

How Does One Get to Heaven?

The question of a person's eternal destiny is one that man has contemplated for centuries. The salvation of one's soul is by far the most important subject that a man or woman will ever face.

You will certainly find shorter pamphlets written on the subject of salvation. The advantage of shorter material is that it will give you a quick rundown or a broad overview of the subject matter. Sometimes that is very helpful. The goal of this booklet however, is to give a thorough examination of salvation, emphasizing its simplicity, while not sacrificing detail. It also will attempt to answer many of the questions surrounding the subject of salvation for the searching soul. Not just what it is, but why it is, and ultimately - how to obtain it.

The very reason for which the Bible was written was to show someone what takes place after death, so please open and let the Bible explain for itself the answer to life's most important question - "How does one get to heaven?"

How Does One Get to Heaven?

Before we examine the most important topic of all, we must first establish a source of credibility. Has anyone ever been to heaven and back to tell us of his or her experience? If man does not even know where it is, then how does he know how to get there? Can we therefore depend on the “wisdom” or the opinions of man as a reliable source to know how to get to heaven? Can we rely upon the writings of philosophers, or the ideas or feelings of men? For something as important as our eternal souls, we cannot wait to die trusting in an unproven opinion.

The Bible claims that it came to us directly from God Himself for this express purpose - to show us how to get to heaven. It claims, in contrast to the opinions and books of men, that God Himself is the Author (therefore we are hearing about this subject from an Expert).

***For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.
(2 Peter 1:21)***

Notice that God used man to write the Scriptures, but it wasn't something that man came up with. God dictated, man wrote it down, but it was God's idea.

We can trust God without reservation because His word claims to have no mistakes.

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. (Psalms 12:6)

Every word of God is pure. (Proverbs 30:5)

How can a book have no mistakes? Simple. It was written by a God who can make no mistakes.

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent (to be sorry for a mistake he has made): hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers 23:19)

Furthermore, God gave us the Bible for the very purpose of answering this most important question. He would not give it to us to mislead us, but to clear up the confusion caused by all the different opinions and speculations. God loves us and does not want us to be wandering around aimlessly not knowing how to find Him. Therefore, as an accurate, precise, and perfect roadmap to Him, the Bible was given to us that we can know for sure that heaven can be our home when we die.

These things have I written unto you... that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:13)

Furthermore, Jesus Christ relied upon the Bible (the Old Testament) and quoted it without apology (it was the only book He quoted). He Himself proclaimed that the way to heaven was found in the Bible (where one would find Him).

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5:39)

As a matter of fact, Jesus Christ is the One who is the source and giver of salvation,

[Jesus is] the author of eternal salvation....

(Hebrews 5:9)

Earlier, we said that no man has gone into heaven and come back to tell us what it was like, but there is a God who has come DOWN from heaven to become a man to show us how to get there.

***And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man...
(John 3:13)***

If Jesus is the Author of Salvation, we can rely upon Him to explain it to us.

If Jesus came down from heaven, we can rely upon Him to show us how to get there.

Therefore, throughout this booklet, we will be using the words of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures which He quoted to answer the details relating to salvation.

Now that we have declared the source upon which we will be relying, let us look at some other statements that Jesus and the Bible make to see what we can learn about salvation.

WHAT KIND OF SALVATION DOES GOD GIVE?

1) The Only One to Give this Salvation

***[Jesus is] the author of eternal salvation...
(Hebrews 5:9)***

2) Duration: Jesus states that the kind of salvation that He gives is “eternal life.” That means it is a salvation that you can never lose.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall

any man pluck them out of my hand. (John 10:27-29)

3) It is a salvation that is available to all. There is no person, however sinful he may be, that Jesus Christ will turn away if that person is truly sorry for his sins.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him... (Hebrews 7:25)

...him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (John 6:37)

4) It is life changing

It is a salvation that is so powerful, that it will “clean up” a person’s life. Therefore, God wants you to come to Him as you are, and let Him change you.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

THE SECOND BIRTH

Let’s now begin to explain salvation. Jesus Christ often used physical things with which we are familiar to help us understand a spiritual truth. In this case, Jesus Christ compares salvation to a birth.

... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

There are two kinds of births, a physical and a spiritual.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:6)

It will further help us understand this 2nd birth if we first look at what God is like and then how He created us.

First of all, God is three persons, which we call a Trinity.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (1 John 5:7)

With this in mind, let us now look at how God created man with three corresponding parts.

... I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

That is because “...*God created man in his own image...*” (Genesis 1:27) ...*God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... (Genesis 1:26)*

Each of these parts allows us to function properly with our surroundings. The body helps us to interact with, or communicate with, or be conscious of the physical world around us. The soul allows us to be conscious of self. The third part of us, our spirit, allows us to be conscious of and to communicate with our Creator God (who is a Spirit – John 4:24).

So, why does man need to have a 2nd birth? Watch closely to see what develops in the following verses.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Genesis 2:16-17)

And ... the woman ... took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (Genesis 3:6)

God promised that on the day that Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree, they would die. But as we read on, we see that their bodies did not die that day. We see them interacting and talking with one another, so their souls did not die. But something had dramatically changed. The part of them that was able to communicate, to understand, to be conscious of God, was no longer functioning. But it was not just damaged - it was separated (death) from God.

One way to look at it is this: just as the soul separated from the body equals death for the body, God's Spirit separated from our spirit means death for our spirit.

As a parent passes his physical traits on to his children, Adam passed his spiritual condition on to his children.

And Adam... begat a son in his OWN likeness, after HIS image; and called his name Seth. (Genesis 5:3)

Notice that Seth was born in the image of Adam, NOT in the image of God.

Adam's dead spiritual condition was transferred to Seth, and Seth transferred it to his children, and today, that dead separated spiritual condition is inherited by us all.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... (Romans 5:12)

So to be born again is simply to be born a second time; not physically, but spiritually. It is simply a "bringing to life" of that dead spirit within us.

Without a physical birth, you cannot come into this world, and

likewise, according to Jesus, without a spiritual birth you cannot get into the “next world” (heaven).

MAN’S NEED OF SALVATION

Before we explain what salvation is, we must first look at the predicament that man is in.

First of all, God is a righteous, pure, and holy God.

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: (Habakkuk 1:13)

*For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.
(Psalms 5:4)*

*He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.
(Deuteronomy 32:4)*

Therefore, He demands justice (He cannot let sin go unpunished). Someday the perfect Judge must present all the evidence. He will show before the entire world your sins – both public and private.

*...For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.
(Matthew 10:26)*

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. (Matthew 12:36)

A holy God despises sin. He hates the smell and the sight of it, and cannot allow it in his presence. If he were to let sin into

heaven, it would no longer be heaven and He would no longer be God. The only way a person can go to heaven is if he has never sinned. But is anybody that good?

Are you that good?

As it is written, There is none righteous, NO, NOT ONE: (Romans 3:10)

For ALL have sinned, and come SHORT of the glory of God; (Romans 3:23)

If no one can be righteous, then why did God give the Ten Commandments? Didn't He give them to us, so that we could try to keep them?

The answer is this: while God did give them to us to help regulate our lives, the main reason they were given is to teach us something: IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP THEM!

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans. 3:20)

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (Galatians 3:24)

Most people try to categorize sin in the belief that some sins are worse than others. And while it is true that the consequences for one sin may be more harmful than another (murder vs. stealing candy), God sees every sin as contrary to His perfect law (the Bible), thereby bringing upon that person a guilty verdict.

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. 1 John 3:4

If God is righteous, that means He is right. Therefore, anything that is not right (perfect) is unrighteous. ***All unrighteousness is sin... (1 John 5:17)***

As a matter of fact, if a person commits one "little sin," the whole law has just been broken.

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. (James 2:10)

It is not just our actions that can be sinful.

The thought of foolishness is sin.... Proverbs 24:9

Jesus said that ***"... whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Matthew 5:28)***

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment...(Matthew 5:21-22) It is murder, but it's in the heart.

The Bible defines sin as "the transgression of the law." To transgress is to go beyond or fall short of God's law. So if we were honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that we cannot keep the law.

Can you honestly say you have never sinned?

Can anyone claim perfection? Remember, if you broke only one, you have broken the whole thing, ***"...whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."***

So how about you?
Have you ever lied?

Then you have broken
Commandment # 9 – **“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”**

Have you ever been angry with or hated someone?
Then according to Jesus Christ, in your heart you have broken
Commandment # 6 - **“Thou shalt not kill.”**

Wanted what was not yours?
Commandment # 10 – Broken. **“Thou shalt not covet”**

Have you ever lusted after the opposite sex? As stated earlier,
according to Jesus Christ, in your heart you have broken
Commandment # 7 - **“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”**

How about taking God's name in vain (either swearing while
using God's name, or simply using it in an irreverent or
purposeless word - vain means empty)?
Commandment # 3 – Broken. **“Thou shalt not take
the name of the LORD in vain.”**

Have you ever failed to honor or obey your mom or dad?
Commandment # 5 – Broken. **“Honour thy father and
mother.”**

Have you ever placed something ahead of God in priority,
whether it was money, or a job, or a person? (The thing we
make #1 in our lives can become our god.)
Commandment # 1 – Broken. **“Thou shalt have no**

other gods before me.”

We have ALL broken the law in our actions or in our hearts.

The New Testament repeats this in the following passages.

Who has NOT committed some of the following in either thought or deed?

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators (sex before marriage), nor idolaters (commandments #1 & #2 - placing something or someone in a higher position than God - money, hobby, addictions), nor adulterers (#7), nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves (#8), nor covetous (#10), nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

(1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

Galatians 5:19-21 adds hatred (#6), strife, & envying.

Revelation 21:8 adds lying (#9).

So how about you? If you were to count those that you have committed, how many do you think you violated? Three? Four? Eight? All?

Remember, the Bible is a unit. The Law is a unit. You can't just break one commandment and the others are unbroken. How many transgressions does it take to break the whole law (that is, all 10 commandments along with every other command in the Bible)?

ONLY ONE!

Therefore, every single one of us has broken the law, many times. All have sinned. Even the very best of men and women

have sinned. All are guilty.

For ALL have sinned, and come SHORT of the glory of God; (Romans 3:23)

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (Romans 3:19)

Now some might say at this point, "OK. Now that I know this, I will just try to improve myself, be a better person and not sin." But do you think you could go the rest of your life and not sin? How about a week? How long do you think you would last? Could you or I even get through one day without sinning? But here is another factor. Even if you COULD stop sinning (and the only way we could do that is if we were in a coma), what about your past sins? You cannot undo them. It's like this. Let's say you ran a red light and the judge you were standing before sentences you to a fine of \$100. But you protest. You say, "Wait, wait. But I'm a decent person. I give to charity, I'm a good father, I'm a good husband." He says to you, "That is good, that is commendable. But did you run a red light?" You answer, "Yes." The judge says, "Then you are guilty." You protest again. "But I have obeyed red lights thousands of other times, thousands of stop signs, I obey the speed limit every day!" The judge responds, "I appreciate your efforts in trying to abide by the law. But you can read it in the law yourself. It is specifically stated, 'Traffic Light Violations will be fined no less than \$100.' Now, back to my question. Did you run a red light?" You answer, "Well, yes." The judge says, "Then you are guilty of violating the law. The law is the law. I am constrained by the law, and I must be impartial. I am required by the law to do my duty. The law states that the fine

is \$100. It MUST BE PAID.”

The good things we do are good, but the fine for the bad things we have done MUST BE PAID. The problem is, when it comes to our souls the PRICE IS TOO HIGH FOR US TO PAY. WE NEED SOMEONE TO PAY IT FOR US...

Let us explain something at this point. The Law was not something that God "pulled out of the air" or made up. The Law is eternal, it has always been. It is the Law of relationships (Matt 22:37-40). It is the law of interaction between two individuals with a free will. Therefore, God did not invent anything. If God did, then that would mean He could change it. The Law was GIVEN. It was given to be a blessing so that people would not harm each other (it guides and protects EVERYONE in a world that is far from perfect). It was not given so that God could "spoil people's fun." The Law emanates from God. It is Who He is. Because of all of these factors, God has no choice but to abide by the Law. Consequently, He has no choice but to require for His creation the same standards. It is a Law over ALL CREATION. It transcends all other laws. It is an absolute moral standard that does not change for location, for time, or for the opinions, circumstances, cultures or standards of man. It over-rides man's laws, or manmade religious laws. In society, we cannot pick and choose which laws we want to follow, which stop lights we choose to obey or not obey, nor are we judged by only the portion we choose to follow. Likewise it is with God's Law. It was given as an absolute unchanging moral standard by which to guide us in society, and in relationships with man and God. But it also condemns us, because we cannot keep it. **“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified...for all have sinned...There is none righteous, no,**

not one... (Rom 3:19, 20, 10)

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (Revelation 20:12)

This sin keeps us apart from God. It puts a wall between us and Him.

*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.
(Isaiah 59:2)*

It gets worse! Sin has a penalty.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (Romans 5:12)

For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23a)

The penalty is not just a physical death, but a spiritual death. A separation from God forever in a place called “the lake of fire.” God wants to save us from this horrible place that was originally “*prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matthew 25:41).

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:41-42)

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15)

Is there an alternative to this predicament? Can a person be reincarnated?

The answer to this is no. This life is the only life we have to live.

And as it is appointed unto men ONCE to die, but after this the judgment: (Hebrews 9:27)

Some believe that hell is a temporary place. Some hope that a person's soul will be destroyed, ending the suffering. But hell and suffering will be forever.

... the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night... (Revelation 14:11)

What kind of people go to hell?

The general thought is that most people are going to heaven, and that only murderers, rapists, or evil dictators will go to hell. It's actually the other way around.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

It is not the degree of the sin that is the criteria. The criteria for deserving hell is, "Am I a sinner?" Let's put it another way. A person does not have to commit a sinful act in order to be condemned to hell. A person does not have to do anything. Because of our sin nature, we are condemned already. All that a person must do in order to go to hell is NOTHING!

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath

not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

...he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36b)

We have seen that the Bible says we all have transgressed (broken) God's commandments. We also must then be separated from God, and that if nothing is done, we will not go to heaven. Something must take place in one's life in order for one NOT to go to hell. Let's make this personal. Something must take place in your life. What is this "something?"

GETTING OUT OF THE PREDICAMENT

It is often helpful in learning about a topic to not only find out what it is, but what it is not. So let's ask the question this way: "How do we NOT get out of this predicament?"

First of all, we cannot pay off God or earn our way out of it. One of the biggest misconceptions about getting to heaven is that we must DO something. But it couldn't be further from the truth.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians. 2:8-9)

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven... Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then

will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:21-23)

Notice: what was the main thing that these people were trusting in to get them to heaven?

WORKS!

What was the main thing that did NOT get them to heaven?

WORKS!

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (Galatians 2:21)

That means that no amount of good deeds, giving to charity, helping the poor, or being a “good person” will get you to heaven. These things are good to do, but will not earn a person a place in eternity.

Furthermore it is not by baptism. Water can wash dirt away but how can it wash sin away? Sin is a condition of the soul.

Being a member of a particular denomination, or part of “the one true church” cannot take a person to heaven. This also includes taking communion, doing sacraments, confessing sins, or repeating certain prayers, or giving money.

Not by work of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us... (Titus 3:5a)

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight... (Romans 3:20)

It is not the good things that we do that get us to heaven, but the sins we commit that keep us out. To be more specific, it is because of our sin nature (that dead spiritual condition).

In John 1:13, God lists all inclusively, the things that cannot get one to heaven.

1) ***not of blood*** - cannot inherit salvation from your parents.

2) ***nor of the will of the flesh***. Nothing you can do (your works, baptism, church membership, or even your willpower. You may want with all your heart to go to heaven, but YOUR desire does not get you there). Basically, there is nothing you can do to impress God in order for Him to take you to heaven.

3) ***nor of the will of man***. This speaks of the will or power of another attempting to get you to heaven. I may desire that you go, but there is nothing I can do to get you to heaven. I cannot baptize you into heaven or pray you into heaven (God will hear my prayer for you, but it must be your choice). A physical man can do nothing to get you to heaven (other than tell you how).

Only God (with your permission) can bring about this spiritual birth.

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (God is the only one who is able to produce this new birth). (***John 1:13***)

So we see that mankind's ability to rescue himself out of this predicament is hopeless. For man to go to heaven, it would be necessary for someone else to rescue him. Only God Himself could do that.

So God came looking for man...

GOD'S SEARCH FOR MAN

From the very beginning, God sought a relationship with man. That was why God created man in the first place. But then man sinned and turned his back on God. What would God do? He had every right to, in anger, shove man aside and cast him into hell right then and there. Didn't man deserve it? Would not God be justified? But instead of throwing man away, God came after him. You see, the whole story of the Bible is a Love Story. God made man, man left God, but God came after man. Because God is a Righteous Judge, He now must judge man. Therefore, man must go to the place called hell. But God didn't want to send him there. But He had to. God wanted man in heaven with Him, but He couldn't have sin in heaven (you could almost say that God was in a dilemma). So God promised a Deliverer. Someone who would come and pay the price for man's sins. Someone who would be a substitute. God was going to do everything He could, to rescue the one He was in love with. But there was a problem. The substitute had to be sinless. If this substitute had sin, he must die for his own, so he wouldn't be able to die for the sin of another. And where would God find a sinless man? Adam was not sinless, and every one of his children would have sin.

It was hopeless.

And then, all of heaven must have breathed a collective gasp, when Jesus Christ, the eternal Creator and Son of God, sitting on the throne where all of heaven worshipped Him, stands to His feet and says, "I WILL GO." While the Bible does not quote this statement, Jesus may have said something like the following. "I WILL BECOME THE SINLESS MAN, THE SACRIFICE FOR MY CREATION, MY TRUE LOVE."

THE GREAT LOVE OF GOD

How the angels must have wondered at the great love of God. The very heart of God, the very reason that God sent His Only Son (the most precious person or thing in the entire world to Him), the very reason for which Jesus willingly came, is reflected in the following words:

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:10)

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 33:11)

The Lord...is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:7)

Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 18:31)

One individual means more to God than the entire universe. And that means YOU. He knows you by name. You are very special to Him (not because of what you are, but in spite of what you are). Though God hates your sin, He loves you immeasurably, and was willing to do the unthinkable so that you could be in heaven with Him.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

You can tell how much something means to someone by how much they are willing to give in exchange. According to the verse you just read, God gave all that He had - the most important thing to Him. He gave a person, His own Son. Do you get the picture? God truly thinks a lot of you.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Do you know that God loves you more than you can ever imagine? He says the following to the people of Israel, but it can be extended to all people.

The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. (Jeremiah 31:3)

Do you know that the number of thoughts of love toward you, (fill in your name _____) are so many, that only an all knowing and all-powerful God could count them?

Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. (Psalms 40:5)

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me [this means you], O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand... (Psalms 139:17-18)

He created you. You are a very special part of God's plan. He wants to give you a purpose. Do you know that God even has a book in heaven that contains the dimensions of your limbs, the length of your eyelashes, the color of your eyes? Do you know that God knows your name?

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

Only God really knows you. He sees into your heart, into the very depths of your soul. He KNOWS why you do what you do. He knows everything you have ever done. He knows your desires, your hurts, your fears.

Psalms 139:1-4 ... O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

How sad it is, when people will reject all that love from their Creator, a home in heaven, the perfect Father, all for silly selfish reasons. Many people reject God's love and mercy for something else that means more to them, such as drugs, drinking, pornography, adultery, or sex outside of marriage.

...Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall

inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

Another reason for which people reject God is self-righteousness. Often, people feel that they aren't "that bad" and that they are doing God a favor by living a good life. By believing this, they are simply saying they do not need God. Others reject God out of fear of what their friends, family, or a spouse will say if they suddenly "get religion." For some, their reason is the love of money or pleasure. While yet others do not want to let go of bitterness or anger. Others have pride in their religion or denomination and will not let go of their tradition or their "heritage." Some people are afraid it will upset Mom and Dad. Others are just plain afraid of what others would think: afraid to be different.

What is the thing you would allow to come between you and God? What would you put before a relationship with the God Who loves you – the God Who created you?

Is it worth it?

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36-37)

WHAT IS SALVATION?

Now, let's talk about what salvation is...

Salvation is a conscious decision (you are fully aware of what you are doing), a cry for help, a conversion. It is a realization that you cannot save yourself, and that you are not worthy of gaining entrance into heaven. It is surrender. You are not doing God a favor; He is rescuing you. Salvation is a mutual intimate relationship between your Creator and you. It is crossing a

bridge and burning it behind you. You will never be able to enjoy your old sins, nor will you want to go to the old sinful places anymore (if you actually did - you couldn't do it without feeling guilty). It is a lifelong decision; one that can never be undone, but one you will never regret. No one can force you into this, no one can decide for you. It must be your decision. Salvation is not a pill that will solve all your problems. You will still have to pay your bills, you will still get sick and have aches and pains, will still grow old, etc. But your biggest problem will be solved, and now, your other problems will be God's problems also. Salvation is not reforming yourself. It is not "turning over a new leaf." It is not a wild emotional experience, a tingly feeling or a close brush with death. It is not baptism. (Water can wash dirt away, but it cannot wash sin away. Sin is a condition of the soul). It is not JUST saying a prayer, thinking there is some obligation now on God's part to perform.

According to the Bible, there are two things that must be present for salvation to take place. These two things cannot be manufactured or forced to be in you. You cannot "muster them up" through your own determination. They are not found in religion, but only in a relationship. Each is a realization. Each is an understanding. God must reveal them to you (which He wants to do for everyone). You either understand or you don't; you either realize or you don't.

Let's take a look at those two things...

***Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks,
REPENTANCE toward God, and FAITH toward our
Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:21)***

REPENTANCE

The first thing that we will discuss is a certain realization called repentance. Repentance literally means "change of understanding." It is not JUST an intellectual acknowledgment that God doesn't like sin. It is a comprehension of the depth and magnitude of sin, of what God thinks about it. It is a desire to be free from the condemnation of it. It is a desire to be right with the God who loves you, to tell Him that you are sorry for offending Him; for sinning against Him personally. The result is a change of attitude toward sin. It is not just a change of mind like, "I did want vanilla ice cream, but now I want chocolate. I changed my mind." No, it is a heartfelt attitude change, a realization that causes a 180 degree turn in the opposite direction. It would be more like you found out that someone blew his nose in the vanilla, and with disgust, you now want the chocolate. That is why you changed your mind. It is a realization that caused an attitude change. Likewise, it is turning from the sin that you now understand that God hates, and that offends Him. It is a desire to turn from sin to the Savior.

*... how ye turned **TO** God **FROM** idols to serve the living and true God... (1 Thessalonians 1:9)*

It occurs when a person realizes, according to the Bible, what he/she truly is compared to an infinitely holy God. We are undeserving of heaven and condemned to hell because of sin. We are born without the tools necessary to get to heaven. (There is nothing in us or about us that can get us there. There is not one redeeming quality about us that can contribute toward the payment that is required to meet God's judgment on sin). Neither you nor I can satisfy God.

*As it is written, There is **none** righteous, no, **not one**:*

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre (grave); with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps (snakes) is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.
(Romans 3:10-18)

What is ironic is that in spite of how man is in God's eyes, man tends to think pretty highly of himself. He is arrogant enough to think he doesn't need God. From man's self-righteous pride to his sinfulness, man's entire life is a testimony to rebellion. Well, repentance is an attitude opposite that of rebellion, a willingness to do whatever is right. Repentance is not JUST an action change (WORKS) it is first an ATTITUDE CHANGE (a change in attitude will result in a change in the action). A person who repents wants to put God first in everything (putting God on the "throne" of his life, and taking self off of the "throne" of his life – this is what the Bible means when it calls Jesus "LORD"). He has an attitude of no longer having his own agenda, but of wanting to do God's will. It is an attitude of no longer fighting God. A repentant person has the attitude, "God is right - I am wrong; I give up." When someone repents, he does not want to hurt God anymore through his sin, and more than anything else in the world, he wants everything to be made right between God and him.

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord... (Acts 3:19)

(We did not say that a person who repents will be perfect. There will still be temptations, mistakes, and self-will. But the ability to practice that sin will be greatly diminished, because that person knows it will offend God, and damage his relationship with God. He will not be able to do so anymore and feel good about it.)

Before a person can be saved, he must come to God on God's terms. He must realize that he (man) is the one that is guilty, and must be truly sorry for his sins (without this deep remorse over sin, there can be no salvation).

*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation...
(2 Corinthians 7:10)*

*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
(Psalm 34:18)*

Repentance involves forsaking one's sins.

*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.
(Proverbs 28:13)*

Let us hasten to say; a person can have regret over sin or regret over the path in which his life has taken. He may even have a change of heart just as Scrooge did toward Christmas, but if he is only bothered that he did not live up to his own standards, and is not bothered that God is offended; he is not ready for salvation. Remember, it is “...*repentance toward God*...”

Let's look at an understandable example of repentance. You will notice in this example, how closely this boy's excuses mirror our own, and how we are not ready to repent until we come clean, admit our own guilt, confess our sin, and want to

be right.

A child is told by his dad not to eat any ice cream until after his meal when he may eat it with the rest of his family. But this little boy looooooves ice cream. So one day when his daddy is at work, he grabs a spoon and "just happens" to make his way downstairs. A couple of bites of ice cream won't hurt anybody, and no one will be able to tell it will be missing. As he is eating, he hears a click, and the light comes on. Oh, oh! His dad walks into the room. At first there is shock. The boy quickly covers up the ice cream and throws it back into the freezer.

His dad says, "Son, what are you doing? Are you eating ice cream?"

He reacts with a lie, "NO!"

"Then what is that on your mouth? And why do you have a spoon in your hand"?

"Oh, uh - Hi Dad, I was just uh, just...."

Realizing how obvious it is, he minimizes his transgression by saying, "I just had a little." (In other words, "Rebelling against your commandment to satisfy my own desire is not THAT big of a deal")

"But Son, I TOLD you NOT to have the ice cream unless it was meal time. Do you remember me saying that?"

"Yes."

But now, he tries something else. "But, Dad. You know how much I like ice cream." (In other words, "I just can't help myself - it's a sickness, it's a disease, I can't be held responsible if I can't control myself" - No repentance, just excuses).

"Besides, that rule is too hard to follow." (Oooh, its DAD'S fault. Dad's trying to spoil my fun.)

So far in each of these cases, there is still rebellion. He is not quite ready to give up the fight. There are excuses, blame shifting, and denial. There is even lying. "Son, did you eat the ice cream, or didn't you?"

The evidence is unavoidable. It is on his hands and in his mouth. He is holding the spoon. There is no one else to blame. He is solely responsible for transgressing his father's righteous commandment. He stands alone – helpless - with the full weight of HIS sin condemning him. He is guilty. He gives up. He acknowledges that HE is wrong - no excuses. What follows then is sorrow, not because he was caught, but because he has regret over his sin, and most of all, because he has disappointed the daddy he loves. He feels about as low as anyone could go. He is humbled.

Their fellowship has been broken (he cannot have both his sin and fellowship with his daddy); and he has hurt his daddy's feelings by disobeying him. He knows he will be punished, but that does not bother him as much as the look of disappointment on his dad's face. And now... he just wants to be right with his daddy more than anything in the world (because fellowship with his daddy means more to him than his sin). With disgust at the thought of this transgression against the one for whom he cares more than self, he turns his back on his sin and turns toward his daddy's mercy, asking for forgiveness. His daddy forgives him.

Something interesting takes place. What once seemed such a delight now becomes a disgust to him. Not so much the taste of ice cream, but his sin WITH the ice cream. There is disgust toward himself. There is a regret at allowing his own selfish desire to go against his dad's word, and get in the way of a relationship. (By

the way, if the little boy can go back to sneaking ice cream, then he didn't repent. Now, will the boy's desire for ice cream go away? Of course not. Will he still be tempted to take a bite when no one is looking? Probably. But his great love for his daddy, the refreshing feeling of guilt being lifted off of him, how his daddy set him free from the guilt by forgiving him, how his daddy loved him and accepted him in spite of his failure, has won his heart to his daddy).

This is an example of a young boy's repentance toward his daddy.

In salvation there must be the same condition - but a ***"...repentance toward God..."*** (Acts 20:21). God wants to be THAT "daddy", and wants you to be His son or daughter. He wants you to acknowledge your sin, to throw yourself into the arms of God who will forgive you, and receive you as you are. Do you see how a relationship is absolutely dependent on a repentant attitude taking place? You cannot find it in religion. The person of God and the person of the sinner, who once were at odds (it wasn't God's fault) are now reconciled to each other again (man was the one at fault, that is why man must come to God on God's terms).

Repentance does not require that you make a list of all of your past sins. You cannot remember every single one. It is an attitude change toward sin in general. However, there may be some obvious ones that come to mind which would be harder for you to let go. Jesus said that if something is coming between you and repenting, you would be better off going to heaven without it, than to go to hell with it. IT IS THAT SERIOUS!

And if thy hand offend thee (causes you to stumble),

cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life (heaven) maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: (Mark 9:43)

Jesus encouraged people to “count the cost” or evaluate what will happen after one becomes a Christian.

*For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?
(Luke 14:2)*

You see, Jesus Christ is not interested in tricking you into a relationship. That is called seduction, not honesty. Jesus Christ loves you too much to mislead you. He wants you to know everything you are “getting into” before you make a decision for Him for the rest of your life. Naturally there are some things that we are attached to in this life, and some of them are good things. We SHOULD care about what others think, to an extent. We should not want to offend others. But it comes down to this. Do you want a relationship with God MORE than you want to hold on to the temporary things of the world? Do you care more about what God thinks, or what your loved ones think? Do you want to accept TRUTH, or hold onto a lie for the sake of others?

**He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.
(John 12:25)**

Salvation is a true relationship with God. It is not playing church, or putting on a show. You may be talked about, called names, excluded from activities. Others may not associate with you anymore. (Now this does not necessarily HAVE TO happen, a Christian does not suddenly have to start acting

goofy, and does not have to be inappropriate and drive people away from him/her. We are just trying to be honest with your expectations so you can properly assess salvation. To have others treat you poorly should not be your goal - some religions enjoy the persecution - your goal is to win them to the Saviour, but also, to not shame God.) In some countries such as in Muslim territories, they may be rejected, may be shunned, may have their property confiscated or family members turn on them. They may even be put to death.

Why is this? Jesus said, **“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.” (John 15:18)**

FAITH

The second realization that Acts 20:21 states a person must have is

“..FAITH toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Let us first define what the word FAITH means.

First of all, faith is not just a simple belief in God. Many people believe in God, but they do not know why. A simple belief in God is not the Bible definition of faith, and a simple belief in God does not gain one an entrance into heaven, as is obvious by the following verse regarding demons (who obviously are not going to heaven).

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. (James 2:19)

The Bible word “faith” means a trust, a confidence, or reliance upon. The foundation of all Bible faith is a trust or reliance upon one and only one thing: God's Word. Confidence in God's Word is based on the foundation of God's character and

his ability.

So let's first establish what we mean by God's character, and let's explain it in terms of comparison to ours.

We have already asked the question, "Have you ever lied?" And we said that the answer was an obvious, "Yes, I have lied." Whether we were afraid of getting caught, afraid of being embarrassed, or had exaggerated a story; we all have lied. In fact, it is our nature to lie.

But has God ever lied?

Is God even capable of lying?

While it is our nature to lie, it is God's nature to NOT LIE.

GOD CANNOT LIE.

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; (Titus 1:2)

"... it [is] impossible for God to lie..." (Hebrews 6:18)

Therefore, everything He said He would do is a promise, and must be fulfilled; God cannot go back on His Word - even once - otherwise He would be a liar. For...

"God is not a man, that he should lie...hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers 23:19)

If God cannot lie and He has declared that He would bring something to pass, then He absolutely MUST fulfill it.

Here is another question with an obvious answer. Have you ever made a mistake? Or have you ever tripped, or spilled a glass of water, or fell down the stairs? Again, the answer is, "Yes, in one form or another, I have made mistakes."

GOD HASN'T! (Neither a moral mistake, nor an accident.)

As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD

is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him. (2 Samuel 22:31)

I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. (Ecclesiastes 3:14)

Have you ever been jealous, disliked another, or treated someone unfairly? Have you ever had impure motives? God Has Not.

And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD. (Zechariah 8:17)

...the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. (Psalms 92:15)

What this proves is that God would never try to mislead you or deceive you. In fact, God is dedicated to TRUTH.

For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth. (Psalms 33:4)

Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever. (Psalms 119:160)

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. (John 17:17)

Are there limits to your mental and physical ability? Again, an obvious "yes." But not with God.

For with God nothing shall be impossible. (Luke 1:37)

...The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. (Luke 18:27)

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?... Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust... Isaiah 40:12-17

So if God is that powerful; so powerful that He can make the entire universe with billions of galaxies containing billions of stars, do you think He could write a book just a few hundred pages in length without a single mistake? Is that too hard, or can God handle that? Hmmm. Yeah, I think He can. No Problem!

So here is the point of all of this. If God cannot and will not lie, cannot make a mistake, is all-powerful, is holy (cannot sin), and loves you more than Himself, then God would never betray your trust and would never do you wrong. If God says His Word is complete and there is nothing that we are missing from it (there are no new revelations to be added to it), and if this kind of God with this kind of character tells us that the Bible is true, then IS IT TRUE? Can there be even one mistake? If there is, then God lied.

It is confidence in this kind of God that then leads to a trust and a confidence in His Word.

This is important, because it is the instructions in His Word that tell us how to get to heaven.

So how does faith work?

Simple. If all these things about God and His Word are true,

and if God cannot lie, then I do not have to see, hear, or feel God to verify that He exists, or to believe that He will do what He says He will do. If God's Word cannot fail, then his Word is all the evidence I need.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

If God sees it, then I don't have to see it. I can depend on Him to tell me. If He can't lie than His Word is more trustworthy than anything my 5 senses can tell me.

Let's illustrate by having you picture the following scenario.

Let's say that you are trying to guess how many fingers a person is holding up behind his back. He tells you three.

How do you know?

You cannot see them. You cannot feel them. You must simply believe that person based upon what he has told you.

But you may have some doubts. Why? Because your lack of trust is based on the other person's ABILITY TO LIE. This would actually be a game, the challenge being whether you have guessed the right amount or if the person was lying to you. (In order to play the game, you would need a third party to verify whether he was telling the truth.)

But let's pretend for a moment that it is God who is hiding His fingers behind His back? He tells you three. How do you know? You cannot see them, or feel them. But there is a difference with God. Here is the key. Can God lie? If the answer is "No", then why would you have to see them? Would you have any doubts? YOU SHOULDN'T. If God cannot lie, then the number of fingers He has told you that He is holding up, must be that stated number, every single time. You don't need a third party to verify - GOD CANNOT LIE. What He says is better than sight. Your trust in Him should be based on His INABILITY TO LIE. HIS FAITHFULNESS. That is a

confidence that cannot be moved, because it is NOT IN YOU, it is IN A GOD THAT CANNOT FAIL.

It is that same simple faith that you can place in Him for your soul.

If God says He will save you, how do you know He will? You will not see salvation. You will not feel salvation. You will not smell, taste, or hear salvation. God will not show you a vision or give you a tingly feeling to verify that you have been saved; you must believe God based on what He has told you (in the Bible). You will see the evidence or the results of salvation later because there will be a change in your life, but you will not FEEL anything at the time of salvation.

So THAT is faith. It is not reliance upon YOUR ability; it is a confidence in SOMEONE ELSE'S ability. In this case, that Someone just happens to be a perfect God.

Not to belabor the point, but I want to make sure you understand how simple faith is.

Let's say that an army is in a valley and must depend upon a lookout to warn them of approaching danger. That scout, on a lookout above them on a mountain, relays the movement of the opposing army. Can the army in the valley see the enemy? No. Who can? The scout. Would the army place a man as a scout with a long history of lying? Someone who was blind? Sympathetic to the enemy? Of course not. They have absolute trust in that man's ability and trustworthiness to relay the facts about the enemy. He has demonstrated this ability and trustworthiness time and again. Is not God more reliable? Is He not worthy of even more trust? Does He not have a perfect track record (in other words, has God ever demonstrated a false motive or made a mistake in the past?)

Just as the army in the valley cannot see the enemy but the scout can, you cannot see what God sees. The army believes what this scout tells it as fact even though they do not see what

he sees. They believe him. That is absolute trust (confidence, reliance upon).

Well God is infinitely more reliable. God understands what we do not, and sees what we do not. He loves you, cannot fail, and wants to tell you the truth. Is that good enough for you and me?

Again, it is not reliance upon YOUR ability; it is a confidence in SOMEONE ELSE'S ABILITY (a "SOMEONE" Who CANNOT fail). THAT is Bible faith.

And what is the significance of this?

The Bible says we are born separated from God and that our sins are taking us to a place called hell. But I have never seen hell. God has. Do you believe Him? The Bible says God wants us to go to heaven, but I have never seen heaven. God has. Do you trust Him? God says we cannot save ourselves. I have not seen salvation, but God said He would provide it. God said it. Can you believe Him? Because we cannot save ourselves, God says He has sent someone to rescue us. I have never seen this Deliverer. I have never heard His voice, but I don't have to. God has seen Him. He said that He would send Him. Do you believe Him?

OK. So God has promised a Deliverer. If I can believe that, then that is good. But how will I know that Deliverer when He comes? When will He arrive? How will He come? In what location will He be when He comes? How will we identify Him? Does the Bible tell us?

THE PROMISE OF THE DELIVERER (Faith in the Messiah)

Immediately after the very first sin, God promised He would send Someone to rescue mankind. Satan had deceived Adam and Eve, plunging mankind into a world of despair, misery,

disease, and eventually death and hell. Sounds pretty bleak doesn't it? So God came to the rescue, and promised He would send someone to UNDO the evil and misery that the devil had brought about. It is the theme of the entire Bible. The Jews called this coming deliverer the Messiah (The New Testament Greek equivalent would be Christos, which is where we get the word CHRIST). To the serpent (Satan) God said, "... **(the Messiah) shall bruise thy head...**" Throughout the Bible, God promised many times that He would send the Rescuer, and gave many clues to His identity. God promised the Jews He would send them a prophet like unto Moses (Deut 18:15, 18 Acts 3:22-23). He promised the Messiah would come thru Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then from the tribe of Judah (The book of Genesis). It says He would be a descendant of King David (2 Samuel). Psalms chapter 22 states that the Messiah would be crucified. In Isaiah 7 He would be born of a virgin, in chapter 53 the Messiah would have our sins laid on Him and God would punish Him instead of us. Micah 5:2 tells us that He would be born in Bethlehem.

There are hundreds of other promises in the Bible about this Deliverer. It was God's intent that these prophecies of how, when, and where this Messiah would come, would help us to identify this Saviour when He arrived so that we could trust in HIM for our salvation. Do we know of anyone who has come close to fulfilling those predictions?

THE IDENTITY OF THE DELIVERER

Who was the person who met the requirements?

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of a virgin from the tribe of Judah, a descendant of Abraham, was crucified between two thieves and buried in a rich man's tomb. Each of these instances was predicted to happen. Biblically and historically,

there is no other person who has fulfilled these prophecies other than Jesus Christ. He fulfilled to the letter every single prediction of the Messiah's first arrival. (To include all of those prophecies here would get rather lengthy, but would gladly be made available upon request).

While several of these fulfilled prophecies of the identity of the Savior have been mentioned, let's ask this question. Did Jesus actually admit to being the Messiah? Did He ever say that He was this promised Deliverer?

The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I THAT SPEAK UNTO THEE AM HE. (John 4:25-26)

...Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ (the Messiah, the Promised Saviour), the Son of the Blessed? and JESUS SAID, I AM: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. (Mark 14:61-62)

... To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. (John 18:37b)

Jesus also told people to look for Him in the only book that foretold His coming...

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5:39)

Those Scriptures say it many times...

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. (John 20:31)

For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ (Messiah). (Acts 18:28)

So, was Jesus Christ the long promised Messiah, sent to UNDO what the devil had started?

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8b)

Did God send the deliverer? A total of 15 times in the book of John, Jesus Christ said of Himself,

... my Father hath sent me...(John 20:21)

So we see that Jesus Christ was actually sent by God for the specific purpose of being the long promised Messiah.

But what was He supposed to do? How was He supposed to pay for the sins of mankind? And with what?

Let's find out.

FAITH IN THE BLOOD.

Immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, God provided an object lesson that pointed to man's future deliverer. When Adam tried to cover his shame and sin with the works of his own hands (fig leaves) God shed the blood of innocent animals

instead (it may have been sheep), and took the coats off these animals to provide a covering for man's shame. God Himself provided the very first object lesson. God shed blood and provided that covering – NOT MAN.

For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. (Leviticus 17:11)

God instructed His followers to sacrifice innocent sheep, shedding their blood. We see that Abel did this. Abraham shed the blood of an innocent male sheep. Moses was instructed to kill a spotless male lamb, that its blood may protect the children of Israel from judgment. (When this lamb's blood was applied over the doorposts, instead of judgment coming to the house, it would "pass over." To this day, that is why the Jews call it the Passover.)

The Jewish high priest would enter into the tabernacle or temple, and shed the blood of an innocent lamb as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. What we mean by innocent is that the lambs had never done anything to deserve death, judgment, or bloodshed. They were detached from any sins a person may have committed. Completely innocent. But it HAD TO BE DONE.

Why?

Sin requires that blood be shed to atone for the guilty party

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. (Hebrews 9:22)

Sin requires death.

...the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23)

At this point, let us pause to define a very important definition.

It is the word SACRIFICE. A sacrifice is something that is a replacement. It gives its life IN EXCHANGE for another. It dies, INSTEAD OF the other. The sacrifice receives WHAT THE OTHER DESERVED. It pays the penalty IN PLACE OF the guilty.

So, we saw that the principle of a sacrifice was laid out in Genesis and was followed consistently throughout the Bible. Innocent animals died and shed their blood in exchange for sin. It was the innocent animals sacrificing their lives to cover the shame of the guilty, and to pay for their crimes. The innocent lamb would be spotless, symbolizing the purity of the sinless FUTURE SACRIFICE.

But a lamb was not the solution. It was only delaying God's action against those sins until the next year, when this sacrifice would have to be repeated again; and the next year, and the next year, etc... Why? Because it was ONLY TEMPORARY, not permanent. In fact, it was to be used only until the person it pictured (the Messiah) would arrive; until HIS BLOOD, and ONLY His blood, could PERMANENTLY take our sins away. So while a spotless lamb was a perfect picture to help us understand, and to point us to the Messiah, as far as taking sins away??? Its blood just wasn't good enough.

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. (Hebrews 10:4)

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? (Hebrews 10:1-2a)

This is saying that the sacrifices could not make a person

sinless, which is why they had to be repeated every year. If the sacrifices could have washed the sins away permanently, WE WOULD NOT NEED A PERMANENT SOLUTION.

An animal is inadequate. An animal (a lamb) was only a picture to help us understand. There was something better. NO! SOMEONE BETTER, who would actually provide a PERMANENT solution.

HE HIMSELF would come.
HE Himself would BE the solution.

But wait! He would have to be sinless.
So just WHERE ARE WE GOING TO FIND THAT?!?!? A SINLESS HUMAN BEING? I don't know of anyone that is sinless.

The only person without sin – is GOD.

But now we run into TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS.

First, GOD CANNOT DIE!

And second, GOD DOESN'T HAVE BLOOD!

...so...GOD BECAME A MAN...

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... (John 1:1, 14)

..God was manifest in the flesh... (1 Timothy 3:16)

Now able to die...

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law (in the flesh, capable of dying) (Galatians 4:4)

With sinless blood...

And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. (1 John 3:5)

*Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:
(1 Peter 2:22)*

*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.
(Hebrews 4:15)*

God would send a LAMB.
This would be GOD'S Lamb.
He would shed HIS blood.
IT WAS JESUS CHRIST.

**The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the LAMB OF GOD, WHICH TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.
(John 1:29)**

JESUS CHRIST WAS GOD'S LAMB. GOD WOULD SACRIFICE HIM. And also, did you see what John said? He would take our sins away. But not just that of the Israelites, but of the WHOLE WORLD. We can be free. Free from the bondage of sin and from guilt. When you looked thru those commandments on page 11, did you break them? Then you are guilty. You are condemned. But God wants to free you from that guilt; from the condemnation, FROM THE PUNISHMENT. God is offering you mercy. He punished Jesus INSTEAD OF you, so you could go free and so that He could restore a Father/child relationship with you. No rituals, no sacrifices, no superficial outward shows, no good works to perform in order to earn his favor - the payment has been made

already - God just wants A RELATIONSHIP. You don't have to do ANYTHING to earn God's favor. He already loved you. He is offering you amnesty. Forgiveness. Just accept HIS payment. Accept HIS BLOOD as YOUR PAYMENT.

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, (Revelation 1:5b)

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (Ephesians 1:7)

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: (1 Peter 1:18-19)

...For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: (1 Corinthians 5:7)

Do you get that Bible picture? If you trust in HIS blood to cover you, (you are pronounced forgiven), then on judgment day, instead of being judged as you deserve; judgment will PASS OVER you.

So do you see? Over and over again that its the “...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

NOT WATER!

Accept His death for you payment. “The wages of sin is death...” so...

... Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; (1 Corinthians 15:3)

And you, that were...alienated and enemies in your

mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: (Colossians 1:21-22)

How is it that “*faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*” can get a person to heaven? Remember, it is a confidence in His ability. Ability to do what?

To meet the requirements to be the sinless sacrifice that was promised for you and I. The Bible says that 2000 years ago, God the Son paid for every single sin of every single person for all time by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross. That means ALL of your sins. Even your future sins. Remember,

By the which will we are sanctified THROUGH THE OFFERING of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE for ALL.

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, WHICH CAN NEVER TAKE AWAY SINS:

But this man [this sinless perfect man], after he had offered ONE SACRIFICE FOR SINS FOR EVER, sat down on the right hand of God; (Hebrews 10-12)

Do you believe that? If God cannot lie, then why wouldn't you? When you realize that the Lord Jesus Christ - who is God - can make no mistakes, cannot lie, has already paid for all your sins on the cross, wants to save you more than anything else in all the world, and that you can put your complete confidence in Him as God to carry out his promise for your salvation - that is trust, that is confidence, that is faith. Faith therefore, is not a confidence in YOUR ability, but a complete confidence in the ability of JESUS CHRIST and His sinless blood, shed to

complete the sacrifice.

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (Romans 3:25)

MISCONCEPTIONS

At this point we need to address some potential misconceptions. Jesus Christ, as we said, was the sacrifice that paid the price for us on the cross. Many people may be under the impression that Jesus made the down payment, but we must contribute something to "the pot."

Did Jesus pay the whole price or not? This question is vital to your salvation...

HOW MUCH DID HE PAY?

As you look at the following verses, notice the finality of the key words.

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE FOR ALL.

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, WHICH CAN NEVER TAKE AWAY SINS:

BUT [in contrast] THIS MAN, after he had OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE FOR SINS FOR EVER, sat down on the right hand of God; (Hebrews 10-12)

Notice - ONCE FOR ALL, ONE SACRIFICE for [ALL] SINS FOR EVER. This denotes that Jesus Christ paid for every single sin of every single person for all time; past, present, and future.

*... there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins...
(Hebrews 10:26)*

Did you see that? No more sacrifice to be performed for sins. No rituals, no fasting, no penance for sins. Jesus did it all. It is done.

*And, having made peace (PAST TENSE - COMPLETED) through the blood of his cross....
(Colossians 1:20)*

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. (John 19:30)

It helps to understand the gravity and the extent of the payment, when one realizes that Jesus Christ WAS THE PAYMENT.

WHOM GOD HATH SET FORTH to be a propitiation (payment) through faith in his blood ... for the remission of sins... (Romans 3:25)

The following verse denotes that there was nothing left to pay after Jesus paid the penalty.

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; (Colossians 2:14)

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; (Hebrews 1:3) Again, this verse denotes a completeness, a task that has been accomplished.

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:11)

Did you see that?

Isaiah 53:11 was written about 700 years before the birth of Christ. At that time, God looked ahead into the future, ahead to the time when He would put His own Son to death on the cross in order to make the payment for us to get to heaven. And He said, on that day, when that is completed, God "SHALL BE SATISFIED."

MANY SAVIORS OR ONLY ONE?

For the sake of thoroughness, let's ask this question.

What if a person believes that Jesus can save him, but ALSO trusts in another religious figure ALONG WITH Jesus Christ, in order to get to heaven? In other words, Jesus and Buddha, or Jesus and Muhammad, or Jesus and Mary. (Many eastern religions would believe that Jesus is one of many saviors. So to them, He is A savior, but not THE Savior.)

Acts 20:21 does NOT say "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ AND (fill in the blank).

That is why Acts 4:12 says there is

"...NONE OTHER NAME under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

The Bible states that there is only one person designated as a mediator between God and man. Only one.

For *there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5)*

It is God Himself that designated that person.

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (payment) through faith in his blood ... for the remission of sins... (Romans 3:25)

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

God sent his Son.

Why?

...to be the propitiation (the payment) for our sins.

Hebrews 1:3 says of Jesus,

.....when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; (Hebrews 1:3)

We need to point out just how important this concept is. Did you see the above phrase? There was no one next to Jesus on the cross to help Him pay the price. On that cross, He was "BY HIMSELF."

The ONE TRUE LIVING GOD (1Thessalonians 1:9) sent His Only Begotten Son – JESUS CHRIST – not anyone else. No one else was qualified. No one else was God's Son, was virgin born, had sinless blood, and fulfilled hundreds of verses of prophetic Scripture. No one else then took our sins upon Himself, spilled that sinless blood, and then was punished for those sins. NO ONE. He, and only He, was the promised Messiah. He was God's Lamb. He paid the price; not Buddha, not Mary, not Muhammad, not any other saint, "god", guru or religious figure (this is not meant to be disrespectful toward any of these people or religious figures; we are simply stating

a fact. They were just people. Jesus was God's Lamb.) Let us speak quite frankly. This is not meant in any unkindness toward individuals in the following religions. On the contrary, it is meant to be honest, for the sake of those individuals that may be seeking the honest truth. The previous verses are saying that if a person believes on any other name than that of Jesus Christ, or even in addition to Jesus Christ, that person will not go to heaven.

Why is this? Because reality is that there is no other person who is qualified. According to Scripture, Jesus Christ was and is God. Because of that ability, and because only God is capable of performing such an act (shedding His own sinless blood), and because Jesus Christ was the only one to perform this act, there simply is no one else to trust. There is no one else in whom you or I CAN trust. As stated previously, NO ONE ELSE IS CAPABLE OR WORTHY TO SHARE IN THIS ACT. He was the only one with sinless blood; He was God's only Son. Muhammad, Buddha, Mary or anyone else are fallible humans with a sin nature just like the rest of us. There is no priest, rabbi, imam or guru, or a saint or ancestor that is capable, qualified, or necessary to be a mediator between us and God. They did not fulfill the promises from Scripture of the Messiah. To think that they or I or you or any other human is qualified to get another to heaven is simply just not true. It is not reality. It is fantasy. Only God Himself was qualified. How many saviors?

I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. (Isaiah 43:11)

...And there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. (Isaiah 45:21)

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is

***none other name under heaven given among men,
whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)***

Now, let's narrow it down even further. The previous verses regarding Jesus dying and shedding his blood on the cross by Himself, we applied to the fact that it is without any other PERSON. But also, Jesus Christ paid the price for your "ticket" to heaven thru Himself, and not thru any other ACT OR DEED performed BY YOU OR I. Many people call themselves Christians, and may pray to only the person of Jesus and believe that He is the only person who will take them to heaven. But many people are trusting in Jesus AND an outward exterior ACT to get them to heaven. It may be performing good deeds for others. It may be baptism, or communion, or sacraments [the word sacrament actually implies that one must perform a religious act in order to get to heaven. It also implies that what Jesus did over 2000 years ago, was somehow incomplete, or that He only made a down payment and we somehow must complete the rest. What the sacraments are actually saying is that they are RE ENACTING and RE-DOING the sacrifice of Jesus over and over again when they are performed. This is entirely contrary to the Bible which emphatically states that Jesus, in a one-time event 2000 years ago, paid the whole price and there is no further sacrifice. **There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins... (Hebrews 10:26)**]. Either Jesus paid the whole penalty, or He did not. But can salvation be thru Jesus AND ANYTHING? While we have already stated we cannot work our way to heaven, people may still have the impression that we can perform our own good works and mix them together with what God did for us.

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

(Romans 11:6)

Understand that a gift is free. If a person is working for something, then it is NOT FREE. IT IS WORK! A free gift is diametrically opposed to, is a polar opposite that of work. They cannot mix. Besides, if Jesus already paid the whole price, than what more is there to be paid? We are to simply accept it.

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved... (John 10:9)

Notice, Jesus did not open the door to heaven, He IS the door.

We even have an example of some people, whose false reality was that they could enter heaven based on some other means in addition to Jesus Christ. They did not accept that finished payment. They instead had their own way.

“Not every one that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven...

Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?’

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

(Matthew 7:21-23)

Were they sincere? Yes they were. Notice how surprised they were that the things they did were not going to get them to heaven.

Did they believe in Jesus? Yes, they did. Notice they called Him “Lord.”

Did they have faith? Oh, yes! Absolute faith. But absolute faith in the wrong thing. Notice, they had faith in what they were doing, but not in what Jesus HAD DONE. They had faith in Jesus AND their own good works, but not solely in Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Their faith in good works inspired them to do great things, thinking that those things would impress God, and that He would be obligated to take them to heaven. But notice: their good works mixed with belief in Jesus DID NOT GET THEM TO HEAVEN (even though they did those works for Him).

Therefore, not only must the Person in whom you trust be Jesus Christ, but you must trust in Him and Him alone. Neither your baptism nor your good works can save you. Your church cannot save you. Neither an angel nor a human being (dead OR alive) can save you. None of these things can save you or even have a part in your salvation. (THEY DON'T EVEN WORK). Jesus Christ doesn't need help from anybody or anything; He doesn't need help from me, and He doesn't need help from you. The only part He leaves up to you is the desire to be rescued and the ability to exercise your own free will to choose. You and I must be willing to let go of our pride, stop trusting in ourselves or our religion, and allow Him and Him only to save us.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.
(John 14:6)

Notice that Jesus didn't say, "no man cometh unto the Father but by me AND baptism," or "by me AND your church," or "by me AND your good works." He said, "but by me." You cannot trust in Jesus AND anything. He is the ONLY way. To quote from others who have made the following statement,

"Jesus didn't say He was a good way; He didn't say He was a better way; He didn't even say He was the best way. He said He was THE WAY!" Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON. (1 John 5:11)

Did you see what that verse said? This life (eternal life) is in who? HIS SON. Not any other person, but in HIS SON.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, THAT WE MIGHT LIVE THROUGH HIM. (1 John 4:9)

Who might we live through? Through none other than His Son.

Remember Acts 20:21 says, "...faith TOWARD OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

How many payments did God make?

Only one.

How many saviors did He send?

Only One

For Salvation to become a reality in your life, you must understand, you must realize the very simple truth, the very simple reality. Jesus Christ's death on the cross was the only qualified payment by the only qualified Messiah, the only qualified God. That only qualified payment has already been completed. It is done. It is faith in that payment alone that will get you to heaven. THAT is Bible FAITH. Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

IS FAITH JUST A HEAD KNOWLEDGE?

Faith is not just an intellectual head knowledge. It begins with the head, because the trust which you place in the payment of Jesus Christ requires you to know some facts. Jesus was the only qualified person, God in the flesh, who came to die for my sins. He died, He rose again. Those are Bible facts. That is head knowledge. But there is a difference between a HEAD knowledge and HEART knowledge.

One explanation of the difference would be like knowing facts about George Washington, versus knowing him personally. It would be like hearing about him 200 years after he lived, versus being his son and having an intimate relationship with him.

Do you believe in chairs? Sure you do. But consciously try this sometime, because I bet you haven't thought of this before. Go over to a chair and sit down on it. Then, sit back and relax. When you sit ON a chair, you entrust yourself to the chair, you RELY upon it to support you. You placed your confidence in the chair. You made a transition from believing IN a chair to reliance ON, believing ON, committing yourself TO its ability. You have trusted ON the chair. Likewise, many people believe IN Jesus, but have never placed their confidence ON what He has done. They have never trusted ON Jesus, or placed their confidence in His ability.

Here is another way to explain it.

Let's say I asked you the following obvious question. "If I pushed you off a 100 foot cliff, would you die?" More than likely your response would be, "Well, of course!" I then say to you, "OK. Why?" Again, a question that should not need to be asked, but you respond, "Weeell, as I fall, my body accelerates. When I hit the ground the sudden stop damages my body,

leading to death.” You have placed obvious facts together in a sequence, and come to an obvious conclusion. Just like $2 + 2 = 4$. It is a head knowledge.

Picture the following scenario. I grab you and hold your body over the edge of a cliff, 100 feet above the ground? What would your reaction be now? Picture it.

Would you not be terrified? Wouldn't the empty space under your feet cause a reaction of instant terror? Fear and the reality of the moment would grip you. You might plead for your life. You may get angry, you might scream in terror, "WHAT ARE YOU DOING?" What is the difference between the first reaction, and that of the second? Simple. It went from a head knowledge, to a "heart knowledge.” While the first one was intellectual, you BELIEVED the second one because it affected you personally and you BELIEVED IT TO BE REALITY. YOU KNEW you would die.

The Faith the Bible talks about is a gripping understanding of the consequences. It is moving from facts to an understanding of the reality..... While you do not see hell, if you fit the criteria, you KNOW you are going there because God says so. You did not see Jesus on the Cross, but you KNOW He was there. You truly believe that what He did on the cross is your complete payment in order to go to heaven.

We need to repeat a verse at this point in order to clarify something, because many people believe that simply having a head knowledge of Jesus Christ, or a belief that He exists, will gain one entrance into heaven. But the Bible says...

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. (James 2:19)

Satan and the demons believe IN Jesus, and obviously they are not going to heaven. One must believe Jesus exists first of course, but a person must also trust AND ACCEPT, must

EMBRACE, must RECEIVE, what Jesus HAS DONE for him, BELIEVING THAT WHAT JESUS DID ON THE CROSS WILL SAVE HIM. It must be APPLIED to YOU PERSONALLY! What the sinner is doing is in faith, committing himself to, and relying upon God's promise in Jesus' payment to save him. It is relying upon and accepting the payment of Jesus Christ on the cross as complete and adequate.

So there must be a “...*repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (Acts 20:21)

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (Romans 5:1)

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith [in the ability of Christ's finished sacrifice on the cross] without the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:28)

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe... (Romans 3:22)

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (payment) through faith in his blood ... for the remission of sins... (Romans 3:25)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians. 2:8-9)

Grace is this. While our sins have offended a holy God, and have brought about a deserved punishment in hell, God in his

mercy has offered to pay the price for us. Grace is God's free gift He is holding out to you.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

It is THAT Gift of salvation that saves you. For by THAT GIFT (not you) are you saved THROUGH FAITH (in God's ability to pay for your crimes and His ability to rescue you). Accepting that gift held out to you KNOWING that once you accept it, it will be yours because the GOD who is holding it out to you wants you to accept it more than anything in all the world and MUST SAVE YOU BECAUSE HE SAID HE WOULD AND HE CANNOT LIE. That is confidence. That is trust. And that is salvation by grace through faith.

Here is what God wants us to finally realize.

“If I am a sinner,

And my sin is taking me to hell,

And I can't stop sinning,

And baptism won't wash my sins away,

And I cannot keep the law,

And my good works won't save me,

And I can't pay my way out of this predicament-

THAN I AM IN BIG TROUBLE!

THEREFORE, I NEED SOMEONE ELSE TO RESCUE ME!”

EXACTLY!

That is where Jesus Christ comes in.

Let's sum up what made it all possible.

God is above all things, a righteous, pure and holy God.

Therefore, God's righteousness demanded that justice be

carried out, and God's justice demanded that sin be punished,
but God's mercy pleaded to give man a way out.
God's love desired man to be in heaven with Him,
but God's holiness could not allow it.
(You could almost say that God was in a dilemma.)

God's law, "*The wages of sin is death*" demanded that the sacrifice would have to die. (Romans 6:23)

God's law, "*Without shedding of blood is no remission*" demanded that blood be shed. (Hebrews 9.22)

God's law, "*As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law*" demanded that sin be punished (Romans 2:12b).

So God came up with a master plan (He knew what He would do all along).

THERE WOULD BE AN EXCHANGE!

But in order for there to be an exchange, the sacrifice couldn't be a sinner. (If the one being sacrificed was a sinner, he would have his own sin for which to pay. There couldn't be an exchange, because we would get his sin, and he would get ours). But since a human (Adam) was the one who brought sin into the world, the one to be sacrificed must be a human. So we needed a perfectly sinless human sacrifice willing to shed his blood and die on a cross, taking our place. Then, and only then, could we have a way out.

But as we said, there was no need to find someone WILLING when we couldn't find someone ABLE (no one on earth has ever been without sin). It was hopeless!

GOD WAS THE ONLY SOLUTION!

Therefore God implemented the perfect plan.

“...God was manifest in the flesh...” (1 Timothy 3:16)
When it came to satisfying God, you and I were incapable. But He loved us so much that He was willing to do the unthinkable: He put His own Son on the cross. Since we could not satisfy Him; Jesus' death, punishment, and shed blood satisfied God's requirements FOR us.

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him (Jesus); he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.

...for HE (Jesus) shall bear their iniquities... (Isaiah 53:10-11)

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

He (God) shall see of the travail of his (Jesus') soul, and SHALL BE SATISFIED ... (Isaiah 53:11)

On a day, two thousand years ago, there was an exchange (a sacrifice).

Jesus took our sins and was punished for them on the cross. When a person accepts Jesus' payment on the cross - in exchange - that person gets Jesus' righteousness.

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians. 5:21)

We were held hostage by our sin. Sin demanded death. Jesus was the ransom.

... Christ Jesus; ...gave himself a ransom for all.... (1

Timothy 2:5-6)

God's gift to men was the sacrifice of His Son.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (Ephesians 2:8)

So that is what the Bible means by grace. That while we deserved death and punishment, God instead offered to us a gift – amnesty - a way out - because **"God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."** (2 Peter 3:9). [And that grace period lasts only as long as we live. But when we die, it will be too late, and we don't know when we will die. This life lasts but a few decades, but after death is forever. So you see? Its not about this life at all. It's all about eternity!] That gift was "through Jesus Christ our Lord", who made the payment with His life.

This means that if you accept this gift - if you really believe this - and consciously decide to place your full confidence in THAT GIFT – and ask for it, in God's eyes you are pronounced forgiven. All your sins are forgotten. You are looked at by God as someone who has never sinned.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isaiah 1:18)

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

(Isaiah 43:25)

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19)

At the moment of salvation, Jesus Christ takes up residence within you (lives inside you) and that spirit that once was dead within you will now be alive.

And I will put my spirit within you... Ezekiel 36:27

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Romans 8:9a

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. John 14:17

This is an added "plus" when it comes to salvation, because God living inside of you will help you to live the Christian life. (It is often the difference between someone who CLAIMS to be born again yet acts like a non-Christian, and someone who is truly born again and has a dramatic lifestyle change). The change comes from the INSIDE.

That is why the Bible refers to it as a "conversion."

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul... (Psalms 19:7)

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19)

This is the "new creature" the Bible talks about.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Remember, you are not going to FEEL God come into you, so please, let us hasten to say, God is not interested in giving you PHYSICAL VERIFICATION. God does not want to give you a cheap momentary thrill, or a physical experience. He wants you to trust Him, and begin a relationship.

At the bottom of page 7 we said, "So to be born again is simply to be born a second time; not physically, but spiritually. It is simply a 'bringing to life' of that dead spirit within us." God miraculously recreates or brings to life that which was dead. You could say it is like a resurrection of that dead spirit within us. God also calls it regeneration, and renewing.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (Titus 3:5) Notice, here is yet another verse where the Bible says that God "cleans us up" on the inside and forgives our sins. It is this salvation, this regeneration, that washes our sins away - not water.

After salvation takes place, heaven will be your home when you die.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)

God judged your sin already on Jesus Christ.

God judged the person of Jesus Christ.

God died for you that you could live.

God bled for you that you could live.

God was punished for you that you would not have to be punished.

God's justice was executed, sin was punished, and therefore God's holiness was satisfied.

God's love was given, and so His mercy was satisfied.

God rose from the dead so that He could defeat death, and so that you too can receive a new body someday.

Every single requirement laid out in the Bible was fulfilled.

It is over.

Finished!

COMPLETED! SATISFIED.

THERE'S NOTHING ELSE TO BE DONE. There's nothing else that CAN be done, by YOU or anyone else.

So the bad news for us was, “...*the wages of sin is death...*”, but the good news now is, “...*the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” (Romans 6:23a, b)

IT IS A CHOICE

One question often asked at this point is, “Does that mean that everyone now goes to heaven automatically?” The answer is “No.” As with any gift, it is not a gift if it is forced upon you. Likewise, as with any gift, when does it become yours? I will borrow another illustration to prove this point.

Let us say that I bought a pen and held it out to you and said, “I paid for this. It's yours. It's FREE.” I could say this all day, but when does it actually become yours?

When you reach out, and of your own free will, accept it. Such is salvation. You must consciously CHOOSE TO accept it. You take it for your own.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: (John 1:12)

TIME AND PLACE

Notice that when a person RECEIVES this gift, he THEN – at that moment - becomes a child of God. There is no such thing as always being a Christian. You cannot BECOME a son of God if you have ALWAYS BEEN a son of God [when we come into this world, we are born as the "children of this world" (Luke 20:34) and "children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2), NOT the children of God as we have been led to believe]. A birth is an event. An event takes place at a particular time and a particular location. Therefore a birth must take place at a time and location. (For example – Susan Jones was born on Saturday, August 16, 1986 at 10:21 AM at Charity Hospital in New Orleans). As with the physical birth of a baby, likewise, would there not be the same requirement for the spiritual birth? A time and location? A before and an after?

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE. (John 5:24)

Notice in the above verse, the action of passing from one condition (death) to the other (life). This action takes place at the moment of receiving. Unlike a baby that has no control over its conception and birth, you are an adult and God wants you to make a conscious choice. To consciously choose means that you are awake, and are aware of and understand what you are doing, and why you are doing it. This is the biggest choice of all time. If you are ready, your attitude would not be flippant; but you would desire to do it with all your heart.

(Another analogy regarding the 2nd birth is this. When a baby is born, he or she passes from the darkness of the womb into

the light of this world. In the same manner, at salvation one passes from the darkness of this world and is born into the light of the "next world" - "the kingdom of God").

God waits for you to invite Him in.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)

When is a person ready to be saved?

Jesus said that a man should count the cost (Luke 14:28). God wants you to be fully aware of what you are doing and make a decision based on what you know (God loves you, and wants a relationship with you based upon your free will. He does not want you to be pressured, pushed, conned, or tricked). This involves determining if Jesus is worth more to you than your sin or your religion, or what someone will think about you if you choose Jesus Christ.

If a groom is standing on the marriage altar next to his bride, but looks longingly over his shoulder toward his previous girlfriends, then his heart has not turned away from his relationships. He has no business getting married.

Likewise, if you come to the "marriage altar" to begin a relationship with Jesus, but look longingly over your shoulder toward your previous religion or your sin, then your heart has not turned away from your previous "girlfriends." You have no business entering into an eternal relationship with Jesus Christ. If you are willing to enter into a relationship with the One True God, but are not willing to leave behind your old gods, then you are not yet ready.

For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; (1

Thessalonians 1:9)

But Jesus Christ would be flattered if you chose Him over those other "relationships." What He wants is for you to fall in love with Him and choose Him no matter what the consequences of your decision may be. If you do not, He will continue to love you, but He will not force you to love Him.

The following example will demonstrate this.

There once was a young man who toiled and saved for years to start his own pet store business. This store was his life, and by it he made a very profitable living.

But one day, he met the girl of his dreams. In a short time they fell in love, and made plans for marriage. There was only one problem. She was deathly allergic to pets!

What would he do?

He must make a choice. On one hand, he could have his pets and his money, but lose forever the one that he loved. On the other hand, he could leave the life he knew for the woman that he loved. He must choose one or the other, but he cannot have both. If he chooses his bride, he can never go back to that old life. He must be willing to leave it all behind without regret. Which one means more to him? Which does he love the most? Until he is ready to leave everything behind, he is not ready to get married.

Now in this illustration, it is an unlikely scenario, and there is nothing wrong with pets or an honest business, but here is the point - if his potential wife cannot co-exist with that which makes her sick, he can't have both. Which one will he choose? You can tell by which one he loves the most.

Friend, if you are not willing to leave behind that which is offensive to God - your sin, your religion, your self-

righteousness - you are not ready to be saved.
You cannot have both.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:24-26)

Which one means more to you?

What if it came down to relationships? Really, that is what we are talking about here is a relationship. God loves you and wants to intimately be a part of your life. But we have other earthly relationships. What will those people think? If they didn't want you to choose a relationship with Jesus Christ, would you be persuaded by them?

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:37)

Please understand, Jesus Christ is not saying you cannot have a relationship with your parents in order to come to Him, He is simply saying, "Which means more to you?" If your mom or dad or girlfriend or whoever, didn't want to have a relationship with Jesus Christ (that is their right to choose), would you then say, "OK, I won't either"? Jesus Christ has to mean enough to you to not care what others think. Would you NOT come to Christ - to TRUTH - simply because you care more about what another person might think?

Let's say you have 3 friends; Tom, Brad, and Greg. But Tom

and Brad don't like Greg; he "comes from the wrong side of the tracks." They voice their opinions to you. There is nothing wrong with Greg, he is a great guy, and has great character. The problem is Tom and Brad's selfish attitude, their misunderstanding. He's not in Tom and Brad's social status. "What do you hang out with Greg for anyway?"

Now you have a choice. Will you stand up for Greg, or will you let the foolish opinions of Tom and Brad sway how you feel about Greg? Will you be afraid to be seen with Greg? Will you be ashamed of him? If you let Tom and Brad sway your opinion about Greg, then you are not a true friend. You would be allowing the selfish opinions of others to influence you into doing the wrong thing. It would be about you. If you allow them to influence you, it is because you value self more than a relationship. Because you are afraid you will not be accepted. But what have you gained? You have traded two selfish self-centered companions in exchange for a good friend.

If it came down to God or your sin, which one would you prefer?

If it came down to God or your religion, which one would you choose?

If it came down to choosing between God saving you, or attempting to be saved by your good deeds, which one would you choose? (If you choose God, then by doing so, you are humbling yourself and rejecting the good things that you do, admitting that you aren't good enough to save yourself. On the other hand, by choosing good deeds, you are rejecting God).

Which do you prefer, God or religion?

(By choosing God, you will reject religion. By choosing religion, you will reject God).

Does your church teach that salvation is thru water baptism, or communion, or good deeds? Does it teach that salvation is

partly thru a religious act or thru your actions?

If you knew that your church taught a works salvation, and if it came down to God or your church denomination, which one would you choose?

Until you are ready to give up your other “girlfriends,” you cannot get into a relationship with God.

You cannot have both God and sin, both God and religion, both God and good works. You cannot have both God and your other gods. Jesus Christ loves you too much to share you with sin. Jesus Christ left behind all of His riches, His throne, His home, and His Father and made Himself shameful by becoming sin - all for you and me. The thing that would make Him the happiest “groom” in the whole world is if you would be willing to leave behind all just for Him.

Is a person ready to be saved if he is willing to say a prayer? Let me hasten to say, anyone can mouth the words. There has been many a man who has told a woman, “I love you,” for either the wrong motives, or because he knew that was what she wanted to hear. Simply saying the words doesn’t mean the person meant what he said, or that he was ready to say it.

It is not the prayer that saves you. Jesus Christ saves you. A prayer is supposed to be an outward expression of that inner desire.

What matters is if you are ready. And if you are, He is simply waiting for you to exercise your free will, to in faith, accept the free gift that He is holding out to you.

Here are some things to consider.

Has God revealed to you your condition?

Are you to a place where the little boy was toward his daddy?

Do you understand that you are the one responsible for the way you are and it is not someone else’s fault?

Do you feel that God owes you something? Do you still think that you are good enough to get to heaven?

Do you feel that you don't deserve hell?

Do you still feel that there are others who are worse than you?

Have you given up; or is there still a little fight left in you?

Do you really believe that Jesus paid the full price on the cross for your sins and so therefore salvation is a free gift, or do you think you can contribute toward the payment?

Do you believe that Jesus will save you simply because He said He would?

Do you see yourself as someone who is climbing a rope to heaven, and the rope is held by God (you and God are working together to get you to heaven)? Or do you see yourself as falling and God needs to catch you.

Do you see yourself as climbing a steep hill, and when you get to the top, God congratulates you for your efforts, or do you see yourself as being in danger, hanging from a branch over the precipice, in between two eternities. You cannot climb out, and if you let go you will fall to your doom. You need someone to rescue you.

According to the verses that you have read in this booklet, where would you go if you were to die right now?

Now be honest with yourself. According to these questions, are you ready to be saved?

If you could not answer these questions, then you are not ready to be saved. You are not ready to be rescued until you see yourself as lost. God does not look down on you for this; perhaps you simply need to hear more of what God has to say about getting to heaven. You may be asking "Then what should I do?"

SEEK GOD.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found...(Isaiah 55:6)

But if...thou whilt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. (Deuteronomy 4:29)

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. (John 4:23)

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Ask God to show you your true condition. Seek God and His answers in His Book the Holy Bible. Attend a church that teaches only the Bible. Look into the Bible Study offered at the end of this booklet.

If you could answer the previous questions with, “According to the Bible, I am lost; I would go to hell,” then let me ask you this. Is your only motive for getting saved, just to get out of hell? Though that should definitely be one of your concerns, it should be accompanied by a conviction over your sin and a desire to be right with God.

Here are some other wrong motives that a person could have: Are you doing it to make someone else happy? Is it so you can be a better husband, or because your kids need a better daddy? Do you simply want to be a better person, but a relationship with God is really not important to you? Wrong motives! (Being a better person is certainly a noble desire, but it is not the right motive to be saved. Some people may desire to be better to get out of trouble, or to impress others, or even to look heroic. Others may truly desire to be different because they are sick of bad habits, but remember, you are not doing anybody a favor; God is the one doing the favor. Those things will be bi-

products of salvation, but the main motive should be to have a relationship with God.)

Is anyone pressuring you? You cannot get saved for someone else.

Is it simply a head knowledge or is it gripping you? Do you want this as badly as a drowning person wants air (this might sound kind of dramatic, but the point is, do you truly recognize the desperate need?)

If so, have you settled it in your heart? Have you counted the cost? Remember, your life will never be the same.

Do you want to be saved more than anything in the entire world?

Are you ready to surrender, and want to be rescued?

Is there anything you are willing to let stand in the way?

Has God convicted you? Conviction is the word that we use to describe a person's sense of guilt. It is the "contrite heart" mentioned on page 28, the reaction to a realization that "Oh No! I have broken God's Law." When God reveals a person's sinful condition and that person understands that he is guilty (responsible for his own sin), and that the God who loves him and died for him in spite of the fact that his sins put Jesus on the cross – if he cares about this – if this bothers him - then the Holy Spirit is bringing about conviction.

The Bible described this in the book of Acts. Peter plainly stated to the people who had crucified Jesus Christ. He said, "Him... ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain..." (Acts 2:23). Notice their reaction. "Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart..." (Acts 2:37)

That "pricking in the heart" is conviction. A person may feel a turmoil or a wrestling inside, or a soul searching. Don't run from it! This "Godly sorrow" gives you an understanding of your true sinful condition. When you don't want to hurt God

anymore with your sin, when you want to turn from things that offend Him, when you want to be right with Him more than you want your own way, then that Godly sorrow has brought you to repentance. Remember, this is not something that is brought on by you, or is manufactured by you. Like in the example of the young boy who felt sorrow over his sin against his daddy and wanted to be right with him, this brought him to repentance. It was a natural reaction brought about by a tender heart, broken and remorseful over offending, and then wanting to be right with that special person.

Remember, salvation is the simplest thing in the world. The hard part is seeing yourself as lost. If you see yourself as lost and God has convicted you of your sin condition, then as stated already, there are 2 things which any relationship requires:

- 1) That you want to be right with the one offended – in this case, God. That you want to be right with Him more than anything in all the world – to restore a Father - child relationship (***“repentance toward God.”***)

- 2) That you trust this person. Do you believe in His ability, take Him at His Word, do you have a total confidence in Jesus Christ’s ability to be the complete payment on the cross to save you (***“faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”***), and that God cannot lie and therefore will save you when you ask Him?

So that is how a person is saved.

The question is - do you want to be saved?

If you are ready, God’s greatest desire, and the only thing for which He is waiting, is for you of your own free will to simply ask Him.

Again, be honest. If you can think about it some more - then think about it. Let God speak to your heart. Ask Him to show you. But please consider the following question, asked by the Lord Himself to the reader of Scripture...

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26)

The Creator God is holding out to you the greatest opportunity of your lifetime; of your ETERNITY. He begs you to choose heaven. He begs you to choose HIM.

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that... thou... may live: (Deuteronomy 30:19)

But if there is nothing left to think about, and you cannot do anything else but get saved, then the instructions are in the Bible. In your own words, just ask God to save you.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Romans 10:13)

If you were ready, and you did that, look at what Jesus has promised us after we are saved?

ETERNAL LIFE

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. (John 10:27-28)

SINS WASHED AWAY & FORGIVEN

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1: 9)

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)

AN ADVOCATE

... if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: (1 John 2:1b)

...AND OTHER BENEFITS – Eternal life, free from the enslavement of sin, escape from hell, God is now your Heavenly Father (Rom 8:15 describes Him as a Daddy, a term of closeness and endearment), a relationship with God, etc....

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 16:24-25)

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9)