

GOD

(Gen. 1; Psalm 93,103,139; Is. 45; Jer. 10)

We do not need to wonder or hypothesize about who God is or what God is like. He has revealed Himself in the Bible. God is the Creator of all things. He is the true and living God, the one and only God who exists from all eternity in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-wise. He is perfectly just, holy, and good. He is merciful and gracious towards His creatures. He hates all that is evil with a perfect hatred and loves all that is good with a perfect love. He is infinitely higher than man in His nature, character, and thoughts. He does not answer to man nor does He owe man anything. God is sovereign over His creation and brings about His purposes regardless of man's will or efforts. All things are for His glory.

MAN

(Genesis 1:26-30; 2:15-25)

Man was created by God and for God. God created man in His own image. He created man with the capacity to reason, choose, feel, communicate, build, and appreciate beauty. He created man for the purpose of ruling over all the living creatures on the earth. Because man is made in the image of God, he is morally

responsible before God. Since God is our Creator, we owe Him perfect allegiance. Every thought, desire, word and deed must be out of true devotion to Him and for His eternal glory. That is why Jesus said the greatest commandment is to *love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength* (Mark 12:30).

SIN

(Gen. 3; Rom. 3:10-20; 6:23; 1 Jn. 3:4)

We all know that we fall far short of our moral obligation to God. To show us our failure, God gave us the Law, the Ten Commandments. The Law is like a mirror showing us our moral corruption. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (Rom. 3:23). Sin is not only deeds we do or don't do, it involves every part of our being including our thoughts, motives, desires, and emotions. We were born into this life spiritually dead to God, thinking only of our own desires and our own glory. We were born this way, because of the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve. When we die, we shall stand before the perfectly righteous, holy, and all-knowing Judge and give an account for every word and deed (Matt. 12:36; Heb. 9:27). Because we are sinners, we are under the wrath of God and face, not only physical death, but also eternal death, complete separation from God and all

His blessings, in Hell, described as the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15). But we cannot change our own hearts (Jer. 13:23) or do anything acceptable in God's sight. Even our 'good works' are like filthy rags before God (Is. 64:6).

CHRIST

(John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:1-11; Col. 1; Heb. 1)

In view of man's helpless condition in sin, God in His love and mercy provided salvation with His own arm. That provision is Christ. Christ is the only way of salvation because He is God's appointed way (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Christ is the Son of God and the Son of Man. In other words, He is truly God and truly man. He, as the second Person of the Trinity, took on human flesh (John 1:14) in order to take upon Himself the sin of mankind (Rom. 8:3). He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life (John 8:29, 46), and laid down His life at the cross for the sins of the world (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

ATONEMENT

(Isaiah 53; Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Pet. 1:18-19)

Christ died for our sins. We deserve eternal damnation, but God intervened in Christ, who took upon Himself the penalty due our sins, by dying on the Cross. His burial proved that He died. His resurrection from the dead, three days later, proved that God accepted

His death as payment for our sins and demonstrated His victory over death on our behalf. When Jesus died on the Cross He satisfied the just demands of the Law of God on our behalf, becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14). He appeased the wrath of God that burned against us (Jn. 3:36; 1 Jn. 2:2). God imputed our sin to Christ, *as if* He had sinned. *He laid on Him the iniquity of us all* (Is. 53:6). And God imputed the righteousness of Christ to us, *as if* we had never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21). On the basis of this heavenly transaction, God declares us righteous. This is called *justification*. This justification is based wholly on the righteousness of Christ, not on our works (Rom. 3:24-28; Gal. 2:16), and is received by faith (Rom. 5:1). If we believe on Christ, our sins are no longer imputed to us. They have been forgiven, washed away, removed from us forever (Ps. 32:1-2; Col. 1:14).

FAITH AND REPENTANCE

(Is. 55:1-7; John 3:1-21; 5:24; James 4:7-10)

The question remains: *How do I enter into this eternal life?* The answer is: faith. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved* (Acts 16:31). We tremble at the Word of God and believe all it says about His holiness, our sin, and His provision in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. We take refuge in Christ and find rest for our souls. We rest in the promise that we

have forgiveness through our Savior. True faith includes repentance, which is a complete turning away from our sinful ways and thoughts (Is. 55:7). We turn around, as it were, and forsake our sins and seek to please God with our whole heart and life. Faith that is not accompanied by repentance is not true faith (James 2:14-26). It is through faith and repentance that we are born again (John 3:1-21). In other words, this is how we are made spiritually alive and come into fellowship with God. This is eternal life (John 17:3). We no longer fear death because we have the promise of heaven. The new birth results in a desire to learn and obey God's Word and a hatred for that which is sinful. The Holy Spirit indwells us (1 Cor. 6:19), sanctifying us (making us holy), producing in us love, joy, and peace (Gal. 5:22-23). Through the Word of God and prayer, God assures us of salvation, guides us, and keeps us.

FIRST STEPS AS A CHRISTIAN

1. Be baptized (Acts 8:36-37)
2. Read the Bible each day (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
3. Pray, asking God for grace, mercy, strength, and wisdom (Heb. 4:16)
4. Join a local church where the Word of God is faithfully preached

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WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

By Dean Good

You are going to die. The death rate is still 100%. If someone offered you a cure for death, would that be good news? In effect, that is what God offers to you in the *Gospel*, freedom from the bondage of death. Jesus Christ *has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel* (2 Timothy 1:10). The word *gospel* means *good news*. This one word summarizes the message of the Bible. God, through Jesus Christ, offers to you, freely, eternal life. Jesus said, *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly* (John 10:10). But how do you enter into this life? How can you be certain that you have this life? These questions are answered in the Bible.

The Gospel, though simple to understand, does require a comprehension and acceptance of what the Bible teaches about God, man, and sin. Without this basic understanding, the gospel cannot be grasped, embraced or believed.