

# FIRST LEVEL

The Path to Reunion with God



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## Note to English Readers

This book was written from a Japanese perspective, and this English version is a translation of what is in the Japanese version. Rather than reworking ideas in such a way as to make this material clear to English speakers, we have decided to merely translate the ideas so that you will know what the Japanese readers are seeing. We have included some cultural notes occasionally within the English text only, which are contained in parentheses and marked as “Translation Note:”.

## Preface

You may think life begins when you take your first breath after coming out of your mother’s womb. But did you know the Bible says that there is a Creator God who had a plan to create each of us even before we were born? God cares about each person in this world far more than anyone can imagine. God knows you because he created you and that is why you are valuable.

When you first realize that God exists, you may think that you have encountered Him for the first time. But from God’s perspective, it is a “reunion”. This is because God, who has known you since before you were born, has been waiting for you to become aware of His existence even while you were living without any knowledge of Him.

“Reunion” can be described as two people who have known each other but were distanced for a while to meet again and develop a new relationship. This reunion with God can also be a transformative event in your relationship with Him. And this relationship can start a whole new life for you.

The life that begins when you are reunited with God is a life of walking in the confidence of God's plan and purpose for you that you never knew before.

“First Level” will guide you on your journey to reunite with God. Let us learn together about God's plan and purpose for you.

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## 1. Who is God?

### **Can we know “god”?**

When we as Japanese hear about “god” (Translation note: the Japanese word for “god” is “kami” which means spirit or deity in a general sense; See page 31), we tend to think of it as an invisible entity watching us from afar that we call out when needed. What or who is this being called god? Is it even possible for us to know this indefinable being?

When asked, “what is your religion?”, many Japanese will answer, “I am Buddhist”, but we also value Shinto customs, such as visiting a shrine on New Year’s Day or the Shichi-go-san Festival (Translation note: celebration of children 7, 5 and 3 years old). Additionally, many Japanese celebrate Christmas and have Christian-style weddings. Most funerals and burials are held in the Buddhist style. As we can see, we are involved in many religions in our daily lives, it is not necessary based on faith, but is influenced by tradition, culture, and trends. Even when we take part in those religious events, we do not do so based on knowledge of the gods those religions teach.

Also, due to the Shinto teaching of Yaoyorozu no kami (Translation note: literally translated to “eight million gods”, is the Shinto concept of “countless gods”) there are many customs in Japan to worship a myriad of gods, including nature gods (sun god, wind gods, thunder gods, mountain gods, water gods), human gods (goddesses, ancestor gods, hero gods), occupation gods (agriculture gods, fishing gods, transportation gods), and Shichifukujin (Translation note: the seven gods of good fortune). But the Japanese culture and customs neither prove these gods exist nor teach about what their abilities and natures are.

### **God can be known**

Generally speaking, we can learn about God in three ways: nature, reason (the way things work) and revelation (what God shows us). From nature we see the beauty and vastness of creation: we see the grandeur of the universe, the deepness of a human heart and value of life. From reason we can see the universe had a beginning, nothing comes from nothing, and that life is miraculously complex. The last way, revelation, is what God has said about Himself to humans. It is the most precise way to learn about God and is found in the Bible.

This journey to know the God of the Bible begins by first opening our minds to the possibility that this God exists. Without this first step, it will be difficult to encounter the true God and come to know Him.

### **Who does God say He is?**

The Bible is God's book of self-introduction. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) This is the very first thing written in the Bible. The Bible is a book that was written through God's guidance. When you look in the Bible, you can understand that there is a "Creator", who is God.

Through the Bible, God has revealed His nature. His nature is "eternal". This is because He existed always, even before this universe.

He is "holy, holy, holy". This is not merely because all that He does is good, but because he is "pure" and "perfect" in every way. There are no evil or wrong things in Him because He is the standard of "goodness". Because of God's complete holiness, He cannot dwell with impurity or wickedness. God knows everything and can see beyond our actions to the heart of man. He is able to be present everywhere and not limited to a single place at a time.

He is the creator of this universe and everything in it. He created humans for relationship with Himself, and He made us in the overflow of His love; so, He is our heavenly Father. God is a trustworthy counselor and guide to our life. He is the source of wisdom. He is able to take care of us completely. God is love. He is unlimited in His capacity to forgive. God is able to bless us so that we can be a blessing to others.

Since the God of the Bible is neither an object nor a force, but a person with wisdom and character, we will refer to Him as "Kami-sama" (Translation note: "God" with the most formal honorific title "sama") to show respect. He reveals Himself to us through the Bible so that we can know Him as follows.

### **Let's think about it**

Has your image of "god" changed?

Through the Bible we can learn about who God is. However, learning about God is not the same as knowing God. Even after learning information about God, for you to meet Him and form a new relationship with Him, you must know how God feels about you personally. God does not just exist, He is alive and at work, and He has a plan and purpose for you from the beginning to the end of your life.

If this God of the Bible really exists, would you want to meet Him?

In the next section, “2. What are Human Beings?”, we’ll learn about what a man is like.

For more details on this topic, go to **Appendix 1. Who is God?**



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## 2. What are Human Beings?

### **Created with a purpose**

*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

*(Genesis 1:27)*

As we saw in “1. Who is God?”, God is the creator of everything, that means He created humans. God did not make humans out of loneliness or curiosity. He created humans from the overflow of His love. Because God is good, He created people to share in His goodness. We were created to be in a relationship with God, where we are in His family, able to enjoy Him and to do good works because His love overflows into us. In whole and individually, we humans are created for a purpose and not by coincidence.

*“And God saw everything that he had made,  
and behold, it was very good.”*

*(Genesis 1:31a)*

This world and even the universe we live in was made for humans. We were created to be the final touch that made our universe “very good.” The Bible tells the details of the first parents, Adam and Eve. *Adam* is the Jewish word that means “man.” *Eve* is the word for “mother of all”, because from Adam and Eve descended all following humans including us.

God prepared a place called Eden. It was a garden, tended and made ready by God as the first place for His human children to live with Him. In Eden, Adam and Eve had a perfect relationship with God; however, it would not last long.

### **Broken relationship**

When everything was created by God, it was very good, and the relationship between nature and man, between man and man, and between man and God were perfect. But what about now? The world is full of problems and disasters, and it is constantly being broken, including human hearts. Something happened back then that resulted in the imperfect world in which we now live.

*And the Lord God commanded the man, saying,  
“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of  
good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”  
(Genesis 2:16-17)*

Among the many trees in Eden with good fruit to enjoy, there was a Forbidden Tree – the fruit of which would bring spiritual death and eventually, physical death.

*“But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.  
For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like  
God, knowing good and evil.”*

*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food,  
and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one  
wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with  
her, and he ate.”  
(Genesis 3:4-6)*

Satan, a created being who had already rejected God, came to Adam and Eve in the form of a serpent and convinced them that they “wouldn’t die even if you eat the Forbidden Fruit”. He told them that in eating it they would become like God and set their own standards of good and evil. Giving in to the devil’s temptations to be like God and “become wise”, Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the Forbidden Tree. From this moment on, all humans became selfish and greedy beings, only able to think about satisfying themselves.

Adam and Eve tried to hide their mistake from God, but God can see everything, and He knew. Ever-loving God came near to the disobedient Adam and Eve and called out to them, but without coming out before God from their hiding place, they made excuses and shifted the blame without showing remorse for their mistake. The perfect relationship between God and humans, one full of love and trust, had “died”.

God is perfect, pure, and has righteous authority. Thus, He is far removed from imperfection, unrighteousness and impurity. Adam and Eve, who rebelled against their Creator God, were banished from the Garden of Eden and the presence of God, and an unbridgeable chasm stands between humans and our creator Father.

Because the first humans so sinned against our Creator God, all of the children of the world in every generation have been born into this separated state, often called “the

fall of man”. This means we all are separated from our Father, and the relationship with Him as we were originally designed for was broken.

### **Restoration of the broken relationship**

God is not happy to be separated from us. So, He made a promise to Adam and Eve that would echo through time. He promised to send a Savior at just the right time.

God has not abandoned His children. He still creates each one of us with a purpose. The Bible says that each person is given a time and place in human history where they are meant to live, and enough light to seek Him. With God’s help we can live according to our individual purpose, which will be good for us, and for everyone around us, including our family, our friends, our community, our country, and the world.

We are still naturally part of The Fall. “3. What is Sin?” will help us to see what that is.

For more details on this topic, go to **Appendix 2. What are Human Beings?**



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### 3. What is Sin?

#### What is a “sinner”?

When we hear the word “sin” in Japanese, we think of a serious crime being committed. What we really should focus on is that a law has been broken, not the size of the crime. There are many kinds of laws, and every country makes its own laws. Some countries have the same laws: “Do not steal” is a law everywhere. And some have unique laws: In Singapore, it is illegal to sell chewing gum. Law is the standard that a society has required of its people. There are also laws of physics (ex. gravity) and laws of nature (ex. seeds require water and nutrition, etc. to grow).

Like the laws of nature, God’s perfect righteousness and holiness are a law unto itself. God obeys His own law perfectly and never does something that would violate His holy nature. Some people say that God can do anything, but the Bible says that God can not lie– it would be impossible for Him to do so because it would make Him unholy. As the Laws are made to keep societies and individuals safe, God put His law here for each of us to have the best life. Anything we do that does not line up with God’s law is sin. The consequence for violating God’s law is separation from Him.

God is pure and holy and cannot dwell with impurity or wickedness. We saw that “The Fall” caused all of Adam and Eve’s descendants to have a fallen nature. It is our fallen nature that causes us to sin. We are all born into the fallen nature and so none of us can live up to God’s righteous standard. Be it a terrible crime or something that seems minor, like a small lie or an impure thought, every person has sinned in one way or another.

*“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)*

*“As it is written, there is none righteous, not even one;  
there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.”  
(Romans 3:10)*

We are a precious creation and are meant to have a good relationship with God, but when sin entered the world, that good relationship ended. Since sin is a state of separation from God, it includes indifference and apathy towards one's relationship

with God. But God is not happy to be separated from us. Our sin may be a denial that God exists, or indifference toward Him, or even pride that recognizes God but does not trust in Him. And even worse, we live our lives thinking we have no sin. That is what the Bible calls "sinners".

### **Awareness of our sin**

There are a few things that we can say about people coming to realize their own sin.

Because humans have been gifted with a "conscience", we are able to judge good and evil in our own minds. So, if we do something bad, through our consciences, we can instinctively know that what we did was wrong. Also, laws and other rules, including those written in the Bible, can show us a standard for right and wrong. And if one has an awareness of his or her own sin, it shows that God is already at work in that person's heart.

Since ancient times, we have long struggled with the questions of "Are man and nature naturally holy?" versus "Are man and nature naturally evil?" When we look around, we can see how the question is difficult to answer. We see the good in people, but there is also an element of evil which results in pain and difficulty for both man and nature. From the section "2. What are Human Beings?", we find the answer is both. Humans and nature are created with a holy purpose but because of The Fall, evil has corrupted that purpose. So, we need to seek ways to recover that holy nature.

Japanese culture shows that people are meant to be pure. Because of this we follow customs such as purification rites and washing of our hands before entering a temple, through which we try to purify ourselves. But even if this could make us completely clean, the moment we stop washing we will become impure again by the thoughts in our heart such as envy, greed, or selfishness.

Are there any people who have never told a lie? Are there any people who have never been selfish or envious? Sin is not only a bad action or a bad thought; when we do not do what we are supposed to do, what is good or righteous, that is also a sin. When we ignore someone in need, for example, even though we can help. We hope that as long as it is hidden from other people God will not see. But God can see all things.

Having our sins and shortcomings brought to our attention can cause us to be vulnerable to bad emotions. However, there is always hope to be found in the Bible! We will see that the solution to the problem of sin is surprisingly not to try harder to be

a better person. It is actually to accept that we can never make ourselves truly pure, so we must find another way. God has made that way.

Continuing to the next sections “4. What is the Cross of Jesus?” and “5. What is Salvation?”, we'll learn God's solution to the problem of sin. Let's keep our hearts open as we search ourselves.

For more details on this topic, go to **Appendix 3. What is Sin?**



## 4. What is the Cross of Jesus?

The “cross” symbol is something we see in many places. We see it on accessories. It is often regarded as a beautiful thing. Sometimes we see another cross, one with a man on it; that man is Jesus Christ. Both the cross alone and the cross with Christ are known to be Christian symbols. We expect to see them in a church, but why is the cross so important to Christians? It started long before the event of the cross. It started with Adam and Eve, with the sin of humans, and with a promise from God.

### **God's Promise**

The sinful nature of humans became a barrier between us and God. God, who is holy, cannot dwell with corrupt and sinful human beings, even though He wants to have a good relationship with us. Even so, God never gives up on His love for us. When God said goodbye to Adam and Eve, He made a promise: that one of their descendants would be a Savior and would restore the relationship between God and His people.

### **Prophecy about the Savior**

As humans grew and spread out around the world, God would remind individuals about His promise. These individuals, who were not merely psychics guessing but true “prophets” with insight given by God, were “entrusted” to deliver His message of a coming “Savior”. With each prophet, more information was given about whom to expect. More than 350 promises about the “Savior” were recorded in the Old Testament.

Here are some examples of the major prophecies in the Bible:

<b>Prophecy</b>	<b>Prophecy Before Christ's Birth</b>	<b>Prophecy as Fulfilled by Christ</b>
Be God's Son	Zechariah 12:10, Psalm 2:7	Matthew 3:16-17, Hebrews 1:2-3
Be born to a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:26-31
Be born in the city of Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:4-6

Prophecy	Prophecy Before Christ's Birth	Prophecy as Fulfilled by Christ
Provide offering for forgiveness of sin	Isaiah 52:15-53:5-12, Psalm 40:6-8, Malachi 3:3	Hebrews 9:12
Be hung on a tree and die	Deuteronomy 21:22-23	1 Peter 2:24, Galatians 3:13-14
Not stay dead but rise from the grave	Psalm 16	Acts 13:33-35

These prophecies and many more were written hundreds and thousands of years before the birth of the Savior. The prophecies were specific about the place and the time and the family line to which the Savior would be born, and in all of human history, only one person has matched them all: Jesus Christ.

### **The Meaning of Jesus' Crucifixion**

So why did Jesus Christ have to die on the cross? The answer is found in the prophecy that says, "The Savior will be an offering for the forgiveness of sins. Man has tried many things to make himself pure, such as offering, washing, Zazen (Translation Note: Japanese Buddhist practice of sitting meditation) and Nembutsu (Translation Note: Buddhist chant for seeking salvation), and more. There is nothing that fallen humans could do to become truly clean and shameless again. All of our offerings have fallen short, and our best deeds, though they may seem good before other humans, are still not a good offering before the perfect God.

What we need is One without sin and shame, One who is like God, to make a perfect offering that is accepted by God on our behalf. God knew that no person could ever be like that. That is why He sent His only Son from Heaven to Earth. That Son is Jesus Christ. He was to be born as a human, live a holy life, and then give His life as an offering for forgiveness of humanity's sin.

*"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins,  
and not only for ours but for the sins of the whole world."  
(1 John 2:2)*

Because of Jesus Christ's death on the cross, the problem of sin and shame is gone. The things that caused separation between humans and God was resolved by God

himself. So, we see that God really does want a relationship with us. In order for us to be reunited with Him both now and forever, God showed His love for us without holding back anything, even giving His own Son to death on a cross.

*“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)*

It is hard to accept such a precious offering on our behalf. Why would Jesus Christ need to die? Couldn't there be another way?

As Japanese, we see something like this every day. Before we eat a meal, we say “itadakimasu” to our food (Translation note: This phrase is commonly said before eating, and it means “I am receiving”). Our food comes at the cost of the lives of plants and animals. If our food did not die, then we would die of hunger. We tell our food, “itadakimasu” because we know we are receiving the life of our food to be our own. There is a mystery in this common practice because it points to the need for Jesus Christ's sacrifice. If Jesus did not die, then we could not receive new life. It is sad that our food must die, but there is joy in a beautiful and delicious meal that gives us energy to live and thrive. In the same way, Jesus' offering on the cross is sad, but there is immeasurable joy, beauty and life that comes from it.

*“For as in Adam all die,  
so in Christ all will be made alive.”  
(1 Corinthians 15:22)*

The cross, once an instrument of execution, has become a thing of beauty. It used to represent death, the result of sin, but now it represents life, the result of the work of Jesus Christ. This “life” replaced the “death” in our relationship with God that Adam and Eve brought to this world.

So, how can we receive this “life”? We will learn in the next section, “What is Salvation?”.

For more details on this topic, go to **Appendix 4. What is the Cross of Jesus?**

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## 5. What is Salvation?

### **Purpose from the Creator**

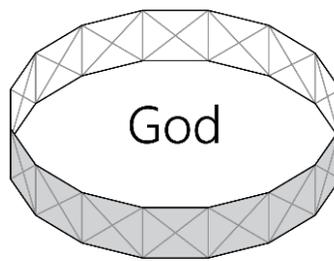
We often think, “If there is a god, what can he do for us? What goodness can he bring to us?” We visit temples or shrines to make wishes. We depend on horoscopes and divine spirits in nature including mountains, rocks, and trees. We build temples and shrines to the spirits, hoping that they are able to bring help. We want supernatural powers for our own benefits, as if the god was created for humans. But the creator always comes before the creation, and so it is with God.

God existed first and does not live in temples or shrines or figures made by human hands. God is the one who created us, forming each of us with purpose.

Put yourself in a creator’s shoes for a moment. A shoemaker creates shoes that are comfortable and stylish to wear. An artist creates art to display beauty. A creator of lamps brings light to a dark room. Someone also created you with an amazing, specific, and glorious purpose. That creator is God. That is why our existence is so special.

### **Far away from God, broken and lost**

To understand what it means to be “saved”, we must first understand what we need to be saved from. The consequence of sin, shame and unrighteousness is that we are in a lost state, separated from God our Creator and Father. Our nature as humans is that we are corrupted from the good we once were, and we cannot understand the special design and purpose that has been given to each of us. Even our best efforts are not enough to make up for our deficiency. We need to be saved from this broken and lost state that we cannot change.



Us

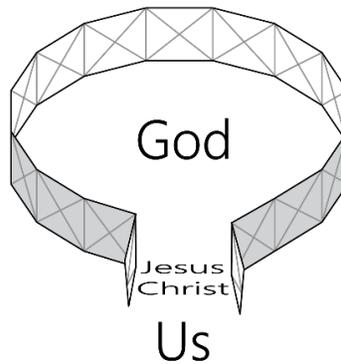
*"All of us, like sheep, have gone astray."  
(Isaiah 53:6)*

If you take the path of salvation and meet God, you have a life full of hope and joy. It is a life in which God Himself will be with you forever. God has prepared a way for you to return to Him before you were born in this world, and even before you were aware of it. It's like a person outside of God's place is welcomed like a lost child returning home.

### **The way to be reunited with God**

However, God loves us as His children and is not content to be apart from us. God even gave up His only Son as a perfect offering on our behalf in order to bring us to Himself. Since Jesus has already received the punishment that we sinners should have received, God did not consider us "sinners" but allowed us to go closer to the Holy God.

Through Jesus' sacrifice, God made a way for us to be with Him. It is like opening a door and walking in, which is why Jesus Christ said in the Bible that He is the "gate" and the "way".



*"I am the gate;  
whoever enters through me will be saved."  
(John 10:9)*

*Jesus answered,  
"I am the way and the truth and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through me."  
(John 14:6)*

We saw that the work of Jesus Christ on the cross as a perfect offering can make us righteous before God forever. His offering is a free gift from God, given by His love, for us to accept or reject. This gift of grace is right in front of you and is available to be received now. This is God's grace to us, His unmerited favor, which is offered to us with His love, even though we do not deserve it.

God is kind and patient, calling each of us near and extending to us this wonderful gift of salvation. He uses various circumstances and experiences in our lives and through people who help us find our way back to Him.

### **Receiving the gift of Salvation**

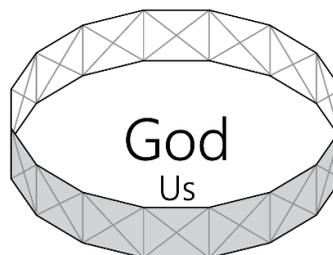
Receiving this gift of God is also called "believing" or "trusting" in Jesus Christ. We must accept the reality that we ourselves are sinners and cannot do anything to be sinless. We must stop our own effort and admit before God that we need Jesus.

When we receive this gift of salvation, we meet God. We no longer must stay separated from Him because of our sin. When we meet God, we learn from Him the purpose for which we were created. This is what it means to be saved.

### **An important step that changes you forever**

Jesus will not only be the Savior of the World; He will be your personal Savior. If you call on Him, He will not leave you outside, but will invite you to the path for you to be in with Him.

When you take the step to be with God, a life full of hope and joy is waiting for you. It is a life where God Himself will be with you from now until eternity. We are immediately reunited with God spiritually as it was originally intended to be: we are no longer separated because of sin, shame and unrighteousness. It is a big step that changes you forever. This is what salvation is. It is to be changed from a person who is outside of God's presence, to one who is welcomed in like a lost child returning home.



*“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;  
knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives;  
the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”  
(Matthew 7:7-8)*

Knowing God and being in a relationship with Him is what all humans were created for. In this relationship, you will understand life more fully, experience joy even in difficult times, and will be more able to love others and serve them cheerfully.

*For he says,  
“In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation, I helped you.”  
I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, Now is the day of salvation.  
(2 Corinthians 6:2)*

### **Respond to God’s salvation**

1. Do you believe there is a God who created the world, and also created you?
2. Do you accept that you are separated from God, the Creator?
3. Do you believe that you are loved by God and that Jesus’ death on the cross was to save you from your sin?
4. Would you like to receive this salvation as a gift from God and have a trusting relationship with Him?

If you responded “yes” to all the above questions, let us close this study with the following prayer:

*“God, my Creator, Thank you for guiding my life to this point even when I did not know you before. Thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sin.  
I believe that you love me and are inviting me to come to you and I accept your salvation.  
Please be with me and guide me forever.”*

If you were led to pray this way, you are now with God and are a child of God. You have been drawn close to a God who loves you very much. But for God, it was not a new encounter, but a "reunion" with you. God who loves you knew everything about you before you were born. When a created person returns to the One who created him, he can live the life that was originally intended for him. Now, your new life is about to begin with God who has been waiting to be reunited with you.

For more details on this topic, go to **Appendix 5 . What is Salvation?**

## Appendix 1. Who is God?

The Bible says that we can not only know about God, but we can also know Him as someone personally close to us. It means that we can actually have a personal relationship with God and know Him and not just have knowledge about Him. In the Bible, the relationship between God and us is described in various ways. For example, here are some expressions of that relationship: “Father God”, “we are God’s children”, “God’s family”, “friend”, “Potter and pottery”, “Shepherd and sheep”, and so on... It is an amazing truth that we can have a personal relationship with the Creator who made all these things in the universe.

### **The Creator God and 8 million gods**

God says that He is the only true god. The word we use in Japan for god, “kami”, is a word that means nonphysical person with abilities that are not limited to the physical world. Some Japanese attribute personalities and powers to them and accredit them for managing certain functions of this world and universe. This is why we often speak of Japan having 8 million gods. These ideas come from the awareness that there is more to this world than what our eyes can see, but the spirits called “kami” are not at all like the God of the Bible, who is uncreated and self-sufficient, eternally existing and the origin of all things both physical and spiritual.

### **What the Bible tells us about God:**

- “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)
- “In His hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.” (Job 12:10)
- “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.” (Psalm 139:13)
- “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,” (Acts 17:24)

### **What the Bible teaches about God:**

- God created people, the earth, and the entire universe. (Genesis 1:1, John 1:3)
- God is pure, completely Holy and cannot dwell with impurity or wickedness (Leviticus 19:2, Psalm 99:9, Psalm 5:4).
- God is completely perfect. God is almighty! He can do anything (Psalm 18:30-32, Luke 1:37).

- God is all-knowing. From past to present, He knows everything in the world. He knows the course of each person's life (Hebrews 4:13, Psalm 33:13-15).
- God is timeless; God has always existed and has no beginning or end (Isaiah 46:9,10, Revelation 22:13).
- God is omnipresent. He is not limited to a single location (Jeremiah 23:24).
- God is unchanging. He is always the same (Hebrews 1:10-12, 13:8, Malachi 3:6).

**What the Bible says God is like:**

- God is a good father (James 1:17,18, 1 John 3:1-3).
- God is a good friend (John 15:13,15).
- God is a trustworthy counselor and guide (Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 3:6, Isaiah 42:16).
- God is the source of wisdom (Daniel 2:20-22, Proverbs 5:21, Isaiah 40:28).
- God is able to take care of us (2 Samuel 22:3, Psalm 46:1-3, 34:4).
- God is love. (1 John 4:8,16; John 3:16)
- God is hope (Romans 15:13, Isaiah 40:30, 31, Micah 7:7).
- God is forgiving (Micah 7:18, Psalm 30:3,4, 1 John 1:9).
- God works all things according to His purpose (Ephesians 1:11)
- God is able to bless us so that we can be a blessing to others (Genesis 12, Ephesians 1:3, Romans 8:32, Matthew 7:9-11)

## Appendix 2. What are Human Beings?

### **The role of humans in creation**

*“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.  
And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea  
and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock  
and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.  
So God created man in his own image, in the image of God  
he created him; male and female he created them.”  
(Genesis 1:26-27)*

We are not beings that exist by random chance without meaning, purpose or extreme value. We are each amazing and intentional creations of God, designed with a purpose. God created everything as the setting for His most significant creation, humans. Humans are often referred to as the “crown of creation” because all of creation’s purpose is made known by and through humans. As we see in these verses, after God created this world, He gave humans the important role of caretaker. Humans are the uniquely created beings that are made in the image of God.

Humans are set apart from other creations, such as nature, animals and even angels. We alone have free will, thought, responsibility and loving relationship characteristics that resemble the Creator’s. It means we are able to reflect God to other people and to the rest of creation according to His good ways; this is how we bring glory to God, by reflecting His glory like a mirror to creation. The ultimate purpose of humanity is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

### **Shame as a result of the Fall of Man**

Because Adam and Eve sinned against God, they were cut off from their perfectly holy Creator. This state called the “fall of man” is passed on to their descendants, the entire human race. This is just like when the head of a family does something dishonorable, the whole family inherits his shame that will not be erased.

As a result of their disobedience, Adam and Eve lost a perfect and loving relationship with God. It was a relationship in which they had nothing to hide before Him and were not ashamed to let everything be known. But after the fall, the relationship became one in which they did not want God to know or question their actions and wanted to hide from Him. This kind of fear of God could be expressed as shame.

Even when we do not know or relate to God, we can still feel that there is something missing in us or something shameful we want to hide is within us. That feeling of shame is a result of the fall that destroyed our original state where we would feel completely safe to expose everything about us before God.

## Appendix 3. What is Sin?

### **Sin and crime**

When you hear the word “*tsumi*” (Translation note: *tsumi* is used in the Japanese Bible to mean “sin”) you usually think of terrible criminal activities. However, in order to understand the idea of “sin”, we must think about its definition. “*Hanza*” refers to law-breaking “acts”, such as stealing, fraud, or murder, which is part of what “sin” is. (Translation note: *hanzai*, which means “criminal offense”, is a combination of two characters, the second one being same as *tsumi*.) But what the Bible calls “sin” is not only criminal deeds. If we think of “sin” only as doing bad things, that is an incomplete definition.

In the Bible, “sin” is about the “nature” of human beings. It refers to a state of broken relationship with the Creator. If we are not in relationship with the God who created this world with perfect order, then we are outside of the perfect righteousness and holiness that was God’s original plan. We can describe that condition as ‘living in sin’. We will see below that the root meaning of “sin” is to “miss the mark”. Being in a state of separation from the Creator God and being outside of God’s standard of absolute righteousness is called “sin”. Of course, crime or bad behavior are also sin, but because our nature is sin, we naturally commit sins. Thus, because of humanity’s sin nature, the entire world is filled with all kinds of sin instead of God’s intended goodness.

### **Sin – missing the mark**

As Japanese, we often have difficulty comprehending the Bible’s teaching that “we are all sinners”. Maybe it is because we have not done anything against the law. While it is easy to agree that everyone makes mistakes and that no one is a perfect, it is not easy to agree that everyone is a criminal. To better understand what is being communicated by the word “sin” we should look back to the Hebrew language, the original language of the Bible.

In Hebrew, “*chata*” is used, which means “missing the mark”. Just as an arrow can miss a bullseye, we humans have missed the mark of God’s law and standard. If an arrow is even a hair off from the bullseye then it is “*chata*”. As good as we may be individually, we have all missed the “mark” of God’s perfect righteousness, so we are all sinners.



## Appendix 4. What is the Cross of Jesus?

When we study the cross of Jesus in depth in the Bible, we see that it is an event that is not found in any other religion in the world, where God's only Son died sacrificially for the sins of humanity. The cross of Jesus is said to be the place where God's righteous anger against our sin and His deep love for us collided. If the cross is a manifestation of God's love for us, we need to understand better what kind of love that is.

### Meanings of love

In the Bible there are 4 different words used for "love":

1. *Eros* – romantic love, marital love
2. *Storge* – love within a family
3. *Philia* – love among friends
4. *Agape* – unconditional love, God's love for us

In Japan, upon receiving a gift/favor, it is a cultural etiquette to return the favor. There are times when we offer something with the expectation that we will be thanked back, and conversely, there are times when we refrain from offering something so as not to burden the receiver with the obligation. This concern for reciprocated favors therefore makes us hesitant to accept something so great that we cannot return even a fraction of the value given.

However, when we look at *agape*, we see a different kind of giving. "Unconditional" means that it is given without any expectation of return. It is possible for God to love in such a way because "God is love." (1 John 4:16). In the original language, "love" in this statement is "*agape* love". God, being self-sustaining, does not need anything, and being the Creator of all things, He is able to give without loss. After experiencing God's *agape* love, we are able to draw from it and thus be able to reflect it to others. Through God's unconditional love we are able to love others without condition as well, with a true love.

### Prophecy/prophets

The word "prophecy" in the Bible is written in Japanese as "yogen" (Translation note: 預言 in Kanji characters) means that direct word from God is entrusted to someone. In the Bible, people called "the prophets" were the ones who delivered God's direct message to the world. The other "yogen" (Translation note: 予言 in different Kanji

characters) in general means "to tell beforehand," and refers to foretelling and predicting future events in advance, including fortune-telling, different meaning from the intentional prophecy of God in the Bible.

### **Prophecy about Jesus**

The primary figure in the Bible is Jesus Christ. Jesus' arrival on Earth had been prophesied repeatedly for many thousands of years. God sent messages to prophets that He specifically called out, so that humans would know that Jesus is who He revealed Himself to be. The Old Testament (the first 39 books of the Bible) was all written over a period of more than 15 centuries before Jesus arrived on Earth. Each prophesy revealed more and more about what to expect and of the hope that He would bring.

There are more than 350 prophecies specifically about Jesus Christ. Examples include when He was to be born, His birthplace, what He would do while on Earth, that He would be killed like a criminal as a sacrifice, and that He would be raised from the dead. We know these prophecies were written before Christ's arrival and that they were not edited after because of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These artifacts were buried at a specific time in history, centuries before the birth of Jesus, and were not recovered until the 20th century: a time-capsule that verifies the accuracy of the scriptures in the Old Testament and the identity of Jesus Christ.

Some key prophecies about the Savior that would come to their fulfillment in Jesus Christ are:

<b>Prophecy</b>	<b>Before Christ</b>	<b>Fulfilled</b>
The Savior would descend from Abraham the patriarch of Israel	Genesis 22:18	Romans 9:5
The Savior would be of the Jewish tribe "Judah"	Genesis 49:10	Hebrews 7:14
The Savior would be a King, of the lineage of David	Isaiah 9:7	Luke 1:32
The Savior would be born in the town of Bethlehem (Bethlehem means "House of Bread", and Jesus called Himself the "Bread of Life")	Micah 5:2	Luke 2:4-6
The Savior would be born to a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:26-31

<b>Prophecy</b>	<b>Before Christ</b>	<b>Fulfilled</b>
The Savior would be born Jewish but would be the Savior for all nations	Genesis 28:14, Isaiah 11:10	Matthew 12:15-21
The Savior would shine light in the darkness, revealing God's plan of salvation to the lost	Isaiah 9:1-2	Matthew 4:13-16
The Savior would show His power over life and death through miracles	Isaiah 35:5-6, 53:5	Matthew 11:2-6
The Savior would be charged as a criminal though He is innocent, and would silently take the punishment of death without resistance	Isaiah 53:7	Mark 15:4-5
The Savior would be put to death	Isaiah 53:11-12	Mark 15:27-28
The Savior's death would be an offering made to cover all sins	Isaiah 53: 5-6	Romans 5:6-8

### **The Resurrection of Jesus**

*"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,"  
(1 Corinthians 15:3-4)*

The prophecy also includes the resurrection of the Savior, which was also fulfilled by Jesus Christ. He became the offering for our sins on the cross to appease God's wrath against sin. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death," indicating that all human beings born with a sinful nature will die. But Jesus, who was sinless, bore our sins and died to pay the penalty for them. In doing so, God's anger against our sin subsided, and all that remained was His love for us. God did not keep Jesus in the grave, but by raising Him three days later He broke the power of death. God nullified death itself that came into the world due to Adam and Eve's sin and prepared a new life for us on this earth and in eternity with Him.

## Appendix 5 . What is Salvation?

### **Salvation leads to “Peace with God” and “Peace of God”**

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.

Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

(John 14:27)

There are two kinds of peace that we can experience when we are reunited with God.

The first is "peace with God" in our relationship with Him. When we are separated from God, we are in contention with Him. It is like being at war against God that we could never win. This causes unrest and animosity between each person and God. But as we are reconciled to God the animosity is removed and we are at peace with God.

The second, "peace in God", is the one that comes as a result of our right relationship with God. This is a peace in our hearts that casts out fears and anxieties. Knowing that God is caring for us, we are able to live a more trusting and harmonious life. This peace overflows from us to those we love.

### **Salvation means Eternal Life**

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,  
that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

*(John 3:16)*

God loves and cares for every individual, so He sacrificed Jesus as an offering for our sin in order to give us eternal life. This is love that gives freely and expects nothing in return. God’s love is unconditional and selfless, requiring nothing in exchange. We are not expected to repay it. God desires to fill us with this love so that we can demonstrate love to others.

Eternal life is perpetual and will be spent forever with God Himself. Through Adam and Eve's rebellion against God, humanity’s relationship with Him was broken. However, out of God’s love, our sins are paid for through the sacrifice of Jesus, and we can spend eternity with God because our relationship with Him is restored.

Eternal life also means to have a right relationship with God in this life. It means to be filled with joy from God as it was in the garden of Eden in this life. Eternal life is a changed life in the way of living in this world that begins when we are saved.

## **Salvation is to be forgiven of our sin**

In Japanese, the kanji character for the word forgive can be written either as 許す "to permit" and 赦す "to pardon" (Translation note: in Japanese, both are pronounced "yurusu"). The meaning of "permit" is "to allow, to acknowledge," while "pardon" means "not to condemn for negligence or failure". Because God is holy, He does not permit (許す) even the smallest of sins. However, because of Jesus, God does not condemn us, but forgives (赦す) us.

This forgiveness is not influenced by reparation, deeds, or one's status, honor, or moral standing. God's forgiveness is based solely on the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Since Jesus has

already taken the punishment for our sins, a just and holy God can forgive us our sins without condemnation.

*"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:  
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."  
(Romans 5:8)*

As we see in this verse, God took the first step in forgiving us. He did not wait until we had repented and started to turn to be good and asked for His forgiveness. God shows that He is serious about forgiveness by taking the steps to make forgiveness possible even before we consider turning to His way. As we learned in several parts of this study, our fallen nature and our sin cause us to be separated from God. "The wages (result) of sin is death" (Romans 3:23) both physically and spiritually, but God does not want anyone to die.

*"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise  
as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,  
not wishing that any should perish,  
but that all should reach repentance."  
(2 Peter 3:9)*

God desires for all people to have reunion with Himself. When we realize His forgiveness, which is not merely overlooking our sin, but taking the punishment of it for us, we see it is a great thing that Jesus has done.

## **Salvation is God's Grace**

In ancient Greek the word used for "grace" was "*charis*". "*Charis*" can have two separate yet related meanings. Grace can mean a posture of or disposition towards

“kindness (generosity)” for someone or something. This disposition could also be considered “favor” even when it is undeserved. As God has shown us unearned favor by sending His Son (Jesus) to die for us, even though we did not deserve it. We can do nothing to earn this favor. We can have a relationship with Him because of God’s one-sided “grace” towards us.

Secondly, “grace” could be defined simply as “gift”. God has shown us grace by favoring us, but He has also given us grace in the gift of His Son Jesus Christ. In the Bible, God’s gift of grace is unconditional, which means there is nothing we can or cannot do to receive it. Jesus Christ is a gift to the whole world, His life given to cover all of our sins.

God’s grace brings gratitude. God has provided a way through the gift of His Son for us to have a restored relationship with Him. So as humans, the only thing that is required of us is to accept this gift with gratitude. It is thanks to this grace that we can have a personal relationship with God.

### **Salvation means becoming a new creation**

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.  
The old has passed away; behold the new has come.”  
(2 Corinthians 5:17)*

When we believe in Christ who saves us from the punishment of sin, the old sin nature of that person was taken away and the renewed spirit of that person is given. The old nature is the spirit that is controlled by sinful and worldly desires that please only oneself and not God. The old nature by itself is corrupt and cannot follow God. A new creation has a relationship with God because of Jesus Christ, so he or she can now seek to honor God and enjoy Him. Those who are a new creation in Christ are children of God (John 1:9). God gives them a new nature with new purpose of life. They are able to serve Him and others the way that we were originally intended to.

### **Salvation is to be “reunited’ with God**

Although we were created to live in a relationship with God, we live without even knowing that God exists. Since we do not know God, God Himself first offered salvation to us through Jesus Christ, making it possible for us to be reunited with Him. This is based on God’s immeasurable and great love for us.

What the Bible says about God, the meaning of human existence, the cross and resurrection of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, and the eternal life that God gives us

through Jesus are all about His saving grace. How do we receive this grace then? It is given to us when we return to God. We are saved not because we found God, but because of His plan to reunite us with Himself who has known us personally since the beginning of the world.

## Postscript

Through this "First Level", did your journey end with a reunion with God? We hope that you were led to respond to God's immense love for you and His desire to reunite with you. When you have a close relationship with God, who created you with a purpose and love, and live according to His will for your life, you can be your true self. There may not be drastic changes in your life right away. But a new life with God is the one where you will know the purpose of your life based on God's love.

If you have been led to reunite with God, your journey to the next step "Second Level" has begun. Second Level Ministry, the publisher of this book, is here to support you in your Christian walk, focusing on how to navigate your new life with God. Let us continue to learn together from the Bible more about God and His truth.

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