Lesson on the Orderly Nature of God

I recently heard a Bible lesson that made me do a lot of thinking about God… about His nature, His mind, and His purpose for us. In this lesson, it was brought up that God, throughout the Scriptures, shows Himself to be a God of … order… patterns… and instructions.

How true… and realizing this fact does nothing to take anything away from His love, His mercy, or His grace. Those all abound without limit towards all who obey Him. Likewise God's justice and wrath will abound without limit in the end towards those who don't obey His commands… the scriptures make both of these ideas equally clear.

Before we begin our subject, I would like to make a few comments on "hearing" the word of God. Much of the world does not understand God's nature, if they did, they would literally hang on His every word to us… you don't know many people like that do you? Most people in the world have no understanding of God's nature.

We, as humans, don't have an innate understanding of God's nature… we must be taught through God's word. A study of the nature of God needs to take place with a heart that desires and loves God's truth… no matter what… anything less than this type of commitment on our parts leads to a clouded understanding... or sadly no understanding at all.

Christ said in **Matthew 11:15… "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"** **Christ is referring to hearing the word of God with your heart… He is talking about hearing with a heart and mind that wants and desires the truth at all cost… He is talking about "hearing" the word of God in such a way that you would not let anything intrude on receiving the information being given, and then keeping the information and living by it.**

Job said in Job 23:12… "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food". This quite an example of how we are supposed to pursue the word of God for our own instruction, and the wisdom it contains. David said in Psalms 46:10… "Be still, and know that I am God". We must "be still" to know God… being "**still" means to be submissive. We must** submit our minds to God in order to know His Word and what it says about all of the aspects of our lives…

With this lesson I want to focus on aspects of God's divinely ordered character that many people don't think about because of the misperceptions about God and His nature that exist in the world today.

God is a God of Order…

In his first letter to the Corinthians, in chapter 14, the Apostle Paul admonishes them for conducting themselves in a disorderly fashion in their worship… everyone was doing his own thing in his own way… which reflected badly upon the Body of Christ to any outside observer. This was making them ineffective at teaching the word of God to anyone who was not a believer. Also, this did them no good internally, because no one could be edified by worship, due to all of the confusion.

At the end of the chapter, in **1 Corinthians 14:40**, Paul states… **"Let all things be done decently and in order."** **Paul wrote this through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to admonish them into conducting themselves in an orderly fashion. He did this to get them back on the right track… to help them to walk in the Lord's ways once more.**

Order is the way of the Lord and Paul tells the Corinthian church this in **1 Corinthians 14:33**, when he says… **"For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."** Paul tells them plainly that any chaos, confusion or disorder, especially in worship, is not of the Lord… meaning it is of Satan. Therefore it stands that any conduct that is orderly, and peaceful is of the Lord.

In **Genesis 1:31** we have the first statement in scripture affirming that God made all things, the text says **" Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good."** This was on the last creation day. The reason I bring this up is that during the creation process, in which the Lord of Creation spoke all things into being, He also made all of the orderly physical laws that we base our human science on. He created gravity and the laws governing it, the Pythagorean theorem that we use in the discipline of geometry became a truth that we would discover, two molecules of hydrogen and one of oxygen became the chemical formula for water, the physical laws around the speed of light became truths. All of these orderly laws, that always give us the same results when we apply them, came into being during creation. How is it then that anyone could even begin to think that any confusion on this earth is of God? He has shown himself to be an orderly being, from the very beginning!

God is not the author of confusion. God's way is orderly and perfect, and there is no other way. Whether we are in the world at work, at home with our families or at worship we must do things in God's orderly way. We must turn from the confusion of the world to this type of thinking if we are to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. No one will serve God in heaven that did not first serve Him on this earth, according to the divine order of things as the Lord has decreed.

God is a God of Patterns…

God has revealed Himself to be a God who gives us patterns to follow. Paul talks a lot about patterns for conducting oneself as a Christian in his various letters, and from the New Testament we learn that Christ is the ultimate pattern for our lives as Christians… we are to emulate Him… to put on Christ. The New Testament also gives us a pattern for worshipping God now under the New Covenant. Many specific examples of giving patterns are also to be found in the Old Testament.

Let me begin this by stating that we no longer live under the Mosaic Covenant or the "Old Testament"… that is made clear to us in **Hebrews 8:13**. In fact the latter half of **Chapter 8** in **Hebrews** is devoted to the explanation of the old covenant's passing in favor of the new one.

The scriptures here plainly state that God has made the first covenant obsolete, and has replaced it with a new covenant or "New Testament." In light of this many people ask, "Why do we study the Old Testament then?"

That is a good question and deserves a good answer. Here is the answer: The Apostle Paul states in his letter to the church in Rome in **Romans 15:4**… **"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."** In **2 Timothy 3:16** Paul tells us **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..."** The statement "**All Scripture**" here certainly includes the Old Testament scriptures, and Paul is telling us with both of these scriptures that the Old Testament is still valuable to us for our learning and instruction in righteousness.

Lastly, we have this statement made by the Lord directly to the prophet Malachi. In **Malachi 3:6** God tells us this **… "For I am the Lord, I do not change…"** Now that is a very important piece of information that many people seem to miss. Our God now… is the same God that smote Egypt, and sent His Son to die for our sins on a Roman cross. God does not change… men do change… but God does not. So if He is the same God as in the Old Testament… and He tells us that He is unequivocally by this statement in the book of Malachi… then it would make a great deal of sense to go to the Old Testament for a study of the nature of God, wouldn't it? To ignore the Old Testament examples on God's actions and His nature would not be wise.

Now let us continue with our study of patterns in the Old Testament. As we stated before the Apostle Paul makes it clear that the writings in the Old Testament are not useless to us. On the contrary, they are there "**for our learning**", and as we also have seen from the book of Malachi, God does not change. The Hebrews writer acknowledges this point in many ways in his writings. One of the examples that he uses, functions to show us that God expects the same obedience now… as under the old covenant. The example is in **Hebrews 8:5** where the writer quotes the Lord's word's to Moses. He uses a quotation from then book of **Exodus** to make the point and we will pick up in the middle of the verse **"… who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He (God) said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."**

God gave Moses the pattern for the tabernacle in heaven as His model for the one that Israel was to be using on earth for their proper worship. God's original words to Moses on the subject is found in **Exodus 25:8-9**, in which we read… **"And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it."** God had a specific pattern for the tabernacle to be used. It was a copy of the one in heaven; God had a purpose for wanting this particular pattern to be used, and no other.

Notice from this verse in **Exodus** that God says that this is so **"that I may dwell among them".** Meaning that if they did it another way, He, God would **not** dwell among them. In order for God to dwell among those of us on earth, we must keep to the patterns He has given us through His word in order to be acceptable to Him as "His people." God will not dwell with us otherwise. We read in **Exodus 40:16… "Thus Moses did; according to all that the Lord had commanded him, so he did."** Moses did as God commanded, and He, God, dwelt among the children of Israel as promised. An illustration of God's acceptance of the way the Israelites followed the pattern is found in **Exodus 40:34-35**… we see that the tabernacle is now finished and **"the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle"**… God accepted the tabernacle as His… and to show His approval He filled it with His Glory.

Doesn't this mean that we now must follow the New Testament pattern for the church, and it's worship… in order for God and Christ to dwell among us now as they promised? In **John 14:23** we have Christ's words to us… the text reads **"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word;**

and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." Notice, as your read this passage, that the promise in **John 14:23** is only for those who keep the word of Christ… those who follow the patterns as given by the Lord. There is a distinct pattern for the New Testament church that the Lord has given to us. If we follow it… the church will be filled with **"the glory of the Lord."** If we do not follow it… God will not claim it as His own, He will not fill it with His glory.

The 400 or so denominational religious organizations in existence today that claim the name "Christian" do not follow this pattern… and this is to their own detriment. God does not dwell among them, they are not filled with His glory now nor will they be when our Lord returns. Many times in the Old Testament we see that when the Israelites left the pattern that God gave them, He turned His face from them… and so it will be with the church today… if it does not meet God's approval… We must respect God's patterns in order to have His benevolent presence with us.

Another example of the strict following of God given patterns is found in the book of **1 Chronicles chapter 28**. King David is speaking to his son Solomon who is about to become his successor to the throne of Israel by the decree of God. David has been told that he may not build the temple that he had so wanted to build for the Lord because he was a man of war, and had shed blood. The Lord decreed that Solomon would do it. Let's hear now what the scriptures tell us that David said to Solomon in **1 Chronicles 28:9-10**… **"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it."**

David then, in **verses 11 through 18**, goes on to give detailed plans for Solomon to build from, right down to the weights to be used for the serving bowls and utensils in the Lord's house. When your read these verses, you get the idea that again… there is a heavenly pattern for these things that must be followed… it is very, very detailed.

David goes on in **1 Chronicles 28:19** to say this… **"All this," said David, "the Lord made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans."**

God gave David the understanding and inspired him to record the specifications exactly.

He made it clear that it had to be done in this specific way. David in **verse 20** exhorts his son once more to **"do it"**, repeating the idea from **verse 10** of being faithful and of not deviating from the pattern in any way. **When the word of God shows a repetition like this we need to take notice**, because God has a reason for the repetition… just as He does for everything He relates to us. By the way we see in **2 Chronicles 5:13-14** that once the temple was completed and was finished according to the Lord's designs and plans… that **"the glory of the Lord filled the house of God."**… God once more showed His approval of what Solomon and the Israelites had done… by proclaiming His approval through His presence manifesting itself… We must respect God's patterns and He will dwell among us.

One of the most famous examples for the giving of a pattern by the Lord is to be found in **Genesis 6:13-22**. This is the story of Noah and the ark that he built. God gave Noah some very specific instructions as to how this was to be done. Noah, knowing that the Lord was greatly displeased with the direction the world was going and was about to destroy creation, did exactly as God commanded. Now let's read the last line of this scripture group in **verse 22** where we are told… "**Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did."**

When looking at these scriptures please notice the specific instructions God gave, and notice all

of the imperative statements God uses such as "**you shall**…" Does anyone think any of this was a subject open for debate? God's specific pattern for the ark included such details as the type of wood to be used, even stating in **verse 16** that there is just to be **"a window"**. Does anyone think that Noah put two windows on the ark? We see from the way the passage ends in **verse 22** that there was no way he did this. He followed the pattern, and God delivered him and his family from the flood. God destroyed creation because of disobedience, and Noah understood that this was the reason for the flood. **So obedience, in Noah's case, became a clear matter of immediate life or death.**

Keep in mind that only eight people in all were saved from the flood, out of millions of souls walking the earth. They were saved because they obeyed God and followed His divinely given patterns… unlike the rest of humanity at the time. This should give us a pause for reflection ... If Noah had disobeyed God, he would not have been saved from the floodwaters and you and I would not be here to read about it. I thank the Lord that Noah was a righteous man who obeyed God's words and adhered to His patterns. But I would ask how many of us look at following God's patterns as Noah did… with the immediacy of life or death attached? If you think about it… we should look at life like that every day….

God is a God of Instructions…

God has also showed Himself to be a God that is given to instructing His people. Many of us are familiar with God's instructions in the Old Testament as to how the nation of Israel was to behave. Let's now take a look at some of the instructions God gave to the children of Israel… His chosen people.

Before we do that, however, let us discuss the relevancy of God's instructions to Israel and the parallel for us in today's world. Israel was the chosen nation of God, and the Lord knew that Israel would eventually be given over to unfaithfulness. God, being a loving God, gave them instructions along with some deadly warnings. In the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ gave us instructions as well as warnings and made it clear that the way to eternal life was restrictive. Remember Noah, and the flood, and the fact that only eight people were saved, out of millions? That should give you some idea as to how restrictive it really is. Here is what Christ actually said in **Matthew 7:13-14… "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."**

A narrow gate is obviously an entrance that is not wide and may not be easily passed through. The "**narrow gate**" that Christ is referring to here is the one that leads to life after death on this earth. So it is an important gate wouldn't you think? In order to obtain an entrance through this particular gate one must not take the easy route, because that leads to destruction. The "**narrow**" or restrictive way is the way that leads to life, and the restrictions are the instructions (i.e. commands) that God has given for us to follow with our lives and our hearts.

That being said, we can see that God has given instructions and warnings under both covenants. Now let us make sure that we properly contrast the instructions from the Old Testament for God's chosen people today, and look at the spiritual Israel... the church of Jesus Christ.

We begin with the book of Deuteronomy, which is fascinating, when one understands what it really is. The key theme in the book is that obedience to God is the wise course that leads to blessings from God, and that disobedience to God is foolish and leads to stern discipline. It is actually a series of three sermons given by Moses before his death given to the people he has lead for many years… these are his parting words to them. Moses at this time was the leader of

Israel, a prophet and was also the Mediator of the old covenant. Contrast that with the fact that Christ is the leader of God's chosen people now as shown in **Colossians 1:18** where it says that Christ **"is the head of the body, the church…"** Christ gave us prophecies as well. Christ is also the Mediator of the new covenant as told to us in **Hebrews 9:15**. Moses delivered the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt, and Christ is the deliverer for God's people now from the bondage of sin. When viewing Moses and his teachings through these angles, and seeing these parallels, it should make his words to Israel important to us as well today.

In Deuteronomy, Moses tells the children of Israel to love God, and that they should do so because of His goodness to them, much as the Apostle John tells us to do this now in **1 John 4:19** where he says **"We love Him because He first loved us"**. Moses also pleads with the children of Israel to be faithful to God, and warns them about disobedience…

In his first "sermon" to Israel, Moses reminds the people of the lessons of the past regarding belief and disobedience. We see that he says in **Deuteronomy 4:1-2… "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."** Moses carefully instructs the Israelites to keep God's instructions to them. He tells them not to add or to take away from them that they may live, and that they may possess the land God is giving them. He repeats these words in his second "sermon" to them as well when he says to them in **Deuteronomy 12:32**, **"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."** Remember what we said about the bible repeating something? God is telling all of us "this is important… do not miss this point."

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Keeping the concept of repetition in mind, this message in **Deuteronomy** sounds much like the instructions Christ gives in His last revelation or message to us in **Revelation 22:18-19**. Compare Christ's words with those of Moses as you read this passage**…"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."** Christ, like Moses, tells us not to add or to take away from God's words. He makes it clear that those who do so will not live (i.e. have life after death), or receive the land or inheritance God has promised them… which is heaven. The words, which Moses spoke then, ring true in our Redeemer's words to us now… we must obey God's instructions, and we must not add to, or take way from them.

In the beginning of Moses second "sermon" to the children of Israel, he tells them this in **Deuteronomy 5:32-33… "Therefore you shall be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess."** Moses is telling them to be careful and to stay on a straight course in their path with God. He tells them to **"not turn aside to the right hand or to the left**". Meaning, "do not deviate from the instructions the Lord has given you". Again he tells them this that they "**may live**" in the land, which they would eventually possess. This was so that they would be blessed by the Lord, not die and be cursed due to disobedience.

Clearly we can see that there is great wisdom in listening to the Old Testament scriptures, as they were a shadowing of things to come for those of us living in the present age. Moses and Christ

both say, “do not deviate from God’s instructions and you will live and be blessed with an inheritance”… they also say, “If you deviate from God’s instructions, you will be cursed and die.” We must give these points the weight in our minds that they deserve. Ignorance of these points means destruction for anyone… active and obedient wisdom regarding these points means life everlasting… and a home in heaven.

Here is a last point on patterns from the Old Testament. We find a passage which sounds very familiar to us in **Joshua 1:7.** Knowing that Moses was a pattern for Joshua to emulate… let’s read what God says here to Joshua, **“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.”**

If you have been following this lesson then this should be an extremely familiar theme by now… God pounded this over and over into the Israelites, and guess what? They still eventually forgot it. We should never think ourselves so clever as to believe that we cannot forget this as well. If the nation of Israel could be so blind, after actually seeing the miracles God performed on their behalf in order to deliver them from everything that besieged them, then who are we to think we can’t forget? Yet still so many have forgotten… or have never even known what the Lord expects, because they have never really “heard the word of the Lord”. It seems it is not worth the time these days. People must rethink that position… and must **“hunger and thirst for righteousness”** as Christ put it in **Matthew 5:6**.

Why God has given us Order, Patterns, and Instructions…

God has given us an order for things, a pattern for how we must do them, and instructions for keeping to the order and the patterns. These are given for our own good. Moses said this to the children of Israel when he said in **Deuteronomy 10:12-13, “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?”** God’s commands were given for our good. If it was true for Israel, certainly it is true for us today as well, especially since we are the recipients of a “**better covenant**”, as we are told in **Hebrews**, than the one God gave them through Moses. The blessing to be had through the covenant that is sealed with the blood of Christ is far better.

God loves us and cares for the good of mankind, and would see all men be reconciled to Him. We see this in **Ezekiel 18:32** where God speaks through His prophet and says, **“For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore turn and live!”** God takes no pleasure in the death of a soul, and would have all people turn to Him and live. That is why he sacrificed His only begotten Son for the remission of our sins. He loves us.

We are made in His image and our souls belong to Him, they are not ours. God tells us this in the first part of **Ezekiel 18:4** where He says, **“Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine…”** Our souls come from God and He will do with them what His perfect mercy demands for those who obey Him. For those who do not obey, however, God says this in the last part of **Ezekiel 18:4**, **“The soul who sins shall die.”** God will do what His perfect justice demands as well.

We are His creation. We may not always understand why God requires something of us, but we don’t always have to, we just have to obey Him and trust Him. Our lack of understanding was pointed out to us by the Creator when He said in **Isaiah 55:8-9… “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”**

To further illustrate this point, we have these words given to us by Moses in **Deuteronomy**

<u>29:29</u>… "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." God has revealed to us that which He wishes for us to know… that which we **<u>need</u>** to know. We must trust in God and obey His commands for He knows far more than we do.

Some things we will never know and understand… and some people will never embrace that… that may be a stumbling block for them… they cannot bring themselves to trust in God the way that He has told us we need to. Lets look at the book of Jeremiah for a moment for some insight into the hearts of men. You have heard the expression in popular culture "just follow your heart"… well here is why that is not a good idea. Jeremiah stated it well when he said through inspiration in **<u>Jeremiah 17:9-10</u>**… **"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings."**

The Lord know our hearts and our minds…we do not have it in us to make judgments by "just following our hearts"… As shown just now our hearts are intrinsically deceitful and wicked… if left without the guiding truths that God has so graciously given us. We must respect those truths.

Mankind, however, has shown himself to be forgetful of this. In the religious world we see that even though God has given us the simple instructions we need to follow to obtain eternal life, many have taken those commands … and perverted them. They have made them into a confusing morass that makes no sense… and it takes a twisted mind to come up with many of the things that are evidenced in secular religion today.

In fact, you have to actually twist your own mind in many cases to even understand some of the perverted logic used to explain why **"God didn't say what He really meant to say."** I recently spent some time corresponding with a denominational minister who took up thirteen pages of writing space to explain why the word "**baptize**" in the New Testament didn't have anything to do with immersion in water, and why baptism was not necessary for salvation… even though the scriptures plainly state that it is!

As I have heard preached so often before and as I will preach today… if words have meanings that we can all understand … and we know they do or else society would have crumbled by now… then we can all understand what God has told man he must do to be saved. Human pride and unwillingness to obey God and to accept His teachings given through inspiration, causes all of this confusion evident on the religious landscape of today. To all of those who twist the scriptures to their own destruction the writer of Proverbs says this in **<u>Proverbs 30:5-6</u> … "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."**

<u>Hear this</u>: God's words are pure and God's words and instructions to us are Holy and not to be perverted. People need to put aside their lack of desire to understand and read what God has actually said to them!

In the book of Job we find a wonderful display of the submission that the Lord expects from us in our lives. In this context it has just dawned on Job that he has been questioning God… and he has found that this is not a wise thing to do. Let's read the comments he makes after God finishes telling him how much he lacks in understanding. Please turn with me to <u>Job 42:5</u> … "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job got the point, he bowed to God's infinite greatness and the Lord blessed him for it.

The final point as to why God has given us order, patterns, and instruction is this; we are sinful and have to have Him tell us how to be saved. **<u>Isaiah 59:2</u>** says **"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He**

will not hear."

We are sinful, and sin has made us imperfect, and we have to have God to tell us how to get right with Him again… since we cannot do it on our own. Man left on his own would be in eternal spiritual darkness.

But God in His infinite wisdom and mercy has provided a way for us to come into His light… we read in Isaiah what He says to us all… look at **Isaiah 1:18-20** and let us see what our Creator has said to us… **"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."**

Through God's plan for the reconciliation of mankind He has made provision for our safe return to Him… but as we see from **Isaiah 1:20** which we read just now…we must accept His way to do this willingly… we cannot refuse it… if we are to have eternal life.

What is the way that God has provided for us to do this… to have the benefits that He intended for us? It is through His Son, Jesus Christ, and the death that He died on the cross. That death provided the atonement offering for our sins so that God, can see us as clean again. We needed one who would come and pay the penalty for our sins… a perfect sacrifice, and Christ willingly came and died in our places, because we in our sinful state, could not do it for ourselves.

In order to access the benefits provided by that sacrifice, God has given us a pattern to follow, and it is marked out clearly for us in the New Testament. That pattern is one that goes like this… in order to know about Jesus one must hear about what He did for us, one must believe that He is the Son of God and that He shed His own blood and died for us and arose on the third day, and is alive and reigning in heaven, one must recognize the sins in his or her own life, and repent of them… and then one must confess Christ as Savior and Lord, and one must be baptized to have their sins remitted. In baptism sins are washed away and we are raised from the immersion in water to walk in newness of life. That is the pattern given to us for salvation, and that is the only pattern that God recognizes for us to be saved by. We have to be baptized into His Son's death, and during this act of obedient faith, our sins are remitted.

This pattern is found in the book of **Acts**, specifically in **Acts 2:38** and is repeated over and over again. In fact, in the book of Acts, there are eight major conversion cases given to us for a pattern to follow, and in everyone of them, each of these steps occurred… although the only step that is consistently mentioned in every case is **baptism**, because it is at that point that we come into God's possession as His child and become washed and freed from sin through the effects of the washing of Christ's blood.

Towards the beginning of this lesson we mentioned the fact that God created all of the natural laws around us… and we know that they always work the same way every time… they are immutable, meaning when they are applied the proper way they always give the same result… they don't change. Take the law of gravity we spoke of, for example. It is easily expressed in these terms, "what goes up… must come down"… we have all heard that haven't we? And this is always true isn't it, when talking about things in the earth's atmosphere? We all know that if we drink a deadly poison such as sulfuric acid we will die.

Why is it then that mankind in all our wisdom, cannot see that God has made His spiritual laws immutable as well… is there any confusion, in the natural world over the process of converting water to steam, or oil to gasoline, or planting corn and reaping corn? No there is not. We accept those things unconditionally… how then could we not accept God's spiritual laws the same way? God has given us a single orderly process to follow for salvation, and if we follow it the same way every time, we produce people that are saved. If we do not follow it then we produce

people that are not saved… there are not multiple ways to be saved… just as you plant corn… you reap corn… not carrots.

Many in the religious world would tell you that you don't need to be baptized for the remission of sins to be saved… that salvation comes by faith alone, or that sins are remitted some other way… at some other time. That is one of the biggest lies that mankind has ever fallen for because it denies the power of Christ's blood to save us from our sins, which He shed in order that we might be saved. Not only is that a heinous thought when you really think about it, but it is contrary to the immutable pattern God gave us to be saved by. Just as you don't boil water and get gasoline… you cannot follow a "faith alone" doctrine and get salvation… it just doesn't work that way. If you take one thing from this lesson it should be that we have no authority to change the patterns that God has laid down for anything.

I'll leave you with one more pattern to consider… in **2 Kings 5** look at the story of Naaman the Syrian, which I am now going to paraphrase a great deal for you. Naaman was a powerful leader of Syria's armies, and he developed leprosy, which in the ancient world was the deadliest, most horrible thing one could contract. He sought to see the prophet Elisha in Samaria, whom he was told could cure him. Elisha would not see him; instead he sent a message to him telling him that in order to be cleansed of the leprosy that threatened his life he needed to go and wash in the Jordan River seven times. He was told that if he did this he would be cured. But this answer made him angry and he refused to do it. He wanted the prophet to come out to him and make a big scene and magically heal him. He wanted to know why the rivers in Syria we not good enough to do the job… why the Jordan River? He absolutely refused to do it.

Then in **2 Kings 5:13** his servants said to him… **"My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"** At that point Naaman came to his senses and did what he had been told to do… and he was cured.

How many people in the world are like Naaman… looking for a magical transformation when all they need to do is simply obey the Lord's command to be baptized? It is that simple…. Please note that Naaman was not cured until he did what he had been told to do… until he followed the pattern given to him. And no one living now will be cleansed of the disease of sin until they have done what we have been given to do. If you need to be baptized, won't you come now and follow the pattern given to us… Christ is calling you and has the Lord has given you an easy pattern to follow for salvation, and you don't even have to wash seven times… just once will do. Won't you do that now?

Likewise if you are a child of God who has wandered from the path of Christ and into sin, won't you come forward now and let us pray with you that you may be restored to spiritual health and well being in Christ again?