



MY STORY

I was born and raised in a Muslim family. Although my family was never zealous in their practice of the Islamic religion, they are zealous in their beliefs and naturally their sincerity transcended to me throughout my childhood.

There was a time where my practice of the Islamic religion surpassed that of my parents. In my teens, I walked daily in the early hours of the day to the local mosque in order to pray. I prayed 5 or more times a day and fasted the month of Ramadan every year. I read the Koran on the bus, on my way to school. With age, my practice diminished due to school and other normal distractions associated with entering adulthood.

However, "How to get to Heaven?" remained a primary concern in my soul. My Muslim family is sincere in its beliefs and so was I. As a Muslim, I believed in one true God: the Creator of the Universe. I therefore held a monotheistic view of God. In time, I grew uncomfortable with the things I discovered about Islam. I did not discover these troubling things outside of the Koran from non-Islamic sources, but rather from within the Koran.

However, the main issue is not the Koran or Islam. The main issue always was and remains: "How do I get to Heaven?" The response of Islam, and of all religions for that matter, is through a system of works or "good deeds".

For Muslims, these works or good deeds are embodied in the 5 pillars of Islam. Furthermore, the Koran reveals that after death, all Muslims go to Hell temporarily to pay for their sins and once their time is served, they can then be transferred into Heaven. Muslims also believe that the alleged prophet Muhammad is not sinless.

Jesus Christ is accepted by Islam as the only sinless human being in history.

Because, according to Islam, all sinners must first go to Hell to pay for their respective sins (including Muhammad, which he openly admits in the Hadith), it can therefore be logically concluded that Jesus Christ is the only man in history who does not need to go to Hell temporarily because He has no sins to redeem and thus as a result of this reality, Jesus Christ has authority over all men because all men are sinners except for Him because He is impeccable (sinless). Perplexing isn't it?

Other religions offer up a similar solution to the conundrum of "How do I get to Heaven?" They propose their own system of works or "good deeds". For some, like Catholics, the path to Heaven is through Sacraments, for others, like Ascetics, salvation is through depriving the self of material things.

How can a sinner, who is therefore imperfect, produce a perfect deed (acceptable to God)? The requirement for a deed to be acceptable in the eyes of a holy, perfect, and righteous God is that

the deed be holy, perfect and righteous as well. This implies that the source of the deed, the man who generates it, be holy, perfect and righteous also. How can any human being even imply that he is holy and perfect? Regardless of one's religion, we can all agree that no human is perfect. But yet, in essence, to produce a perfect deed you must be perfect. An imperfect being like man, only has access to imperfect methods of producing deeds. Thus all deeds he produces are imperfect. Imperfection cannot create perfection or else perfection would not be perfection, in its essence. And for God to accept any deed produced by an imperfect being would imply that He is not perfect as a God because His integrity can be bent. We can all agree that God would not be God if that were possible.

So the question remains: "How do I get to Heaven?"

So far, we've established that the answer is obviously not through a system of works or good deeds because man is imperfect and thus cannot produce works which can be accepted as perfect. To be accepted by God, a deed or work must be perfect in its source and content. The Old Testament states in Isaiah 64:6:

"For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment (rag)."

Therefore, the only possible answer is that one must become perfect so that he can produce perfect deeds but since this transformation from imperfect to perfect is impossible, it must be done for us, by the only One who can do perfect things: a perfect God. God must make you perfect so you can start producing perfect deeds acceptable to Him. However, God is justice and righteousness and thus the sins of man, which make him imperfect, cannot go unpunished. Legally speaking, God cannot simply sweep the sins of man under the carpet because if He did, He would not be a righteous God. The penalty of sin is death and separation from God in the lake of fire (Hell).



Another question comes to light: "How can God make me perfect if I have earned the penalty of sin through my inherited sinful nature and my personal sins committed throughout my earthly life?" Allowing the penalty of my sins to go unpaid would go against God's integrity and justice, but if I pay the penalty, I can never go to Heaven because the penalty of sin, which is death and separation from God, is eternal, not temporary. In other words, once I'm in Hell, I cannot get out. Hell would not be Hell if you could get out. Quite a conundrum! Whether I commit one sin or a million is irrelevant. Murder is sin but so is lying, anger, gossip, slander, etc. Not only are sins things that we do but also things that we speak or think, that are contrary to God's holy character: the sweetest grandmother that bakes cookies or the billionaire that donates millions of dollars to charity, sins one way or another. One sin deserves, legally speaking, the eternal penalty of sin so 10 million sins are irrelevant; they add up to the same penalty. One crime against God (sin) gets you the death sentence in God's courtroom and even though God loves His creation, he cannot contradict his integrity and justice. God is not grey, He is white in the sense that He is pure and holy and just. But justice is not an emotion; it's a rigorous body of law and integrity. We have often seen "loving mothers" forgive their sons who committed overt sins like murder but God, even though He loves you, cannot overlook the penalty of your sin because He would not be God if He did. A God that is partial is no God at all. God is immutable in the way He deals with sin.

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

Furthermore, you are born a sinner because of the sin of Adam, and the consequences of his mistake are automatically transferred to you through procreation. In the same way an

irresponsible mother that uses drugs during her pregnancy passes on her addiction to her unborn child (crack babies), the sin of Adam and the consequence of it, a sin nature, is transferred seminally throughout the generations. In other words, the moment you are born, you are already a sinner and throughout your life, you pile up additional sins. No matter how cute and sweet a child is or how kind and loving you are to your neighbors, you are a sinner under the penalty of sin and you are imperfect by birth, thus your "good deeds" such as giving to charity are imperfect deeds in the eyes of a perfect God and so they are not "good" deeds in His eyes, the only eyes that matter. Are you willing to admit in the privacy of your own soul that you are a sinner and imperfect? Not admitting so is the summit of pride and arrogance. Being sweet and nice has nothing to do with being justified in God's courtroom.

God is justice and He, being just, requires that penalty for sin be paid for. That is justice. This is why God required man in the days of the Old Testament to perform animal sacrifices. The main purpose was to cover sins of believers by transferring the penalty of their sins to an innocent animal, whose shed blood was the substitute for the payment of their sins. However, how can an animal truly be an acceptable substitute for man, who is created in the image of God? Animals are not created in the image of God and thus cannot be a full substitute that satisfies God's legal requirements. The reality is that animal sacrifices were simply a temporary solution until a time came when God would provide a permanent solution. That solution is Jesus Christ, the One called the unblemished, spotless lamb. Animal sacrifices were therefore only a preview of things to come.

The only way someone or something else can be a substitute for you, in other words that someone or something else pays for your penalty of sin so that you can go to Heaven, is if that someone or something else is sinless. Otherwise, how could a sinner pay for the sins of another sinner? The only man (animals cannot fit the bill) who ever walked the earth and remained sinless throughout his earthly life is Jesus Christ, something that even Islam recognizes. He never inherited the sin nature of Adam because He was born of a virgin birth and He never committed a single sin. How He resisted temptation, when we do not, is another topic. I will not deal with it at this time, as my main purpose in this text is the topic of salvation.



So legally speaking, Jesus Christ is the only one who can claim to be perfect and God therefore can accept Him as a substitute for you, without contradicting or nullifying His justice and integrity. Thus if Christ pays for your sins, which means that He would die and be separated from God instead of you, you would no longer be guilty and thus you would now legally be allowed to enter the holy presence of God for you would no longer be a "criminal" in the court room of God. You would be set free from the condemnation (penalty) of sin. But what about the sins committed after Jesus Christ dies on the cross as a substitute for your sins? They would

also be paid for because the substitute is so legally satisfying to God that it covers all sins past, present and future and not just for your personal sins but also for the sins of all creation. We call this unlimited atonement. That is why Jesus Christ is referred to as the spotless, unblemished sacrificial lamb. Thus the main purpose of Old Testament animal sacrifices (which Muslims perform today) was to announce (foreshadow) the coming of the sacrificial lamb that would satisfy the legal requirements of a holy and just God. That lamb is Jesus Christ. He has come, He has died as a substitute for your sins and He now offers you the free gift of eternal life based on His perfect work, not your imperfect works. Because He has come, animal sacrifices are no longer needed to temporarily "cover" sins. The shed blood of Christ paid for all sins, forever.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died as a substitute for us. (Romans 5:8)

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;... (1 Peter 3:18)

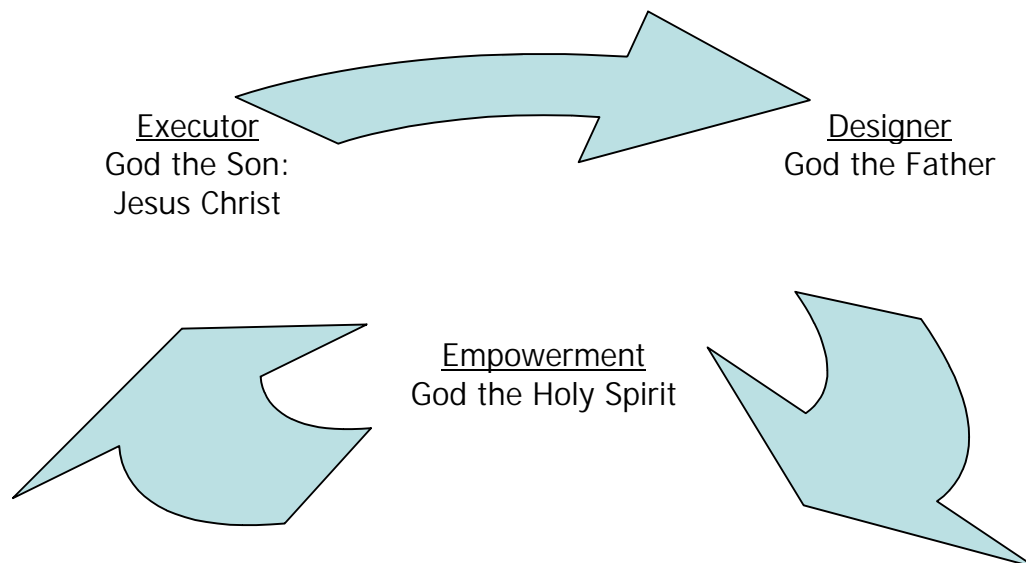
...and He Himself (Christ) is the propitiation (legally satisfying substitute) for our sins; and not just for ours (Christians) only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

So who is Jesus Christ to have such an exalting and privileged position in the plan of God?

The answer is simple: Jesus Christ is God; the visible manifestation of an invisible God; the Second Person of a One God who is triune. The Old Testament speaks of the coming Messiah (the sacrificial lamb Jesus Christ) as Immanuel, which in Hebrew means God dwelling amongst us. Muslims accept the fact that Jesus Christ is sinless. This implies that to a Muslim, Jesus Christ never lied in any of the statements He has made about Himself. It may surprise some to discover that Jesus Christ is the One who revealed to us that He is God and the Son of God simultaneously. The statements of Jesus Christ (from His own lips) about His deity are even documented in neutral, historical sources outside of the Bible.

Josephus, a well known Jewish Historian, documented the claims of Jesus Christ and confirmed that He did indeed refer to Himself as Son of God and God. Thus those who claim Jesus Christ never made these statements need to reflect upon the extra-biblical evidence that supports this reality. Those who documented this fact had no benefit to gain by lying. In fact, the benefit from a Jewish perspective would have been in not documenting the words of Jesus Christ. If one accepts Jesus Christ as sinless, as Muslims do for example, he must also accept as absolute truth every word spoken by Jesus Christ, including His own admissions of deity.

Even Islam claims that Jesus took clay and shaped it into the form of birds and made the clay to come alive and fly away. If a Muslim accepts this proposition as true, then he must ask himself: "Who is the only One who can create life from dust?" The answer is God. The concept of a triune God (trinity) is complicated to many because it is often confused with the idea of three gods. God is one but manifests himself in three persons. Scientifically, you can, in a finite way of course, reproduce a similar experiment with water. Under the right circumstances, water can be in the form of ice, liquid and vapor simultaneously; thus one element manifesting itself in three states. God is the same but in an infinite way. He is one God but manifests Himself in three persons:



At this point, some clarifications need to be made. First, the sincerity that you place in your beliefs is not the same as the object or subject of your beliefs. A Muslim is just as sincere in his beliefs as a Buddhist or a Hindu. So sincerity expressed through zealous religious practice means nothing in itself. It's not how much you believe in something that matters, it's what you believe in that makes the difference. When God enlightened me to this reality, that's when things started to make more sense. I always assumed that if you are a "good person" and sincerely believed in one God and sincerely practiced your beliefs without committing any major sin like murder, you should end up in Heaven. We have already established earlier the issue of imperfection versus perfection, which nullifies this former belief of mine. In life you can be sincere but yet sincerely wrong. Those who claim: "How could so many people be wrong for so long?" are the first ones to tell other religious groups that they have been in the wrong for so long throughout generations! Religion is man trying to reach God through "good deeds". We have established that this is not legally possible, thus why God instead reaches for us by giving us a substitute: Jesus Christ, the sacrificial lamb without spot or blemish.

Second, we cannot engage in a debate between religions or else, we would never go to sleep! The reality is that all religions (Islam, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age, etc.) are automatically nullified if one accepts that he is a sinner and imperfect and thus his deeds are all imperfect. If you do not accept this fact, I encourage you to do a word study on key attributes of God such as: perfection, integrity, justice and righteousness. You will discover how much you possess none of these attributes. The end result should hopefully be that you recognize how sinful you truly are. Sin is not just overt actions like murder. It's any thought, word or deed that is contrary to God's perfect character.

So why is Jesus Christ the solution? We have established that because He is without Sin, He is an acceptable legal substitute for your sin debt, so acceptable that His death and separation from God (the penalty of sin) propitiated (satisfied) the legal demands of God, not just for your sins but also for the sins of the entire world.

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.' (John 14:6)

For there is one God and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus... (1 Timothy 2:5)

A natural question that may come to mind is the fact that if Jesus Christ paid for the sins of the whole world, then why is it people still go to Hell if they die not believing in the work of Jesus Christ? If I give you a gift, but you chose to not accept it, can you still experience the benefits of that gift? The answer is no. Thus, even though God gave you a gift by having sent Jesus Christ to pay for your sins as a legally acceptable substitute, unless you believe it, you cannot experience the benefits from this gift, which are eternal life in Heaven and more. The time to make a decision about Jesus Christ is now.

-SUMMARY-

You are unable to save yourself from the just penalty of sin no matter how many good, religious deeds you accomplish. In response to this situation, which God foreknew would happen before He created the world, God created the world through Jesus Christ, His divine Son, in order to redeem it through Jesus Christ: the only acceptable substitute for the penalty of sin (death and separation from God for eternity).

*...namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself...
(2 Corinthians 5:19a)*

He (God) made Him (Jesus Christ) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (Jesus Christ). (2 Corinthians 5:21)

This reality is revealed from the first page of the Bible to the last page of the Bible. The seed that will crush the serpent's head in Genesis 3:15 is Jesus Christ.

You are a born sinner because of Adam's sin. When Adam sinned, a sin nature passed down seminally throughout the generations, thus rendering every descendant of Adam, a born sinner. Furthermore, you abundantly contribute your own personal sins to your record throughout your life by thinking, speaking and doing things that are contrary to God's holy character.

The penalty of one or more sins is eternal death and separation from God, referred to as the lake of fire or Hell, because a sinner cannot be in the presence of a holy God who resides in Heaven (while being omnipresent as well).

Because of your sin nature, you are imperfect and thus you cannot produce "good deeds" to pay for your sins because an imperfect being has only access to imperfect ways of producing deeds and therefore all the resulting deeds are imperfect by essence. To be acceptable to God, a deed and its source (man) must be perfect because its destination (God) is perfect.

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment (rag). (Isaiah 64:6)

Religions, being systems of works and deeds, cannot be the solution for the problem of sin.

The only solution is that God reaches down to you, rather than you attempt to reach Him through "good deeds". He reached down to us by offering us a solution that satisfies the legal demands of His righteous character.

The solution is that someone else dies in your place, and be separated from God (the penalty of sin), thus acting as a substitute. This substitute must satisfy the legal requirements of God's righteous character, thus why the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament and modern day religions cannot meet this standard.

...Sacrifice and offering Thou (God) hast not desired, but a body Thou hast prepared for Me (Jesus Christ); In Whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast taken no pleasure. (Hebrews 10:5-6)

The only acceptable legal substitute is Jesus Christ, who is the second person of the One God. He took the form of flesh and lived a perfect humanity without sin (impeccability), even though He was tempted in every way (in His humanity, not in His deity).

And the Word (Jesus Christ) became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld (saw) His glory, glory as the only begotten (unique, one of a kind) from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Jesus Christ agreed willfully to go to the cross, die (in His humanity) and be separated from God as a substitute for you, so that you, a lost and hopeless sinner, can have access to Heaven without contradicting God's justice.

After Jesus Christ died on the cross (in His humanity), He was raised to life on the third day and received (in His Humanity) eternal life, and a resurrection body that will never perish, a Gift from God.

As a sinner, because Christ has already paid for your personal and inherited sins (past, present and future), the moment you believe that Jesus Christ did this for you and that His death alone is the only way you can get into Heaven, God freely gives you eternal life and you are then found "not guilty" in God's court room. All you have to do is believe.

When you are saved from the penalty of sin, it doesn't mean that you are automatically saved from the power of sin. You will still commit sins but you will not be condemned for them. You will be held responsible for them, thus you do not have a license to sin but how you are held responsible for your future sins no longer involves death and separation from God. This is what is called progressive sanctification. (past, present and future)

Thus it is the sole belief in what Jesus Christ accomplished for you at the cross that saves you and allows you entry into Heaven. When you believe this, legally, you are declared not guilty and the righteousness of God is credited to you as a gift because payment has been made on your behalf by an acceptable substitute, Jesus Christ.

...knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but by precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

It is only belief in this that can save you. Believing this but also adding your deeds to this belief will not save you. Thus a Catholic, who believes in Jesus Christ but also adds a total of 7 sacraments to the list of required things to be saved, cannot be saved. The concept of religion automatically implies deeds added to faith and thus all religions are disqualified as a means of salvation, even religions that center on Jesus Christ.

It is faith alone in the work of Christ alone accomplished at the cross on your behalf that saves you. Not faith plus sacraments like baptism, for example, because if it were the case, that would imply that God accepted an imperfect work as part of the salvation process.

For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Baptism is something you do AFTER you are saved to give a public testimony that you WERE saved from the penalty of sin by grace and not by works.

When I understood this, I believed that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins as a substitute for me and this substitution satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God in His court room and as a result of trusting solely in the act Jesus Christ did on my behalf, I now have eternal life.

Once you are saved from the penalty of sin, you can then begin the journey of being saved from the power of sin until, ultimately, God will save you from the presence of sin by giving you a glorified and resurrected body, after you die or when Jesus Christ returns, all depending which event happens first.

...who (Jesus Christ) will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:21)

Ask yourself the following question:

"Do I believe that it is 100% sure that I will go to Heaven even though I am a sinner and as a sinner, I cannot be in the presence of a perfect and holy God unless my sins are paid for and I know that the penalty of sin is eternal death and separation from God?"

I can answer YES to that question. Can you?

The solution is not religion or deeds. The solution is the free gift of eternal life from God through Jesus Christ. Are you willing to accept this or would you rather try and work your way to Heaven, which by definition is impossible?

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Believe as I did and receive the free gift of eternal life.

This doesn't mean your earthly life will be easy and full of fortunes such as a nice car, job, house, or bank account. What it does mean however is that you will have eternal life and the riches of Heaven.

