

RESCUE

THE BIBLICAL PLAN OF SALVATION



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SOTERIA BOOKS

Rescue: The Biblical Plan of Salvation

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Many thanks to my niece, Krystal, who read this booklet several times and made many helpful suggestions.

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*Dedicated to the memory of my beloved wife,
Patricia (1953-2018) who faithfully stood with me
in the preaching of the gospel despite the many
challenges and sufferings she had to endure.
God blessed us with 41 years of marital bliss
for which I am most grateful.*

August 28, 2021

An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth
is far above jewels.

Proverbs 31:10

Books of the Bible Abbreviations

Old Testament

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Genesis | Ge |
| Exodus | Ex |
| Leviticus | Lv |
| Numbers | Nu |
| Deuteronomy | Dt |
| Joshua | Jos |
| Judges | Jdg |
| Ruth | Ru |
| 1 Samuel | 1Sa |
| 2 Samuel | 2Sa |
| 1 Kings | 1Ki |
| 2 Kings | 2Ki |
| 1 Chronicles | 1Ch |
| 2 Chronicles | 2Ch |
| Ezra | Ezr |
| Nehemiah | Ne |
| Esther | Est |
| Job | Job |
| Psalms | Ps |
| Proverbs | Pr |
| Ecclesiastes | Ecc |
| Song of Solomon | SS |
| Isaiah | Is |
| Jeremiah | Jer |
| Lamentations | La |
| Ezekiel | Eze |
| Daniel | Da |
| Hosea | Hos |
| Joel | Joel |
| Amos | Am |
| Obadiah | Ob |
| Jonah | Jon |
| Micah | Mic |
| Nahum | Na |
| Habakkuk | Hab |
| Zephaniah | Zep |
| Haggai | Hag |
| Zechariah | Zec |
| Malachi | Mal |

New Testament

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Matthew | Mt |
| Mark | Mk |
| Luke | Lk |
| John | Jn |
| Acts | Ac |
| Romans | Ro |
| 1 Corinthians | 1Co |
| 2 Corinthians | 2Co |
| Galatians | Gal |
| Ephesians | Eph |
| Philippians | Php |
| Colossians | Col |
| 1 Thessalonians | 1Th |
| 2 Thessalonians | 2Th |
| 1 Timothy | 1Ti |
| 2 Timothy | 2Ti |
| Titus | Tit |
| Philemon | Phm |
| Hebrews | Heb |
| James | Jas |
| 1 Peter | 1Pe |
| 2 Peter | 2Pe |
| 1 John | 1Jn |
| 2 John | 2Jn |
| 3 John | 3Jn |
| Jude | Jude |
| Revelation | Rev |

INTRODUCTION

Men and women are constantly plagued with questions that focus on eternity and their standing before God. Their earnest searching is for answers that will promise them eternal life in heaven. We find this search described for us in the Bible. For example, the Philippian jailer asked the apostle Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" (*Ac 16:30*). The rich young ruler asked Jesus, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (*Mk 10:17*). Similarly, many people have asked this question since Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (*Ac 2:37*), "How do I become a Christian?" The three questions are essentially the same. How would you answer this question? Where would your search for answers lead you? The answers given today are many and varied. Some say:

1. I am a Christian because I was born to parents who belong to the Christian religion. As a child I was baptized or christened and I became a member of the church my parents attend.
2. I am a Christian if I live a moral life according to the Ten Commandments and Jesus' teachings.
3. I am a Christian if I pray and ask Jesus into my heart, get baptized, and join the church.
4. There are those who believe that all a person needs to do is get baptized and that will make you a Christian.

I am sure you have heard other answers.

Where Can I Find the Answer to this Question?

The sacred book of Christianity is the Bible. To answer the question: “How do I become a Christian?”, we must turn to the Bible and find the answer there. The Bible proclaims itself to be God’s revealed word to mankind. We must let the Bible speak for itself. In the Bible, you will discover that becoming a Christian is a conscious and deliberate decision you must make, based upon hearing, understanding, and believing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. My prayer is that as you study these lessons,

- you will come to understand the gospel as it is taught in the Bible;
- you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved;
- you will be filled with the confident hope of salvation in Christ and eternal glory.

GOD HAS SPOKEN

When you think about God, what comes to your mind?

The answers to this question are diverse and some can be very strange. Far too many times we rely on our own understanding of God to answer this question and we end up creating a god of our own liking. You may have heard the statement, "I like to think of God as..." In our fallen sinful state, we conceive of a version of God that suits us. The Bible tells us that fallen man's thoughts and ideas about God are futile speculations (*Ro 1:21*) and idolatrous (*v 23*).

But here is the good news! Our knowledge of God does not have to be the futile product of our own fallen, finite minds. God has spoken. God has revealed Himself and His will to mankind. And God's revelations of Himself to mankind are recorded for us in the Bible.

Psalm 9:16 says, "The LORD has made Himself known."

Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."

Hebrews 1:1-2 does not cover all the details about God speaking, but let us take note of the following:

1. "God" is the subject in this long sentence. "God... spoke,... has spoken,... appointed,... made."

2. God has not remained silent. God has taken the initiative to reveal Himself. And He revealed Himself via speech.
3. We discover in the Old Testament that God spoke directly to men. For example, God spoke directly to Adam (*Ge 2:16-17*); to Abraham (*Ge 12:1-3*); to Moses (*Ex 3*).
4. God spoke through the prophets of old like Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, to name a few.
5. Finally, God spoke through His Son (cf *Jn 3:34; 7:16; 12:49-50*). God's final messenger is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus gave God's message to the apostles and they said, "We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (*Ac 4:20*).

God Has Written

God spoke. And God chose men to record for us in a book all the things *He wanted us to know about Him*. For example, we read in *Jeremiah 1:1-2*, "The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah... to whom the word of the LORD came."

- The book of Jeremiah is God's word revealed to Jeremiah.
- Jeremiah spoke and recorded God's message in his words and in keeping with his own style.

The Secret Things of God

God is infinite and human beings are finite. As finite beings we cannot come to know *everything* about God. We can only come to know that which God has revealed to us (*Dt 29:29*). There are some things that God has revealed that you will never be able to fully understand (*Is 55:8-9*). There are questions you will have that God has chosen to not answer. As finite beings we should not behave arrogantly before this omniscient God and make demands where God has chosen to

be silent. As finite beings we need to humbly bow before God and embrace His infinite wisdom and sovereign choice to be silent wherever He pleases (cf *Ps 115:3; 135:6*).

Inspiration

The book in which God recorded His message for us is called *the Bible*. The writing of the Bible was progressively done over a period of approximately 1500 years through the divine process of *inspiration*. The word *inspiration* is the translation of the Greek word **theopneustos** which literally means *God-breathed*. *2 Timothy 3:16-17* says, "All Scripture is inspired by God (*God-breathed*) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

God used His Holy Spirit to guide men into producing Scripture. *2 Peter 1:21* says, "For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by (*or carried along by*) the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

It is important to note that the men who wrote are not described as *inspired*. The **Scriptures** are described as **inspired** or God-breathed.

The God of Truth

The Bible teaches us that God cannot lie (*Tit 1:2*), and it is impossible for God to lie (*Heb 6:18*). For this reason, the Bible says, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law (*word*) is truth" (*Ps 119:142*). "The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting" (*v 160*). In *John 17:17* Jesus said, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." *2 Timothy 2:15* used the expression, "the word of truth".

God has spoken to us. He has spoken truth and we must listen to what He has said. In the Bible, listening and obeying go hand in hand. In *Deuteronomy 6:3* Moses said to the Israelites, "O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it (*to obey*)." *Deuteronomy 15:5* says, "Listen obediently to

the voice of the LORD your God, and observe carefully (*obey*) all this commandment which I am commanding you today.” Jesus said, “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them (*obeys them*)” (*Mt 7:24*). *Hebrews 12:25* gives this warning, “See to it that you do not refuse (*reject*) Him who is speaking.”

Important question

*Are you ready to listen to what God has said
about the gospel in the Bible and to obey Him?*

Your answer to this question will determine your eternal destiny. Do not be like the rich young ruler who wanted to hear but did not want to obey (*Mk 10:17-22*). Jesus said, “blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe (*obey*) it” (*Lk 11:28*).

The gospel is presented in the Bible as a message about God, man and sin, Jesus Christ, repentance and faith. We begin with God.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REVEAL ABOUT GOD?

Who is God? What is God like? What does God demand of me? Unless you have a basic Biblical understanding of God, then your understanding of the gospel will be unbiblical, faulty, and misleading.

He is the Eternal God.

Hebrews 11:6 says, “He who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” Note the word *must*. In the New Testament *must* is a very important *verb*. *Must* refers to that which is divinely necessary. *Must* means you must do what God has said, required, or commanded. *Hebrews 11:6* says that if you are coming to God you cannot come as an agnostic or an atheist. You must come believing that God is, that is, that God eternally exists.

It is for this reason the Bible begins with God and never sets out to prove there is a God. *Genesis 1:1* simply says, “In the beginning God....” *Genesis 1:1* confronts you with God, the God who is already there in the beginning of creation. Whatever is before the beginning is *eternal*. So the first three words in the Bible tell us there is a God and He is an eternal Being. Moses, who wrote the book of Genesis, confirms this truth in *Psalms 90:2*, “Before the mountains were born, Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”

He is the Triune God.

There are two other important truths about God that are found in *Genesis 1:1*. “In the beginning God created....”

The word *God* is plural but the verb *created* is singular. The word *God* tells us God is more than one. But the singular verb tells us God is one. *Deuteronomy 6:4* says, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD (singular) is our God (plural), the LORD (singular) is one!" The Bible teaches us that God is one being and three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Historically, this **mystery** is called the doctrine of the *Trinity* or *Tri-unity* of God.

Let us be careful here. God is not three Gods. And we are not speaking about three different manifestations of the one God. God is one God who has existed eternally in three distinct persons who are equal in character, glory, and power. *Matthew 28:18* says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name (singular) of the Father and [of] the Son and [of] the Holy Spirit" (cf *2Co 13:14*). *Acts 5:3-4* clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is God. We will deal with Jesus' divinity later.

He is the One True God.

God is one means all other gods and goddesses are idols. *Isaiah 44:6* says, "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts; I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me." *Isaiah 45:5*, "I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides me there is no God." And so, in *Exodus 20:3-4* God warned, "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth." (See *Ps 115:4-7*. *Is 44:9-20* describes the absolute folly of idolatry.)

He is the God who alone must be Worshiped.

God is one means God alone must be worshipped. God warned in *Isaiah 42:8*, "I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images." *Exodus 34:14* warns, "you shall not worship any other god." *Deuteronomy 6:13-14* warns, "You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.

You shall not follow other gods." *Revelation 14:7*, "Fear God, and give Him glory,... worship Him who made the heaven and the earth." *Rev. 19:10*, "Worship God" (cf *22:9*). John 4:24 says, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him **must** worship in spirit and truth." Note the verb *must*. You cannot worship God based on your own ideas. God *must* be worshiped based upon the truths He has revealed in the Bible about (1) Himself, and (2) how He must be worshiped.

He is the Creator.

Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The Bible begins with God and introduces us to God as the Creator of all things. Genesis chapter 1 shows us that God, by His sovereign power, spoke all creation into existence out of nothing (cf *Heb 11:3*). We read repeatedly in *Genesis 1*, "Then God said... and it was so." *Psalms 33:6* says, "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host." *Jeremiah 10:12* says, "It is He who made the earth by His power, who established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens." In *Acts 14:15* Paul spoke about the "living God who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them." *Psalms 100* tells us we must respond with worship and thanksgiving to God who is our Creator.

He is Holy.

More than any other word, the Bible uses *holy* to describe God. God is *holy* means God is utterly pure, totally without any kind of blame or error, and absolutely free from sin in every respect. Holiness is a positive characteristic describing the uniqueness of God. This uniqueness means God is in a class all by Himself. Holiness describes what God is and governs all that God does. Consider the following verses:

- *Isaiah 6:3*, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory" (cf *Rev 4:8*).

- *Psalms 71:22*, “To You I will sing praise... O Holy One of Israel.”
- *Psalms 99:2*, “Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He.”
- *1 John 1:5*, “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”
- *Psalms 77:13*, “Your way, O God, is holy; What god is great like our God?”
- *Psalms 145:17*, “The LORD is righteous in all His ways, And kind in all His deeds.”

What does the holiness of God mean for us?

Firstly, as the verses above indicate, we must praise and worship this God who is holy.

Secondly, God requires us to be holy. *1 Peter 1:15-16* says, “but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.” God’s requirement is the same in the N.T. and O.T. (cf Lv. 11:44; 19:1; 20:7). The important question is this: how can sinful men be holy and live holy before God? The answer is in the gospel of Christ.

Thirdly, God’s holiness means God must punish sin. *Habbakuk 1:13*, “Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look upon wickedness with favor.” *Psalms 5:4*, “You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You.” *Exodus 34:7*, “He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.” *Isaiah 13:11*, “I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.”

You are a sinner and you are facing God’s punishment for your sin. *John 3:36* says “the wrath of God abides on you.”

The verb *abides* is present tense. This verse teaches us that God's wrath is abiding on you right now. God's final eternal punishment for sins is the lake of fire (hell). This will take place after the final judgment (cf *Mt 25:31-46*, noting *v v 41 & 46*; *Rev 20:11-15*).

He is Infinite.

Infinite simply means without limits. The infinite nature of God means that God exists outside of and is not limited by time or space. When we refer to God as *infinite*, we generally refer to Him with terms like omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience.

Omnipotence means that God is all-powerful or that He has infinite or unlimited power. *Jeremiah 32:27*, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?" (cf *Ge 18:14*; *Jer 32:17*; *Zec 8:6*; *Mt 19:26*; *Lk 1:37*; *Ro 4:21*). *Job 42:2*, "I know that You can do all things And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted" (cf *Is 14:24, 27*; *43:13*; *46:10-11*; *Eph 3:20*). God's omnipotence is usually coupled with His **sovereignty**. (See *Ps 103:19*; *115:3*; *135:6*; *Da 4:35*). God is absolutely sovereign and God's absolute sovereignty is backed up by His absolute power.

Omnipresence means that God is always present. There is no place that you could go to escape God's presence. God is not limited by time or space. He is present at the same time with His whole being at every point of time and space. *Psalms 139:7-12* is the clearest expression of God's omnipresence (cf *Jer 23:23-24*). A practical expression of omnipresence is seen in Jesus' interaction with Nathanael (*Jn 1:44-49*, note v 48).

Omniscience means that God is all-knowing or that He has infinite or unlimited knowledge. Omniscience means God's knowledge cannot increase nor decrease. *Job 37:16* says God is the One who is "perfect in knowledge." *1 John 3:20* says "God... knows all things." *Isaiah 46:9-10* says, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done" (cf *Is 41:21-24* – God's challenge to false gods.)

The omniscience of God has a very serious implication for all men. *Hebrews 4:13* says, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (or "*before whom we must render account*")" (cf *Psalms 33:13-15*). In other words, God's omniscience has serious implications for final judgment. When you stand before God in the final judgment there will be no secrets. Your whole life, thoughts, words, and actions, will be laid bare before the eyes of God. The omniscience of God means that as a sinner your guilt is a foregone conclusion.

MAN AND SIN

Creation of Mankind

The psalmist asked the question in *Psalms 8:4*, “What is man...?” Mankind is the crowning point of God’s creation. *Genesis 1:26-27* tells us:

- God created mankind on the sixth day.
- God created mankind in His image and likeness.
- God created mankind male and female.
- God created mankind to rule over His creation.
- *Ps. 8:5* says God crowned mankind with glory and majesty.

God created the man, first, from the dust of the ground. Then God created the woman from one of the man’s rib (*Ge 2:7, 21, 22*). God created mankind a moral being with a conscience (cf *1Sa 24:5; Ro 2:14-15*) and God placed man under His law (*Ge 2:16-17*). Therefore, man must obey God’s law and live under the rule of God’s law.

Genesis 5:2 tells us that when God created the man and the woman, He blessed them and named them *Adam*. As we would say, God named them *Mr. & Mrs. Adam*. In *Genesis 2:20; 3:17* the man is called by the name *Adam*. In *Genesis 3:20* Adam would give his wife the name *Eve*.

The Fall and its Consequences

Instead of obeying God's law, Adam and Eve believed the serpent's (Satan's) lies and disobeyed God (*Ge 3:1-7*). The Bible defines sin as lawlessness or as the transgression of God's law (*1Jn 3:4*). When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's law, they sinned against God. It is important to keep in mind that every sin that is committed is committed against God (*Ps 51:4; Ge 20:6; 39:9; 2Sa 11:27; 12:13; Ne 1:7; Da 9:5, 8*). Obedience to Satan's lies did not result in Adam & Eve going upward and becoming like God (*Ge 3:5*). Obedience to Satan's lies resulted in their fall into sin and their spiritual and moral ruin.

Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." Note the three terrible words: disobedience, sin, death. The consequence of Adam's sin is that "death spread to all men, because all sinned." Adam's sinning against God did not affect Adam alone. Adam sinned as the head of the human race and his sin had consequences for the entire human race. Adam's one trespass resulted in condemnation to all men (*Ro 5:18*). Because of Adam's sin we are all sinners and we all share in the condemnation that fell upon him.

None Righteous

Romans 3:10 says, "There is none righteous, not even one." *Verse 23* says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Let it be clear that we do not become sinners after we commit our first sin. We commit our first sin because we are born as sinners (*Ps 51:5*). We sin because we are sinners by nature and by birth. *Psalms 58:3* says, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; Those who speak lies go astray from birth."

Sin's Corruption

The fall into sin corrupted our whole being – mind and body. *Jeremiah 17:9* says, "The heart (*mind*) is more deceitful than all else, And desperately sick (*wicked*); Who can

understand it?" God alone fully understands the extent of the wickedness in every person's heart (cf v 10). Jesus said in *Mark 7:21-23*, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (cf *Ro 3:10-18*).

The Bible teaches that sinners are capable of good deeds. But because sin has corrupted our whole being, all our good works are infected and corrupted by sin's corruption in us. *Isaiah 64:6* says, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment." The imagery here is very graphic. *Unclean* is the leper's cry. *Leviticus 13:45* says, "As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his moustache and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'" His clothes will be torn and soiled by the fluids oozing from his leprosy sores. Every sinner is a spiritual leper and the clothes of his good works are defiled by the leprosy of his sinfulness.

Before his conversion, the apostle Paul was a Pharisee who kept the law of God very scrupulously (*Ac 23:6; 26:5; 22:3*). In *Philippians 3:4-6* Paul outlined the impeccable racial/moral/religious credentials he had as a Jew. But then Paul came face to face with Jesus (*Ac 9:1-9*) and he discovered that his good works and impeccable credentials were not good enough to save him. In *Philippians 3:8* Paul described his impeccable credentials as *rubbish*. The Greek word **skubala**, translated as *rubbish*, was actually used to refer to dead rotting animals, dog manure, and any kind of filth. In the eyes of God your good works and impeccable moral and religious credentials are like a filthy garment and **skubala**.

The Wages Of Sin

Sin brought death into this world. *Romans 6:23* says "The wages of sin is death." There are three aspects to this death.

- Firstly, there is *physical death*. *Hebrews 9:27* says, “it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” Because of sin every human being must die.
- Secondly, there is *spiritual death*.
- Thirdly, there is what the Bible calls the *second death*. *Revelations 20:14* tells us the second death is the lake of fire, that is, what we commonly call *hell*. Jesus described hell as “eternal fire” and “eternal punishment” (*Mt 25:41, 46*).

Spiritual Death And Its Effects

Let us consider what the Bible teaches about spiritual death. *Ephesians 2:1*, “you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” *Verse 5*, “when we were dead in our transgressions.” *Colossians 2:13*, “you were dead in your transgressions.” Spiritual death means you are dead to God and the things of God but alive to sin and very active in sinful deeds.

Firstly, the spiritually dead sinner is alive to sin. *Ephesians 2:1-3* says, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins (*dead men*), in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world (*dominated by the world*), according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience (*dictated to by Satan*). Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind (*dedicated to the flesh*), and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest (*destined for hell*).” Note the action verbs that describe the spiritually dead sinner: *walked* (conducted yourselves); *lived*; *indulging*.

Secondly, spiritual death is characterized by spiritual inabilities with respect to the things of God. These spiritual inabilities are present because there is no spiritual life in the sinner. These spiritual inabilities are expressed by a negative Greek verb that is translated *cannot, not able or impossible*. It

means you do not have the ability or power to do something. It means that which you are required to do is impossible for you to do. Consider the following verses:

Matthew 13:13 do not see... do not hear... do not understand.

John 8:43 cannot.

John 6:44 no one can come; verse 65 – no one can come.

Romans 8:7-8 does not subject... not even able... cannot please.

1 Corinthians 2:14 does not accept... cannot understand.

2 Timothy 3:7 never able.

The Bible makes it very clear that the sinner cannot do anything to save himself because he is spiritually dead and cannot respond positively to the things of God. This reality inevitably brings before us the question the disciples asked Jesus in *Matthew 19:25*, "Then who can be saved?" And Jesus answered, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (v 26). In this verse Jesus used our Greek verb in the negative, *impossible*, and in the positive, *possible*. From a human standpoint the conversion and saving of the sinner is impossible. But from God's standpoint, "all things are possible." The conversion and the saving of the sinner lie only within the realm of God's power. "Salvation is from the LORD" (*Jonah 2:9*).

God's Intervention

For the sinner to be saved, God must intervene with mercy and grace. God must intervene and make you spiritually alive in Christ so that you can hear, understand, and respond to the message of the gospel and be saved. In *John 3:3* Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again (*born from*

above) he cannot see (*perceive, understand*) the kingdom of God." Note the verb *cannot*. Verse 8 tells us that being born again is a mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in the sinner.

In *Ephesians 2:1-3* we have the hopeless description of the sinner who is destined for hell. But from *verse 4* we read of God's intervention: "**But God**, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us" (note vv 4-9). (See also *Ro 5:8; 6:23*). *Made us alive in verse 5 and born again in John 3:3* is the same truth expressed in different words.

JESUS CHRIST - DIVINITY

In *Matthew 16:13* Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” Their answers are in *verse 14*. In *verse 15* Jesus asked His disciples, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter’s answer is emphatic (literal), “You are **the** Christ, **the** Son of **the** God, **the** living One” (*v 16*). And Jesus responded, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona (*son of Jonas*), because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but **My Father** who is in heaven.”

There are two important points to note in Peter’s answer. Firstly, note Peter’s use of the definite article, **the**, and his emphasis that Jesus is **the** Son of **the** living God. Secondly, Jesus described God as **My Father**. What is unique about this?

In *John 5:17-18* we read, “But He answered them, “**My Father** is working until now, and I Myself am working.” For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, **but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.**”

To say Jesus is **the Son of God** is to say that Jesus is divine. This is one of the reasons the Jewish religious leaders set forth for the crucifixion of Jesus. They told Pilate, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be **the** Son of God” (*Jn 19:7; Mt 27:43*). When Jesus said **My Father**, the Jews clearly understood that Jesus was declaring that He is equal to God (*divine*) and confirming that He is **the** Son of God.

We saw earlier that God is one Being who has existed eternally as three distinct Persons: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ is the second person in the Triune God-Head. Let us consider further what

the Bible teaches in *John 1:1-3* about the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

Jesus Is Eternal.

The Word is a name John used for Jesus. John wrote, “In the beginning was the Word”, or, “In the beginning the Word was already there.” This reminds us of *Genesis 1:1*, “In the beginning God.” As noted already, *the beginning* refers to the beginning of creation. In the beginning God was already there. In the beginning the Word (Jesus) was already there. In other words, just as God is eternal, the Word (Jesus) is eternal. Note the verb **was** that is used four times in vv 1-2. It is in the Greek imperfect tense and we are told that this tense expresses continuous timeless existence. This verb is used in contrast to *came into being* (v 3) which describes existence in time.

Secondly, “the Word was with (lit. toward **the**) God.” There are two points to note here. (1) By the use of two definite articles, this statement distinguishes *the* Word (Jesus) from *the* God (Father). (2) This statement tells us that the Word who is eternal has been existing in an eternal face to face relationship with *the God*.

Thirdly, John tells us very emphatically, “the Word was God.” The Word (Jesus) who is eternal, is God! In verse 2 John repeated all three points in one brief statement: “He (the Word who is God) was in the beginning (eternal) with (toward) the God.”

Jesus Is The Creator.

In *verse 3* John tells us the Word (Jesus) is the Creator. Note the word **nothing**. It means *not even one thing*. *Genesis 1:1* tells us God is the Creator. John is telling us Jesus is the Creator. So, who is the Creator? The answer is in *Hebrews 1:1-2*, “God...

has spoken to us in His Son... through whom also He made the world." The Father created through the Son. *Colossians 1:16* says, "For **by** Him (*Jesus*) all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created **through** Him and for Him. He is before all things (*eternal*), and in Him all things hold together (*He is the Sustainer of creation*)." God the Father created all things through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (*the Word*).

Jesus is the I AM.

There are many other verses in the Bible that clearly show us that Jesus is God. Given the limitations of this study, we cannot look at all these verses. But consider this point. In *Exodus 3:14* God revealed Himself to Moses as I AM (*Yahweh or Jehovah*). In *John 8:24* Jesus said to the Jews, "unless you believe that I AM (Gk. *ego eimi*), you will die in your sins." (Note: whenever *ego* is used with a verb, it's use is emphatic.) Jesus is saying in this verse that there is one thing you can do so as not to "die in your sins", and that is, to "believe that I AM." Jesus has clearly identified Himself with the name Yahweh (*Jehovah*).

In *John 8:28* Jesus added, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM." *John 8:48-59* is an important passage. Note the emphasis in *verse 58*, "Truly, Truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM". Note the reaction of the Jews in *verse 59*. See also *John 10:30-33*.

Now consider the following verses (literal translations) in which we find *ego eimi*:

Matthew 14:27 "Take courage, I AM; do not be afraid."
(*Mk 6:50*).

John 4:26 "I AM, the One speaking to you."

John 8:18 "I AM, the One testifying about Myself."

John 13:19 that you may believe that I AM."

John 18:5 “He said to them, “I AM”.
(Note the response in v 6).

In *Isaiah 6:1-5* the LORD appeared in a vision to Isaiah. In *John 7:41* we are told that the One Isaiah saw in his vision was Jesus. (context: vv 36-43)

John 20:28 shows us Thomas’ reaction when he saw the resurrected Jesus. He said to Jesus (literal), “The Lord of me and the God of me!” Other verses:

Matthew 1:21-23 Jesus is “Immanuel – God with us.”

Luke 1:31-35 Jesus is the Son of the Most High
& the Son of God.

Titus 2:13 Jesus is “our great God and Savior.”

2 Peter 1:1 Jesus is “our God and Savior.”

GOD SENT HIS SON

John 3:16-17 says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten (lit. *one and only*) Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” Note, briefly, the following:

- God sending His Son is the expression of His love for sinners.
- Jesus is God’s one and only Son.
- The contrast between *perish* and *eternal life*. Eternal life is salvation in Christ. To perish is the opposite.

God sent His Son into this world (cf *Jn 3:34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 38, 57; 7:29; 8:42*). *Galatians 4:4-5* says, “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

God sending His Son into this world is called the doctrine of **the incarnation** of Jesus. God sent His Son through normal human birth into this world. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb. Nine months later Mary gave birth to Jesus in Bethlehem (*Lk 1:31-32, 35; Lk 2:1-7*).

The apostle John described for us the incarnation from eternity into time in *John 1:1 & 14*, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us....” The eternal Word (Jesus) *became flesh*, that is, He entered time

as a real flesh and blood human being, and took up residence with us.

In the incarnation Jesus did not cease to be God. In the incarnation the eternal Son of God added to Himself human nature. The incarnation means Jesus has two completely **unmixed** natures: (1) The divine nature – He is fully God; (2) The human nature – He is fully man. This is the reason He is called the “God-Man”. And because of the incarnation Jesus is forever the God-Man.

JESUS' LIFE & DEATH

Jesus grew from childhood into adulthood as any normal human being. He grew up in Nazareth and followed Joseph by becoming a carpenter (*Lk 2:40, 52; Mt 2:23; Mk 6:3; Jn 6:42*). *Luke 3:23* says, "When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, as was supposed, the son of Joseph." Jesus' ministry focused primarily on teaching, preaching and healing.

Jesus' teaching and preaching amazed the crowds (*Mt 7:28-29; 13:54; Jn 7:15, 46*). Jesus also performed innumerable miracles in healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead, feeding the multitudes, calming storms. His disciples would ask, "What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (*Mt 8:27*). The people said as they witnessed Jesus' miracles, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel" (*Mt 9:33; Mk 2:12*).

His Sinless Life

The Bible clearly testifies to the fact that Jesus lived a sinless life on this earth. Jesus said in *John 8:29*, "He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." In *John 8:46* Jesus challenged the Jews, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" The Jews brought Jesus to trial before Pilate and laid serious charges against Him (*Lk 23:2, 14; Jn 18:29-30*). Pilate's verdict is found in *Luke 23:4, 14, 15, 22*. Take note of the testimony of the following verses: *2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peters 2:22-23; 1 John 3:5*.

The plain fact is this: if you believe Jesus is God, then you must believe that it was impossible for Him to sin during His life on earth.

His Death On A Cross

Jesus' ministry brought Him into serious conflict with the Jewish religious leaders. As a result they put a plan in place to put Jesus to death (*Jn 11:47-53; Mt 12:14; 26:3-4*). What these wicked men did not know was that they would be carrying out the will of God (*Ac 2:22-23*). The primary purpose for which God sent His Son into this world was for His Son to die for sinners (*Jn 3:16; Ro 5:8; 1 Jn 4:10; 1Co 15:3*). God sending His Son to die for sinners is rooted in God's love (cf *Eph 2:4*).

We have seen that sin is the breaking of God's law. The legal punishment for breaking God's law is death. As sinners we all deserve to die. This death is not merely physical (*Heb 9:27*). This death is also the second death, being cast into the lake of fire for all eternity (*Rev 20:14-15*).

When Jesus died on the cross He died as our legal substitute. Note the word **for** in the following verses: *Mark 10:45; John 10:11; Romans 5:6, 8; 1 Timothy 2:5; Titus 2:14*. The word **for** also means *in the place of* and speaks of substitution. If Jesus was not sinless, He could not have died as our substitute. Jesus died, was buried, and He rose from the dead on the third day (*1Co 15:3-4*). Jesus' resurrection was a physical bodily resurrection (*Mt 28:6; Mk 16:6; Lk 24:36-43*). The clear Biblical emphasis must be believed: death, burial, and resurrection. *1 Corinthians 15:12-19* make it very clear that no resurrection means no salvation in Christ. When Jesus died as our substitute and rose from the dead, He secured for us salvation in Him.

REPENTANCE & FAITH

The bad news is that you are a sinner, you cannot save yourself, and you are on your way to final judgment before God and the lake of fire or hell for all eternity. There are those who say that they want God to be fair to them and give them what they rightfully deserve when they stand in the final judgment. Here is the vitally important question: What do you, a sinner and law-breaker, rightfully deserve when you stand before God in the final judgment? *John 3:18* says that as an unbelieving sinner you have been judged already. The word **judged** means *judged and condemned*. As a sinner you are going into the final judgment already judged and condemned. All that remains is for God to pass sentence on you. And that sentence is the eternal lake of fire (cf *Mt 7:23; 25:41*). If God gives you what you rightfully deserve, you will receive from God the sentence of eternal hell.

The gospel is good news. The good news is that in eternity God put together a plan to rescue you from sin, spiritual death, and the lake of fire. God's rescue plan is His eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The good news, as we saw, is that Christ died for your sins, was buried, and rose from the dead to secure your salvation in Him. The good news is that, today, you can be rescued by God in Christ and go into the final judgment knowing that you will not be judged, condemned, and cast into the lake of fire for all eternity. (cf *Jn 3:18a; Ro 8:1, 33-34*). The good news is being able to hear *Matthew 25:34* in the final judgment, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

The big question is: how can you receive this salvation in Christ that He secured by His death, burial, and resurrection? The answer is in two words: repentance and faith.

You would have noted that I used the word “today” two times in this section. The reason for this is that there is no offer nor hope of salvation after you die. *Hebrews 9:27* says very clearly, “after this (death) comes the judgment.” God is calling upon you to repent of your sins and believe in Christ for salvation right now, while you are still alive. *2 Corinthians 6:2* says, “behold, now is the day of salvation.” There are those who promise that they can secure salvation for you after you die. That promise is utterly false. The responsibility is yours. You must repent. You must believe. If you fail to repent and believe, you would have failed utterly and eternally. May it please God’s Holy Spirit to move your heart toward repentance and faith.

Repentance

What is repentance?

Firstly, let us establish the Biblical **necessity** of repentance. Jesus said in *Luke 13:3 & 5*, “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (cf *Lk 24:46-47; Ac 2:37-38; 3:19; 2Pe 3:9*).

Secondly, the primary meaning of the word **repent** is *to change one’s mind*. There are several factors involved in repentance.

- The person who desires to repent recognizes that he has sinned against God and needs to change. (See *Ps 51:4; 41:4; 2Sa 12:13; Ge 20:6; 39:9*) All sin is against God.
- Repentance involves sorrow for one’s sins. It is a sorrow that is evidenced by the changes made (cf *2Co 7:9-10*).

- Repentance involves a turning. Paul said he preached to Jews and Gentiles “that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance” (*Ac 26:20*). *1 Thess. 1:9* says the Thessalonians “turned to the God from the idols to serve the living and true God.” (literal). The point to note here is that repentance results in a change in the mind, a change in the direction of your life, and a change in your behavior (conduct). Examples of repentance are Zacchaeus (*Lk 19:8*); Saul (*Ac 9:1-31* from persecutor to preacher. *Gal 1:23*)

Faith

What is faith?

Firstly, faith and belief (believe) are two words that express the same Biblical concept. *Ephesians 2:8* says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith....” *John 3:15*, “whoever believes in Him (Jesus) will have eternal life” (*cf Jn 3:16, 36; Ac 16:31*).

Secondly, we must note that repentance and faith must be understood as two sides of the same coin. It is impossible to place your faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior without first changing your mind about your sin, about who Jesus is and what He has done. Paul said he solemnly testified “to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Ac 20:21; cf Mk 1:14-15*).

Thirdly, saving faith has three elements:

1. Knowledge: You must know and understand who Christ is (**as He is revealed in the Bible**) and what He has done for you. Saving faith is not a blind leap into the dark. Saving faith is an intelligent faith. It calls for the right believing of the right knowledge.

2. Conviction & Assent: Conviction means you know something and you are persuaded that it is true. Assent is the acknowledgement of your conviction. Applied to the gospel, conviction means that you are persuaded that the things you have learned about Jesus are true. Assent is your acknowledgement of who Christ is and what He has done for you.
3. Trust: This is the active part of faith. Let me illustrate. Trust is not only believing that the chair you are looking at is strong enough to hold your weight if you sit on it. Trust is acting on your belief and sitting on the chair. Trust is acting on your belief that Jesus can save you and prayerfully entrusting yourself to Jesus to do what He has promised to do in saving you.

It must be made clear that the exercise of faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ (cf *Ac 20:21*). Jesus is Lord (*Lk 2:11; Ac 2:36; 2Co 4:5; Php 2:9-11*). *Romans 10:9* says, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." The simple point is this: Jesus cannot be your Savior unless He is your Lord because the Lordship of Christ is the touchstone of salvation.

Jesus is Lord means He is the absolute sovereign of your life. He owns you. He bought you with the price of His blood (*1Pe 1:18-19; 1Co 6:19-20*). Note the emphasis: "you are not your own". You do not belong to yourself. You belong to Christ. You do not own yourself. Christ owns you. You do not have rights over yourself. Christ has all the rights over you. You do not have authority over yourself. Christ has all authority over you.

Jesus is Lord means you must obey Jesus. Jesus said in *Matthew 28:20*, "teaching them to observe (obey) all that I commanded you." (See *Mt 7:21, 24; Lk 6:46; Jn 3:36; 1Pe 1:2*).

CONCLUSION

John 3:36 says, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life.” We have seen that eternal life is salvation in Christ. I want to outline to you what it means to have salvation in Christ. These points are not set out in any order or priority.

1. You who were spiritual dead have been made alive in Christ by the Holy Spirit..
2. Eternal life has a time factor in it. It is eternal or everlasting or never-ending life.
3. Eternal life is also qualitative. It is having a personal intimate relationship with God the Father and His Son Jesus (*Jn 17:3*).
4. Eternal life is your present possession and future hope. Note the present tense verbs following verses:

John 3:16 “but have eternal life.”

John 3:36 “has eternal life”

John 5:24 “has eternal life.”

Future hope: *2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21-23;*
1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

5. Salvation means that in Christ, God, the Divine Judge, has forgiven you ALL your sins (*Lk 24:47; Ac 2:38; Eph 1:7; Col 2:13*) and has declared you justified or righteous (*Rom*

3:24; 5:1). There is now no condemnation for you who are in Christ Jesus (*Rom 8:1, 33-34*).

6. Salvation in Christ means you are now indwelt by the Holy Spirit (*1Co 3:16; 6:19; 2Ti 1:14; Ro 8:9*).
7. Salvation in Christ means you are now a new creation in Christ (*2Co 5:17*).
8. Salvation in Christ means that you, who were once the enemies of God, now have peace with God (*Ro 5:1, 10*).
9. Salvation in Christ means God's wrath against you has been propitiated (*1Jn 4:10*).
10. Salvation in Christ means you have this standing sure promise if you sin (*1Jn 1:8 - 2:1*).
11. Salvation in Christ means you will never lose your salvation (*Jn 10:27-29; Php 1:6*). (*Jn 10:28*, literal) "I give to them eternal life and they will not not perish into the eternal age."
12. Salvation in Christ means God is now your Heavenly Father and you have been adopted into the family of God (*Gal 4:4-7; Ro 8:14-17*).

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The Lord saved him at age 12. He entered into full-time ministry in January 1972. Later on, he studied theology at Jamaica Bible College, Mandeville, Jamaica. He became Pastor of the Newtown Evangelical Church (Port of Spain) on May 1, 1977. In 1984 the name of the church was changed to The Reformed Evangelical Church. Pastor Semurath was happily married to Patricia (deceased) for 41 years and God blessed them with two sons.

