

YOUR STORY *Do You Know It? Take the Test!*

WHY READ THIS? Have you read the world's best seller, *THE HOLY BIBLE*? It's the book that records the past, present, and future of the human race. The Bible takes about 70 hours to read. *YOUR STORY* encapsulates its amazing Story and Message—and takes less than an hour to read.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Paul D. Bramsen has spent much of his life in Senegal, a predominantly-Muslim nation on the edge of the Sahara. His writings flow from a passion for the Scriptures and from thousands of conversations with Muslim friends in Senegal and around the world.

*"Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her."
— Your Creator (Proverbs 8:10-11)*

Take the Test

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR OWN STORY?

1. What are the names of your birth parents?
2. What are the names of your grandparents? (You have 4.)
3. What are the names of your great-grandparents? (You have 8.)
4. Your great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandparents? (You have 512!)

If offered all the gold in the world—could you come up with the names of each of your grandparents from ten generations back? Probably not! Why not? Because you have *no written record* of your ancestry from so long ago.

Now think about a much older part of your story—a piece of history worth more than gold.

Your first ancestors. What do you know about them?

If there were no *written record* of their story, you could not know where you came from or why you are here. Thankfully, there is *such a record*.

Do you know what it says?

The Record

The book called *The Holy Bible*¹ is not only the world's best seller and most translated book, it is the best-preserved text of antiquity.² The Bible, which claims to be *God's Word*, is divided into two parts:

- **Part 1:** Old Testament (Torah, Psalms, etc.) — *God's Plan Foretold*
- **Part 2:** New Testament (Gospels, etc.) — *God's Plan Fulfilled*



But how can we know if these writings are truly *God's record*? We can know because they contain proofs found in no other book, such as:

- **Perfect consistency.** The Scriptures were written by dozens of prophets over fifteen centuries, yet form one interconnected message. Only the Author who lives outside of time could have inspired it.

- **The Story.** No human could have imagined such a complex history. All the parts fit together perfectly. It answers life's big questions, gives hope, and transforms lives.
- **Hundreds of fulfilled prophecies.** Only God can reveal history before it happens.

The Beginning

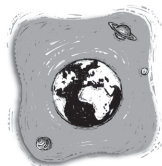


Your story begins with *God*. While man has many ideas about the origin of your first grandparents, the book of Genesis (meaning *origin*) is the record of the One who was there when it all began.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1, Torah)

Does God exist? His creation answers that question with deafening eloquence. *"He suspends the earth over nothing."* (Prophet Job, 26:7) *"The skies proclaim the work of his hands."* (Prophet David, Psalm 19:1)

Speaking of hands, look at your own. Who but a master craftsman could design such tools? And what kind of wisdom is required to make a living cell with millions of working parts? Or knit together a two-meter-long microscopic coiled strand of chemicals with the billions of genetic codes that make you *you*?



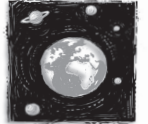
"O LORD... You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" (Psalm 139:1,13-14)

Your Creator

What is God like? He is the infinite Mastermind and Creator of the universe. He is without beginning or end. He is *"the Father of spirits"* (Hebrews 12:9) who created the angels in heaven and your first ancestors on earth to know, love, worship, and serve Him forever. God is One, yet He can be everywhere at once. His name is the LORD, the Self-sufficient One. He needs nothing, yet wants to be known and loved. He is *the Almighty*, who by

His Word and Spirit, spoke the world into existence.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness." (Genesis 1:1-4)



On the first day of creation, God's glory and light pierced the darkness. *"God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth."* (1 John 1:5-6) Your Creator is perfect. Only perfectly pure beings can live with Him. *"God is holy."* (Psalm 99:9)

Your First Ancestors

In six orderly days the God who is light created the atmosphere, land, sea, vegetation, sun, moon, stars, fish, fowl, insects, and animals. What a planet! If ruled well, Earth would never lack any good thing. It would be the ideal home for mankind.

"Then God said, 'Let us³ make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule... over all the earth....' So God created man... in the image of God... male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:26-27)

Distinct from the animal kingdom, humans were made to reflect the nature of their Creator. God gave them eternal souls, powerful intellects, deep emotions, and the capacity to make choices of everlasting impact. God didn't want robots. He wanted your first ancestors, Adam and Eve, to develop a close relationship, not only with each other, but also with Him. He wants the same for you. *"God is love."* (1 John 4:8)

The Law of Sin & Death

In the beginning, God and man were friends. But God planned to test that friendship, giving Adam and Eve a chance to deepen their relationship with their Creator as they trusted

1. Holy means *one-of-a-kind* or *set apart*. *Bible* comes from the Greek word *Biblia*, meaning *book* or *library*.

2. See Chapter 3 in ONE GOD ONE MESSAGE: www.one-god-one-message.com

3. Since God is ONE, why does He say, *"Let US make man in OUR image..."*? The answer is embedded in His complex unity. In the Scriptures, the Hebrew word for *"God"* is *Elohim*, which is a *plural noun*. The word used for *"one"* is *echad*, meaning a *compound unity*. In eternity, before creating angels or man, God enjoyed a relationship of love and communication within Himself—with His personal Word and His Holy Spirit. *"How great is God—beyond our understanding!"* (Prophet Job 36:26)

and obeyed Him. And so, even before the LORD God created Eve, He placed Adam in a perfect garden with wonderful sights and sounds, unique animals, and all-you-can-eat fruit trees—with one notable exception.

*“The LORD God commanded the man, **You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.**”* (Genesis 2:16-17)

What would be the result of disobedience to God’s one command?

Did God tell Adam that if he ate the forbidden fruit he must begin to use prayer beads, pray, fast, give alms, attend religious gatherings, and perform good deeds to “balance out” his bad deeds, and then hope for God’s mercy? Is that what God said? **No!!!**

God told Adam that SIN must be paid for with **DEATH**. The Bible calls this *“the law of sin and death.”*

(Romans 8:2)



The Meaning of Death

This first law given to man by his Creator provides a key for understanding your own story—past, present, and future.

Sin (breaking God’s law) causes a **three-fold separation**:

- 1. Spiritual Death:** separation of man’s spirit from God.
- 2. Physical Death:** separation of soul from body.
- 3. Eternal Death:** separation from God forever in hell, *“the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”* (Matthew 25:41)

The meaning of death can be illustrated by a tree branch. The instant a living branch is broken off, though it still looks alive, it is “dead” since it has been separated from its source of life.



God was warning Adam that **sin** would **separate** him from his Creator, the Source of Life. For a perfect and holy God, sin is no trivial matter.

The Choice

After the LORD formed a lovely woman from Adam’s side, presented her to him and pronounced them husband and wife, *“God saw all that he had made, and it was **very good**. ... The man and his wife were both naked, and they **felt no shame**.”* (Genesis 1:31; 2:25) Imagine a perfect world inhabited by a perfect couple in a growing relationship with their perfect Creator. That is how things were in the beginning. Perfect. **What went wrong?**

One day, as Adam and Eve were near the forbidden tree, Satan⁴ appeared as a serpent. To Eve he said, *“**Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’**”* The devil wanted them to doubt God’s word, telling Eve, *“**You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**”* (Genesis 3:1,4-5) Notice how Satan mixes truth with error. An Arab proverb says: “Beware: some liars tell the truth!” The great deceiver spoke lies saying, *“You will not surely die,”* and spoke truth saying, *“You will know good and evil.”* But he did not mention the horrendous consequences their sin would produce.

Sin & Shame

The moment had come for Adam and Eve to choose between God’s word and Satan’s word. They chose the latter. *She ate. He ate.*

*“**Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.**”*

*Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they **hid** from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

*But the LORD God called to the man, **‘Where are you?’***

*He answered, **‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’**”* (Genesis 3:7-10)

Why the shame and hiding?

- They had sinned.
- The close friendship with their Creator was over.
- Physically our ancestors were still alive but spiritually they were **dead**.



A Holy God

Before they sinned, Adam and Eve had been surrounded by God’s perfection and glory. They were completely **comfortable** in the dazzling presence of their Creator, who would come down into the garden to walk and talk with them. But the moment they disobeyed His command they became **uncomfortable** in His presence—not just because of their physical nakedness, but because of their spiritual nakedness.

Before they transgressed, Adam and Eve were **God-conscious** and *“felt no shame.”* (Genesis 2:25) Now they had become **self-conscious** and felt unclean before God.

They had become the opposite of their Creator, who is **holy**. They were now **unholy**. They no longer wanted to be in the purity and

brilliance of God’s presence. Like cockroaches scurrying for cover when a light is flicked on, they now *“loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”* (John 3:19)

A perfect, pure, and holy God cannot tolerate sin. And they knew it. Do you?

Sin is as disgusting to God as a decaying pig carcass in your house would be to you.

*“**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD!**”* (Prophet Isaiah 6:3)

Helpless Sinners

The instant our first ancestors sinned, they became like a broken branch. They were *separated from God*, the Source of life. Also like a separated branch, their *bodies began to die*. And unless the Lord God rescued them, they faced *eternal separation from God* in “the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14-15) where sin-contaminated souls are forever quarantined with no hope of escape. Adam and Eve had become **helpless sinners**. But the news gets worse.

Because Adam was the head of the human race, his sin would affect **all his descendants**. Just as every twig and leaf on the broken branch is affected, so are those who belong to Adam’s family branch. We all sin and we all die.

*“Sin entered the world **through one man**, and death through sin, and in this way **death came to all men, because all sinned.**”* (Romans 5:12)

Sin (not cancer, famine, poverty, or the nuclear bomb) is the most destructive force and far-reaching disaster on our planet.

The Curse & the Plan

Sin brought a **curse**. Our first ancestors and their descendants would now experience hardship, pain, thorns, famine, disease, old age, and death.



Most of us are so accustomed to such misery that we accept it as “a normal part of life.” But is it normal for the wonder of childbirth to include excruciating pain? Or for a fragrant rosebush to bear vicious thorns? Or for those created in God’s image to die and face judgment? Such invasive elements are no more natural to this world than cancer cells are natural to a healthy person’s body.

The good news is that from the beginning our Creator had a rescue plan. On the day sin corrupted the human race, God gave Adam and Eve a glimpse of His plan. In His time, the LORD would send to earth **a Savior, the Offspring of the woman** (Genesis 3:15), who would make a way for Adam and Eve and their descendants to be rescued from Satan, sin, death, and hell. This Deliverer would be known as the **Messiah, God’s Chosen One**.

4. Satan (meaning *Adversary*) is a former heavenly angel who was cast out of heaven after he tried to get the other angels to worship him instead of the LORD. The angels who joined Satan’s rebellion are called *demons*.

The First Sacrifice

Next, in His mercy and justice, God did a remarkable thing for those who had just rebelled against Him.

“The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.” (Genesis 3:21)

Adam and Eve had made fig-leaf coverings in an effort to hide their sin and shame. But God rejected their efforts to make themselves acceptable in His sight. Instead, God slaughtered some animals and covered Adam and Eve in the skins.

Sadly, innocent animals had to die because of Adam and Eve’s sin. God was showing a picture of His plan to rescue sinners from *the law of sin and death*. The shed blood symbolized what is necessary to *cleanse* man’s **sin**; the skins symbolized what is necessary to *cover* man’s **shame**. From then on, a lamb or other acceptable animal must die as the sinner’s *temporary substitute*, until such time as God would supply the *permanent Substitute*.

God had provided **the first sacrifice** for sin.

He would also provide **the Final Sacrifice** for sin.

Sinners Worship

Following this display of grace (*undeserved kindness*), God sent Adam and Eve out of the perfect garden and into the sin-cursed world. Their sin separated them from God. Our first parents had a serious problem. So do we.

In time, Eve gave birth to the world’s first baby, Cain. Next came Abel, his brother. Both boys inherited their parents’ sin nature. As the African proverbs state:

- “A rat doesn’t produce offspring that don’t dig.”
- “A calamity doesn’t limit its effects to the one who first caused it.”

As young men, Cain and Abel both wanted to worship their Creator. But if they were to have a relationship with Him, it must be on His terms: *“Without the shedding of blood (a death payment) there is no forgiveness (of the sin debt).”* (Hebrews 9:22)

Cain approached God in **his own way**. He offered to God a selection of vegetables which he had diligently cultivated. Cain was like people today who try to earn God’s favor with religious rituals and good works, ignoring the fact that sin demands *death*, not self-effort. God rejected Cain’s offering. Meanwhile, Abel approached God by faith in **God’s way**. Abel brought a death payment—the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

An Acceptable Substitute

Picture Abel placing his hand on the innocent lamb’s head and thanking the LORD that though he, Abel, deserved to die and be separated from his Creator forever, God would

accept the lamb as his substitute. The lamb (which had no sin debt) died in his place.

Abel respected the law of **sin and death**, which is why, *“the LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.”* (Genesis 4:4-5)

Even though Cain had approached God in the wrong way, God still loved him and urged him to repent, that is, *to change his mind* and submit to God’s way of forgiveness and righteousness. But Cain refused to present the blood of a lamb for his sin. Instead, in his anger and religious pride, he murdered Abel and turned his back on God.

The Scriptures tell us that Adam and Eve had *“other sons and daughters.”* (Genesis 5:4) Some chose to trust and obey God, but most chose to follow the way of Cain.

Faith in God & His Plan

Ten long generations after Adam, God gave this sad report about our human family: *“...evil all the time.”* (Genesis 6:5) After much patience, God judged evil with a global flood, sparing only our ancestor Noah and his family, who believed in the LORD and His plan. God also preserved a pair of each animal species, and seven pairs of animals suitable for sin sacrifices. And what was the first thing Noah did after the flood subsided? *“Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.”* (Genesis 8:20)

Even when blessed with a fresh start, people soon turned away from their Creator. Ten generations after Noah, God called Abraham to leave his father’s house and religion, and to put his faith (confidence, trust) in Him alone. The Scripture states: *“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God’s friend.”* (James 2:23; Genesis 15:6) Why did God declare Abraham righteous? Because Abraham trusted the LORD and His word.

God had told Abraham, *“I will make you into a great nation...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”* (Genesis 12:2-3) God kept His promise. The prophets, the Scriptures, and the Messiah all came to us through that nation.

Abraham’s Prophecy

When Abraham was very old, the LORD asked him to do a hard thing. He told him to go to a certain mountain and there to build an altar and sacrifice his son! Abraham had learned that God is just, good, and trustworthy, so he obeyed.

Three days later, as father and son walked up the mountain, Abraham’s son asked the logical



question, *“Father, where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”* Abraham replied, *“God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.”* (Genesis 22:7-8)

Perhaps you know the story. God intervened and provided a ram (not *“the lamb”*) to die *“instead of his son.”* So Abraham called that place **The LORD Will Provide**. And to this day it is said, *“On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”* (Genesis 22:13-14) By naming the mountain *“The Lord Will Provide”* instead of *“The Lord Has Provided,”* Abraham was foretelling the momentous day when the Messiah, *“the Lamb of God,”* would shed His blood on the same mountain range as the Final Sacrifice for sin, not to redeem just one man, but to provide a full and final ransom for the world, so that *“whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 1:29; 3:16)



The Ten Commandments

God kept His promise to Abraham by making his descendants into *“a great nation”*—great, not in *size*, but in *significance*. God intended to use this nation to teach all nations what He is like and how sinners can be accepted by Him. In Moses’ day, God gave ten commandments (Exodus 20), declaring, *“Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law.”* (Deuteronomy 27:26)



Sin separates man from God. The LORD, who is holy, requires perfect, unflinching obedience.

“Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” (James 2:10)

No matter how good you think you are, you can never live up to God’s perfect standard. Like a *mirror* that shows the dirt on your face, but can’t cleanse it, God’s Law exposes the sin in your heart, but it can’t remove it. The Ten Commandments teach us that we are **helpless sinners** and that we need a **Savior**.

The Law of the Sacrifice

Since the entire nation was guilty of breaking His laws, God commanded Moses to *“make an altar...and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings.”* (Exodus 20:24) Only **the law of the sacrifice** could negate **the law of sin and death**. It was through the sacrifice of an unblemished animal that God punished sin without punishing the sinner. Worshipers were to select a healthy bull, goat, lamb, or bird. They showed their faith in God’s way of justice and mercy by placing a hand on the creature’s head. Before God, their sins were transferred to the creature, which was then put to death in their place.



“The life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.” (Leviticus 17:11, Torah)

Atonement means *covering*.

The blood of a spotless animal could *cover* sin, but could not *remove* it. *“It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”* (Hebrews 10:4) Animals were not created in the image of God. Only God’s promised, sinless *“Lamb”* (Isaiah 53:7) could remove man’s sin debt forever.

More Prophecies

Following the time of the prophet Moses, God chose and inspired many more prophets to foretell, with increasing detail, the coming of the Messiah who would *“save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:21) Here are some sample prophecies:

“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (Immanuel means *‘God with us.’*) — Isaiah 7:14 (700 BC)

“You Bethlehem...out of you will come for me one...whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” — Micah 5:2 (700 BC)

“Your God will come...to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.” — Isaiah 35:4-6 (700 BC)

“They have pierced my hands and my feet.” — David, Psalm 22:16 (1000 BC)

“He was led like a lamb to the slaughter... He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.” — Isaiah 53:7,5 (700 BC)

The Announcement

After thousands of years of preparation, God’s time had come to send the Messiah into the world. But *who* would He be? And *how* would He come? As foretold by the prophets, He would be born of a virgin from the family line of both Abraham and King David. The Savior of sinners would be conceived in such a way so as not to inherit Adam’s sin nature. He would be the unique offspring of a woman.

“God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary....

The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.’

‘How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’

The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ... For nothing is impossible with God.’” (The Gospel of Luke⁵ 1:26-37)

The Son of God

The Messiah’s name was *Jesus*, meaning *The LORD Saves*. And what was His title? Let’s listen again to Gabriel’s words to Mary: *“So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”*

God wants all people in every nation to believe that Jesus is *His Son*. Yet most people refuse to do so. Many think the title *“Son of God”* implies that God took a wife and had a son. This is not what the Bible teaches.

In 1984, a well-known citizen of Senegal died in an automobile accident. The national newspaper eulogized this Muslim as “a great son of Senegal.” Did these words imply that the country of Senegal had taken a wife and begotten a son? Of course not! The Muslim people of Senegal have no problem honoring a well-loved citizen with this title. They understand what the expression “son of Senegal” means. They also know what it does *not* mean.

Similarly, when Almighty God calls the Messiah *His Son* we should know what He means and does *not* mean. Let us not mock the titles and terms that our Creator magnifies.

The Son of Man

In the Scriptures, the Messiah has more than 300 names and titles. Each term gives fresh insight into who He is and why He came. For example, His title, *“The Son of God,”* declares *His majesty* as the One who came from heaven. But He is also called *“The Son of Man,”* a title revealing *His humility* as the One who chose to be born into our sin-riddled human community.

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. ... Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (Mark 10:45; John 15:13)

As *the Son of God* He places a hand on deity, but as *the Son of Man* He places a hand on humanity. The Messiah is the one and only *“Mediator between God and men”* (1 Timothy 2:5) who can satisfy God’s demand for justice and man’s need for mercy.

Those who consider it “below God’s majesty” to become man are ignoring His nature and plan. Your Creator, who did not consider it

“below His majesty” to walk and talk with Adam and Eve, chose to live among our fallen ancestors to rescue them—and you and me—from Satan, sin, and death. **“God is love.”** (1 John 4:8)

The Savior

As foretold by the prophets, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. But Mary lived in Nazareth. This posed no problem for God. At just the right time, the Roman Emperor made a decree, requiring all people to return to their city of birth for a tax census. Thus, Mary and Joseph traveled south to Bethlehem.

“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her first-born, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

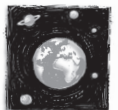
And there were shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord!’ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men....’” (Luke 2:7-11,13-14)

The Word

So who was this baby boy born in a shed and announced by angels? Hear again the angel’s words to the shepherds: *“He is Christ the Lord!”*⁶

“In the beginning was the Word,⁷ and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made ... In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1-5,14)

The only person ever to be born without a human father is none other than *the Word*, by whom the universe was created. He is the *Offspring of a woman* promised by God the same day sin entered the human family. He is *“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (Prophet John [Yahya]; John 1:29)



5. In Part 2 of His Book (New Testament), God inspired Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to record the gospel narrative about Jesus. The one true God always confirms His truth with multiple witnesses.

6. *Christ* is Greek for *Messiah*, meaning *the Anointed One*. And, yes, *the Lord* means *the LORD!*

7. While the Qur’an also calls Jesus the *Word of God* (Arabic: *Kalimat Allah*; Suras 3:45; 4:171), it gives this title a different meaning. The Qur’an also refers to Jesus as *the Messiah and Spirit of God* (Sura 4:171).

Miraculous Works

Just as Satan tempted Adam, so he tried to get Jesus to sin. But, unlike Adam, Jesus did not submit to Satan. From childhood to adulthood, the Lord Jesus obeyed the Ten Commandments and all of God's laws perfectly—inwardly and outwardly. He was *"tempted in every way, just as we are—yet without sin."* (Hebrews 4:15) Since He was sinless, He did not deserve to die. But He had come for that very purpose.

At age 30, Jesus began to travel outside His hometown of Nazareth, teaching and preaching, calling men and women to follow Him, casting out demons, raising the dead, restoring hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind. Jesus performed miracles so that people would know who He was, and believe. Who but God can satisfy 5000 hungry men with a boy's lunch? Jesus did. Who but God can calm storms? Jesus did.

Jesus healed every kind of disease. And He didn't do it with medicine or magic. He did it by speaking. Since He is *The Word* by whom the universe was made, every part of nature was under His authority. However, the Messiah's main mission was not to solve people's physical problems, but to bring them into a right relationship with God.

Marvelous Words

"Some men brought to him a paralytic (lame man), lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.'

At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, 'This fellow is blaspheming!'

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, 'Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...'

Then he said to the paralytic, 'Get up, take your mat and go home.'

And the man got up and went home. When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe." (Matthew 9:2-8)

No one ever spoke like Jesus. For example, He taught, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6) Jesus is different from religious leaders who say, "Do this! Don't do that! Follow these rules. This is the way." Only Jesus could say, *"I AM the Way."* Only Jesus could say, *"I AM the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies,"* and then call a four-day-old corpse back to life (John 11:25). His works proved that His words were true.

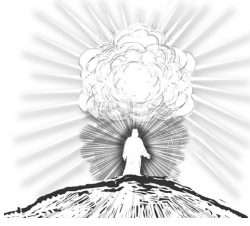


The Light

Jesus also said, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12)

The prophets were like the moon, reflecting a little of God's light to a dark world. But in the Scriptures of the prophets, the Messiah is called *"the sun of righteousness"* and *"the rising sun."* (Prophet Malachi 4:2; Prophet Zechariah, Luke 1:78) Jesus is *"the light of the world,"* the very Source of light and life. The same glory that pierced the darkness on the first day of creation was hidden in Jesus! He had come to drive out the darkness of sin and bring us back to God.

Shortly before Jesus willingly laid down His life, He chose three witnesses *"and led them up a high mountain... There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ... a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'"* (Matthew 17:1-2,5)



The Lamb

Jesus is the only Person who knew exactly: when He would die, where He would die, how He would die, and why He would die.

As the time approached for Him to suffer and die for the past, present, and future sins of the world, Jesus told His followers, *"We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again."* (Luke 18:31-33)

The religious leaders hated Jesus *"because he claimed to be the Son of God."* (John 19:7) But what bothered them even more was that people were now listening to Him instead of to them! So they plotted to have Him killed, not knowing they were fulfilling the Scriptures of the prophets: that the Messiah would be *"despised and rejected by men"* and then *"led like a lamb to the slaughter."* (Isaiah 53:3,7)

The Final Sacrifice

And so the Lord Jesus allowed Himself to be arrested, judged, mocked, crowned with thorns, flogged, stripped naked, and nailed to a wooden cross on the same mountain range where, 2,000 years earlier, Abraham had prophesied, *"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering."* (Genesis 22:8) God spared Abraham's son, but He *"did not spare his own Son."* (Romans 8:32)

Abraham's prophecy had come true. *God had provided the Lamb—the Perfect Substitute.* As Jesus took the punishment you and I deserve, God in heaven covered the earth in darkness. Jesus willingly took our sin and shame. The sinless Lord Jesus suffered God's judgment against sin so that we might be set free from *the law of sin and death.* The infinite One endured our hell in time so that we need not endure it in eternity. Then just before He died, He shouted in victory, *"It is finished!"* (John 19:30)



Jesus had *paid in full* the sin debt of the world! No more sacrifices for sin would be needed or accepted. As Abraham's ram died for one, so God's Lamb died for all.

The Empty Tomb

Jesus was dead. His torn body was removed from the cross, wrapped in clean linen, and laid in a cold tomb. The heavy stone door was sealed. Then came the third day.

On Sunday, before daybreak, several women who had been Jesus' loyal disciples came to the graveyard. They found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty!

Only the linen burial cloths remained.



An angel appeared to them and said, *"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples: He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him!"* (Matthew 28:5-7)

As the women ran to tell the others, Jesus met them and *"they clasped his feet and worshiped him."* (Matthew 28:9)

Death Defeated

Jesus did what none of our ancestors could do: *He defeated Satan, sin and death!* Jesus said what none of the prophets could say: *"I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades (world of the dead)."* (Revelation 1:17-18) Because Jesus overcame death, those who trust in Him have nothing to fear in this life or the next.

After His resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days with His disciples. He helped them understand the Scriptures, showing them that the prophets (Abraham, Moses, David, etc.) had foretold how the Messiah would die and come back to life. He also promised to send down

His Holy Spirit to live in them, transform them into His character, and empower them to proclaim His good news in every nation. All who *repent* (have a change of mind and direction) and *believe* in God's Perfect Lamb who died in their place and defeated death, will be forgiven, declared righteous, and brought into a relationship with God.

On the fortieth day, as His disciples watched, Jesus ascended into the clouds to His Father's home, promising to return at the end of time as the Judge of all the earth. But that's another story!



The Name

We began this journey by asking if you knew the names of your long-gone grandparents. Whether or not you know their names is of limited value. But there is a name that God has declared to be of infinite value; a name that can transform your life for time and eternity.

That name is **JESUS** — the name that means *The LORD Saves*.

"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. ... It is by the name of Jesus Christ ... Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 10:43; 4:10,12) *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."* (1 John 5:13)

Yes, you can **know** where you will spend eternity! Your Creator invites you to trust Him; to allow *His Story* to revolutionize *your story*. If you will transfer your trust *from* yourself and your religion *to* the Lord Jesus Christ and what He did for you by His death and resurrection, then He is saying to you personally: *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."* (John 5:24)

Man's Problem

When Adam and Eve disobeyed their Creator, they brought on themselves a twofold problem of **sin and shame**.

- Their **sin** drove them into hiding.
- Their **shame** made them cover their nakedness.

In His justice, God rejected their self-made coverings of fig leaves, but *in His mercy*, He clothed them in the skins of sacrificed animals. The animal blood symbolized what was necessary to cleanse their **sin**, and the animal skins symbolized what was necessary to cover their **shame**.

We share our ancestors' sin and shame. As sinners we fall short of God's standard of righteousness and are shamefully unfit to live in His holy presence. We need to obtain His pardon and perfection. But how?



- How can you be cleansed from the **sin** that separates you from your perfectly righteous Creator?
- How can you be declared righteous by God so that you can live without **shame** in His presence forever?

God's Solution

On the cross, Jesus Christ suffered for **your sin** and endured **your shame**. But because He was without sin, death could not keep Him in the grave. By His death and resurrection He now offers to *cleanse and clothe* you—to exchange *your sins* for *His righteousness*. But you must believe God's written record. Do you?



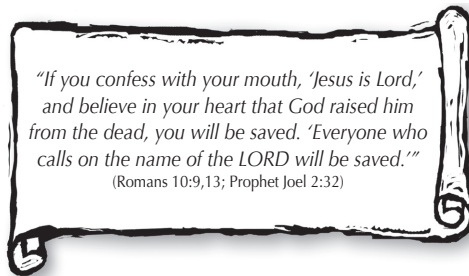
"Who has believed our message? ... He was pierced for our transgressions... We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ... My soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness." (Isaiah 53:1,5-6; 61:10)



"By this gospel you are saved ... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:2-4)

- What do *you* think about Jesus?
- What do you believe regarding His life, His death, His burial, and His resurrection?
- How has His Story affected your story?

The Declaration



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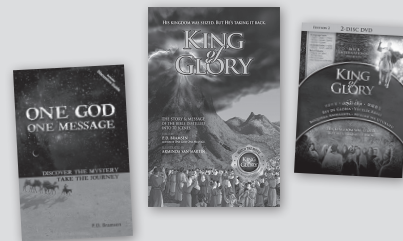
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P.O. Box 4766, Greenville, SC 29608
resources@rockintl.org
www.rockintl.org/resources
Author: P. D. Bramsen
Artist: D. C. Bramsen