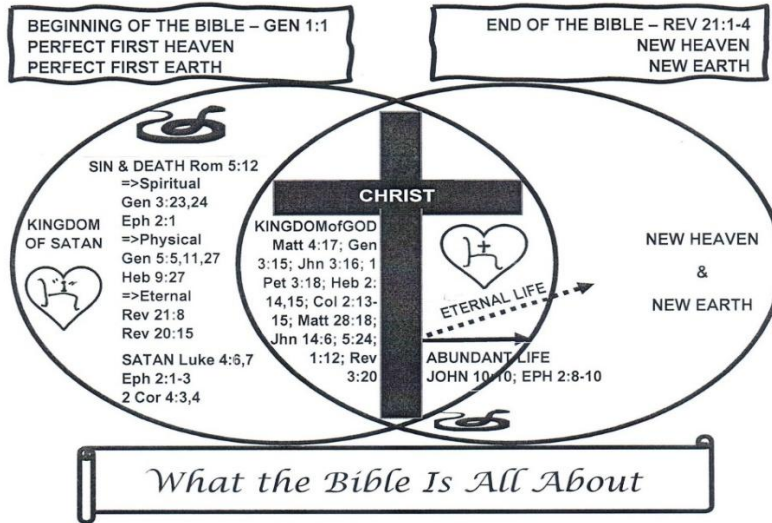


# WHAT IS THE BIBLE ABOUT?

## Evangelistic Introduction to the Bible

By Pastor Bien Llobrera

**LESSON AIM:** *To discover God’s plan for salvation as revealed in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.*



NOTE TO TEACER:

- You may use this as an EVANGELISTIC INTRODUCTION to the Bible.
- This is a long lesson, and you may wish to discuss this in 2 or 3 meetings, depending on the wishes of your class.

### PART ONE: PERFECT BEGINNING

The Bible is the story of the progressive unfolding of God’s plan of salvation. When we open the Bible to the very first chapter of the very first book, we read of a perfect creation, a perfect heaven and earth.

***“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . . Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good”*** (Genesis 1:1, 31).

But when we turn to Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we read this:

***“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away”*** (Revelation 21:1).

The stark contrast between these two statements at the beginning and the end of the Bible causes us to wonder and ask: “What happened?”

What made it necessary for God to create a new heaven and a new earth? What happened to the original perfect heaven and earth? (Please see diagram above.)

The story of the Bible is the story of the unfolding of God's plan of salvation. It is the story of how God set about to restore what was damaged and lost. It is the story of how this salvation required a tremendous cost, and how, because of His great love, God willingly paid the cost.

The account of creation tells us that in the beginning, God brought into existence everything by His Word. He spoke, "Let there be!" and there they were – the vast expanse of space containing countless planets, stars and galaxies; the earth and all the creatures that would inhabit its land masses and rivers and oceans and surrounding atmosphere.

But in bringing forth the crowning glory of His creation, God did not only speak; He bent down to mold humanity with His own hands.

Genesis 1:26-28:

***26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."***

Genesis 2:7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 21, 22:

***7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being . . . 8 The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil . . . 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 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." . . . 21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.***

## RULERS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Adam and Eve were created to rule God's creation, therefore God created them in His image and imparted to them qualities that were over and above the rest of creation.

- **SPIRITUAL COMPONENT.** Adam and Eve had physical bodies with material characteristics like the rest of creation. God also imparted to them a spiritual component, which the Bible would later define as soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
- **MORAL SENSE.** Furthermore, Adam and Eve were given a moral faculty, free will, along with the faculties of mind and emotion. Heavenly bodies automatically followed laws that kept them in their fixed orbits; animals and plants were dictated upon by natural instincts. Humans were different in that they could make choices. Free will was necessary for them not be robots but free agents, who could relate to God in a fellowship of love and partnership. In a sense, we might say that God took a tremendous risk; free will enabled humans to say yes or no to God Himself. In fact, as we read in Genesis 2:16,17, God gave them from the very beginning the opportunity to exercise their freedom to choose.
- **PERFECT ENVIRONMENT.** God placed Adam and Eve in a perfect environment in the Garden of Eden where all their needs were supplied. The different trees in the garden represented their various needs and God's provision to meet those needs – physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, spiritual and eternal. Let's read Genesis 2:8-9.
  1. For ***physical needs*** God provided trees for food.
  2. For ***intellectual needs*** God provided beautiful trees, representing everything in nature that people can admire, think about and study and which gave satisfaction to their feelings and emotions.
  3. For ***moral needs*** God provided the tree of knowledge of good and evil, so people can exercise their power of choice.
  4. For their ***spiritual need*** and the ***need for eternal significance*** God gave the tree of life that promised eternal life. Isn't this absolutely amazing? The same Creator, who designed us to have different kinds of needs, also created simultaneously all the things that would satisfy those needs correspondingly!
  5. Humans also had the ***need for love, companionship and relationship***. How did God provide for this need? Let's read Genesis 2:18, 21-25. God provided for the need for love, companionship and relationship through marriage and the family and society.
- **MANDATE TO RULE.** Thus equipped with mind, emotion and will and soul and spirit, God gave humans the mandate to rule over creation.

This is the picture given by the Bible of the beginning. We see Adam and Eve, two perfect humans, placed in a perfect environment and given a perfect assignment. From

the beginning humans had a perfect relationship with God as His vicereagents of His perfect creation.

## **PART TWO: TROUBLE IN PARADISE**

It did not take long before trouble entered Paradise when the Tempter, in the form of a serpent, came into the Garden. The Bible identifies this Tempter in Revelation 12:9:

***“... the great dragon ... that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world....”***

How did trouble begin in Paradise? Let's read Genesis 3:1-8:

***Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”***

***<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; <sup>3</sup> but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”***

***<sup>4</sup> Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”***

***<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.***

***<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the <sup>l</sup>cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.***

Many people ask, “Why did God plant the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil only to forbid Adam and Eve from eating of its fruit? Why did God allow Satan to tempt Eve?”

We must admit that our human minds will never fathom God's reason for these things. Suffice it to remind ourselves that God did not create robots; He gave Adam and Eve the gift of free will, the freedom and ability to choose. Free will is not really free without the opportunity to choose one way or the other.

Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, and by their disobedience sin entered the human race and human history.

What exactly was wrong with eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? We discover what's wrong when we examine the nature of Satan's temptation; he said, "When you eat of this forbidden fruit, you will become like God, knowing good and evil."

Well, first of all, eating of the forbidden fruit was wrong because they were directly disobeying a clear prohibition by God. But more serious than just disobeying a clear command, Adam and Eve chose to take for themselves the authority to decide what was good and evil for themselves, instead of looking to God to guide them with His Word. Only God had the right to define good and evil. Instead, Adam and Eve grabbed that right for themselves; in that sense, they have become like God. More precisely, they became a god to themselves, with the power to define what is good or evil.

To use an illustration:

In the heart of Adam and Eve there is a throne; only God deserves to sit on that throne as Creator, Owner, and King of their lives. When they ate of the forbidden fruit, they kicked God out of the throne and installed their SELF as god and king on the throne of their heart. This is the root meaning of sin, spelled "S – I – N" (with the big proud letter "I" in the middle), declaring:

"I am the King/Queen of my life, and I decide what to do, when and where and why and how to do it, and I don't care what God or others will say; and I don't care whether or not other people are hurt as long as I'm happy."

Sin is rebellion against God and declaring independence from God. And this rebellious, independent, self-centered attitude was passed on by Adam and Eve to all their descendants, including you and me.

What were the results of sin? The immediate results included the following:

- **SHAME & PRETENCE BEFORE OTHERS.** Adam and Eve saw their nakedness and began to make coverings for themselves to hide their shame from one another. Bible scholars believe that before they committed sin, a cloud of glory

from God covered Adam and Eve like a garment in such a way that they could be totally transparent and totally accepting of each other because they had nothing to hide. The moment they ate of the forbidden fruit, that glorious covering vanished, along with their sense of mutual transparency and acceptance, leaving them with the feeling of shame and the need for covering. From that point on, all honesty disappeared and pretense took its place.

- **GUILT & ALIENATION TOWARD GOD.** After Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they started running away and hiding from God, and all their descendants have been fugitives from God ever since.
- **SUFFERING, DECAY, & DEATH.** Through their sin, Adam and Eve brought into the world suffering, decay, and death. Many say, “But Adam and Eve stayed alive after they ate of the forbidden fruit.” Let me ask you: “When you cut off a branch from a tree, do the leaves on that branch still look alive, fresh and green?” Yes; but you know that the branch is already dead because it’s no longer connected to the source of life. The same thing happened to Adam and Eve. Physically, they remained very much alive after they committed sin. But the punishment of death had been immediately imposed on them. The Bible tells us that death is experienced in several stages:

**STAGE 1: SPIRITUAL DEATH.** Adam and Eve became spiritually separated from God the moment they sinned. And all their descendants are born spiritually separated from God. Ephesians 2:1 describes this condition of spiritual death: *“And you ... were dead in trespasses and sins”*.

**STAGE 2: PHYSICAL DEATH.** Physical death happens when the soul/spirit leaves the body; the soul/spirit returns to God to face judgment, and the body returns to the dust from which it was originally taken. Adam and Eve eventually died physically. And every human being born into this world will die physically without exception. Someone commented, “The chance of death for every person is still 100%.” Sadly, according to the Bible, physical death is not the end.

**STAGE 3: ETERNAL DEATH.** Revelation 21:8 tells us, “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone,

which is the second death.” The second or eternal death is that condition wherein the soul/spirit of a person (who died without receiving forgiveness of his/her sins) will be cast into the place of eternal suffering, eternally separated from God. God’s plan of salvation was implemented to provide a way for people to receive forgiveness of sins in order to be spiritually reconnected with God and eventually receive bodily resurrection and be saved from eternal death.

- **SATAN BECAME THE RULER OF THIS WORLD.** Adam and Eve were originally installed as rulers of all creation under God. The moment they sinned they lost their position of authority and Satan usurped that position, so much so that he could even boast about this to Jesus, the Son of God:

***<sup>5</sup> Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. <sup>6</sup> And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours” (Luke 4:5-7).***

Jesus did not contradict the claim of Satan. In fact, three times He referred to the devil as the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

The whole world is under the control of Satan and he manipulates people through sin, using three the main avenues of lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These were the same three avenues that he used with Adam and Eve and Jesus:

***<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:15-17).***

Even worse, Satan maintains his hold on people by blinding their minds so they will not see their only way of escape through Jesus Christ:

***<sup>3</sup> But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).***

Satan has never changed his strategy or tactics. He continues to offer the kingdoms of this world to people – satisfaction of their physical and emotional

passions, satisfaction of their greed for possessions, and satisfaction of their hunger and thirst for power and position. What people do not realize is that obtaining the wealth, fame and power in this world will cost them their most precious possession, their soul. In the end, they will realize too late that they have sold their soul to the devil. But the devil did not lie to them; just like he said to Jesus, the devil continues to tell people very frankly:

***“All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”***

No wonder, when you talk to people about God or Christ or the Bible, they will say, “Sorry, I have no time for that.” Why? Because they are worshiping the devil. But someone would protest, “No, I don’t worship the devil.” The truth is, the devil is happy enough that you have no time to worship God, no time to follow Christ, no time to listen to His Word the Bible, because, in effect, when you don’t worship God you are actually worshiping Satan. And Satan will keep you busy in acquiring all the wealth and fame and power in the world in order to prevent you from having time for God.

Please study carefully the diagram above; notice that Satan, the Serpent, is ruling on top of the world of sinners.

### **PART THREE: GOD PROMISED THE COMING MESSIAH**

The sin of Adam and Eve plunged the world into the darkness of sin. But in the midst of that tragic darkness, God immediately caused the light of His promise to shine. This promise came in the form of God’s curse upon Satan in Genesis 3:15:

***“And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her Seed;  
He shall bruise your head,  
And you shall bruise His heel.”***

God’s promised the coming of “the Seed (or Son) of the woman, who would eventually defeat Satan. Later on, the prophets of Israel would call Him the Messiah, the Lord’s Chosen or Anointed One, who would bring salvation to Israel and to the world. The Messiah would engage Satan in a do-or-die conflict. In their mortal combat, Satan will succeed in crushing the heel of the Son, but the Son will triumph by crushing the head of Satan. The Messiah would solve the problem of sin and all its results; He would deliver the world from the dominion of Satan.

Adam, the first representative head of humanity, failed and lost his position of authority. The Messiah, the second representative head, would achieve complete victory over Satan and would regain all that Adam lost, including the position as ruler of all God's creation. Who was this Son of the Woman? This was Jesus, the Son of God, who humbled Himself and came down from heaven in order to be born as a human being through the miracle of virgin birth.

- God's angel announced the manner of His birth to the virgin Mary. Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they officially got married and came to live together, Mary conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's read Matthew 1:18-23:

***<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. <sup>20</sup> But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."***

***<sup>22</sup> So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."***

- The moment Satan saw that the promised Son of the Woman was born in the city of Bethlehem, he immediately plotted to kill Him. Satan incited Herod, the king of the Jews at that time, to kill all the children ages two downwards to make sure the baby Jesus would not escape. However, before Herod's soldiers were able to start the massacre God had already warned Joseph to take the child Jesus and His mother and flee to Egypt, where they hid for a time until the death of Herod. After some time, Joseph received instruction from God to return to the land of Israel and settle in a little town called Nazareth. There Jesus grew as a normal obedient son of Mary and Joseph for thirty years. Luke 2:51-52 summarizes those years in two verses:

***<sup>51</sup> Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. <sup>52</sup> And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.***

- After thirty quiet years in Nazareth, God's hour struck! The moment had come to begin the assault on the strongholds of Satan. God called Jesus to begin His

public ministry, beginning with His baptism through John the Baptist. Let's read Mark 1:9-13:

***<sup>9</sup> It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."***

<sup>12</sup> Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.

- At His baptism, God put His seal of approval on the perfect life of Jesus during the thirty silent years by anointing Him with the Holy Spirit and by publicly declaring, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Immediately after His baptism the Holy Spirit drove Jesus to the wilderness to meet Satan in open combat for forty days and nights, without taking any food or water. During the thirty silent years, Jesus certainly was attacked by the usual temptations of everyday existence; Jesus overcame all those temptations. However, during the forty days and nights in the wilderness, the temptations piled upon Him with greater intensity. Satan threw at Jesus all the tactics and stratagems that he had used successfully against people since the time of Adam and Eve. But by using the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, Jesus routed all the Tempter's attacks (Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13 cp. Ephesians 6:17).

Hebrews 4:15-16 summarizes the overwhelming victory of Jesus over all temptations and the reason why He had to undergo this terrible ordeal:

***"<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."***

Jesus overcame all temptations for our sake. In the Garden of Eden, the first human representative head, Adam, failed miserably under temptation and passed on to all his descendants his guilt and all the destructive results of his failure. In contrast, here in the wilderness, the second human representative head, Jesus, triumphed convincingly and He now passes on to us, who believe in Him, all the precious fruits of His victory (Romans 5:12-21).

#### **PART FOUR: THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND!**

Emerging victorious from his battle with Satan, Jesus began His campaign to save humanity and to reclaim the throne that Adam had lost to the enemy. The inaugural proclamation of Jesus is very significant:

***Mark 1:14-15: <sup>14</sup> Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”***

With this proclamation, the kingdom of God, under the generalship of Jesus, began the invasion against the kingdom of Satan.

Please study again our diagram. Note the two circles. The first circle represents the world under the dominion of Satan, the Serpent. As earlier explained, because of Adam’s sin Satan was able to usurp (forcibly and deceitfully take over) the dominion over the earth, which originally belonged to humans. The second circle represents the kingdom of God. Note the overlap between the two circles. This overlap means that with the coming of Jesus, the kingdom of God has invaded the kingdom of Satan; this is the meaning of “The kingdom of God is at hand”. Now, the peoples of the world have to make a choice between the two kings and the two kingdoms; this is the meaning of “Repent”:

- Will people continue to remain under the kingdom of Satan?
- Or will people renounce their former allegiance to Satan and transfer their allegiance to Jesus? To repent means to reject Satan and to accept and follow Jesus as the new King of one’s life.

To “believe in the gospel” means to put one’s confidence in the good news that Jesus has provided the way for former rebels to receive full amnesty for their treason against God and to be welcomed back again as full citizens of the kingdom of God.

You see, because of sin all humanity had become slaves of Satan. But humanity’s need was not only how to be delivered from Satan’s bondage. Humanity’s greater need was how their rebellion against God was to be forgiven. How was God going to provide this forgiveness? From the human perspective, God seemed to be “caught between the horns of a dilemma” (to use an old expression). God was caught between the demands of His love and the demands of His justice.

On the one hand, God’s love moved Him to rescue humanity. On the other hand, God’s justice demanded that every human being must be punished to the full extent of God’s law. In the words of the apostle Paul, “How could God be just and at the same time be the justifier of the ungodly”? (Romans 3:26).

How God reconciled His love and His justice was a mystery deeply embedded in His plan of salvation.

As Jesus pressed His assault against the enemy kingdom, Satan and all his hosts of demons and evil spirits tried to oppose Him at every turn. But every time there was an encounter between Jesus and evil spirits, they immediately realized they were totally powerless to resist. The Messiah always cast out the evil forces and delivered the victims from their clutches. This is how Acts 10:36-38 describes the earthly ministry of Jesus:

***<sup>36</sup> The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—<sup>37</sup> that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.***

Satan knew his only hope was to kill Jesus before Jesus could crush his head. Satan used jealousy to inflame the hatred of the Jewish religious and political leaders against Jesus. And using greed, masquerading as concern for the poor, he gained entry into the heart of Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles, causing him to sell his master for thirty pieces of silver. With the help of Judas, the murderous Jewish leaders implemented their plot to arrest Jesus on trumped-up charges and they successfully manipulated the justice system to condemn Jesus to die by crucifixion.

But unbeknownst even to angels and Satan and evil spirits and humans, God was actually working out His secret plan. In the coming of Jesus the love of God reached its fullest expression in His determined pursuit to restore humanity to Himself. The joining of deity and humanity in the incarnation of Jesus was the closest that God could come to humanity. In Jesus God was giving Himself totally to humanity while at the same time God was taking humanity back to Himself.

Since the Garden of Eden, God has been relentlessly pursuing humanity, while humanity was relentlessly fleeing deity. In the joining of deity and humanity in the incarnation of Jesus and in His decision to live as a human among humans, God had in a real sense caught up with fugitive humanity and boxed him into a corner. God and humanity were finally face to face, with God offering Himself completely in love to the fugitive.

And what does the fugitive do? Instead of surrendering himself to the arms of divine love, he allies himself with God's enemy and kills the only Person who truly loves him! When utmost love encounters utmost hate, hate plunges the dagger deep into the heart of love. The creature kills his Creator, humanity murders his God!

There in that act of murdering the Son of God, sin achieves its fullest expression. And what does God do? Instead of pulverizing the murderer, God offers His own Son on the altar of His divine justice as the atoning sacrifice for all the sins of humanity. Having satisfied the demands of His justice, He turns to the murderer and offers him complete forgiveness and total acceptance.

Watching from the sidelines, Satan is totally blindsided. He has been jealous of humanity all along, while at the same time feeling thoroughly frustrated by his inability to hit back

at God Himself. He had thought that by getting God to become so angry as to destroy sinning humanity, he would gain a measure of satisfaction in seeing God's plan for humanity derailed, if not defeated.

But, no! Just when Satan expected the full force of God's wrath to fall on humanity, God deflects His wrath instead toward His own Son and pours upon His Son the full fury of divine judgment. With the cup of justice completely emptied, God now stretches out His hands of forgiveness to offending humanity!

Satan thought he had the last laugh when he succeeded in getting Jesus nailed to the cross. Now his laughter reverberated like echoes bouncing between heaven and earth taunting and mocking him as the eternal loser.

At the resurrection of Jesus, God stripped Satan of all his powers while at the same time investing Jesus with all the authority and power in heaven and on earth, far above all rule and authority and might and dominion and above every name that can be named in this age and in that which is to come, declaring Him Lord and Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords.

And in the name of Jesus, God now proclaims complete amnesty and release and restoration to all of Satan's former slaves. The condition is easy and simple – that they repent (renounce their former allegiance to Satan and sin) and believe in (pledge their allegiance to) Jesus as Savior and Lord of their lives.

It was on the morning of the resurrection that Satan realized that in killing the Son of the Woman physically, he succeeded only in bruising his heels. To the contrary, through that same death followed by His resurrection the Son crushed Satan's head, defeating him totally once and forever. Thus the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 was finally fulfilled. The author of Hebrews describes this powerfully:

Hebrews 2:14-15: *<sup>14</sup> Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

Now, please note in the diagram the picture of the two hearts. The sinner (the heart on the left hand side) is under bondage to Satan only because SIN (represented by the big, proud letter "I") is reigning as king/queen in his/her heart.

The moment the sinner repents, the moment he/she accepts Jesus as Savior and Lord of his/her life, that very moment he/she will be delivered from Satan's bondage and snatched from the kingdom of Satan and transferred into the kingdom of God (the heart on the right hand side, under the cross).

The transfer from Satan's bondage to the freedom in Jesus is offered in the proclamation: "Repent and believe in the good news!"

## CORE GOSPEL TRUTHS

The core truths of the good news (gospel) are presented in the following verses:

John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

1 Peter 3:18: *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring <sup>ll</sup>us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.*

1 Corinthians 15:3-4: <sup>3</sup> *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.*

Colossians 2:13-15: <sup>13</sup> *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, <sup>14</sup> having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*

This passage in Colossians pointedly clarifies the two works of Jesus as Savior: (1) first, by His death He made possible the wiping away of all sins (forgiveness); (2) second, He defeated Satan and all his army of principalities and powers.

Matthew 28:18: <sup>18</sup> *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

John 14:6: *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

John 5:24: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."*

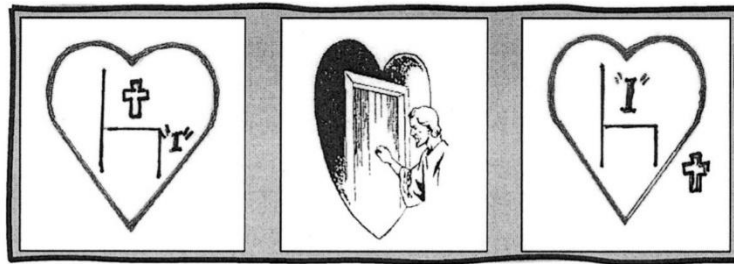
John 1:12-13: <sup>12</sup> *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the <sup>le</sup>right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

John 10:10-11: <sup>10</sup> *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. <sup>11</sup> "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."*

Ephesians 2:8-10: <sup>8</sup> *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Revelation 3:20: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

### PART FIVE: TIME TO CHOOSE



Christ is knocking.

Which heart do you choose your life to be?

- The heart with CHRIST on the throne, and your “I” (SELF) surrendered to Him?
- The heart with your “I” (SELF) on the throne, and with CHRIST outside?

If you choose CHRIST to be on the throne of your life, pray this sincerely from your heart:

***“Lord God in heaven, thank You that You love me and You want to give me eternal life and abundant life. I admit that I am a sinner. Forgive me of all my sins. Lord Jesus, I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. I believe that You rose again to be the Only Way to God the Father. I now open the door of my heart and I receive You as my Savior and Lord. I now surrender to You the throne of my life. Take full control of my life and help me to follow You from now on. This is my prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.”***

Did you pray sincerely to receive Christ as your Savior and Lord?

If you did, what does Christ promise? Let’s read Revelation 3:20 again:

Revelation 3:20: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

- If you hear Christ’s voice and open your heart, what two things will happen?

- Two things:
  - (1) First, Christ will come in your heart.
  - (2) Second, Christ and you will dine (eat) together.

You may ask, what does eating with Christ mean?

In the Bible, to eat together means to have a permanent relationship with one another. In other words, if you sincerely receive Christ as Savior and Lord in your heart, He guarantees that He will come in to sin on the throne of your life. He will establish a permanent relationship with you that will last throughout this life; and after this life, He will take you to be with Him forever in heaven, in the eternal kingdom of God.

- This is a good time to pray a prayer to thank Christ. Pray sincerely:

***Lord Jesus Christ, You see my heart; I have sincerely received You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, that You have come into my heart, and You have given me a personal relationship with You, which begins in this life and which will continue in the eternal kingdom of God. In Your name, I pray. Amen.***

## WHAT NEXT?

Please look again at our diagram (above). Note the two arrows on the right hand side of the cross.

- The arrow with the dashed line represents eternal life, which means that the person who has received Jesus as Savior and Lord is assured of living someday with God forever in the new heaven and new earth in the eternal kingdom of God.
- The arrow with the solid line represents the ABUNDANT LIFE that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, promises in this present life to you who have received Him as your Savior and Lord. To be assured of ETERNAL LIFE and heaven in the future is great.

Your ABUNDANT LIFE with Christ begins now. With Christ on the throne of your life, and with you totally surrendered to His kingdom and to His will, this is His promise in Matthew 6:33:

***<sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.***

This is the meaning of “eating with Jesus”. Throughout your earthly journey, Jesus will share His bread with you. And what is His bread? His bread consists

of all the blessings and provisions He will supply for all that you need. This does not mean that He will make you healthy, wealthy and prosperous in this world. This does not mean you will not suffer the trials and temptations that come to all who still live in this sin-cursed world.

Rather, Jesus promises that He will always be with you in every situation in life, and He will supply all that you need (not what you want), He will not deny anything that you need in order for you to fulfill His purpose for your life.

## **HEAVEN CAN WAIT**

Yes, the Lord Jesus saved you for a great purpose.

This is why He prayed that God should not take Christians to heaven right away. Did you know that? Lord Jesus does not want you go to heaven right away. In fact, He prayed to the Father to keep and protect Christians here on earth, because He has a great plan for them on this planet. The prayer of Jesus included all future believers, and that includes you!

On the night before His arrest, and looking beyond the cross to His eventual resurrection and return to heaven, He prayed this prayer for His disciples (which includes you):

***“<sup>15</sup> I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.<sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world”*** (John 17:15-18).

The Lord Jesus did not want His disciples to go to heaven immediately. He wanted them to remain on earth because He had a great mission for them to do in the world. That mission is to go and tell the whole world that Satan and sin have been defeated, and that the WAY OR BRIDGE BACK TO GOD has been established! That WAY is no other than Jesus Christ Himself!

You and I and all who believe in the Lord Jesus today are given the same mission. Fulfilling that mission is part of the ABUNDANT LIFE that He gives us. This mission is usually called the GREAT COMMISSION as given in Matthew 28:18-20:

***<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”***

Christ has saved us in order to become soldiers in His GREAT COMMISSION ARMY. The Great Commission involves EVANGELISM and DISCIPLESHIP.

1. **EVANGELISM** is helping people to know Christ and to have a personal relationship with Him.
2. **DISCIPLESHIP** is teaching and training people to become CHRIST-LIKE, to obey all that Christ commanded (in the Bible, God's Word), and to apply His commands in their daily life.

## WHAT ABOUT SATAN?

Finally, please note in our diagram (above) that the Serpent, Satan, has been cast down at the foot of the cross.

This means that Satan is a defeated enemy, already a permanently defeated foe. However, God has a special mission from God as well. God allows Satan and his evil hosts to continue operating at the present time. This is the reason: God is using Satan and his demons to test people. Someone said, "Satan is prowling around like a lion in this world, but God has already pulled out all his teeth." The Lord Jesus has stripped Satan of all his powers, except for one. Satan's only remaining weapon is lies and deceptions.

This is why God has given us the most powerful, undefeatable weapon against Satan: GOD'S TRUTH. For those who know the truth in Jesus, Satan's lies will no longer have any effect. God's TRUTH will defeat all of Satan's lies and deceptions.

This is why it is absolutely important for all disciples of the Lord Jesus to KNOW THE TRUTH revealed in the Bible, God's Word. Not only to know but to MASTER God's Word. As you master God's Word, you will discover the complete victory of Christ. And you will know and enjoy all that God has prepared for you in this life, and in the world to come!

*John 8:31-32: <sup>31</sup> Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. <sup>32</sup> And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

## THAT'S WHAT THE BIBLE IS ALL ABOUT

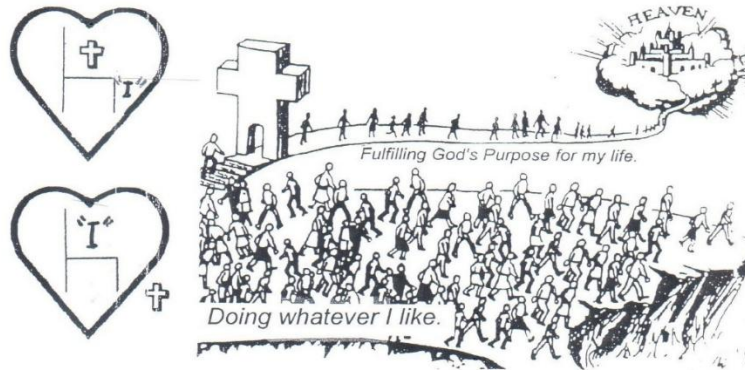
The Bible BEGINS with the creation of the original perfect heaven and earth. Sin entered and destroyed that perfect creation. The Bible ENDS with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

And in between the beginning and the end, the Bible tells the story of how God is forming a perfect family for Himself through His plan of salvation in His own Son Jesus

Christ. This family will spend eternity with God forever in the new heaven and new earth.

## A PERSONAL QUESTION

This reminds of the personal question we asked earlier.



Which heart do you choose your life to be?

- THE SELF-CONTROLLED HEART, with your big, proud “I” sitting as the BOSS of your life? If you are this kind of heart, the Bible warns you in Revelation 21:8:

Revelation 21:8: ***But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.***

- THE CHRIST-CONTROLLED HEART, with Jesus reigning as the KING of your life? If you are this kind of heart, praise God! The new heaven and new earth await you where you will enjoy love, joy and peace forever and ever with God!

Revelation 21:1-7: ***Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup> Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”***

***<sup>5</sup> Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”***

***<sup>6</sup> And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. <sup>7</sup> He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.***

## **INVITATION**

We invite you to join us for regular Bible study, in order to know more of God’s Word, to be assured of your relationship with Christ, and to discover the full blessing of abundant life in Christ.

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Day & Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person & Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

### **NOTE:**

As a follow-up to this lesson, invite interested friends to join a cell group to study NewLife Book 1.