

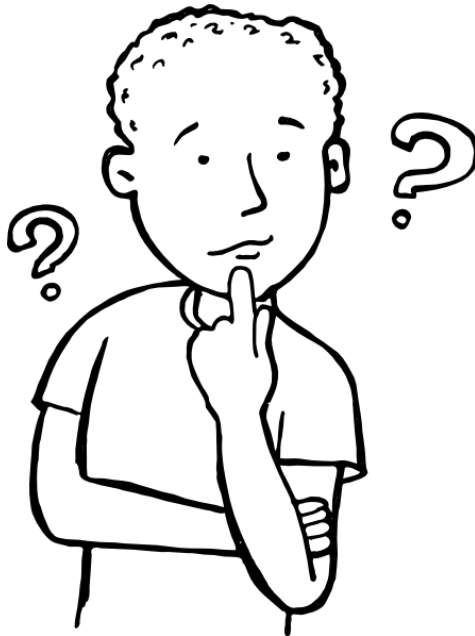
SHARON COPLEY ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST

# Why Am I Here?

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## Lesson 3

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## Why Am I Here?

### Lesson 3 – *God's Nature, the Problem of Sin, and the Gospel*

Thus far in our study, we have established that the Bible gives plain and easy to understand answers to life's biggest questions. We also examined evidences that demonstrate that the Bible is, as it claims, the very Word of God. As such, we can trust its answers and must give heed to its instructions.

As was stated at the conclusion of Lesson 2, if we are to fulfill our purpose and thus enjoy true happiness and have hope of eternal life, we must first deal with the problem of sin.

#### *Defining terms*

Read **1 John 3:4**. What is sin?

Read **Romans 6:23** and **Isaiah 59:1-2**. What are the consequences of sin?

Read **Romans 3:23** and **Ecclesiastes 7:20**. Who is guilty of sin?

Given what we have noticed above, it is plain that sin is serious. When we break God's laws by fulfilling our own desires (**Jas. 1:13-15**), it causes a separation between us and Him. This leads, ultimately, to what the Bible terms "*the second death*." Read **Revelation 21:8** and **Matthew 25:31-33, 41**.

1. Do any of the descriptions given in **Revelation 21:8** stand out to you? If so, why?
2. How is the second death described?

In order to fully appreciate why sin is so terrible, we need to understand the nature of God.

#### *God's nature*

The Bible explains that God is truly awesome. He is omniscient or all-knowing (**Heb. 4:13**), omnipresent or present everywhere (**Psa. 139:7-12**), and omnipotent or all-powerful (**Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26**). These qualities alone, however, do not make Him worthy of our devotion. After all, such qualities in the hands of a being with evil intent would be quite terrifying!

Thankfully, the one true God is not evil, but good. His defining attribute, in fact, is holiness. Something that is holy is devoid of imperfection. It is set apart. Read **1 John 1:5**, **Psalms 5:4**, and **Isaiah 6:3**.

1. Because God is holy, what cannot dwell with Him? What is the significance of this in light of what we have noticed regarding sin?

Because God is holy, He is also a God of justice (**Psa. 103:6; 37:27-28**). From time to time we hear about individuals who were found guilty in court, but were later released once it was determined that a mistake had been made. Or, on the other hand, we hear about individuals who have committed crimes but have yet to be caught so as to pay the penalty for their actions. Justice in the hands of men is often imperfect. God, however, is perfect in regard to justice (**Isa. 46:9-11**).

It is God's justice that demands punishment for sin. Read **Hebrews 9:22** and **Ezekiel 18:20**.

1. What must be remitted so that we might not receive the wages we deserve? (cf. **Rom. 6:23**)
2. Whose sins are we accountable for? Do we inherit sin? (cf. **Eccl. 7:29**)

We have seen that sin (the breaking of God's law) brings about separation from God. His holiness and justice demands such for He cannot dwell with that which is evil. What then are we to do? If we've all sinned (**Rom. 3:23**), then how can we fix things so that we can fulfill our purpose and enjoy true peace? The apostle Paul asked a similar question in **Romans 7, verses 21-24**: *"I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"*

Thankfully, God is not only a God of holiness and justice, but also of love (**John 3:16; 1 John 4:8-10**). It is God's great love for us that provides the solution to the problem of sin. Because God loves us, He wants us to be with Him. He wants us to be holy as He is (**2 Cor. 6:17-18**). How does God demonstrate His love while remaining just and holy? The answer is sacrifice; allowing another's life to be offered in place of the one who is guilty. Under the Law of Moses, God's people offered animals to make atonement for their sins. Read **Leviticus 17:11, 16:29-30**, and **22:17-25**.

1. How often was atonement made for the sins of the Israelites?
2. What was the nature of the animals that were offered?

While the animal sacrifices offered under the Law of Moses established the principle of atonement for sin, we are told in the New Testament that such sacrifices could not bring about forgiveness (**Heb. 10:1-4**). While the animals were sinless (as reflected by their required, unblemished physical condition), they were not so by choice. Unlike human beings, animals are amoral. They do not comprehend right and wrong and are not subject to God's moral law. They rely on instinct. What type of sacrifice, then, could make full atonement? It would take a sacrifice perfect by choice; a human being who had, unlike the rest of us, lived without sin. Read **John 1:29**, **1 Peter 1:18-19**, **Hebrews 2:14-15**, **John 1:1-3, 14**, **2 Corinthians 5:21**, **Hebrews 9:11-15**, and **10:12-14**.

1. Who provided the Perfect Sacrifice for sins?
2. Who was God's Lamb?
3. In what way was Christ perfect?
4. How many times did/does Christ have to die?
5. For whose sins did Christ die?

### *The Gospel*

The death of Christ on the cross is the essence of the gospel - the "good news" that is spoken of in the New Testament.

Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**. What are the facts of the gospel?

Read **Mark 16:15-16**. What did Jesus tell His disciples to do with the gospel? What was to be the proper response?

Read **Romans 1:16**. How is the gospel described? What does it accomplish for those who believe?

Read **2 Thessalonians 1:3-10**. What are the consequences of not obeying the gospel?

Read **Galatians 1:6-9**. How many gospels are there?

*A word about the resurrection*

As noted above, one of the main facts regarding the gospel message is that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The details of this are contained in each of the gospel accounts, and its significance is reiterated over and over again throughout the remainder of the New Testament. Read the following passages about the resurrection: **Romans 1:1-4**, **Acts 17:30-31**, and **1 Corinthians 15:12-22**.

1. What did Christ's resurrection confirm about His identity? His message?
2. If Christ is not raised, what does Paul say we are still in?
3. If Christ is not raised, what does Paul say about our faith?
4. What does the resurrection allow us to become? (**2 Cor. 5:17**)
5. What is the hope we have through the resurrection? (**1 Pet. 1:3-5**)

Skeptics of the Bible often try to dismiss the resurrection (not surprisingly). The honest critic will acknowledge that it is one of the best documented events in history; that the gospel accounts are accurate regarding other historical facts, cultural norms, geography, etc.; and that the gospel writers, therefore, are reliable. This does not prevent, however, various theories about how the resurrection could be explained in a non-miraculous way.

Some will say that the disciples made up the story so as to perpetuate their made-up religion. However, it is interesting to note that the Jews at that time anticipated them doing this and took steps to prevent such from happening (**Matt. 27:62-66**). They had Pilate seal the heavy stone over the tomb and set a guard so that no one could sneak the body of Christ out and thus perpetuate a hoax! Roman soldiers were no pushovers. They were highly trained and took their duties to guard prisoners very seriously. If that which they were guarding escaped or was stolen, they understood that it was their life on the line (**cf. Acts 16:25-28**). The theory that the disciples rolled away the stone and stole the body without these guards noticing is not probable. It is interesting to note that after Christ was raised, the soldiers who had been guarding the tomb went to the chief priests and reported what had happened. What were they told to say? (**Matt. 28:11-15**)

If the disciples were perpetuating a lie and had any belief at all in God, why would they willingly subject themselves to eternal punishment as they would have understood that God does not tolerate liars (**Prov. 6:17**)? If they were without faith and simply desiring to pull one over on mankind, why would they willingly subject themselves to torture and untimely death (**Acts 7:57-60; 12:1-4**)?

Further, the Scriptures are not shy about conveying the disciple's defeated mentality. **John 20:19** states that *"the same day at evening, being the first day of the week...the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled...for fear of the Jews."* The disciples, even after Christ had been raised, were under the impression that Christ was going to set up an earthly kingdom. When he died, they thought all hope had been lost. After He had risen, **Acts 1:6** states that *"when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'"* Understanding these things is important because it shows us that the disciples would not have even thought about trying to steal His body. What good would a dead king be to their hopes of a restored kingdom?

Some will try and teach that Christ was not actually dead when placed into the tomb. Thus, once He awoke, He was able to roll the stone away and escape. The problem with this is two-fold. First of all, the fact that Christ was actually dead was confirmed by a trained Roman centurion (**Mark 15:42-45**). Secondly, the stone covering the tomb was not a mere pebble. We are told it was very large and would require the effort of multiple men to move (**Mark 16:1-4**). Even if Christ did not actually die, He would have been weak and helpless after having been beaten, scourged, and crucified (**John 19:1-3; Matt. 27:35**). How could one in such a state roll away such a massive stone all by himself?

One final theory states that the eyewitnesses to Christ's resurrection simply had visions of Christ. Thus, while they had good intentions, they were simply mistaken. While the idea of one person having a vision or a dream and perceiving it to have been real is somewhat plausible, the idea of multiple people having the same vision at the same place and time is not. In **1 Corinthians 15:6**, Paul stated that *"He [Christ] was seen by over five hundred brethren at once."* Luke records an occasion where He appeared to the disciples in **Luke 24:36-43**. At this time, He proved Himself to be more than a vision or a ghost by eating a meal in their presence and allowing them to touch Him. If these individuals were only hallucinating, why, upon their initial preaching of the gospel, did the Jews not simply say "uh, hold on there fellas, we have the body right here!"?

The logical conclusion, upon weighing all of the evidence, is that Jesus Christ did indeed rise from the grave.

### *Conclusion*

If Jesus Christ rose from the dead, then He is more than just a man. His resurrection proves His claimed identity and the validity of the message He proclaimed. The writer of Hebrews stated in **Hebrews 5:9** that *"He [Christ] became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."* The question becomes, "how does one obey Him?" We will explore that question in Lesson 4.