

God's Plan of Salvation

A troubled jailer in the first century once asked two Christian leaders, “what must I do to be saved?” ([Acts 16:30](#)). This in fact is the most important question that anyone can ask. We are troubled not only by the evils of our world but also by our own faults. We often feel guilty for those words and deeds that our own consciences tell us are wrong. We probably sense that we deserve God's judgment, not his favor. What can be done—or what has been done—to rescue us from our helpless situation? We begin our answer by offering an overview of God's plan and his work to bring salvation, followed by a more detailed unpacking of these truths.

An Overview

Creation

God made this world and all that is in it: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . . God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” ([Gen. 1:1, 27](#)). He created human beings to be like him and to have unhindered fellowship with him, and when his work of creation was finished he saw that it was “very good” ([Gen. 1:31](#)).

Rebellion

Although the first people God created, Adam and Eve, had complete freedom to live in friendship and trust with him, they chose to rebel ([Gen. 3:1–7](#)). Because God designed that Adam would represent the entire human race, his sin was catastrophic not only for him but for us: “one trespass led to condemnation for all men” ([Rom. 5:18](#)). Our fellowship with God was broken. Instead of enjoying his holy pleasure, we instead face his righteous wrath. Through this sin, we all died spiritually (see [Rom. 3:1–20](#); [Eph. 2:1–10](#)) and the entire world was affected. God also cursed the world over which humanity had been set to reign as his lieutenants (see [Gen. 3:17–19](#)). “The creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it” ([Rom. 8:20](#)). And we all individually sin against God in our own lives: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” ([Rom. 3:23](#)).

Redemption

God would have been perfectly just to leave matters there, with all human beings under his holy judgment, but he didn't. God instead set in motion his plan to save his people from sin and judgment and set free the entire creation from its subjugation to sin and the curse. How? By sending his Son as a true man who would bear the penalty for our sin and die in our place: “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures” ([1 Cor. 15:3](#)).

The best-known verse in the Bible summarizes the required response to this good news: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that *whoever believes in him* should not perish but have eternal life” ([John 3:16](#)). To “believe in” Jesus includes both a wholehearted trust in

him for forgiveness of sins and a decision to forsake one's sin or to “repent”: All who truly “repent [or turn from their sins] and believe [in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins]” will be redeemed ([Mark 1:15](#)) and restored to a right relationship with God. To “believe in” Jesus also requires relating to, and putting trust in, Jesus as he truly is—not just a man in ancient history but also a living Savior today who knows our hearts and hears our prayers.

Consummation

God not only rescues lost sinners but he restores all of creation. We read in [Romans 8:21](#): “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” The heavens and the earth will “pass away” and be radically transformed ([2 Pet. 3:7–13](#); [Rev. 21:1](#)). We read of the glorious culmination of this in the book of Revelation, where God's people, the redeemed, are brought into the presence of God to live ([Rev. 21:1–22:6](#)). This is life as it should be, literally as it was meant to be.

Result

God's plan is to save his people from their sins—and to bring his people fully and finally to himself ([Matt. 1:21](#); [2 Tim. 2:10](#)). Christians experience salvation in this life in both a past and present sense, and we anticipate salvation in a future sense. Christians have been saved from the *penalty* of our sins; we are currently being saved from the *power* of sin; and one day, when God's plan of salvation is completed and we are with Christ, we shall be like him, and we shall be saved even from the very *presence* of sin. This is God's plan of salvation.