New Testament, *The Kingdom New Testament* by N.T. Wright, and *The Source NT* by A. Nyland. Also see commentary on John 3:3, “born from above,” and John W. Schoenheit, *The Christian’s Hope: The Anchor of the Soul*, Appendix “H”).

God uses the concept of “birth” to communicate what happens in Christian salvation. There are many parallels between physical birth and spiritual birth. One similarity is that physical birth is permanent and cannot be undone. It is so important to God that Christians understand the New Birth that He uses three different words for it:

1. *Anagennaō* (#313 ἀναγεννάω; from the Greek prefix *ana*, “again” or “up,” and *gennaō*, “to give birth”). It means to be given birth to again, or to be born again, and occurs in 1 Peter 1:3 and 1:23, “in his great mercy he has given us new birth…” (1 Pet. 1:3).
2. *Palingenesia* (#3824 παλιγγενεσία; from *palin*, “again” and *genesis*, “genesis” or “origin”). It means to have an origin again, a new genesis, and occurs in Titus 3:5: “He saved us through the washing of rebirth….”
3. *apokueō* (#616 ἀποκυέω; from the Greek prefix *apo*, “away from,” and *kueō*, “to be pregnant”). It means “to give birth to,” and occurs in James 1:18, “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth….”

Every one of the three Greek words listed above was used by the Greeks for birth, and in the context of the New Birth they all appear in the New Testament Epistles and nowhere else in the Bible. *Anagennaō* and *apokueō* appear only in epistles to the Church. *Palingenesia* appears in the Gospel of Matthew, but in Matthew it is not about people but refers to the regeneration of the earth.

As every parent knows, the predominant truth about a birth is the continuing, physical presence of a baby. God used all three commonly understood words for “birth” to underscore that what happens when a Christian is “born again” is a continuing, spiritual presence, i.e., the holy spirit born within a person. Just as a physical birth is permanent and cannot be undone, so also this spiritual birth is permanent and cannot be undone. The fact that these three words are used scripturally only of Christians shows the uniqueness of Christian salvation.

People who believe Christians can lose their salvation argue that things that are born die, so Christians must be able to die, too. But the Christian New Birth is not of flesh and blood that can die, it is of God’s spirit. In all of God’s creation there was never a birth like the New Birth. God’s created spirit beings, such as angels, were created, not “born again,” and even Jesus Christ was not “born again” in the New Testament sense of the word—he was born of God, but not “born again.” Only Christians are “born again,” and the fact that the teaching of the New Birth in the epistles to the Church is mentioned along with “everlasting life” means that the Christian is born of God and will never die. We have an everlasting future.

One aspect of spiritual birth is that the Christian is born again of spiritual “seed.” 1 Peter 1:23 (REV) says, “for you have been born again, not from corruptible seed, but from incorruptible, through the living and enduring word of God.” If the holy spirit that is born in the Christian is called “seed,” then 1 Peter 1:23 is saying it is “incorruptible,” and therefore it gives the person who has it everlasting life.

**c) Adoption**

Birth is permanent, so to emphasize the permanence of our guarantee of salvation God calls it “birth.” But since in the Roman culture adoption was also considered permanent, God calls our new birth “adoption” as well, in part to emphasize its permanence (see commentary on Eph. 1:5). “Adoption” does not by any means introduce uncertainty or the possibility of becoming undone, but rather emphasizes that Christians are a permanent part of God’s family.

**d) A New Divine Nature**

Every child is born with the nature of the parent. Because Christians have been born of God, 2 Peter 1:4 says Christians are partakers of the divine nature, the nature of God. That Christians have a divine nature is unique to the Christian Church. No one in the Old Testament or Gospels is ever said to receive, or “partake of,” a divine nature, not even the prophets who had God’s holy spirit upon them. Christians have the nature of God because they are His children by birth, but people who lived before the Church Administration did not have His divine nature in them because they were not “born” of God.

In actuality, Christians have two natures—a new divine nature (the result of their spiritual birth) and an old sin nature (the result of their physical birth). These antithetical natures struggle against each other within every Christian. Galatians 5:17 (CJB) says, “For the old nature wants what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit wants what is contrary to the old nature. These oppose each other, so that you find yourselves unable to carry out your good intentions.” Only in Scripture specifically addressed to the Christian Church does the Bible say that the “nature” of sin (sometimes called the “flesh” or “old nature”) and the “nature” of God (the “spirit”) “are in conflict with each other” because only since Pentecost have believers been “born again” and had a divine nature born within them.

It is also important to notice that since Christians have a divine, holy nature they are called “holy” themselves. Most English versions represent this fact by calling Christians “saints,” but a clearer translation would be “holy ones” (see commentary on Phil. 1:1 concerning “holy ones”). There were “holy ones” in the Old Testament, but a study of the subject shows that the people who were called “holy” in the Old Testament were called “holy” because of their works. But after the Day of Pentecost, every person who makes Jesus Christ their Lord and is born again becomes “holy” because the presence of “holy” spirit born inside imparts a divine, “holy” nature. Thus, there is a shift between the Old Testament and the Church Age when it comes to what makes a person “holy.” Godly works made a person holy before Pentecost, while the indwelling presence of the gift of holy spirit makes a Christian “holy” today. This explains why the Church Epistles are addressed to the “holy ones” (saints). That salutation recognizes that every Christian is a “holy one,” not just those in the Christian Church who live holy lives.

Since it is the presence of holy spirit inside that makes Christians holy, Christian salvation is assured. Ephesians 1:13-14 says that Christians are sealed with holy spirit until the fullness of their redemption is manifested at the time of Christ’s return for His Church. If the Christian is sealed “until” they are fully redeemed, then they cannot lose their holy nature before the time; they cannot sin and become unholy or unsaved. The exhortation for Christians to live holy lives is not so they can be saved or somehow maintain their salvation, but so that their physical lives line up with what God has already done for them spiritually. In this way, they can have many blessings God has in store for them now, and also garner rewards they will enjoy in their life to come.

**e) New Creations**

The New Birth is an act of creation—God creates His nature in people when they become Christians. “If anyone is in *union with* Christ, *he is* a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). People in the Old Testament and Gospels believed in God, but God never created anything in them when they believed. This explains why the Bible never calls any believer in the Old Testament or Gospels a “new creation.” In contrast, when a person in the Administration of Grace believes, God actually “creates” something new and permanent in them. Other verses besides 2 Corinthians 5:17 also indicate that Christians are new creations (e.g., Col. 3:10).

Some people believe that “new creation” just refers to the fact that Christians are supposed to live a new, godly life. However, if that were true then the term “new creation” should appear throughout the whole Bible because every believer, no matter when they lived, was exhorted to live a new and godly life. But the phrase “new creation” is unique to the Church Epistles. Each Christian is literally a “new creation” because God’s gift of holy spirit was created in them, and before the New Birth, before the Day of Pentecost, no believer was a “new creation” because the holy spirit was not created in them. Note that in 2 Corinthians 5:17, the Bible says that if anyone is “in union with Christ,” they are a new creation, so being a new creation is dependent on the New Birth, because a person is only “in Christ” if they are born again and thus part of the Body of Christ. So Corinthians is saying that if a person is “in Christ,” which means they are born again with the gift of holy spirit created in them and part of the Body of Christ, then they are indeed a new creation.

**f) Sealed with a New Holy Spirit**

Each and every Christian is sealed with the gift of holy spirit—a new holy spirit that came on the Day of Pentecost and had not existed before. Christians are sealed at the time of their New Birth. Every Christian is born of God, and in birth, the nature of the parent is passed down to the offspring. In the New Birth, the nature of the Father, God, is passed to believers, His children. But what is the nature of God? The Scripture says that God is “holy” and God is “spirit,” so what is “born” (by creation) inside each Christian is God’s gift of “holy spirit.” Thus, another way God emphasized the permanence of Christian salvation was by saying that Christians are “sealed” with the holy spirit. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, “in whom you also, when you heard the word of truth—the good news of your salvation—and when you believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy spirit, 14which is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of *God’s own* purchased possession, to the praise of his glory.”

[For more on the holy spirit, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

Being “sealed” with holy spirit is new to the Administration of Grace. No one in the Old Testament or Gospels is said to be “sealed” with holy spirit. Quite the opposite! God took His holy spirit from King Saul when he sinned (1 Samuel 16:14). Also, Psalm 51:11 records that after committing adultery with Bathsheba and having Uriah killed, King David asked God not to take holy spirit from him. But in contrast to the way God gave holy spirit before the Day of Pentecost, in the Church Age the gift of holy spirit is “born” by creation in Christian believers and thus they are permanently sealed with holy spirit. Furthermore, the Bible says Christians are sealed “until the redemption of God’s own purchased possession,” that is, until the time that their redemption is fully realized and every Christian receives their new everlasting body that is like Christ’s glorious body (Phil. 3:21). Christians are not sealed “until they sin” or “until they renounce Christ,” they are sealed “until the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30). The holy spirit created by God inside a person “seals” that person as God’s property and guarantees their salvation. Christians never have to pray like David did, begging God not to take His gift of holy spirit from them.

An understanding of the gift of holy spirit that Christians receive from God is important in understanding the permanence of salvation for Christians. Christians are “born” of God because the holy spirit was “born” in them at the time of their salvation. They are new creations because the holy spirit was born in them by an act of creation. They are God’s children because He has given birth to His nature, holy spirit, in Christians, which is also why they are partakers of God’s divine nature. Christians are called “holy ones” (saints) because God’s gift of “holy spirit” within them makes them holy.

Another key in understanding the role of God’s gift of holy spirit in the Christians’ guarantee of salvation is that the holy spirit they have today is called “the promised holy spirit” (Acts 2:33; Eph. 1:13). In the Old Testament, God promised that in the Millennial Kingdom, He would pour out holy spirit upon His people, and it would be a “new spirit” (Ezek. 11:19, 20; 36:26, 27; Joel 2:28, 29; John 14:17; cf. Isa. 32:15; 44:3-5; Ezek. 37:12; 39:29; John 15:26; 16:13). John 7:39 tells us that new spirit had not been given up to and including the time of Christ’s ministry. It says, “for as yet there was no spirit, because Jesus was not yet gloried” (John 7:39 has not been translated well in most English Bibles; see commentary on John 7:39).

Before Christ died, God did not give the new holy spirit that He promised in the Old Testament because Jesus had not yet inaugurated the New Covenant by the shedding of his blood. But on the Day of Pentecost, less than two months after his death and resurrection, Jesus gave this new holy spirit to the Church (Acts 2:33). One of the attributes of the holy spirit God promised was that it would be permanent in people (Isa. 59:21; Ezek. 11:19-20; 37:12-14). What Christians have today is the gift of holy spirit that God promised in the Old Testament would be permanent. If Christians cannot lose the gift of holy spirit, then their new birth cannot be reversed, and they cannot lose their salvation. This explains why Romans 8:38-39 says that “nothing” can separate us from the love of God. That is not a platitude or hyperbole, it’s a statement as to the guarantee of Christian salvation.

**g) Salvation is Guaranteed**

One of the things that is unique to the Christian Church is that Christians have a guarantee of salvation (2 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:14). Ephesians 1:13-14 (REV) says: “in whom you also, when you heard the word of truth—the good news of your salvation—and when you believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy spirit, **14**which is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of *God’s own* purchased possession, to the praise of his glory.” This “guarantee” is indeed unique for the Church—there are no verses in the Old Testament or the Four Gospels that say salvation is guaranteed.

Although some English Bibles translate the Greek word *arrabōn* (#728 ἀρραβών) in Ephesians 1:14 as “guarantee” (cf. CJB, ESV, GW, NIV, NKJV, NLT, RSV), there are versions that instead use “earnest,” “pledge,” “deposit,” “down payment,” or something similar. But saying “pledge” or “down payment” does not change the meaning of the verse, which is that Christians have something now that assures them that they will have the fullness later. The Greek word *arrabōn* means a deposit in advance that guarantees the full payment to come. For Christians, that means the presence of the gift of holy spirit in them now assures them that they will be given new, immortal bodies and will be with Christ forever. The NIV gets the sense of the text very well: “Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Cor. 5:5). If God “guarantees” everlasting life, then it is indeed guaranteed. The Bible never says that the guarantee is in any way conditional, like, “I guarantee it IF you will do such and such.” Christians are God’s children by birth, and His guarantee of everlasting life is absolute and unconditional.

[For more on *arrabōn* and “guarantee,” see commentary on Eph. 1:14.]

There are some theologians who argue that salvation is guaranteed only to those who remain faithful to Christ throughout their whole lives, but that is not what the text of Ephesians says. There is no “if” in God’s saying that the holy spirit is a deposit that guarantees us our future inheritance. But more to the point, if what the Church Epistles are saying is that a person will be saved only if they remain faithful to God, then there is nothing new about that message; it is the same message that is in the Old Testament and Gospels. If the “guarantee” of salvation in the Church Epistles is really just the same message that the Bible has proclaimed since Genesis, then either the Church Epistles should not use the word “guarantee” or the whole Bible should use it. It is essential to recognize that when God changes vocabulary in the Bible, it is a signal that something is important. In the Church Epistles God uses new vocabulary that is not used in the Old Testament or Gospels in order to describe the new reality of permanent salvation and the new reality that Christians have a “guarantee” of their salvation.

**h) Christians are Part of the Body of Christ**

When a person is born again, they become part of a newly-created spiritual Body, “the Body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27; cf. Rom. 12:4,5; 1 Cor. 10:16; 12:12-20; Eph. 1:23; 3:6; 4:4; Col. 1:18; 3:15). The “Body of Christ” started on the Day of Pentecost and is part of the Administration of Grace. It did not exist, nor was it mentioned, in the Old Testament or Gospels. Like the physical body, the Body of Christ is comprised of many members, with Jesus Christ as its head (Eph. 5:23).

The Body of Christ is unique to the Administration of Grace and is made up of all those who believe, no matter what their gender, nationality, or social standing in this world. Galatians 3:28 makes it clear that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, nor slave nor free person, in Christ. This is a shift from the Old Testament and Gospels, in which the people of God are distinctly counted as being either a Jew or a Gentile—and there were many Gentiles who lived righteous lives in the Old Testament, in fact, there were not even any Jews at all until Jacob was born, and by then the Old Testament was chronologically more than half over.

Once a person is a member of the Body of Christ, there is no indication they can be severed from it. There is not one explicit verse in the Church Epistles that states a person can be amputated from the Body of Christ. Ungodly behavior can affect a person’s fellowship relationship with God and others and can affect the rewards a person will receive in the future, but it does not cause a person to be severed from the Body of Christ and lose their salvation.

**i) Already Saved**

One of the unique statements made to Christians after the Day of Pentecost is that they “have been saved” (Eph. 2:8). But to truly understand what Ephesians 2:8 means when it says that Christians “have been saved,” we must understand what “salvation” is in the Bible. The Greek verb commonly translated “saved” is *sōzō* (#4982 σῴζω) and it means to be rescued, delivered, or saved; in some contexts, it can have a specific meaning such as “healed” (Matt. 9:21). No one is “saved” yet in the literal sense of the word because no one has yet been rescued from weakness, sickness, and death, and no Christian yet has the things that are promised when they are actually “saved,” such as a glorious new body that is immortal and incorruptible (Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 51-54).

But if Christians are not saved yet, what do they have now, and why does Ephesians say that Christians “have been saved”? The Bible says Christians “have been saved” in order to fully assure them they will be saved in the future. It is well-known that if a person is to correctly understand the Bible then they must understand the language and idioms the Bible uses. One such idiom is called by scholars the “prophetic perfect.” The “prophetic perfect” is an idiom that is mainly used in Semitic languages, but occasionally in others as well, to emphasize the certainty of a future event by speaking of it as if it has already happened. (Several examples of the prophetic perfect idiom will be discussed in this appendix).

God used the prophetic perfect idiom many times in the Bible to assure people about future events. For example, in Isaiah chapter 53, the prophet Isaiah uses many past tense verbs to describe what was going to happen to Messiah even though he was writing more than 700 years before Messiah was born. Isaiah 53:5-8 (REV abridged) says, “But he **was pierced** for our transgressions, **crushed** for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace **was** on him…Yahweh **has laid** on him the iniquity of us all… He **was oppressed** and he **was afflicted**, yet he **did not** open his mouth...He **was taken away** by oppression and judgment…he **was cut off** out of the land of the living and **stricken** for the disobedience of my people..” Why did Isaiah use past tense verbs to describe a future event? Isaiah used the prophetic perfect idiom and wrote about the Messiah as if he had already come to assure the people he would come and suffer for their sin.

The REV, quoted above, translates the verbs in the Hebrew text literally as past tense verbs. It should be noted that some English versions try to avoid confusing the English reader by translating the verbs as future tense verbs. While that can help the English reader, it does not teach the important lesson that the Bible often speaks of future events in the past tense to assure the reader that the events will occur.

The Hebrew text does not read that Christ “will be” despised and rejected, even though that would be literally accurate. Instead it employs the prophetic perfect idiom because the coming sufferings of Christ were certain to happen. Similarly, God assures us that Jesus will come back by saying in Jude, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones” (Jude 1:14 NASB, a quite literal translation of the Greek text). Even though the Lord Jesus has not come back yet, God speaks of it in the past tense in Jude—that Jesus “came”—so that Christians can be assured that he is coming back.

The Hebrew text makes many promises about the coming of the Messiah and his kingdom using the prophetic perfect, but the English reader cannot see most of them because English Bibles often change the past tense verbs to the future tense so the reader will not be confused. For example, in the Hebrew text, God told Abraham he “had given” the Promised Land to Abraham’s descendants before Abraham even had any descendants (Gen. 15:18). Job said of his redeemer, “my eyes have seen him,” some 2,000 years before Christ came (Job 19:27). The prophet Balaam said, “a star [the Messiah] has come out of Jacob” some 1,400 years before Jesus was even born (Num. 24:17). Isaiah said, “To us, a child has been born,” but Jesus’ birth was still more than 700 years away (Isa. 9:6). Similarly, Isaiah 11:1 says, “A shoot [the Messiah] has come up from the stump of Jesse.” All these prophecies state future events as if they were in the past in order to assure people they would happen. The same is true of what God says about Christians being saved now. Christians are not literally saved yet, but they have a promise and guarantee that they will be in the future.

[For more about the prophetic perfect, see commentary on Eph. 2:6.]

Scholars can usually tell if a verse is using a past tense verb literally or idiomatically as a prophetic perfect because if the past tense verb is idiomatic there will be other verses about the same subject that use the future tense and thus state the truth literally. For example, it is clear that when Jude says the Lord “came,” the prophetic perfect is being used because there are many verses that say the Lord’s coming is still future. Similarly, Ephesians 2:6 says Christians are already seated in heaven, but one can tell the verse is using the prophetic perfect because many other verses say Christians are on earth, and besides, it is peoples’ common experience that they live on earth, not in heaven.

In the case of Christian salvation, there are a couple of verses that say Christians are saved, but there are many more that say, or clearly imply, that salvation is still future (e.g., Rom. 5:10; 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:5). The verses that say salvation is still in the future are literal, because when Christians are fully saved they will no longer experience weakness, sickness, or death and they will be in their new, everlasting bodies that will be like Christ’s glorious body (Phil. 3:21). Christians “will be saved” (Rom. 5:10; 10:9) in the future. What Christians have today is a promise that they will be saved; a guarantee of future salvation. When Ephesians 2:8 says Christians already “have been saved,” it is using an idiom to powerfully express the truth that they will absolutely be saved in the future.

The expression of the biblical promise that Christians will be saved in words that indicate they are already saved is unique to the New Testament Epistles. The Bible never records God speaking to any group before the Day of Pentecost and telling them they “were saved” while they were still alive. Before Pentecost, people had to remain faithful to be saved. But in contrast, Christian salvation is a one-time birth event, and “if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from among the dead, you WILL [emphasis added] be saved” (Rom. 10:9). God can use the prophetic perfect idiom when speaking of Christian salvation because once a person confesses Christ as Lord and is born again, their salvation is guaranteed.

[For more on the prophetic perfect idiom as it refers to salvation, see commentary on Eph. 2:8.]

**j) Already Raised from the Dead**

One of the many things that is unique to the Christian Church is that Christians are said to be raised from the dead before they have even died. For example, Ephesians 2:6, written to living Christians, says that God “raised us up with him.” Also, Paul wrote to the church at Colossae and said, “you were raised with Christ” (Col. 3:1). But how can the Bible say that Christians have been raised from the dead before they died? The Bible saying that living Christians have already been raised from the dead is another use of the prophetic perfect idiom (explained above). Paul wrote in Ephesians and Colossians that Christians were already raised with Christ because they were born again, and because of that reality, Paul knew they would be raised from the dead in the future.

When a person gets born again and becomes a Christian, that person becomes part of the Body of Christ and is “in Christ.” The Bible says Christians are “in Christ,” often meaning “in union with Christ,” and this union is an actual mystical union accomplished in the spiritual world. By virtue of being in union with Christ, the Bible says that Christians went through what Christ himself went through. This is expressed in the Bible when it says that Christians were circumcised with Christ (Col. 2:11); baptized with Christ (Rom. 6:3); crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20), died with Christ (Rom. 6:8; 2 Tim. 2:11), buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), raised with Christ (Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12, 3:1), and are now seated with Christ in heaven (Eph. 2:6). By virtue of being part of the Body of Christ, what happened to Christ is said to have happened to the Christian.

To correctly understand the Bible, it is vital to notice that only Christians are said to go through those things that Christ went through. No Old Testament believer was said to be baptized with Christ, or died with Christ, or was raised with Christ. No believer in the Gospels was said to be circumcised with Christ, or crucified with Christ, or seated in heaven with Christ. The Body of Christ started on the Day of Pentecost, and only on and after that day could people be born again and be in union with Christ such that they experienced in a spiritual way what Jesus experienced physically (scholars sometimes refer to the union of the Christian with Christ as a “mystical” union because the nature and process of the union are not known). So when the Bible speaks of events that happened in the past for Christ, such as being raised from the dead and seated in heaven, and says that Christians have experienced those things even though they are still future for Christians, the Bible is using the prophetic perfect idiom to assure Christians that those things will indeed happen to them and for them. The Bible’s use of the prophetic perfect idiom regarding these things expresses God’s guarantee that Christians will be raised from the dead, be seated in heaven with Christ, and live forever with Christ.

As was stated earlier, one way that scholars know when the prophetic perfect idiom is being used is that the Bible will almost always have that same truth expressed literally somewhere else. It is clear that when Ephesians or Colossians says Christians “have been raised” from the dead, for example, they are using the prophetic perfect idiom because there are many other verses that say Christians “will be raised” from the dead in the future when Christ appears. This illustrates that God uses literal language as well as the prophetic perfect idiom to communicate to Christians that their salvation is guaranteed and they will live forever with him.

An example of the use of literal language that shows the permanence of Christian salvation is found in Romans 6:3-8. This set of verses establishes a connection between Christians being in union with Christ and the promise that they will be raised from the dead.

Romans 6:3-8 REV (abridged):

3Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into *union with* Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4Therefore, we were buried with him by baptism into *union with his* death…5For if we have become united *with him* in a death like his, we will certainly also be in a resurrection like his... 8Now since we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him,

Romans 6:5 speaks of our being raised from the dead in the future and says “we WILL certainly also be in a resurrection like his.” This statement is unique to the Christian Church. There is no verse in the Old Testament or Gospels that promises that if someone believes at one point in their life, they will “certainly” be raised like Christ was. The “certainty” of Christian salvation is due to the New Birth and being in the Body of Christ. Paul also writes, “we believe” we will live with Christ (Rom. 6:8), which does not mean “we hope,” but rather that “we believe it.” God says that if we died with Christ, we will live with him, so Christians can rest assured in that belief, just as Paul did.

Romans 6:5 and 6:8 make the point that Christians have a secure salvation—if we died with Christ we will be raised like Christ, and the Christian has died with Christ. A similar verse is 2 Timothy 2:11: “This statement is trustworthy: For if we died with him, we will also live with him.” Every Christian died with Christ, so every Christian will be raised from the dead like he was. God wants Christians to know that their salvation is not in doubt, so He makes the literal statement that we will be raised with Christ in the future, and the figurative statement (using the prophetic perfect) that we have already been raised from the dead with Christ. God said that Christians would be raised from the dead two different ways, figuratively and literally, so we would not miss the point—Christians will be raised from the dead into everlasting life in the future.

[For more on “in union with Christ,” see commentary on Eph. 1:3.]

**k) Already Seated in Heaven**

The Bible says Christians are seated in heaven. God “raised us up with him [Jesus] and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). Of course, Christians are not literally in heaven right now as both the Bible and life experience show. But God wanted to make it clear via the phrasing of Ephesians that salvation is secure and Christians will one day be in heaven with Christ. Consequently, God used the prophetic perfect idiom and referred to it as a past event to establish the unassailable certainty that a person who is born again will live forever with Christ.

It would be disingenuous of God to use the prophetic perfect idiom and say Christians are already in heaven if in fact they might not be there in the future. Thus, once again one can see God using unique vocabulary in the Church Epistles to describe a reality that is new for the Christian Church and different from what the believers in the Old Testament and Gospels had available to them. God never told the believers in the Old Testament or Gospels that they were already in heaven. God could not have used the prophetic perfect idiom for Old Testament salvation because it was not secure. Guaranteed salvation based on the completed work of Christ could not be offered until Christ died for the sins of humankind. It is only in light of Christ’s death and resurrection that the prophetic perfect idiom can be used to describe Christian salvation because it is guaranteed. It is just as Romans 10:9 says: if a person confesses Christ as Lord and believes God raised him from the dead, that person “will be saved,” or, as stated in the prophetic perfect idiom, is “already in heaven.”

**l) Already Citizens of Heaven**

As children of God, born-again Christians belong to God’s heavenly kingdom, not to the earthly realm where their physical bodies reside. Scripture makes this clear: “But our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20 REV). Here again, the uniqueness of the Christian Church is revealed. Many people in the Old Testament and Gospels believed, but none were referred to as citizens of heaven. Christians can be called citizens of heaven, while believers in the Old Testament and Gospels could not, because Christian salvation is guaranteed. In contrast, people in the Old Testament and Gospels had to stay faithful to be saved because their salvation was not guaranteed. Thus, they could not be called citizens of heaven while they lived. Furthermore, there is no way a Christian’s heavenly citizenship can be revoked because Christians are sealed with holy spirit until the day of redemption, at which time they will no longer be in an earthly body, but will be in a new heavenly body, taken up to heaven with Jesus (1 Cor. 15:42-44; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). The only reason the Bible can say Christians are citizens of heaven now is because their salvation is guaranteed; if their salvation were not guaranteed, the Bible would have to say that they “might be” citizens of heaven one day.

**m) Already Glorified**

The Administration of Grace, with its guarantee of salvation, is much more glorious than the Mosaic Law. The Law was glorious in that it gave light and justice where there had been confusion and darkness, but Scripture reveals that the glory of the Administration of Grace far surpasses the glory of the Mosaic Law. “For what was glorious [the Law] has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory” (2 Cor. 3:10). But what has God given the Christian Church that is so new and so glorious that in comparison to it the Law of Moses had “no glory?”

At this point, it helps to properly understand the biblical meaning of “glory.” While “glory” has many meanings and therefore the exact meaning in any given verse is subject to the context, the basic idea of “glory” is “importance, weight, respect, honor, majesty, and reputation,” and it also often involved “being praised.” Given that, what could Christians have that is so glorious—so weighty, important, respectable, honorable, and praiseworthy—that there was “no glory” in the Law in comparison? After all, Old Testament believers could be saved, and some of the miracles they did, such as splitting an ocean or stopping a river, have not even been recorded in the Church Age. That seems like a lot of glory, but the Bible says the glory Christians have makes the glory of the Old Testament appear as “no glory” in comparison.

Some of the “glorious” things Christians have that people in the Old Testament and Gospels did not have include having God as their birth Father and having the powerful presence of the holy spirit created inside them. However, the primary “glory” that Christians have is the permanence of salvation brought by the New Birth —that God’s children by birth are not in danger of everlasting death. The guaranteed promise of everlasting life is the greatest “glory” there is.

But not only do Christians have a new glory that is so glorious that the Law had “no glory” in comparison, the Bible says Christians are already glorified (Rom. 8:30), i.e., they are already in their new glorious bodies and in glory with Jesus. As was stated in Ephesians 2:6 above, Christians are already seated in heaven, which is an example of the prophetic perfect. Peter also speaks of already being a partaker in the glory that is still future (1 Pet. 5:1).

Christians are said to be already glorified because it is absolute and certain that they will be glorified in the future. Romans 8:17-18 says their glory is in the future, which is literally true. However, Romans 8:30 emphasizes the fact that their future glory is secure by using the prophetic perfect. The Christian salvation is secure. Christians will be glorified and be in heaven, so the Bible says they are already glorified and seated in heaven. Thus, both literal language and figurative language is used to emphasize the truth that Christian salvation is secure.

Believers in the Old Testament could become unfaithful and thus not attain salvation, so the Bible never says anyone in the Old Testament or Gospels is already glorified. But Christian salvation is unique because it is a one-time birth event and guaranteed. This means that Christians can be spoken of as already glorified even though their actual glorification will come in the future when they are taken to be with Christ. The reason God spoke about Christians differently than the believers in the Old Testament and Gospels is precisely because Old Testament salvation was not guaranteed, while Christian salvation is guaranteed.

**n) New Relationship with God—the Love of a Birth-Father**

One of the promises unique to the Christian Church and absent from the Old Testament and Gospels is that the Christian cannot be separated from the love of God. This promise provides additional assurance to Christians of the permanence of their salvation. Because of the New Birth, God is the birth Father of Christians. The bond between parents and their birth children is practically universal. No matter how a child behaves, the parent loves the child. The permanence of Christian salvation based on the New Birth is also seen in the shift in how God expresses His love relationship with Christians as opposed to what He said about Israel in the Old Testament. The way this is worded in Romans is especially impactful because Paul specifically notes that what Christians have in Christ is different from the Old Testament. In this regard, Paul even quotes Psalm 44:22 from the Old Testament, but says “No.”

Romans 8:35-39 (REV)

35What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36As it is written [in Ps. 44:22], “**For your sake we are being killed all day long, we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered**.” 37No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Those verses express two great truths: first, that nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39), and second, that this is a change from the Old Testament. Paul makes his point clearly and powerfully, and some of the impact of what Paul wrote can be seen when it is compared to what God said to His “chosen people,” the Jews in Israel, when they turned away from Him. Because of Israel’s sin, God told the prophet Hosea to name his daughter “Lo-ruhamah,” that is, “No-Compassion” (or “Not Pitied”) because He would not have compassion on Israel. Then, when Israel still did not repent and obey God’s commands, God told Hosea to name his son “Lo-ammi,” that is, “Not My People,” saying Israel was no longer His people and He was not their God (Hos. 1:6-9). Furthermore, Isaiah 50:1 and Jeremiah 3:8 speak of God divorcing Israel and sending her away: “I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries” (Jer. 3:8 NIV). God did indeed send Israel away. The Israelites were defeated and carried away from the Promised Land by the Assyrians in 722 BC, and scattered around the Assyrian Empire, and they are still scattered around the world to this day.

In contrast to Israel, who became unloved and were no longer considered God’s people because of their sin, God specifically promises that Christians cannot be separated from His love for any reason. This means Christian salvation is secure. If Christians could become unsaved and then destroyed in the Lake of Fire, then they would be separated by death from God and His love. But God says Christians can never be separated from His love, thus giving them an assurance of everlasting life.

[For more on God being called our “Father,” see commentary on Rom. 8:15 in the REV.]

**o) New Ending**

The Administration of Grace began on the Day of Pentecost when Christ poured out the new gift of holy spirit (Acts 2:4, 33) and it will end with the Rapture when dead Christians are raised, living Christians are changed, and both groups are taken to heaven in new bodies like Christ’s glorious body (Phil. 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54). The Rapture is only spoken of in the Church Epistles and is something that only Christians will experience. It is new and only for them. In the Rapture, Christians will meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air (not on the earth). Some people believe that Matthew 24:37-41 is about the Rapture, but it is not. Reading it in context shows that it refers to Christ’s coming to earth as a conqueror and a judge and compares the Judgment Day of the wicked of Noah’s day with the Judgment Day of the wicked at the time Christ comes back to earth (see commentary on Matt. 24:40).

Since the Rapture occurs only in the Church Epistles, many scholars deny that it will ever occur, thinking that if it was going to happen, it would have been spoken about in more than just a couple of places in the Church Epistles. That, however, is exactly the point: only Christians are in the Rapture, so it is only spoken of in the Church Epistles. It is unique to God’s children by birth, so it is not in the Old Testament or the Gospels.

The Bible teaches that Christians will be raptured into heaven as the Church Epistles state, while believers who lived during the period of the Old Testament and Four Gospels will come up out of their graves in the Resurrection of the Righteous, also called the “first resurrection” and the “resurrection of life” (cf. Ezek. 37:11-14; Dan. 12:2; Luke 14:14; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:5).

[For more on the resurrections, see commentary on Acts 24:15.]

**p) A One-Time Event**

The vocabulary used to refer to Christian salvation shows it is a one-time event. The terms and phrases used to express Christian salvation such as New Birth, sealed, new creation, the gift of holy spirit, receiving a new divine nature, and becoming citizens of heaven, highlight the truth that what is being described is not a process but a one-time event occurring in a moment of time the outcome of which is irrevocable. In contrast, none of those concepts is applied to people in the Old Testament or Gospels precisely because their salvation was the outcome of continued faith in God, not a one-time birth event. Furthermore, unlike Christian salvation, Old Testament salvation was not guaranteed because it was conditional on people continuing in faith until they died.

**q) Christians Will Not be Condemned to Die in the Lake of Fire**

According to the Bible, one of the unique promises to the Christian Church is that no Christian will be condemned to die in the Lake of Fire. God’s promise of “no condemnation” cannot be found in the Old Testament or Gospels; it is exclusive to the Christian Church. Romans 8:1 says, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in *union with* Christ Jesus.” The Greek word translated “condemnation” in Romans 8:1 is *katakrima* (#2631 κατάκριμα). It only occurs three times in the New Testament—Romans 5:16, 18; and 8:1—and its use in those three verses is consistent. *Katakrima* refers to both the pronouncement of guilt and the ultimate infliction of punishment. Thus, in a legal setting, as in Romans, *katakrima* refers to both the guilt of the offender and the retribution the offender deserves and will receive.

Romans 5 is about Adam’s transgression and how Adam’s sin resulted in “condemnation” for all people. Romans 5:16 says that “judgment came from one transgression [Adam’s sin] resulting in condemnation [*katakrima*].” Romans 5:18 gives the same message: “one transgression resulted in condemnation for all people.” Thus, every person is “condemned” because of Adam’s sin. But condemned to what? Every person is condemned to death (Rom. 6:23) by being burned up in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15; cf. Matt. 10:28). Romans 5 is saying that Adam sinned, and the result was “condemnation” for everyone. Everyone is guilty before God, and unless their sin is paid for, they will die in the Lake of Fire. Thankfully, Romans 5 also says Jesus paid the price for sin by dying in place of sinners. Since Jesus paid the price for sin, those who accept him as their Lord and Savior are declared righteous in God’s eyes and consequently granted everlasting life (Rom. 5:6-10).

[For more on death in the Lake of Fire see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.” For more on the legal setting of Romans and being “declared righteous” by God, see commentary on Rom. 3:20.]

**r) Christians Can Know They Are Saved**

Christians can “know” they are saved, they do not have to wonder or guess. This is unique to the Christian Church and is due to the New Birth, the presence of the gift of holy spirit, and the guarantee of salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:1

For we **know** that if our house here on earth, our tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, everlasting in the heavens.

1 John 3:2

Beloved, we are children of God now, and it has not yet been revealed what we will be. We **know** that when it is revealed, we will be like him because we will see him just as he is.

1 John 5:13

I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you can **know** that you have life *in the* age *to come*.

2 Corinthians 4:13-14

But since we have the same spirit of trust as that shown in what has been written, “I believed, and therefore I spoke,” we also believe and so we speak, **knowing** that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us up also to be with Jesus, and will bring us, along with you, into his presence.

It is sometimes said that people like Paul, Peter (1 Pet. 5:1), and John could know they were saved because they were such holy people, but the average Christian cannot know they are saved. But note that in 2 Corinthians 4:14 and 5:1, Paul not only says that he knows that he will be with Jesus, but that the people in the Church at Corinth would also be with Jesus. Paul may have been confident in his own walk, but one has only to read the Epistles to the Corinthians to see that the Corinthians had lots of problems and sin. Given that, the only sure way Paul could write that he “knew” that the people of Corinth would be with him in the presence of the Lord would have been if he knew their salvation was secure in Christ—he could certainly not be sure that none of them would reject him.

Furthermore, there are other verses that do not specifically use the word “know” that show that Christians can know they are saved. For example, Paul wrote to the Church at Colossae and said, “*but* when Christ—your life—appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4). Paul knew Christian salvation was secure, so he wrote to the church at Colossae, which had plenty of problems, and said they would appear in glory with Christ when Christ appeared. But Paul could not have written that to the whole church if Christian salvation was not secure.

Before the New Birth in the Administration of Grace, people had to maintain their faith to be saved. That meant there was always some room for them to doubt their salvation, and people could wonder if they maintained enough faith in the sight of God to have everlasting life. The consistent message in the Old Testament and the Gospels is that people had to be faithful throughout their lives, and this is quite clearly stated in Ezekiel (in the section of Ezekiel below, “live” means “live forever,” and “die” means “die forever).”

Ezek. 33:12-19 (REV)

12And you, son of man [Ezekiel], say to the children of your people: The righteousness of the righteous person will not deliver him in the day when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked person, he will not fall by it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor will the one who is righteous be able to live by it in the day when he sins. 13When I say to a righteous person that he will live, yes live, if he trusts in his righteousness and commits injustice, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but because of his injustice that he has committed, because of it, he will die. 14But when I say to a wicked person, ‘You will die, yes, die,’ if he turns from his sins and does what is just and righteous, 15if that wicked person returns the pledge, gives back what he had taken by robbery, walks in the statutes *that give* life, *and* does not commit injustice, he will live, yes live, he will not die! 16None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. He has done what is just and righteous; he will live, yes, live! 17Yet the children of your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ But as for them, *it is* their way that is not fair. 18When a righteous person turns from his righteousness, and commits injustice, then he will die because of it. 19But when a wicked person turns from his wickedness and does what is just and righteous, he will live because of it.

What God said in Ezekiel—that if a righteous person turned to a life of sin they would die forever, and if a sinner turned away from their sin and obeyed God they would live forever—is consistent throughout the Old Testament and the Four Gospels. Here are some other examples:

Deuteronomy 6:25 (REV)

And it will be our righteousness if we are careful to do every one of these commandments before Yahweh our God, as he has commanded us.

Matthew 19:16-17 (REV)

And look! A man came to him and said, “Teacher, what good thing must I do in order to have life in the age *to come*?” **17**And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about that which is good? There is One who is good. But if you want to enter into the Life, keep the commandments.”

Matthew 24:10-13 (REV) (abridged)

10And then many will fall away.11And many false prophets…will mislead many. 12And…the love of the many will grow cold. 13But the one who endures to *their* end, this one will be saved.

These examples could be multiplied many times, but they make the point. The Bible says Christians are born again in a one-time event and then “will be saved” and they can “know” it for certain. But the message to the people before and after the Christian Church and Administration of Grace was that they had to be faithful to maintain their salvation. No verse in the Old Testament or Gospels says a person can “know” they are saved. Christians live in the Administration of Grace, and are truly graced by God because of the work of the Lord Jesus. One of the great blessings Christians enjoy is being able to know they will live forever because once they are born again, they “will be saved.”

**s) Totaling the Evidence**

As we have seen above, there is a large amount of evidence in the Church Epistles that Christians are guaranteed everlasting life. Note some of the major things unique to the Christian Church: Christians are “born again” of God’s gift of holy spirit and “sealed” with that holy spirit until the Day of Redemption. The born-again Christian has a new, divine nature. Christians have a “guarantee” of salvation, and since the New Birth is an act of creation, Christians are “new creations” with a new, spiritual life. Furthermore, with that new life comes a new language: speaking in tongues (more on that below). As God’s children by birth, Christians are already said to be raised from the dead, to be citizens of heaven, and to be seated in heaven. Since God is now the birth Father of Christians, they are His children and nothing can separate them from His love. Also, Christians are already said to be glorified with a glory so glorious that the Mosaic Law had “no glory” in comparison.

The Scriptures make clear that it is impossible for a born-again Christian to somehow lose their salvation. For that to happen, their spiritual birth would somehow have to be undone; they would have to somehow be “unsealed” and lose the gift of holy spirit that was promised to be in them until the Day of Redemption; their “divine nature” would have to be taken away; the “guarantee” they have from God would have to be made null and void; they would have to become “uncreated” and amputated from the Body of Christ; their new spiritual life would have to be killed; their heavenly citizenship would have to be revoked; God’s promise that Christians are already raised from the dead, already with Christ in heaven and already glorified would be shown to be worthless; the promise that nothing could separate Christians from God’s love would be shown as false; and the fact that Christians “know” they will be with Christ would be revealed as only wishful thinking.

**3) An added bonus: Christians have a new language**

The Bible says Christians can “know” they are saved, but how? One way that Christians can know they are saved is that God gave them a new language unique to the Administration of Grace. The Bible refers to it as “speaking in tongues.” Speaking in tongues happened for the very first time on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). In fact, speaking in tongues is one of the many indicators that God started something new and different on the Day of Pentecost that had never existed before. Speaking in tongues is prayer and praise that edifies the one speaking, but arguably the most important thing about it is that it conclusively shows a person they are born again and do not have to worry about not having everlasting life. No wonder God says, “I would like every one of you to speak in tongues” (1 Cor. 14:5). No one has to speak in tongues to be saved, but properly done it is a way for Christians to know the gift of holy spirit is born in them.

[For more on speaking on tongues, see commentary on 1 Cor. 14:5.]

**4) Can you relinquish your salvation?**

Some scholars acknowledge that Christians cannot lose their guarantee of salvation by sinning or behaving in an ungodly manner, but they believe that if a person wants to become unsaved or wants to repent of their salvation, they can do that. However, when a person becomes born again, they are a new creation with a new nature. Christians cannot “uncreate” themselves or change their nature. The New Birth changes people in a way that cannot be reversed. There are some changes people can make to their own bodies in the physical world and in the spiritual world that are permanent and that cannot be changed later even if the person wants to. The New Birth is one such change. There are plenty of examples of this in the physical world. For example, if a man decided he did not want to see sinful things and so blinded himself, he would not be able to repent and restore his sight—he would be permanently blind. Similarly, when a person gets born again, they are permanently changed and they become God’s purchased property. There is no verse in the New Testament that says they can reverse their decision or that God would ever grant someone’s request to not be saved.

**5) Concluding Thoughts**

**a)** **Why is the permanence of salvation debated in the Church?**

In the light of all the evidence in the Epistles to the Church, why would anyone think Christians can lose their salvation? There are a number of reasons. One is the long-standing tradition that people can lose their salvation—that they can sin and go to “hell”—and many people are uncomfortable going against the tradition of the Church or their ancestors. However, no matter how long a tradition is entrenched, it is the Word of God that must be followed, not tradition.

Another reason some people believe salvation is not guaranteed for Christians is that they read the Old Testament and the Gospels and see that salvation was not guaranteed during those times, and therefore think it is not guaranteed for Christians either. However, God did something wonderful for Christians after Christ’s death paid for the sins of humankind. In calling attention to this, God even called the time in which Christians live the “Administration of Grace.” An integral part of the very unique “grace” Christians have been given by God is the permanence of Christian salvation.

Another reason some believe Christian salvation can be lost is that they do not read the whole Bible, and especially the Church Epistles, often enough and carefully enough to notice things written to the Christian Church that are never written anywhere else in the Bible. Prominent among these things is the “guarantee” of everlasting life which only occurs in the Church Epistles. One must read the entire Bible carefully and prayerfully to understand it. Frankly, it takes reading it over and over to really understand the scope of what it is saying. When one approaches the Church Epistles in this manner, the utter uniqueness of the salvation given to the Christian Church stands out brilliantly.

Some people believe Christian salvation can be lost because they are scandalized by the thought that a person can become a Christian by faith in Christ and then return to sin and still be saved. They do not think that is logical or fair. But everyone sins, and the wonderful thing about the death of Christ is that it covers all sin, not just “little sins.” Some of the sins covered by Christ’s death are egregious, but the blood still covers them. The guarantee of salvation is logical if we understand “birth.” Many parents have children who become very ungodly, but they are still their children. The same is true for God’s children by birth: even if some behave in a very ungodly manner, they are still God’s children. It also helps to realize that in the future there will be salvation and rewards. Salvation is a free gift but rewards are earned. The person who gets saved but continues in sin will lose rewards (see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil”).

Another reason some people believe Christian salvation can be lost is because there are some verses in the New Testament Epistles that seem to say that it is possible. However, there are many verses that show Christian salvation is secure. With some study, the verses that seem to say salvation is not secure can be explained in light of the teaching that salvation is guaranteed for the Christian. A list of some of those verses is provided below.

There are also people who believe Christian salvation can be lost because they think it would be unfair of God to guarantee salvation to the Christian Church but not to people in other administrations. However, God made Christian salvation permanent for His purposes and to reveal His wisdom (Eph. 3:10). It was certainly in line with His purposes, and not “unfair” that the Jews had very strict food regulations but Christians do not, or that under the Mosaic Law, a person could not be a priest unless he was born one whereas any Christian can become a leader in the Church. When God changes the rules, it is His choice and He does so with great wisdom and love.

**b)** **Why not just say we cannot lose our salvation?**

One logical question people ask is, “If our salvation is permanent, why doesn’t the Bible just say that you cannot lose it?” The answer is simple but can seem strange: the Bible does not say, “You cannot lose your salvation” because Christians are not actually “saved” yet. This point was made earlier in this appendix. If Christians are not literally saved yet, then they cannot lose their salvation because no one can lose what they do not yet have.

What Christians have today is a guarantee of salvation (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14), not the actual fullness of salvation itself, which is still future (cf. Rom. 5:10; 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:5) When Christians are actually fully “saved” (rescued) from this body of sin, they will have new bodies like Christ’s (Phil. 3:21) and they will be immortal/incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:51-54)—free from the curse of sin, sickness, and death. There are a couple of verses that say Christians are saved, such as Ephesians 2:8, but as has been seen above, this verse employs the prophetic perfect idiom. Today Christians have the “hope” of salvation (1 Thess. 5:8), the hope of being rescued from sin, sickness, pain, and death.

Scripture says it succinctly and plainly: If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead, you WILL be saved. By the grace of God, Christians have the guarantee of salvation and will live forever.

**6) Addendum: List of Some Commonly Used Verses to Argue the Conditionality of Salvation**

To read the arguments for these and other verses, see the REV commentaries on 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Corinthians 15:2; 2 Corinthians 6:1; Galatians 5:21; Colossians 1:23; 2 Timothy 2:12; Hebrews 3:14; Hebrews 4:1; 2 Peter 2:12; and 2 Peter 3:17.