

# What is the Gospel?

A sermon by Steve Childers at the funeral service for Mary Frame, wife of John Frame, on October 23, 2022<sup>1</sup>

When Mary and John asked me to preach this sermon, they did not tell me what to preach. So last week I met with John and asked him what Mary would like for me to preach. John made very clear that they were asking me to do one thing – preach the gospel. This raises the ancient question, “What is the gospel?”

There is no more important question for us to answer because the answer we give has eternal consequences. Paul tells us there is only one true gospel, and if we get it wrong, we are cursed. But if we get it right, we are blessed with everlasting life. (Gal. 1:1-9)

The gospel is good news that is simple enough for a child to understand but profound enough that the greatest minds could never grasp the fullness of its depth. A respected theologian was once asked “What is the most profound concept you have ever studied in the Bible?” He replied, “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

Historically the biblical word we translate “gospel” refers to a proclamation of news about some event that has happened in history—something that is both very significant and very good. The Bible tells us that the gospel at its core is good news about God.<sup>2</sup> It’s the proclamation of *who God is* and *what God does* in history.

## So, who is God?

One of the most significant ways God reveals who he is is by the many names he gives himself. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, Moses asked God what his name is to understand *who he is* in contrast to all the other “gods” being worshipped.

God revealed to Moses his personal name, *Yahweh*, from the Hebrew word for *I AM*, usually translated *LORD* in English Bibles.<sup>3</sup> By revealing his personal name, God reveals the good news that he is not merely an impersonal force or higher power, but he is a personal, faithful, God of grace who has sworn a solemn oath, a covenant, to deliver his people from their sin and all its consequences.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a slightly edited audio transcript of the sermon with the addition of extensive footnotes written by Steven L. Childers and John M. Frame in their Pathway Learning *Applied Theology I Collection* books: *Essentials in Theology*, *Foundations in Theology*, and *Perspectives in Theology*.

<sup>2</sup> In Mark 1:14-15, the Apostle Mark describes the gospel message Jesus preached as “the gospel of God.” “Jesus came into Galilee, *proclaiming the gospel of God*, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” The Apostle Paul describes himself as “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for *the gospel of God*.” (Rom. 1:1) Paul describes the gospel as “*the power of God for salvation* to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith’” (Rom. 1:16-17, Hab. 2:4).

<sup>3</sup> This English name for God, *LORD*, the Hebrew name *Lord (Adon)*, and the Greek name *Lord (Kurios)*, occur over 7000 times in the Bible. All throughout history recorded in Scripture, we learn that God works in the lives of his people so they will know that *he is LORD* (e.g. Exod 6:7).

When Jesus appeared on the scene in the first century, performing miracles, the religious leaders of his day asked him the same question, “Who do you make yourself out to be?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, *I AM*. They picked up stones to throw at him.” (John 8:58-59) Their violent response shows that they understood him to be saying he was equal to Yahweh.

Then, after his resurrection, Jesus revealed who God is with even greater clarity when he revealed to his disciples a whole new name for God as the *name* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:18-20) So, if that’s *who God is*, the question then becomes, “*What does this triune LORD do in history that is such good news?*”

### **What does God do?**

The Bible reveals three magnificent acts of the Triune Lord in history in his mission to deliver his people from their sin and all its consequences. Theologians sometimes use the Latin phrase *Magnalia Dei* (Herman Bavinck) to refer to these magnificent acts of God. They include the magnificent acts of: 1) the Father as Lord of Creation, 2) the Son as Lord of Redemption, and 3) the Spirit as Lord of Restoration.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Good News about God the Father as LORD of Creation**

All members of the Trinity are fully engaged in creation, redemption, and restoration. But the Bible presents the unique perspective of the supremacy of God the Father in his creation of all things. We cannot fully understand the good news of *God’s Salvation* until we understand its relationship to *God’s creation*. The essence of God’s salvation is his *Re-Creation* of his humanity and world that is now so horribly broken by evil.<sup>5</sup>

In the beginning *God created the world* to be an eternal, cosmic display of his glory as he rules over everything as LORD. *God created you* to reflect his glory as you find your ultimate joy in him and in his mission to fill the earth and rule over it (as God’s sub-creators) as LORD so that the paradise of his kingdom will extend on earth for all eternity. (Gen. 1:26-28, 2:15, Exod. 34:6, Ezek. 33:11)

When God created the Garden of Eden, it was literally *heaven on earth* for Adam and Eve as they experienced God’s ultimate joy, peace, and happiness. The reason they were able to

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<sup>4</sup> See the first affirmation in the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds: “I believe in God, *the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.*” The biblical emphasis of the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer, and the Spirit as Restorer, does not deny that all members of the Trinity are fully involved in all aspects of creation and redemption, e.g. the Father is also Redeemer through the Son and Restorer through the Spirit, etc.

<sup>5</sup> The early church father Augustine (354-430 AD) describes the essence of God’s saving work in Jesus Christ as restoring all things lost in the Fall by using a series of Latin couplets that describe God as “Former and Re-Former,” “Creator and Re-Creator,” and “Maker and Re-Maker.” Augustine understood the essence of salvation in Christ as *transformation*, seeing creation as formation, the fall as *deformation*, and redemption as *reformation*. This is why Augustine often included these couplets in public worship and offered them as a simple prayer, “May the one who formed us reform us, the one who created us recreate us, the one who installed us restore us to perfection.” (St. Augustine of Hippo, s. 301A; Hill, *Sermons* (III/8), 291.) Likewise, in his theological writings from the late 19th century, Herman Bavinck concludes from Scripture that the essence of salvation is “Grace restores nature.” (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006) 577.)

experience this was because God created them with three things: 1) a perfect standing of innocence, 2) a pure heart, and 3) a perfect world.

- *Their perfect standing* of innocence (without sin) allowed them access into God's holy presence to be accepted, loved, and cherished by him. (personal righteousness)
- *Their pure hearts* were alive with a deep love for God above all else that compelled them to cherish him, obey him, and be like him in their love for others. (personal holiness)
- *Their perfect world* was a picture of perfect harmony in all their relationships (e.g. God, self, others, creation), ultimate joy with no pain, suffering, sickness, or death.<sup>6</sup>

However, evil entered the world through Satan who overthrew God's kingdom on earth by tempting Adam and Eve to sin resulting in the Fall of humanity. When Adam sinned, that sin was rightly regarded by God to be the sin of all his descendants – the entire human race.<sup>7</sup> As a result of sin, not only humanity, but all of God's good creation came under God's just curse and Satan's rule.

### **Bad News First**

*So here's the bad news* we must first embrace or the good news will never be good to us: although *God is a loving and merciful Father*, he is also a *perfectly righteous and just Judge*, so therefore he must punish sin.<sup>8</sup> The result is we're all born under God's threefold curse:

- **Personal Guilt:** First, our *perfect standing* of innocence became a *condemned standing* of guilt under God's curse, we're born separated and alienated from his loving presence. (Matt. 5:29; 23:33, John 3:18, Heb. 9:27; 2 Thess. 1:9)
- **Personal Corruption:** Second, our *pure hearts* became *corrupt hearts* with disordered loves, dead to God, enslaved to idols, producing ungodly lives in disobedience to God. (Jer. 2:13, 17:9, Jn. 8:34, Mark 7:20-23)
- **Cosmic Corruption:** Thirdly, our perfect world became a *broken world* not just spiritually, but in all spheres of life: socially, culturally, politically, and economically. (Gen 3:14-19, Rom. 8:19-23)

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<sup>6</sup> The Hebrew prophets use the word "shalom" to describe this state of full peace, completeness, wholeness, and blessedness. In this paradise Adam and Eve experienced the blessedness of *shalom* —the fullness of happiness, love, joy, and peace rooted in their loving communion with the Triune God.

<sup>7</sup> The Apostle Paul writes, "Sin came into the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12), "By a man [Adam] came death" and "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22), and "One trespass led to condemnation for all men" (Rom. 5:18). Although the Bible teaches that our mysterious union with Adam makes his sin as our representative also our sin for which we're guilty, the Bible also teaches that as descendants of Adam we all commit our own sins making all of us personally guilty before God and under his just condemnation. Paul writes, "For *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and "the wages [consequences] of sin is death" (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

<sup>8</sup> The Scriptures teach that God's love is a revelation of his holiness that displays his mercy, and God's justice is a revelation of his holiness that displays his necessary punishment for and just wrath against sin. Because God is perfectly holy, he cannot even be in the presence of sin – just like light cannot be in the presence of darkness. The prophet Habakkuk addresses God as one who is, "of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong" (Hab. 1:13). The Bible teaches that there are certain things that God cannot do because of his absolute moral perfection (holiness). For example, God cannot change (Mal. 3:6), and God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18). Likewise, God cannot *not* demand total ethical holiness of his image bearers to be in his holy presence. This means that when humans disobey God and fail to be perfectly holy, God's holiness demands that he display his displeasure in holy wrath and punishment. (Is. 5:16)

The Bible tells us that there is absolutely nothing we can do to save ourselves from God's just curse. (Eph. 2:1-3, Rom. 1:18-32, 3:9-20; Eph. 2:1-3, 12) All world religions, except Christianity, consist in things people are trying to do to be right with God. But the problem is that it's not possible to do enough because you'd have to be perfectly righteous. (Is 64:6, Titus 3:4-5, Prov. 14:12, Gal. 2:16) Paul writes, "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in God's sight" (Rom. 3:20).

But the good news is about how God graciously solved this problem through his Son...

### **The Good News about God the Son as LORD of Redemption**

God's purpose for fallen humanity and creation could not be thwarted. Soon after the fall, God reveals his plan of salvation when he proclaims the gospel to Satan as he curses him for what he did to overthrow his kingdom. In that curse, God promises to send a deliverer who will defeat Satan and restore fallen humanity and creation to flourish as God's kingdom on the earth again. (Gen. 3:15)

Then the Old Testament reveals how God carries out his plan of salvation: First through people like Adam and Noah, then through Abraham and the nation of Israel under the leadership of people like Moses and David. Then four hundred years pass until Jesus shows up proclaiming the good news that he is the Lord's promised Redeemer who has come to deliver his people and re-establish God's kingdom on earth forever.

In the New Testament, Jesus' apostles reveal that there were several historic events that Jesus did to redeem his people from God's horrible curse for their sin. First, was...

#### **His Humiliation:**

- **His birth (incarnation):** This is the good news that in order to rescue us and this corrupt world under the dominion of evil, God's *only Son*, the second person of the Trinity with a fully divine nature, humbled himself and entered human history by taking on a human nature (body and soul) in his conception and birth. (Jn. 1:1-14, Phil. 2:6-7)<sup>9</sup>
- **His life (active obedience):** As God's *second man* and *last Adam* he lived the life we should have lived. He faced all the temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil that defeat us. But, he never sinned, and in so doing he earned a record of perfect righteousness that we could not earn, perfectly obeying God's law for us. (1 Cor 15: 45-47, Rom. 5:12-14, 18-19, Matt. 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13)<sup>10</sup>
- **His death:** Jesus also became our substitute in death. When he died on the cross, he did not simply experience the pain of physical suffering and death. He also suffered the full wrath and punishment of God that we deserve because of our sin. Isaiah 53:6 tells us,

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<sup>9</sup> He was born as Jesus, son of the virgin Mary. The Bible teaches the mysterious truth that Jesus was and is both fully God and fully human. (Mark 2:5; 14:61-62, John 10:30; 20:28) Although Jesus was sent by the Father, he teaches that he came willingly "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

<sup>10</sup> The Apostle Paul presents Jesus as the *second man* and the *last Adam*. (1 Cor 15: 45-47) When the *first man*, Adam, was tempted in the garden, he failed to obey God, resulting in eternal death for all humanity. (Rom. 5:12-14) But when the *second man*, Jesus, was similarly tempted throughout his life (Matt. 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13, he perfectly obeyed God resulting in eternal life for humanity. (Rom 5:18-19)

“The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.” He died the death we deserve to die in our place. (Acts 2:22-23, Rom. 5:9, 1 Cor. 15:3-4, 2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 3:13, Phil 2:8, Heb. 9:11-12) And on the cross, Jesus delivered the fatal blow to Satan and his horrible rule over broken humanity and the world. (Matt. 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 3:23-25; John 12:31; Col. 2:15)<sup>11</sup>

### **His Exaltation:**

- **His resurrection:** The good news is that three days later God raised him from the dead proving that his rescue mission was a success. This is the good news that Jesus not only conquered Satan, sin, and death, but he also inaugurated God’s kingdom on earth by revealing himself as the *first-born from the dead* of all his people who will one day also be raised from the dead when he returns. (1 Cor. 15:3-6, Romans 4:24-25, Phil 2:8, Acts 2:29-39, Acts 17:30-31, Rom. 1:4, 1 Cor 15:56.57, Rom 6:5–7, 2 Pet. 3:7-13, Rev. 21:1-3)<sup>12</sup>
- **His ascension:** Forty days after his resurrection, he ascended back to the Father’s right hand from where he will return to judge the living and the dead. (Acts 1:1-11, Acts 2, Matt 24:30; 25:19, 31; 26:64; John 14:3)<sup>13</sup>

But the Good News about the Father as Lord of Creation and the Son as Lord of Redemption reaches its consummation in:

### **The Good News about God the Holy Spirit as LORD of Restoration**

When Jesus ascended back to the Father, God poured out his Spirit on his people at Pentecost as evidence that Jesus is now seated on God’s throne as his only Savior and LORD of the world. This means that God has now given Jesus Christ the sole authority as Lord to form God’s New Humanity on earth, God’s New Israel, called the Church, by the transforming power and presence of his Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:32-33, Acts 4:12, Phil. 2:10-11, Eph 2:15-16, Gal. 3:26-29, Eph. 2:11-22, Col. 3:11, 1 Pet. 2:9)

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<sup>11</sup> The Bible presents the essence of both sin and salvation as *substitution*. This is the good news that *God satisfied himself by substituting himself*. God satisfied his own just demands as the holy just Judge by substituting himself for us and taking on himself the full penalty for sin that we deserve. In love, the holy and just judge allowed himself to be judged in our place so that his justice and his love could both satisfied at once. Paul tells us this was so “that God might be both *just* and *justifier* (just Judge *and* merciful Father) of those who believe” (Rom. 3:26).

<sup>12</sup> Jesus’ resurrection was evidence that his sacrifice on the cross was an acceptable payment for the penalty we deserve to pay for our sin, fully satisfying God’s holy justice for us (1 Cor. 15:3-6, Romans 4:24-25, Phil 2:8). Jesus’ resurrection, like his death on the cross, was a declaration of his victory as the *Son of God* over all our enemies, including Satan, death, and the power of sin. (Acts 2:29-39, Acts 17:30-31, Rom. 1:4, 1 Cor 15:56.57, Rom 6:5–7) Jesus’ resurrection also brought about the inauguration of God’s kingdom on earth by his revelation of himself as the *first-born from the dead* of all his followers who will also be raised from the dead when he returns. (Rom. 8:29, Col. 1:18) The bible presents the good news of two resurrections. Jesus has risen from the dead (the first resurrection) in advance of all his followers being raised from the dead in the future (the second resurrection). (1 Cor. 15:20-28) The resurrection of Jesus is also good news that there is a whole new world coming that will one day be completely delivered from sin’s presence and made new. (2 Pet. 3:7-13, Rev. 21:1-3)

<sup>13</sup> This exalted Christ is coming again, and when he comes again, it will not be like the first time as a humble, suffering servant. He will return as a sovereign King, executing judgment and establishing righteousness in all the earth. (Matt 24:30; 25:19, 31; 26:64; John 14:3).

## Union With Christ: The Highest Blessing of the Gospel

The Holy Spirit's most significant application of Christ's redemptive work to our lives is reconciling our broken relationship with the Triune God by *uniting us to Jesus Christ*. Therefore, the highest blessing of the gospel is the believer's *union with Christ*. Paul teaches that our union with Christ is the fountainhead from which flows "every spiritual blessing." (Eph. 1:1-3)<sup>14</sup>

The good news is that God now promises all who will bow before Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, in true repentance and faith, the outflowing of a *threefold spiritual blessing* by his Spirit that will completely reverse the consequences of his *threefold curse* on us because of our sin.

**First, he promises to reverse our condemned standing of guilt by forgiving us and giving us a new standing before him in his heavenly court.**

- **Propitiation:** This is the good news that you can be forgiven through Jesus shed blood for you on the cross because God declares that his just wrath against you is now satisfied in the death of his Son. (1 John 4:10, Rom. 3:25, Heb. 2:17)<sup>15</sup>
- **Justification:** It's the good news that you can be accepted by God through Jesus' righteousness because God, as Judge, now considers the record of all your sins to be on Jesus, and the perfect record of all Jesus' obedience to be yours. (Gal 2:16, Rom. 3:21-26, 2 Cor 5:21)<sup>16</sup>
- **Adoption:** It's the good news that you can be loved as God's own child because God is now your heavenly Father who promises to accept and love you just as he accepts and loves his one and only Son. This means that God's love for you in Christ is so radical, so

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<sup>14</sup> The biblical teaching on our union the Triune God "in Christ" is one of the most important and neglected doctrines in Christianity. There is nothing more central to our salvation as Christians than our union with Christ. In the New Testament, the word "Christian" is found only three times. However, the Apostle Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" approximately 165 times. Paul begins his letter to the Ephesians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us *in Christ* with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3). John Murray writes, "Union with Christ is really the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation not only in its application but also its once-for-all accomplishment in the finished work of Christ. Indeed the whole process of salvation has its origin in the phase of union with Christ." John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: MI, 1955), 161.

<sup>15</sup> Through Jesus' death, God's just wrath against us has been turned away by being poured out in all its fullness on Jesus in our place. God satisfied his wrath against us by substituting his own Son for us so that he can look on us without wrath, and we can look on him without fear. This is the good news that believers in Jesus don't have to live in fear of God's condemnation anymore. Instead, no matter how great our sins may be, God promises that he will no longer look on us with anger because he poured out all his wrath on Jesus in our place.

<sup>16</sup> When we believe in Christ, a *great exchange* takes place in the heavenly court. "For our sake he [God] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). God treated Jesus like a sinner so he could treat us like Jesus. This is the good news that believers in Christ don't need to be crippled by the fear of rejection from God or people anymore, always seeking acceptance by building and defending our reputations. Instead, we can love God and people well, risking people's rejection because we know God's acceptance of us because he considers Christ's perfect righteousness to be ours through faith.

amazing, that there is nothing you can do to cause God to love you any more or less. (Gal. 4:4-5, Rom. 8:15, Heb. 4:15, 12:10)<sup>17</sup>

**But God also promises to reverse the curse on our corrupt hearts by giving us a new heart by his Spirit.**

- **Regeneration (New Birth):** This is the good news that you can have a new heart with new desires to love, obey, honor, and enjoy God because God promises to give you a new birth and a new heart by his indwelling Holy Spirit. (Ezek. 36, Acts 2:38-39, John 3:3-8, Titus 3:5-6)<sup>18</sup>
- **Redemption (Ransom):** This is the good news that you can have a new freedom from sin's domineering power over your life because God promises to deliver you from *sin's dominion* and set you free to live a life of righteousness. (Rom 6, Eph 2:1-6, 2 Cor 5:14-15, and Col 2:20-3:4)<sup>19</sup>
- **Sanctification (New Life):** This is the good news that you can experience lasting change for the good because God's Holy Spirit is the one renewing you into the image of Jesus Christ as you keep drawing near to him in repentance and faith. (Titus 3:5, 2 Cor. 4:16, 2 Cor. 3:18, Col. 2:8-9)<sup>20</sup>

But God does even more than promise us a *new standing* and a *new heart* as his forgiven, accepted and beloved children.

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<sup>17</sup> Although we can grieve and displease God because of our sin, there is nothing we can do to cause our heavenly Father to love us any less, and there is nothing we can do to cause him to love us anymore. The Father's love for us in Christ is the same eternal love he has always had for his one and only Son. Because we are now his children, God promises to use all the trials of our lives not for our punishment, but for our good, to help us grow and mature to be like his Son. (Heb 12:10)

<sup>18</sup> The good news is that, by a miracle of divine grace, a new life is implanted by God in all who repent and believe in Jesus Christ, and that life is the life of God himself by his indwelling Holy Spirit. There is now divine opposition God promises to implant in us to counter the domineering power of sin. God will give us a new nature, a new set of desires, and a new set of dispositions to know him, please him, glorify him, and enjoy him as our heavenly Father.

<sup>19</sup> When the Holy Spirit regenerates us, he unites us to Christ resulting in a *definitive break* with sin's domineering power over us and a *new freedom* to strive after holiness and righteousness. Paul describes this as a definitive, one-time act of God in the lives of all believers in Christ. The good news is that no matter how intense or enslaving our present struggles with sin may be, we no longer need to be in bondage to sin's dominion over our lives. Although we can never be free from *sin's influence* until heaven, the good news is that because of our union with Jesus in his death and resurrection, God promises we can be delivered from *sin's dominion* and set free to live a life of righteousness. See John Murray's *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, and *The Agency in Definitive Sanctification* in his *Collected Works*.

<sup>20</sup> In Paul's letter to the Romans, he changes his focus from the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection in our *justification* in Romans 1-5, to the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection in our *sanctification* in Romans 6 because of our union with Christ. In Romans 6, Paul refers to this radical change God makes *in us* as our "death to sin" through our union with Christ in his death and our "newness of life" by our union with Christ in his resurrection. The same gospel message that *saves sinners* also *sanctifies saints*. The goal of the gospel is not merely to forgive us, but to change us into true worshippers of God and authentic lovers of people. The gospel is not just a gate we pass through one time but a path we are to walk each day of our lives.

**He also promises to reverse the curse on our corrupt World by giving us a whole new world when Jesus Returns.** The Bible teaches that on that day God will raise all people who have ever lived from the dead to stand before him for his final judgment.

- *The bad news* is that as the Just Judge he *must* then separate all who rejected him from his merciful presence forever in hell.
- *But the good news* is that as Merciful Savior, he will usher all his followers into a new creation where heaven will finally return to earth and be a new paradise even *better than Eden*.

Everyone who goes to heaven will be making a round trip back to earth to experience the fullness of God's salvation and paradise forever. The Christian hope is not just that one day, when we die, we will go *up to heaven* and worship God forever. Our ultimate hope is in another day when Jesus returns and brings heaven back *down to earth*. (Eph. 1:13,14, Rom 8:30, Titus 1:20, 1Cor 15:20-57, Col 1:20, Rev 21:1-4)

When Jesus returns:

- the kingdom paradise that *the Father* prepared for his children in creation,
  - the kingdom that was thwarted by Satan and sin in the garden, and
  - the kingdom that *the Son* inaugurated on earth by his death and resurrection,
- will finally come to earth in all its fullness forever by the transforming power of *the Spirit*.<sup>21</sup>

On that day you will be made new in both soul and body and delivered, not only from sin's domineering power, but even from its presence. On that day God promises he will wipe away every tear from your eyes, and death will be no more, neither will there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things will have passed away.

When this happens you will say, like Jewel the Unicorn at the end of The Chronicles of Narnia, "I've come home at last! This is my real country. This is the land I've been looking for all my life."

### **"What Must I Do To Be Saved?"**

A troubled jailer in the first century once asked the Apostle Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). This jailor's question reflects the most important ancient question of the ages, "How can a sinful person be right with a holy God?"

How can these gospel promises of a *new standing*, a *new heart*, and a *new world* be promises that we can claim for ourselves? What must *we* do to be saved from sin's penalty and corrupting power?

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<sup>21</sup> The Bible presents both a cosmic and a personal perspective about the good news: 1) The cosmic perspective is broad and all encompassing. It includes God's restoration of *all things* — both fallen creation *and* fallen humanity. This is the good news that *the Father's creation, ruined by the fall of humanity, has been redeemed by his Son, and is being restored by his Spirit into the kingdom of God on earth*. 2) The more personal perspective focuses on God's redemption and restoration of *humanity* as the pinnacle of his creation. This is the good news that *God the Father so loved the world (all nations) he created, that he gave his only begotten Son to redeem them, and his Holy Spirit to restore them – so that all (nations) who believe in him will not perish but have everlasting life*.



**We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord by repentance and faith.**

Jesus answers this question when he calls us to “*Repent and believe* in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). God makes these gospel promises to anyone who will personally receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord by repenting and believing in him. The Apostle John writes, “To all who receive him [Christ], who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

Repentance and faith are presented in Scripture as two sides of the same coin. Through repentance we turn away from our sin and self-trust, and through faith we place our trust in Jesus Christ alone as our Savior and Lord.

**What is repentance?**

*Repentance involves admitting the problem* – that you are a guilty sinner before God, justly deserving his condemnation for your sin. It involves a total renouncing of yourself as being adequate in any way to do that which would make you acceptable to God. It involves confessing your sinfulness to God, acknowledging your guilt before him, and having an attitude that sincerely desires to turn away from your sins. Repentance means turning away from your sin and self-trust.

**What is faith?**

Faith is not just intellectual assent or merely trusting in God for help. (James 2:19, Matt. 8:29) It involves *accepting God’s solution* – placing all your personal trust in Jesus Christ alone to save you from your sin’s condemning penalty and corrupting power. (Acts 16:31, Rom. 3:22, Rom. 4:5) Faith involves believing in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection for you as your only hope for forgiveness and acceptance with God.

Here’s an example of a prayer that can help you express repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

*My gracious God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. I confess to you that I am a sinner, worthy of your just condemnation for my sin. I acknowledge that I am totally unable to do anything to make myself acceptable to you. I now turn away from all my sin and self-trust, and place my trust in you alone for the forgiveness of my sins and the gift of your Holy Spirit to give me a new heart and new desires to know you, please you, glorify you, and enjoy you now and forever. Take control of my life and transform me into the kind of person you’ve made me to be. Amen.*