

God's Amazing Scheme of Redemption

Ephesians 1:3-5

I. Introduction: I

1. **2** Sometimes we need to step back and see the “big picture.”
 - A. The Bible has one unified theme—God’s amazing plan to redeem His fallen creation.
 - B. The Bible was written by around 40 different men over a period of about 1,500 years.
 - (1) Men with varying degrees of education (uneducated fishermen → highly educated kings).
 - (2) Different nationalities (e.g., Hebrew, Greek).
 - (3) Diverse cultures (nomadic herdsmen to kings living in grand palaces).
 - (4) Different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek).
 - C. The Bible contains 66 books (39, Old Testament; 27 New Testament) of varying styles: law, poetry, history, narrative, and prophecy.
 - D. Yet each book reflects a unity of facts, teaching, and purpose.
 - E. All of man’s history recorded in the Bible revolves around God’s amazing scheme (plan) of redemption; each book is a single thread sown into this incredible tapestry!
2. These facts about the Bible, coupled with its consistent theme, serves as incredible evidence the Bible comes from God.
 - A. Given its nature and history, ordinary men could not have created the Bible.
 - B. Time, history, and human nature would have prevented the Bible’s existence if it were a product of mere men and not directed by God.
 - C. This wonderful aspect of the Bible is hard to convey to non-believers; they are not inclined to study the Bible with an open mind to see this great scheme of redemption unfold through its pages.
3. If we fail to understand the theme of the Bible it will not matter what we choose to believe or practice in religion.
 - A. We must come to an understanding of the Bible’s overall theme: God’s amazing scheme of redemption for mankind.
 - B. God’s plan of redemption is anchored in the writings of the Old Testament but obtains its fulfillment in the New Testament.
 - C. In the New Testament God’s plan of redemption is called the “gospel” or “good news.”
4. **3** Let us consider 12 things we need to know about God’s amazing scheme of redemption; the “gospel” the “good news.” (explain goals of next several lessons).

II. Discussion:

The first thing we need to know about God’s amazing scheme of redemption is...

1. **4** There is only one gospel
 - A. **The Great Commission:**
 - (1) Just prior to ascending into heaven, the final verbal instructions of Jesus to His followers was given in what is often called “The Great Commission.”

- (2) Since these were Jesus' final instructions they must represent something He considered of critical importance; these words are not a trivial afterthought!

Mk. 16:15-16: "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'"

- (3) In His final words on earth, Jesus commanded His followers to go and tell His story to mankind—God's plan to redeem the world...the gospel...the good news!

B. ** God's power to save: Why is the gospel of such great importance?

- (1) Jesus' instruction greatly elevates the importance of the gospel:

Rom. 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

- (2) The gospel is the means (tool) God uses to save people:

2 Thess. 2:13-14: "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- (3) The gospel is a message that is to be preached to people that will save them—a message from God that stands between man and salvation!

1 Cor. 15:1-2: "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain."

C. ** Lost without it:

- (1) Understanding the gospel is even more important when we consider the eternal consequences of not being obedient to it:

2 Thess. 1:7-10: "...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who **do not obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed."

- (2) Here we learn that two groups of people will be condemned to eternal punishment when the Lord returns:

☛ "those who do not know God" (1 Jn. 2:3-5)

☛ "those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"

- (3) Thus, it is critical for us to study and come to an understanding of the "gospel." For if we do not respond to (obey) the gospel, we will suffer the fate of eternal condemnation!

D. ** Beware of false gospels:

- (1) But there is a huge problem; and, it's not a new problem.

- (2) Some 2,000 years ago Paul was amazed that the Christians in Galatia were already following "a different gospel."

- (a) In other words, someone was telling the Galatians there was a different way to be saved than what they were originally instructed.
- (b) In no uncertain terms Paul declares that there is only one gospel and they must know it and obey it!

Gal. 1:6-9: *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”*

(3) Let’s consider some important observations from this passage:

- (a) Different gospels (what people are told about how to be saved) exist (e.g., the sinner’s prayer, faith only, works of obedience only, etc.).
- (b) Different gospels may be taught by those with considerable knowledge, education, intelligence, and credibility (e.g., apostles or even angels, Gal. 1:8). Remember Jesus Himself issued such warnings:

Matt. 7:13-16: *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. 15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?”*

- (c) “fruit” here is a different gospel—a different message of how one is saved.
 - (d) Good sincere people, believers, Christians, and churches can and do teach and/or follow a different gospel! (this was the case at Galatia)
 - (e) So, it is the responsibility of every individual Christian to discern between the one true gospel and the many false gospels (Jn. 16:13; Eph. 3:1-5; 1 Jn. 4:1, 6; **Eph. 4:4-6:** *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one **faith**, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all...”*; Jude 3).
- (4) Knowing and responding to the one gospel is essential to the believer...our salvation depends upon it! Remember Rom. 1:16!
- (5) Likewise, believing, teaching, or following a false gospel will cause a person to be condemned, no matter how educated, famous, or sincere they are! (**Matt. 15:14:** *“Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”*)

E. ** Will the real gospel please stand up:

- (1) The New Testament provides a pointer of where to begin our search for this one gospel: The Old Testament! Gal. 3:24 (also see Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; **2 Tim. 3:15:** *“and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”*).
- (2) The Bible is a progressive revelation. (e.g., If you skip the first half of a novel and try to finish it, you will have a hard time understanding the characters, the plot, and the ending. e.g., Just letting the Bible fall open and then reading a passage or two.)

- (3) Thus, the New Testament is only completely understood when it is seen as being built upon the foundation of the events, characters, laws, sacrificial system, prophecies, covenants, and promises of the Old Testament.
- (4) The Old Testament period was a time of learning (“*our tutor to bring us to Christ,*” Gal. 3:24), a period of training to prepare the world for the arrival of Jesus Christ and His role in God’s amazing scheme of redemption.
- (5) So, what do we need to learn from the Old Testament that would “*lead us to Christ*”?

The second thing we need to know about God’s amazing scheme of redemption is...

2. **5** God is holy

- A. All Biblical understanding must begin and end with a knowledge of God (1 Jn. 2:3-5). Who is He? What are His characteristics, what are His attributes?
- B. ****** It is impossible for us to arrive at an understanding of the one gospel without first understanding God.
 - (1) Unfortunately, man has always sought to create God in his own image rather than allowing God to define Himself.

******“The god of this century no more resembles the Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering candle the glory of the midday sun. The god who is talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday school, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Christian conferences, is a figment of human imagination, an invention of maudlin sentimentality. The heathen outside the pale of Christendom form gods of wood and stone, while millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a god out of their carnal minds. In reality, they are but atheists, for there is no other possible alternative between an absolutely supreme God, and no God at all. A ‘god’ whose will is resisted, whose designs are frustrated, whose purpose is checkmated, possesses no title to Deity, and so far from being a fit object of worship, merits naught but contempt.” (Arthur Pink, *Gleanings in the Godhead*, pp. 28-29)
 - (2) ****** We must look to the Bible alone, for it is the only place where God reveals Himself (1 Cor. 2:4-13).
- C. ****** God’s character is defined by the attribute of holiness—the absolute absence of any evil:

Psa. 5:4: “*For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You.*”

1 Jn. 1:5: “*This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*”

 - (1) John is telling us God is completely free of any moral evil.
 - (2) God is completely and totally morally pure.
- D. God’s holiness perfects His attributes of omnipotence (infinite power), omniscience (perfect knowledge), and omnipresence (everywhere present).
 - (1) Holiness makes all His attributes perfectly good.
 - (2) His holiness puts Him far above man! We must never make the mistake of pulling Him down to our level (e.g., making Him into our “good buddy”!).

Psa. 99:5: “*Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool — He is holy.*”

Psa. 145:3: “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.”

- (3) It is His holiness that makes Him worthy of our praise, adoration, and service:

Ex. 15:11: “Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”

Psa. 99:9: “Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill; For the Lord our God is holy.”

Isa. 57:15: “For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’”

E. ** God’s Holy Demand:

- (1) God intends/desires to have a relationship with His creation...with us!
- (2) Because man is a spiritual being (Gen. 1:26) God and man can have *spiritual* fellowship BUT only as long as holiness exists.
- (3) God repeatedly tells us that we are to be holy because He is holy:
- 1 Pet. 1:14-16:** “as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; I 5 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, I 6 because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”
- (4) This is the idea of *sanctification*. Only when one is free of sin can they have fellowship with a holy God.

The third thing we need to know about God’s amazing scheme of redemption is...

3. **6 Sin is terrible:**

- A. **God abhors sin:** Nothing defines God’s character and His relationship with man as much as His absolute abhorrence of sin.

- (1) God is God. God is holy. God is supreme ruler of the universe.
- (2) Any breaking of His law or His will results in His absolute and complete rejection.
- (3) This breaking of His law or rejection of His will is called sin (1 Jn. 3:4).

B. **** Sin separates us from God:**

- (1) Any violation or rejection of God’s will causes our spiritual fellowship or relationship with Him to be severed; we become “separated” from God:

Isa. 59:2: “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”

Hab. 1:13: “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours a person more righteous than he?”

- (2) To be separated from God, the essence of spiritual life, is so dreadful it is referred to in the worst possible terms—spiritual **death** (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 5:6).
- (3) Furthermore, because God is holy, any sin, regardless of its motive, magnitude, or consequences, *must* result in immediate separation from a just and holy God.

C. ** God's holiness is demonstrated in His justice and love:

Psa. 33:4-5: *“For the word of the Lord is right, and all His work is done in truth. 5 He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.”*

Psa. 89:14: *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face.”*

- (1) God's justice will not allow sin to go unpunished.
 - (a) However, His love for man seeks to repair what man's carelessness and rebellion has destroyed by committing sin.
 - (b) This forms the basis for His incredible plan of justice and mercy first demonstrated in the Old Testament.
- (2) In the garden of Eden, before sin, man existed in a perfect state of spiritual fellowship with God.
 - (a) But this all changed when sin entered the picture in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2-3; esp. 3:8).
 - (b) The breaking of God's law became a constant habit with man and mankind became exceedingly wicked.
 - (c) By the time of Noah, God was sorry He had made man and He decided to give mankind what they deserved—death (2 Pet. 2:5).

Gen. 6:5-7: *“Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So the Lord said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’”*

2 Pet. 2:5: *“and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;”*

- (d) But, Noah *“found grace in the eyes of the LORD”* (Gen. 6:8) because: **Gen. 6:9:** *“Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.”*
- (e) God's mercy is demonstrated, to some extent, in that man is not immediately struck dead (what we deserve) the instant we sin (Ezek. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; Gen. 2:16-17; 3:17-19, 22-24; 5:5).

D. ** All have sinned:

- (1) Looking over the scope of history, the New Testament writers reflected this chilling and disturbing characteristic of man by observing *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:23).
- (2) As a result, all of mankind has a serious problem!

The fourth thing we need to know about God's amazing scheme of redemption is...

4. 7 God's justice demands life (blood):

A. ** The consequences of sin:

- (1) All of humanity suffers the consequences of sin (Gen. 3:16-19).

- (2) Especially note that every person will die a mortal death (limited life span) as a consequence of Adam's sin:

Gen. 3:19: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."

I Cor. 15:21-22: "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."

- (3) ** But, more importantly everyone also sins which separates us from God, leading to spiritual death:

Gen. 2:16-17: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"; cf. Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Jas. 1:14-15

- (4) The very first warning issued by God in the Garden of Eden clearly elaborated the price for sin (Gen. 2:16-17).

(a) Put in the plainest of words, the payment of death is pronounced upon man for daring to break the laws of the God of the universe.

(b) God pronounced death as the *price* for sin because His justice must be served (death = separation; Isa. 59:2).

(c) Adam and Eve surely suffered the consequences of sin—they died spiritually the instant they sinned, and they were destined to eventually die a mortal death, but that did nothing to remove their sin, or pay the price for their sin—death.

(d) ** The New Testaments clearly and unequivocally states that "...without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin" (Heb. 9:22); a principle stated way back in the Old Testament:

Lev. 17:11: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."

Gen. 3:21: "Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them." (Required a death, the shedding of blood!)

(e) Adam and Eve were liable for a price they could not possibly pay!

(f) This price (life = blood) is on the head of every sinner. We are all pronounced guilty because all have sinned (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

- (5) ** So, we are in a desperate situation:

(a) We have broken the laws of the God of the Universe, that separates us from God.

(b) And, as a result the price of blood (death) is required of all by a just God.

(c) If one dies a mortal death separated from God they will be eternally separated from God. We are unable to pay the price for sin ourselves!

The fifth thing we need to know about God's amazing scheme of redemption is...

5. 8 God's love provides mercy:

- A. **Atonement:** Fortunately, we now see another aspect of God's holiness, His lovingkindness toward man—exhibited in mercy, where God does not give us what we deserve.

Eph. 2:4-5: “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),”

- (1) God made provision to redeem (buy us back) us by having the price of death paid by an innocent representative.
- (2) This is the principle of blood atonement (remember Heb. 9:22).
- (3) God makes provision for sin by an innocent life (atonement). This is described in Lev. 17:11.
- (4) In animal sacrifice the life of the animal atones for (literally ‘covers’) or cleanses the sins of the sinner (**Lev. 16:30:** “For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.”).
- (5) By removing sin, man is made holy (*sanctified*).
- (6) As a result, the penalty of death is removed (*justification*, i.e., acquittal), and man is declared *righteous*, and the spiritual relationship between God and man is restored (*reconciliation*).
- (7) Even in showing man mercy, God maintains His righteousness and justice:

Rom. 3:21-26: “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

- B. **** Blood:** (which represents life, Lev. 17:11) is the **ONLY** thing that will pay the price for, take care of, or atone for sin (Heb. 9:22)—not good works, good beliefs, good morals, or good intentions!
- (1) **** Blood**→represents→Life
 - (2) Innocent life→atones for→Sinner
 - (3) Innocent life→represents→Guilty life
- C. Notice some things we learn from animal sacrifices in the Old Testament:
- (1) The animal was innocent of sin—it was amoral, it couldn’t sin. If an animal could have sinned it would have been liable for its own sin. Sinlessness was required for it to provide a representative death.
 - (2) The animal had to be perfect, spotless, unblemished (Lev. 22:21-25).
 - (3) Man did not deserve to have an animal die for him—this is grace—God gives us what we don’t deserve. It was not a gift that was earned (Eph. 2:5, 8).

The sixth thing we need to know about God’s amazing scheme of redemption is...

6. **9 Faith responds:**

- A. Important observation about animal sacrifice: derived its power from faith of the believers.

- B. The animal had to be killed—one couldn't just believe in animal sacrifice (**Heb. 9:22:** “without shedding of blood there is no remission.”).
- C. **Faith:** In Hebrews 11:6 we have a great definition of faith. We see in this passage the two critical elements of saving faith—*belief* and *action*.
- D. ****** Look at Old Testament examples of faith given in Hebrews 11:
- (1) “by **faith** Abel **offered** unto God a more excellent sacrifice” (vs. 4)
 - (2) “by **faith** Noah...moved with fear, **prepared** an ark” (vs. 7)
 - (3) “by **faith** Abraham...**obeyed**...and went out...” (vs. 8)
 - (4) “by **faith** Abraham...**offered** up Isaac...” (vs. 17)
- E. **** Living faith vs. dead faith:** The kind of faith that pleases God is *belief-based action*.
- (1) Saving faith has always required belief-based action.
 - (2) James asks rhetorically, “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can such faith [without action] save a man?” (Jas. 2:14) No!
 - (3) Faith without belief-based actions is useless! **Jas. 2:26:** “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”; Deut. 8:2; 2 Kgs. 5:1-14

The seventh thing we need to know about God's amazing scheme of redemption is...

7. || Jesus is God's sacrificial lamb:

- A. Thousands of years went by under the system of animal sacrifice.
- B. Then a climactic time in history arrived.
- (1) John is baptizing in the river Jordan, to “Prepare the way of the Lord” (Matt. 3:3),
 - (2) As John sees Jesus approaching him he makes an astounding pronouncement that reverberates throughout history, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of world.” (Jn. 1:29)
- C. Think about it. John's statement is God's plan of redemption distilled into one sentence!
- (1) By proclaiming Jesus as “the Lamb of God” John declared Jesus to be God's sacrifice to pay for the sins of humanity! (**1 Jn. 2:1-2:** “...if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; 1 Jn. 4:14)
 - (2) Jesus' death on the cross was no accident or “Plan B” due to a failed mission; it was His eternal purpose for coming to earth (1 Pet. 1:18-20; Eph. 3:10-11).
- D. Jesus came to die; take the place of an animal sacrifice! (**Matt. 26:28:** “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”; **Matt. 20:28:** “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”)
- (1) Jesus paid the price of death for us with His perfect sacrifice!
Heb. 4:15: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”
Heb. 9:14: “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

- (2) Jesus' sacrifice necessary since the animal sacrifices of the OT could not completely take away sin (Heb. 10:1-4; Lev. 16 esp. vs. 34; animal not of equal value; **Lev. 16:34**: *"This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year." And he did as the Lord commanded Moses.*).
- (3) Mankind did not deserve such a perfect sacrifice (Rom. 5:6-8), hence, we are saved through God's grace (Eph. 2:5, 8; Rom. 3:24).
- (4) Christ's suffering and death was foretold clearly, vividly, and specifically some 750 years earlier in Isaiah 53.
 - (a) vs. 5: *"...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities...And by His stripes we are healed."*
 - (b) vs. 8: *"...He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken."*
 - (c) vs. 12: *"...He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors."*

The eighth thing we need to know about God's amazing scheme of redemption is...

8. 12 Jesus paid the price owed by the sinner:

- A. Jesus' sinlessness qualified Himself as an innocent stand-in to die in place of the guilty.
 - (1) When Jesus died on the cross He took our sins upon Him and thus paid the price owed by the guilty—death (1 Pet. 2:24).
 - (2) Christ's death results in the death of the believer (**1 Pet. 2:24**: *"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."*; **Col. 3:3**: *"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."*).
 - (3) This role of Christ is summed up in 2 Cor. 5:21 and Heb. 7:26-28:

2 Cor. 5:21: *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."*

Heb. 7:26-28: *"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."*
- B. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth as a man, so that, as God and man, He could offer the perfect sacrifice, paying the price for our sins, reconciling man to God (Eph. 2:13-16; **Col. 1:21-23**: *"And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight — 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven..."*).
- C. By dying with Christ, we can have our sins forgiven, share His victory over death and have the hope of eternal life: 1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 6:6, 8.

(see also Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 9:26-28; 10:10; 13:12; 2:17; Rom. 5:6-8; 1 Jn. 2:2; 3:5; 4:10; 2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 2:11-16; Titus 2:14; Col. 1:22).

The ninth thing we need to know about God's amazing scheme of redemption is...

9. **13** The believer must die with Christ

- A. This is the primary *action* (recall *faith-based action*; Heb. 11; Jas. 2) of the plan of redemption—that the believer dies through and *with* their representative, Jesus Christ.
- (1) Christ's death symbolizes the death of the believer.
 - (2) This terminology is often used in the New Testament to refer to the point in time where one actually becomes a Christian.
 - (a) "if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him" (2 Tim. 2:11).
 - (b) "we died with Christ" (Rom. 6:8; cf. Col. 2:20).
 - (c) "you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).
 - (d) "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20)(see 2 Cor. 5:14)
 - (e) "he who has died has been freed from sin" (Rom. 6:7).
- B. Since this is the gospel message—that Christ died for (in place of) the sinner—the believer must ask the question, "How & when do I die with Christ?" When does God view me as:
- (1) **Dead** to sin?
 - (2) **Freed** from sin?
 - (3) Dying **with** Christ?
 - (4) Crucified **with** Christ?
 - (5) United **with** Christ in His death?
 - (6) Sin **done away** with?
 - (7) **Set free** from sin?
- C. The answer to this question is the believer's response to the gospel.
- (1) We must have a Bible answer to this crucial question and not the opinions of man.
 - (2) The answer to this question is the response to the one gospel...
- D. We are united with Christ's death in baptism (Rom. 6:3, 4, 6, 5, 8). Why? For what purpose?
- (1) "that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).
 - (2) "we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:5).
 - (3) "that the body of sin might be done away with" (Rom. 6:6).
 - (4) "that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Rom. 6:6).
 - (5) "that we shall also live with Him" (Rom. 6:8).
 - (6) "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:11).
 - (7) "having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:18).
 - (8) "now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God" (Rom. 6:22).
 - (9) "you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life" (Rom. 6:22).
 - (10) "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).
- E. Have you died with Christ?

The tenth thing we need to know about God's amazing scheme of redemption is...

10. **14** What the apostles taught

A. Baptism (Greek = *immersion*) is the point where our sins are cleansed by faith in Christ's blood—where we die *with* Christ.

(1) Baptism is **where** we are united w/Christ's death by faith and, is **when** our sins are removed; we stand sanctified, justified, and righteous before God (Rom. 6:3ff; **chart**).

(2) **15** The apostles *taught* that baptism was the point *WHEN*:

(a) We are **justified** by faith (Gal. 3:26-27): Why? When our sins are removed the penalty of death is removed (justification, acquittal). Therefore, we are "sons of God through faith," when we put on Christ in baptism.

(b) We are **saved by faith** in Christ's work (Col. 2:12): Baptism is not a meritorious work that earns salvation. It is the point where we accept God's promise...and His work. Therefore we are buried with Christ in baptism and raised up with Christ through faith in the **working of God**, not in the working of ourselves.

(c) We are **saved** (1 Pet. 3:21): Peter flatly states "baptism now saves you." How? Through faith ("answer of a clean conscience") in the working of God ("through the resurrection of Christ")(**Col. 2:12**: "buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.").

B. **16** As there is only one gospel, there is only one baptism:

Eph. 4:4-6: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

(1) Paul gives us a list of seven very important things upon which all Christians must be united—one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father, and **one baptism**. Why is baptism on this list?

(a) ** Baptism is on this list because it is the act of faith, and the point at which one's sins are removed (e.g., Rom. 6:6, 7, 11, 18, 22; Acts 22:16)(*faith-based action*).

☛ "...that the body of sin might be done away with..." (Rom. 6:6).

☛ "For he who has died has been freed from sin." (Rom. 6:7)

☛ "...reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:11).

☛ "...having been set free from sin..." (Rom. 6:18).

☛ "...now having been set free from sin..." (Rom. 6:22).

(b) The fact that there is but **one baptism** attests to its importance and connection with the *one gospel* of Galatians 1:6-9.

The eleventh thing we need to know about God's amazing scheme of redemption is...

11. **17** What the apostles practiced: The examples of what the apostles actually *practiced* are very powerful and valuable (Jn. 16:13; Mk. 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20). Baptism was:

A. **Commanded "for the remission of sins"** (Acts 2:38): Here believers specifically asked "what must we do?" (cf. Acts 2:21) They were commanded to repent and be baptized for (in order to, Matt. 26:28) receive the remission of sins.

- (1) **Baptism was included in “preaching Christ”** (Acts 8:5, 12): Here Philip proclaimed the one gospel, i.e., “preached Christ” (vs. 5). When “they believed...as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (vs. 12); hence, “preaching Christ” (i.e., the gospel) had to include instruction about the “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5).
- (2) **Baptism was included in “preaching Jesus”** (Acts 8:35-39): Here Philip “preached Jesus” to the eunuch. The eunuch’s first reaction was “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (vs. 36). Preaching Jesus had to include instruction about baptism. Note that he rejoiced after he was baptized.
- (3) **Baptism is when and where the Lord added one “to the church”** (Acts 2:41, 47): After baptism (vs. 41) the Lord added “them” (i.e., “those being saved”) to his church, His spiritual kingdom, where Christ is ruler and Savior (Col. 1:13, 18; Eph. 5:23).

B. ** The conversion of Saul:

- (1) One of the clearest examples of conversion in the New Testament is that of the apostle Paul (Acts 9; 22).
- (2) Persecuted Christians w/clear conscience that he was doing God’s will (Acts 23:1).
- (3) While traveling to persecute God’s people (Acts 9:2), Christ appeared to Paul in a vision and directed him to go to Damascus “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” (Acts 9:6)
- (4) We see several elements of Paul’s repentance:
 - (a) He believed and confessed: “What must I do Lord?” (Acts 9:6; 22:10)
 - (b) He obeyed: “I came into Damascus” (Acts 22:11)
 - (c) He prayed: “he is praying” (Acts 9:11)
- (5) Ananias, who had been instructed by God to go to Paul (Acts 9:10-12), commanded him, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16).
- (6) Even though Paul exhibited acts of repentance and had prayed, he had not yet died with Christ, thus, he had yet to have his sins “washed away” in baptism. In baptism Saul “died to sin” and arose to “walk in newness of life.”

C. ** The figure of baptism:

- (1) One figure of baptism often used in the New Testament is that of ‘washing’ because in baptism our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16).
- (2) This figure is also used in Titus 3:5, “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit...” (cf. Jn. 3:3-5).
- (3) This passage echoes important fundamental truths:
 - (a) In baptism (when we are united with Christ in His death) we are “regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit.”
 - (c) Romans 6:4, 8 tells us we are given this new life because we have died with Christ.
 - (b) This is a gift of God’s mercy, not a righteous work on our part.
 - (i) If someone gives me a birthday check, I do not earn the gift because I endorse the check and cash it at the bank—I merely accepted the gift.

- (ii) Likewise, we accept God's gift of grace and mercy when we respond by faith in what Christ did for us (Rom. 6:23).
- (iii) Baptism saves (1 Pet. 3:21), but is not a righteous work that earns anything!
- (iv) But, baptism is an act of faith on our part! Remember faith-based action?
Col. 2:12: *“buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”*

The twelfth thing we need to know about God's amazing scheme of redemption is...

12. 18 The command of Jesus

A. Let's now revisit Jesus' command in the great commission:

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes AND is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mk. 16:15-16; also Matt. 28:19).

B. Understanding God's plan of redemption, we can see why Christ commanded baptism for those who believed the gospel and why belief in the gospel is a prerequisite to baptism.

C. What about belief alone?

(1) What about passages such as Jn. 3:16 that seemingly indicate that everyone who believes (mental assent only) will be saved.

Jn. 3:16: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

- (a) “Believe” in this and other passages is used as a figure of speech called *synecdoche*—where a part represents the whole (e.g., “head” for cow, “hands” for sailors).
 - (b) When used as a *synecdoche* in these passages, *belief* (a part) is used to represent the whole, or **all** that is involved in salvation (e.g., confession, Rom. 10:10; repentance, Acts 17:30; and baptism, Mk. 16:16).
 - (c) In 1 Pet. 3:21, Peter flatly and unequivocally states *“baptism now saves you.”*
 - (d) If one takes baptism out of context here (like *believe* in passages such as Jn. 3:16); then 1 Pet. 3:21 would teach that a person does not even need to believe!
 - (e) In 1 Peter 3:21 baptism is used as a *synecdoche* to represent **all** a person needs to do to accept God's gift of salvation—believe, repentance, and confession.
 - (f) Belief is often used in the New Testament as *synecdoche*, to represent the entire process of acceptance of the gift of salvation, just like baptism in 1 Pet. 3:21.
- (2) James further addresses the doctrine of salvation by “belief alone” in Jas. 2:19, *“even the devils believe, and tremble.”*
- (a) There are believers in hell! If “belief alone” saves then even the devils are saved!
 - (b) James again states emphatically that belief without action is “dead” or “useless” (2:17, 26).
 - (c) And in the only passage in the Bible where the actual words “*faith alone*” appear (2:24) James states, *“You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.”* (NASV)
 - (d) We surely cannot be saved without faith, but it cannot be a dead or useless faith; it must be a responsive, accepting, obedient faith! (cf. Col. 2:12; Gal. 5:6; Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Heb. 5:8-9)

- (3) In baptism we accept the promise of salvation by our great God and He adds us to His kingdom, the church (Col. 1:13; Acts 2:41, 47).
- (a) In His kingdom we accept the headship of Christ and commit to a life of loving faithfulness to His authority and commands (Matt. 28:18-20; Col. 3:17).
- (b) While baptism is not the gospel all by itself, one cannot teach the one gospel of Christ without describing and teaching the one baptism—the believer’s response of faith in Christ’s redeeming blood which saves us and provides entrance into God’s kingdom and an abundant life.

III. Conclusion: 19

1. God desires all men to be saved: 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9.

2. God makes provision for all men to be saved: Rom. 3:24-26; 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-2

Acts 10:34-35: *“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, ‘Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.’”*

Rev. 22:17: *“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let him that heareth say, ‘Come.’ And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”*

3. Man’s has a responsibility: Eph. 2:8; Heb. 11:6; Jas. 2:24, 26:

Rom. 5:1-2: *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*

☛ ****Hear** the gospel: Rom. 10:17

☛ **Believe** the gospel: Rom. 1:16; Heb. 11:6

☛ **Confess** your belief: Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37

☛ **Repent** of your sins: Acts 2:38; 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9

☛ **Be baptized** for the remission of sins: Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-11; 1 Pet. 3:21; Col. 2:12

☛ **Live faithfully:** Rev. 2:10; 2 Pet. 3:17; Matt. 16:27; Col. 1:21-23; 1 Cor. 15:58

Adapted from a tract by Kenneth W. Craig.