



Introduction

When a baby is born, an absolute miracle occurs. No matter how much we might understand the biology of the event, it is still somehow beyond belief – especially to the parents. But for the baby, too, its new life is beyond belief.

At birth, babies understand nothing of what has happened, nor its implications. They know **something** has happened, for their environment has changed; but they understand nothing of what family is, what a privilege it is to have loving parents, what brothers and sisters are, what a home is. Only as they begin to grow up will these things become clear.

Becoming a Christian is pretty much the same. When we are **born again** into God's family through our faith in Jesus, few of us understand the full implications of what has happened, or the privileges and responsibilities that are coming our way. All we know is: **something new has started!**

Paul, one of the main leaders in the early church, summed it up like this:

Read:

2 Corinthians 5 v17

What do you think Paul meant by -

“the old”

“the new”



If we have put our trust in Jesus, a completely new life has begun for us.

But, **how can we be sure?** How do I know that this is not just my imagination or wishful thinking? How do I know I will not lose my experience, or that God will not change his mind?

Well, the Bible tells us that we can be **absolutely sure** about our new relationship with God – after all, no good father would want his kids to live with uncertainty! The reason for this assurance, however, has **absolutely nothing to do with us**. It has **everything** to do with Jesus – and in particular with:

- who he was
- what he did
- what he promised
- whom he sent

It is these four aspects that we will be exploring more in this booklet. You will also need a Bible. But don't worry if you are not familiar with the Bible, as your group leader will help you find the appropriate page, or you can use the index page at the front of it.



1 Who Jesus was

At the very heart of the Christian faith is not just a **person**; not even a **special person**; but a **unique person** – Jesus, the Son of God.

Why is Jesus unique? Because he is fully God, yet fully man – all at the same time! Our human minds find that hard to grasp. To our thinking, add 100% man to 100% God and you get – well, what? 200% man-God?

But our God is not a God of addition, but a God of multiplication. Let's use an illustration from simple mathematics to show what a difference that makes:

$$1 + 1 = 2$$

$$1 \times 1 = 1$$

It is rather like that with Jesus. Somehow – quite miraculously (but then, what is the point of having a God who can't do miracles?) – he was **both** God **and** man, all in the same one person: God **become** man.

So how did the first Christians come to this conclusion? By looking at the evidence before their eyes:

1. Jesus – fully a man

a. The facts

Note down from the following Bible verses, all taken from the four **Gospels** (accounts of Jesus' life) in what ways Jesus' real humanity is shown:

Luke 2 v52

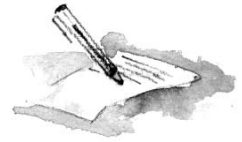
Matthew 4 v1-2

John 4 v6-7

Mark 4 v36-38

John 11 v33-35

John 19 v33-34



Jesus was a real human being. That was why John, one of his closest followers and friends, could begin one of his letters in the Bible like this:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we have **looked at** and our hands have **touched** – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life (i.e. Jesus).” (1 John 1 v1)

OK – so Jesus was fully human. But what is the significance of that for us?

b. The significance

Because Jesus was a **real** human being – just like us, but without any sin in his life – it means that:

- he can understand us and our circumstances

Read:

Hebrews 4 v15

- he can pray to God ('intercede') on our behalf

Read:



Romans 8 v34

he can represent us before God

Because it was a human being (Adam) who sinned and thereby brought separation between all human beings and God, it is only just that it should be a human being who represents us before God when it comes to putting things right. Adam led us all into death; but Jesus can lead us all into life.




This is what Paul teaches in the passage that follows:

Read:

Romans 5 v12-18

**c. Review**

*As you think about this section, in what ways do you find it encouraging to know that Jesus was a **real** man? What difference do you think this fact will make in your Christian life –*

-  *at home?*
-  *at work?*
-  *at leisure?*



Good as it is to know that we have someone who can fully identify with us, it is of no help at all if that **someone** has no **ability** to help us. But that is not how it is with Jesus. For Jesus was not only fully man, but also fully God ...

2. Jesus – fully God

At this point, we really get to the heart of what makes Christianity different from any other religion in the world: our belief that Jesus was not just a

good man, or a man of astounding spiritual insight, but **God himself** come to earth in human form.

On what do we base these beliefs?

a. What others saw in him

*In each of the following passages from the New Testament, note down **what** it was that people saw about Jesus, and **why** they saw it:*

b. What Jesus himself claimed

Jesus made many claims – direct and indirect – to be ‘God among us’. For example, he claimed:

■ **to have existed before he was born!**

	What?	Why?
Matthew 16 v13-17		
Mark 1 v21-24		
Mark 2 v1-12		
John 20 v26-28		



(John 8 v58-59) His enemies obviously understood this to be a claim to be equal with God, because they were about to stone him (the penalty in those days for blasphemy – offending or making yourself equal with God).

■ **to have lived without any sin or wrongdoing in his life** (John 8 v46) – something that only God could do

■ **to have the right to forgive other people’s sin** (Mark 2 v5,10-12)

■ **to have done miracles because of his unique relationship with God his Father** (John 14 v8-11)

Only when circumstances seemed to point to his being anything **but** God, did Jesus at last quite

openly acknowledge who he really was:

Read:

Matthew 26 v62-66

Why do you think Jesus waited until now – the most unlikely of points – to acknowledge openly that he was the Son of God?



c. What God himself said

There were several occasions when God spoke very plainly from heaven, underlining the truth of who Jesus was. Note down at what stage in Jesus' earthly life each one came:

Luke 1 v26-33

Mark 1 v9-11

Mark 9 v2-7

At key points in Jesus' life, God was ready to confirm the 'unbelievable' for those who were open to receive the truth.

d. What the church understood

In the light of Jesus' resurrection, many of the things he had said and done while with them suddenly began to make sense! The more they reflected on it, the more they saw that there was only one conclusion they could come to: the man that they had spent the last three years of their life with, that they had seen at close quarters, that they had had ample opportunity to catch out, was none other than **God himself with them.**

Here are just some of the ways they summed this up:

Read:

Colossians 2 v9

Hebrews 1 v1-3



John 1 v1-4,14

In the light of all the evidence before their eyes, the first Christians realised that they had no alternative conclusion they could come to: this man Jesus was indeed **Immanuel, 'God with us'**.

Let us sum up then:



*It was because Jesus was **fully man** that he could **represent us**; it was because he was **fully God** that he could truly **deal with our sin, failures and problems**.*

*And this is why we can be so sure! **Nothing depends on us – everything depends on him**; and what a one to depend on!*

2 What Jesus did

The second main reason we can be **absolutely sure** that God is with us and for us has to do with what Jesus did when he died on the cross.

First of all, let us be clear that his crucifixion was –

- not an accident
- not a mistake
- not a plan gone wrong
- not a matter of political or religious expediency on the part of his enemies



Rather, the Bible tells us, it was a **carefully prepared part of God's plan**.

a. Part of God's plan

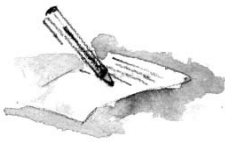
On many occasions, Jesus actually told his disciples what would happen ahead of the event (this is part of what the Bible calls **prophecy**, a gift of the Holy Spirit).

Look at the following examples and note what specific aspects of his death Jesus mentions:

Matthew 16 v21

Matthew 17 v22-23

Matthew 20 v17-19



Not only did Jesus know his death was coming; Old Testament prophets had foreseen it hundreds of years earlier. One of the best known of their 'prophecies' came from a prophet called Isaiah who lived 700 years before Jesus came to earth:

Read:

Isaiah 52 v13 – 53 v12

In this passage what phrases in particular foresee what happened to Jesus at the Cross?

Jesus' death on the Cross was no accident, no 'plan gone wrong'; it was part of God's clear plan to save me.



Think: *If Jesus' death was part of God's clear plan to save us, what do you think that says about God's attitude toward us?*

Have you grasped hold of this amazing truth for yourself?



b. The meaning of the Cross

History records many acts of great heroism – for example, when a soldier or fire fighter gives their life to rescue others. And we often say, “What courage – what commitment – what love!”

The death of Jesus was **not** like that. Certainly he showed courage, commitment and love. But he was not somehow vaguely **rescuing** us. Rather, some very specific things were happening at the Cross, and understanding these is an important key to **being sure**.



The Bible has four main pictures of what happened at the Cross:

1. Made clean

Read the following verses and write down the key phrases in each. Note how one stage inevitably leads to the next.

Romans 3 v23

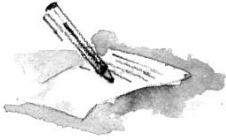
Romans 6 v23(a)

Hebrews 9 v27

This is the path that every person who has ever lived will follow. What we need is someone to break the downward spiral, a **substitute** who will die in our place, a **sacrifice** that will pay the price of our sins. This is exactly what Jesus was when he died on the Cross for us.



Read:



1 Peter 2 v21-25 (especially v24)
1 Peter 3 v18

Jesus was our **substitute** and our **sacrifice** who dealt with our sin so that we could be **made clean** and so could come to a holy and perfect God. This is why we can be so sure we will not be turned away.

2. Bought back



Because God is a holy and absolutely perfect God, he cannot bear to look on anything that is **unholy** or **imperfect** – and that included you and me! But once my sin has been dealt with, then I am in a place where God can take me back again.

The trouble is, we had **sold ourselves out** to others – to sin, to wrong ways of living and thinking, and ultimately, the Bible says, to the devil himself who stands behind all of this. At the Cross, Jesus **bought us back** from what we had got ourselves into.

Read:

Matthew 20 v24-28

What is the key word in verse 28? What does this picture bring home to us?

But some people ask, is there anything more to pay? And if not now, what about when I die? Whatever traditions you might have grown up with or **old wives tales** you might have heard, the Bible makes plain that there is **absolutely nothing more to pay** for your sin! Jesus paid for it all.

This comes out in the very last words that Jesus cried out from the cross: "**It is finished!**" (John 19 v30). The phrase used there is a term from

the world of commerce and business; it means, **"All paid up!" "Nothing more to pay!"** Who but a fool, therefore, would be conned into thinking there is more to pay when the receipt is in your hand?



When you buy something, it is yours. No one has the legal right to take it from you. God has bought you, having paid the full price. You now belong to him. And that is why we can be so sure.

3. Put right

Having been **made clean** and **bought back**, we are now in a position to be **put right** with God – that is, put into a right relationship with him. Our status can now be changed from that of **sinner** to that of **son**. When we give our lives to Jesus, the Bible tells us that we become **hidden in him** (Colossians 3 v3). This means that, when God looks at us, **he no longer sees us, but Jesus, his Son**. And because his Son is perfect and without sin, there is not a word to be said against us, not a word of judgement left for us!

Read:

2 Corinthians 5 v21

Romans 3 v21-26

In this passage from Romans (not the easiest part of Paul's writings to read!) we are taken to a courtroom, where God the righteous judge is ready to pronounce judgement on us. Then along comes Jesus, who says: **"Father, I have died in their place; their sins are absolutely forgiven; they are now hidden in me."** And as a righteous judge, God now has no alternative but to pronounce those wonderful words –

Not guilty!



*In your own words, say what difference it makes to know that we carry God's '**Not guilty**' verdict for our life – and to know that this is his last word on the matter.*

Does it mean that we can now live careless lives or do as we please? And if not, why not?

4. Made friends

We have seen how, at the Cross, we have been **made clean**, so that we can be **bought back** and **put right** with God. All of that could still be so 'clinical', so 'legal' and 'technical' – which is not what God wants at all! That is why this last step is so important.



Having been through the process that we have looked at, we are now in a position to be **made friends** (reconciled) with God again, because all the obstacles that once stood in the way have now been removed.

Let's let the Bible speak for itself on this point:

Read:

Romans 5 v9-11

2 Corinthians 5 v17-21

Colossians 1 v19-23

*What does it mean to you personally to know that all the obstacles have been removed and that you are now **God's friend**? If you are following this book in a group setting, why not share this with the other group members.*

One final passage from the Bible helps to sum up all that we have seen in this section, so let's end by reading it:

Read:

Romans 5 v1-8

And **this** is why we can be so sure!

What Jesus promised

Promises are all too easy to make – and to break! (Our own lives testify to that, without our needing to look at others.) This does not invalidate the idea of 'promise'. All it means is that we have to be careful to look at **who** makes the promise in the first place.

For example, I could copy a £100 note and add my signature to it. But I am not the Chief Cashier of the Bank of England, and so my promise would be worthless (as well as getting me into trouble). But get a real note with **his** signature on and – well, let's have the meal out on you!

So, what makes the difference? –

The difference is:

it matters who makes the promise!

Jesus made lots of promises. The reason we can trust them is because of all we have seen so far in this book – because of **who he is** and **what he has done**. When **he** makes a promise, we can be **sure** it will happen.

Let's read some of those promises that he gave concerning how we can be sure we have a new relationship with him and Father God. Note down the key phrases in each one:



 John 3 v16

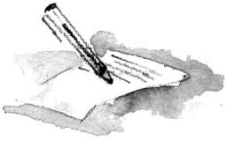
 Revelation 3 v20

 John 10 v27-28

 Matthew 28 v19-20

 John 6 v40 & 11 v25

These are just some of the many promises – on all sorts of issues in life – that Jesus made. (You have an exciting time ahead of you discovering the others and claiming them for yourself!) The reason we can be so sure of our new relationship with God is because Jesus himself, the Son of God, has made promises to us. And Jesus **never** breaks a promise.



Whom Jesus sent

Without the Holy Spirit, Christianity is little more than a nice moral code, an intellectual exercise, or a faith in which you are left to struggle along by your own efforts. With the Holy Spirit, it becomes a real living relationship with God – fulfilling, exciting, challenging and life-changing. This is because the Holy Spirit is not just a **feeling** or a **presence** or even the **power of God**. He is the **person of God himself** come to live within us!

It is **his presence within us** that sets the seal on our assurance that we are indeed children of God.

a. The promise of the Spirit's presence

Let's look at some of the promises that Jesus made concerning his sending of the Holy Spirit to us.

As you read these passages, note down different aspects of what Jesus promises the Spirit will do or bring.

John 14 v15-18

John 14 v25-27

John 15 v7-11

Acts 1 v4-8

It is clear from all of this that Jesus saw it was impossible to be his follower without the presence and help of his Holy Spirit. But it is also clear that he really did promise he would come.

b. The reality of the Spirit's presence

Some promises in life remain empty and unfulfilled; but not this one! Once Jesus had gone back to his Father in heaven, the way was open for him to send the Spirit, just as he promised.

The Spirit came – and still comes – in many different ways. Sometimes he came noisily,



sometimes quietly; sometimes to individuals, sometimes to groups; sometimes to those expecting him, sometimes to those minding their own business! But whenever he came, there was **never any doubt about his arrival and presence!**

Read:

Acts 2 v1-4

Acts 8 v14-21

Acts 9 v17-19

Acts 10 v44-48

Acts 19 v1-6

What did you notice all these incidents had in common?

This promise and reality of the Holy Spirit was not just for those first Christians. In the Church's first ever sermon, Peter said that "The promise is for you and your children and for **all who are far off** – for **all** whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2 v39) We are certainly **far off** – in time and distance! And we are certainly part of that **all!**

As a new Christian, God wants **you** to be filled to overflowing with the Spirit's presence, to be **baptised** in his Spirit (more of this in a later book). All you need to do is – **ask**.



c. The results of the Spirit's presence

We will look at other results of the Spirit's presence within us later in this series. But for now we just want to major on how his presence reinforces our assurance that we are indeed God's children.

So, how does the Spirit help us in this way?

Read the following Bible passages and reflect

together on how they bring out each bullet point:

- He brings an inner **witness** within us.

Read:

Romans 8 v14-16

1 John 4 v13

If we are truly born again, something has **happened**, something has **shifted** inside – and now we can know!

- He helps us to start getting to know God and his ways better.

Read:

Ephesians 1 v17-21

- He helps us to pray – especially when we don't know how to or when we run out of words.

Read:

Romans 8 v26

Ephesians 6 v18

- He begins to grow his **fruits** within us.

Read:

Galatians 5 v16-25

- He brings a new love within us for God's people – and we want to ask "Where did **that** come from?"

Read:

1 John 3 v14

1 John 4 v11-13

- He acts as God's living "deposit" or downpayment on all that is yet to come.

Read:

Ephesians 1v131-4

2 Corinthians 1 v20-22



Think: *Do I know that I have received the Holy Spirit into my own life?*

If you are not sure, God wants you to be sure! And now is as good a time as any to ask him to come and fill you.

Conclusion

So, to sum up: we can be sure of our new-found Christian faith – that wrong things from the past are forgiven and that a new life with God has begun – because of these four basic things:

- who Jesus was
- what Jesus did
- what Jesus promised
- whom Jesus sent



- *Am I clear about each of these – in principle, if not yet in every detail? Tick the appropriate place in the following box.*
- *Can I say that I am **sure** of my Christian faith and my standing before God?*
- *Do I know for a certainty that if I were to die today and were asked, "Why should you be let in to heaven?" that I would be able to give the right answer and know I would*

not be turned away?

*It really is possible to be sure!
This is not arrogance – but confidence.
And it can be yours too.*



	Yes	No	Still not sure
Who Jesus was			
What Jesus did			
What Jesus promised			
Whom Jesus sent			

