

“Do You Have Articles on Losing Your Salvation?”

My friend believes it is possible to lose your salvation. He believes if you are in sin or sinning at the point of your death and have not had a chance to repent you will not go to heaven. Do you have any articles on this?

We cover that issue in several answers to email:

- [“Can a True Believer Commit the Unforgiveable Sin?”](#)
- [“Is God Punishing Me Because I Committed the Unforgiveable Sin?”](#)
- [“I Fear I Have Committed the Unforgivable Sin!”](#)
- [“I Don’t Know How to Answer this Biblical Argument Against Eternal Security”](#)
- [“What is the ‘Sin Unto Death’?”](#) [Jimmy Williams]
- [“What is the ‘Sin Unto Death’?”](#) [Michael Gleghorn]
- [“How Can I Know I’m Going to Heaven?”](#)
- [“Were Those Who Fell Away Ever Saved or Did They Lose Their Salvation?”](#)
- [“Can a Christian Lose His Salvation?”](#)

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“Would Clones Have Souls?”

If we were ever able to clone humans, would they have souls?

This is a common and important question. The tough part is

that we don't know for certain the origin of individual souls. One view in theology is a creationist view that supposes that God individually creates each new soul some time after fertilization or perhaps even just before fertilization (Jeremiah 1:5). Another view suggests that something in the union of sperm and egg contributes to the origin of the soul. However the Bible does not give us direct testimony one way or the other. We do know that identical twins form when the early embryo—in the 2–8 cell stage—somehow divides completely in two. If sperm and egg were necessary for each individual, then only one person from an identical twin pair would have a soul and the other would be soulless. I think we can all agree that that doesn't make sense. So I assume a clone would have a soul since it is a form of technological twinning.

I hope that helps. An interesting question to ask is, What if clones did not have souls and were biologically viable? You would face the possibility of having a *homo sapiens* standing in front of you with no soul. If so, how would you know they *didn't* have a soul? The question is not as easy to answer as you might expect.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.

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“If Judged at Death, Why Judged Later?”

I found your article on [what happens at death](#). My question is, if we are judged at death immediately, why do we say the in

the creeds that at the second coming Jesus will judge the quick (living) and the dead since the dead have already been judged? Anxious to hear back from you. Thanks.

Thanks for your letter. There is what some have called a “judgment of faith” which takes place immediately at death and a “judgment of works” which takes place at some time afterward.

The “judgment of faith” may be in view in Hebrews 9:27. A good biblical example is the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Notice that the rich man finds himself in “Hades” after death, while Lazarus is in Paradise. This judgment is based on one’s relationship with the Lord and has nothing to do with works per se.

However, the Bible also speaks of a “judgment of works.” For unbelievers, this judgment will apparently take place just prior to the creation of the new heavens and new earth (see Rev. 20:11 – 21:1). Notice that even death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire at this time (Rev. 20:14). In other words, “Hades” (where the rich man went at death) is not to be equated with the lake of fire (which is where unbelievers will spend eternity after the Great White Throne judgment).

Believers will also experience a “judgment of works” at the judgment seat of Christ (see 1 Cor. 3:10-15). This judgment does not determine whether the person is saved or not, for this judgment only includes those who are already saved. It rather determines whether one will receive eternal rewards or not. Apparently, some believers will not receive any rewards (1 Cor. 3:15). Theologians do not agree on precisely when this judgment will take place. But most believe that it follows the initial “judgment of faith” at some later time. It certainly occurs before the creation of the new heavens and new earth (where resurrected believers will spend eternity in joyful fellowship with God and one another).

Hope this helps clear up some of the confusion.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

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Can People Do the Right Things Out of Compassion and Not Because of a Moral Law?

I have a question about moral law. Everyone knows what pain feels like and everyone knows what sorrow feels like, etc., so isn't it possible for humans to not want to cause others to feel these things because they know how it feels to themselves and not necessarily because of a moral law?

Thanks for your note. You asked a good question.

I think your reasoning would work with someone who has a tender conscience and doesn't want others to hurt. But we all know there are people who don't care whether others hurt. So while the motivation to not want to hurt others could prevent you and like-minded people from doing others harm, others who don't have that motivation will have no constraints. And, I have to add, if the typically tender-hearted person has a day when he or she doesn't care, what will be his/her motivation to do good? If someone responds that it doesn't matter what a person feels like, that it's good to not make others suffer, then we're back with a moral law again.

A fixed moral law, grounded in the nature and will of God,

taught in Scripture, and reflected in His universe, provides an objective standard against which we can measure our actions, regardless of our personal motivations.

Thanks again for writing. Write again with other questions, if you like. Or if you think my answer isn't correct, write back and we'll talk about it!

Rick Wade

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“Woman Caught in Adultery Story Not Found in Early Manuscripts”

I'm interested in John 8:1-11. The notes in my NIV Bible say that these verses are not found in early manuscripts, and I was wondering what your thoughts are on this account of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery.

Yes; you're correct. The earliest and best manuscripts do not contain this story. It was almost certainly not an original part of John's Gospel. Could it still be historical, though? Perhaps. It would be an unusual instance of a story passed down orally (and later included in John's Gospel) that actually goes back to Jesus. Of course, I don't think we can be dogmatic on this point. At most, I think we can say simply that it may be historical.

W. Hall Harris has a good discussion of this passage at Bible.org.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“My Friend Believes Jesus’ Miracles Were All Done by Mind Power”

I just had a conversation with a friend about his spiritual beliefs. I was talking about Jesus and my friend said that the miracles He performed were from His own mind power. That he had a higher control over his brain than other people. Jesus attributed his miracles to God’s power but that’s only because he didn’t understand where the power came from.

He generally believes that there is a lot of power in oneself and if one will only utilize it and become self actualized one can become god-like.

I responded by talking about my belief in the fall and its effect on humanity. How man is hopelessly flawed and incomplete without Christ. I noted how man’s efforts and science have failed to deliver. The world is still wrought with disease and suffering. I’m trying to be brief so I’ll not go into the rest of the conversation. How would you have responded and do you have any suggestions on what to bring up the next time we talk about that kind of thing?

It sounds like you’re doing a great job talking with your friend! Here are a few thoughts: It might be worth asking your friend, “If Jesus had such incredible control over His brain,

including the ability to perform miracles by the sheer power of His mind, then how is it that He was deluded about where His power actually came from?" I would challenge your friend, "If Jesus was so superior to you in mental power and abilities, then why should you think that you know more about where His power came from than He did?" It's a question that deserves a careful answer, I should think.

More generally, however, I would ask your friend why anyone should believe his rather original spin about where Jesus' power came from? Why does he think he's correct? What evidence supports his opinion? Further, why does he reject what the New Testament says about Jesus? Shouldn't the original witnesses to these events have been in a better position to judge what happened than he is? What does he do with the evidence for the [historical reliability of the Gospels](#), etc.?

Finally, if Jesus really died on the cross (which no serious scholar disputes) then how can your friend explain Jesus' greatest recorded miracle—His resurrection from the dead? If Jesus was dead, then how could He have used His brain to accomplish the miracle? If your friend doubts that Jesus rose from the dead, then challenge him to investigate the evidence for himself by reading some good books and articles on the subject. Challenge him to read Lee Strobel's book, *The Case for Christ*. Or challenge him to read some of William Lane Craig's work on the historicity of the resurrection. Log onto this site and register for free, then search for the following www.reasonablefaith.org:

- *Article: The Resurrection of Jesus*
- *Section: Scholarly Articles/The Historical Jesus (numerous relevant articles).*
- *Audio-Visuals Page and Debates Page: Dr. Craig also has audio and visual stuff as well as debate transcripts regarding the resurrection here*

I have tried to give you some helpful information here. But the most important thing is to share this information with genuine love, compassion and respect. No one likes an intellectual bully. So please be sensitive to the Spirit's guidance.

Hope this helps.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“What Is Your Position on Universalism?”

Do you have any information or research on “Christian-Universalism”? Please see the website www.christian-universalism.com.

Universalism, in its simplest sense, teaches that at some point all will be saved. The website that you referenced in your email contains many of universalism's most popular beliefs. However, routinely these views stray from orthodox Christian belief and away from the Bible. In numerous places the Bible refers to a time of judgment where the righteous are granted eternal life and the wicked are given over to eternal punishment (cf. Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 16:19-31, Revelation 20:11-15). Furthermore, Jesus, as well as the New Testament writers, referred to a place of eternal punishment (cf. Matthew 5:22, 18:8-9, Mark 9:43, 48, Revelation 19:20, 20:10, etc.).

The Bible is very emphatic regarding the doctrine of eternal punishment. Universalism rejects this teaching and replaces it with its own. Below is a website that contains information regarding Universalism. It takes a look at Universalism's beliefs and teachings and subjects it to the Bible through various word studies and Scripture comparisons. It is a helpful place to start:

www.carm.org/universalism.htm

Hope you find this helpful.

Ryan Holmes

Probe Ministries Intern

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“Your Ministry Is Devoted to Exclusion”

It is amazing that your ministry devotes so much to exclusion.

We are very aware that our views are not popular, but much of what Jesus claimed and said wasn't popular either. And what we believe and teach is based on what He said. Such as “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by Me.” That's about as exclusivistic as anyone can get.

Yet, He also said that after He was crucified, He'd come back to life three days later, and He did. So that's a pretty convincing argument for believing that what He said was true. About God, about the nature of man, about heaven and hell, about other religions, about sexuality, about philosophy,

about ethics. . . the whole ball of wax.

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin

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“Body Building”: Edifying Thoughts about Our Bodies

Why Should I Care About This?

Our culture is obsessed with the human body. Have you turned on the television or stood in the supermarket checkout line recently? Images and information about the human body bombard our senses from almost every direction. And what we believe about the body can make a huge difference for our daily life, and for the life beyond! That’s why we need to think carefully about a Christian view of the body. For when our ideas about the body go wrong, a lot of related Christian beliefs can also be affected.



For example, in the early centuries of the Christian church there were some religious groups called Gnostics. Their name derived from the Greek term *gnosis* which means “knowledge,” because they thought that salvation came through secret knowledge. In their view, reality consisted of two primary components: matter (which was evil) and spirit

(which was good).{1} Since matter was evil, the human body was likewise viewed as “intrinsically degenerate.”{2}

The Gnostics’ negative beliefs about the human body influenced their thinking in other areas as well. Their ideas about the incarnation, the afterlife, and human sexuality, were all affected. Consider the incarnation. Christians believe that God the Son became a real human being with a real human body. But this view was repulsive to some of the Gnostics. While some believed that the divine Christ temporarily assumed a human body, they did not think this state was permanent. And others denied that Jesus had a physical body at all. They believed that Jesus only *appeared* to be human.{3} In reality, he was a completely spiritual being. This was especially true after his resurrection, which Gnostics generally held to be a purely spiritual (and not physical) event.{4}

The Gnostic view of the afterlife was similar. After death, Gnostics believed, they would be reunited with God in the spiritual realm. Unlike Christians, they had no desire for the resurrection of the body. The body was a prison from which they would gratefully escape at death.

Consider finally their views about human sexuality. Although some Gnostics may have lived a sexually immoral lifestyle, the majority seem to have rather been ascetics.{5} They treated the body harshly and rejected sexual activity and procreation as earthly, physical, and unspiritual. Such activities kept one in bondage to this evil material world.

Unfortunately, these Gnostic beliefs about the body influenced Christianity to some degree. But if we look at what the Bible teaches, what we find is much more interesting and exciting.

The Goodness of the Human Body

What do you believe about your body? Is it something good—or evil?

In striking contrast to the Gnostics, who believed both the material world and human body were intrinsically evil, the biblical writers present a positive conception of both.

The first verse of Genesis declares, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). A few verses later we learn that God created human beings in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). And at the end of chapter one we're told that everything God made "was very good" (Gen. 1:31). So unlike the Gnostics, who believed the material world was the work of an evil, inferior deity, the biblical writers viewed the physical universe and human body as part of the good creative work of the one true God.

Moreover, in the biblical view humanity occupies a very special place in the created order. Having been made in God's image, men and women are viewed as the crown of creation. But what does it mean to say that we are made in God's image? As one might expect, this is a question that has been given extensive consideration throughout the history of the church.

On the one hand, we probably shouldn't think of the divine image primarily in *physical* terms, for God is a *spiritual* being. Still, it's probably also a mistake to think that our bodies aren't *in any sense* made in God's image. Genesis 1:27 says that God created man in His image. Reflecting on this statement, some scholars have noted that it's "not some part of a human or some faculty of a human, but a human in his or her wholeness [that] is the image of God. The biblical concept is not that the image is *in* man and woman, but that man and woman *are* the image of God."[\[6\]](#) Since God created man in His image as an embodied personal being, it seems quite natural to suppose that the material (as well as immaterial) aspects of our being are *both* included in what it means to be made in God's image.

In Genesis 2 we have a more detailed account of the creation of man and woman. In verse 7 we read that "the Lord God formed

man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” This verse indicates that there are both material and immaterial components of man’s being—and each *in some sense* bears God’s image. This is why in the Christian view human beings have inherent worth and dignity. It’s also why in contrast to the Gnostics we believe in the goodness of the human body.

The Importance of the Incarnation

Did you know that your beliefs about the human body can affect your view of Jesus and why He came? As we’ve seen, the biblical writers saw the human body as God’s good creation (Gen. 1-2). Naturally enough, such radically different views of the body influenced how Gnostics and Christians understood the doctrine of the incarnation as well.

The term “incarnation” means “‘to enter into or become flesh.’” It refers to the Christian doctrine that the pre-existent Son of God became man in Jesus.”[\[7\]](#) Our first hint that something like this would happen comes shortly after man’s fall into sin. In Genesis 3:15 God tells the serpent, the agent of temptation in the story, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” The verse promises a coming Champion or Deliverer, who would be born of a woman, and who would deliver the decisive death-blow to Satan. Later we learn that this Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, redeems humanity from the tragic consequences of sin and death by giving His own life as a substitute in our place (1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10). The death of God’s Son for the sins of the world was possible because of the incarnation. By becoming a real man, with a real body, He experienced a real death on the cross.

One of the clearest statements of the incarnation is found in the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word . . . and

the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (1:1, 14). This Word made flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ, told His followers that He had come "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45). While Gnostics generally regarded the death of Jesus as irrelevant for salvation, Christians see it as absolutely essential.

In Revelation 5:9 a song is sung in praise of Christ, who through His death "purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation." In the early church, some theologians said that what Christ did not assume, neither did He redeem. They meant that if Christ did not really have a human body, then neither did He redeem our bodies. This is why the incarnation is so important. By becoming fully human and dying for our sins, Christ secured the complete redemption of all who put their trust in Him.

Human Sexuality

Those unfamiliar with the Bible might be surprised to learn how much it has to say about sex. And what it says is neither prudish nor out of date. On the contrary, its counsel is both supremely wise and eminently practical. [\[8\]](#)

In fact, unlike the ancient Gnostics, the Bible has a very positive view of human sexuality. An entire book of the Bible, the Song of Solomon, is largely devoted to extolling the beauty and wonder of sexual love within the God-ordained covenant of marriage. Sex was God's idea and is rooted in His original creation of man and woman as sexual beings (Gen. 1:27). While one of God's purposes in creating us this way was for procreation (Gen. 1:28), it certainly wasn't His only purpose. God also intended sex to be a pleasurable and meaningful expression of intimacy and love between husband and wife (Prov. 5:18-19).

According to Jesus, the biblical ideal of marriage is a

lifelong, exclusive commitment of one man to one woman (Mk. 10:2-9). Citing the Genesis creation account He says, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh" (Mk. 10:7-8; cf. Gen. 2:24). As one writer has observed, "Here we have a blueprint for human sexual love: through the sexual act the man and woman have a wonderful new kind of intimacy. This is called being 'one flesh,' and it is designed to be exclusive and faithful."[\[9\]](#)

Unfortunately, man's fall into sin brought about the misuse and abuse of God's good gift. And as one might expect, the Bible doesn't shy away from addressing such things. Essentially, the biblical view is that sex is to be fully enjoyed as a wonderful gift from God, but *only* within the sacred bonds of marriage between one man and one woman. Every other kind of sexual activity is lumped into the category of "sexual immorality." And this we are told to flee, for as Paul told the Corinthians, "he who sins sexually sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18).

But Paul then went even further. He called the believer's body "a temple of the Holy Spirit." He said that Christians have been "bought at a price" and should "honor God" with their bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20). This reveals something of the value which God places upon the human body. And He encourages us to do the same.

Bodily Death and Resurrection

Did you know that your view of the human body affects your view of eternity?

Throughout history humanity has entertained a variety of ideas about what happens after death. Some think that physical death is the end of our personal, conscious existence. While we might "live on" in people's memories, we don't live on in any

other sense. Others believe that while the body dies, the human soul or spirit continues to exist—perhaps on a higher spiritual plane, perhaps in a spiritual heaven or hell, or perhaps somewhere else. According to this view, our bodily existence is only temporary. Once we die our bodies are discarded, but our souls go on living forever.

In the early years of the church, many Gnostics believed that people would experience different fates at death. Some would just cease to exist. For them, death was the end. Others could enjoy some sort of afterlife through faith and good works. From a Gnostic perspective, these people were the Christians. Only a few, however, namely, the Gnostics themselves, could expect a truly fantastic afterlife in which they would be reunited with God in the divine realm.[{10}](#) In other words, the Gnostics anticipated being liberated from this evil material world, including their bodies, and being reunited with God in a completely spiritual existence. Interestingly, although there are differences, many Christians seem to expect an afterlife that's very similar to that envisioned by the Gnostics.

But what the Bible teaches is really quite different. Although it comforts Christians with the reminder that to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8), this is not the believer's final state. Instead, we're told to eagerly await the resurrection of our bodies, which will be modeled after Jesus' resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:20-23, 42-49). As Christians, we don't look forward to a purely *spiritual* (in the sense of *non-physical*) afterlife. Instead, we await a *bodily* existence in a new heaven and new earth which is completely free from the presence and power of sin (2 Pet. 3:10-13)! Just as Christ was raised *physically* from the dead, so one day He will likewise raise all men from the dead. Some will enjoy His presence forever; others will be shut out from His presence forever (Matt. 25:46; Jn. 5:28-29). Which experience shall be ours depends entirely upon our

relationship to Christ (Jn. 3:36; 2 Thess. 1:8-10). So why not put your trust in Him and enjoy forever the new heavens and new earth in a new, resurrected body? You're invited, you know (Rev. 22:17).

Notes

1. Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: Christian Scriptures and the Battles Over Authentication*, Course Guidebook, Pt. 1 (Chantilly, Virginia: The Teaching Company, 2002), 20.
2. Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 9.
3. J. Ed Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer, and Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus: What The Da Vinci Code and Other Novel Speculations Don't Tell You* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2006), 200.
4. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 29.
5. Ibid., 21.
6. *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, eds. Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), s.v. "Image of God."
7. *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (1st ed.), ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), s.v. "Incarnation" by Frank J. Matera.
8. A number of ideas in this section were informed by the article "Sex, Sexuality," in *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*.
9. Amy Orr-Ewing, *Is the Bible Intolerant?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 113.
10. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 21.

“How Do the Health-and-Wealth Believers Rationalize Their Beliefs?”

I read your [Stairway to Heaven article](#) on materialism and still can't understand why people (and especially these new mega churches) are still so into it. People have actually told me that God wants us to have wealth, and I keep receiving “religious” email chain letters about being “blessed” monetarily. I would prefer blessings of a more loving type . . . !!

My question is always, what kind of “wealth” does that necessarily mean? It is all so contradictory to Jesus' teachings as well as to His overthrowing of the merchants' tables in the Temple. How do they rationalize this way of thinking?

Thank you for your thoughtful response to my essay on materialism.

I also have difficulty understanding the “health and wealth” gospel that some profess in the name of Christ. I find no justification for it in Scripture. In fact, I find just the opposite in passages like 1 Peter 4:12-16:

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”

Paul, in Romans 5, points out that suffering is an integral part of developing the character we need to serve Christ effectively. As to where this “health and wealth” gospel comes from, I suppose it begins with the very popular view that “God wants me to be happy” rather than the biblical admonition to be holy as God is holy. Fortunately, many churches (both large and small) work hard to overcome this form of hedonism.

For Him,

Don Closson

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