

Deuteronomy Chapter 23:5

- Describes 3 types of people:

V: 1-4 We have the description of a man who through the course of life has been mutilated, he's considered less than a man, and now he's un-productive.

- Then describing those who's lives are the result of sin, often rejected by the world – not having a choice of how they came into the world.
- Those born at enmity with God and God's people, profane lives, cursing God.

V: 5 “**Nevertheless**”... regardless of those things: God isn't paying attention to those things, one way or another He will use these things to draw those that are truly His to Himself.

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1 “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”

Isaiah 1:18 “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; thou they be red like crimson, that shall be as wool.”

Isaiah 61:1 “¹The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;”

- Until we see our own need, until we see our lives for what they are we can't see or discern the “good tidings” – the “good news of Jesus Christ” – the “gospel”.

Deuteronomy 23:5 “... but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee.”

- The Lord takes the curse of sin in our lives and in a sense turns it into a blessing because He allows it to bring us to an understanding of what our need really is:
- As we realize that we've broken God's law we come to the understanding that we deserve judgment.

Galatians 3:24 “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

- All of this is part of God's plan because He loves us and wants us to be with Him.

1 John 4:10 “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Romans 5:8 “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

- Our God literally is love, the essence of love.

1 John 4:16 “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

- God’s great love is the reason He sent His Son to be the blood sacrifice for us:

John 3:16-17 ¹⁶For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
¹⁷For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.”

Jesus told Nicodemus, “*verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.*” (John 3:3) In other words unless a person is “born again” they can’t see or enter into the kingdom of God.

- To put it more plainly, unless a person is born again they cannot enter into Heaven.
- To understand what “born again” means we need to go back to the beginning, to the Garden of Eden.
- In the Garden of Eden (Genesis Ch.’s 1-3) we read that God created man in His own image.

Genesis 1:26 “And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness:”

1. When God created man in His own image He wasn’t speaking of physical attributes, but of deeper things, spiritual things because God is a Spirit (John 4:24).
2. Man is made in the image or the similitude of God. God is a tri-une being, the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and these three are One.
3. Man was created and given life as a tri-une being as well, an inferior trinity. Man is body, soul, and spirit.
4. God is a superior Trinity, man is an inferior trinity. We have a body, we’re born into this world with the ability to do things physically, we can move, work, and express ourselves through our physical body. We have a soul; that is the ability to think, to reason, and to learn, in other words we have a consciousness.

5. Initially in the garden of Eden we see that God breathed life into man (**Genesis 2:7**) and man became a living soul. This was the Spirit of God living in man – man was now complete; body, soul, and spirit – living in harmony and communion with his creator.
6. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Man is body, soul, and Spirit – it is in the area of the Spirit that God and man have fellowship, this is where and how we connect with God.
7. As an inferior trinity, being made in the likeness of God we have some of the attributes of God; one of them is that God is sovereign and self determinate, basically God can do whatever He wants.
8. While we're not completely sovereign, God has given us a degree of self-determination. This means that God has given us the ability to choose, to make choices. Not only did God give man the ability to make decisions but He gave man options, choices to make which would validate his choice.
9. God placed man in the garden and gave him direction, he was to work and tend to the garden. God also gave man a commandment:

Genesis 2:16-17 “¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

1. When God gave man this commandment He at that same time brought the man to a place of decision, one of his first choices.
2. Man's choices were either to obey God, or to disobey God. God graciously stacked things in favor of the right decision, it wasn't just a matter of either this tree or that tree, a 50-50 shot. Along with the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil there were many other trees to choose from. Out of the many trees that had fruit on them that was good to eat, there was only one that was forbidden.
3. The next event we see in the garden is the creation of woman, created as a help meet for man, intended to compliment man and be a helper to him. We don't know how long Adam & Eve lived in the garden in communion and fellowship with God, being obedient to His commandment – but we're coming up to the “bad news”.
4. Satan, in the form of a serpent approached the woman. We are told that he was more subtle, or cunning, or crafty – all in a bad sense. Satan asks the woman:

Genesis 3:1 “... yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

1. When Satan asks this question, which is the first question recorded in the Bible, a couple of things happen.

“... *hath God said...*” Satan is questioning the word of God, and planting that question in her consciousness. Satan is also casting doubt upon the word of God; a very subtle attack upon the word of God.

2. Secondly the statement: “... *ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*” Not only is Satan misquoting what God said, but he is making God’s word sound unreasonable.
3. God didn’t say they couldn’t eat from every tree, just the one; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In phrasing his question in this manner Satan isn’t just casting doubt upon God’s word, he is casting doubt upon God’s character.
4. Next when Satan said: “... *ye shall not surely die:*” – Satan was directly contradicting God’s word.
5. Then the temptation: “*For God knows that your eyes will be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*”
6. Man was created innocent which is different than being righteous. Righteousness is the ability to maintain innocence in the presence of temptation. Now they came face to face with temptation, a point of decision.
7. Man now has two sources of information; the first is God who created man, of which Adam has first hand knowledge, who gave commandment not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; knowing that God is good and that He loves us. Because God loves man He also gave the warning: “*not to eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*”
8. The other source of information; Satan who is now contradicting God’s word, casting doubt not only on God’s word, but casting doubt upon His character – that He is somehow withholding something that is good for us.
9. The choice at this point is either to be obedient to God, believing His word to be true; or being disobedient, setting God’s word aside in favor of the word or counsel of Satan.
10. Eve’s actions affirmed her choice, she ate from the forbidden fruit, Adam followed suit – their choice made apparent from their actions.
11. Their sinful actions did not invalidate God’s word, God’s word was and is still true and they both died. God had said that they would surely die, but they didn’t die right away physically because we know that they went on to have children and lived to ripe old ages.
12. Their soul didn’t die; they didn’t lose their ability to think, to learn, or to reason. They died spiritually, the spirit within them died, or left them.

13. Man was physically alive, able to move, express themselves, and re-produce. They were still alive consciously, in the soul, able to think and reason, etc., but dead spiritually.
14. As they continued in their earthly physical lives they produced children, and as much as they were able to pass on physical life, they were unable to pass on spiritual life, because they were spiritually dead and they didn't have it to give.
15. The same cycle continued from Adam and Eve to each of us, being born into this world alive physically, born with the ability to think, reason, and learn, but born dead spiritually.
16. Again, God is the superior Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Man is an inferior and now a broken or incomplete trinity; body and soul, but dead spiritually.
17. It is in the area of the Spirit where that we are able to have communion and fellowship with God. Unfortunately, fellowship and communion between God and man was now broken because of sin. Ultimately, because of our inherited sin nature, we each would eventually prove ourselves to be sinners.

“As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one.” **Romans 3:10**

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” **Romans 3:23**

1. The Apostle Paul teaches us that the wages, or earnings of sin is death (*Romans 6:23*), it was true for Adam and Eve, and it is true for us as well.
2. The emptiness that is in us, that missing part of our “trinity”, the longing for fulfillment often prompts us to seek that fulfillment in many other things in this world; sometimes we sense fulfillment, but it is always temporary and eventually we see that it is to no avail and we go from one thing to the next. The pursuit of happiness and fulfillment is endless apart from finding it in God.
3. Just like Adam and Eve, at the end of our lives we will each face physical death just as the Bible tells us:

Hebrews 9:27 *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”*

4. Our bodies are finite; sin is a corruptive influence and eventually our physical bodies wear out and are no longer capable of performing or expressing who we are. Our soul or consciousness, like the Spirit of God is eternal. When we die physically, our soul, our consciousness is set free from the limitations of the body. Our body being dead no longer expresses who we are, and no longer being subject to our consciousness it simply decomposes, returning to it's basic elements – just as the Bible says:

Ecclesiastes 12:7 *“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”*

5. The physical body decomposes back to its basic elements, which are the same as dirt.
6. The Spirit returns to God who gave it; that is assuming that the person involved was born again for the Spirit to be there in the first place.
7. The soul; this is the real question. The person who is born again of the Spirit, having the Holy Spirit residing in them (¹ Corinthians 3:16, 6:19) when they die the Spirit and soul / consciousness are joined together and as **Ecclesiastes 12** describes returns to the presence of God – Heaven. The person who is not “born again” and doesn’t have the Spirit residing in them, when they die there is no Spirit to return to God. The soul is alone, released from the flesh and transported to Hell, a place of torment and anguish awaiting the final judgment described in Revelation 20:11-15.

Revelation 20:11-15 “¹¹And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. ¹⁴And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

8. Those “souls” that apart from the Spirit are cast into hell awaiting final judgment are conscious of their circumstances. The soul like the spirit is eternal and lasts forever.
9. It all comes down to two choices: The Psalmist describes heaven as being in the presence of God.

Psalm 16:11 “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

10. The only other option described in the Bible is hell, which Jesus describes:

Mark 9:45-46 “⁴⁵... to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: ⁴⁶Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

11. God doesn’t condemn or send anyone to hell, we condemn and send ourselves in our rebellion against God.

Jesus tells us:

John 3:17-19 “¹⁷For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

12. God alone sets the criteria for who enters into heaven, He gives us the ability to choose, and He gives us the information we need to make a decision. Then God allows us the sovereignty to choose, not forcing a particular choice upon us. God also respects our choice.

13. If we choose Him freely, in His eyes this is a true expression of love – then He receives us with open arms into a personal relationship with Him, in what ever state we’re in.

14. If we choose to reject Him, He regretfully respects that choice as well. He will not force us to be “born again” even thou He desires that personal relationship with each of us.

2 Peter 3:9 “*The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

15. God the Father sent His only begotten son to die on the cross for us. Because the wages, the earnings, or result of sin is death, judgment – the one who sins, falls short of the glory or perfection of God has to die in **payment** for sin.

16. Sent by the Father, Jesus steps in and both individually and corporately – pays the price for all of our sins. He lays down His life sacrificially and substitutionally in our place.

17. Our sin is imputed to Him, His righteousness is imputed to us. God the Father then see’s us through the righteousness of Jesus – which makes us acceptable in His sight.

2 Corinthians 5:21 “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

18. This is a good trade! It always comes down to an issue of faith.

Jesus was asked:

John 6:28-29 “²⁸... what shall we do, that we might work the works of God?
²⁹Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.”

19. Believing always comes down to a conscious choice. When I was working through these things for the first time I realized that my ways, my wisdom hasn't worked and that I needed to do something different. Albert Einstein once said that doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results is insanity.

Isaiah tells us:

Isaiah 1:18 “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; thou they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

20. Placing our faith in Jesus isn't an act of “blind faith” because we can reason it through, to a point. God wants us to reason it through as much as we can and to make an intelligent, knowing choice – but there is and there has to be an element of faith – simply believing because God says so.

Hebrews tells us:

Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him...”

21. There is that element of simply trusting God's word and believing in Him. Prior to making that decision there will never be enough “tangible proof” to absolutely know.

22. After making the choice to place your trust in Jesus, when the Holy Spirit has come to live in us (once we're born again of the Spirit) it seems that we are suddenly overwhelmed with incredible proof.

23. Another way of putting this is that for many before they want to a chance there is the demand “God if you're real, then reveal yourself to me – and I'll believe.” God puts it back on us and says “believe in Me, and I'll reveal Myself to you.”

24. This is exactly what He did for me. I reasoned and understood as much as I could but I got to the place where I had to either make a decision, a choice to simply believe or walk away and try something else. So I chose to believe, I just decided that God's word and His ways were true – I didn't understand everything, I just chose God's ways over my own.

Later I found that the Apostle Paul described the same thing.

Romans 10:9, 13 “⁹That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” – “¹³For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

1. The Gospel is the good news, the good news is that even though we're sinners and deserving of eternal punishment God has sent His only begotten Son to take our place, our punishment upon Himself so that we can be with Him forever in heaven. We can reject all of this, but we're still eventually going to be held to

account for our sinful lives – and the penalty for sin is death – eternal separation from God, hell.

2. Receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior is a simple process, a simple prayer:

“Lord I admit that I’m a sinner deserving of judgment. Please forgive me of my sins and come into my life and be my lord and my savior.

Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”