

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **“THE PLAN OF SALVATION”**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, James Gravelle.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Mt. 11:28-30). Welcome to another lesson in our topical series. This is the Gospel of Christ, and we are so happy that you have chosen to join us. We encourage you to take Bible in hand and study God’s Word with us as we examine God’s plan of salvation.

Have you ever considered what the Bible is all about? It is a collection in the Old and New Testaments of sixty-six books that humans have divided 1,189 chapters and 31,731 verses. In the King James Version, we find that it contains 773,692 words, and over 3.5 million letters. It took 1,600 years, and over 40 different penmen, to write it. Yet we know that it had but one Author—God. But what is it all about? If we took the Bible and distilled its essence, we could capture its purpose in one sentence: **The glory of God and the salvation of man through Jesus Christ our Lord**. This theme runs through every book of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. In this lesson, we want to concentrate on the middle part of the theme—the salvation of man.

But why is this so important? The apostle Paul helped us understand the importance of this matter with one simple statement in Romans 3:23 when he wrote, “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” Man is not “born sinful,” even though there are certain religious groups that teach such. Sin does not originate in an individual through some type of “hereditary depravity.” Sin is of such a nature that it cannot be inherited. It is **an act** that constitutes a violation of the Word of God. In 1 John 3:4 in the King James Version we read, “Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law.” The origin of sin can be seen in James 1:13-15 where James recorded,

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.”

The steps to sin are lust, enticement, and temptation—resulting in sin, with death ultimately following. The steps to sin can be clearly seen in the actions of a man who lived during the time of Joshua. His name was Achan. Read with me Joshua 7:20-21.

“And Achan answered Joshua and said, ‘Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I have done: When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it.’”

Achan saw. Achan coveted. Achan took. And Achan died. The very same thing happened when sin first entered the world. Adam and Eve were told that they **could** do some things, and that they could **not** do some things. In Genesis 2:17 we read, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall

surely die.” In Genesis 3 we read how Satan came to Eve and tempted her. In verse 6 we read, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” Just as in the case of Achan, Eve saw, coveted, took, and died. And, as Paul explains in Romans 5:12, that was the beginning of sin in the world: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

In Genesis 2:17 God told Adam and Eve the consequences of sin—“For in the day that you eat of it [the fruit] you shall surely die.” We know that neither Adam nor Eve died **physically** the moment they touched and ate the fruit. So what happened? The answer is found in Isaiah 59:1-2—“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.” Sin, therefore, is a separation or death. After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they were dead in sin. This is the first death. It is a separation from God. And those who live in such a state up until the time that they die physically will be lost eternally. In Romans 6:23 Paul said in no uncertain terms, “The wages of sin is death.” There, Paul was discussing “the second death,” which is discussed in Revelation 21:8. After John listed numerous evil deeds, he said that all people who commit such deeds “shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” John helped us to understand this by writing in Revelation 20:14-15, “Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Why is man in need of salvation? Romans 3:23 explains why—“For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” From Romans 6:23 we learn that “the wages of sin is death.” In Revelation 20:15 we see that anyone whose name is not written in the Book of Life will be cast into a lake of fire.

This gives so much more meaning to the Scripture that we all know so well—John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” To save mankind from certain eternal punishment, a sacrifice was required. Man could not save himself. It would take the death on the cross of the Son of God. In this passage, we see God’s love for His creation. Why was it necessary to have a sacrifice for man’s sin? Hebrews 9:22 tells us, “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” It could not be the blood of animals, as Hebrews 10:4 says: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” We gain greater knowledge of when God actually planned for Jesus to die for us by reading 1 Peter 1:18-21.

“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”

Before God made man—and, in fact, even before He created the world—He knew it would take the death of His Son to save us from sin. Jesus came into the world and lived a sinless life, thereby qualifying Himself to serve as the Sacrifice for our sins. In 1 Peter 2:21-24 we read,

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.”

This horrific sacrifice required more than Jesus merely coming to Earth and dying for us. In Philippians 2:6-8 we read of Jesus,

“who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

Jesus, although 100% God, also became 100% human. He took upon Himself human form so as to be encased in a human body. When His earthly body died, He took on a body that would be fit for eternity—the same type of body that we eventually will have, as 1 Corinthians 15 makes clear. We can only begin to understand the great significance of Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf. But, as we consider that sacrifice, we can begin to grasp Paul’s words in Romans that it is reasonable for God to expect us to live as “living sacrifices.” In Romans 12:1-2 Paul wrote,

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Even with God’s Son having died for mankind, the majority of people will still be lost. It is not God’s will that such be the case, as we learn from 1 Timothy 2:4, which speaks of the fact that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Paul explained to those who had assembled in Athens on Mars Hill to hear him speak, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). Jesus died for all mankind, but He requires all mankind to come to Him. It was Jesus Himself Who explained in Matthew 7:13-14 that most people will choose the wrong path.

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

In verses 21-23 Jesus explained why this would be the case.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

The problem is that the majority will never do the Father’s will. The majority will never do those things that can bring them into a right relationship with God. They will not do what God commands. Read with me John 12:48-50.

“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

In John 10:10, Jesus explained why He came into the world: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” Since Jesus came to give us eternal life, should we not then go to **His** Word to find out what **He** requires us to do in order to have eternal life? That seems like such a simple question, yet there is so much confusion in the world today regarding the answer. Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through **Me**.” That excludes every other way that man could possibly conceive or invent regarding how to get to Heaven. If the way to Heaven is not “through Christ,” then it is in vain.

But what, exactly, does Jesus require of us? This is not the first time that such a question has been asked. Look with me at Acts 16:30, where we read, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” This question, asked by a Roman jailer, qualifies as the most important question any person could ever ask. But that jailer was not the only one who ever asked such a question. On the Day of Pentecost discussed in Acts 2, others asked the same type of question in verse 37 when they cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” The striking thing that you discover as you read through the pages of the New Testament is that those who were seeking salvation never failed to find it. Let’s see what Jesus would have every man and woman do in order to receive everlasting life. In John 14:15 Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” The writer of the Book of Hebrews said in Hebrews 11:6, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Whence, then, comes faith? Romans 10:17 explains: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” One cannot have true biblical faith without first having heard God’s Word. Thus, the first thing in the list of things that a person must do to be saved would be hearing God’s Word.

I have already mentioned John 3:16 (“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”). Now, however, we need to discuss the requirement for salvation that is contained within this passage. We must believe in Christ if we want to be saved. Jesus further emphasized this requirement in John 8:24 when He said, “If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” But mere belief (or “just having faith”) is not enough. James shed light on this point in James 2:18-20 when he wrote:

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”

In verse 24, James once and for all answered the question, “Is man saved by faith alone?,” when he wrote: “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” Thus, we see that belief (faith) is required, but by itself cannot save anyone.

What else does God require? Look at Acts 3:19, where we read, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Here we see the additional command to repent. Paul gives us additional information regarding the meaning of repentance in 2 Corinthians 7:10—“Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” Here, Paul contrasts two different types of repentance. The first is godly sorrow, and the second is worldly sorrow. Worldly sorrow is simply the idea, “I’m sorry—that I got caught!” Godly sorrow, on the other hand, is actual sorrow for having done something wrong. Godly sorrow leads to, and produces, repentance. When a person truly repents, it is because he is sorry that he did wrong—and he determined within himself to try not to commit that sin again.

Hearing, believing, and repentance, however, are not enough to save a person. Jesus gave us an additional requirement in Matthew 10:32-33 when He said, “Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.” In Romans 10:9-10 Paul helps us understand Jesus’ point:

“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

God has given us further instruction on this matter by way of an example. As Philip taught the man from Ethiopia, the man came to a conclusion, and then made the following statement in Acts 8:37—"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

But hearing, believe, repenting, and confessing Christ as Savior are still not all that is required. When Jesus gave what we today refer to as "The Great Commission," He said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:15-16). Jesus commanded people to be baptized. But this passage simply presents the command. Other passages help us understand baptism more completely. In Acts 2, Peter explained that the people to whom he was speaking had committed sin—a fact that cut good and honest people to the heart. They cried out, "What shall we do?" Peter provided the answer in Acts 2:38—"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." From this verse we learn the purpose of baptism. It is not an "outward sign of an inward grace," as many religions today teach. Rather, it is for "the remission of sins." In verses 40-41 we read,

"And with many other words he [Peter] testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.' Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."

The mode of baptism is explained in Romans 6:3-4.

"Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Baptism (immersion) is a burial. But you do not bury someone who is alive! Remember that as I began this lesson, I discussed how God had explained to Adam and Eve the consequences of sin when He said in Genesis 2:17, "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." And so they did! They became dead in sin. Baptism is a burial of a person who is dead in sin and who, just as Jesus was buried after His death, is then "buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." A person who has been baptized needs no longer fear the second death, as John explained in Revelation 20:6—"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power."

But this is not the end; instead, it is a beginning. God takes the saved person and places him or her into the church (Acts 2:47)—the church that Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18 to build. It is the church (kingdom) that Jesus will deliver to God in the last day (1 Cor. 15:24). As a person rises from the watery grave of baptism to walk in newness of life, he or she is then to live a faithful life, worship God as a member of Christ's body (the church), and walk in the light as He is in the light (1 Jn. 1:7). Then, at death that person can leave this life as a faithful child of God. Revelation 2:10 admonishes all of us to "be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." Seek out members of the church of Christ in your community. They will help you obey God's plan of salvation. If you need help finding the Lord's church in your area, please contact us and we will assist you in any way possible. Thank you for being part of our lesson today from the Gospel of Christ. We hope you will join us next time as we continue to study God's Word.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE PLAN OF SALVATION”

1. To what was Jesus referring when He said in Matthew 11:28, “I will give you rest”?
2. According to Romans 3:23, who has sinned?
3. According to Romans 6:23, what is the penalty for sin?
4. According to James 1:15, when sin is “full grown,” to what does it lead?
5. According to James 1:13, what is one thing God will never do?
6. According to James 1:14, what causes us to sin?
7. What, according to Isaiah 59:1-2, has sin done for mankind?
8. In Revelation 21:8 John spoke of “the second death.” What is that second death?
9. According to Revelation 20:15, what will happen to those people who have not been saved, and thus have not had their names written in the Book of Life?
10. What does John 3:16 say that God did for us regarding our salvation from sin?
11. According to Hebrews 9:22, what is required as a sacrifice for sin?
12. According to Hebrews 10:4, what is not an adequate sacrifice for human sins?
13. According to 1 Peter 2:21-24, what sacrifice was ultimately given for mankind’s sins?
14. Instead of living in sin, Romans 12:1-2 tells us that we should live in another way. What is that “other way”?
15. What, according to the teaching found in 1 Timothy 2:4, does God want for all people?”
16. Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 that not everyone would be saved. Who **will** be saved?
17. According to John 12:48, what will serve as our judge on the Day of Judgment?
18. According to Romans 10:17, what must a person do to be saved?
19. According to John 8:24 what must a person do to be saved?
20. According to Luke 13:3,5, what must a person do to be saved?
21. According to Romans 10:9-10, what must a person do to be saved?
22. According to Acts 22:16, what must a person do to be saved?
23. According to Revelation 2:10, what must a person do to be saved?