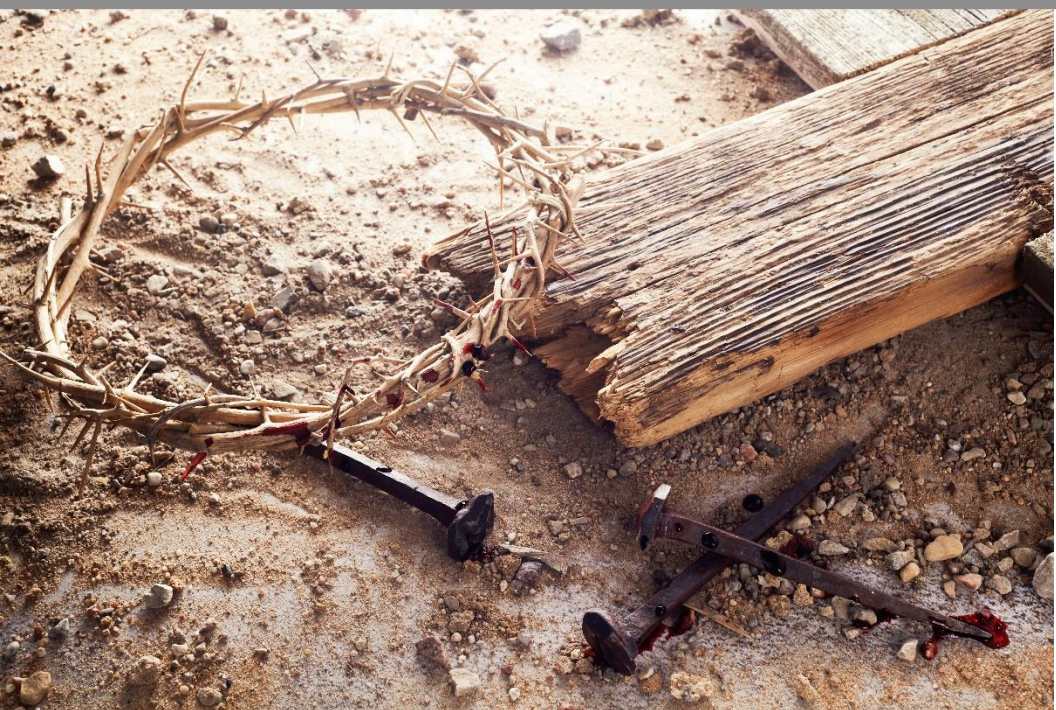


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**Messenger**

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## Article 1

# Why Did Jesus Have To Die?

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Why was Jesus's death on the cross necessary to bring about salvation? Why didn't God make some other way for people to be forgiven of their sin without requiring the suffering and death of His Son? Certainly, Jesus's suffering and death was not an arbitrary way to bring about salvation. Instead, it was absolutely necessary to save people from sin! Consider why this was so.

**1) God's holiness means that sinners are separated from Him.** God is holy. This means that God is separate from everything that is evil and committed to everything that is good. And, as a result of God's holiness, He cannot be in fellowship with anyone involved in evil. 1 John 1:5-6 says that "God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him. If we say, 'We have fellowship with him,' and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth."

Whenever people fail to believe and obey God's will, they sin. This sin (represented as darkness) always separates people from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). For, whenever people sin, we reject God's standard of holiness and choose to please ourselves. And, the Bible calls this separation from God "death." This is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23). Then, if someone dies physically while in sin, the result will be eternal separation from God in the fires of Hell, called the "second death" (Revelation 21:8) because God cannot be in fellowship with sinners.

**2) God's justice requires sacrifice to be made for sin.** Sin always has consequences. God could not remain a holy God if there were no consequences for sin and would fellowship sinners. God has plainly stated in the Scriptures that just as sin results in death, God requires the payment of death to be forgiven of sin. For example, Hebrews 9:22 says, "According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Sacrifice and the shedding of blood is essential to forgive sin because life is in the blood (Leviticus

17:11). So, blood can be offered to God as a way of covering the sin that has been committed so as to be sanctified (or, made holy).

Although the shedding of blood is the payment God requires to forgive sin, the Bible teaches that not just any blood would suffice. Although God instituted a system of animal sacrifices whereby an animal that was innocent of sin (since animals are amoral) would be killed and offered for sin, God says that “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). So, the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament were designed to prepare people for Jesus. Jesus (as the only one to be tempted and never sin, Hebrews 4:15), came to earth, lived a sinless life, and offered His own blood as the sacrifice to cover our sins and make us holy before God! Therefore, Jesus is called “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)!

**3) God’s love motivated Him to provide the way for salvation.** Although we have seen why Jesus’s blood (as a sinless sacrifice) was essential for sinners to become holy and be in fellowship with God, we still have not seen why God choose to provide the sacrifice to save those who had chosen to sin against Him. The answer, though, is God’s great love! God demonstrated His grace in that He provided a way for all people to be saved. And, God demonstrated His mercy in that He provided a way for all people to be forgiven. For, God loves everyone and wants all people to be saved (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4)!

Romans 5:8-11 says, “But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. How much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.”

Although all people have sinned against God (Romans 3:23), God has provided the one way for people to be saved. There really is no other way to be forgiven of sin besides through Jesus Christ

(John 14:6; Acts 4:12). But, Jesus's sacrifice does not save everyone automatically, as most people will be lost (Matthew 7:13-14). To be saved, you must believe in and obey what He teaches (John 8:24; Hebrews 5:9)!

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## Article 2

# Was The Thief On The Cross Saved Without Being Baptized?

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As Jesus was being crucified between two thieves, Jesus told one thief, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Based on the account in Luke 23:39-43, many claim that this thief was saved without being baptized. And, it is claimed, if he was saved without being baptized, then people can be saved without being baptized today. Yet, let's consider what the Bible teaches about this often-misapplied subject.

**1) The thief may have been baptized.** It is often claimed that this thief was not baptized. However, it is possible that he had been baptized at some point. We simply do not know. For, passages like Matthew 3:1-6 and Mark 1:4-5 demonstrate that all Jerusalem, Judea, and the region around the Jordan went out to be baptized with John's baptism (which was the baptism being taught at that time). Perhaps the thief had been among these. Rather than viewing the thief as one who was reaching faith in Jesus for the first time right before he died, Luke 23:39-43 *could* indicate he had learned about Jesus prior to this. For example, he knew there was a God and that God should be feared (verse 40). He knew there was something to answer for beyond death (verse 40). He recognized a principle of right and wrong (verses 40-41). He knew Christ was innocent, perhaps even sinless (verse 41). He knew the one dying next to him was Lord (verse 42). And, he knew Jesus was going to possess a kingdom (verse 42). Therefore, the thief *could* have been a believer who had fallen away and was now being restored.

**2) The thief lived under the Old Testament law.** Jesus lived and died during the time the Law of Moses was still in effect

(Matthew 5:17-18). Jesus's new law came into effect on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Therefore, we can conclude that the thief lived (and died) under the Old Law. Passages like Colossians 2:13-14 and Hebrews 9:15-18 make it very clear that Christ had to die in order for His new law to take effect. Since the thief lived and died under the Old Testament Law, why would we expect him to have obeyed a law (regarding baptism) that was not in effect when he died? Certainly, a person is only judged by the law that is in effect during the time he/she is living!

**3) The baptism of the New Testament was not yet in effect.** Although Jesus alluded to the fact that baptism would be necessary to enter the kingdom of God in John 3:3-6, Jesus first commanded it in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16 as part of the Great Commission He gave to His disciples. For instance, Mark 16:15-16 says, "Then he said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.'" Furthermore, this baptism is connected with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:3-4). Yet, the burial and resurrection of Jesus had not occurred whenever the thief died. Certainly, you should not expect the thief to have obeyed a command that was given after he died, that is symbolically connected with events that had not yet happened!

**4) Jesus had power on earth to forgive sins.** Even if none of the previous points were applicable, you must recognize the significance of this point. Jesus, while He lived on this earth, had the power to forgive whomever He chose. For example, in Luke 5:20, Jesus told someone, "your sins are forgiven." Therefore, Jesus had the power/authority to tell the thief on the cross his sins were forgiven and that he would be in Paradise. However, Jesus does not live on earth any more to forgive in this same way! Instead, He has given us certain commands we must obey to be forgiven of sin! One of these commands is baptism (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21).

The thief on the cross may or may not have been baptized (both are possibilities – and neither can be proven). However, the thief on the cross lived and died under a law that is no longer in

effect – and prior to Jesus’s command to be baptized to be saved. Plus, Jesus had the authority to forgive whomever He chose while He was on this earth. Therefore, even *if* the thief on the cross was saved without being baptized, we live under the new law of Christ that includes the command to be baptized – and we must be obedient to this commandment if we want to be saved!

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### Article 3

## Does God Have A Law Today?

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Do you have any obligations to be obedient to a law God has given today? It is commonly taught that although God was a strict and vengeful God in the Old Testament who demanded that people obey Him, He is now a loving, gracious, and merciful God who does not have strict standards. While this is a wildly popular idea that is extremely appealing, we must test it according to the Scriptures and examine whether God has given us a law we must live by to please Him today.

**1) We live under grace.** There is no doubt that God is a loving, gracious, and merciful God. It is equally true that no person can be saved without God’s grace and mercy (Ephesians 2:1-10). Romans 6:14 states, “For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but under grace.” Many apply this verse so as to conclude that there is no law God has given to govern our conduct today. The point of the verse is that, unlike people under the Old Testament law, we are not dependent on perfect law keeping. Rather, we have access to God’s rich grace. But, we must not use this grace as a license to sin (read Romans 6:15-23)!

**2) God does have a law.** There are many passages that indicate the presence of a new and better law God has given for people today. While God’s grace has provided a way to be saved through Jesus whenever we violate God’s law, God still expects people to follow His law. Consider a few passages that identify the presence of law today.

In 1 Corinthians 9:21, Paul recognized he was “not without God’s law but under the law of Christ.” So, Paul recognized God had a law he must live by. In Galatians 6:2, Paul instructed Christians to carry one another’s burdens, saying they would “fulfill the law of Christ.” Certainly, Jesus’s law revolves around the greatest commands of loving God and others (Matthew 22:36-39). Then, James 1:25 says, “But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works – this person will be blessed in what he does.” Jesus’s new law is a law that offers freedom from sin through Jesus’s sacrifice, as well as one that requires obedience.

**3) Lawbreakers will be punished.** The New Testament Scriptures clearly warn against breaking God’s law. Of course, the implication in these verses is that God does have a law that must be obeyed. For example, James 2:8-11 says, “Indeed, if you fulfill the royal law prescribed in the Scripture, Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. If, however, you show favoritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the entire law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all. For he who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder. So if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you are a lawbreaker.”

Jesus also often spoke of His law, indicating requirements of those who would follow Him (read Matthew 5-7). And, Jesus said that salvation depended on more than just professing Him as Lord and doing some good things in His name. Rather, God will reward those who obey the will of the Father and the lawbreakers will be punished (Matthew 7:21-23). In fact, the apostle Paul even recognized that he had to discipline his body and “bring it under strict control” so that he would not be “disqualified” and lose his salvation (1 Corinthians 9:27).

God *does* have a law all people must live by today! However, this law is far superior to the law that was contained in the Old Testament. For, this new law (revealed in the pages of the New Testament) offers freedom from sin through Jesus to those who will obey God! But, those who disobey God’s law will be eternally punished.



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## Article 4

# Must Christians Tithe?

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Must Christians tithe? Many churches and preachers today teach that Christians must tithe (or, give a tenth of their income) to a church in order to please God. And, there are even some churches today that will require documented proof of tithing by asking the members show their tax documents. While many people go along with such teachings and practices without questioning them, we must look into the Scriptures to see whether God actually requires Christians to tithe.

**1) Tithes were offered in the Old Testament.** Abraham offered a tithe of everything, even before the Mosaic Law required such (Genesis 14:17-20; Hebrews 7:4). The same is true about Jacob (Genesis 28:22). Then, during the time the Law of Moses was in effect, the law required the Israelites to pay multiple tithes – not just one flat tithe of ten percent. One tithe was of the crops and flocks/herds (Leviticus 27:30-33). One tithe was to be paid to the Levites who were supported by the rest of the Israelites (Numbers 18:21-32). And, one tithe was to be brought to God at Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 12:1-19). Therefore, what was actually required of the Israelites under the Law of Moses well exceeded ten percent being “tithed.”

**2) Christians live under the New Testament.** While the tithe (tenth) is referenced in a few New Testament passages (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42; Luke 18:12; Hebrews 7:1-10), it is never referenced in a way that instructs Christians to tithe. Today, we must recognize that we do not live under the Law of Moses. Rather, Colossians 2:14 refers to the fact that the old law has been taken away, saying, “He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.” Then, Hebrews 8:7-13 declares that the old law has been removed and replaced with a new and better law! Therefore, the Law of Moses (which mandated the tithes we considered previously) is no longer binding for Christians today. So, although Christians may choose to use 10% as a

benchmark for their giving, tithing is not required and must not be bound!

**3) The New Testament pattern for giving.** To learn how God expects Christians to give, we must look to the New Testament. As we do, we notice the following instructions about giving money to support the work of the church. 1 Corinthians 16:2 says, “On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and save in keeping with how he is prospering, so that no collections will need to be made when I come.” 2 Corinthians 8:6-7 says, “The point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should do as he has decided in his heart – not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver.” So, there is no specific amount that is mandated for Christians to give to the church under the new law of Christ. Instead, Jesus is concerned about people having a heart that desires to give to support the work God has given to the church! Examples of giving principles in the New Testament can be seen in Mark 12:41-44, Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32-35, Acts 11:27-30, Romans 15:25-27, and 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. These passages show a true willingness and eagerness to give rather than acting under obligation to meet a particular requirement for giving!

**4) Christians must give themselves entirely to God.** Lest anyone think that God is okay with His people giving less under the new law than they did under the old law, there is a deeper point that must be understood. It is far too common for people to attend church and give money, thinking that their obligations to God and to the church are met by doing so. However, the New Testament demonstrates that God does not just want 10% or even 30% from His people. Instead, He wants 100%! For example, Romans 12:1 says, “Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.” Everything you have and everything you are as a Christian should be viewed as belonging to God to be used in His service! This should be reflected both in your giving and in everything you do!

Christians are not bound under the new law of Christ to give a certain percentage of their income to the church today. Rather, the New Testament teaches the importance of a willing heart that is eager to use those things God has blessed Christians with in God's service. Because God has purchased us with the blood of His precious Son, we must give ourselves entirely to live in His service!

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## Article 5

# What Is God's Grace Intended To Do?

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God's grace has appeared! The word "grace" refers to God's unearned favor. He has made His grace freely available to every person through Jesus Christ. Certainly, the concept of God's grace is central to the message of the New Testament. However, we must recognize that God's grace is intended to do something very special in us. Let's consider what God intends for His grace to accomplish, according to Titus 2:11-14.

**1) Bring salvation.** Titus 2:11 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people." God's grace provides every person an opportunity to be saved from the sins that have separated us from God through the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross! So, by God's grace (as well as His mercy), we can go from being on a road that leads to eternal torment in Hell to being on the road that leads to eternal life in the wonderful paradise of Heaven! There was certainly nothing we could do that could have brought about this wonderful salvation by ourselves. Rather, we were dependent on the sacrifice that only Jesus Christ could provide.

While God's rich grace provides a tremendous blessing for us in that we can have eternal life in Heaven, this is only one aspect of what God's grace is intended to do in us. For, God's grace is intended to lead us to transformation – from ruined sinners to God's holy people who live on mission for Him! For example, Ephesians 2:8-10 says, "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift – not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, created in

Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.”

**2) Instruct against ungodly living.** Titus 2:12 continues teaching about the grace of God that brings salvation, “instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts....” Those who recognize the tremendous opportunity God has given us to be saved from such ungodly activity cannot be content to continue living in it! That is, we recognize that it is a misuse of God’s grace to think that we can just keep on sinning so that God’s grace can continue covering even more sin. Rather, we must consider ourselves to have died to sin (Romans 6:1-4)! In fact, to continue living deliberately in sin is to trample Jesus underfoot, regard Jesus’s blood as profane, and insult the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29)!

**3) Instruct in godly living.** Stopping the previous sinful behavior is just one part of the transformation. Those who truly embrace God’s grace will desire to conform their lives to the standard God has revealed so Jesus can be formed in them. Titus 2:12-13 continues, saying, “and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Those who recognize the opportunity God has given them to be saved eternally in Heaven will be eagerly waiting for and anticipating the time when Jesus Christ returns! And, in anticipation for this blessed event, we will be trying to live each day in God’s holiness (2 Peter 3:10-13).

**4) Develop zeal for good works.** God’s grace is not just a privately held blessing that should accomplish a work inside us. Rather, God’s grace ought to stir us to action in serving Jesus. Titus 2:14 says, “He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works.” Those who have come to Jesus Christ in faith and obedience so as to access God’s grace must realize they belong to Jesus. He is their Master. As such, they must live every moment to God’s glory and should desire to share the wonderful news of God’s amazing grace with others! Realizing that such a great sacrifice has been made for us should create a deep love and zeal

for living for the Lord and serving others in our lives (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)!

God's grace is truly amazing! None of us deserve the spiritual riches He has provided to us through Jesus Christ. However, if we do not allow God's grace to instruct us against ungodly living, instruct us in godly living, and develop zeal for good works, this grace will have been shown to us in vain (1 Corinthians 15:9-10)! Learn these wonderful lessons from God's grace and recognize that nothing is too much to give to the God who has provided His grace for us!

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## Article 6

# Do We Need To Recognize Authority?

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“Authority” refers to the power and right for one to tell another how to live or conduct himself/herself. While many people would prefer to think of themselves as completely free from any authority and do not like the thought of living under another's power or control, authority is actually a necessary thing. This is true in both the physical and the spiritual realms. So, we should take a few moments to consider the need we have for authority.

**1) In the physical realm.** All around us, people recognize the importance of authority in the physical realm – even though many decry the presence of authority. They recognize that it is necessary to provide structure, to have common laws that govern us, to have order rather than chaos, etc. Can you imagine what would happen if no one had authority in the government? Or in the school system? Or in the workplace? Or in the home?

You see, we recognize the need for authority every day of our lives. We recognize it when we approach a stoplight in our vehicles. We recognize it when we pay for our groceries at the supermarket. We recognize it when we show up for work on time. We recognize it whenever we take examinations at school. We recognize it when we do chores in the home. In fact, God teaches people to recognize and submit to various ones in positions of

authority in the physical realm (i.e. Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 5:22-24; Hebrews 13:17).

**2) In the spiritual realm.** Even more important than recognizing the need for authority in the physical realm, we must also recognize the need for authority in the spiritual realm. We must recognize that we need guidance and direction to understand what is right and wrong, pertaining to our souls. People are divided as to what is right and what is wrong in these areas. And, this has resulted in constant conflict, chaos, and confusion – as many people simply choose to live in whatever ways they desire to live. They practice their religion however they believe is appropriate and live by whatever standard of morality seems “right” to them.

Yet, we must question whether authority exists in the spiritual realm. We have already learned that it exists (and needs to exist) in the physical realm. So, why would it be any different in the spiritual realm? Does the God who created all things really not care how people live? Does He really not care how people try to serve and worship Him? Does He really desire His creation to be in constant conflict, chaos, and confusion about what is right and what is wrong? And, is it really in our best interest (spiritually) to live according to our own desires, beliefs, and standards?

A couple passages should definitely prove our need for authority in the spiritual realm. First, consider Proverbs 14:12. “There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death.” So, even though we often *think* we know what is right and what is wrong, we are often sorely mistaken! And, the result is spiritual death whenever we violate what God has said – because what God has said is completely true and right!

Second, consider Jeremiah 10:23. “I know, Lord, that a person’s way of life is not his own; no one who walks determines his own steps.” Although people often try to reject authority in the spiritual realm, the fact is that mankind is incapable of living in the way that pleases God without it. God will not be pleased whenever we only live according to our own ideas, traditions, feelings, etc.

Clearly, the need for authority exists all around us – every day. But, there is not an area that is more important to have authority than in the spiritual realm. Recognizing the need for authority in this area of your life is essential to pleasing God and to submitting to His great authority!

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## Article 7

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# Are You Convinced Or Converted?

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It is possible to believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior but not allow this knowledge to transform your life. It is even possible to read your Bible every day, pray, go to church, and do some basic things you believe is your responsibility as a Christian but not allow the knowledge of Jesus Christ to impact every aspect of your life. Therefore, you must deeply examine your own life to see whether you are merely convinced about Jesus or whether you are truly converted to Jesus!

**1) Being convinced is essential but insufficient.** Head knowledge about Jesus is crucial. John 8:24 records Jesus saying, “Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.” However, James 2:14-26 repeatedly demonstrates how a faith that only involves head knowledge does not save anyone, even referring to such as a “dead” faith. Verse 26 says that “faith without works is dead.” In fact, the demons are held up as examples of workless faith, saying that even the demons believe and shudder (verse 19)! The problem, of course, is that neither the demons nor those with mere head knowledge of Jesus totally surrender their lives and produce the works of true faith!

Jesus further demonstrated this point in Matthew 7:21-23. He said that there will be many people on Judgment Day who will call Him “Lord” and say that they had done “many” things in Jesus’s name. However, Jesus said they would not enter the kingdom of heaven because they were lawbreakers who did not obey God’s will! So, they were convinced but not fully converted.

**2) True faith involves action and change.** Although the Bible sometimes speaks of faith in the sense of being fully persuaded, this is not always the case. Many times, “faith” refers to the kind of full trust in God/Jesus that involves obedience and submission. Hebrews 11 demonstrates many examples of how true faith involves action. In fact, go through the chapter, noticing the phrase “by faith” and then the corresponding action true faith took. For example, by faith Abel offered to God (verse 4). By faith Enoch pleased God (verse 5). By faith Noah built an ark (verse 7). By faith Abraham obeyed (verse 8). Now, just imagine if these people had not taken these actions. Would they really be considered great examples of faith? Absolutely not!

James 2 demonstrates the point well. Verse 18 says, “But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith by my works.” Verse 24 adds, “You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” When you develop full trust in God and Jesus as the Savior, you will surrender your life completely to Him, honoring Him as the Master and King of your life! This will result in turning your life from sin and self to righteousness and service.

**3) Two contrasting examples.** The book of Acts is full of examples of how people responded to the gospel of Christ. But, let’s limit ourselves to just contrasting two briefly. First, consider Governor Felix in Acts 24:22-27. Felix heard the gospel preached and knew about Jesus. Verse 25 says that as Paul “spoke about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix became afraid and replied, ‘Leave for now, but when I have an opportunity I’ll call for you.’” So, he had head knowledge but did not allow this knowledge to translate into action.

Second, consider the example of many Corinthians. When Paul preached to them in Acts 18, verse 8 says, “Many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized.” These individuals not only used their knowledge to take the initial steps required for salvation but there were also many changes made in their lives concerning how they lived (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)! So, their knowledge of Christ resulted in real change!



Are you convinced or converted? If you have true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, just how much have you let your knowledge impact your life? True faith in God and Christ will know no limits to how much your life can be impacted and how much you will accomplish in Jesus's service!

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## Article 8

# John 8 "IFTTTs"

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"IFTTT" is an abbreviation commonly used in technology. It stands for "if this, then that." If "x" happens, then "y" will happen. These program automations can be very useful and save people a great deal of time, hassle, and money. However, more important than these, the Bible describes many "IFTTTs." Specifically, we want to briefly explore several from John 8.

**1) If you know Jesus, you will know the Father.** When some of the Jews were rejecting Jesus's claim as the Son of God, Jesus told them, "You know neither me nor my Father...If you knew me, you would also know my Father" (John 8:19). They had rejected the one the Father had sent to them. So, they could not really know Him. Today, if you know Jesus Christ by believing and obeying Him, you will also know the Father.

**2) If you do not believe in Jesus, you will die in your sins.** Jesus identified the consequence of failing to believe in Him in John 8:24. He said, "Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins." Jesus both claimed and proved Himself to be the Son of God, the Messiah, and the Savior. Those who reject Him as such will never be able to find forgiveness of their sins – as all forgiveness is only available through Jesus. And, belief in Jesus is essential to forgiveness.

**3) If you continue in Jesus's words, you will be His disciple.** Jesus told the Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). Those who believe Jesus to be who He claimed to be must obey what Jesus says. When this

happens, these people are rightly called Jesus's disciples. They are both learners from Jesus and imitators of Jesus. And, this truth Jesus has taught (now revealed through the pages of the New Testament) is God's power to salvation in that it sets people who obey it free from their sins.

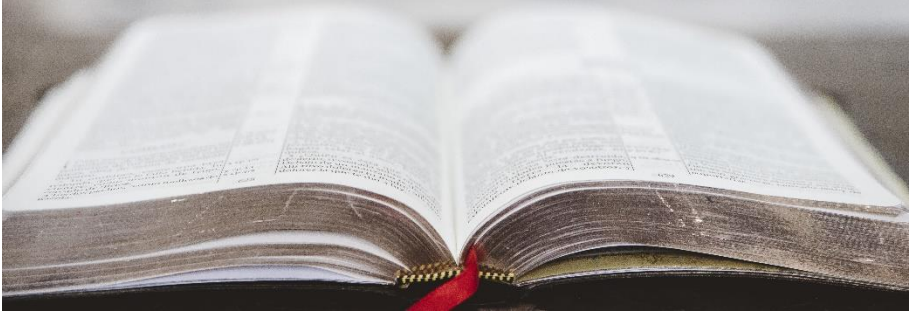
**4) If Jesus sets you free, you will be free.** When people heard about the possibility of being set free by continuing in Jesus's words of truth, some did not understand this and said they had never been enslaved. However, Jesus said "everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34). Then, Jesus (contrasting the slave and the son) said, "So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free" (John 8:36). So, whenever people believe and obey Jesus, He really will set them free from slavery to sin!

**5) If God is your Father, you will love Christ.** As Jesus was trying to open the eyes of the Jews to recognize that rejecting Him as the Son of God failed to make them children of God, He said, "If God were your Father, you would love me, because I came from God and I am here. For I didn't come on my own, but he sent me" (John 8:42). Being from a particular family is not enough to make someone a child of God. Instead, real children of God love Jesus Christ, recognizing that He really is the Son of God. Those who reject Jesus by failing to believe in and obey Him are not really children of God.

**6) If you keep God's words, you will never die.** When Jesus was accused of having a demon, Jesus denied such a claim and said, "Truly I tell you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (John 8:51). While the Jews failed to understand what Jesus was saying (thinking only of physical death), Jesus's statement should encourage those who believe and obey Him. Not only will they experience resurrection from the dead, but they will never share in the second death in the fires of Hell (Revelation 21:8).

The Bible is full of spoken and unspoken "IFTTTS." These are just a sample from one chapter. You should allow these spiritual "IFTTTS" to dramatically impact your life – and be on the lookout for more spiritual "IFTTTS" as you study God's word!

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