

WHY BAPTISTS BELIEVE WHAT BAPTISTS BELIEVE, PART 3

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

Let's begin with [Question 19]. Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Man was created in God's **image**, in His likeness. This is what distinguishes us humans from everything else God created, even angels. God desires intimate fellowship with us! We are special.

Man's original condition was **perfect** (Genesis 2:8-12). He lived in a perfect, sinless environment with everything he needed provided for and best of all he had intimate fellowship with God. What more could he want? Well, he wanted something that he shouldn't have and that became a problem.

Then man **sinned** against God (Genesis 3:1-13). He disobeyed God's specific instruction not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He could eat of any other tree but that one. By the way, when I say "man," I'm speaking of both Adam and Eve. They were both guilty. But in the New Testament it seems like God holds Adam more accountable.

As a result, God's **wrath** fell upon man (Genesis 3:17-19) and...

Man was **separated** from God (Genesis 3:23-24). He was kicked out of the perfect place God had made for him. He no longer had the same intimate fellowship with God that he enjoyed before. He longed to have that back, but it would never again be like it was before.

Before we get too critical of Adam and Eve, the Bible states that **all** people are sinners (Romans 3:23). Now we are sinners by nature and we fall under the curse of sin. However, there is good news...

God's grace is **free** to everyone who **believes** in Him (in Jesus), who has faith in Him (Romans 6:23, John 3:15-16). It's free to us, but it cost Him everything!

I love John 3:36. Jesus is talking to Nicodemus and says, "He who believes in the Son has **eternal life**"; So, when does eternal life start? When you believe in Jesus. When you exercise your faith in Christ. Jesus goes on to say, "But he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Now we get to the crux of our message as Christians. How are we saved (from the wrath of God)? "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved" (Romans 10:9-10). If we by faith believe God's word, accept God's terms of salvation, and confess that publicly, then we will be saved. We will become a part of God's family. And that is what the last question [*Question 20*] talks about. You can do that on your own. It's interesting to go through these verses and see the different terms that are used in the Bible for God's family.

There's a lot here and frankly there's quite a bit more I could have said. But that gives you a broad overview.

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Let me begin this important topic by asking each of you to tell me something that YOU believe about Jesus. [Class responses]

There are a lot of opinions out there about Jesus. Everybody has an opinion. Some people say He was just a religious leader. Some say He was a good moral teacher. Most agree that Jesus was a famous historical figure. What do we Baptists believe about Jesus Christ? Well, we're going to answer this question during this study. Let's begin here...

[Question 1] Jesus Christ is the subject of more than **300** Old Testament prophecies that were made several hundreds of years before His birth. The website newtestamentchristians.com says that Jesus fulfilled a total of 351 Messianic prophecies. Obviously, we will not have time to go through all of these. I have a book by Herbert Lockyer entitled "All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible. It's a 500-plus page hard bound book. It shows all of the Messianic prophecies contained in the Bible and how Jesus fulfilled all of them - well, not all of them because there are some that are still to be fulfilled. But 351 actual fulfilled prophecies, that sounds about right. If you circle "300" as your answer it would be the most accurate.

Why is this important? The Old Testament has the prophecies and the New Testament documents how Jesus fulfilled them. Why even study this? If you read the Old Testament prophecies, this Messiah that was going to come was going to be a big deal. He was going to save us from our sins. Of course, the nation of Israel had their own image of this Messiah King - He would set up a kingdom on earth and defeat Israel's enemies. Even Jesus's own disciples thought that He was going to establish His kingdom in their lifetime. But that was NOT Jesus's plan and He had to set them straight. But when you see all the prophecies that Jesus DID fulfill, it confirms that Jesus was and is the true Messiah, the anointed One, the promised One, the Son of God, Savior of the world.

Let's consider just a few examples of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah:

The virgin birth was predicted in Isaiah 7:14. The historical setting is that Judah's King Ahaz is having a crisis in his life thinking the Assyrians are going to defeat them. He begins to make coalitions with these other nations to fight against the Assyrians. Isaiah speaking for God says "I'm going to deliver you. There is no need to worry about the Assyrians." Ahaz is having a

hard time believing this. So, Isaiah gives him a sign for his time. Isaiah is speaking to Ahaz about a specific event involving a certain virgin who will give birth, which happened in their time. But then later on Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit takes that same prophecy and applies it to Jesus being born of a virgin (Mary) in Matthew 1:18, 22-23. This is an example of how some prophecies can have both a near and a far fulfillment.

The birthplace of the Messiah as being Bethlehem was predicted in Micah 5:2. In Luke 2:4-7 we see meet this young couple, Joseph and Mary who are residents of Nazareth way up north. Because of a census that was required by Rome they make their way to Joseph's hometown of Bethlehem. Luke tells us that Mary was pregnant when she left Nazareth and that she gave birth when they got to Bethlehem. So then, that prophecy was fulfilled. This is very interesting. The easiest way to have that prophecy fulfilled would be for God to select a couple already in Bethlehem. Instead, God selects a couple in Nazareth far to the north and then involves the most powerful man in the world, the Roman Emperor as the means by which this prophecy will be fulfilled. It is his decree that forces Mary and Joseph to travel down to Bethlehem.

The Messiah's childhood in Egypt was predicted in Hosea 11:1: "Out of Egypt I called My Son." You remember the terrible story about King Herod killing all the babies in Bethlehem. Joseph was warned ahead of time in a dream and he took Mary and baby Jesus down to Egypt. They lived there for a while until Herod died. What Matthew does in Matthew 2:14-15 is show how this event fulfills scripture. It was ultimately fulfilled when they returned home from Egypt.

The price of betraying Jesus of 30 pieces of silver was predicted in Zechariah 11:12-13. It talks about 30 pieces of silver being weighed out and then thrown to the potter. "So, I took the 30 pieces of silver and threw them into the House of the Lord, to

the Potter.” Then you come to Matthew Chapter 26:14-15. We all know about Judas being the traitor and how he betrayed Jesus. Judas asks the chief priests “What price will you give me to turn Jesus over to you?” They said “30 pieces of silver,” which is right out of Zechariah 11. I don’t think the chief priests thought to themselves how this was fulfilling scripture. In Matthew 27:5 Judas finally has remorse after Jesus has been arrested and condemned. He goes back to the chief priest and they say, “What’s done is done.” Judas goes out and, just before he hangs himself, takes the 30 pieces of silver and throws them where? Into the temple! Do you think Judas realizes that he is fulfilling scripture? No. But Zechariah’s prophecy was fulfilled that day.

Details surrounding the crucifixion. You have lots of scriptures about the crucifixion of Jesus. The one that I would like us to look at is Psalm 22. In this Messianic prophecy the Messiah is speaking. In Psalm 22:7-8 He says, “All who see Me mock Me... They wag their heads.” Then the crowd responds by saying, “He trusts in the Lord. Let Him rescue Him. This gets literally fulfilled in Matthew 27:39-43. Matthew describes how the people passed by Jesus on the cross deriding Him and “wagging their heads,” And then of course they’re mocking Him: “He saved others. Let Him save Himself!” That is all right out of Psalm 22. There are other places in Psalm 22 which mention His hands and feet being pierced, the dividing of His garments and casting lots. All of these are fulfilled in Matthew 27.

The Resurrection was also predicted in Psalm 16:9-10. The Messiah speaking says, “You will not abandon My soul to Sheol or let Your Holy One undergo corruption (or decay).” The Apostle Peter quoted this verse in Acts Chapter 2 in his sermon at Pentecost to apply to Jesus being resurrected from the dead and His body not undergoing decay. The actual resurrection is recorded toward the end of all four Gospels. Matthew 28:2-6 is one of those accounts. It talks about a great earthquake, an angel

descending, rolling away the stone and sitting on it. It mentions the Roman guards trembling in fear and becoming like dead men. What's interesting when you read all four Gospels is that none of them actually describe the resurrection itself when Jesus comes out of the tomb. They all mentioned what happened afterward - an angel or angels at the tomb, the stone rolled away, the earthquake, Roman soldier's reaction and then their report back to the religious leaders of what they saw. Matthew goes on to tell how the angel told the women who came to the tomb not to be afraid "For I know you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here for he has risen as He said he would." Later Jesus shows Himself to these same women and then to His disciples and to hundreds of others in the weeks that followed.

So, what did the people who were contemporaries of Jesus say about him? *[Question 2]* You have on your handout several quotes contained in the Bible that were made about Jesus. Match the scripture on the left side with the one to whom it applies on the right side.

"...seeking all the more to kill Him" (John 5:18) - **C** His enemies (identified at "the Jews," the Jewish religious leaders). If you go back to John Chapter 5 in the first year of Jesus's ministry, He made the religious leaders mad because of his claims to be God and for his healing on the Sabbath. They wanted Jesus dead and began plotting to kill Him early in His ministry.

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16) - **E** Peter at Caesarea Philippi. This is that great confession of faith that Jesus commended Peter for.

"I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world" (John 11:27) - **A** Martha in Bethany just before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This one was not quite as obvious. I think it's a tremendous statement of faith. Most people don't remember Martha saying this. Poor Martha. She gets

bad rap from the Mary and Martha's story when she was rebuked by Jesus. But Martha actually made this really fantastic statement of faith about Jesus just prior to her brother Lazarus being brought back to life.

"Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39) - **F** Roman centurion at the crucifixion. He witnessed all these things happening after the crucifixion - you had the earthquake, the temple curtain being torn in two from top to bottom, there were dead people walking around Jerusalem. So, there were a lot of bizarre things happening.

"My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28) - **D** Thomas. Doubting Thomas. Thomas gets a bad rap but here he makes this great statement of faith about Jesus. When I think about Thomas this is what I think about. I associate him with this statement. If I'm being completely honest, I would have been just like Thomas, if I wasn't present with the other disciples when Jesus showed up. Think about it. Thomas comes back and the disciples tell him "Hey, while you were gone Jesus showed up." I would be like "Yeah, right!" No different than Thomas.

"You have a demon!" (John 7:20) - **G** The crowd at the Feast of Booths. No doubt this group here had been influenced by the religious leaders who were saying the same thing about Jesus. Here it's the crowd that's saying it.

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17) - **B** God. God the Father's voice from Heaven testified about His Son Jesus following His baptism by John. The Father would later make the same declaration about Jesus at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17).

I asked each person in my class to express something they believed about Jesus. They told me that they believed Jesus to be... the Son of God, forgiving, Savior, loving, eternal, humble, all-knowing, Redeemer, light, the way, the truth and the life.

Here's what the Baptist Faith and Message has to say about Jesus: "Christ is the eternal Son of God... fully God, fully man."

[Question 3] Baptists believe that Jesus Christ is the one and only **Son** of **God**. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of everything that we as Baptists believe. We are "Cristo-centric" in our doctrine. What that means is that Jesus Christ is the central theme about which all other theological positions or doctrines are oriented.

By the way not all so-called "Christian" groups believe this about Jesus, which was really surprising to me.