



The eagle rising from the water illustrates 'the Peter Package' that gets the child of God off to a flying start in his faith. Born of water (water baptism) and Spirit (baptism in the Spirit), he mounts up with the speed and power of an eagle to a victorious life by the Spirit.

ISAIAH 40:31; JOHN 3:5; ACTS 2:38

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THE FLYING START

BRAM MOELKER



THE FLYING START

- *Well begun is half done!*

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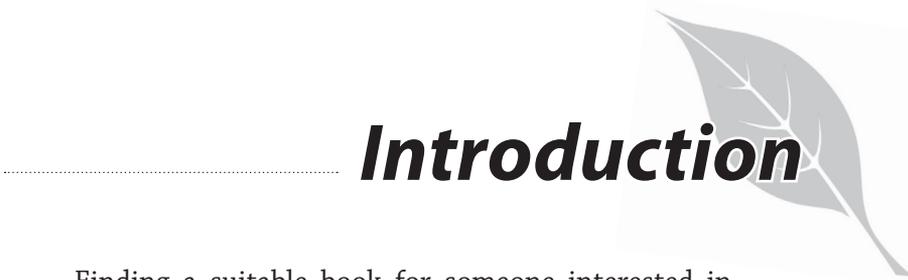
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Introduction



Finding a suitable book for someone interested in learning more about the Christian faith is not an easy task. There are plenty of studies on a wide range of topics, but it is almost impossible to find a reasonably complete manual to help new believers or other interested persons get started.

This was one of the most important reasons for writing *The Flying Start*. So the purpose of this book is to quickly familiarise the reader with the core of the Christian message whilst remaining firmly rooted in the Bible, the authoritative Word of God.

The Flying Start is not only dedicated to blessing those who are new to the Christian faith, but also to providing new insights for those further down the road in their Christian walk.

We hope that this book will help lay a firm foundation for many fellow believers so that together we can all become a strong building, a temple filled with the Holy Spirit, to the honour of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Why Jesus?

In this chapter we will take a closer look at questions like: Why Jesus? What crucial role does He fulfil? What do Christians expect from Him? Is there truly hope for this world and for me personally? Can I really live in freedom because of Him?

Created in the image of God [1.1]

First of all, it is important to know that the Bible teaches us that God created man as the *crown of His creation*. Indeed, we were created in His own image [GENESIS 1:26-27]. This is quite a statement. It means that we were created to live a life of peace and love. What is more, we were made to have a relationship with the Almighty, the Creator Himself, and to rule over all creation together with Him [GENESIS 1:28]. For instance, God brought the animals He had created to Adam to see what he would name them [GENESIS 2:19]. This shows us that God created us to have an intelligent partnership with Him, a fully fledged, cooperative relationship between God and man.

We were made to live and think like God [PSALM 8:3-8]. Maybe you are wondering how that is possible; but if God is your teacher, He can also teach you to become like Him [LUKE 7:40]. After all, God did not create people in His own image for nothing.

*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground,
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.*

– GENESIS 2:7

Although some people claim otherwise, people are not animals. Animals only have a body and soul. However, people also have a spirit. It is the spirit within every human being that reflects the fact that they are created in the image of God, because God is spirit [JOHN 4:24]. Human beings are unique because of their spirit. It enables us to communicate with God. Before sin entered the world, God and man even communicated as equals. That must have been wonderful! Unfortunately, it did not last long...

Separation between God and man [1.2]

According to the Bible, the first human beings (Adam and Eve) sinned because of the deceptive words of Satan (the devil). He told them that it was good to eat fruit that God had forbidden them from eating [GENESIS 2:16-17]. Eve was the first to eat the 'forbidden fruit', quickly followed by her husband, Adam [GENESIS 3:6]. Their hearts were immediately filled with shame and guilt after doing this [GENESIS 3:7]. They had lost their innocence.

The disobedience displayed by Adam and Eve is what the Bible calls 'sin'. It was a conscious decision to not trust God and instead to do what they thought was best. This destroyed the beautiful relationship that man once had had with God. It immediately resulted in a 'spiritual death' (being separated from God), which would later be followed by physical death [GENESIS 2:17, 5:5]. The instant that Adam and Eve disobeyed God, bringing sin into the world, is referred to as 'the fall of man'.

The fall of man was a horrible event with severe consequences. Even today, people are still burdened by it. Not a day goes by without

people being confronted by physical death, either personally or through the media. Our spiritual death is the root of all the fear, illness, violence, anger and jealousy with which we all are familiar.

Fortunately, there is wonderful news! God Himself created a means to restoration through His Son, Jesus. We will discuss this more later.

All have sinned [1.3]

We all know that everybody makes mistakes. This means even more sin, destroying not only our lives but also those of others. Moreover, every sin is literally and figuratively directed *against God* because He is our Creator. Unlike people, God is *holy and righteous* and for this reason He has no other option than to judge us. In fact, our sins make it impossible for us to relate to Him. Basically, all that is left for us is being *separated from God forever*: an eternal death.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

– ROMANS 3:23

The old covenant [1.4]

In the Old Testament – before Jesus came to earth – God gave man a temporary solution. God was able to partially restore His relationship with people by making a covenant. However, only one nation, the people of Israel, had this privilege. It was also limited in many other ways. The Bible teaches that in order for sin to be

forgiven, blood had to be shed [HEBREWS 9:22]. This is why the offering of bulls and goats was part of the covenant. However, these sacrifices never were able to take sin away, only cover it [HEBREWS 10:1-4].

The new covenant [1.5]

In the New Testament, we read about a new covenant that is accessible to all nations. Also, it is a much *better* covenant than the old one. In the new covenant, sin is not only covered but also *completely taken away* [HEBREWS 9:13-14]. This required a perfect and sinless offering. The only person who could meet that criterion was Jesus [1 PETER 1:19-21]. That is why only He, the Son of God [JOHN 20:31], was able to give His life *as a ransom*, erasing all the sins that testify against us [MARK 10:45; COLOSSIANS 2:13-14].

By dying on the cross, rising from the dead after three days, and being seated at the Father's right hand, Jesus created this possibility: a new covenant [LUKE 23:33-55, 24:1-12]. As said before, this new covenant is accessible to all people from all nations. All that is needed is faith: faith in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. This is discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.

Reconciliation and being born again [1.6]

Anyone can be reconciled to God by faith in Jesus. What this basically means is that the believer accepts Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. Upon doing so, the believer is *born again*. Being born again means that all the believer's sins are forgiven, and that he receives the gift of *eternal life* [JOHN 3:3; ROMANS 10:9-10].

The Peter Package

In the book of Acts, Peter presents *three clear steps* leading to the *complete born-again experience*:

Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

– ACTS 2:38

These three steps belong together, because Peter preaches them as one package. For this reason they are also known as ‘the Peter Package’: [1] repentance, [2] water baptism and [3] receiving the Holy Spirit, a synonym for the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The first step: repentance

Before discussing the topics of water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit, we will first take a look at the first and foremost step.

Repentance is a decision [2.1]

Perhaps you are wondering what it is from which we must repent. Or maybe you are thinking: from our sins, of course! But then again... It could be that we have committed certain sins in our lives without being aware of them.

In biblical terms, *repentance* most notably means to turn *from our unbelief to the true faith*, i.e. to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who died on the cross for our sins [ACTS 2:37-38]. It means that you *choose* to acknowledge Him as Lord and to follow Him for the rest of your life. In doing so, you receive forgiveness for sins. You demonstrate your decision to follow Christ by being baptised in water. Of course, all the other sins still need to be dealt with, but that is a transformation process that starts after repentance and continues for the rest of your life [1 THESSALONIANS 5:23]. This is why it is also called ‘the sanctification *process*’.

Indeed, repentance is a decision. The meaning of the original Greek word is a *change of mind* followed by an actual *turning* to the one true God. It involves a great deal of action. Similarly, the Hebrew word literally means: turning around. It involves a *conscious decision* we make the very moment we are convinced.

Three keys [2.2]

Read the parable of the prodigal (lost) son [LUKE 15:11-32]. It tells us about a young man who asked his father to give him his part of the inheritance. He did not seem to care whether his father was still alive or not. Upon receiving his inheritance, he moved to a distant country and squandered his wealth in wild living. However, he became impoverished when a severe famine occurred in that country. Finally, he had nowhere left to go and decided to return to his father. This parable illustrates three important keys to repentance:

1. Recognition: *But when he came to himself...*[VERSE 17]
2. Change of mind/decision: *I will arise and go to my father...*[VERSE 18]
3. Action: *And he arose and came to his father* [VERSE 20]

Faith is a requirement [2.3]

Without faith it is impossible to please Him.

– HEBREWS 11:6

There is no basis for a relationship with God if we do not have faith in Him. Moreover, we are only saved by faith and not by works, so that no-one can boast and say: I did this all by myself [EPHESIANS 2:8-9]. No, God did this for us and all the honour belongs to Him.

The Hebrew word for faith is *emoena* and it means ‘to be certain’. It can also mean ‘stand firm’ or ‘unmoveable’. So, faith is *certainty*. The Bible also teaches that it is the only basis for a *righteous life* [ROMANS 1:17, 3:21-26].



The second step: water baptism

He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

– MARK 16:16

Three different baptisms [2.4]

We can find three different baptisms in the New Testament:

1 – The baptism of John the Baptist

The baptism of John the Baptist was meant to prepare Israel for Jesus’ coming. John implored people to repent and lead fruitful lives. They confessed their sins while being baptised [MATTHEW 3:6-8]. John’s baptism was *temporary* and was abolished after Jesus’ resurrection. In other words, this baptism no longer applies to us [ACTS 19:3-5].