

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS REGARDING SALVATION *STUFF YOU JUST HAVE TO KNOW!*

Without making this study of epic proportions, we will discover, over two weeks, the essence of what God has communicated to humanity regarding the issues of sin and salvation. We must first begin with a very brief overview of the Biblical world view of humanity.

According to the Bible, mankind is God's **highest creation**, made in God's own image. The Bible clearly states that man was created by God. This truth is found especially in Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:7-25. These passages teach that God did not use any **previously existing** living creature in bringing man into being. As Carol, my wife, likes to point out, since mankind was reserved as God's final creative act, and since woman was made last, she must have been ultimately what He had in mind! The best was saved for last!

When God created humanity, He made them tripartite: body (our flesh), soul (our **mind, will and emotions**), and spirit (that part of us which **communicates** with God and the spiritual, unseen world around us).

But why did God create us in the first place?

Very simply put, we were created for **fellowship** (camaraderie) or **communion** with God. Unlike any of the other creatures, we have a fundamental likeness to God: we are created in the **"image of God"**. Mankind meets and talks with God in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15-17). This was the original intention of God for all of us- a loving, life-giving, joyous, uninhibited **relationship** with our Creator. It also becomes God's continuing intention, as He repeatedly intervenes to draw humanity back to Himself. Ultimately, the Redeemer-Jesus-was sent for this reason as well. We are not only to have loving companionship with God; we are to glorify Him by **what we are** and what **we do**, thus demonstrating that we are truly His children (1 Corinthians 10:31; Eph 1:12).

We are also created to do God's will and work. What should astonish most people is that we were created in God's image so that we might "have dominion" over the rest of creation or perform **God's work of ruling** the creation in His place as good stewards. This assignment of work to be done came before the FALL.

This brings us to a key point, THE FALL of Humanity.

The idea of the fall of man is in no way peculiar to Christianity; **all religions** contain an account of it and recognize the awful fact.

"The Fall" of our first ancestors was a turning point in the moral history of humanity and the beginning of far-reaching, **catastrophic results**.

Man at his creation was in a state of **moral purity**. In connection with his freedom there was of necessity the possibility of sin. But still there was **no evil tendency** in his nature. God pronounced Adam & Eve, with other objects of His creation, "good." They were made in the image and likeness of God.

As moral beings, they were placed by God in a state of "trial". Their freedom was to be exercised and tested by their being **under divine law**. Of every tree in the garden they could eat freely, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At one point there must be restraint, **self-denial** for the sake of **obedience**. The temptation to disobedience came from an evil source **outside them**. In Genesis the serpent is mentioned and later in the NT the tempter is identified as Satan, who employed the serpent as his instrument (1 Corinthians 11:3, 14; Romans 16:20; Revelation 12:9).

The temptation came in the form of an appeal to man's **intellect** and to **the senses**. The forbidden fruit was presented as "good for food" and "desirable to make one wise." Thus the allurements were in the direction of **sensual** gratification and **intellectual pride**. But at the root of the sin lay **unbelief**. The tempted ones doubted or disbelieved God and believed the tempter. And thus, under the strong desire awakened by the temptation, they disobeyed God's command.

The immediate consequence of "The Fall" was **death**, symbolized by their loss of fellowship or communion with God. For the first time, Adam and Eve experienced **fear** in the presence of the Lord God; and they hid when He approached (Genesis 3:8-10). Because of their unbelief and rebellion, they were driven from the garden that God had provided as their home. From that time on, man would **experience pain** and encounter **resistance** as he worked at the task of earning his daily bread. **Physical death**, with the decay of the body, is not a natural process. It entered the human experience as God's curse upon sin.

Adam and Eve did not sin simply as private persons, but as the **representatives** of **all members** of the human race. Their sin is the sin of all; and all persons receive from them a **corrupt nature**. It is this nature that stands behind all personal violations of the Lord's commandments. For this reason, the fall of Adam is the fall of the human race. The apostle Paul thought of Christ as the second Adam who would rebuild the old, sinful Adam through His plan of salvation. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Since "The Fall", God has acted to **restore man** to his original state of innocence and camaraderie with God. He has done this by **sending His Son** to die for man so man might be reconciled to God and be **renewed** or "born again" (John 3:3,7). The aim of this is to restore man to a dynamic, vital relationship **with God** (Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:20). I believe it can well be said of everyone that we are most fully human when fulfilling God's intention for us: worshiping, serving, and loving God.

With this overview in mind, we will conclude this lesson with “the stuff you just have to know about sin and salvation”, things so awesome as to cause the Bible to call what Jesus offers “so great a salvation”!

STUFF YOU JUST HAVE TO KNOW!

1) You were unsaved before you received Christ. “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”- Romans 3:23 The expression “short of the glory of God” simply means that we have “**missed the mark**”- that is, our disobedience and “giving in” to our sinful nature causes us to fall horribly short of the high and great **potential** we have in God.

2) You were guilty before God, under penalty of death. “For the wages of sin is death”- Romans 6:23 The reward for following our own sinful desires is to be the **living dead**. It is important to note that the Bible concept of death is not the ceasing of existence, but rather one of **separation**. One can exist but be spiritually dead, meaning you are **separated from God** who is life itself. Since God is the source of all good and because we as creatures live eternally, to be spiritually dead means to exist apart from God and all that is good **eternally**. That is why hell is so, well, hellish!

3) But God loved you too much to see you perish. “He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”- 2 Peter 3:9 One very important concept to get here is that God has identified the peril of His creation and instead of desiring to destroy them, He desires quite the opposite. God does **not take pleasure** in the death of even the most wicked of people, but desires that they would repent and live (see Ezekiel 18:23 & 33:11). God loves **to forgive!** We will discuss the vital issue of repentance and what it is and isn’t next week.

4) God offered His best to prove His love for you. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting light”- John 3:16 God loves us! He in no way approves of our sinful conduct, but rather is earnestly **desirous of our happiness**, a happiness that He knows can only be found in **cleansing from sin** and reunification with Him. Something had to be given to remove the stain of sin and God gave His Son- it was a **free** and unmerited **gift**. Man had no claim: and when there was no eye to pity or arm to save, it pleased God to GIVE his Son into the hands of men to die in our place that we might not die but **live**.

5) Christ was God’s gift and He died for you. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”- Romans 5:8 God was willing to go to the point of the **sacrifice** of Himself to do good for others. This is amazing when you consider He did this for those who would even be considered His **enemies**. While many might sacrifice themselves for family or friend, He demonstrated a love not seen among us- dying for even evil people!

He died for us, in our place, to save us from death. He took our place; and by dying Himself on the cross, saved us from dying eternally in hell.

TO BE CONTINUED....