

# Sin and Salvation

**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (NASB)  
John 3:16**

**W**hen God walked on this earth as a man, those who observed Him were astonished. They had never seen a man performing the miracles that He did or teaching the things that He taught. People would touch His clothes and be healed. He was amazing and powerful. The religious leaders of His day rejected Him, but vast numbers of people accepted Him. People would chase after Him and gather in His home. He could not escape. In both the gospels of Mark and Luke we read that the people were impressed with Him.

**And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath; and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority. (NASB) Luke 4:31-32**

Even secular writers were impressed. One major comment comes from a Jewish historian. His name was Flavius Josephus (AD 37-97). He was born into a priestly Jewish family. He was a Pharisee and a historian for the Roman empire. He wrote several famous works: *Antiquities of the Jews* and the *Wars of the Jews*. Here is a major comment from him,

Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man. For he was a doer of surprising feats - a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day. (*Antiquities of the Jews* 18.3.3)

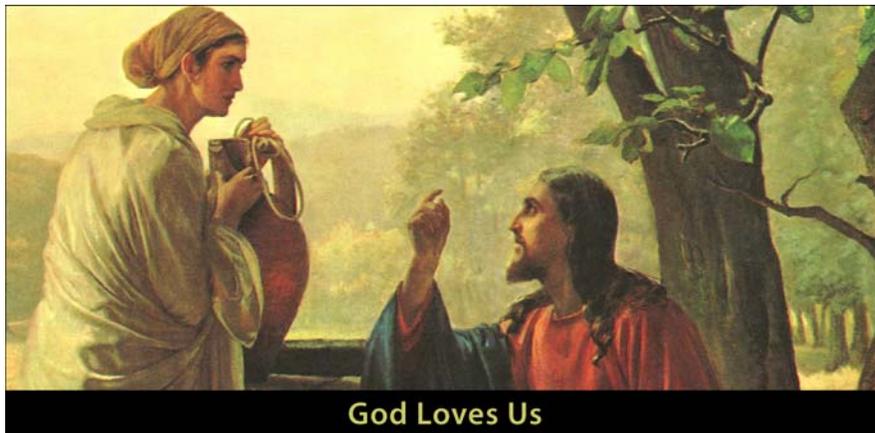
Another major comment comes from multiple authors who quote from documents that Pontius Pilate (1 BC - circa AD 37) had written. Pontius Pilate was the fifth Roman procurator of Judea (AD 26 - 36 ), under Emperor Tiberius, who lived during the time of Jesus. He sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion. The quote below refers to the Acts of Pontius Pilate, a document he wrote which is now missing. Its existence is strongly supported by three ancient authors: Epiphanius (*Heresies* 50.1), Justin Martyr (*First Apology*) and Tertullian (*Apology*).

“At His coming the lame will leap as a deer, and the stammering tongue will clearly speak: the blind will see, and the lepers will be healed; and the dead will rise, and walk.” And that He did

those things, you can learn from the Acts of Pontius Pilate. First Apology 48.

“They pierced my hands and my feet,” was used in reference to the nails of the cross which were driven into His hands and feet. “And. . . they cast lots for His clothes, and after they crucified Him distributed it among them.” And that these things did happen, you can ascertain from the Acts of Pontius Pilate. First Apology 35.

Jesus was not an ordinary man. That is the testimony of history. He was God in human flesh.



**WHY HE CAME.** But why did He come to earth? Why did God take on human flesh? Did He come to raise a family or conquer Rome? Why did He come? His apostles, the men who knew Him well, tell us why He came. In the years that followed, Jesus' apostles died for Him because they believed in Him. We possess records about Jesus from Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 55-120), who has been called the greatest historian on ancient Rome; Hadrian, who was an emperor of Rome in A.D. 76-138; Mara Bar-Serapion, who was a Syrian living at least 73 years after Jesus Christ; Phlegon, a historian who lived in the first century; Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (A.D. 61-112), or Pliny the Younger, who was the governor of Bithynia (A.D. 112) and a Roman senator, Gaius Suetonius Tranquilla, who was a Roman historian (A.D. 117-138); Thallus (circa A.D. 52), who wrote a history about the middle east from the time of the Trojan War to his own time; and Trajan, who was emperor of Rome in A.D. 53 - 117. The testimony is loud and clear. Why would secular writers have written what they did? The answer is simple. They recorded what was true. Jesus existed, taught, and healed people. But why did He come?

1. Romans 5:6-9 has the answer to our question. What is it about?

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2. Of the three types of people described in Rom. 5:6-9, for whom would you be willing to die? For whom did He die?

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3. Why was God willing to die for us (Rom. 5:8)?

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Jesus came and died because we had a need. We were spiritually dead. Every man, woman, and child that you see throughout the day are spiritually dead unless they are trusting Jesus to forgive their sins. Every human has lied, been angry,

quarreled with someone, been jealous, been selfish, lusted, deceived someone, or been gluttonous. Some of us have committed adultery, murdered, or robbed someone. God calls these actions sin, and so He calls us sinners. He says that no one is holy, not even one of us (Rom. 3:10, 12), and as a result we deserve a spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). God does not do evil. He did not deserve to die. He is more than good. He is perfect. He is wonderfully holy. He hates sin! He says that unless we want His forgiveness and believe that only Jesus Christ can forgive us, we are going to live in hell forever. We will deserve to remain spiritually dead due to our sins. As a result we will deserve to spend eternity in a place of suffering **unless** we make peace with God. We absolutely need our sins to be forgiven.

Yet in some churches, pastors do not want to tell us that we are sinners or that we are going to spend eternity in hell unless we believe in Jesus. One pastor was quoted in the U.S. News and World Report in March 25, 1991 as saying this,

“My congregation would be stunned to hear a sermon on hell,” says Rev. Mary Fraus, pastor of the Dumbarton United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. Her parishioners, she says are “upper-middle-class, well-educated critical thinkers” who view God as “compassionate and loving, not someone who’s going to put them into eternal damnation.”

4. What is Jesus trying to tell us in Matt. 25:46 and John 3:36?

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5. Is the view of the pastor, Mary Fraus, dangerous? If so, why?

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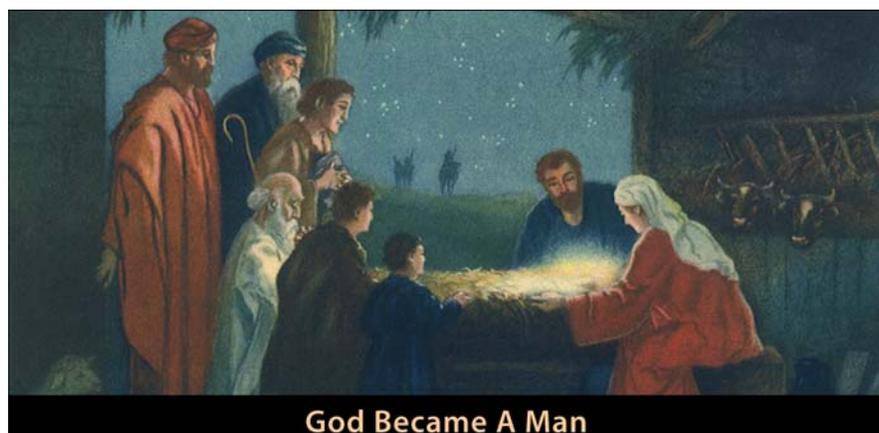
6. Should people be warned about their future?

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7. Is it wrong not to warn others about hell if Jesus warned people about hell when He was here?

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**SO, GOD BECAME A MAN.** God became a man so that He could warn us, die for the punishment we deserve because we have sinned against God, allow our sins to be forgiven, and escape an eternal hell. He was born of a virgin so that He would have a sinless birth and life. This destiny was something that He did not deserve. In His human form He was called Jesus Christ.



The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel- which means, “God with us.” (NIV) Matt. 1:23

He lived a perfect life without sinning. He lived among us and did many miracles as proof that He was God.

But others asked, “How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?” (NIV) John 9:16 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ . . . (NIV) John 20:30-31

He taught us truth, and when it was time to die, He did not protect Himself. He came to die for us because He loved us!

8. In 1 John 4:2-3 we are given a test that we can apply to determine if men and women are false teachers. What is the test?

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9. What does the test imply happened to Jesus when he was born (1 John 4:2-3 )?

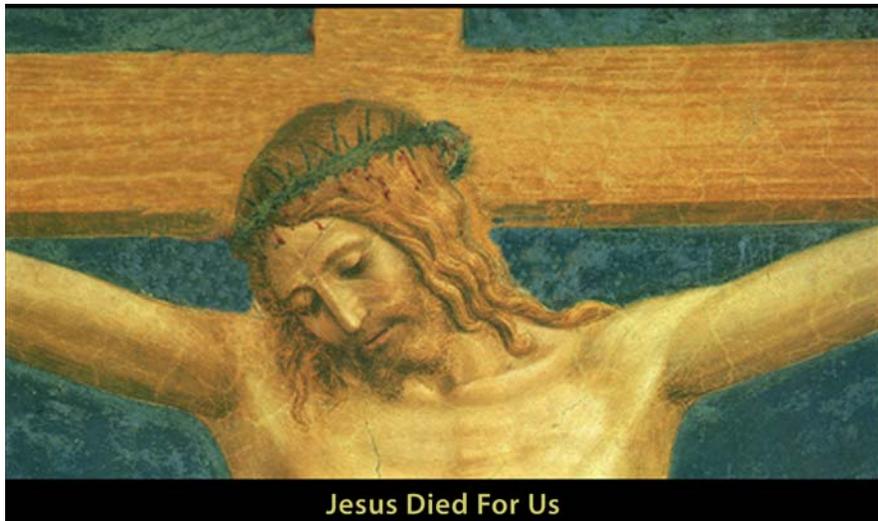
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10. What does Acts 2:22-24 tells us about Jesus?

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**JESUS DIED.** Jesus willingly died for us so that He could forgive our sins. His death paid the penalty for our sins. He died on a wooden rail called a cross. The Roman soldiers spat on Him, abused Him, and eventually killed Him. Why was God willing to experience this pain and humiliation? Here is the answer . . .

For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him . . . whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed . . . (NIV) John 3:16-18



God did this because He loves us more than you can imagine. Why would Jesus die for you unless He loves you? There was no other way to rescue you.

11. What must a person do in order to have his/her sins forgiven according to 1 Cor. 15:1-6?

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12. According to 1 Cor. 15:1-2, is it possible to believe but not really believe? Is it possible for a person to think that he/she is a Christian and going to heaven but neither are true?

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13. Do you believe that Jesus is God and that He did these things? If so, would you like Him to forgive your sins?

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14. If not, why not?

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*Believe in Jesus?*

What does it mean to believe in Jesus? Many Christians do not really know what it means “to believe.” In the Greek, the terms “believe, trust, depend, confidence, faith, conviction, entrust, abandonment, guarantee, and persuade” all come from the same Greek word PISTIS. These are interchangeable words and concepts. If we say that we believe in Jesus, then we are trusting in Jesus. PISTIS also has the meaning of obeying or submitting. Believing is more than an intellectual assent. James 2:19 says that even the demons know that Jesus is God. Those who truly believe have been persuaded and have abandoned or given themselves to Jesus. John 3:16 says that we must believe in Jesus and Romans 10:9 says that we must confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord. Those who have this kind of belief will have their sins forgiven. That is all that God requires because there is nothing you can do to deserve the forgiveness of your sins or eternal life with God.

**ONLY JESUS CAN FORGIVE OUR SIN.** Some people believe that God will evaluate their good and evil deeds before deciding if they go to heaven or to hell. One man some years ago said that he was very confident that he would be able to convince God that he deserved to go to heaven. But he missed the fact that only Jesus saves us from the consequences of our sins when we are trusting Him to do that. Our good deeds will not please God. We need Jesus to forgive our sins.

*There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.  
(NASB) Acts 4:12*

15. According to this passage, can some other religious leader or religion rescue you?

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**JESUS RETURNED TO LIFE.** Three days after Jesus died a physical death, He returned from the grave to life and walked again on earth among many people.

16. Acts 2:24 tells us what happened to Jesus after His death. What occurred?

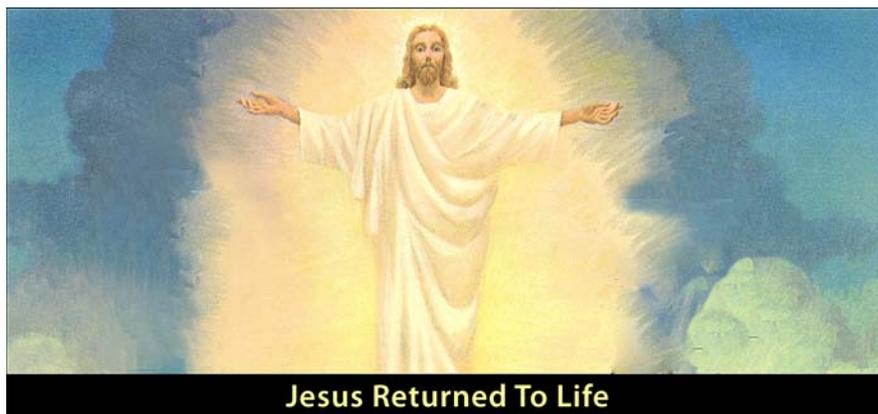
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17. According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-6 who saw Jesus after He returned to life?

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Jesus returned to life to prove that He was God and to prove that He was without sin. He did all of this so that your sins can be forgiven and so that you can live with Him forever. Jesus loves you and He wants to forgive your sins. Jesus is seeking you and calling you to believe or trust in Him. Jesus is the only one who can forgive your sins.

18. Is it your heart's desire to have your sins forgiven?

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**DO YOU BELIEVE?** Do you consider yourself a sinner and want to be at peace with God? Are you sad about your sins? Do you believe only Jesus can forgive your sins (Acts 4:12)? Do you want Jesus to forgive your sins? Jesus will do that with your life if you are serious. To believe in Jesus means to trust or depend on Him. Jesus is simply asking that you start trusting or depending on Him to completely forgive all of your sins. He will take over your life and when you die, He will take you to heaven! Do you want this to happen? Others have already asked Christ to forgive their sins. If you do, tell Him!

**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. (NASB) Rom. 10:9**

**RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.** God knew that you had a need and has been pursuing you ever since you were born! If you believe in Him, your sins are forgiven, you will have a new life, and you will be starting a friendship with God. You will also discover that Jesus loves you and wants a close relationship with you. You will discover this truth in the next lesson called “God’s Greatest Desire.” We want to encourage you to read it. God’s desire for you is not about rules and regulations! It may surprise you!

**SAVED ONLY ONCE.** Imagine that you had a car accident one evening and several people died in the other vehicle. Then you died shortly afterward before you were able to confess your sins. Would you go to heaven? That is an important question. The answer is found in John 5:24 which tells us,

**He who hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” (NASB) John 5:24**

19. In John 5:24, what does Jesus mean when He says that the one who believes in Him does not come into judgment?

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20. If someone passes from death into life, does that imply he/she is now alive? What was he/she before?

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21. In John 6:37 does Jesus say that He might lose a few of those who believe in Him?

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The Holy Spirit says we have passed into life. It is not a question. It has already occurred. Eph. 4:30 tells us that we are sealed unto the day of redemption. The idea of a seal was ownership and authority. It is a completed transaction. Jesus gives us great assurance that once really saved, we are always saved. He says in John 6:37, “all that the Father gives Me shall come to Me and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” And in John 6:39 Jesus says, “of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.” Once we believe in Jesus, He takes over our life. He will not let us go. Most Christians struggle with the one who once claimed to be a Christian and later stops going to church and rejects Jesus. What does 1 John 2:19 say was true about the one who departs from the faith?

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Matt. 7:21-23 tells us there will be those who will die and meet Jesus, thinking they are Christians, but they were never real. The point of the passage is that if we are really saved, we are always saved. We cannot be unforgiven, and those who stop believing were never Christians in the beginning. Once Jesus takes over your life, you are His. Praise the Lord.

## THINGS TO PONDER

1. How would you answer someone who asks, "How can I be forgiven?"

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2. Would someone go to heaven if he/she killed a person but had not confessed his/her sin before they died?

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3. If you are a Christian, how did you become one?

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4. Are your sins forgiven? How do you know?

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5. How does God feel about you according to John 3:16?

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6. Did Jesus come to rescue from spiritual death?

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# *The Rescue!*

**Answer true (T) or false (F) to each of the following statements:**

1. Secular historians state that Jesus existed. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Secular historians reveal that Jesus did miracles. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Jewish records attempt to explain away Jesus' return to life. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Men and women deserve eternal punishment because they sin. \_\_\_\_\_
5. God will weigh our good deeds against our bad ones and then determine what happens to us. \_\_\_\_\_
6. All one needs to do is trust Jesus to forgive his/her sins in order to escape punishment. \_\_\_\_\_
7. To believe in Jesus includes complete trust or dependence upon Him. \_\_\_\_\_
8. After Jesus forgives all our sins, we can never be unforgiven. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Jesus came to earth to die for us. \_\_\_\_\_
10. God loves us. That is why Jesus died for us. \_\_\_\_\_