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SIN

Background

How can sin be described? It is, in a very real sense, putting yourself at the centre of everything, as in sin, where 'I' or 'me' is the operative word. God is left on the periphery – if he features at all! Sin is rebellion against God (consciously or unconsciously) and ultimately it is enmity with God. It can be seen in three distinct ways:

- by act – e.g. theft is an act of sin
- by attitude – e.g. jealousy is an attitude of sin
- by state – e.g. being unsaved is a state of sin

Human beings are by their very nature separated from a holy and loving God. Separated by act, by attitude and by spiritual condition. Sin, at its most basic, is rebellion against God's right to be God over our lives. Generally speaking, humans resent not being at the centre, and rebel against the One who should be central in our lives – the Lord Jesus.

Origins of sin – what the Bible says

Christians believe that it is only in the Holy Bible that the origin of sin is adequately revealed. The reality of sin in the world is difficult to deny, although many do, trying to blame humanity's conditions for the world's problems – or even blaming God himself! The scarlet stain of sin runs through all the books of the Bible:

Genesis **2:17**; **3:4–13**, **18**, **19**; **13:13**; Numbers **32:23**; Psalm **51:5**; Proverbs **14:9**; Isaiah **1:5**, **6**; **14:12–14**;
Mark **7:20–23**

Sins of act

Galatians **5:17–21**

Sins of attitude

Matthew **5:21**, **22**, **28**; **23:28**; Psalm **66:18**; Luke **18:11–14**; James **2:8–9**

Sins of state

John **16:8**, **9**; James **4:17**; Romans **7:1–12**; 1 Corinthians **15:21–22**; 1 John **1:5**, **8**; **3:4**, **8**; **5:17–19**

Sin is universal

By nature humans are born in a state of sin, which is the natural inclination of all mankind, even those who have been born again (see John **13:10** – the reference to having had a bath represents salvation; the reference to washing of feet represents the periodic need even of believers to repent of specific, known sins).

Having been 'born in sin' does not mean that babies have committed particular sins, but that there is an inevitability that they will sin as they grow older. They will push back at God's right to be God of their lives.

Sin is a terminal disease of the soul and must be completely cleansed if we are to avoid what is only justice – eternal punishment following judgement by a righteous God.

Cleansing, forgiveness happens both at one distinct, definite moment in an act of commitment to Jesus as Lord and Saviour, as we hand our lives and our futures over to him – and we are saved from the penalty of past sins – and also on an ongoing basis. Our old nature will periodically try to reassert itself, and we will need to go on asking for forgiveness for particular sins. Committing our lives to Jesus is, and must be, an act of repentance, an act of turning to Jesus and away from sin. This is a life-changing event, normally at baptism, (but sometimes before baptism) and thereafter as the need arises – probably daily! Sin is like a burden. If not released from it, the burden will inevitably drag us down and affect our physical, mental and often social and economic well-being.

Ultimately it will be judged. Jesus alone amongst all the humans who have ever lived was without sin.

Romans **3:9, 23; 5:12; 7:24–25**; Acts **17:26**; Ephesians **2:1–3**; Hebrews **4:15**; 1 John **3:5**

1 Peter **2:22**; Genesis **3:8–10; 23–24; 6:7**; Isaiah **48:22**; Joshua **7:10–12; 25–26**

The remedy for sin was prepared from the beginning of time

In the Old Testament the blood of a sacrificed animal made 'atonement' for the man who offered the animal, if he truly repented (that means, turned away from his sin) and believed in the sufficiency of the sacrificed blood. At the right time God came himself, in the form of Jesus, the 'Son of Man', the 'Lamb of God', and voluntarily died once for all, for the sins of the world. Since Jesus' death for us, belief in Jesus and more particularly in his blood shed for us, is the only way to escape from the power and the consequences of sin ('the wages of sin is death'). The ultimate consequence of sin is eternal punishment in hell (see especially Jesus' teaching in the Gospels on this topic), which also entails eternal separation from God.

Ezekiel **18:4, 20**; Isaiah **1:13–18**; Acts **4:12; 13:38**; John **1:29**; Hebrews **9:26–28**; 1 John **1:7**

Romans **5:19; 6:11–12, 23**.