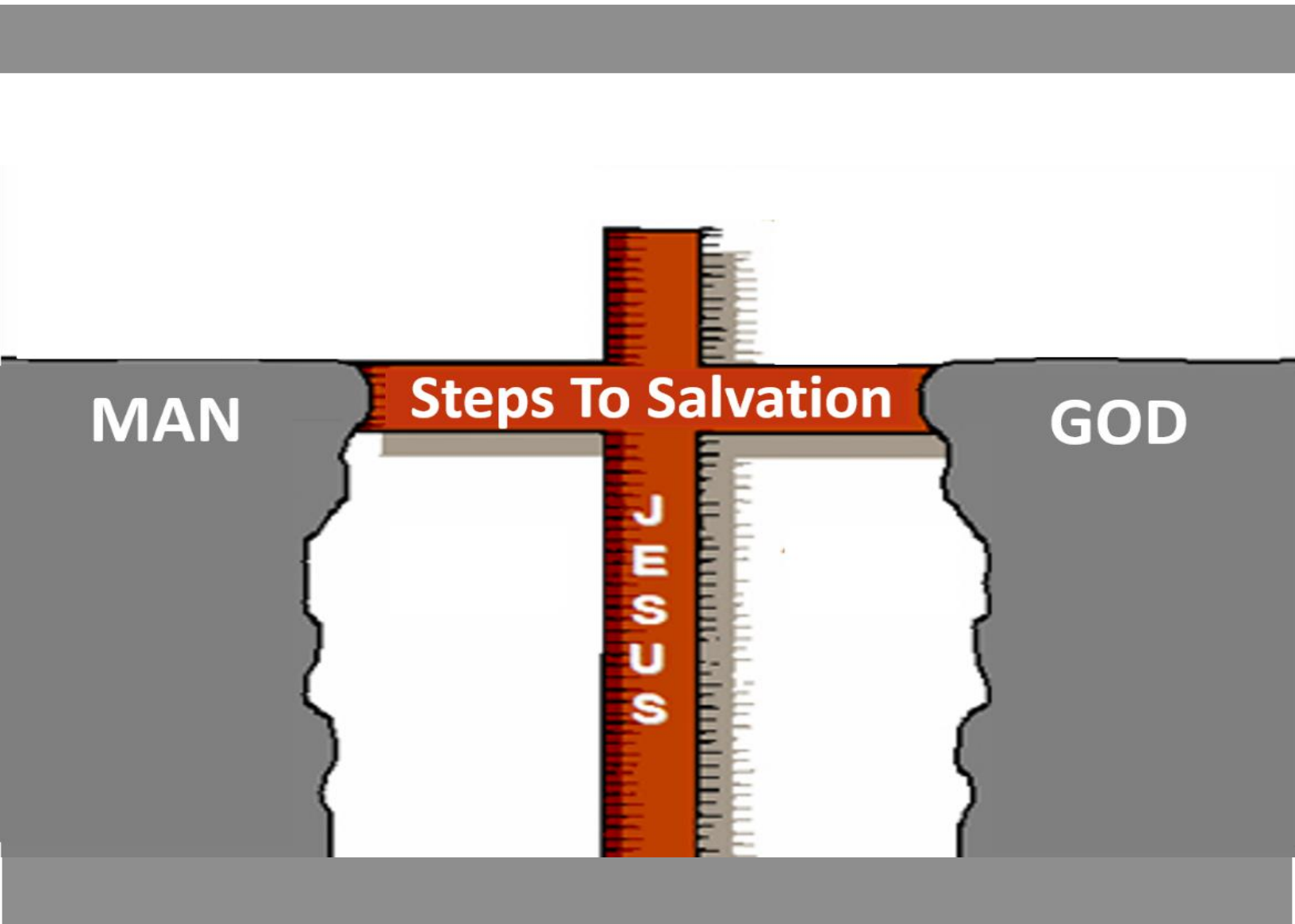


The Way Of Salvation



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

The Way Of Salvation

Learn about the problem of sin, God's part in salvation, and man's part in salvation

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW84

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About the author: My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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The Way Of Salvation

The Bible is an amazing book! In fact, it is not just one book. It is a collection of 66 individual books. Some of these books are books that contain law, some are books of poetry, some are books of prophecy, some are books of history, and some are letters. Overall, there are 39 books that make up an “Old Testament” and 27 books that make up a “New Testament.”

The Bible was authored by more than 40 men with varying backgrounds, educations, and nationalities. These 40+ men wrote in 3 different languages. The Old Testament was primarily written in the Hebrew language (with a small portion written in Aramaic). The New Testament was written in Greek. And, these authors wrote over a 1,500+ year span of time.

As you reflect on these basic facts about the Bible, you should consider the perfect harmony that is found within these 66 books. There is no error or discrepancy that is to be found within their pages. Each one of these 66 books of the Bible contribute to the big picture of the Bible’s story/theme. This main theme is: The way of salvation!

Certainly, no man-made book could accomplish this tremendous feat! This must be the work of God. A man-made story that would be written over 1,500 years by more than 40 different authors of varying backgrounds in 3 different languages would certainly have many different twists in theme and purpose – and would contain many errors. Therefore, these basic facts about the

Bible are among the greatest pieces of evidence that the Bible is *not* a man-made book. Instead, it is a book that comes from God (as 2 Timothy 3:16-17 claims).

If we are to understand this amazing book that contains the perfect revelation of God’s will to mankind, we must understand its overall theme. This theme (the way of salvation) can be summarized by the word “gospel.” This word simply means “good news.” The message of the Bible contains the most wonderful news mankind has ever heard about the opportunity to be saved. However, if there is an opportunity to be saved, it also means that there is something man must do in order to take advantage of that opportunity. And, if there is an opportunity for man to be saved, it also implies that there is something man needed to be saved from.

Therefore, let us open the pages of the Bible and discover the basics about this wonderful way of salvation. In Acts 16:17, some were identified as proclaiming “the way of salvation” to the people. We all need to learn this way of salvation – as the message of the Bible is applicable to every person who lives on this earth! But, as we begin studying this saving message of good news, let’s also understand that there is only one true message of salvation (though man has often attempted to change it).

Galatians 1:6-9 says, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”

This one gospel is identified as “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). As we begin to study the way of salvation, we will need to see the Bible story in three parts. First, we will need to understand the problem of sin. Second, we will need to understand God’s part in salvation. And, third, we will need to understand man’s part in salvation.

The Problem Of Sin

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). God is the Creator of all things. When He created everything, it was all declared to be “very good” (Genesis 1:31). He placed the man He had created in the Garden of Eden (a true paradise on earth) and gave man full access to Him. Read Genesis 1-2 to see more about God’s creation and the home He had prepared for mankind. However, this would all soon change, as the man and the woman God had created in His own image chose to sin against God.

God is holy

God is eternal. He has no beginning and He has no end. He possesses limitless power (as demonstrated in His ability to create all things, see Genesis 1). He possess complete and perfect knowledge of all things. He sees everything that happens. These are essential elements of what makes God - God!

However, another key element to God that is essential to be understood is that God is holy. He is completely separated from everything that is evil. Revelation 4:6-8 depicts a tremendous scene before the throne of God in Heaven in which four marvelous spiritual beings are endlessly crying out to God, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”

Then, not only is God declared to be a holy God, but the Scriptures also demonstrate what that means. Psalm 5:4 says, “For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You.” 1 John 1:5-6 also states that “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” Therefore, since God is light and completely separated from the ways of darkness (evil), if “we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”

The holiness of God has far-reaching implications for how we (as the creation made in God’s image) must respond to God. First, God’s holiness is part of what makes Him worthy of our praise, love, and devotion. If God possessed all of

His other characteristics (eternal, all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-powerful), yet was involved in evil – would you want to love Him? Would you want to worship Him? Would you want to devote your life to Him?

Second, God’s holiness demands holiness from mankind. Look, for instance, in Leviticus 20:26. “And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.” Or, look at 1 Peter 1:15-16: “but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’” In order for mankind to have a relationship with God and enjoy the spiritual blessings God provides, he must be holy (separated from everything that is evil).

Third, God’s holiness involves both justice and love. Psalm 33:5 says, “He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.” God’s justice means that He will always treat mankind fairly. It also means that whenever God makes any kind of promise that He will perform what He has promised. Sometimes, this even involves the promise of punishment or penalty for those who do not obey Him. Furthermore, His love always accompanies His justice. He is always looking out for our best interests (as a loving father always looks out and acts in the best interests of his children).

Therefore, God’s holiness forms a solid foundation upon which we can build through the remainder of this study. Indeed, God’s holiness has wide-reaching implications for how we live our lives. As we will see, God’s holiness presents a great problem for mankind whenever we sin. But, thanks be to God that His holiness has also provided mankind the opportunity to be saved from this sin.

Man created in the image of God

As I mentioned moments ago, when God created all things on this earth (as recorded in Genesis 1), He chose to create mankind in a special way. Genesis 1:26-27 explains. “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps

on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Surely (since God is not a physical being), this cannot and does not mean that God has created mankind with a physical resemblance to Him. Instead, there is a much greater point being made than a point about a physical resemblance. In John 4:24, Jesus declared that “God is Spirit.” Therefore, whenever mankind is created in the image of God, it means that mankind has been created to possess a spiritual element to his existence (a soul).

Man, therefore, is not *just* flesh and bones (unlike animals). He has the ability (by possessing a soul) to be in fellowship with, worship, and serve the Almighty and holy God! Then, the Scriptures also teach that this soul survives physical death. For instance, in Luke 23:43, Jesus told one of the two thieves who was being crucified alongside Him, “today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Physically, they were both going to experience death. However, Jesus’ statement indicates that there is a continual existence for the soul after death (compare with Acts 2:31).

Also, as you consider the way in which God created mankind, it is important to realize that God created man with the ability to choose between right and wrong. God did not want to create someone who would worship and serve Him because he had no other choice! Instead, God wanted the man He had created with a spiritual existence to *choose* to worship and serve his holy Creator! This free will God created man with can be seen throughout the pages of Scripture – as man makes many decisions either to glorify God or not to glorify God.

In fact, this is the reason God has even created mankind – and created him in His image. Isaiah 43:7, for instance, states: “Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him.” The book of Ecclesiastes, therefore, says that the entire purpose of man in living on this earth can be summarized in the following way. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every

secret thing, Whether good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Sin’s introduction to the world

Whenever God first created mankind in His own image (the first man and woman), He placed them in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 2). Though we only have a very limited amount of information about this wonderful place and the original condition of man, Genesis 1-3 pictures mankind at that time to have been enjoying the blessings of living in a true paradise on earth and full fellowship with his holy God.

In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve one law to live by. This was the law not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (see Genesis 2:16-17). God promised them that they would die in the day they ate of this tree. Then, in Genesis 3, the Scriptures record the evil influence of Satan (who took the form of a serpent) to lure (tempt) mankind away from listening to God (see Genesis 3:1-6). Satan asked the woman (Eve), “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’” (verse 1)? However, whenever Eve accurately stated God’s law and the promised consequence for breaking the law, Satan did not stop. Instead, he said, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (verses 4-5).

Now, Eve was faced with a choice. She could either exercise her free will to obey the voice of God, or she could listen to Satan. Verse 6 records her decision. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

But, was God bluffing whenever He promised that they would die in the day they ate of the tree? Would there even be any consequence for violating the law of God? The rest of Genesis 3 demonstrates that there were severe consequences for breaking God’s law! These consequences can be divided into two categories: Physical and spiritual consequences. First, there were physical

consequences for breaking God's law. Genesis 3:16-24 details these consequences. There would be pain in childbearing for the woman. There would be hardship in the man's work. And, they were cast out of the paradise that was the Garden of Eden (in which was the Tree of Life that would have allowed them to live forever). Then, Genesis 5:5 records the physical death of Adam.

Yet, these physical consequences were only part of the negative effects of sin. Remember that God promised Adam and Eve they would die "in the day" they ate of the tree. Yet, Adam did not die *physically* until many years after this sin took place. There was another kind of death they experienced "in the day" they ate of the forbidden tree. This was a spiritual death. Whenever Adam and Eve sinned, their wonderful relationship with their holy Creator changed. They were separated from Him.

All have sinned

Why does Adam and Eve's sin matter so much? It matters because this was the first time man sinned against his holy God. It matters because this changed the entire course of this world. It matters because we all sin – just as Adam and Eve sinned. Therefore, we profit greatly from a study of their sin and the consequences of sin because it helps us understand our own sin and the consequences of that sin.

You see, sin did not stop with Adam and Eve. As the Bible story continues, we see mankind continuing to sin against his holy Creator. Cain was envious of his brother (Abel) and killed him. Mankind became so wicked during the days of Noah that God wanted to destroy him from the earth. And, so it continues throughout the Bible. Even the nation of Israel (who was chosen as God's own special people) often sinned against God.

The Bible simply teaches that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). This includes me. This includes you. Everyone who has ever reached the point of personal moral accountability (having the ability to know right from wrong) has chosen to sin against God – with only one exception (which we'll talk about later in the lesson).

Please note that some (i.e. infants, young children, etc.) do not possess the mental ability to sin.

But, what exactly is sin anyways? The Bible defines sin in the following ways. (1) Sin is lawlessness. 1 John 3:4 says, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." Sin is acting against/contrary to the law God has revealed. (2) Sin is unrighteousness. 1 John 5:17 says that all "unrighteousness is sin." Sin is contrary to the righteous and holy ways of God. (3) Sin is failing to do what God instructs. James 4:17 says, "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." When God commands that you do something and you choose not to do it, you commit sin.

To sin is to miss the mark (target) that God has set for your life – like an archer misses his target with his arrow! To sin is to fail to do what God instructs to be done or to do what God instructs not to be done. Therefore, any time you violate the law that God has revealed to you in the pages of the Bible, you sin – just like Adam and Eve sinned whenever they violated the law that God had given them to live by! And, just like Adam and Eve, you sin when (through the influence of Satan) you are lured away and enticed by your own physical desires and choose to fulfill those physical desires in unlawful ways (see James 1:13-15).

The "wages of sin"

Remember that God is a *holy* God and that sin is *unrighteousness*. Therefore, just as Adam and Eve experienced, sin always carries consequences. And, just as Adam and Eve experienced, these consequences can be divided into two categories: Physical and spiritual consequences.

First, sin has physical consequences. Physical death continues to exist in this world and spreads to all men as the result of the first sin (1 Corinthians 15:22). Ever since the sin that occurred in the Garden of Eden, mankind has been separated from the Tree of Life and no longer lives in a paradise on this earth. Passages like Hebrews 9:27 identify that physical death is a certainty for us all. However, physical death is not the only physical consequence of sin. Sometimes the sin we commit results in physical

injury, jail time, the destruction of earthly relationships, etc.

Second, sin has spiritual consequences. And, the spiritual consequences of sin are the most damaging consequences of them all! Listen to Romans 6:23. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Now, this verse is not referring to physical death. Physical death (as we just discussed) comes to everyone as the result of living in a fallen world. Rather, this death is a spiritual death. This is the same kind of death Adam and Eve experienced “in the day” they ate of the forbidden tree. This is a spiritual separation from God, the giver of all life (both physical and spiritual life). Also note that this death is what man earns/deserves. It is his “wages” for sinning against God.

But, why does sin result in spiritual death (separation from God)? Remember that God is entirely holy. He is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. Therefore, whenever we engage in unrighteousness, our holy God cannot remain in fellowship with us (see Psalm 5:4 and 1 John 1:5-6 again). Isaiah 59:1-2 summarizes this point. “Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”

Therefore, our sin destroys the relationship that we once experienced with our holy God. He cannot remain the God of light and be in fellowship with the ways of darkness. Like Adam and Eve, this separation from God is made the moment that we commit sin. Thus, the Scriptures speak of the possibility of being dead while we live (see 1 Timothy 5:6) – spiritually dead while we have physical life.

Then, the Scriptures warn us that if we die physically while we are living in sin, we will experience the vengeance of our holy God and be sentenced to everlasting punishment in Hell fire. Consider 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9. The passage speaks of what will happen to some whenever Jesus Christ returns to end life on this earth. It says, “in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know

God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” Notice that those who will be punished are those who do not know God or obey the gospel of Jesus Christ – those who are living in sin. These individuals will experience the vengeance of God. Then, notice that this punishment of “everlasting destruction” is “from [away from] the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

Similarly, Jesus (in teaching about the great Day of Judgment that will take place when He comes) says that He will tell the wicked, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). This is everlasting separation from God and all the blessings He offers – in the place that is called “Hell.” Consider Revelation 21:8. “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Man cannot save himself from sin

Now, this terrible news about sin gets even worse. Since we have all sinned and have been spiritually separated from God, we all deserve to experience this “second death” in Hell fire for all of eternity! Remember, the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). It is what we all have earned and deserved.

Since this is what we have all earned, we are all incapable of bridging the gap (the separation) that has resulted between us and God because of our sins. The Scriptures teach that we cannot do enough good works to make ourselves right in God’s sight – by ourselves (see Ephesians 2:8-9). Therefore, if this is all that we knew about the Bible, we would be hopelessly lost in our sins and would be doomed for everlasting punishment in Hell fire.

God's Part In Salvation

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” These are the wonderful and hope-filled words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:15. Fortunately, the amazing story of the Bible does *not* just tell us about the reality and consequences of sin. But, it tells us of the way God has made available to save mankind from his sins. Look at Romans 6:23 again. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God's justice demands life as a payment

God's holiness cannot permit Him just to overlook sin without any price being paid. This would not be in harmony with His justice. When God pronounces a certain punishment for sin, that punishment must be paid. As we have seen, the punishment for sin is death.

Hebrews 9:22 states this fundamental principle of truth. “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” While God takes “no pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezekiel 33:11), death is the cost of sin. Ezekiel 18:20, for instance, states, “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”

Throughout the Scriptures (both in the Old and New Testaments) you can observe that this is the payment God requires for sin. It began in the Garden of Eden, continues today, and will continue for as long as life continues on this earth. Physical death exists because of sin. And, spiritual death results from sin. Man clearly needed to be saved! He could not save Himself. He had doomed himself to everlasting destruction.

God's love provides mercy

Fortunately, God is an eternally wise God. Whenever Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God was not caught unprepared. He had a plan in place that would demonstrate His great love for

His creation and pay the price that was owed by the sinner.

The first glimpse into this plan of redemption is offered in Genesis 3:15 (when God addresses Satan after Adam and Eve had sinned). “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” There would be a time in the future when God would be victorious over the work of the devil! Genesis 12:3 records another early reference to God's plan of salvation. In this text, God promised Abraham that all families of the earth would be blessed through his lineage.

These references are among many passages in the Old Testament that are evidence of the fact that God had a plan in place to redeem mankind from his sin. In fact, passages such as Ephesians 3:8-11 and 1 Peter 1:18-21 demonstrate that God had an eternal plan in place to redeem mankind from his sin – even before He ever created the world and mankind!

Temporarily, as clearly seen under the law God gave to govern the Israelite nation (often referred to as the Law of Moses), God instructed people to make animal sacrifices in order to be forgiven of their sins. For this time, the life of the animal would be offered to pay the price that was due by the sinner. Leviticus 17:11 says, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” Under the Law of Moses, a yearly animal sacrifice would be made on the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16:30 describes, “For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.”

Now, as you study the Old Testament and learn about its system of sacrifices, you learn some basic facts about this animal sacrifice. (1) The animal was innocent of sin. This is because animals cannot sin. They are amoral. If they could sin, they would have been liable for their own sin. Sinlessness was a condition for paying the price due by the sinner (hence, why the sinner could not save himself). (2) The animal had to be without defect (see Leviticus 22:20-21). (3) The sacrifice of the animal would demonstrate both God's justice and His mercy. The

payment of life would still be required for sin. However, the one who had committed sin would be permitted to live. (4) Whenever this sacrifice was offered, the sins of the sinner were removed and he was restored (reconciled) to a place of fellowship with his holy God (i.e. Leviticus 4:20).

Still, even in this system of animal sacrifices that was in place to remove sin, there was a problem. Hebrews 10:1-4 explains: “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”

Now, God did not lie when He said that those who offered these animal sacrifices would be forgiven of their sins. Remember, God is holy (separated from everything that is evil). Therefore, God does not lie (see Titus 1:2 and Hebrews 6:18). Instead, these sacrifices fulfilled their temporary purpose. But, even in these sacrifices, it was not the blood of these animals that cleansed the people of their sins. Ultimately, their sins would still be cleansed through the same sacrifice our sins can be cleansed through today (see Romans 3:21-26)!

Jesus is God’s sacrificial Lamb

John 3:16 proclaims, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Listen to the proclamation of John, the Baptist, as he saw Jesus approaching him. “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)!

Throughout the Old Testament (such as in Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 12:3 – as referenced earlier), God promised that He would send the Messiah (Christ) who would present Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. Throughout the Old Testament, then, we watch the story of God’s people and how the lineage was preserved through

which God had promised to bring Jesus Christ into the world. Then, in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Jesus Christ fulfills the Old Testament prophecies made concerning Him and offers His own life as the ransom sacrifice for the sins of the world!

Particularly, the end of each of those four books record the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. You can read each one of those records to see how Jesus was betrayed, arrested, beaten, mocked, unfairly tried, spat upon, scourged, etc. leading up to His death. Then, you can read about how Jesus Christ was taken to the place called “Calvary” and was hung on the cross, being fastened to it with nails driven through His hands and feet. There He died an agonizing death.

Now, consider some essential facts about Jesus’ sacrifice. (1) Jesus’ death was intentional. Jesus did not *have* to come to earth, suffer, and die. Instead, 2 Corinthians 8:9 indicates that Jesus chose to leave Heaven (a place where there is no evil, suffering, or death) so that we could become spiritually rich by living in Heaven. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

(2) Jesus was the perfect sacrifice. Jesus Christ was sinless – even though He was tempted just as we are (Hebrews 4:15). 1 Peter 1:18-19 says that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb “without blemish and without spot.” 1 John 3:5 says, “And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.” Whereas the blood of bulls and goats could not take away our sins, Jesus Christ offered Himself one time and serves as the sacrifice for sins forevermore (see Hebrews 10:11-14)!

(3) Through Jesus’ sacrifice, we can be saved from the wrath of God. Consider Romans 5:8-11. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

(4) Jesus paid the price owed by the sinner. Because of our sins, we owed a debt that we could never repay. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Through Jesus’ sacrifice, we can have the forgiveness of our sins and be restored to a place of fellowship with our holy God and have everlasting life in Heaven when life on this earth is over!

(5) Jesus’ resurrection provides victory and furnishes proof that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus did not just die. He also rose from the dead by the power of God (Matthew 28). Through His resurrection from the dead, God forever demonstrates that Jesus Christ truly is the Son of God (see Acts 17:31 and Romans 1:4). This life of Christ is key to our being victorious (see Romans 5:8-11 and 1 Corinthians 15). Without the resurrection of Christ, we would have no hope of a future resurrection from the dead!

In all of this, God has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. We had no way of bridging the separation between us and God that had resulted from our sins. Consider Ephesians 2:1-10: “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good

works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Man’s Part In Salvation

We have now seen that Jesus Christ is the Way to eternal salvation with God in Heaven. In John 14:6, Jesus plainly stated, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Yet, although God has provided mankind with this “bridge” back to a state of being in fellowship with Him, God has required man to cross that “bridge”!

The gospel requires faith and obedience

The gospel of Jesus Christ details this wonderful opportunity God has given us to be saved from the consequences of our sins. However, He does not save everyone *automatically*. Remember, God created us as free moral agents and wants us each to choose to worship and serve Him. Therefore, God has simply done for us what we could not do for ourselves (creating the “bridge” for us to be reconciled to Him). However, He requires man to have faith and obey Him in order to be saved.

Look at Hebrews 5:9 carefully. “And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.” Jesus Christ has made eternal salvation in Heaven possible. But, it will only be given to those who “obey Him.” For instance, even though Jesus died to save everyone (Titus 2:11), most people will be eternally condemned to Hell fire because they will not obey Him (see Matthew 7:13-14).

In fact, Jesus even teaches that it is *not* enough just to believe in and profess Him as Lord of your life (Matthew 7:21-23). You see, it is not enough just to believe that the “bridge” between us and God exists. Instead, true faith will trust in God so much that we will do what He requires to cross the “bridge”! This is because true faith always responds in obedience (see Hebrews 11). Noah trusted in God so much that he built the ark for the saving of his household. Abraham trusted in God so much that he sacrificed his son on the altar.

So it is today. Yes, the gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). However, if you do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, you will be punished with everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). But, even though God requires our obedience to the gospel of Christ (as revealed in the pages of the New Testament), our obedience does *not* earn our salvation! Our obedience could never build the “bridge” – no matter how many good deeds we would do. Our obedience simply demonstrates our complete trust in God and crosses the “bridge” He has built. For instance, James 2:24 says, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”

The “steps” to salvation

Consider 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” The one who died for you requires that you die with Him! You die with Christ when you give your life to Christ by being obedient to the things He requires of you. So, what exactly does God require you to do in order to have your sins forgiven and be saved?

(1) Hear God’s word. If you are going to be obedient to the gospel of Christ, you must first hear the gospel’s message. Romans 10:17 says that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” You must hear about what God has done through Jesus Christ so that you can be saved and hear what He requires you to do in order to be saved.

(2) Believe. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). Although mentally believing certain facts about God and Christ are not enough to be saved (by themselves), God does require this mental assent. For instance, Jesus said, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).

(3) Repent of your sins. If you are going to die with Christ, you must put your old sins to death (as taught in Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3). Repentance is central to this. In repentance, you determine to turn away from the sinful things you have previously been living for in order to live your life entirely for God. Acts 17:30 says that God “now commands all men everywhere to repent.”

(4) Confess Jesus Christ. God requires that you confess Jesus Christ with your mouth. Romans 10:9-10 says, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” An example of this confession is found in Acts 8:37, when the Ethiopian (prior to being baptized) confessed, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

(5) Be baptized. To be baptized is to be immersed in water (see Acts 8:38-39 and Romans 6:3-4). This immersion in water is plainly said to be necessary for the salvation from sins. Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Also, Acts 2:38 records the command, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins....”

The saved are in Christ’s church

Upon being obedient to these required “steps” for salvation, we will be forgiven of our sins, reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus Christ, and be saved from the wrath we deserved to experience because of our sins. Furthermore, those who do what God requires for salvation are added to His church (the collection of the saved). Acts 2:47 records that those who obeyed this plan of salvation were “added to the church” by the Lord. This is the one church Jesus promised to establish (see Matthew 16:18).

Then, after being forgiven of our sins and being added to Christ’s church, we must remain faithful to God throughout our earthly lives. Jesus said, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). This faithfulness

involves doing everything God requires you to do as a Christian (as revealed throughout the pages of the New Testament). Therefore, you must devote yourself to diligently studying the word of God so that you can live in a way that God approves. For, it is possible to fall from the grace of God after being saved by it (see Galatians 5:4). Even after becoming Christians, we can sin and separate ourselves from God. Whenever we do, we must repent of that sin, confess the sin to God, and ask Him for forgiveness (see Acts 8:14-24 and 1 John 1:8-2:2). After doing so, we will once again be reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus Christ!

Conclusion

The Bible records this amazing plan of salvation! It is truly the greatest news that we could ever hear. It is the story of salvation from our sins through Jesus Christ. However, we must be obedient to the requirements God has placed upon our salvation.

Have you believed and obeyed God? If not, you will experience the wrath and vengeance of God. But, if you will believe and obey God, you will be forgiven of your sin, reconciled to God, and will spend eternity in Heaven!

No other message will produce this eternal salvation. No other message will result in your being part of Jesus' one true church. Acts 4:12 simply states, "Nor is their salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Study Questions

List some facts about the Bible. Why is the Bible such an amazing book?

What is the central theme of the Bible?

1. The Problem Of Sin

Describe the holiness of God. Why is the holiness of God significant to your life?

How was man created? What is so special about this?

When did sin enter the world? What is significant about this occasion?

Who has sinned? What is sin?

What are the consequences of sin?

Can man save himself from sin?

2. God's Part In Salvation

What does God's justice require whenever sin occurs?

What does God's love provide? What kind of sacrifices did God institute under the Law of Moses? What was the problem with these sacrifices?

How was Jesus Christ God's sacrificial Lamb? What was the significance of His sacrifice?

3. Man's Part In Salvation

Does the gospel require anything of you in order to be saved?

What does the gospel require you to do to be saved?

What are you added to whenever you are obedient to these commandments? What does God require of you after you become a Christian?

***Have you believed and obeyed God?**