

# Why Jesus?

by Mike Sharrett

What's the big deal about Jesus? Isn't up to us to decide for ourselves what will make us happy? Can't people fashion their own spirituality?

The Bible was written to reveal to us how to have true spirituality. It explains how to know God personally and to enjoy him forever. The following points summarize the Bible's basic teaching on what it means to be alive spiritually, to be right with God, to have eternal life, and why Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the *way, the truth and the life*. (John 14:6)

## God is good

The Bible testifies over and over that God is good. He is the fountain of every good thing, *the earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord* (Psalm.33:5) He delights to bless his creatures. Every pleasure we enjoy comes ultimately from the hand of God.

*The Lord is good to all, His mercies are over all His works...You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.* (Psalm 145:8,16)

In his goodness he makes life possible. He created us and upholds us. Think about how the very nature of life screams *dependence*: we can't live for a minute without air, or days without water, or weeks without food. We can't even make ourselves breathe. *He gives life and breath to all things.* (Isaiah.42:5) Think how defenseless you are roughly one third of your life...while you sleep! You are also totally vulnerable to disease, the forces of nature, and many things simply beyond your control. It is patently obvious we are dependent creatures; none of us makes the sun shine or oxygen to exist. Since we are not self-created we owe our existence, and reason for existence, to the Creator.

## God is holy

God is an eternal person, the uncreated Creator, who is morally perfect in his being. He is just, righteous, hates evil, and always acts with moral splendor. He is trustworthy, faithful, kind, and merciful. If you saw him in his beauty you would never desire to leave his presence. Psalm 33:8 says, *let the whole world stand in awe of him.*

King David of Israel understood this, writing in Psalm 27:4:

*One thing I have asked of the Lord, that I shall seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord...*

Being a just and fair God, he must punish the guilty.

*Shall not the judge of all the earth deal justly?* (Genesis 18:25)

*God will by no means leave the guilty unpunished* (Exodus 34:7)

When we've been wronged and demand justice in a law court, we especially understand that God should be this way. We all instinctively hate injustice, cheating, bribes, lies, or being slandered or swindled by others.

God can't be bought; he will always give everyone exactly what they deserve, no less, no more. He loves what is right and hates what is wrong. He will most certainly put all wrongs to rest.

*He will render to every man according to his deeds.* (Romans 2:6)

He has such an aversion to sin, as you would to a toxic substance, that he will not tolerate it in his presence. Since sin is a violation of his law and nature, he will never have it in his presence and he must punish it. His universe is a moral universe, such that sin always and inexorably attracts his judgment or wrath. He would not be good if this were not so.

## We are not holy

We all know we are not perfect. Who ever claimed to do everything for every second with every fiber of his being exactly like God does? We fall so far short of God's moral beauty that there really is no comparison.

*If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, who could stand?* (Psalm130:3)

*Who can say, 'I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin'?*

(Proverbs 20:9)

We are usually the last person to see sin in our own hearts:

*There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*

(Proverbs14:12)

*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick, who can understand it?* (Jeremiah 17:9)

Sin is both a heart and a legal problem. As a heart problem, sin twists us from our original moral glory. We were made to depend upon God in loving obedience. Rightly related to him, all was well. But once sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, our nature changed such that we want to take and enjoy the gifts of God without the Giver. Our tendency is to either be content without him entirely, or to use God, to fashion him in our own

likeness, to take him on our own terms. This tacitly keeps us from dealing with the horrendous issue of our rebellion against God.

*For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator.* (Romans 1:25)

Sin is also a legal problem. Many people refuse to admit that self-serving autonomy is the dominant principle in their hearts, and that they fall woefully short of living by God's holy standards or laws. God says that *all have sinned and missed the mark of His moral perfection.* (Romans 3:23) Not one of us has kept His precepts without blemish, we've all done what we should not (sins of commission) and left undone what we should do (sins of omission). By thought, word and deed we have not sought to please and honor God with every fiber of our being. Rather than keep God's law, we lower his standards, become a law unto ourselves, and do what seems right in our own eyes.

## The God problem

Now you see the "God problem": we can't live without him and we can't live with him. While we were made to live for God, and in fact we are completely dependent upon him for everything, we seek to live independently of God. God is too holy for us. We are too sinful for him. He must punish our sin. Our sin attracts his wrath. Do you see, if you die with your sins you will suffer eternal torment away from his presence forever? Jesus said, *But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!* (Luke 12:5)

## Man-made solutions

What have human beings done over the ages about the God problem? Some have simply denied there is a problem, asserting that there is no God. *The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'* (Psalm.14:1)

Others have sought to make themselves good enough for God. They try to earn his acceptance. But honestly, how good do you have to be for a perfect God? If you think you are succeeding, your standards are too low. If you are sure you are not, you're probably riddled with fear and guilt, drowning a guilty conscience in the pursuit of pleasure, possessions, or some passion.

Still others think that God merely wants people to be sincere, an idea which is foreign to the Bible. It ignores the fact that it is possible to be sincerely mistaken, that we are usually more self-serving than sincere, and that sincerity itself makes no one righteous, nor can it cleanse anyone of the stain of sin.

Finally, others have invented religion as a solution. All world religions share the same basic premise. Keep the rules and God owes you. Do your part and God is obligated. Religion is advice: do this and God will accept you. Christianity, however, is totally different. It is an announcement: God accepts you not because of what you did, but by what someone else did!

Yes, Christianity stands alone as the only religion of grace. It alone takes seriously the fact that no one can ever give God the perfect righteousness he requires, nor is any amount of our good deeds sufficient to stop God's wrath from being attracted to our sin.

*By the works of the law no flesh will be justified (declared perfectly righteous) in his sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.* (Romans 3:20) Paul is showing that, regarding acceptance before God, the only thing moral standards (the law) can do is reveal how much you miss the mark of perfect obedience to God. The law can never bring about the obedience it requires because the heart is sinful.

What we need is a shield of protection against God's wrath, the removal of our sin and the acquiring of perfect righteousness. Where do you find that? No religious leader ever claimed to be that for anyone, except...

## Jesus

Jesus came to earth to do for sinners what they are completely incapable of doing for themselves. What do you need to enjoy God's presence?

First, you need the forgiveness he offers through Christ's death. Christ's death on the cross was completely sufficient to satisfy God's just punishment for your sin. Jesus paid the debt in full by nailing to the cross, in His body, your sins, thus bearing the curse of law-breaking (death) in your place. *For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...* (Romans 5:6f)

Second, you need the perfect righteousness attained by Christ's obedience.

Just as Christ died for your sins, he also lived a blamelessly righteous life that He might grant His “perfect record” to any who trust Him.

*I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...that I may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith... (Philippians 3:9)*

Thus, in Jesus Christ you have all you need for salvation. Jesus, acting in your place, met the whole demand of God’s law by living righteously. He also fulfilled the penalty of the law by dying to purchase your forgiveness. Some call this the “Great Exchange”: you give Jesus your sin, which he removes from your “moral record” and nails to the cross, and then he grants you his moral perfection. *God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

The Bible calls this marvelous transaction “justification”. God declares helpless sinners as totally righteous in his sight because of the merits of the resurrected Jesus Christ--and all as a free gift of his grace. Behold the *mercy* of God, not giving us what we deserve – death, and the *grace* of God, in love giving us what we do not deserve --eternal life!

*...that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:7) But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved). (Ephesians.2:4)*

Is it clear that absolutely everything we need for salvation we find in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who invites us to Himself for salvation:

*The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many... (Mark 12:45) I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 12:46) Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)*

## **And you?**

*Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. (Romans 10:13)*

“Calling upon the name of the Lord” means having faith. Faith embraces Jesus as the Savior of your life, trusting the promise of God, taking Him unreservedly at His word, that Jesus died for a sinner like you. Faith is acknowledging, believing and trusting that Christ’s death and resurrection were enough to save you, and that you can not add anything to His completed work. *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

Faith, the “empty hands” that reach out to receive what God offers freely, knows the facts about Jesus, believes those facts to be true, and trusts Jesus Christ alone as your personal Savior. *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. (John 1:12) If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. (Romans 10:9)*

True trust in Christ will transform the heart; it always changes your priorities. Jesus said faith has a cost: *Take up your cross; follow me; you must die to self.* Jesus takes your heart’s throne as Lord of your life.

When considered in light of God’s design for your life, His Lordship is perfectly reasonable: you were *originally intended* to live in humble, obedient reliance upon the Creator, doing all your works for His glory. Now that through faith you are reunited to your Lord, the same pattern of life holds true: you live for His glory! These works do not merit your salvation; they are simply the fruits of it: *For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10) Christ Jesus gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:14)*

Faith restores that wondrous relationship. How? The same Spirit that brings to your heart the resurrection life of Christ is the Spirit who also changes the desires of your heart to cause you to want to follow Jesus. The Spirit, using the Word of God, teaches you how to please your Heavenly Father, and abundantly empowers you to, as well.

Why not ask Jesus in prayer to mercifully take away your sin. Tell him you trust his promise to cleanse and love you forever. Ask him to take control of your life by the power of his indwelling Holy Spirit.