

Study of Jesus Christ (Gathers and preserves the church)

Christ preserves the church.

The preservation of the church has to be understood in two ways:

1. The invisible church, and
2. The visible church.

1. The invisible church:

The invisible church is preserved by the integrity of God in the following manner:

- a) God wrote the names of the elect in the book of life before creation purposing that these names would be read at the end of time to lead them into heaven.
- b) Man was allowed to follow the devices and desires of his own heart – and our First Parents rebelled against God.

Gen 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

- c) The prophets spoke through the Spirit of Christ as to the things that would come.

1Pe 1:10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look.

- d) Christ appeared and was bound to live and say only those things that have been prophesied – not bound as in chains, but bound by his perfect immutable integrity. It was after all He, as the almighty God, who directed the prophets to say what is to come.

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Luk 24:25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Luk 24:44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 "You are witnesses of these things. 49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

- e) The elect go through a period of sanctification to strengthen their faith and tutor their free will, so that they would be able to freely and sufficiently withstand the temptations of the flesh.

Joh 17:19 "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Act 26:16 'But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; 17 delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

Mat 5:48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

2CO 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

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2CO 13:9 We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection.

2CO 13:11 Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

1TH 5:23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mat 26:41 "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Look at the instruction (tutoring)

1Co 10:11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. 14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

Rev 3:5 'He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.

f) The elect are called into heaven from the book of life.

DNL 12:1 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered.

Rev 21:27 and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

a, o, u, au = k
e, i, ae, oe = ch

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Throughout these six actions, man goes through four phases resulting in four different states in which man finds himself:

<i>Phase:</i>	Pre-Fall Man	Post-Fall Man	Reborn Man	Glorified Man
<i>State:</i>	able to sin Posse peccare	able to sin Posse peccare	able to sin Posse peccare	able to not sin Posse non peccare
	able to not sin Posse non peccare	unable to not sin Non posse non peccare	able to not sin Posse non peccare	unable to sin Non posse peccare

Pre-fall:

We know that man was without sin before the fall because God said after creating man, "it was good". We also know that man as able to sin (posse peccare) because he did exactly that – sin.

Post-Fall:

Post fall can be divided into two phases: pre-law and post-law.

Pre-law: Before the law there was total lawlessness.

Gen 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Rom 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned - 13 for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Post-law: After the law, order and discipline came. The law also brought guilt, death, repentance, and reformation.

Rom 5:20 And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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EXO 20:20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

The law, again, can be divided into two main categories: Moral law and ceremonial law.

Moral Law:

The moral law came in the form of the Ten Commandments and had at its core the purpose of defining the relationship between God and man, and man and his neighbor.

Ceremonial Law:

The ceremonial law came in the form of the many precepts and prescriptions found in books of the Old Testament such as Deuteronomy and Leviticus.

Their core purpose again could be divided into two: The practical and the prophetic.

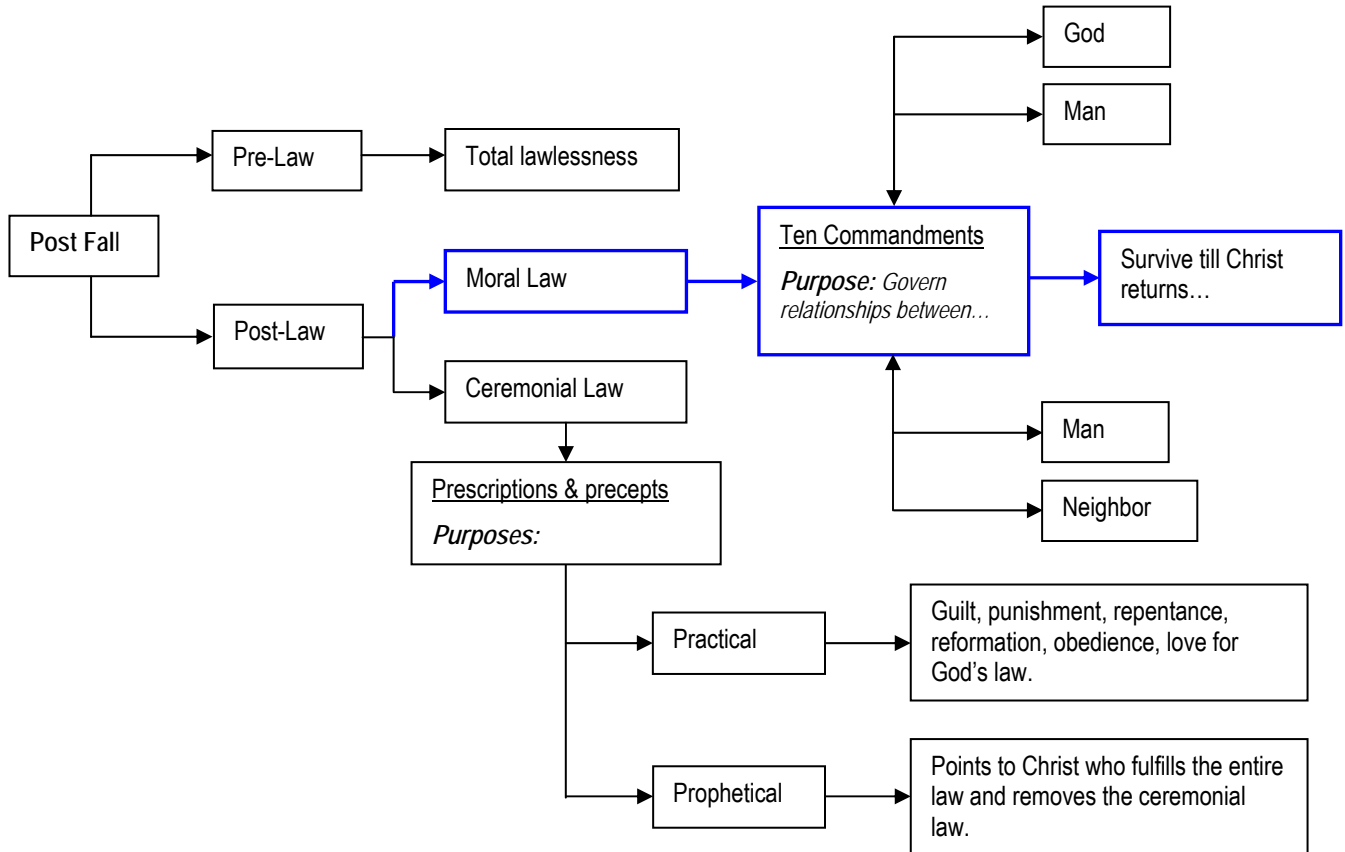
The principal practical purposes were

- i) the establishing of order in the lives of Israel,
- ii) combat sin and evil,
- iii) an orderly manner in which they could bring sacrifices for their sins, and
- iv) have the priests mediate on behalf of the people.

The principal prophetic purpose was to give the elect among the Israelites (the invisible church) comfort in the signs and seals of the prophetic laws and professions by assuring them that their Messiah will come.

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Diagram of the Post-Fall laws



The elect were entrusted to the nation of Israel, as a vessel, so to speak, until the Messiah would come. The promises made to Israel were made on behalf of the elect that were entrusted to them.

The elect were tutored by the law to grow in their understanding of God's will, which was their sanctification process. Afflictions led to guilt, which led to contrition, which led to repentance and obedience, which led to love for God's law.

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PSA 45:7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.

PSA 119:10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

PSA 119:12 Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. 13 With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. 14 I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. 15 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. 16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. 17 Do good to your servant, and I will live; I will obey your word.

PSA 119:18 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. 19 I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me. 20 My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times. 21 You rebuke the arrogant, who are cursed and who stray from your commands.

They glorified God even in their affliction as they waited patiently for the Messiah.

PSA 119:92 If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

Joh 9:1 And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.

The law's tutorship sanctified their free-will so that they desired to glorify and praise God above all else.

The reprobate, on the other hand, who were also present in the nation of Israel suffered (personal and public) affliction with the elect but they disregarded and ignored the tutorship of the law and rather clung to the practical purposes of the law. They yoked God's loving discipline with the precepts of sacrifice and the ceremonial law, thus subjecting their free-will to the bondage of the ceremonial law.

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This made them blind to the prophetic purposes of the law, which is why they could not recognize the Messiah when He appeared.

Joh 9:39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind." 40 Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

ACS 13:27 The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath.

The law gave the elders, prophets and priests the authority to punish transgressors so that God's displeasure with sin was visibly displayed, tutoring their free-will to live a more sanctified life and refrain from evil.

But these punishments were for all Israelites who broke the law. God's punishment for those outside of Israel was reserved for God's wrath, not only his displeasure with sin. From the destruction of those outside of Israel, the Israelites were shown God's wrath with the reprobate, so that they could always remember that God is not only a loving Father but a fierce judge of the wicked; always near to protect and preserve the church.

This process of judgment within the ranks of the church by members of the church but God's judgment for those outside the church is still in place today.

Judging (not being judgmental) other saints is an intimate, loving act, which is a crucial element in our sanctification process, preserving the church. The same was true in Old Testament Israel, where judgment and punishment was meted out by the elders, prophets and priests.

One would assume that the preferred situation, both in Old Testament and New Testament times would have been for the visible and invisible church to have been one and the same church, but God purposed it that nobody would know who are members of the elect so that pride and arrogance would not afflict the elect.

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Although wicked men masquerade as apostles of Christ and Satan disguises himself as an angel of light to mislead the elect, if it were possible, God allowed the reprobate to enter the visible church, so that the hypocrites could be led away from the church and to test the elect so that they can become stronger and resist the temptations of the evil one, who misled Adam and Eve.

2Co 11:3 But I am afraid, just as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

2Co 11:13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

For the same reason, the reprobate were embedded within the nation of Israel together with the elect.

It is clear from the foregoing that God preserves his church so that the elect could be thoroughly tested and tutored to live lives that are Christ-like and where they fail, they should repent and reform so that the church may be kept holy and a place where the gospel is preached so that, through hearing, the elect's faith be strengthened.

And when their free-will have been fully sanctified, they will pass through the grave, unhindered, without the horror, led by the hand of Jesus Christ to the bosom of Abraham.

If, then, that's the purpose of our lives, to freely glorify God, so that our sanctification would be complete before we leave to go home with the Lord, then how much value is there in this life? Are we not merely sojourning here, living in a tent? Why would we, then be concerned with remodeling our tent or buying as many tents as we can find, if we are here only for a fleeting moment?

Who of you would go on vacation for a week and start remodeling the hotel room in which you are staying, adding a room or breaking in a window with a better view? It would be ludicrous, wouldn't it?

But we didn't invent the sojourning concept of our earthly lives. God purposed it that we would be here only briefly, so why would He have more concern for our lives during this temporary period than for the eternal time we would spend with Him?

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What if you or I have to suffer with an affliction so that God may be glorified? What concern is it of you or I that someone else's suffering brings glory to the almighty God?

1PE 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

That doesn't mean we should be reckless in this life, but just as the reprobate within Israel ignored God's loving discipline and clung to the practical purposes of the law, we, too, should avoid clinging to the things of this life thus placing a yoke over the liberty to be found in the purpose of our lives eternal.

So, if people, especially children, suffer, we ought to do everything we are able to mitigate the suffering, but, overall, God's glory should be the overriding purpose of our efforts and the consideration of the suffering. If we do not consider the proper priorities of this very intimate and challenging human experience, we tend to repeat the mistakes of the reprobate-Israelites.

It's OK to mourn, to cry, to plead and petition God for relief, but always with the understanding that God's will be done and everything to His glory, even our suffering and mourning. Because we are not without hope.