



# *The Salvation of All* What Led Me to This Belief

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Bob Evely is a businessman with a national company, and specializes in sales, marketing and business development. He is a graduate of *Oakland University* (Rochester, Michigan) and also has a Master of Divinity Degree from *Asbury Theological Seminary* (Wilmore, Kentucky).

Bob was an ordained minister in the *United Methodist* and *Free Methodist* denominations. He served as pastor of the Canton and West Point United Methodist Churches in Salem, Indiana; and the Open Door Free Methodist Church in Nicholasville, Kentucky. Both were bi-vocational positions, with Bob supporting his family through his full time employment.

In 2002 Bob resigned his position as pastor, based on his study of God's Word. He had come to the understanding of the *salvation of all*. Bob wrote a book, *At the End of the Ages*,<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of explaining, point by point, how he came to this conclusion.

Here is a brief look at what led him to this belief.

I guess if I had to boil everything down to reply to the question, "What was it that clinched this truth for me?" I would say it was simply considering the possibility that the denomination and the seminary I had attached myself to MIGHT be wrong in some of their doctrines. This is one area where seminary was a big help. As I sat in several classes and heard professors make discrediting remarks about other seminaries (particularly *Dallas Theological Seminary*), it made me think ... "I guess the professors at *Dallas Theological* are saying the same things about us." This was an eye opener. I realized that all my life I was in a theological box ... told how to think about various doctrines, without having to really think for myself. When I thought that maybe *Dallas Theological Seminary* might be right and my own seminary wrong, it led me to the point where I conceded it was POSSIBLE that doctrines I had accepted my entire life could be wrong.

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1. *The book can be ordered through StudyShelf.com, or by calling 1-800-784-6010.*

Once I reached this point and was open to teachings other than what I had previously accepted, I began to study ... read ... and think for myself.

I saw that Bible translations were problematic. I saw inconsistencies from one translation to another that led me to see there was a problem. It was at this point that I first began to question translations. I did not question the Word of God ... but only the various translations. I knew there were many different ones ... but I always thought them to be very close, with no significant differences that would impact doctrines. Yet I found this was not necessarily true ... and more importantly I came to see that a translation was generally also an INTERPRETATION. The translator came to his work with certain biases ... not purposefully tainting the translation, but translating with a bias without even realizing he was doing so.

When we look at the Bible and attempt to search back to the Hebrew and Greek ... trying to be consistent and as unbiased as possible ... we begin to see MAJOR issues.

*EONIAN* was the first and the biggest issue I encountered. I saw that this same Greek word was translated sometimes “*eternal*” and other times “*age-long*” (or something similar), and I saw the inconsistency of the translations. I began to see that if this word “*aion*” in its various forms was considered consistently, it should always be translated “*age long*” or “*eonian*,” or something such as that. Therefore certain things Scripture said were “*endless*” really were not.

*HELL* was another word I studied ... and saw that “*sheol*” and “*hades*” were also inconsistently handled. The translators would use “*hell*” if the context talked about the wicked ... but “*the grave*” (or something similar) if talking about the righteous. But again ... great inconsistency, and simply a matter of the translators trying to make sense of the passages in light of the doctrines they had accepted.

Then I began to see the many “*all*” passages, that in the past I had restricted because of the doctrines I had accepted. “*All*” could not mean all, or so I thought, since *SOME* were destined for hell. But not so, if the Scriptures are handled consistently.

Rightly dividing the Word was also something I never did ... and in my Methodist backgrounds never even heard of. Israel meant the church, Kingdom meant heaven, and so on.

[Then] I came to the point when I concluded, “What right do I have to take a passage talking directly to Israel, and to automatically claim it as my own.”

Along this line, I also never realized that Paul’s message was any different from Peter’s, or any of the others. Open the Bible to wherever you like and apply it ... that was what I thought was true. But I saw for the first time in Galatians that Paul did not receive his gospel from man, but from a direct revelation from Christ. Why would this be so important, unless what Paul had received was different, and new?

Then, finally, I appreciated I Corinthians 15 for the first time in all of its grandeur. This was the climax ... not the end of Revelation, but I Corinthians 15.

I can tell you that my time at seminary was a bit of a disappointment. In the 3-½ years of study, less than half of the classes involved Bible study ... many were on topics such as “the History of Worship” or “the History of the Church” or “Preaching Effectively.” All are valuable in the “religion business” but none in an understanding of the Bible. (By the way ... having studied church history *after* seminary is where I came to learn that *many* in the very early church believed in the *salvation of all*.)

The classes that did pertain to Bible study were more like “indoctrinations” than study. They used systematic theology textbooks or the sermons of John Wesley, and interpreted Scripture for me ... all, of course, from the Wesleyan perspective.

So I do not count my M. Div. degree from *Asbury Theological Seminary* as very valuable, even though Asbury is considered to be the “crown jewel” of seminaries by conservative, Bible-believing Methodists.

Taken from the *Bible Student's Notebook*<sup>™</sup>, a weekly Bible study publication available in two formats (electronic and printed)

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