

11. How can it be that simple to be saved, just believing in Jesus?

What costs a sinner nothing, cost Jesus Christ tremendous undeserved suffering. The cost of salvation was far greater than any sinner's ability to pay: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son [Jesus Christ], that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." [John 3:16]. Because an infinitely holy God paid the price for those he came to save, a person can know that God is satisfied with the payment: "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." [1 John 1:7]. Keep in mind, **WE ARE NOT SAVED SIMPLY BY RECITING A PRAYER ASKING JESUS TO SAVE US.** A supernatural transaction must take place. God must convert the heart in order for a person to be truly saved: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" [Matthew 18:3] ... "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." [Ezekiel 36:26-27]

Have you been converted? (Bear in mind, baptism does not convert a person.) Have you received of God a new heart and a desire to obey God's laws?

12. How can a person know they are saved?

God saves a person, not by taking the old person and making him better through a combination of religious rituals, traditions and guidelines, but by supernaturally imparting a whole new nature into him when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in him at the moment of salvation: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" [Romans 8:16].

Ask yourself the following questions to see if you bear the fruit and marks of a true Christian:

A. Do I realize that I owe Jesus everything for my salvation - there is nothing I could contribute to it? - "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" [Titus 3:5]

B. Has my attitude about sin changed? Do I now hate the sins I used to love and love the things of God I used to hate? - "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" [2 Corinthians 5:17]

C. Do I enjoy talking about how Jesus changed my life and saved me from Hell? - "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee" [Mark 5:19]

D. Do I understand that ALL people are lost without Christ and do I show my concern for the souls of others by warning people to flee God's wrath in hell? - "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." [2 Corinthians 5:20]

E. Do people make fun of me or in some other way persecute me for standing up for Jesus Christ? - "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." [2 Timothy 3:12]

F. Do I realize that I am here on earth to serve God and to get ready to spend eternity with Him? - "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" [Romans 12:1]

G. Do I fellowship with other Bible-believing Christians on a regular basis and do I consider it a matter of necessity for my spiritual health? - "let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" [Hebrews 10:24-25]

H. Do I realize that God is very holy and that I must strive to live a life of holiness? "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." [1 Peter 1:16].

I. Do I love to read the Bible daily to find out more about God and how He expects me to live? - "I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word." [Psalm 119:16]

You may wonder 'How is it possible for anyone to think and act like the kind of Christian described above?'. That's the whole point! No one is born in this condition. Only God can change a person's nature which is why Jesus said: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." [John 3:3].

What if I refuse to believe these things? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." [Mark 16:16] ... "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" [2 Thess. 1:7-9]

YOUR FINAL DESTINATION

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Many people who think that God is pleased with them are in fact headed for hell, as Jesus said in Matthew 7:22-23:

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The Holy Bible has much to say about heaven and hell and how you can know which of these two places is **YOUR final destination.** The reliable and respected King James Version of the Bible will be quoted herein, since it has been used of God for centuries to lead countless souls to heaven.

1. What keeps us from going to heaven?

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." [Isaiah 59:1-2] As Isaiah 59 says, it is sin that keeps us out of the presence of God, preventing us from entering heaven.

2. What is sin?

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" [Isaiah 53:6]. The Bible uses many terms for sin, including iniquity, unrighteousness, trespasses, violence, wickedness, uncleanness and others. Sin is rebellion against God of any kind, even if we aren't aware of it: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." [1 John 3:4]

The sin we practice is the violation of God's laws for any reason, whether ignorantly or maliciously. We continually violate God's laws from birth and it is our natural tendency to do so. That is why David said: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." [Psalm 51:5]. Likewise, the apostle Paul said: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" [Romans 7:18]

3. Who takes away sin - God or us?

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." [John 1:29]

Only the sinless saviour, Jesus Christ, acting as a sacrificial lamb, could pay for the sins of sinners. There is nothing at all that you, or anyone else acting on your behalf, can contribute to your salvation because the Bible says: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" [Ephesians 2:8-9].

4. Isn't anyone good enough to get to heaven?

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." [Romans 3:10-12] ... "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" [Genesis 6:5]. According to God, we are hopelessly lost sinners, totally unfit for heaven and incapable of making ourselves good enough to go there.

5. I believe in God, I go to church, I am a good person, I don't hurt anyone. Isn't that enough to get me to heaven?

Committing even one little sin qualifies a person for hell. God is holy and no sin can be allowed in His presence: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" [Revelation 21:27]. But the wonderful *Good News* of the Bible, is that when a person is saved, they receive the righteousness of Christ, so that when God looks at a saved person, He sees them, spiritually, as if they were as sinless as Jesus Christ, and not the vile sinner they used to be: "For he hath made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." [2 Corinthians 5:21].

6. Doesn't God want or need any help from me?

Salvation is a priceless gift from God that costs the recipient nothing (no sacraments, no prayers, no good deeds, NOTHING!): "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" [1 Peter 3:18]. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." [Isaiah 53:5-6]. Christ took upon *himself*,

the full punishment of those he came to save. That punishment consists of the wrath of God: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." [John 3:36]

7. What is the wrath of God?

God's wrath involves eternal separation from Him without hope, forever - eternity in Hell: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" [Revelation 21:8]. This punishment is not just for what the world considers 'really bad people'. It applies to whomever dies unsaved - whomever dies without having their sins completely paid for through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." [1 John 5:12].

8. Why would a loving God send me to hell?

God hates sin and the sinner, so the sinner must be punished: "The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth" [Psalm 11:5]. The penalty for sin is extremely severe because it is proportional to the absolute holiness (purity) of God. The Bible clearly states that God loves the righteous (saved) person and hates the unrighteous (unsaved) person. We saw in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that those who have been saved have the righteousness (purity) of Jesus Christ and therefore the love of God. Jesus said: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." [John 17:23]. So while God is a God of love (1 John 4:16), He also delights in exercising judgment (Jeremiah 9:24). God's judgment is absolutely faultless, and He judges according to the standard of the righteousness of Christ: "because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." [Acts 17:31]

9. What can I do to avoid the wrath of God?

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" [Luke 18:13]. You can't DO anything to earn or cause salvation from God's wrath, but you can cry out to God

to have mercy on your soul to save you from the wrath that you deserve for your sins. You can't even honestly do this until God shows you that you are a hopelessly lost condemned sinner: "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." [Romans 3:11]. God saves someone by convicting them of sin and drawing them to Him by the Holy Spirit. Conviction of sin means that God causes a person to feel truly guilty about their sins to the point where they can no longer bear the grief and guilt, not just to the point of wanting to avoid getting caught by someone or to avoid the results of their sin, but to the point where they want God to rescue them from their sinful way of life so they can live a life which will please God. Conviction takes place by hearing the Word of God and through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" [Romans 10:17] ... "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." [Romans 3:20].

10. I believe in Jesus so I must be OK, right?

The kind of believing in Jesus that saves a person is not just a historical knowledge of him. One must believe that they need him, personally, to be Lord of their lives for now and throughout eternity and they must believe that he is THE all sufficient substitutionary sin-bearer for themselves: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" [Hebrews 9:28]. In order to believe in Jesus the way that he expects us to, we need him to give us the faith to believe since we cannot truly know God unless and until God reaches out to us which he does through the Holy Spirit and through His word in the Bible. That is why it is so very important to read the Bible asking God to show you the truth about your need for the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Have you come to a realization that in God's eyes, there is no good thing in you - that is, you have nothing to offer God for your salvation except your sins? ... "For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us"
[Isaiah 59:12]