



Kids asking the darndest questions
(a.k.a. Yes, Y'all Really *Do* Need Jesus)
The Easter 2023 Message

Kids really DO ask the darndest questions...

I have an extended family member, a young man who is just barely a teenager and extremely logical and literal. He is very much a person who evaluates what he's told, asks for proofs, and will respond with a unique perspective and questions that are often head-scratchers. I respect it because he forces me to think, reason, and articulate in new ways.

When it comes to God, Jesus, and all things pertaining to the Bible, this kid can REALLY come up with the unexpected questions for me. For example:

"If demons hate Jesus and heaven, why does God send them to hell? Why doesn't He make them go to heaven as punishment since they hate it there?"


"What happens if a person who enjoys pain goes to hell for eternity? Is that punishing them if they like pain?"

Those questions are mostly meant to be ornery, but there are other questions that he asks which are quite serious and deserve a biblically-correct answer and really put my hermeneutic skills to the test. Usually he catches me while I'm driving and don't have the ability to open the Bible. The challenge is that this child does not take "because the Bible says so" as a complete answer to his questions.

One conversation and a series of rapid-fire questions from this child has really stuck with me the past couple of weeks: *"Why did God create Satan if He knew Satan would be evil and do bad things? Why doesn't God just get rid of Satan? Why doesn't God change men so that they can't do evil things? If someone lives a perfect life and never does anything wrong EXCEPT that he doesn't believe in Jesus, shouldn't he still be able to go to heaven?"*


These are not new questions. In fact, for some of those questions, the Bible does not give outright explanations. I'm sure every Christian has to answer such questions at some point. What is different for me is presenting an answer in a manner which this very literal and logical child will accept. Yes, I did give him the initial answer "That's not what the Bible says", knowing it would not suffice in his case.

Gradually, I began to realize that all these questions tie together and relate to our present holiday of Easter. They pertain to Jesus Christ's life, ministry, and His death on the cross. The Bible study that follows will try to examine God's purpose in Christ's sacrifice (and why men can't earn salvation on their own) in a very analytical manner while staying true to Scripture.



In examining this set of questions, I first realize that there are multiple other questions that must be examined (literally and logically) from a Biblical perspective:

- ▶ What does the Bible say about the creation and fall of Lucifer (who became Satan)?
- ▶ Does the Bible tell us God's reasons for the creation of the angels and the cherubs, including Lucifer?
- ▶ What does the Bible say about God's reasons for creating man?
- ▶ What can we discern from these Biblical facts about God's reasons for creating angels, cherubs, and mankind if He knew they would end up as sinful beings?
- ▶ What does the Bible say about man's ability to be righteous by his own efforts?
- ▶ What does the Bible say about man's ability to earn his own salvation?
- ▶ Does God have a plan for ending Satan's wickedness in this world?
- ▶ Does God have a plan for ending mankind's wickedness in this world.
- ▶ Presuming that man cannot be righteous or earn salvation on his own, what is God's solution?



Can a man be righteous by his own effort?

“There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death” (Proverbs 14:12)

Before we go into what the Bible has to say on that question, let's examine it from a secular perspective.


Is it possible for man to know right from wrong, good from evil, with no biblical basis simply from the act of daily living in this world? From observing the natural order? In the context of living within a community, state, or nation?

And if a man does develop “morality” or “righteousness” within that context of daily living, is he really righteous or is he merely obedient and compliant to the rules of community life? Some people groups consider personal liberties to be a hallmark and prerequisite of right living; other people groups view individual liberty as a pathway to destruction and chaos. Either perspective is likely rooted in a morality that allows the individual, family, and/or community to survive and even prosper. Which group is correct? Which way is “righteous” or “moral”?

For that matter, is mankind as a species able to come to a consensus on what constitutes “righteousness”? We see that man as a species is capable of justifying what would be considered extremely cruel, “inhumane” actions. Men as a tribe, community, state, or nation can justify any course of oppression, violence, and cruelty against other individual or people groups if it suits their purposes (physical, social, political, or national survival or profit), but such justifications do not translate to righteousness or mortality. Let's face it: Nobody's a villain in their own eyes.

Thinking about it that way, “righteousness” is completely a matter of perspective and morality is subjective. There could be no truly comprehensive and universal standard for righteousness, there is only the morality cultivated by individual people groups. The results can be disastrous—murder, mass murders and genocide, famine, war, political turmoil, oppression of many people groups, slavery of all sorts, weapons of mass destruction.

So, if this would indicate that “righteousness” sans God's guidance is truly selective, inconsistent, and subjective and morality is fluid and flexible and basically rooted in compliance to what is best for the happiness of the individual or survival of the group, what about righteousness rooted in the Bible sans Jesus?



Can a man be biblically righteous by his own effort without Jesus?


That's another interesting question. To make this possible, men would have to selectively choose which Biblical tenants are true and applicable to their lives and which are not. In other words, they are cobbling together a theology (and a moral foundation) based not on the whole of the Bible but rather on the select teachings that appeal to them personally, serve their purposes, and justify their personal ambitions or desires.

This is not righteousness. This is what theologians call "proof-texting". This means using the Bible to justify a human-based morality rather than rooting oneself in God. Again, this is essentially removing God from the throne, supplanting His kingship in our lives when it conflicts with our personal wishes.

This is what we do when we say we believe in heaven but not in Jesus. For one point: The Bible teaches us that God is a triune entity, a Holy Trinity. He is One being made up of Three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three together are inseparable; you cannot have one without the other two. It would be as if a child were to say to his mother the employed teacher: "I believe you are a mother, but I don't believe you are a daughter or a teacher". Clearly, she was born to another which makes her someone's biological daughter, and she is in the employ of a school as an educator which makes her a teacher. She is all three and that doesn't change even if the son does not believe it.

I've also heard the argument that Moses and Elijah and other saints went to heaven before Jesus was born therefore you can get to heaven without believing in Jesus. This rationale neglects two facts: Moses and Elijah believed in God, the *whole* triune God. It also neglects that the Bible teaches *belief* in God as a whole, complete God (not just the aspects of God that suited them) earned their righteousness (Galatians 3:6).

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOT AN INNATE CHARACTERISTIC OF MAN. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A GIFT IMPARTED TO MAN BY GOD OUT OF MERCY, GRACE, AND LOVE THROUGH OUR FAITH IN JESUS. IT COMES WHEN WE BELIEVE GOD'S WORD—ALL OF GOD'S WORD, NOT JUST CAREFULLY CHOSEN PIECES OF IT.



Let's see what the Bible has to say about whether men can get to heaven without Jesus...

The Bible says that Jesus is:

The way to heaven (John 14:6)

The object of faith (Matt 7:21-27)

The Word of life (John 6:63)

The Gate of the sheep—the sheep being men and the gate being heaven's gate (John 10:7)

The Bread of life (John 6:35)

The Resurrection (John 11:25)

The only way to heaven (Acts 4:12)

The forgiveness of sin (Acts 13:38-39)

The ONLY MAN God exalted (Phil 2:9)

Chosen by God to be Savior (1 Peter 2:4)

The only one who fulfilled the Law (Matt 5:17)

The only one who conquered death (Heb 2:14-15)

Come from heaven & returned to heaven (John 3:13, 6:38)

Lived a perfect human life (Hebrews 4:15)

Is the only sacrifice for forgiveness of sin (1 John 2:2)

The only mediator between God & man (1 Tim 2:5)

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12)

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6)

In other words: Jesus Christ is the only gate to the kingdom of heaven. We cannot gain heaven through our own efforts but only by faith in Jesus. God's House, God's Rules, God's Way.

We have to understand that:

- 1) God is the Creator of Heaven and Earth.**
- 2) God sets the requirements for citizenship in heaven.**
- 3) Faith in Jesus is the requirement that God has set in His Word, the Bible. It is not optional.**

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9)



The truth hits us right between the eyes...

...and that truth is this: IF MEN WERE ABLE TO OBTAIN RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH THEIR OWN EFFORTS, THEN JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS WAS POINTLESS AND THE WORD OF THE BIBLE IS INCORRECT.

Seriously. The thrust of the Bible is for God to reveal His plan for the redemption of mankind so that we understand how all the events of the Bible (under His control of history) led to the fulfillment of that plan. This is all predicated on the truth that man cannot achieve righteousness on his own.

“When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked ‘Who then can be saved?’. Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible’.”

(Matthew 19:26).


WE NEED TO BE AWARE THAT THE DESIRE TO EARN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY OUR OWN EFFORT IS ANOTHER TRAP OF SATAN. WE ARE TAKING OUR TRUST AWAY FROM GOD AND PUTTING IT ONLY IN OURSELVES.

- We exist in cultures that are very centered on self-determination, personal gratification, individual liberty, achievement, success, and physical and material desires. We are taught that it is up to us to be in control of our lives, our futures, our success. We measure ourselves by cultural standards, including whether we are good people, whether we are successful, whether we are acceptable, loveable, our self-identity and self-worth are often set according to the external influences around us. **WE ARE NOT CULTURALLY CONDITIONED TO TRUST OUR FATE INTO OTHER PEOPLE'S HANDS. WE ARE CULTURALLY CONDITIONED THAT “SUBMISSION” AND “OBEDIENCE” ARE SIGNS OF WEAKNESS OR THREATS TO OUR PERSONAL LIBERTY.** We're taught that “it's all up to us”, “look our for number one”, and “if you want it done right, do it yourself”.
- We are also under emotional and mental attack of the enemy. Satan will always encourage you to set yourself as the master of your fate. He will set up material desires, career goals, social media, competition, even things like getting married and having children and make them “idols” for you (an idol is anything that takes your time, your devotion, your priority over the Lord). Even good works are idols if our true motivation is to earn our redemption by good works rather than working for the good, glory, and pleasure of the Lord.
- All of these things—this self-determination, these idols---take God off the throne of our lives. It could even be considered putting ourselves on the throne of God.
- **CHECK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU WRECK YOURSELF.**



Why did God create Lucifer (and for that matter, mankind) knowing that the result would be the introduction of sin into God's creation?

- ▶ First: We have to understand that there is very little information in the Bible about Satan, the rebellion of the angels, and why God has not simply eradicated sin and evil through His great power (yet) but rather allows Satan to influence the world for an unspecified length time.
- ▶ Second: God has given us His revelation through His creation, His Word, and His acts throughout human history. Through this revelation, we know certain things about God's nature and character and abilities. It is possible, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to gain some insights when we examine God's revelation, we find sufficient foundation for us to have faith in God's reasons, purposes, and plans even when we don't understand.
- ▶ Three: There is NOTHING wrong with asking God questions. Just be aware that Satan works against God's purposes. As you seek to learn about God, the adversary is going to try to harden your heart against the answers (especially if the truth isn't what you want to hear because it doesn't suit your personal wishes or ambitions). **God wants to answer your questions. He wants you to know Him.** He gave us His creation, His Bible, the teachings of His Son, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit to provide answers to our questions so that we CAN know Him. But we have to guard our hearts and quiet our minds so that we are receptive to what God wants to teach us.



What DO we know about God from studying the Bible?

God desires RELATIONSHIP with us

1 Timothy 2:3-4

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come to knowledge of the truth.”

- ▶ God is OMNIPOTENT (all-powerful)
Romans 11:36 Ephesians 1:11
- ▶ God is OMNISCIENT (knows everything)
Acts 15:18, Ezekiel 11:5
- ▶ God is OMNIPRESENT (everywhere at once)
Job 11:7-9, 1 Kings 8:27
- ▶ God is our CREATOR
Genesis 1-2
- ▶ God is TRIUNE (Father, Son, and Spirit)
Isaiah 9:6, 1 Corinthians 8:6
- ▶ God is HOLY
1 Samuel 2:2, Revelation 4:8
- ▶ God is RIGHTEOUS
Psalm 48:10, Deuteronomy 32:4
- ▶ God is JUST
Genesis 18:25, Psalm 99:4
- ▶ God is LOVING
1 Corinthians 13, Romans 11:36, John 3:16
- ▶ God is MERCIFUL
Hebrews 4:16, Titus 3:5



What DO we know about God from studying the Bible?

God is TRUSTWORTHY

Revelation 21:5, Deuteronomy 32:4

The LORD is the everlasting GOD, the CREATOR of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of His UNDERSTANDING. He gives POWER to the weak and STRENGTH to the powerless. – Isaiah 40:28-31

- ▶ God is SELF-SUFFICIENT (needing nothing)
John 5:26, 2 Corinthians 3:5
- ▶ God is IMMUTABLE
Malachi 3:6, James 1:17
- ▶ God is TRANSCENDENT (above all things)
Isaiah 55:8-9, John 8:23
- ▶ God is IMMANENT (close by)
- ▶ God is our PEACE
- ▶ God is SOVEREIGN (He reigns)
Genesis 14:19, Romans 9:15
- ▶ God is FAITHFUL (keeps His Word)
1 Corinthians 1:9, 1 John 1:9
- ▶ God is SELF-SUFFICIENT
John 5:26, 2 Corinthians 3:5
- ▶ God is ETERNAL
Exodus 3:14
- ▶ God is JEALOUS FOR US (it's a good thing)
Exodus 20:5, Deuteronomy 4:24
- ▶ God is GRACIOUS
Psalm 145:17, Ephesians 4:7

What DO we know about God, the devil, and creation from studying the Bible?

Much of what theologians know about the fall of Satan come from the books of Isaiah (chapter 14) and Ezekiel (chapter 28). These verses overtly address the kings of Tyre and Babylon, but many biblical scholars hold that their hidden meaning is that these verses describe the conceit of Lucifer and his fall from heaven.

The book of Job and the temptation of Christ illustrate how Satan still works openly to oppose God's purposes in the world. But, it is his subtle influence through tempting mankind to sin and rebel against God that comprises Satan's daily attacks on God's purposes. 2 Peter 2:4 warns that God did not spare the angels who rebelled, nor will He spare men who refuse Jesus' offer of salvation and choose rebellion and sin.

The Gospel of Luke (10:17-18) speaks of Satan falling from heaven like lightning. 1 Timothy 3:6 admonishes that those who become conceited may fall under the same judgement as the devil, indicating conceit was a key factor in Lucifer's fall from heaven.

The Book of Revelation (chapter 12) speaks of the final battle between Michael and his angels and Satan and "his angels" (actually demons or angels who fell with Lucifer after the rebellion).

It should also be noted that Lucifer is called a "signet" or seal of perfection. This means he is a display or symbol of perfection; it does NOT mean Lucifer was created perfect. Only God is perfect. WE NEED TO BE CLEAR ON THAT POINT.

- Before God created mankind, He created the heavenly angels and cherubim, including Lucifer.
- God made Lucifer ("morning star") very wise and very beautiful. He is called a "seal of perfection" and said to have "perfect beauty".
- Lucifer grew proud of his own God-given qualities and began to desire the throne of heaven for himself. He gathered some of the other heavenly beings and led a rebellion against God.
- As a result of the rebellion, God cast Lucifer down from the mountain of God but did not destroy him. Lucifer became known as Satan ("adversary").
- Lucifer still has contact with God, as seen when challenging God in the Book of Job and tempting Jesus in the Gospels. Both accounts illustrate that Satan works against God's purposes and plans.
- For a period of time that God has set, Satan is allowed to roam the earth, causing sin and suffering, before his ultimate defeat by the Messiah.
- Satan works on earth to oppose God's purposes.
- God has determined that Satan will be defeated by the "seed of the woman" (Eve), the Messiah, and eventually will be imprisoned for a time and then finally cast into a lake of fire.

What DO we know about God, the devil, and creation from studying the Bible?

“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might now the things that have been freely given to us by God.

These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ”

- 1 Corinthians 2:10-16

- God created the heavens, earth, man, and woman.
- Man and woman were created and placed in the Garden of Eden for specified purposes set by God, including:
 - Subdue the earth and its creatures
 - Have dominion and authority over the earth and its creatures as God’s regents
 - Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with God’s image
 - To eat of any fruit or plant of the Garden EXCEPT the fruit of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
- Satan interfered in the Garden of Eden by tempting Eve and Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge. Because of this, mankind became sinful and fallen much as Lucifer and the angels who rebelled. The result was similar: Adam and Eve were removed from the Garden and left in a fallen condition.
- The difference between the fall of man and the fall of Lucifer is that God set a plan in place for mankind to be redeemed and saved from their fallen condition. We will examine that plan and how it led to Easter in the next section of this lesson.

Given what we DON'T about God, the devil, and creation from studying the Bible, how do we answer these questions?

Let's circle back now to the questions presented by my young friend at the beginning of this lesson:

Why did God create Satan knowing he would be evil?

Why does God not simply end Satan right now?

Why did God create men knowing that they would also be sinful?

Why does God not simply change men to be without sin (I'm paraphrasing) right now?

These, unfortunately are questions for which there is not a definitive answer clearly stated in the Bible. I can't make claim to special insight into the mind of God beyond what His Word tells us. What I'm going to present you with is some Biblical points to consider. I'm also going to say that anytime you are faced with the question "Why, God?" your first course of action should always be GO TO GOD IN PRAYER.

And not just once, but keep praying on it until the Holy Spirit moves you and illuminates a chapter or verse of the Bible that speaks to the answer. Your relationship with God is deeply personal. Only He can give you insights that will hold meaning for you or give you any true peace of mind or spirit. If you still struggle, go to your congregational leadership and seek their counsel.

Before I try to answer, I am going to give you one more caution: Understand that there IS a difference between what God knows and what men know. Understand that there IS a difference between the priorities of God and the priorities of men. Be careful as you ask God questions that you are not questioning God or attempting to remove His sovereignty over His own creation.

The death of Christ on the cross is a perfect example of Satan and man's understanding and perspective versus God's understanding and perspective. Satan's perspective was that Christ's death brought an end to redemption. The Pharisees' perspective was that Christ's death brought an end to rebellion against their ways and the Law. The perspective of the faithful was that Christ's death was the end of hope for salvation.


God's perspective that Christ's death was the victory over Satan, the fulfillment of the Law, and the guarantee of salvation for the faithful.


So, maybe keep that in mind next time you think you know how God ought to handle things (if I may be blunt). If you cannot accept that God's priorities and plans may not align with how you believe the universe should operate, then nothing I can say here is going to make a difference. Your heart is already hardened against finding a true explanation.

One thing that the Bible teaches us is that God has not yet revealed ALL that He knows, all His mysteries or insights. Some things will not be revealed to us until the very end of time.

On the other hand, if you are truly seeking to find a purpose and a hope by asking such questions, I will do my best to make some observations on what the Bible tells us, observations that at least give me hope.

Ready?

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- ▶ Yes, God knew what would happen when He created Lucifer and mankind. It is impossible, based on what the Bible tells us about God's attributes, to conclude otherwise. He's already seen the whole flow of history.
 - ▶ This being said, God CHOSE to create all of us anyway. Specifically, men were created in His own image to fill the earth with His image. What does this tell us? GOD WANTS US. HE WANTS RELATIONSHIP WITH US. Why does He not simply change us, remove our free will so that we cannot chose to do evil? He does not enslave our free will because His own freewill is not enslaved. If He wanted us to be made without free will, He would have made us that way.
 - ▶ God is a being of free will. His attributes of mercy, holiness, justice, etc. are not forced upon Him by an external source. His mercy and grace are His to give or rescind according to His will. The relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit is one of mutual love, concern, and submission that is freely given not forced. One is not enslaved to the will of the other within the Trinity. For God to create an image of Himself (man or angel) that is incapable of giving love, mercy, compassion, or worship by free choice would not be making a true image of Himself. Honestly, does ANY loving, righteous parent want a child's love and obedience to owe to the fact that the child has no choice?
 - ▶ God wants us to KNOW Him, to know His WAYS, to TRUST Him. These things come from the heart. That's why God says in Matthew 15 that evil originates in the heart and emerges from our lips to defile us. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit works within our hearts to turn us towards God. We choose God with our hearts. A being of no free will has no heart. He wants us to enter into a relationship like the one within the Trinity, mutually giving and receiving love, submission, peace, and joy. No mind slaves. No automatons. Nothing forced or insincere.
 - ▶ We know that the Lord purposes that we be in relationship with Him.
 - ▶ We know that the Lord purposes that all people hear the good news about Christ and are given the opportunity to receive salvation through faith in Christ.

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- ▶ God is righteous and holy and just, and therefore an image of Him that is corrupted by sinfulness and evil is also not a true image. His nature cannot allow such corruption to exist eternally. Evil will reach its end the correct moment in time AS DETERMINED BY GOD (who has the wisdom) AND NOT BY MEN (whose wisdom and foresight are limited).
 - ▶ God has a purpose for all things that He creates and a plan for mankind, the image that He created. God knows the hearts and minds and schemes of men (and fallen angels). Romans 8:27-29 tells us God knew from the very beginning which of His children would choose His ways, and so He chose them from the beginning (millennia before we were even born) and works all things and plans for the good of those who love Him. He chose us to be part of His plans.
 - ▶ Knowing that Satan set himself against God's purposes, the Lord has equipped His children for spiritual warfare against the adversary. He gave us the general revelation of His natural world and the special revelation of His Word in the Bible that we could be individually and collectively cultivated and trained for this warfare. As we are cultivated by God's Word and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, our image is transformed from a reflection of sin to a true reflection of God in all that we believe and feel, in our every action and deed.
 - ▶ In cultivating a garden of believers into His image, it is inevitable that weeds will emerge. Like weeds in the garden, Satan seeks to pervert God's plans and purposes. But God's plans will prevail. God has already anticipated every evil that Satan will do in this world and controls the flow of events in history that Satan's workings will not derail the Lord's redemptive purposes. Think back on the death of Christ on the cross if you still doubt that God can take evil schemes and turn them for good purposes. **HAD GOD NOT ALLOWED CHRIST'S DEATH, ALLOWED THAT EVIL SCHEME TO BE ENACTED BY SATAN AND MAN, MANKIND WOULD HAVE NO HOPE OF SALVATION.**
 - ▶ God's got the whole of history under HIS exclusive control. BUT IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN HIS WAY ACCORDING TO HIS PLANS AT A TIME OF HIS CHOOSING. His house; His rules.



It comes down to this...

GOD SAW ALL POSSIBILITIES FOR THE MEN THAT HE CREATED. HIS IS OMNISCIENT AND ETERNAL. HE KNOWS HOW HISTORY HAS TO UNFOLD TO ACHIEVE HIS PURPOSES.

THE ONLY "WORK" THAT A MAN CAN DO TO EARN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SALVATION IS TO MAKE A CHOICE: TO CHOOSE TO BELIEF THAT JESUS ALREADY DID THE WORK.

GOD GAVE US FREE WILL BECAUSE TRUE FAITH, OBEDIENCE, AND WORSHIP OF GOD IS ROOTED IN CHOICE.

GOD WANTS OUR FAITH TO BE OUR FREE CHOICE.

GOD WANTS OUR OBEDIENCE TO BE OUR FREE CHOICE.

HE WANTS US TO CHOSE TO SUBMIT OUR PERSONAL AMBITIONS TO HIS WILL AND PURPOSES. THAT IS OUR GIFT TO GOD IN GRATITUDE AND RECOGNITION OF GOD'S HOLINESS, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND WORTHINESS OF OUR PRAISE, WORSHIP, FAITH, AND OBEDIENCE.

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS IMPARTED TO US FROM GOD ON ACCOUNT OF OUR FAITH. IT IS GOD'S GIFT TO US IN RETURN.

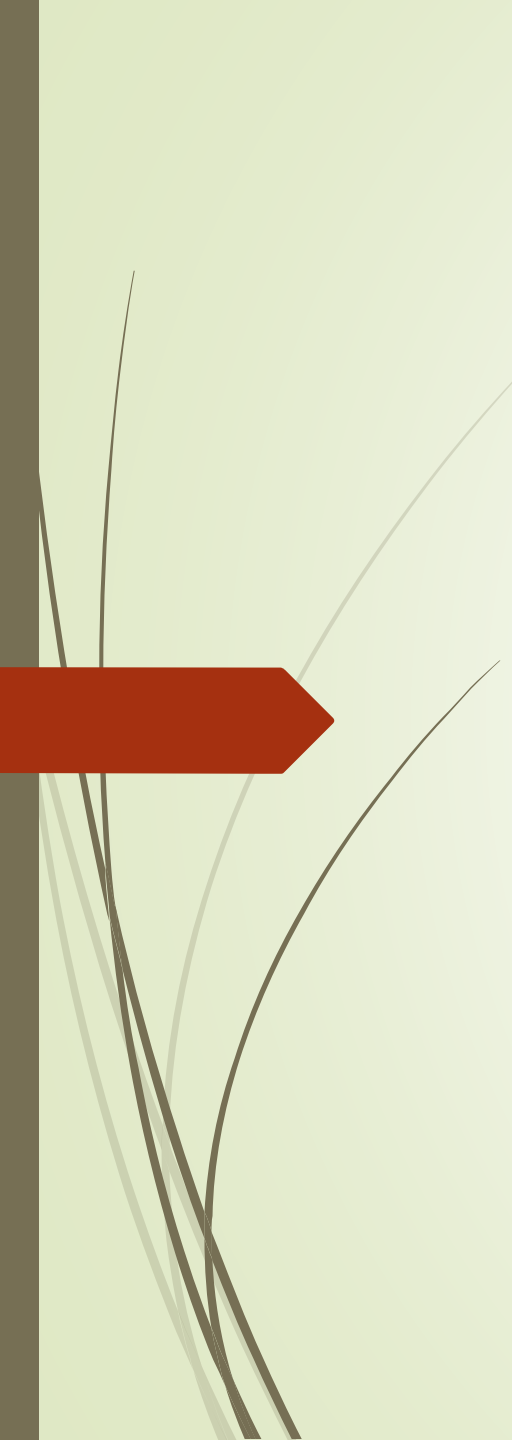
LOOK TO THE BIBLICAL HEROES OF THE FAITH FOR PROOF THAT FREE WILL AND TO CHOOSE GOD AND NOT FORCED COMPLIANCE IS ESSENTIAL TO TRUE FAITH:

- Abraham chose to obey when God said to leave his father's house and go to the promised land.*
- Noah obeyed when God said to build an Ark.*
- Moses obeyed when God appointed him the prophet to lead His people out of bondage.*
- The people of Israel chose to enter into covenant relationship with God.*
- The prophets of the Lord chose to obey His instructions in every task He set and every message they delivered to Israel and Judah. Even Jonah obeyed (after a little discipline from God).*
- Mary said yes to God's will that she become the virgin mother of Christ, even knowing that she could be put to death when she was found to be pregnant and unwed.*
- Joseph said yes to God's will to take Mary as his wife.*
- The apostles said yes to God's will when they left behind their families and their ambitions to follow Jesus.*
- JESUS SAID YES WHEN GOD APPOINTED HIM TO DIE ON THE CROSS.**



Why then are we allowed to be born with physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual brokenness?

- ▶ Brothers, sisters, children, YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL TO GOD IN YOUR BROKEN STATE.
- ▶ God wants you to know that He makes all things beautiful, all things are made to work together for His good. Believe that God has a purpose in all things that happen. Even the schemes of Satan can be turned to the good of those who trust God.
- ▶ Our weakness, as the Apostle Paul said of the thorn in his flesh, makes us truly understand how dependent we are upon God for healing, for hope, to make us whole. God wants us to lean on him when we are not strong, to come into His arms when we are broken, to open our hearts to Him when we do not understand the answer to the question “why”?
- ▶ It could be in your broken condition that God is preparing you for something truly amazing, something that will make you a light to others, beckoning them to the same salvation and hope you receive from Christ. Who is better suited to find the lost than one who has been lost? Who is better suited to comfort those who suffer than one who has experienced that same suffering? Who is better suited to understand addiction than one who has survived addiction? Who is better to be a teacher than one who was already a student?



We've examined why God created beings who were vulnerable to sin and why He doesn't fix the problem by eliminating or changing us immediately (the way of man).

Now let's examine the plans God DID make, and we'll see why Jesus is the only gate by which men may enter God's kingdom of heaven. Let's examine the events that led to Good Friday and Easter Sunday.



GOD'S REDEMPTION PLAN FOR MANKIND

Did you know that the image of the cross has biblical symbolism beyond the sacrificial death of Christ?

The horizontal piece of the cross symbolizes Christ as the bridge from sin and death to salvation and life. It also symbolizes humankind's relationship to one another (which is intended to be one of fellowship, support, submission, building up, teaching, correcting, and love).

The vertical piece of the cross represents man's relationship with God. It symbolizes man reaching upwards for God even as He reaches down to lift us up to Him.

The story of Easter is the story of “redemptive” or “covenantal” biblical history. For a visual, imagine that the cross has been placed at the top of a staircase (yes, a stairway to heaven).

Redemptive history would be the staircase. In that history, God made six covenants. With every covenant, a new theological era was created. Each new step was built upon the foundation of the previous steps, carrying history closer to the arrival of Christ the Messiah.

Those six covenants are the *Adamic, Noahic, Mosaic, Palestine, Davidic, and New Covenants*. Each one made the path for Jesus, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

Let's do a brief review of these covenants.

THE BIBLICAL COVENANTS – PATHS TO GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER SUNDAY

▶ THE ADAMIC COVENANT

- ▶ While God cast Adam and Eve from Eden, He gave them the hope that mankind would one day be redeemed from its descent into sin.
- ▶ This covenant promises that the “seed of the woman” (Eve) would crush the head of the serpent (Satan).
- ▶ This was a promise that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, would be one of Eve’s descendants. He would eventually defeat Satan and bring salvation from sin to mankind.
- ▶ We must realize that God had to fulfill this covenant by preserving the lineage of Eve. Which brings us to the Noahic Covenant.
- ▶ The first animal sacrifice is found in this episode. God kills an animal to provide skins or clothing for Adam and Eve.
- ▶ From this, we see that components of God’s redemptive plan are blood sacrifices and a Messiah who would defeat Satan.

▶ THE NOAHIC COVENANT

- ▶ When the holy God could no longer abide the unrepentant wickedness of mankind, His punishment was the Great Flood, which wiped all men from the earth save for Noah and his family.
- ▶ Noah was a descendant of Eve. In preserving Noah, God preserved the lineage that would lead to Jesus Christ and kept His covenant with Adam and Eve.
- ▶ God’s promise to Noah in this covenant was that He would never again send a flood to wipe out mankind. He gave us the rainbow as a reminder of His promise.
- ▶ This covenant holds that the earth will provide an environment for man until such time as this creation ends and the new earth is formed.
- ▶ A side note: After this covenant, men began to consume meat but were forbidden to eat blood, which was called “life”. Blood and sacrifice would factor heavily into God’s redemption plan and worship rituals for His chosen nation of Israel.
- ▶ Noah sacrifices animals to honor God, pointing to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and His sacrifice.

THE BIBLICAL COVENANTS – PATHS TO GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER SUNDAY

▶ THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

- ▶ A covenant between God and Abraham that gives us the first true insights about God's redemptive plan.
- ▶ God called Abraham to go to the land of Canaan. There, He promised to make a great nation from Abraham's descendants. Through them, all families of the world would be blessed.
- ▶ He also promised that the land of Canaan would become the possession of Abraham's descendants.
- ▶ This is a "blood covenant", where those in the covenant passed between two halves of a sacrificial animal as a sign of their oaths. If either party failed to fulfilled their promise, they would face death just like the sacrificial animal. In this case, God alone passed between the halves of the animals, which meant the responsibility for keeping this covenant was His alone and He was swearing it on His very eternal existence.
- ▶ More than this, God promised that those who blessed Abraham would be blessed, and those who cursed Abraham would be cursed. In other words, God would protect Abraham's descendants as His own, which we see Him do throughout history as pagan nations threatened His chosen people.
- ▶ Abram ("high father") who was renamed Abraham ("father of a multitude") after this covenant was a descendant of Eve. This means that not only would Abraham's descendants become the holy nation of Israel, but that the Messiah was going to be one of Abraham's descendants.
- ▶ As a sign of their entrance into this covenant, Abraham and his male descendants were to be circumcised. If any descendant refused, he was declaring himself to be outside of God's covenant plan (see Exodus 4:24-26).
- ▶ How would his descendants "bless all families"? The most obvious reason is that Jesus Christ would die on the cross to redeem men from their sins and become the gateway to salvation. Those who believe in Jesus are considered to be adopted into the family of Abraham, the chosen people.
- ▶ Jesus Christ was the "Living Word" by which God would bless men. Abraham's descendants would also be given the Written Word of God in the form of the Law of Moses. They were to model this law, teach it to their descendants, and obey its every tenant.
- ▶ Another way they would bless the nations is by being the image of God among the pagan nations. They were intended to model God's perfect law, His perfect ways to the world, to show how He would love, preserve, bless, and protect those who were His own. In reality, the people of Israel would often lapse into idolatry and paganism, at which time they were also a model to the world of the justice and righteousness of God when He disciplined them in various ways. Yet, through it all, God would preserve a remnant of Abraham's descendants—Eve's descendants—that He could demonstrate His faithfulness to keep every promise He makes.
- ▶ Worship in the days of Noah and Abraham was individual—a person built an altar and worshipped God as they would. In fact, Abraham was known for constructing altars wherever he went and openly worshipping God before the pagan people. He was known as a man of God and a man of integrity.

THE BIBLICAL COVENANTS – PATHS TO GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER SUNDAY

- ▶ THE MOSAIC (SINAITIC) COVENANT
- ▶ ALSO CALLED THE PALESTINE COVENANT OR THE OLD COVENANT
- ▶ This was a covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham whom He liberated from slavery in Egypt. God would be their king and Sovereign Lord.
- ▶ This was a conditional covenant: God's promises were contingent upon the obedience of the Israelites once they agreed to enter into the covenant. If they obeyed, God would bless them. If they disobeyed, He would punish them. These blessings and curses are detailed in Deuteronomy 28.
- ▶ God promised to make them a "kingdom of priests, a holy nation". Does this mean they would actually BE holy in the same way God is holy? No. "Holy" in this case means that they were being set apart among all the nations to be God's chosen people, to serve God and to worship God. They would proclaim God's name, Yahweh, to the pagan nations as a light beckoning them to the Lord.
- ▶ They were given the Law of Moses, which includes the Ten Commandments. These were precise guidelines for every detail of their daily lives and their proper worship of God. It is important to note that obeying this law did NOT translate to salvation. That would be man earning his salvation through his own good works, which as we saw is not God's plan. In fact, the Law was meant to fully reveal man's sinful condition and their need for a Savior. There was never a living man who could completely fulfill the law and lead a blameless life...except for Jesus Christ.
- ▶ In the Law of Moses, animal sacrifice and blood are crucial to atonement for sin. Because the wages of sin is death, the animals had to die in place of the sinner. Yet, animal blood did not remove a man's sin (see Hebrews 10:4-6), it merely temporarily put those sins from God's sight. Complete, final atonement could only come from the blood of Jesus, the only truly perfect sacrifice.
- ▶ These animal sacrifices, then, foreshadowed Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the complete and final forgiveness of sins.
- ▶ We see that worship was now organized, not individual, and followed rituals as set by God. Priests were now mediators between man and God, and only a priest who went through precise sanctification rituals could approach God in the tabernacle/temples.

THE BIBLICAL COVENANTS – PATHS TO GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER SUNDAY

▶ THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

- ▶ As it turns out, the people of Israel could not help but demand to have a human king just like the pagan nations. In essence, they were removing God from the throne of their lives, rejecting Him as their Sovereign. The backsliding would continue as a great many of them would reject God as their Lord in favor of the false gods of the pagans.
 - ▶ After the disastrous reign of King Saul, God finally revealed His true chosen monarch of Israel: King David, whom God called a man after His heart despite David's occasional sins and backsliding. David had true zeal, trust, and devotion to the Lord and was blessed as God's servant.
 - ▶ God reaffirmed his Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. He promises to provide a place for His people so they would have a home of their own where they would not be oppressed. He promised that David's son would succeed him as king of God's people and that son would be the one to build God's temple (that son was Solomon).
 - ▶ God promises that David's throne would be established forever, that the line of David would be preserved before the Lord. In other words, the Davidic Kingdom would be everlasting. His descendants would sit upon David's throne.
- ▶ God promised that a different son of David would build a lasting House and rule forever. That descendant of David is Jesus Christ.
 - ▶ The book of Revelation shows a time when Satan will be defeated, and Jesus Christ will take the throne of David and authority as king over all believers who choose him and are adopted into the covenant.
 - ▶ For God's plans, we now know that the Messiah will be a son of King David, that there will come a day when His people are governed by the true King forever. So, the Messiah would not just be the perfect sacrifice for men's sins, He would be the true King to rule over them. Part of the reason that the people despaired at the death of Christ was that they expected He would come to Jerusalem to take the throne and save them from their oppressors, not to die on the cross. Again, we see human will and perspective contrasted with God's will and perspective.
 - ▶ This covenant is unconditional—God would do all that He had promised to His servant David.

THE BIBLICAL COVENANTS – PATHS TO GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER SUNDAY

▶ THE NEW COVENANT

- ▶ Among Moses' final words to the Israelites was a prediction that the Lord would "circumcise" their hearts and the hearts their descendants so that they would finally love God with all their hearts and live.
- ▶ Why? The history of Israel shows us that God's people failed in fidelity and love for the One True God. They frequently worshipped false gods and false idols, neglecting the Lord. Their sacrifices for atonement of sin were hollow because their hearts did not belong fully to God. They neglected the temple that Solomon built for God. For a time, the Law of Moses was even lost and forgotten among God's people. So wicked and sinful was the condition of Israel that it divided into two kingdoms: Israel, which primarily rejected God, and Judah, which was still ruled by David's descendants (though Satan had inspired the Israelites to nearly wipe out David's descendants, God preserved the line of the Messiah). God sent His prophets to warn His people that punishment was coming, but His warnings went unheeded. God eventually allowed Syria to conquer Israel and carry its people into captivity. This should have been a warning to Judah, but they also fell into idolatry. God eventually allowed King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to conquer Judah, and the people spent seventy years in captivity before God moved King Cyrus to allow their return to Jerusalem.
- ▶ In the New Covenant, God promised to put His law into their minds and write it on their hearts, to give them new hearts capable of loving Him. They would be His people; He would be their God. This covenant was written on the heart, while the Law of Moses had been written on stone.
- ▶ In this covenant, God also promises believers that He would put His Spirit in them (the Holy Spirit) so that they would understand God's Word and obey its teachings.
- ▶ He also promises that His people would live in the land promised to Abraham and God would provide for them.
- ▶ This was not a covenant of Law but a covenant of God's grace.
- ▶ Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, salvation would also be available to the Gentiles (adoption into Abraham's family and therefore into the covenant).

THE BIBLICAL COVENANTS – PATHS TO GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER SUNDAY

▶ THE NEW COVENANT

▶ **THE CONDITION OF THIS COVENANT IS FAITH IN THE MESSIAH WHOM GOD SENT: JESUS CHRIST. THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN JESUS WOULD HAVE RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPARTED TO THEM BY GOD AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS WOULD PERMANENTLY PUT THEIR SINS OUT OF GOD'S SIGHT. THEY WOULD RECEIVE SALVATION.**

▶ We have said that priests were mediators between God and man in Israel. The most central area of the temple was the Holy of Holies, where God's presence dwelled. A heavy veil separated this area from the rest of the temple. Only a High Priest who was carefully sanctified per God's instructions could enter and be in God's presence or address God on behalf of sinners. When Christ died on the cross, this heavy veil in the temple ripped into two. This was God's way of saying there was no longer a barrier between Himself and believers. Because Jesus had made atonement for all sins, those who believe on Him were considered righteous in God's eyes. It also means that Jesus alone, instead of human priests, now acts as a mediator between God and man.

▶ The Apostles of Jesus were also guided by the Holy Spirit to know that the Word of God and access to the salvation of Jesus Christ was no longer limited to the Jewish people. They were to take the story of Jesus, the Good News, and share it with the Gentile/pagan people as well. The Book of Revelation reveals that God's eternal kingdom will include people of all nations or tribes of man.

▶ Before Jesus' atoning death on the cross, before His ministry, John the Baptist was performing water baptisms. This identified people with the Messiah who was to come (John was purposed by God specifically to announce that the Messiah's arrival was imminent). Water baptism is used today. Being baptized does NOT earn a man's salvation. Christians are baptized as a symbolic act of being buried in the tomb like Christ (submergence in water) and joining Christ in His resurrection to eternal life (being lifted out of the water). It is a public confession of faith in Jesus, an act that must be done of free choice.

▶ There is another Christian baptism, which comes after one has accepted Jesus as Savior. That is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit coming into the believer as they study God's word so that they can understand and moving their hearts to align with God's will.

THE BLOOD OF JESUS

- ▶ GOOD FRIDAY, THEN, WAS THE DAY OF THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST, HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS.
- ▶ We have seen that it was God the Son's choice to come to earth, be born to a woman, and live a perfect life. In doing so, He was the only human who perfectly fulfilled all the requirements of God and was blameless in God's eyes—without a single sin.
- ▶ God the Father's intention and God the son's choice was that the Son would die on the cross as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of ALL those who believe on Him. God knew even before He created Adam and Eve that history had to lead to this moment.
- ▶ Why? God is a holy God, a just God, a righteous God. His justice requires the punishment of sin, and that punishment must be death of the sinner. Every human stands condemned before the Lord. Jesus traded places with us, died for each of us (Mark 10:45, 1 Peter 2:24, Romans 3:25). God's wrath against man was satisfied by His act of love in coming to earth to die in our place.
- ▶ This act on the cross, freely dying for us, makes one point clear: GOD LOVES US. HE LOVES US SO THAT HE GAVE HIS OWN BLOOD THROUGH THE SON FOR US THAT WE COULD LIVE. HE MADE A WAY FOR OUR FORGIVENESS. When sin infected man through Adam and Eve, we were separated from God (who cannot have sin in His holy presence). Through Christ's blood, we no longer are separated from God by our sins, but are now able to be in God's presence again.

THE DEATH & RESURRECTION OF JESUS

- EASTER SUNDAY IS THE DAY THAT CHRIST ROSE FROM THE DEAD. THIS MEANS THAT CHRIST OVERCAME DEATH, WHICH SATAN BROUGHT INTO THE WORLD THROUGH SIN.
- Upon His death, Jesus descended into Sheol, the place of the dead. The power of God raised Him from Sheol after three days, demonstrating that God and not Satan has ultimate sovereignty over life and death.
- Christ rose in a new body. The Bible teaches us that when believers come into the New Kingdom of Christ, they will be given new bodies as well.
- Jesus resurrection authenticated every claim He had made about Himself, validated His deity, proves that He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). Death no longer has power over Jesus, neither will it have power over those who believe on Him.
- Jesus is the first who will be raised from the dead, the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Those who believe in Jesus will likewise be raised to life again in His eternal kingdom.
- The Book of Revelation teaches that there will be a second advent or coming of Jesus Christ. This is the time that God has appointed for the final defeat of Satan and removal of sin and its influence from the eternal kingdom. We will study the biblical theology of the Rapture/Armageddon/Second Advent in a later lesson.



Conclusion



- ▶ This was a long lesson, and to be honest I still don't know if my answers would satisfy my young friend's curious and intelligent questions. I hope it has given you "something to chew on" and maybe something to investigate for yourself through the study of God's Word. These are complicated subjects, and I have only skimmed the surface here. Please check out some of my other lessons at walkthroughscripture.com if you want to dig more into these subjects. As always, I'm just a human teacher doing my best to understand and share what God has taught me, but there is no substitute for personal relationship with God by the study of His Word and a relationship of worship and prayer. Jesus has given you a direct line to the Lord, so don't let it go to waste!
- ▶ Easter blessings to you, brothers and sisters.