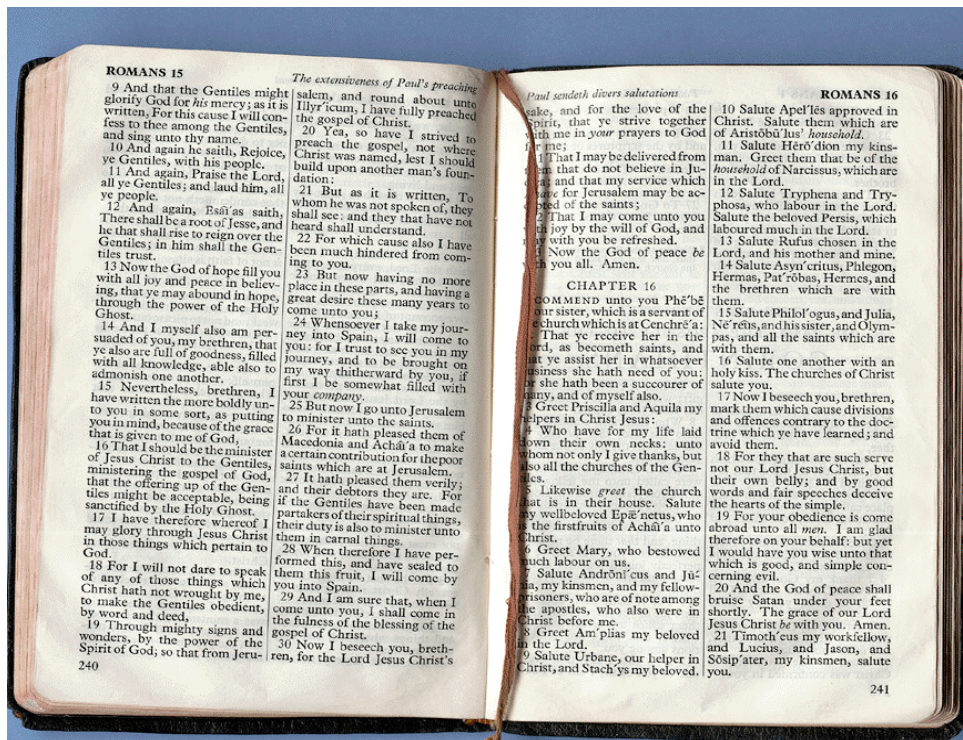




Early Christian Doctrine by R. J. Adams



Early Christian Doctrine

Some may have wondered what is the doctrinal position of the author of this website. As a non denominational Christian I base my foundational doctrine on the earliest teaching of the church, The Apostles Creed. This creed as best we can tell was the doctrine that was being used and taught during the time the book of acts was being written. Everything needed for salvation is contained in this creed. All other studies such as prophecy and biblical history are good for Christian growth, but not necessary for salvation.

The Apostles Doctrine

The term heresy comes from the Greek word meaning "to choose" and generally refers to the willful rejection of the normative doctrines of a group by a member of that group. The history of Christianity is bound up with the history of heresy because the historic orthodox Creeds were formulated to correct what were believed to be erroneous teachings. The result of these early struggles was the emergence of the rule of faith embodied in what is now called the Apostles' Creed. Almost every line of this creed is directly aimed at some important heresy. The Software Toolworks Encyclopedia

It is affirmed by Ambrose "that the twelve Apostles, as skillful artificers assembled together, and made a key by their common advice, that is the creed; by which the darkness of the devil is disclosed, that the light of Christ may appear." It is believed that each disciple wrote one line of this creed. (Ambrose was an early writer of church history)

- 1. Peter, I believe in God the Father Almighty;**
- 2. John, Maker of heaven and earth;**
- 3. James, And in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord;**
- 4. Andrew, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary;**
- 5. Philip, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried;**
- 6. Thomas, He descended into hell, the third day he rose again from the dead;**
- 7. Bartholomew, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;**
- 8. Matthew, From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead;**

9. James Alpheus, I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Christian Church;

10. Simon Zealot, The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins;

11. Jude, The resurrection of the body;

12. Matthias, Life everlasting, Amen"

While it is not absolutely certain that the Apostles actually wrote this creed, nevertheless it is an early church document that reflects the true teaching of the scriptures in one short paragraph. The Apostles Creed is what this author believes in and it is a good test for anyone seeking to join a church to compare that churches doctrine against "The Apostles Creed." Any church teaching something other that what agrees with this creed is in error and in disagreement with the scriptures.

The Didache or the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

Another document that explains the doctrines of the early Christian Church is called the Didache, meaning, "The Teaching." If you would like to know what the church taught during the first 100 years of Christianity then this will interest you. The teaching in it is still valid today and is in agreement with the scriptures.

What Does "Didache" Mean?

The Greek word Didache means "teaching." The Didache is the short title of an ancient document that contains some very early Christian doctrines. Another title of the work is "The Teaching of the Apostles to the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas were the Apostles to the Gentiles and the Didache may very well be the full text of the rules for Gentile converts that was formulated in Jerusalem sometime between AD 47 and AD 49 by Peter, James, Paul, Barnabas and the other Apostles in Jerusalem. If it was not written by the Apostles themselves then it was probably a product of the leaders of the earliest Greek Speaking Churches.

(Acts 15:1-2 & 4NIV) Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

(Acts 15:5-9 & 12 NIV) Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses." The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

(Acts 15:13-18 NIV) When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me. Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: "After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' that have been known for ages.

(Acts 15:19-20 NIV) "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.

(Acts 15:22- NIV) Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers.

(Acts 15:23-27 NIV) With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings. We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul--men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing.

(Acts 15:28-31NIV) It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell. The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.

Notice that the Apostles in Jerusalem along with Paul and Barnabas composed and sent a letter to the Gentile church at Antioch. The letter contained instructions for the Gentile church and in it we know that their decision contained admonitions to avoid food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality. These admonitions are also included in the Didache. Any letter of so great an importance would have undoubtedly been preserved and shared with other churches. The Didache is the only early church document that seems to meet the criteria of being that letter that was sent from the Apostles in Jerusalem to the Gentile Churches. Unless evidence to the contrary comes to light we would have to conclude that they are one and the same.

(Acts 15:32-33 NIV) Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. After spending some time there, they were sent off by the brothers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them.

THE DIDACHE (The Teaching)

Chapter I

1:1 There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and the difference between the two ways is great.

1:2 The way of life is this: first, you shall love the God who made you; second, your neighbor as yourself, and whatever you would not have done to you, do not do to another.

1:3 And the teaching of these maxims is this: bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast on behalf of those who persecute you; for what thanks is there, if you love them that love you? Do not even Gentiles do the same? But love those who hate you, and you will not have an enemy.

1:4 Abstain from fleshly and bodily lusts. If anyone gives you a blow on your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you will be perfect [full-grown, fully-mature]. If anyone compels you to go a mile, go with him two; if anyone takes your cloak, give him your coat also; if anyone takes from you what is yours, do not ask for it back nor try to use force.

1:5 Give to everyone who asks of you, and do not demand it back; for the Father wants something from his own free gifts to be given to all. Blessed is he who gives according to the commandment, for he is guiltless; but woe to him who receives; for if one who receives is actually in need, he is guiltless; but whoever receives when not in need will have to explain why he received and for what purpose; in prison he will be interrogated concerning the things he has done, and he will not depart from there until he has paid the last penny.

1:6 Yes, truly it has been said about this: "Let your alms sweat in your hands until you know to whom to give."

Chapter 2

2:1 And the teaching of the second commandment is this:

2:2 You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery; you shall not seduce or commit sodomy with young boys; you shall not fornicate. You shall not steal. You shall not be a fortune-teller; you shall not practice sorcery. You shall not kill a child by abortion nor slay it when it is born. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor. *(Note: The same sins the true church preaches against today)*

2:3 You shall not commit perjury; you shall not give false testimony; you shall not speak evil; you shall not bear malice;

2:4 you shall not be double-minded or double-tongued, for a double-tongue is a snare of death.

2:5 Your word shall not be false or empty, but confirmed by deeds.

2:6 You shall not be greedy or rapacious or hypocritical or malicious or arrogant. You shall not take up an evil plot against your neighbor.

2:7 You shall not hate anyone, but some you shall rebuke, and some you

shall pray for, and some you shall love more than your own soul.

Chapter 3

3:1 My child, flee from everything that is evil and everything that is like it.

3:2 Do not be wrathful, for wrath leads to murder, nor jealous nor contentious nor quarrelsome, for from all these murder ensues.

3:3 My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to fornication, nor a filthy-talker nor a lewd-looker, for from all these adulteries ensue.

3:4 My child, do not be an interpreter of omens, since it leads to idolatry, nor an enchanter nor an astrologer nor a magical purifier, nor wish to see them, for from all these idolatry arises. (*Magical Purifier-One who casts spells of purification or good luck*)

3:5 My child, do not be a liar, for lying leads to theft, nor avaricious nor conceited, for from all these thefts are produced.

3:6 My child, do not be a complainer, since it leads to blasphemy, nor self-willed nor evil-minded, for from all these blasphemies are produced.

3:7 Be meek, for the meek will inherit the earth.

3:8 Be long-suffering and merciful and guileless and peaceable and good, and revere always the words you have heard.

3:9 You shall not exalt yourself, nor let your soul be presumptuous. Your soul shall not be joined with the lofty, but with the righteous and humble you shall walk.

3:10 Accept whatever happens to you as good, knowing that apart from God nothing comes to pass.

Note: Verse 10 is similar to Romans 8:28 - (**Rom 8:28 NCV**) **We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him. They are the people he called, because that was his plan.**

Chapter 4

4:1 My child, remember night and day him who speaks the word of God to

you; honor him as the Lord, for where his lordship is proclaimed, there is the Lord.

4:2 Seek out daily the faces of the saints, that you may rest in their words.
(Christian fellowship)

4:3 You shall not desire schism, but shall set at peace those who contend. You shall judge righteously; you shall not show partiality when rebuking for transgressions.

4:4 You shall not vacillate (be double minded) about whether a thing will be or will not be.

4:5 You shall not be one who stretches out his hands to receive but one who draws them back when someone is giving.

4:6 If you have anything in your hands, give a ransom for your sins.

4:7 You shall not hesitate to give; neither shall you grumble when giving, for you know who is the fair paymaster of your reward.

4:8 You shall not turn away from him who is actually in need, but share with your brother in all things and not say things are your own, for if you are partners in what is imperishable, how much more so in perishable things?

4:9 You shall not remove your hand from your son or your daughter, but from their youth teach them the fear of God.

4:10 You shall not command in your bitterness your slave or your maid who hope in the same God as yourself, lest they cease to fear the God who is over you both; for he comes not with regard for reputation, but to those whom the Spirit has prepared.

4:11 And you slaves, subordinate yourselves to your masters in shame and fear, as to an image of God.

4:12 You shall hate all hypocrisy, and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord.

4:13 You shall not abandon the commandments of the Lord, but guard what you have received, neither adding nor subtracting anything.

4:14 You shall confess your transgressions in the congregation; and you shall not come to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

Chapter 5

5:1 But this is the way of death: first of all, it is evil and full of curses, murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, fortune-tellings, sorceries, robberies; false testimony, hypocrisy, duplicity, deception, arrogance, malice, stubbornness, greed, filthy-talking, jealousy, audacity, pride, boastfulness;

5:2 persecuting good men, hating truth, loving falsehood, not knowing the reward of righteousness, not adhering to what is good nor to righteous judgment; watching not for that which is good but for that which is evil; far from gentleness and patience, loving worthless things, pursuing recompense, having no mercy for the needy, not working for him that is distressed, not recognizing him who made them; murderers of children, corrupters of the image of God, turning away from him that is in need, oppressing him that is distressed, advocates of the rich, unjust judges of the poor, utterly sinful. May you be delivered, my children, from all these!

Chapter 6

6:1 Take heed lest anyone lead you astray from this way of teaching, for he who does so teaches you away from God.

6:2 If you can carry the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect [full-grown, fully-mature]; but if you cannot, then do what you can.

6:3 Concerning food, bear what you can, but carefully keep away from food sacrificed to idols, for it is a worship-service to gods from the realm of the dead.

Chapter 7

7:1 Concerning baptism, baptize thus: having first recited all these precepts, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in running water.

7:2 But if you have no running water, baptize in other water, and if you cannot baptize in cold water, then warm water;

7:3 but if you have neither, pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

7:4 Before a baptism, let him who baptizes and him who is baptized fast, and any others who may be able to do so. And command him who is baptized to fast one or two days beforehand.

Chapter 8

8:1 Do not let your fasting be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second day and the fifth day of the week [Monday and Thursday], but you shall fast on the fourth day and the day of preparation.

[Wednesday and Friday] *(Note: This was included so that the Gentile converts would not appear to be following the practices of the Pharisees and legalists the very ones who brought the charges against them in the first place.)*

8:2 Neither pray as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in his gospel: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for yours is the power and the glory, forever."

8:3 Pray this way three times a day.

Chapter 9

9:1 And concerning the thanks-giving [Eucharist-Communion], give thanks thus:

9:2 first, concerning the cup: "We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of your son David, which you have made known to us through your son Jesus; to you be the glory forever."

9:3 And concerning the broken bread: "We thank you, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through your son Jesus; to you be the glory forever.

9:4 As this broken bread was once scattered on the mountains, and gathered together became one, so may your congregation be gathered

together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power, through Jesus Christ, forever."

9:5 But let no one eat or drink of your thanks-giving except those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord, for the Lord has said, "Do not give that which is holy to the dogs."

Chapter 10

10:1 And after you are filled, give thanks thus:

10:2 "We thank you, holy Father, for your holy name, which you have caused to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you have made known to us through your son Jesus; to you be the glory forever.

10:3 You, Almighty Master, created all things for the sake of your name, and give men food and drink to enjoy, that they might give thanks to you, but to us you give spiritual food and drink and eternal life through your son.

10:4 Above all, we give thanks that you are powerful; to you be the glory forever.

10:5 Remember your congregation, Lord, to redeem it from all evil and perfect it in your love; and gather it together, the one that has been sanctified, from the four winds into your kingdom which you have prepared for it; for yours is the kingdom and the glory forever.

10:6 May grace come, and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David! If anyone is holy let him come; if anyone is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen."

10:7 But let the prophets give thanks however they wish.

Chapter 11

11:1 Therefore, whoever comes and teaches you all these things aforesaid, receive him.

11:2 If the teacher himself is perverted and teaches a different doctrine to the subversion thereof, do not listen to him; but if he increases your righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, receive him as you would the

Lord.

11:3 And concerning the apostles and prophets, do according to the command of the Gospel.

11:4 Let every apostle who comes to you be received as you would the Lord.

11:5 He will stay one day, and if necessary, a second day, but if he stays three days, he is a false prophet.

11:6 Let the apostle when departing take nothing except bread until he arrives at his next lodging. But if he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

11:7 Do not tempt or dispute with any prophet who speaks in spirit, for every sin will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven.

11:8 However, not every one who speaks in spirit is a prophet, but only he who has the disposition of the Lord; therefore, by their dispositions the false prophet and the prophet shall be known.

11:9 Any prophet who orders a meal in spirit shall not eat of it; if he does, he is a false prophet.

11:10 If any prophet who teaches the truth does not do what he teaches, he is a false prophet.

11:11 And any prophet, true and approved, working unto the mystery of the Church in the world, yet not teaching others to do what he himself doeth, shall not be judged by you, for his judgment is with God; for likewise also did the prophets of old.

11:12 If anyone says in spirit, "Give me silver," or whatever else, do not listen to him; but if he tells you about others in need, that you should give to them, let no one condemn him.

Chapter 12

12:1 Let every one who comes in the name of the Lord be received, and then examine him judiciously -- right and left -- for the opinions he holds.

12:2 If the one who comes is a traveler, assist him as much as you can, but

he shall not stay with you more than two or three days, unless there is a necessity.

12:3 If he wishes to settle with you and is a craftsman, let him work for his living.

12:4 If he is not a craftsman, decide according to your own judgment how he shall live as a Christian among you, but not in idleness.

12:5 If he will not do this, he is one who makes gain from Christ. From such keep aloof.

Chapter 13

13:1 Every true prophet who desires to settle among you is worthy of his food.

13:2 Likewise, a true teacher also is worthy, but like the craftsman, he works for his living.

13:3 Therefore, take the first-fruits of every product of the wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and sheep, and give it to the prophets, for they are your chief priests.

13:4 And if you have no prophet, give it to the poor.

13:5 If you make bread, take the first-fruits and give according to the commandment.

13:6 In like manner, when you open a jar of wine or oil, take the first-fruits and give it to the prophets.

13:7 Yes, and of money and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruits, as seems good to you, and give according to the commandment.

Chapter 14

14:1 Gather together on the Lord's day, break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure.

14:2 But do not let anyone who has a quarrel with a companion join with you until they have been reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be

polluted;

14:3 for this was spoken by the Lord: "In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the Gentiles."

Chapter 15

15:1 Therefore, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money, true and approved, for they also perform for you the ministry of the prophets and teachers.

15:2 Therefore, do not despise them, for they are your honorable men, along with the prophets and teachers.

Notice that in verse 15:1 it says "Elect for yourselves" which is in stark contrast to the doctrine that bishops must only be consecrated by other bishops, and the doctrine of "apostolic succession" upon which the hierarchy of the papacy was founded. The fact that it includes this democratic doctrine of the congregation electing their bishops is probably why the Roman Catholic Church excluded the Didache from their Tradition and doctrine, and the reason why it is not in common use today.

15:3 And reprove one another, not in anger but peaceably, as you have it in the Gospel, and let no one speak to any one who wrongs his brother, neither listen to him, until he repents.

15:4 And your prayers and almsgiving and all your deeds, do as you find it in the Gospel of our Lord.

Chapter 16

16:1 Be watchful for your life; do not let your lamps be quenched or your loins be ungirded, but be ready, for you do not know the hour in which our Lord comes.

16:2 Be often gathered together, seeking what is fit for your souls, for the whole time of your faith will not profit you if you are not perfect [full-grown, fully-mature] at the end of the season.

End Times Prophecy from the Didache

16:3 For in the last days false prophets and seducers will be multiplied, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate.

16:4 For as lawlessness increases, they will hate and persecute and betray one another. And then the deceiver of the world will appear as a son of God, and he will do signs and wonders, and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will do unlawful things such as never happened since the world began.

16:5 Then the creation of man will come to the fiery trial of testing, and many will stumble and perish, but those who endure in the faith will be saved alive from under the curse.

16:6 And then will appear the signs of the truth: first the sign of an opening in the heavens, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet, and thirdly a resurrection of the dead:

16:7 not of all, but as it is said: "The Lord will come and all his saints with him."

16:8 Then the world will see the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven.

This abbreviated version of the apocalypse is the simplest and clearest teaching about the end times that I have ever seen. Notice that early church teaching was that the rapture would not take place until the Antichrist was revealed and had persecuted the saints.

Also worth noting: nothing in the Didache indicates any awareness of the Jewish rebellion in AD 66 or the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. So, this document was probably composed between Pentecost in the book of Acts (about 33 or 34 AD) and prior to 66 AD. If so then the teaching contained in the Didache is what was being taught by the Apostles during the first 33 years of the church age.

In my opinion a person or church could not go wrong by adopting the teaching contained in "The Apostles Creed" and the "Didache" as their articles of faith. They are indeed a firm foundation on the rock of our faith, which is Christ.

SALVATION

(Romans 10:9 NKJV) that if you confess with your mouth the **Lord Jesus** and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

If you have read about the end times and don't want to be left behind you can be reconciled to God the Father right now through Jesus Christ. Simply speak to God and say: Dear God, I believe Your Word, the Gospel. (good news) I believe in Jesus Christ that he died in my place to pay for my sins. Forgive me all of my sins through Jesus and make me into the kind of person you want me to be.

That's it. The rest is up to him. If you really meant it the Holy Spirit will come into your life and begin to change you. You will be a new person. Follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the scriptures and you will have an exciting journey through this life ahead of you and eternal life at the end.

(Titus 1:1-2 NIV) Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness-- a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, **who cannot not lie**, promised before the beginning of time,

Remember, God cannot Lie! He has promised eternal life for those who have faith in Jesus Christ and he will bring it to pass.