

GOD has made Provision for our Forgiveness of Sin and our Welcome Into His Family.

“For His Compassions Never Fail They Are New Every Morning” (Lamentations 3: 22, 23 NIV).

The Keys of Heaven

The Church’s ROCK:

“ ___ were more opened minded ___ They welcomed the word very readily; Every day they studied the scriptures to check whether it was true” (Acts 17:11 TJB).

GOD:

“For His anger lasts only a moment, but His favor lasts a lifetime; Weeping may remain for a night, but Rejoicing Comes in the Morning” (Psalm 30: 5 NIV).

**At Caesarea Philippi Jesus begins to Prepare His Disciples for
The Beginning of the Church & the Importance of Their Coming Ministry.**

Jesus:

“Who do you say I am?’... Peter ... ‘YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.’ Jesus ... ‘Blessed are you Simon ... for this was ... revealed to you ... by My Father in heaven ... You are Peter, and on this **ROCK** I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome IT. I will give you **THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN;** whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ Then He warned His disciples not to tell anyone that HE WAS THE CHRIST. From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and **SUFFER** ... and ... be **KILLED** and on the third day be **RAISED** to life. Peter ... ‘Never Lord! ... This shall never happen to You!’ Jesus said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men’” (Mt. 16: 13, 15-23 NIV).

JESUS Confirms He was referring to Himself as the Rock when He warns His disciples:

“Tell no one that HE WAS THE CHRIST” (Mt. 16: 20 NASB). And when He earlier taught: **“Everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon (does) them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the **ROCK**”** (Matthew 7: 24 NASB).

Apostle PAUL clarifies this truth using an Old Testament event, the Israelites exodus from Egypt: **“They drank from the spiritual **ROCK** that accompanied them, and that **ROCK** was **CHRIST**”** (1 Corinthians 10: 4 NIV).

It is evident, that when JESUS rebukes Peter, that Peter [himself] is not the “ROCK” of the Church. This is also evident when Peter tells us about Jesus: “... the Lord. He is ‘The LIVING STONE, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him’ ... scripture says: ‘See how I lay in Zion a precious CORNERSTONE, that I have chosen and the man who rests his trust on it will not be disappointed ... a STONE to stumble over, a ROCK to bring men down.’ They stumble over it because they do not believe in THE WORD” (1 Peter 2: 3, 4, 6, 8 TJB). “... because they disobey THE MESSAGE” (1 Peter 2: 8 NIV).

*Points in “THE WORD” or “MESSAGE” are The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.
They explain that Jesus is the Christ.

Matthew records JESUS’ explanation of these “KEYS”: “He must go unto Jerusalem, and SUFFER many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes (teachers of Jewish law), and be KILLED, and be RAISED again the third day” (Matthew 16: 21 KJV). “Jesus said ... ‘The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall KILL Him, and the third day He shall be RAISED again’” (Matthew 17: 22, 23 KJV).

Apostle PAUL used these “KEYS”: “... I declare unto you THE GOSPEL which I preached ... which ... ye have received ... wherein ye stand: By which ... ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached ... For I delivered ... that which I also received ... CHRIST DIED for our sins According to the Scriptures ... HE WAS BURIED and that HE ROSE AGAIN the third day According to the Scriptures. And that He was seen of Ce’-phas (Peter) ... And ... of me” (1 Corinthians 15: 2-5, 8 KJV).

Apostle PETER used these “KEYS” in his opening message to the Jews: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth ... being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have CRUCIFIED and SLAIN: Whom God hath RAISED up having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it ... His soul was not left in hell (Hades TJB; the grave NIV; Hades NASB), neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God RAISED up” (Acts 2: 22-24, 31, 32 KJV).

Apostle PETER used these “KEYS” to open heaven for the Gentiles: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right. You know THE MESSAGE GOD SENT ... THE GOOD NEWS OF PEACE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST ... They KILLED HIM by hanging Him on a tree, but God RAISED HIM from the dead on the third day and caused Him to be seen ...

He is the One whom God appointed as a judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name” (Acts 10: 34-36, 39, 40, 42, 43 NIV).

Apostle JOHN shares WHY JESUS CAME: “He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose THE SON OF GOD was manifested (revealed), that He might destroy the works (operations) of the devil” (1 John 3: 8 KJV).

The Book of HEBREWS reveals HOW JESUS CAME: “One who has become a Priest ... on the basis of the power of an indestructible life” (Hebrews 7:16 NIV). “For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One Who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15 NIV).

Apostle PAUL on JESUS’ sacrifice & victory: “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the GOSPEL – not with words of human wisdom, lest the Cross of Christ be emptied of its power.” (1 Corinthians 1: 17 NIV) “For THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1: 18 NIV). “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe ... we preach CHRIST CRUCIFIED ... who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1: 21, 23, 30 KJV). “So that, just as it is written, ‘Let Him Who Boast, Boast In The LORD” (1 Corinthians 1: 31 NASB). “For since by man came death, by man came also the RESURRECTION of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so IN CHRIST shall all be made alive ... The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST” (1 Corinthians 15: 21-22, 56-57 KJV). “He was delivered over to DEATH for our sins and was RAISED to life for our justification” (Romans 4: 25 NIV). “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our LORD JESUS CHRIST ... For if by the transgression of the one death reined through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the ONE JESUS CHRIST” (Romans 5: 1, 17 NASB).

JESUS rebuked and warned those who did not believe: “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8: 24 KJV).

The book of ACTS records PETER using The Keys of The Kingdom of Heaven.

To the Onlookers: “Peter ... ‘Men of Israel ... The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and **KILLED** the Prince of life, Whom God **RAISED** from the dead, of which we are witnesses ... you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the CHRIST would **SUFFER**, He has thus fulfilled. REPENT therefore and BE CONVERTED, that YOUR SINS MAY BE BLOTTED OUT ...” (Acts 3: 12-15, 17-19 NKJV).

APOSTLE PAUL: “CHRIST lives in me ... I Live By Faith in THE SON OF GOD, Who Loved Me, And Gave Himself For Me (Galatians 2:20 NIV).

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AT THE CROSS

“WHERE I FIRST SAW THE LIGHT”

A Hymn by: Issac Watts 1707

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus: Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:5, 6 KJV).

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father. Jesus has finished the work of our redemption. Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins has been accepted as full payment by God the Father. No other sacrifice for sin is needed, nor can any be offered. The sacrifices God wants from His followers now are sacrifices of praise that confess Jesus as Lord and sacrifices of service which show God’s love.

The Book of Hebrew records: “For **CHRIST** is not entered into the holy places made with hands ... but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us Nor ... that He should offer Himself often ... For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: But now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to PUT AWAY SIN BY THE **SACRIFICE** OF HIMSELF. And, as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; So **CHRIST WAS ONCE OFFERED**, to bear the sins of many; and UNTO THEM THAT LOOK FOR HIM SHALL HE APPEAR THE SECOND TIME WITHOUT SIN UNTO SALVATION” (Hebrews 9: 24-28 KJV).

“JESUS CHRIST is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. Do Not Be Carried Away By Varied And Strange Teachings ... Through Him ... let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God ... the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Hebrews 13:8-9, 15-16 NASB).

James writes: “PURE RELIGION ... visit the fatherless and widows ... keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1: 27 KJV).

To What or Whom do You Entrust Your Soul? **“My soul finds rest in God alone,** my salvation comes from Him. He alone is my **ROCK** and my salvation ... My salvation and honor depend on God; He is my **MIGHTY ROCK** my refuge. Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge ...” (Psalm 62: 1, 2, 7, 8, NIV)

Psalm 78: The Israelites forgot and did not trust God: **“They refused to walk in His** law, and forgot His works and His wonders ... they sinned even more against Him ... they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy. Yes, they spoke against God ... they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation (deliverance NIV)” (Ps. 78: 11, 17-19, 22 NKJV).

Have You Forgotten What Jesus Has Done?

Will You Disbelieve God And Not Trust In The Deliverance Provided By The Cross?

Luke writes about Jesus suffering on the Cross: **“The people ... the rulers ... sneering** at Him, saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the **Christ** of God, His Chosen One.’ The soldiers ... mocked Him ... saying, ‘If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!’ Now there was also an inscription above Him, ‘THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.’ One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, ‘Are You not the **Christ**? Save Yourself and us!’ But the other answered, and rebuking him said, ‘Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.’ And he was saying, ‘Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!’ And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise’” (Luke 23: 35-43 NASB).

The foolish criminal was thinking only of maintaining his earthly life.
However, the wise criminal recognized his impending death and humbled himself.

HE: Feared God, - Acknowledged his guilt - that his deeds were sinful – that his punishment of death was just and deserved.

HE: Recognized - Jesus was guiltless, sinless - that Jesus' **suffering** and **death** was undeserved.

HE: Believed, Jesus **would live again** – have His own Kingdom - that Jesus was the **Christ** Who could forgive him and give him a new life.

In return, Jesus: Recognized, the faith of the wise criminal and promised him eternal life that very day.

Will you: NOW believe and trust in the deliverance and salvation that JESUS has provided?

Paul writes: “Working together with Him, we also urge you ... behold, NOW is ‘The Acceptable Time,’ behold, NOW is ‘The Day of Salvation’” (2 Corinthians 6: 1-2 NASB).

The Simple Message Jesus gave in John 3:16 is proven true in His relationship with this wise criminal: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3: 16 KJV).

The Wise criminal's comments indicate that he recognized Jesus as the Christ and perhaps, unknowingly, his comments point to Jesus as the ROCK upon which the Church would be built. After all: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13: 8 KJV).

Here are the Wise Criminals comments followed by one or more parallel Old Testament Scripture:

“Do you not even fear God ...?” “For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the **ROCK** except our God” (2 Sam. 22: 32 NIV).

“We are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” “The LORD is upright ... my **ROCK** and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” (Psalm 92: 15 KJV) “He is the **ROCK**, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He” (Deuteronomy 32: 4 NIV).

“JESUS, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!”

“Rescue me and deliver me in Your righteousness; turn Your ear to me and save me. Be my **ROCK** of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for You are my **ROCK** and my fortress.” (Psalm 71: 2, 3 NIV) “To you I call, O LORD my **ROCK**; do not turn a deaf ear to me.” (Psalm 28: 1 NIV) “Deliver me speedily; be my **ROCK** of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me ... Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth” (Psalm 31: 2, 5 NKJV).

JESUS responded to the wise criminal:

“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43 NASB).

These next Old Testament Scriptures help us to see THE JOY the wise criminal must have Experienced That Day:

“**The LORD lives**, and blessed be my **ROCK**; and exalted be God, the **ROCK** of my salvation” (2 Samuel 22: 47 NASB).

“**The LORD is my ROCK** and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust ...” (Psalm 18: 2 NKJV).

“**Come, let us sing** for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the **ROCK** of our salvation ... come ... with thanksgiving ... music and song. For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods” (Psalm 95: 1-3 NIV).

“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though YOUR SINS be as scarlet,
They Shall Be as White As Snow” (Isaiah 1:18 KJV).

JESUS said: “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage (wedding feast) for his son ... he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: ... Friend, how came thou in here not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king ... Bind him ... and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22: 2, 11-14 KJV).

Apostle John saw a vision of heaven: “A great multitude ... of all nations ... kindreds ... people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes ... one of the elders ... saying unto me, What (Who) are these which are arrayed in white robes? ... And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said ... they ... have washed their robes, and made them white in **THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB**” (Revelation 7: 9, 13-14 KJV).

JESUS said: “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside ... everyone who loves and practices falsehood” (Revelation 22: 14-15 NIV).

The Psalmist wrote: “From my distress I called upon the LORD; The LORD answered me and set me in a large place. ... It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. ... The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation. ... I shall not die but live, and tell of the works of the LORD. The LORD has disciplined me severely, but He has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness; I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous will enter through it. I shall give thanks to Thee, for Thou hast answered me; And Thou hast become my salvation. The **STONE** which the builders rejected has become the **CHIEF CORNER STONE**” (Psalm 118: 5, 8, 14, 17-22 NASB).

HAVE YOU ENTERED IN? ARE YOU STANDING ON THE ROCK?

JESUS said: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction ... many ... go in by it ... narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of false prophets.” (Matthew 7: 13-15 NKJV) “I tell you the truth, I am the gate ... whoever enters through Me will be saved” (John 10: 7, 9 NIV).

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(see Hymn next)

THE HYMN: AT THE CROSS

by: Issac Watts

1. Alas! And did my **Savior bleed** and did My **Sovreign die**?
Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I? (sinner)
3. Was it for crimes that I had done He **groaned** upon the tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown! And love beyond degree!
6. But drops of grief can ne'er repay the debt of love I owe:
Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'Tis all that I can do.

REFRAIN:

At the **Cross**, at the **Cross** where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away
It was there **by faith** I received my sight.
And now I am happy all the day!

4. Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut His glories in,
When **Christ**, the **Mighty Maker died**, for man the creature's sin.

{Read Psalms Next}

GOD'S WORD - PSALMS (Chapters)

READ IT: **The way of the Righteous and the Wicked 1**

- 1. Blessed** is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
- 2. But his delight** is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

- 3. He is like** a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. **4.** The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

- 5. Therefore** the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; **6.** For the LORD knows the way of the righteous; but the way of the wicked will perish.

BELIEVE IT: **The Reign of the LORD'S Anointed 2**

- 1. Why do** the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? **2.** The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, **3.** "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."

- 4. He who sits in the heavens laughs;** the Lord holds them in derision. **5.** Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, **6.** "As for me, I have set My King on Zion, My holy hill."

- 7. I will tell** of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. **8.** Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. **9.** You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

- 10. Now therefore,** O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. **11.** Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. **12.** Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

LIVE IT:

Answer Me When I Call 4

- 1. Answer me** when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress, be gracious to me and hear my prayer!
- 2. O men, how long** shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? **3.** But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.
- 4. Be angry, and do not sin;** ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. **5.** Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD.
- 6. There are many who say,** “Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!” **7.** You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.
- 8. In peace** I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

(Scripture: English Standard Version) **Presented** by: Gary Westgerdes
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