

How Can I Be Saved?

Lesson 1: Faith in Jesus (Part 1)

Vocabulary:

to save (n. salvation, Savior)	to design	arrogance	command
to preserve	to motivate	self-righteousness	shame
to grab	to depend (n. dependence)	to humble (adj. humble)	guilt
circa (i.e. c. 160 B.C.E.)	dull	to reveal	to impact (n. impact)
B.C.E. / C.E.	to remind	to fulfill	to crucify / cross
righteous (n. righteousness)	to remember	to rescue	to declare
holy (n. holiness)	ritual	to reign	form
further	legalistic	oppression	to put to the test
in truth	mercy	virgin	
to cleanse	aim		

Discussion

The Bible is divided into two sections: The Old and New Testaments. Another word for testament is “plan” or “promise.” These old and new plans and promises tell the story of God and his plan of **salvation** for his children. The word salvation is the noun form of the verb “**to save**.” In Greek, [sózó], the word can mean to keep safe, to rescue from danger or destruction, to heal, to **preserve**, and to make whole.¹ In Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament, the word “to save” [Hebrew: *natsal*] has more specific and physical meanings, such to rescue from death, enemies, and sin; to escape completely; and to **grab** something physically and pull it away.²

What do you think it means to be saved according to the Bible? Why do we need to be saved? What are we being saved from? Consider some of the definitions.

According to the Bible, salvation is the act of God saving men from sin and allowing them at death to enter heaven, an eternal home of rest with God, rather than hell, a place of punishment for sins.

God’s Plan: *The Old Testament*

The Old Testament presents the first part of God’s plan to save his people who lived from the time of Moses in c. 1500 **B.C.E.** (**circa** fifteen hundred B.C.E.), to the time of Jesus in c. 6 B.C.E. (circa 6 B.C.E.). These people became a group known today as Jews, or Jewish people who later lived in the land of Judea, now known as Israel. In the beginning of this plan, God created laws for the Jews to follow. These laws taught the people about sin, **righteousness**, and **holiness**. Such **concepts** were abstract to men living 3500 years ago. So, God designed a physical plan for men to understand these concepts. He called certain animals clean and unclean and certain objects and places **holy** and unholy.

To help the people **further** understand the concepts of sin, righteousness, and holiness, God also required his people to sacrifice animals when they sinned. The blood of these sacrifices represented not

¹ “4982. sózó,” *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*, electronic database (Biblesoft, 2011), <https://biblehub.com/greek/4982.htm>.

² “5337. natsal,” *Brown-Driver-Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon*, unabridged, electronic database (Biblesoft, 2006), <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/5337.htm>.

only the cleansing of sin but also the price for sin. The price was death. Why? Sin causes spiritual death between God and his people. Therefore, this price of sin was the physical death of an animal, a physical representation of a spiritual concept. **In truth**, each man should have died for his own sins, but God loved his children so much that he provided a physical representation of that spiritual death so that his children would not die physically or spiritually when they sinned. This plan **cleansed** men from their sins and created a way for God's unholy children to live eternally with their holy Father in heaven. The plan was also **designed** to **motivate** God's children to **depend** on their heavenly Father instead of depending on sin as a way of life. The people made regular sacrifices to **remind** them again and again to turn their hearts back to God and **remember** God's gift of forgiveness (Leviticus 4-5, 16).

In the Old Testament, however, we see men turning away from their heavenly Father more and more. Instead of growing in love and **dependence** on God, they became spiritually **dull** in their hearts. The sacrificing of animals became a **ritual** and lost its meaning. Some men became proud of their **legalistic** obedience to God's commands, as though the laws could save them. Yet, these laws were not simply rules to follow. They were created to guide the people toward love: love for God and love for others. No man could perfectly obey these laws, so the laws were also created to help men see their deep need for God's **mercy**. However, men's **aim** for perfect obedience was only leading them to **arrogance** and **self-righteousness**. What would God have to do to **humble** his people and save them from the sins that were separating them from their loving Father?

Consider the first part of God's plan of salvation found in the Old Testament. What was it designed to do? What did this plan **reveal** about people's hearts?

God's Plan: *The New Testament*

After being patient with mankind for thousands of years, from the birth of Adam to the first century B.C.E., God **fulfilled** his complete and perfect plan to **rescue** his children from sin. The time was in or around 6 B.C.E. when Caesar Augustus [SEE-zer aw-GUH-stus] **reigned** over the growing Roman Empire. Augustus was heavily taxing Judea, the land of God's children. At this time of **oppression**, a Jewish child was born in Bethlehem to a **virgin** named Mary and was given the name Jesus, also Yehoshua [yeh-ho-SHOO-ah] in Hebrew, meaning "the Lord is salvation."³ Seven hundred years before the birth of this child, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah [i-ZAY-uh] had predicted that a son, the Savior of mankind, would be born in the city of Bethlehem through a virgin. And this child would be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." This was no ordinary child: this was Mighty God and everlasting Father. This son would bring peace between God and his children.

Although born in Bethlehem, Jesus grew up in the town of Nazareth, Judea and began preaching a message: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him would not be lost but have eternal life" (John 3:16, ERV). He helped the people to understand God's heart about his laws. Jesus taught, "Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest **command**. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets [reflect] these two commands" (Matthew 22:37-40, NIV). Man would no longer live according to the physical laws and rules of the old plan, but they would live according to love. Yet, men would be made righteous not by their love for God and others but by God's love for them in sending them his Son, the one spoken about by prophet Isaiah. Jesus taught that once people realize

³ "3091, Yehoshua," Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3091.htm>.

that they are sinners who need saving, they can put their faith in him as God's Son and trust in his power to save them.

Jesus also helped people to understand that sin leads us away from love and that God's desire is for us to turn away from sin and choose to love instead. Yet this too is not something we do on our own. Once we place our faith in Jesus and agree with his plan for our life, he helps us to turn away from sin and grow in love. Paul, a follower of Christ, reminds us of this love that Jesus has for us when he says, "Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new. God has done it all! He sent Christ to make peace between himself and us" (II Corinthians 5:17-18, CEV). Through faith in Jesus, men could be made new in their heart for God.

Knowing that his children would never be perfect, God still had to provide a sacrifice for his children's sins. There would be one final and perfect sacrifice to cleanse his children and take away their sin, their **shame**, and their **guilt** both now and forever. This was the sacrifice of God's one and only Son. Jesus Christ was **crucified** in or around 33 C.E., paying the full price for the sins of all mankind.

The message of salvation in the New Testament is clear: We are saved through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22). "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, NIV). Jesus himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Consider God's full plan of salvation from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Why was Jesus a better sacrifice than animals? How might Jesus's sacrifice **impact** people's hearts in a deeper way?

Why is Jesus the only plan of salvation, the only way, and the only truth? Why is he the only one who can give us true life?

Throughout this study series, we will explore the impact and power that Jesus has on those who place their faith in him and receive his sacrifice for sin. Knowing that Jesus is God himself – Mighty God and everlasting Father, according to Isaiah – we understand that there is no greater sacrifice for our sins. No one is greater than God. No one could come later and claim to be a better sacrifice, and no animal or personal sacrifice could compare to the purity of God sacrificing himself on a **cross**. God is the only one who lives forever and is, therefore, the only one who can give eternal life to man. No one has the power to forgive all sin but God. He is the only one who can change a man's heart or make him pure and holy because he alone is holy. As God, his personal sacrifice for the children is both final and complete.

Perhaps we already believe and are following Jesus. Perhaps we're learning about Jesus for the first time. How can we put our faith in someone we don't know? This study series will also explore more about who Jesus is and what he taught.

Jesus is the Living Word of God

According to Isaiah's prophecy, a child would be born to Mary and be called Mighty God. But how did that happen, and why is he called God's Son? In the book of Genesis, the first book of the Old

Testament, we learn that God created all things through his spoken Word. He said, “Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). He said, “Let the land produce living creatures” (Genesis 1:24), and it happened. Throughout the Old Testament, God also spoke his Word to the prophets, who then **declared** God’s messages to the people.

In the book of John, the fourth book of the New Testament, we learn that God sent us his spoken Word in the **form** of a human being: “Before the world began, there was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became man and lived among us” (John 1:1,14, ICB). This man was Jesus. In the last book of the New Testament, Jesus is given the name “the Word of God” (19:14). Although we know that Jesus is God from the prophet Isaiah, we see here in John that Jesus is God because he is God’s Word made into man. When we consider ourselves as humans, we understand that our words define who we are. We cannot separate ourselves from our words. We are one with what we say. In this way, we understand that God’s spoken Word and God are also one. Since Jesus was made into man, he is called God’s Son, but he is also God’s Word and therefore God at the same time.

Today, we can read the Bible, and more specifically the Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – to read what Jesus said and taught. When we read Jesus’s words, his teachings, and his stories, we are listening to the living words of God.

How can you be sure that Jesus is the living Word of God?

To be sure that Jesus is the living Word of God, we must **put** Jesus **to the test**. To do this, we can begin by reading the Gospels and ask ourselves, “Is this what God would speak and teach? Is this how God would live? Could someone who is just a man speak, teach, and live this way? Do I know such a man other than Jesus?” Simply opening the Bible, reading Jesus’s words, and listening to his voice can allow us to experience Jesus in a meaningful and powerful way that speaks to our hearts.

Which of the Gospels have you read? Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John?

Make a list of what you already know about Jesus – his stories, his teachings, his actions, etc.

Have you ever experienced Jesus in a special way just from reading his Word? Describe.

This Week:

Write in your journal:

1. Read one chapter in one of the Gospels every day this week. In your journal, write new teachings that you learn. Make a note of Jesus’s actions, words, and way of life. Is Jesus God’s living Word? Write your thoughts.
2. Select one way that you can practice something Jesus taught or imitate the way he lived. Write about your experience. Share your experience with a friend.
3. Complete the next study: *Faith in Jesus (Part 2)*