

# INTRODUCTION

Before we begin this study, it is important that we enter in with the heart of the Bereans, as noted in **Acts 17:11**. When the apostle Paul came to them — a man who had been chosen by Jesus Himself to preach the Word and who was inspired by the Holy Spirit — they “*received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*” Keep this in mind as you study the things found within these pages, for if such a man could be challenged as to whether or not his words were true [that is, true according to the will of God], what does that say about how we should listen to uninspired men today who claim to be speaking the Word of God?

On this subject, in particular, it is vitally important that you do not accept my word for truth — or anyone else's, either. I am capable of making mistakes, and **all** men may be under the influence of certain prejudices and biases, whether we realize it or not. It may be that a man who teaches the gospel plan of salvation simply does not have all the facts, and is in error (like Apollos, **Acts 18:24-28**), or it may be that he is more interested in keeping a position of power (as the Pharisees, **John 11:45-53**), or it may be that he is simply a false teacher (as Peter warned about in **2 Peter 2**). Take these words and hold them up against the already-revealed Word of God [the Bible] to see if they are in harmony. If they are found to be in error, you should rightly reject it as false and you would do well to let me know where I am in error. If I am in error, I will have to answer for it in the end, so I want to be right according to the will of God. But, if these things are found to be sound doctrine — true according to the Bible and logical and consistent in application — then you are responsible for acting on these truths and making personal application. **You** will be judged for having obeyed the gospel of Christ [or not] in the end.

That said, this study is about something of extreme importance: your salvation. If you believe that God exists, then you must logically believe that the same God has established rules for mankind, His creation. And you would be right. God did not simply create man and then leave him to his own devices; He intended from the beginning to have a continuing relationship with His creation. But God knew that man would sin even before he was created, so He established a plan for his salvation before time began. [We will talk more about this later in the study.] It is that plan for our salvation that will be covered within this study, and it is my hope that (1) I have not omitted anything from the revealed Word of God that is essential to understanding this plan, (2) I have not added anything to the plan, and (3) I have not misrepresented any of the revealed plan in any way, misusing texts or twisting the meaning so as to fit some preconceived idea or belief of my own.

Please consider these words and, as the apostle Paul wrote, “*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?; unless indeed you are disqualified.*” (**2 Cor. 13:5**) It may be that some of you who will read this **think** that you are already a child of God, but you may have not done all the Lord has commanded that one must do, in the way the Lord commanded, or even for the reason the Lord commanded. If so, know that you are still in your sins and you are not saved. You are **not** a child of God. It may be that you once obeyed but have ceased serving the Lord and have gone back into the world. If you find that you have not done what Jesus commanded, or are not living faithfully before Him, I urge to you to not hesitate in obeying His will, for your soul is at stake. In the final judgment, it will seem utterly ridiculous if you delayed until it was too late, or if you did not obey because you did not like the writer/speaker, or because it meant your parents, your spouse, or your friends were not really saved.

Your soul is at stake. Follow Jesus. (**John 14:15**)

*Steven C. Harper*