

John Wesley was born on June 17th, 1703 in Epworth, Lincolnshire, England. He was the fifteenth of nineteen children. In 1709 he was rescued from a fire, and from then his mother gave him special attention and care, believing that God had a great purpose for his life.

In 1729 John returned to Oxford and soon became the spiritual leader of the small group of students that his brother, Charles Wesley, had gathered. Other students called the group the "Holy Club." Later they were known as "Methodists."

Together they studied the Greek New Testament, abridged numerous theological and devotional works, fasted twice a week, partook of the Holy Communion and regularly visited those sick or imprisoned. One of the members of this "Holy Club" who became a famous preacher and evangelist was George Whitefield. It is estimated that ten million people heard the gospel through his preaching alone.

John Wesley went to America in 1735 as a missionary and on his return home he was convinced by the German Moravians who stressed the importance of having right standing with God by faith alone, followed by an inner assurance of salvation. Wesley began to preach and teach this message, even though he himself still lacked this complete assurance of being saved.

If anyone should have been confident about their "religion" it was John Wesley. After all, he had been a missionary to the American Indians; he was an Anglican priest; he had been involved in prison ministry; he was an Oxford scholar; his personal spiritual habits included reading the Bible and regular prayer; he was

sensitive to sin and tried to do what was right and holy. However, none of these activities had given him peace about his own destiny.

Was he right with God? Was he saved? Was he going to Heaven? These questions still plagued his mind. He had spent considerable time praying, studying the Bible and reading various books during this time of dilemma. He had sought counsel from other preachers and friends. All to no avail, but all this changed one evening when he reluctantly attended a Christian meeting in Aldersgate, London, on May 24th, 1738.

On that night someone was reading from Martin Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to Romans*. Wesley noted that about 8:45 p.m. "while he (Luther) was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

From this night onwards Wesley had great peace about his eternal destiny. Notice from his own words what brought this peace, "...I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins..." It was faith in Jesus Christ that brought an end to Wesley's doubts.

Wesley came to the point where he knew that he could go to Heaven only because Jesus Christ was his Lord and Saviour. Jesus alone can save us from our sins. Wesley felt a warmth in his heart because Jesus was the Saviour of his soul. Only then he had the witness of the Spirit that he was a child of God.

The Bible says, '*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children*' (Romans 8:16).

Shortly after this, John's brother, Charles, and their friend, George Whitefield, had the same assurance that they were saved by faith in Jesus. They began to preach this message with a new fervour.

Their emphasis on a personal experience of salvation by faith was considered a 'new doctrine' and unnecessary by most leaders of the Church of England, who maintained that a person was sufficiently saved by virtue of infant baptism. Soon, established churches were closing their doors to the Methodist preachers, which forced them to begin their great campaigns of open-air gospel preaching.

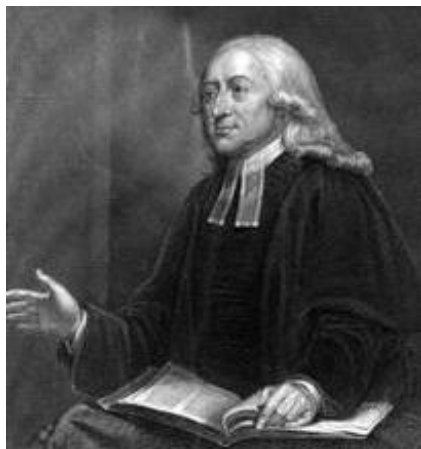
A key step in the development of Wesley's ministry was to travel and preach outdoors. Whitefield was the one who first encouraged him to do this, but Wesley soon recognized that the open-air services were necessary because they were successful in reaching men and women who would not enter the churches.

Wesley felt that the church had failed to call sinners to repentance, that many of the clergy were corrupt, and that people were perishing in their sins. He believed he was commissioned by God to bring about revival in the church, and no opposition, persecution, or obstacles could prevail against the divine urgency and authority of this commission.

From then on Wesley took opportunities to preach wherever an assembly could be brought together, more than once using his father's tombstone as a pulpit. He spoke at churches when he was invited, but took his stand in the fields, in halls and cottages, when the churches would not receive him.

As early as 1739, Wesley approved local preachers and sent them out to proclaim the gospel. This expansion of lay preachers was one of the keys of the growth of Methodism. Unwilling that people should perish in their sins, Wesley continued his open-air preaching for more than fifty years.

Moving across Great Britain, North America and Ireland, Wesley helped to form and organize small Christian groups that developed intensive and personal accountability, discipleship and religious instruction. He continued to appoint itinerant unordained evangelists to travel and preach as he did and to care for the new believers. Under Wesley's direction, Methodists became leaders in many social issues of the day, including prison reform and the movement to end slavery.



John Wesley travelled generally on horseback, preaching two or three times each day. It is estimated that he rode 250,000 miles by horse, gave away 30,000 pounds, and preached more than 40,000 sermons.

Wesley died on March 2nd, 1791, in his 87th year. As he lay dying, his friends gathered around him. Wesley grasped their hands and

said, "Farewell, farewell." He then repeated his final words twice by saying, "The best of all is, God is with us." He then lifted his arms and raised his feeble voice again, repeating the same words, "The best of all is, God is with us."

Because of his charitable nature he died poor, leaving as the result of his life's work 135,000 members and 541 itinerant preachers under the name "Methodist". It has been said that when John Wesley was carried to his grave, all that he left behind was a good library of books, a well-worn clergyman's gown, but most of all, the Methodist Church.

The Methodists continued to take the gospel around the world after Wesley's death. For example, Methodist missionaries came to Fiji in 1835. For many years they had little success. But things began to change so that by the 1860's multitudes of native Fijians had given their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Methodist Church must once again promote the work of God by removing any compromise with sin. They must get back to their original task of sending out preachers of the gospel and missionaries to save souls. The Methodists will then see a mighty move of God.

MAKE SURE OF YOUR SALVATION!

To go to Heaven you must put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of your soul. Please say this simple prayer:

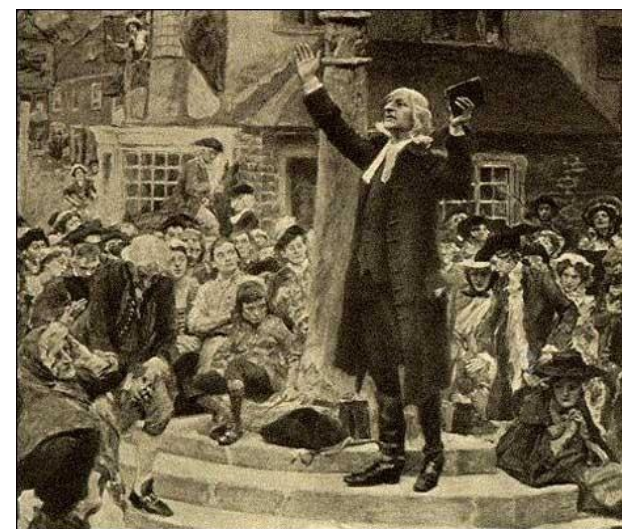
"Lord Jesus, have mercy on me, a sinner. Save me and set me free."

For more information contact:

Evangelist Matthew Needham
findsalvation@hotmail.com

www.evangelistmatthew.com

THE SALVATION OF JOHN WESLEY



**Preacher, Evangelist,
Founder of the Methodist Church**