

Jesus Saves Us, But From What?

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| <i>Jesus Saves Us From...</i> | <i>Implied Problem</i> | <i>Implied Answer</i> | <i>So Let's Make People Feel</i> | <i>But What If They Ask...</i> | <i>And in Scripture...</i> |
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| Death | Mortality | Heaven / Resurrection | Afraid of dying? | Why do we still die anyway? Why did we start to die? | Death is the result of sin (Rom.5:12 – 14), so we have to engage with the deeper problem. |
| Demonic oppression | Satan, or feelings of demons present | Deliverance | Accusation, or feelings of demons present | Demons? Where? Didn't God make Satan? Is God evil, then? Why does Satan have so much power? | God made the angels. Satan turned against humanity and persuaded some angels to follow him (Rev.12; Gen.3:1 – 15). Satan's main power is lies; he opposes God's truth (Jn.8:31 – 51). We are vulnerable to Satan/demonic power because of the corruption of sin in us (Eph.4:26 – 27; Mt.12:43 – 45). Ultimately God will defeat Satan and his demons (Gen.3:14 – 15; Rom.16:20; Rev.20). |
| Being unloving | Failing or Emptiness | God's love | Failure at loving | What if I were more loving without Jesus? If I were more loving, would I need God? | The reason we are sometimes unloving, and have limited range of love, is because human nature is corrupted (Mt.7:16 – 20; Lk.6:43 – 45). |
| No Purpose | Direction | God's purpose | Purposeless | I feel fine with my life direction as it is. | We can't define our own purpose. Jesus defines our purpose because he restored human nature in himself to what God always meant for us to be (Gen.1:26 – 28; Mt.19:3 – 12; Col.3:11 – 12). |
| Separation from God | Broken relationship with God | Adoption? Holy Spirit? | Lonely | God separated himself from me? God threatens to separate himself from people? I have to maintain this connection? How? Why? | 'In him all things hold together' (Col.1:17; Acts 17:28) notes that the Son is connected to all things already. God is still working in non-Christians through each person's conscience (Rom.2:12 – 16; 1:19 – 20; Prov.8:22 – 36). We are alienated from God in our <i>mind</i> (Rom.8:5 – 8), and often resist God in our <i>will</i> , but God upholds our personhood and always pursues us. |
| God's Law, which we broke | God's condemnation and holiness | Forgiveness/ Justification | Feelings of guilt and shame | Does God care more about His Law, or about us? | God cares about His commandments <i>because</i> He cares about us. His commandments help us grow (Gen.1:26 – 28) and are suited for us in His wisdom (Prov.8:22 – 36). So His commandments are like a doctor's health regimen. We have damaged what God most loves: ourselves. He forgives our sin because sin is self-harming. |

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| <p>Hell, which is where God infinitely punishes people for disobeying, rejecting Him</p> | <p>God's retributive justice</p> | <p>Forgiveness/Justification</p> | <p>Afraid of God or hell</p> | <p>So God is a perfectionist judge who runs a prison system with fire as torture?</p> <p>Who did Jesus die for? The 'elect'? Everyone? If he died for everyone, then there would be no hell. If he died for only some, how do you know whether God loves any given person?</p> <p>Is God doing something about human evil, or does He just punish it? Does God care more about the next world than about this world? So God makes himself feel better about how lame we are?</p> <p>Jesus died to appease God? Is God that retributive?</p> | <p>'Fire' in Scripture always symbolizes God's purifying love as He calls for us to stop sinning (e.g. Mal.3:1 – 3; Isa.1:24 - 31). God's purifying love can feel like 'burning coals on our heads' (e.g. Rom.12:17 – 21) or a burning coal on our lips (Isa.6:6 – 7), because He wants to burn something sick out from us. Hell is described as 'fiery' not because God just wants to inflict pain, but because God insists that people surrender their addiction to sin, and by that time, they will not want to surrender (2 Pet.2:19; 1:4 – 9). We have to ask, 'What does sin do to us?' before we ask, 'What is hell like?'</p> <p>Jesus did die for all (1 Jn.2:2; 2 Pet.3:1, 9; 1 Tim.4:10; Ti.2:11; Ezk.18:23, 32 – 33), in the sense that he offers to each the antibodies for our sin. God became the cooperative patient that He, as doctor, always wanted. He took on fallen human nature (Jn.1:14; Rom.7:18), paid the price to beat every temptation (Heb.4:15; 1 Cor.6:20), died to condemn the sin in himself (Rom.8:3; 6:6), to become perfect (Heb.5:8 – 9), purify his human nature and give himself to us by his Spirit. So God loves every person.</p> <p><i>God IS undoing human evil, at its source: in each of us.</i> God's wrath is not aimed at <i>the person</i>, but something <i>within</i> the person, e.g. 'flesh' (Rom.7:14 – 25), like a surgeon. God aimed at 'circumcision of the heart' (Gen.6:5 – 6; 8:21; Dt.10:16; 30:6; Jer.4:4; Rom.2:28 – 29), or transformation of 'the heart' (Jer.31:31 – 34; Ezk.11:18; 36:26 – 36; Mt.15:18 – 20; Mk.7:20 – 23; etc.). He wants to cut or burn something sick away from us. <i>He cares about this world, not just the next world.</i></p> <p>God's justice is restorative, not retributive. The 'wrath of God' refers to God letting us experience the consequences of our own resistance to Him (Rom.1:24, 26, 28). We are saved from the wrath of God in that sense (Rom.5:9) by <i>his life</i> (Rom.5:10). Jesus has grabbed hold of human nature and overcome its resistance to God.</p> |
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- I might have been freed from demons at my conversion. But that doesn't mean I should always talk about Jesus that way to everyone. There is a difference between telling our conversion story and sharing the gospel message. My conversion story is what I experienced. The gospel message is who Jesus is and what he did.
- If we get people to grapple with (1) why we do evil, (2) whether there is a God good enough to heal us, then we can also engage with other religions better. We have to share about Jesus in ways that describe not just symptoms, but also the root of the problem. Talking about the root of the problem leads to the right kind of conviction, and a growth-oriented conversion.