

HEALTH! WEALTH! PROSPERITY!



Health, wealth and prosperity are some reasons why many people come to Jesus Christ. They pray a prayer and believe that Jesus will take away all their pain, suffering and financial difficulties. But who is this Jesus that people are coming to? Does He declare that all those who follow Him, or at least make a token commitment to Him, will have all their problems dissolved?

To answer these questions we must examine what the Bible says about Him:

Who is He?

Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord. The very Name Jesus, means “Saviour” or “God Saves”.

“You shall call His Name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” Matthew 1:21

Because of man’s sin, the single most anticipated and important event in the Bible was the coming of the Messiah. This Messiah was promised to the first man and woman who ever lived – Adam and Eve. God promised that Jesus would come to bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Throughout the Bible, prophecies were made about the Messiah so that people might look forward to His coming to take away their sins.

The prophecies detail that the Messiah would go through much punishment to take away their sins. This was necessary because of man’s depraved spiritual condition. Take note of the diagnosis of mankind’s fallen state, of which Jesus came to cure us of given in Isaiah 53:5 **“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him...”**

Jesus came to be punished for our transgressions and iniquities and the Scripture goes on to say that **“By His stripes we are healed”**.

This act of Jesus is so effective and powerful that once someone partakes of it he is given a new life, in which he strives for righteousness and hates evil. Peter puts it this way:

“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed”. 1 Peter 2:24

The punishment that Jesus received on the Cross was a direct result of our sin and spiritual sickness, or death, from which we need healing. Even more than that, Isaiah goes on to say that it wasn’t only the physical punishment which Jesus endured, but also the Father’s wrath poured out upon Him which achieved our forgiveness.

“But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering.” Isaiah 53:10

When Jesus finally came to this earth in bodily form, the reason He came was once again emphasised by John the Baptist when he said: **“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”**. John 1:29

The apostle Paul makes the work of Jesus clear: **“...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...”** 1 Timothy 1:15

When Jesus ascended into Heaven, He commanded His disciples to carry this message: **“...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations...”**

Luke 24:47

The abovementioned Scriptures show us that Jesus came into the world, suffered, died and rose again for the primary purpose of saving us from sin. Many people come to Jesus for their own selfish gain, but neglect to seek Him for salvation from sin (the very reason He came).

What does it Mean to Follow Him?

When a rich young man came to Jesus wishing to receive eternal life, Jesus showed this man that wealth was his idol and that he needed to forsake his worldly pleasure if he wanted to follow Him.

“Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”

Mark 10:21

It is amazing that so many people are promised great riches if they come to Jesus when He actually commanded the rich to rid themselves of their idol – money. To come to Jesus in order to feed your own pleasures is either an insult, or an act of great ignorance of who He is, what He did and what He wants from us.

One man, who is arguably the greatest follower Jesus ever had, is the apostle Paul who wrote over half the books of the New Testament. With reference to his own Christian walk he said: ***“From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”*** 2 Corinthians 11:24-28

This man, who is an example for all of us to imitate, was found to be hungry, thirsty, suffering and weary - all for the sake of Christ. In fact, it was this same man who said that all of his worldly accomplishments could be counted as rubbish and filth compared to knowing Jesus Christ.

Those who follow Jesus are expected to take up their cross and deny themselves. They are

expected to be concerned with Jesus Christ and with His Kingdom. Followers of Jesus must be taken up with walking righteously. In a message to the Hebrew Christians we read a startling rebuke:

“You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.” Hebrews 12:4

These are the messages which Jesus and His Apostles emphasised and these are the principles towards which we should be striving. Jesus Christ, who came to save us from sin, expects us to follow in His steps, to war against sin and to live lives of contentment, not chasing after health and wealth.

“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” 1 Timothy 6:6-8

This point is further emphasised when we are warned about the consequences of chasing after riches.

“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.”

1 Timothy 6:9-11

Where Does This Leave You?

If you had to die tonight, do you have absolute assurance that you would go to Heaven? Have you ever told a lie in your life? Have you ever taken something that didn't belong to you? Have you ever hated someone, or looked at someone with lust? If you have done these things, then by your own

admission you are a lying thief and a murderous adulterer at heart.

Have you been claiming to be a follower of Jesus but only cared about yourself, never striving for holiness but only seeking after worldly gain?

If you have, then you may not truly know Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

The consequence could be an eternity in hell.

“Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, cast out demons in Your Name, and done many wonders in Your Name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'”

Matthew 7:22-23

If this bothers you and you are desperately asking what it is you must do to be Saved, then you need to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Repent by turning from your sins and confessing them before God. Believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord. Come to Him for who He truly is and what He has truly done so that you might inherit eternal life. You will be adopted into God's family and know the true meaning of fulfilment and joy as you take up your cross and follow Him!

John Clifford

For more Bible-based teaching pamphlets, Gospel literature and more audio-visual resources contact:



Reformation Society
PO Box 74
Newlands 7725, Cape Town
South Africa
Tel: (021) 689-4480
Fax: (021) 685-5884
Email: info@reformationSA.org
Website: www.reformationSA.org