

## Why we need Jesus

**Reading: Romans 1:16-17** “...the gospel of Christ... is the power of God...”

### **Introduction:**

People who are Christians always have been, and always will be, in the minority (**Matthew 7:13-14**) in this world. And the trend seems to be that they represent a smaller and smaller percentage of society as time goes on. While many in the world will acknowledge that they see some “good things” about Christianity<sup>1</sup>, they do not see it as being necessary, nor do they have a desire to become a Christian themselves. To some of them, Christianity is seen as;

- restrictive – having “rules” that limit their personal freedom.
- old fashioned – not needed in these “enlightened” times.
- taking up “valuable” time on Sundays to attend church.
- an “optional lifestyle choice” for those who choose it.

If Christianity was nothing more than an alternative way of living, with no eternal significance, then there probably wouldn't be anything wrong with people adopting a “*take it or leave it*” approach. But is it just an “alternative lifestyle” and nothing more? Is it just a noble way of living, but at the end of the day, has nothing more to offer than the non-Christian who leads what we would call “a good life”? Do we really need Jesus? Can't we follow some other religious leader or prophet who teaches things like love and forgiveness?

These are all valid questions to ask, and during this lesson, we will look at what the scriptures have to say about why we need Jesus, and why we need to obey Him.

## **LESSON**

### **1) We are spiritual beings – more than just flesh and blood**

As human beings, we are more than just our physical bodies. The scriptures show us that we are made up of two parts; an outward part, and an inward part (**2 Corinthians 4:16**);

- the outward part is the physical body – the physically tangible part that people can see. This is the part that God created from the “*dust of the ground*” (**Genesis 2:7**). But while your body or physical appearance may reflect elements of your personality, it is not the “real you”.
- it is the inward part that is the “real you” - your soul; your spirit<sup>2</sup>, and it is formed within man by God Himself (**Zechariah 12:1b**). While we are alive here on earth, our spirit lives within our physical body (**Daniel 7:15**) – what Peter described as his “*tent*”<sup>3</sup> (**2 Peter 1:13-14**).

Passages such as **Matthew 10:28** and **Luke 12:4** also highlight the fact that there is a difference between these two parts. These verses show us that while man can kill the body, only God can kill both the body and the soul. In other words, there is a part that man can destroy - the physical body, but there is

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<sup>1</sup> For example, showing forgiveness, doing good deeds, loving one another.

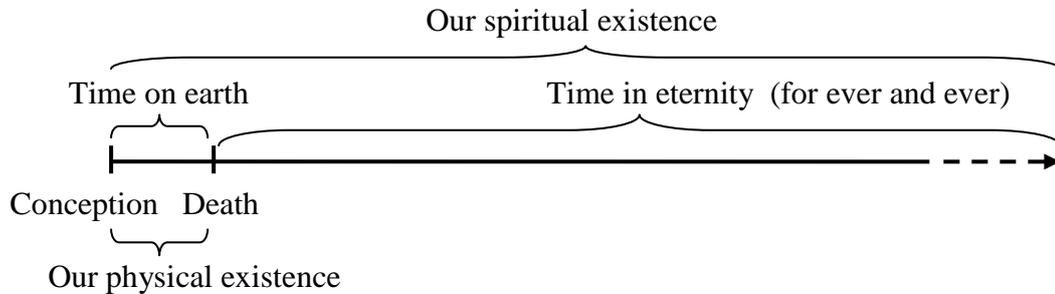
<sup>2</sup> The terms “*soul*” and “*spirit*” are often used interchangeably throughout the scriptures.

<sup>3</sup> Paul also used the term “*tent*” when talking about our physical body – **2 Corinthians 5:1, 4**.

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another part that man cannot destroy - the spiritual body, the soul. In fact, we can see from these scriptures, and from life itself, that our physical bodies are only temporary. Eventually we die, and our physical body decays<sup>4</sup>. However, our spiritual lives remain, long after the physical has passed away (**Luke 16:22-26; Philippians 1:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; Revelation 20:12-15**).

Therefore, if we were to illustrate this in a diagram, it would be something like this;



The above diagram is obviously not to scale, as our physical existence here on earth is but a very small fraction of time compared to eternity – it is “...*a vapour that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away...*” (**James 4:13-14**). Once we start to understand the “big picture”, and stop thinking that our lives consist only of our time here on earth, then we should see things in a different perspective. Our lives should not be dominated by what we can simply achieve for ourselves here on earth, but on how we are preparing ourselves for eternity (**Colossians 3:1-3**).

### **2) We are all accountable to God**

God created us with the ability to choose how we want to live our lives here on earth (**Joshua 24:15**). But with that “freedom” (to choose) comes responsibility. At the end of the day, whatever lifestyle we choose to live, we will have to answer to God for the way that we have lived it (**2 Corinthians 5:10a**). At some point in the future, all of us, whether we are a Christian or not, will have to give account of ourselves to Him on the Day of Judgement (**Hebrews 9:27**). We don’t know *when* that day will be (**Matthew 24:36, 42; 2 Peter 3:3-10**), but we do know *what* is going to happen;

- we will be judged on whether our names are recorded in the Book of Life (**Revelation 20:15**),
- we will be judged on what we have done while we lived in this physical world (**Romans 2:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:10b; Revelation 20:12-13**), and,
- our lives will be measured against the teachings of Christ (**John 12:48**).

The result of that judgement will be as follows;

*‘...eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil....’* (**Romans 2:7-10**)

<sup>4</sup> Unless some special preservation treatment has been applied to the body, such as embalming.

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What this and other passages<sup>5</sup> show us is that, how we live here on earth will be a big factor<sup>6</sup> in determining what happens to us in eternity. This makes the manner of our lives here very important, because once we have lived and died, there is no going back to try and change things (**Luke 16: 19-31**).

### 3) We all sin

If we lived perfect lives, then judgement day wouldn't be an issue for us - we would be faultless and have nothing to fear. But when we take an honest look at our own lives, we will admit that there have been times when we have done the wrong thing. We may very well have done many things that are good and noble – and that's great. But there are also the bad things that we have done;

- It may have been telling a lie (**Proverbs 12:22**).
- It may have been that we sought revenge to “get even” with somebody who hurt us (**Romans 12:19**).
- It may have been that we stole something that didn't belong to us (**Ephesians 4:28**).
- Or it may have been that we spoke evil about someone we don't like (**Ephesians 4:31**).
- In fact, it may have been that we did all of those things; and much more; and many times over.

Even the sins that nobody else knows about, God knows (**1 Corinthians 4:5**). He knows what is in our minds, our thoughts and our hearts (**Psalms 139:1-4; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24**).

If we try to convince ourselves that we haven't sinned, then the Bible clearly tells us otherwise. Scriptures such as **Romans 3:23** and **1 John 1:8, 10** show us that we are all sinners. It doesn't matter whether we sinned just once, or sinned many times – we are still guilty of being sinners (**James 2:10**). And sin brings with it a penalty – condemnation (implied from **Romans 8:1**), spiritual death (**Romans 6:23a**), separation, alienation from God (**Colossians 1:21a**).

**Point:** If nothing else happened, we would all stand before God condemned, helpless, living in fearful expectation of the judgement (**Hebrews 10:30-31**).

### 4) Only Jesus provides eternal life

But in spite of our sinful ways, God still loves us - He doesn't want anybody to perish (**2 Peter 3:9**). But God is a just God (**Romans 3:26**), and so justice must be done. A penalty or sacrifice had to be paid for our sins – they cannot be ignored. So before He even created this world, God had a plan (**Ephesians 1:3-4**) - He would send His Son Jesus into the world to be the sacrifice for our sins, our iniquities (**Isaiah 53:2-8**).

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<sup>5</sup> For example **Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10**.

<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that we are saved simply by our own works. We must have faith in God, and we are reliant upon His grace and forgiveness (**Galatians 2:16a; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 1:7, 9**). But our faith must be accompanied by good works (**James 2:24, 26; Colossians 1:10**), otherwise it is worthless.

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Some may ask, “*But why Jesus? Isn’t it a bit extreme that the Son of God had to die in order to take away our sins?*” The answer lies in Jesus’ prayer in the Garden (**Matthew 26:39**) and what happened afterwards – there was no other way. Jesus was the only acceptable sacrifice.

Firstly, there can be no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood.

“...without shedding of blood, there is no remission (i.e. forgiveness of sins).” (**Hebrews 9:22**)

Secondly, animal sacrifices did not have the power to take away sin.

“...it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats (i.e. animals) could take away sins..” (**Hebrews 10:4, 11**).

Thirdly, animals that were sacrificed under the Old Law had to be “...without blemish...” (**Leviticus 1:3, 10; 3:1; Deuteronomy 15:21; 17:1**). In other words, they had to be perfect. God will not accept second-rate, imperfect offerings (**Malachi 1:6-8, 13-14**). Therefore, for someone to be our sacrifice (because animal sacrifices are not sufficient), that person would also have to be perfect. And there is only one person who has walked on this earth who meets that criteria - Jesus (**Hebrews 4:15; Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 2:21-22**).

Fourthly, in order for the New Covenant (or Testament, or Will) to come into effect, it first required the death of the One who made it.

“For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator”<sup>7</sup> (**Hebrews 9:16**).

As a result, we can now have forgiveness (**Romans 5:6-11; Colossians 1:19-22; Hebrews 10:12-14**) – no-one else has paid the price that’s required for our sins to be forgiven. Only His sacrifice allows us to go from being lost to being saved, and also allows us to continue to be saved (**1 John 1:7, 9**).

This is why Jesus could make statements like;

“...I the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (**John 14:6**).

This is why the apostle Peter could make statements like;

“...Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved...”(**Acts 4:12**).

This is why the apostle Paul could make statements like;

“..O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord...” (**Romans 7:24-25**).

“...For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus...” (**1 Timothy 2:5**).

**Point:** Without Jesus and His sacrifice, we would have no hope of salvation (**Colossians 1:27; 1 Timothy 1:1**). We would all stand before God condemned to an eternity of punishment.

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<sup>7</sup> As we know in this secular life, a person’s last will and testament does not come into force until that person has died. It cannot be implemented while the person is still alive.

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### 5) We need to respond in order to receive the benefits

Salvation is not automatic. We have to do something in order to become saved and to remain saved. That is why the apostles were sent out to preach the gospel throughout all the nations (**Matthew 28:19-20**). What we do in response does not “earn” us our salvation – we are saved by grace (**Ephesians 2:8**) – but salvation is conditional on obedience to what God has commanded (**Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8**).

We can see from early church history, recorded in books such as **Acts**, that to become saved, people had to obey the gospel by;

- believing that Jesus is the Son of God and in His gospel (**Acts 8:37a; John 3:16**),
- confessing that belief (**Acts 8:37b**),
- repenting of their sins (**Acts 2:38a, Luke 13:3**),
- being baptised (immersed in water) in the name of the Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38b; 8:38; 10:48; 19:5; Matthew 28:19**).

We can also see that remaining saved is conditional upon our ongoing faithfulness (**Colossians 1:21-23; 1 Timothy 4:16; 1 John 1:7**).

- It is possible to jeopardise our salvation. Some of the early Christians had already “ship-wrecked” their faith (**1 Timothy 1:19-20**).

The result of our faithful obedience is that we no longer stand condemned before God (**Romans 8:1**). We have been made (spiritually) clean, holy, and blameless (**Colossians 1:22**) and can look forward to spending eternity in Heaven with the Jesus and the Father (**John 14:2-3; 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:10b**).

### Conclusion:

While people have the ability to make choices in this life, Christianity is not just another “lifestyle choice” – and it is not “out of date”. Times may change. Technology may change. Our understanding of things in this world may change. But one thing remains constant throughout the centuries – people still sin. We still have thieves and murderers. We still have liars and gossipers. We still think and say things that we shouldn’t. We still have people who devise evil schemes. We still have people who ignore the needs of others. We still see sexual immorality and drunkenness in society (**Romans 1:28-32; Galatians 5:19-21**). All of these things (and much, much more) still cause people to be lost. The God to whom we must give account today is the same God who gave us His Word some 2000 years ago (**Hebrews 13:8**).

Jesus also shows us how to live a full and wholesome life. The world still needs people to show love towards others. The world still needs people to forgive one another. The world still needs people to help the poor. The world still needs people to exercise patience. The world still needs people to speak the truth, and to speak the things that build up and edify others (**Ephesians 4:25 – 5:2; Colossians 3:12-16**). Jesus’ life and His teachings provide us with the example and instructions to follow.

We need Jesus today just as much as people did in the first century.