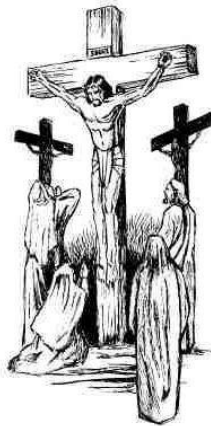


Why Jesus Came

The winter weather is just about finished, and we are looking forward to springtime. And of course the biggest event of spring, this year and every year, is our remembrance of the death of Jesus, and our celebration of His miraculous resurrection from the dead.



Have you ever stopped to think about all the reasons why Jesus came to Earth? Or to put it another way, when He said that He had finished the work the Father sent Him to do (John 17:4), what was that work? Let's look at some of the answers.

He came to redeem the world.

In the beginning the first man, Adam, was given dominion over the earth. When Adam fell into sin, he handed over the dominion to Satan. That's why Satan is called "the god of this world" in the Bible. Even though the world belongs to God, Satan has authority over it, because of Adam's sin.

God Himself would not simply take that authority away from Satan. God had given it to a man, and a man would have to pay the price to get it back. But it would have to be a perfect, sinless man—one who was born of a virgin, so He wouldn't inherit Adam's sin nature; and one who committed no sin himself and therefore did not fall under Adam's curse. Jesus was that man—a human being who was "...tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

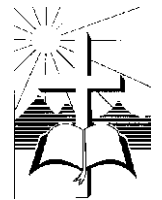
He came to keep God's promises.

When God cursed the serpent in the Garden of Eden, He also foretold the coming of the Messiah—"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." The seed of the woman

refers to Jesus's virgin birth. Satan "strikes His heel" by (he thinks) getting Jesus crucified; but Jesus "crushes his head" by His resurrection, thus defeating

death forever for all people who will accept His salvation..

Over and over in the Old Testament scriptures God promised to send a Messiah. He was to be a prophet; a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; from the tribe of Judah; born of a virgin; born in Bethlehem. His ministry, his rejection, and his unjust death were all foretold. One of the last prophecies about the Messiah came as the angel said to Joseph in a dream, "[Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."



Jesus came so that all of these prophetic promises (about 300 altogether) would be kept.

He came to pay the penalty for our sins.

I am a sinner. You are a sinner. "There is no one righteous, not even one. ... all have sinned..." (Romans 3:10, 23) And because we have sinned,, and keep on sinning, we deserve to be punished for our sins. "...the wages of sin is death ..." But, praise God, the penalty has already been paid. The punishment has been borne. "... but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) I could give you at least a dozen scripture passages that say the same thing—Jesus died for your sins and mine. The sin debt is paid. Hallelujah!

He came to break the power of sin in us.

God's desire for us is that we live godly lives, keeping ourselves free from sin. We don't do it—even the apostle Paul did not do it perfectly. Getting rid of sin in our lives is a process that begins when we receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, and ends when we go to Heaven to be with Him eternally.

"He has rescued us from the power of darkness ..." (Colossians 1:13)

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:7-9)

The LORD is faithful to all his promises

Psalm 145:13

He came to show us what God is like.

There have been many incomplete pictures of God over the centuries. Many have thought of Him (and many still do) as a stern judge, just waiting to clobber someone for sinning. But Jesus showed us, by His nature, what our heavenly Father is like—righteous, yes, but also loving and full of compassion for hurting and lost souls.

God loved the world so much “that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (John 3:16-17) What could be more loving than that sacrifice?

Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? ... Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” (John 14:9,11)

He came to show us how to live the godly life.

Jesus was God’s only begotten Son, but He was also a man. And as a man, He lived as we ought to live—guided by the Holy Spirit, always listening for the Father’s voice and seeking to do His will. He skipped meals and sleep in order to pray. He spoke the truth in love, and had compassion on those who were hurting. He was fearless and



resolute before those who made themselves His enemies, and He gave His life for others.

If we want to live as God calls us to live, all we have to do is look at Jesus, and live as He lived on Earth.

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Ephesians 5:1-2)

“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.” (1 John 2:6)

He came to give us gifts and a new commandment.

Jesus had a peace within Himself—the “Peace of God that passes all understanding.” This peace comes from obeying God, rather than struggling against Him. It is a heavenly peace, not an earthly one. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10) “He who has the Son has



life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 John 5:12)

“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4-5)

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

He came to give us the Holy Spirit.

Since “apart from Him we can do nothing,” Jesus made arrangements to be with believers even after He ascended to Heaven. “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you....”



“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:16-17)

He teaches us, He reminds us. He also gives us the power to live the godly life we are called to live. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses ...” (Acts 1:8) “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23) When we receive Holy Spirit power and allow Him to change us, the fruit of the Spirit—the character of Jesus—will be developed in us.

I hope you will ponder all of these things, and search the Bible for other scriptures as well, to understand more about why Jesus came to Earth. And be sure to praise and thank the Father often for the gift of His Son.

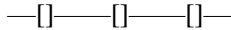
Jesus died a horrible, agonizing, shameful death—for you and for me. Then He rose from the dead, and defeated death forever—for you and for me. Jesus, please give us grace to appreciate fully the pain of that death and the joyful triumph of that resurrection, as we try to live as Jesus lived, by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

“God bless us all”—and He does.

Brother Roland

Inmates' Questions

First of all, let me say that I'm not a preacher. I have not had any formal Bible training. So what I say here is just one layman's opinion. I hope it is helpful, but if it isn't, don't give up. Jesus has the answers and if you keep seeking, He will teach you all you need to know.



A brother wrote:

Was Adam the first man? Why are there two stories in Genesis about God creating man? Was he created in Genesis 1:26-27, or in Genesis 2:7?

Genesis 1:26-28 says, *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

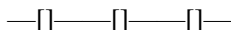
Genesis 2:7 says, *the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

This is the way I look at these passages, and I believe many Bible scholars have this view: Genesis 1:1 through 2:3 are an overview of the whole creation—the big picture, so to speak. This describes God making the heavens and the earth, then the physical features of the earth, then vegetation, then birds and animals, and finally human beings. The whole six-day process, plus God's day of resting, are covered in these 34 verses.

Then the writer of Genesis does something that story tellers often do, particularly in Eastern cultures—he goes back and takes a closer look at part of the story. He provides details about that sixth day, when Adam and Eve were created; and also about the animals and the man's relationship to them, God's instructions to the man, and so forth. Then the story continues on to well beyond that sixth day,

We do the same thing today. A news announcer might say, "The Orioles beat the Yankees today by a score of seven to three." Then a little later he or she would give more details about the game. Not a different event, just further details about the same event, and possibly later events as well .

Now as to whether or not Adam was the first man, I think he was, but the only reason I think so is that the Bible says so. There's no way to prove it one way or the other, so you either just accept it on faith, or you don't. I like to think the person who wrote those passages (maybe Moses) knew more about the subject than I do—besides being inspired by the Holy Spirit. So I just trust God's word, and I don't worry much about the opinions of folks who think differently.



Another brother wanted to know:

Who is God?

I don't know if I can help with this or not. All we know about God is what He has revealed to us in His word, the Bible, and in His Son, Jesus. We know He created everything; He gave us life; and He loves us. We know He has high standards for His creatures, and no human being except Jesus ever measured up; but we also know that He made a way for us to be forgiven for our sins, by sending Jesus to earth to become a man, to bear our punishment, and to defeat death. And that's most of what we know about who God is.

Beyond that, God says, "I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me." (Prov. 8:17) In other words, if you want to know who God is, ask Him.

Who made God?

Nobody made God; He exists "from everlasting to everlasting," the Bible says. We don't understand how this can be, but it is certainly true.

What do these words mean: firmament, sheweth, adversary, alms, undaunted, omitted, immense, phosphorescent ?

Firmament — without getting into a big theological discussion, I'll just say that "firmament" means "the sky" or "the heavens." Just think of it as what's "up there."

Sheweth — the King James Bible was translated more than 400 years ago, and the English they used then was different from the language we speak today. "He sheweth" simply means "He shows." Differences like this make the King James version a little harder to read than a modern translation, so I recommend that you read a good modern translation if you can get one.

Adversary means enemy or opponent—someone to fight against. The devil is God's adversary, and also our adversary.

Alms is a word for money or other charitable gifts to the poor or people in need. Money given to help disaster victims might be called alms.

If you are **undaunted** that means you are still brave; still fighting the good fight; you haven't lost your courage ; you have not given up.

Omitted means left out. If I omitted a word from this sentence it might funny. (See, it does sound funny without the word "sound.")

Immense simply means huge — really, really big.

Phosphorescent is a word to describe something that gives off light without a lot of heat. Things that glow in the dark are phosphorescent.

Names of Jesus

How many names do you know for Jesus? There are many in the Bible, and others that have been used over the centuries to describe the attributes of our Savior and Lord. As you find each name in the puzzle, think about what that name means to you and your relationship with Jesus. Enjoy!

Puzzle:

A L P H A A N D O M E G A I N O M L D C Y K P K F D M V Q W
 B P S C L S D D W D V W B H M G B M F O I M I M R N D C S G
 D A J E D J P W A H D B A F A F R R Y N G N N T S I X G F T
 V J Y T C A T K Y E A U Z Y D D D S G Y G F G G V S N D P F
 T O M H S R P Y K R H K J Y T Q U O Q O U A O A V I D A Q W
 D S S R E N N I S F O D N E I R F J F Z N W D N H O O R K C
 U O E B I Q C F D L J M O F M G U T F M Q F V T E S O H I R
 Z E G I A T I H H C T G G G L S H T O O O F L Y S S R E Y U
 G V M Y R R P K C B D L R O F E F O H G N L S A V I O R D C
 K F D M T P P B Z R E R R O J O R V N L A O Q F Z A F H D I
 F I E I A H H H Q A U Y E E C G S I D F I B I K S K T S C F
 B Q L E G N G G Z N J H W H E K R S O C D F J L E H H R G I
 D C I Z C O U I I C M S C D P P O R E O L H E H M D E M U E
 P K V D U R B E M H J A I E S E O F G N Y I A U A M S F D D
 B R E T S A M T L O T R U F H T H F A J L I B L N R H Y I F
 N V R V Y H O Y L F B A F L A T O S U G S L U C L N E B Y O
 Z J E U N S P P F J Q O E E A N F D D S E K U S L Y E T Z S
 S A R Q L F C Z R E F C R R O M G O E O I S O F A O P J P P
 O R O D K O Y Y Y S D C D S G E B M D I O V C T E V B F R M
 J Y F W P E N R S S W O R R O S F O N A M G L T V G T L Y T
 X V Z W V S C T E E M F G F U J T I F T E Z U Z O C E K O V
 H H I F B O K C N M I E T F D F S C T G B H L J B W H E K D
 I M O X M R X R E E E H D A P R I N C E O F P E A C E Y R I
 V G N Y H L O N R H E E Y I U L R Z A J Z D M O E D M O K J
 Q Y Q E G B E I Q N W S D Z A U H O B T W G P M M D W W K U
 V L W S T R I N A N P N S E Z T C R Z A V I T X A G N E H G
 N P N S A B K T O R K N W Q R X O H U G C Y J Q N I J M D C
 T Y R Z V C I K I R A T S G N I N R O M T H G I R B N W B H
 J I A D C O R N E R S T O N E C M Z R J B U V G T K Z I Y C
 F N M N N Z G B N A Q V M Q T K Y S B R Q I L H W M F J K C
 J W J S R X U P D Q A P H E R T S A S P L W X X V M L R C U

Words:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| ALPHA AND OMEGA | DELIVERER OF ZION | KING OF GLORY | NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES |
| BRANCH OF JESSE | DOOR OF THE SHEEP | KING OF THE JEWS | NAZARENE |
| BRIDEGROOM | EMMANUEL | LAMB OF GOD | OFFSPRING OF DAVID |
| BRIGHT MORNING STAR | FIRSTBORN | LION OF JUDAH | PRINCE OF PEACE |
| CHOSEN OF GOD | FRIEND OF SINNERS | LIVING WORD | RABBI |
| CHRIST | FULLNESS OF GODHEAD | MAN OF SORROWS | REDEEMER |
| CORNERSTONE | GOOD SHEPHERD | MASTER | ROCK OF AGES |
| CREATOR OF ALL THINGS | GREAT HIGH PRIEST | MEDIATOR | ROSE OF SHARON |
| CRUCIFIED | HEAD OF THE CHURCH | MESSIAH | SAVIOR |
| DAYSPRING | JUDGE OF THE NATIONS | MIGHTY GOD | SON OF GOD |
| | | | WAY, TRUTH, LIFE |