

Jesus now sits on the throne at the "right hand" of God, a Jewish metaphor meaning that Jesus has been given all authority to judge and save mankind. Having been a man, he is full of compassion for us in our weakness. **All who follow God's Son receive a new identity: sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus who are equal to each other, regardless of race, social class, appearance, job, skill, wealth, education, name, or position.** When we put our faith in Jesus, he also raises us up with him and seats us next to him in the heavenly realm. **Jesus gives us authority over the spirit world and over sin** when we pray with faith in his name, follow the Holy Spirit, and use the truths of God's Word as our guide. Jesus gives us and his church every spiritual blessing that he possessed for us to do his work in the world. **Jesus said to us as his followers that we will do even greater things than he did because he has placed his Holy Spirit inside each of us.** It pleases Jesus to give us these gifts so that we might glorify his name among the nations! His Holy Spirit also strengthens us to obey the Father and reminds us of all that Jesus taught, so that we might faithfully follow him until the end. (Matthew 26:64; John 14:11-17, 26; Acts 7:56; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 1:3, 18-23, 2:6, 19-22; Hebrews 2:14-18, 4:15-16)

Since we are still human and not Jesus, we will still sin. Yet now, we have the power to grow in faith, obedience, and devotion to our Lord and Savior, as we continue to pursue our relationship with him through prayer, reading and obeying the Word, and listening to the Holy Spirit. We are also strengthened by deep relationships with our brothers and sisters, as we confess our sins to one and another, pray for each other, and encourage one another with our testimonies and the Word. We receive greater faith and power from the Spirit as we worship the Lord, remember his sacrifice and examine our hearts during a communion meal, minister within the church, serve others, and share the love and message of Jesus throughout the world. All this brings glory to his name. There is no greater life than a life filled with the power and glory of Jesus Christ! (I Corinthians 11:23-32; Ephesians 6:10-18; James 5:16; I John 1:5-8)

God's Promise

God's promise is that anyone who puts their faith in his Son for salvation and follows his teachings will be saved. Faith in Jesus comes from not only hearing his message but also walking toward his way of life. Today, we can experience this faith by reading God's Word, the Bible, believing and following what we read, and imitating Jesus's life. When we put our faith in Jesus as Savior, commit to him as the Lord of our life, trust in his forgiveness, and turn away from our desire to sin, God forgives all our sins and promises us eternal life with him in heaven. This promise is immediate and begins with our agreement with Jesus's plan and purpose for our life. In fact, Jesus saves us while we are still dead in our sins. He doesn't wait for us to clean up our lives and then save us. **He saves us in our sin, so that his salvation comes through his loving grace, our faith in**

his power to save, and our genuine desire to follow him because of his great love and sacrifice for us. (Luke 15:11-32; Romans 3:21-26, 5:1-2, 8, 10:9-17; Ephesians 2:4-10; Colossians 2:11-15)

Although Jesus saves us while we are sinners, he doesn't leave us in our sin! With our entire bodies going down into water, Jesus washes us with his blood, buries our sins forever, and raises us into a new life of following him. This is why new believers ran to the waters of baptism! Just as Jesus died for our sins and was raised to glory, we too die to our old life of sin and self, and pledge our new life to Jesus through baptism. Now that we trust him, we adopt his teachings, plans, dreams, and goals for our life, and serve him wholeheartedly as our Lord and Savior. In all this, Jesus truly gives us a new life as we become more like him every day. (John 8:31-32; Acts 22:16; Romans, 6:1-10; James 1:22-25; I Peter 3:20-21; I John 2:3-6, 3:1-10)

Jesus also sets us free from fear, guilt, and social shame because we now know that God loves and accepts us and will protect us forever from spiritual harm. For this reason, we can walk in peace because our Father is always watching over our lives and doing what is best for us. The Bible says that one day this world will end. At that time, Satan, his demons, and all those who continue to follow the evil one will be sent into darkness and punishment, where God's love and grace are no longer present. Yet, those who turn from their sins and follow Jesus until the end will reign with him in heaven, worshipping God, and spending eternity rejoicing with their spiritual family. (John 14:2; Acts 5:27-29; Romans 2:7; 8:1-4, 28; Hebrews 10:19-31; I John 4:18; Revelation 20-22)

Our Purpose

Since we have been forgiven, we celebrate by living a life of worshipping, serving, and loving Jesus together with other believers. We now live for him, instead of ourselves. We live for loving, serving, and forgiving others, as we have been loved and forgiven. We stay close to Jesus through prayer, reading his Word, learning and practicing his teachings, confessing our sins to God and to each other, and turning away from sin when we struggle. The church is a place where God's children are restored to honor. For this reason, we can freely confess our sins to God and to each other so that we can experience the healing of God's truths and guidance, learn how to put into practice Jesus's teachings, and recognize Satan's lies. In all this, we praise Jesus for his love, grace, wonderful works, and miracles in our lives, and share with the nations this message of love, forgiveness, and power through Jesus. Now we can change our world by setting people free from the works of the devil! The Lord tells us we will suffer many things as his followers, just as he suffered. Yet, those who remain faithful to Jesus until the end enter a glorious eternal life full of peace, freedom, and love. (Matthew 18:21-35; Matthew 28:18-20; John 15:1-17; Acts 2:42-47; Romans 8:17-18; Hebrews 10:24-25; Revelation 17:14)



Why are there so many problems in the world?

Where can I get help and direction for my life?

What will happen to me after I die?

Who am I and why was I born?

What's the purpose for my life?

What does the Bible say?



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The Bible says that God made all creation through his powerful Word, or voice, and everything he created was good. He created the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, as honorable, innocent children of God and placed them in a beautiful garden. They walked with God every day, fearing nothing. Yet, God warned his children never to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Since God had created his children to be imperfect, he knew that with this knowledge, they would choose evil. Even though the punishment for sinning against God is spiritual and physical death, God gave his children the choice to trust or not trust his words. With this opportunity, an evil spirit Satan came to tempt God's children, promising that God would not punish them if they ate from the tree since they would be like God, knowing good from evil. Adam and Eve believed Satan's lies, trusted their own judgment, and ate the fruit.

There was another fruit from a tree in the garden called the tree of life that allowed Adam and Eve and all mankind after them to live eternally. So, God immediately expelled Adam and Eve from the garden to protect mankind from living forever in sin. While Adam and Eve still lived under God's care, they entered the world of sin and death. Yet, God was not without a plan to restore his children to himself, purify them of sin, and live with them forever. This is the story of the Bible. (Genesis 1-3, Jeremiah 3:19, Romans 6:23)

Like Adam and Eve, we too have sinned, wanting our own way, honor, and glory, instead of God's. At some time in our lives, we've all chosen to follow something else or someone else as our god, living for ourselves, relationships, romance, friends, family, education, work, or vacation, instead of living for God. Perhaps we've chosen to live for food, media, our bodies, pleasure, sleep, or sin. We may have worshipped nature, animals, spirits, statues, idols, a person, or even ourselves. Maybe society, power, fame, or the world became more important to us than God. We've all done good things, but we've all lived a life of sin apart from God. Sin includes lying, dishonesty, impurity, lust, sexual immorality, hatred, disunity, prejudice, anger, cursing, boasting, competitive pride, arrogance, unforgiveness, gossip, greed, selfishness, rebellion, drunkenness, overindulgence, and idolatry. Idolatry is honoring anyone or anything above God, even ourselves, and includes turning to idols, charms, deities, or nature for power, protection, or knowledge that belongs only to God. We've all believed Satan's lies that these things could bring us joy, honor, value, glory, beauty, happiness, a better life, money, and even power. We've all chosen to live some part of our lives for what we value instead of living for God's honor and values. In all this, we too have turned to the ways of Satan, without even realizing the source of our beliefs. (Romans 3:23; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:25-32, 5:3-7; Revelation 21:27, 22:15)

As we continue in sin and pride, we fail to experience the Father's full love, plans, purpose, and direction for our lives. Without God's power and guidance, we become slaves to sin,

self-honor, fear, shame, social standards, and competition. Our sins and choices begin to hurt our relationships with people and with God. In all this, sin separates us eternally from our loving Father because in sinning, we are choosing again and again to love, honor, and follow something else or someone else, instead of God. If we are honest with ourselves, we recognize our shame and feeling of distance from our Father and our need to be restored to him. Since God has placed eternity into the heart of every man, we might sense our desire for eternal life, our need for God's love, and a longing for a life that honors him, instead of one that leads to broken relationships, shame, anger, dishonor, and death. Yet, without God, we are left spiritually powerless and dead, and that's not God's plan for us. Even after all the ways we've sinned against him and contributed to the broken world we live in, our Father still loves us and longs to bring us back to him forever. (Ecclesiastes 3:11, Isaiah 59:2, John 8:34-35, Romans 6:17-23)

God's Plan

God's plan of love for us is found in the Bible. The Bible is divided into two sections: The Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament was written between 1500—400 B.C.E. and contains stories of God's people, God's first set of Laws, Jewish prayers, and over 300 prophecies about Israel and the Savior, or Messiah, who would save man from his problem of sin. The New Testament was written within the adult life of Jesus's friends and first followers and contains stories of Jesus Christ (c. 6 B.C.E.—30 C.E.), the stories and writings of his early followers, the history of the first church, Jesus's teachings, and Jesus's fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies about the coming Savior. These prophecies were written over 400 years and preserved within 200 years before Jesus's birth, all archeological evidence proving Jesus to be the Messiah.

The Old Testament tells of God's plan to have a people of his own, a Jewish people called Israel. Israel was referred to as God's children, and together called God's "son." They were born to be a people fully devoted to their Father God. To build their devotion, God created laws for his children to follow and sacrifices to perform as payment for their sins. But each man, even the prophets, failed to keep the Law perfectly and failed in their devotion. This dishonored God and their relationship with him. The Old Testament story reveals how much man needs God to rescue him from sin. We see how man cannot overcome sin on his own or restore by himself the honor God deserves, for men continue to sin and dishonor God no matter how hard they try to be perfect. Even God's punishment didn't produce righteousness in his children. Without his divine help, eternal punishment outside of heaven was their only destiny. (Jeremiah 31:9, Hosea 11:1)

In the New Testament, we discover God's plan for our world: to send a Savior, his perfect, faithful Son Jesus Christ, to be sacrificed on a cross for our sin to cover our sin and shame. Through

Jesus's story, we begin to see that former animal sacrifices were physical symbols of how God would one day sacrifice his Son Jesus as the one and final payment for the sins of all God's children. Israel as God's imperfect son was also a physical symbol of both Jesus, God's perfect Son, and all God's imperfect children, Jewish and non-Jewish people. These children would one day be purified through Jesus's sacrifice and turn their hearts back to God. (Psalm 2:6-7; Micah 5:2-4; Isaiah 7:14, 9:6, 10:22, 52:13-15, 53:1-12; Romans 9:1-9, 25-26, 30-33; 10:1-4; 11:5-6, 22-26)

So, *how* is Jesus God's Son? The Bible says that Jesus was literally God's living Word, or voice, made into man. This same voice created the world. In this way, Jesus was in fact God: his spoken words in human form. Since God alone can forgive sins and supply full payment for all sin against him, the sacrifice of God himself removed forever the penalty of sin and eternal death that awaited his children. With this one perfect and holy sacrifice, no future sacrifices to God for sin would ever have to be made. The price was fully paid in Jesus, and the power of sin and spiritual death destroyed for those who follow him. (Joshua 7:20; II Samuel 12:13; Psalm 51:4; John 1:1-14, 29, 8:54-58, 14:11-13; Hebrews 1:1-3, 10:10-14, 17; Revelation 19:13)

Jesus showed himself to be God through his resurrection from the dead. He was beaten, flogged, and tortured on a cross by Roman leaders, at the request of Jewish leaders who didn't believe Jesus and were jealous of his authority. After six hours on the cross, Jesus was pronounced dead and buried. After three days in a tomb, he resurrected and appeared to over five hundred people. Many who witnessed the risen Jesus were tortured for their claim, showing their certainty in what they had seen and heard. Through Jesus's suffering, God proved his eternal love for us and his longing for us to be restored to him. (Matthew 27:11-65, 28:1-20; John 3:16 12:10-11, 17-19; I Corinthians 15:6)

Through the Son's perfect devotion to the Father, we learn how to live for God instead of ourselves, how to bring honor and glory to his name, and how to walk in a daily relationship with him. We learn how to love, obey, and trust God in every area of our lives, even through suffering, just as Jesus suffered. Through Jesus's words, we can grow in our understanding of God and the identity he gave us. We also gain wisdom for life and relationships through studying and practicing Jesus's teachings. Jesus also showed his love for people and his divine power over Satan through his actions—when he healed the sick, raised the dead, cast demons out of people, forgave people, and saved them from their sins. Through Jesus's life, we can also learn how to love people and set them free from sin, sickness, Satan's lies, and death. (Matthew 8:16-17, 9:1-8; Mark 1:21-27; John 5:16-47; 9:1-41; 11:1-45, 12:49-50)

