

SUMMARY

CHRISTIANITY ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE BY RON RHODES

INTRODUCTION

- Approximately 25 percent of people claiming to be born again rely on means other than God's grace to get to heaven, thereby indicating an unbiblical view of salvation.
- America has increasingly become a biblically illiterate nation.
- Jesus Is the Heart of Christianity

CHAPTER 1: GODS COMMUNICATION TO US

- Authentic Christianity, as opposed to cultural (man-made) religion, is based on divine revelation.
- God has revealed Himself in two primary ways-through general revelation and special revelation. General revelation refers to revelation that is available to all persons of all times. Special revelation refers to God's specific revelation through historical biblical events, the person & work of Jesus Christ, God's Word, and His message spoken via prophets and apostles.
- Jesus-as eternal God-took on human flesh so He could be God's fullest revelation to man.
- In the Bible, God has provided everything He wants us to know about Him and how we can have a relationship with Him. It is inspired so the human authors, using their own individual personalities and writing styles, composed and recorded without error His revelation to man.

CHAPTER 2: THE RIGHT WAY TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE

- One of Satan's methods today is to undermine confidence in God's Word and cause people to misinterpret it.
- When the plain, literal sense of Scripture makes good sense, seek no other sense.
- Theological "preunderstandings"-doctrinal opinions we have previously formed-should not bias our interpretation of Scripture.
- We must read each statement in Scripture in its proper context. The interpreter of Scripture must seek to step out of his Western mind-set and into a first-century Jewish mind-set.
- Interpret the Difficult Verses in Light of the Clearer Verses.
- Distinguish Between the Descriptive and the Prescriptive Verses.
- Realize That Some Biblical Truths Are Explicit and Others Are Implicit
- Distinguish Between Promises and Principles.

CHAPTER 3: GOD IS AWESOME

- Our hearts have hunger that none but God can satisfy, a vacuum or void that only God can fill.
- Our relationship with God begins the very moment we trust in Christ (who is God) for salvation.
- God is: the one true God, Spirit, living with us, immanent & translucent, perfect, eternal, love, omnipresent, all powerful, sovereign, holy, just, and trinity.

- In our modern pluralistic society, many people - including some who claim to be Christians-voice challenges to the traditional biblical concept of God. Examples include God is Sexist, Evil proves God is not all-powerful, a loving God wouldn't send people to Hell, etc.

CHAPTER 4: WHAT A WONDER JESUS IS

- People today, especially on college campuses, have different conceptions of Jesus-more often than not, wrong conceptions. This includes claiming Jesus was a Myth. Just a good Moral Teacher, not really God, and the like
- Per the Bible Jesus divine attributes include that He is Eternal, Self-Existent, Everywhere Present, All Knowing, All Powerful, Sovereign, and Sinless.
- Jesus' deity signs include that he performed numerous miracles, was worshipped as God, was also called the Son of God (meaning "of the order of God", not a son in the earthly sense), was Messiah. and spoke as God.

CHAPTER 5: GODS MAGNIFICANT CREATION

- David considered the magnificence of interstellar space a universal testimony to the Creator's glory. For example, Astronomers estimate that the universe contains 10 million billion billion stars.
- God sovereignly chose our tiny planet earth as a center of divine activity.
- The Universe Is Intelligently Designed for Life on Earth. Scientists tell us, for example, that if the strength of gravitational attraction were different, life on earth would not be possible. If our moon were significantly larger, the gravitational pull of the moon would be greater, and this would cause tidal waves that would engulf the land. And much more.
- Human Beings are creatures, created a little lower than the angels by God's own hands. They are wonderfully complex and designed specifically to live on the earth.
- Humans Are Created in God's Image.
- Human Beings Have Both a Material and an Immaterial Nature – ie. body & spirit.
- All Races of Humanity are Equal.
- Men and women are equal in worth before God, and both are created in His image.
- Human Beings Did Not Evolve.
- Humans Do Not Become Angels at Death.
- Humans are creatures responsible to God, our Creator, and should bow down in worship.

CHAPTER 6: HUMAN SIN

- Sin in the universe began not with man but with a great angelic personage known as Lucifer, who became so impressed with his beauty and power that he wanted to take God's place.
- As a result of this heinous sin against God, Lucifer was banished from living in heaven. He became corrupt, and his name changed from Lucifer ("morning star") to Satan (Adversary).
- Soon after their creation, Adam and Eve sinned against God and catapulted the entire human race into sin. The serpent (Satan), who had previously fallen into prideful sin, sneaked up to Eve, and in a fatal conversation, he led her astray.

- When Adam and Eve sinned, they broke their relationship & fellowship with God, acquired a sinful nature and rebellion against God, and infected all their descendants with that sinful nature.
- Jesus taught that man is utterly lost, that he is a sinner, that he is in need of repentance before a holy God, and that he needs to be born again.
- God is fully aware of every person's sins, both external acts and inner thoughts; nothing escapes His notice.
- All sin leads to spiritual death, not just one category of sins.
- Death, the penalty for sin, includes both spiritual and physical death. God intended for people to live and have fellowship with Him. Death is therefore foreign and hostile to human life. Death arose because of our rebellion against God. It is a form of God's judgment.

CHAPTER 7: JESUS THE SAVIOR BECAME MAN

- Christ's development as a human being was normal in every respect, with two major exceptions: (1) Christ always did the will of God, and (2) He never sinned.
- Innumerable passages in the New Testament confirm Christ's full humanity in the incarnation. Jesus experienced normal human development through infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.
- As a Human Christ veiled His preincarnate glory, voluntarily did not use some of His divine attributes on many occasions, and experienced condescension involved in taking on the likeness of human beings. However, He did not subtract a single divine attribute from Himself or in any sense make Himself less than God
- Christ is our High Priest. He is fully able to understand and empathize with us in our struggles as human beings.

CHAPTER 8: HUMAN SALVATION

- Scripture tells us that even before God created the world, He had decided that Jesus, the Lamb of God, would die on the cross for the sins of man.
- A careful reading of Scripture shows that the Father's role was to devise the plan of salvation.
- Jesus' task in the eternal plan of God included playing a key role in the creation of the universe, making preincarnate appearances to the patriarchs in Old Testament, coming to earth as God's ultimate revelation, dying on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice for man's sins, rising from the dead, and mediating between the Father and humankind.
- The Holy Spirit undertook the ministry of inspiring Scripture, regenerating (or gives new spiritual life) believers and sealing believers for the day of redemption (ie. believers are secure in their salvation, and The Holy Spirit enables believers to overcome sin and gives them the power to live righteously).
- **Summary Gospel:** 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."
- Popular misconceptions include: we must plead for mercy, we must live as Christ lived, we must state a redemption prayer of repentance, and many more.
- Salvation is a gift of grace from God that believers receive by faith alone, not by doing good works. The word grace means "undeserved favor." Because salvation is a gift, it can't be earned.

- Believers Receive Salvation Through Faith. God has not made the gospel complicated. In fact, according to the New Testament, a relationship with Jesus begins simply by placing faith in Him.
- God gave us the Commandments to show us what sin is, to provoke us to know how much we need a savior, to be a tutor to lead us to Christ. Once we have trusted in Christ as our Savior, the law has done its job and no longer holds sway over us.
- Because Baptism is not a part of the gospel, it is not necessary for salvation. Nevertheless, we should still get baptized because God has instructed us to.
- God gives His declaration of righteousness to believers "freely by his grace".
- We are forgiven- guilt-the legal condemnation for the offense-is gone.
- Scripture consistently teaches that once a person trusts in Christ and becomes a part of God's forever family, he or she is saved forever.
- Additional misconceptions include Universalism – the idea that in the end everyone will be saved, and that Jesus is only one of many ways to salvation.

CHAPTER 9: JESUS THE RISEN SAVIOR

- Jesus' crucifixion must have been utterly horrific. Scripture indicates He was beaten and scourged beyond recognition, forced to carry His heavy cross, stripped of His clothing, and had his hands and feet nailed to a cross where he was hung and died a horrible death.
- Friends and enemies of Christianity have long recognized that the resurrection of Christ is the foundation stone of the Christian faith.
- Contrary to a variety of skepticism, believing in the resurrection is reasonable because the historical evidence supports it, including:
 - The Roman seal on the grave was broken, which meant the person responsible would-be crucified upside down. Furthermore, the large 4000-pound stone sealing the grave was moved a good distance from the entrance, as if it had been picked up and carried away. The Roman guards had also fled. The penalty in Rome for a guard leaving his position was death. We can therefore assume they must have had a substantial reason for fleeing!
 - The biblical account has Jesus appearing first to a woman, Mary Magdalene. In first-century Jewish culture, a woman's testimony was unacceptable in any court of law except in a very few circumstances. A fabricator would have been much more likely to portray Peter or the other male disciples at the tomb.
 - Mary promptly told the disciples the glorious news. That evening, the disciples gathered in a room with the doors shut for fear of the Jews. The risen Christ appeared among them and said to them and showed the disciples His hands and His side. The wounds showed that He did not have another body but the same body.
 - Following Jesus' resurrection appearances to the disciples, their lives were transformed. They braved opposition, cynicism, ridicule, hardship, prison, and death on three continents, as they preached everywhere Jesus and the resurrection.
 - The Apostles endured some of the worst abuse and punishment known in their own day. In fact, many of them were tortured and even martyred for their faith in this resurrected Messiah. These witnesses seemed convinced beyond any doubt about the reality of Jesus' resurrection.

- The many thousands of Jews who became unflinching followers of Jesus abandoned many of their long held and cherished sacred beliefs and practices. Such abandonment of Jewish doctrine, according to Jewish authorities, could lead to an eternity in hell.
- Only the resurrection of Jesus could explain the conversion of hard-core skeptics in New Testament times.
- Many early Christians died for their testimony and commitment to Jesus. The only thing that could explain such widespread commitment is a resurrected Jesus who promised eternal life to those who followed Him.
- Jesus appeared before many hundreds of people after his resurrection.
- Various people have responded to Jesus' resurrection by claiming his followers were hallucinating, had distorted memories, that the body was stolen, that Jesus swooned (ie. didn't really die) on the cross, and other extreme theories. None of these theories stand up to the historical facts and/or logic.
- After examining all the data on Christ's resurrection Professor Tom Arnold concluded this: "I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquiry, than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead."

CHAPTER 10: THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Jesus informed the disciples, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever." The word counselor is a rich one-carrying the meaning of "comforter, helper, advocate, one who strengthens." This one word conveys the concepts of encouragement, support, assistance, care, and shouldering responsibility for another's welfare
- Scripture portrays the Holy Spirit as a Person with emotions, will, and all the other characteristics of a Person.
- Not only is the Holy Spirit a person, He is also God. He is just as much God as the Father and Jesus are.
- The Comforter Glorifies Christ: Scripture reveals that a primary purpose of the Holy Spirit is to bring glory to Jesus.
- The Scriptures tell us that the Holy Spirit is involved in a number of wonderful ministries among believers. The Ministries of the Holy Spirit include providing Believers with the following: a seal until the day of redemption, filling them to yield to the indwelling of the Spirit, the ability to walk in the Spirit, various Spiritual gifts, the Fruits of the Spirit (Peace, Love, Joy, Patience, Kindest, Gentleness, Goodness, Faithfulness, and Self Control), and much more.
- Many churchgoers today have taken some extreme positions on certain aspects of the Holy Spirit's work and ministry – including holy laughter, being "slain in the spirit", needing to speak in tongues for salvation, etc. Don't fall into this trap. You can't have a healthy spiritual life without the Holy Spirit's involvement.

CHAPTER 11: THE CHURCH

- The universal church is a global company of people who have one Lord and who share together in one gift of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Scripture indicates that the universal church was born on the Day of Pentecost.
- The church involves two very important relationships-relationships with other Christians and a corporate relationship with the Lord. One relationship affects the other.

- Christ is the Head of the Church.
- The Church is a Place of Equipping and Discipleship in regard to Bible study, worship, ministry, and much more. It is a Place of fellowship and involvement, a Place of Worship, and a Place of comfort.
- The Sacraments of the Church include Baptism and the Lords Supper. Baptism does not produce salvation and does not convey grace but rather is a symbol pointing to the believer's complete identification with Jesus Christ.
- In summary the church is a place of equipping, teaching, and discipleship. It is a place of worship, a place of fellowship, a place where the ministry of comfort takes place, and a place of involvement where every Christian's role is important.

CHAPTER 12: ANGELS AMONG US

- Angels Are Created Beings and were apparently all created simultaneously. There has been no increase in their ranks, and angels do not marry and thus do not procreate.
- When God created the angels, they were all good and holy. Some of the angels retained their holiness and did not sin, while others-following Lucifer's lead-rebelled against God and fell into great sin.
- The good angels are called elect angels. Good angels are therefore now incapable of sinning.
- The evil angels who rebelled against God are nonredeemable. The evil angels are destined for eternal suffering.
- Angels apparently have access to the entire universe and sends them on specific errands or assignments on earth.
- Angels are personal beings (spirit persons) with all the attributes of personality. They have intelligence, emotions, love, they desire, they contend, they worship.
- Angels are incorporeal and invisible
- Angels are localized beings: Despite the fact that angels are spirit beings, they nevertheless seem to have spatial limitations. Scripture is clear that at many angels have wings.
- Angels are powerful (although not all powerful like God), holy, obedient, immortal, and innumerable (ie. over 100 Million)
- There are different ranks of angels: Thrones, Dominions, Rulers, and Authorities. Beyond these specific angelic ranks, Scripture also speaks of other angels who have varying levels of authority and dignity-including the archangel Michael, the cherubim, the seraphim, and Gabriel. Michael is undeniably the prominent archangel.
- The Ministry of the Angels includes bringing messages, answering believer's prayers, giving encouragement, restraining evil, taking care of believers at death, and executing judgement. A key ministry among Christians is to act as guardians.

CHAPTER 13: SATAN

- Many people in our society today, including some who claim to be Christians, believe Satan is not a real person-an idea no doubt inspired by Satan himself. After all, if we don't believe we have an enemy to contend with, we will not prepare for defense.
- The biblical evidence for the existence and activity of Satan and demons is formidable.

- Lucifer led a rebellion against God, at which time his name was changed to Satan. The sin that corrupted Lucifer was self-generated pride, wanting to be like God. As a result of Lucifer's heinous sin, God banished him from heaven.
- Sin originated when Lucifer freely chose to rebel against the Creator-with with full understanding of the issues involved. Apparently, one-third of the angels freely chose to follow Lucifer in his rebellion. These demons are highly committed to their dark prince, Satan.
- Because of his vast experience, Satan knows the best way to foul you up. He is a master tempter, with thousands of years of practice of luring people into sin.
- Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers to the truth of the gospel.
- Fallen angels are also very active opposing believers in various ways: tempting Believers to sin, to commit sexually immoral acts, to lie, etc. They also incites persecution of Believers, plant doubt, instigates jealousy and division among Christians, hinder answers to Believers prayers, and the like.
- Satan is the "accuser of our brothers," indicating that he goes before God's throne and makes slanderous statements about the saints. In the future tribulation period, however, God will decisively cast the devil out of heaven. Sometime later God will throw Satan into the lake of fire. Our enemy's time is definitely limited.
- Jesus prays for us on a regular basis. Christ's intercession for us includes the kind of intercession He made for His disciples in John 17:15, where He asked the Father to keep them safe from the evil one.
- Christians must choose to put on their spiritual armor. Wearing this armor includes such things as living in righteousness and obedience to God's will, having faith in God, and using the Word of God effectively. This includes scriptural knowledge, reconciliation, Relying on the Holy Spirit, and prayer.

CHAPTER 14: GODS END OF TIMES PROPHECIES

- **The Rapture:** The rapture is that glorious event in which the dead in Christ will rise and living Christians will be instantly translated into their resurrection bodies-and both groups will be caught up to meet Christ in the air and taken back to heaven. Rhodes and many other scholars believe this will happen before the Tribulation period.
- **The Tribulation:** Scripture reveals that the tribulation will be a definite time of great travail at the end of the age. It will be so severe that no period in history, past or future, will equal it.
 - **The Antichrist.** The apostle Paul warned of a "man of lawlessness," who is the Antichrist. This individual will perform counterfeit signs and wonders and deceive many people during the tribulation period.
 - **The false prophet.** The false prophet is an assistant to the Antichrist.
 - **The 144,000.** The 144,000 Jews of Revelation 7 may be the ones who will fulfill God's original calling on Israel by witnessing all over the earth during the tribulation period.
 - The two witnesses receive power from God in much the same way that Moses and Elijah did. They will prophesy for 1260 days, and their message will no doubt be a call to repent.
- **Armageddon:** Human suffering will steadily escalate during the tribulation period. Worse comes to worst, however, when these already traumatized human beings find themselves engaged in a catastrophic series of battles called Armageddon.

- **The Second Coming of Jesus Christ.** The second coming is that event when Jesus Christ-the King of kings and Lord of lords-will return to earth in glory at the end of the present age and set up His kingdom. This will be a visible, physical, bodily return of the glorified Jesus and will be a universal experience; every eye will witness the event.
- **The Millennial Kingdom:** Following the second coming of Christ, Jesus will personally set up His kingdom on earth.
- **The New Heaven and New Earth:** The Scriptures say the old heaven and earth will pass away. The new heaven and new earth will conform with all that God is-in a state of fixed bliss and absolute perfection. The new earth will actually be a part of heaven itself.
- God gave us prophecy for more than just excitement. He gave it to us so we'd be motivated to purify our lives.

CHAPTER 15: THE WONDERS OF HEAVEN & THE AFTERLIFE

- **Death:** At the moment of physical death, man's spirit separates or departs from his body. The believer's spirit departs from the physical body and immediately goes into the presence of the Lord in heaven. Both believers and unbelievers remain as disembodied spirits until the future day of resurrection.
- **Judgement:** Every human being - Christian and non-Christian- will face a judgment. The Christian is judged not in relation to salvation (which is absolutely secure) but in relation to receiving or losing rewards from God. The unbeliever, however, is judged as a precursor to being cast into the lake of fire.
 - **The Judgment of Christians:** All Christians will one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ. At that time God will examine the deeds each believer has done as well as personal motives and the intents of our hearts. Based on this judgement Christians will receive-or lose-rewards.
 - **The Judgment of Unbelievers:** Unbelievers face a horrific judgment that leads to their being cast into the lake of fire. The judgment that unbelievers face is called the great white throne judgment.
- **Heaven- City of Glory:** This is a scene of ecstatic joy and fellowship of sinless angels and redeemed glorified human beings. This is a fitting description, for this city will not know sin or unrighteousness of any kind. Only the pure of heart will dwell there.
- **The New Jerusalem:** Perhaps the most elaborate description of the heavenly city is in Revelation 21, where we read of the new Jerusalem. The city measures approximately 1500 miles by 1500 miles by 1500 miles. The eternal city is so huge that it would measure approximately the distance between the Mississippi River and the Atlantic Ocean.
- **The Blessings of Heaven:** Absence of death and intimate fellowship with God and Christ – enjoying the sheer delight of unbroken fellowship with God and immediate and completely unobstructed access to the divine glory. Also, they experience reunion with Christian loved ones, satisfaction of all needs, serene rest, and sharing in Christ glory.
- **Hell The Infernal Destiny of the Wicked:** The Scriptures assure us that hell is a real place. People who reject Christ will join Satan and his fallen angels in this infernal place of suffering. Scripture sometimes refers to the destiny of the wicked as the "fiery furnace."
- **Eternal punishment:** Jesus affirmed that the wicked "will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life".

- **Controversial Questions About the Afterlife:**
 - **Near Death Experiences:** Christian researchers note the strong possibility that many of these experiences are actually caused by the evil one-Satan. Much of what is going on in so-called near-death death experiences is clearly not of God. Reader beware!
 - **Purgatory:** The Roman Catholic church teaches that Christians who are perfect at death are admitted to heaven. Christians who are not perfectly cleansed and are still tainted with the guilt of venial sins, however, do not go to heaven but rather go to purgatory, where they allegedly go through a process of cleansing (or "purging"). Purgatory is clearly not a scriptural doctrine. We are cleansed not by an alleged fire of purgatory but by the blood of Jesus Christ
 - **Reincarnation:** Some churchgoers claim that reincarnation is compatible with Christianity. At death, the Christian immediately goes into the presence of the Lord, not into another body.
 - **Annihilation:** Some Christians today hold to a doctrine known as annihilationism which holds that unbelievers are ultimately destroyed in hell. Annihilationism is answered by Matthew 25:46, which tells us that the wicked "will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

POSTSCRIPT

I have tried to show that modern cultural religion accepts many ideas that are not Christian at all and are, in fact, patently unbiblical. Here are just a few examples:

- Cultural religion weds religion with evolutionary theory. Biblical Christianity teaches that God created all things-including including human beings.
- Cultural religion teaches that the problem of evil proves that God cannot be all-powerful and all-knowing. Biblical Christianity portrays God as being infinite in perfections, including being all-powerful and all-knowing. Surely this all-powerful and all-knowing God has a sovereign purpose for allowing evil to exist temporarily.
- Cultural religion downplays sin in favor of a "feel good" Christianity. Biblical Christianity reveals the true ugliness of sin, clearly delineating its damning effects.