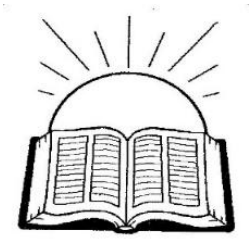

NewLife Series
EVANGELISM, DISCIPLESHIP, MISSIONS
English, Tagalog & Cebuano Versions.

By Pastor Bien Llobrera

BOOK 5

Basic Bible Truths

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BASIC BIBLE TRUTHS

LESSON 1

PALM: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT THE BIBLE

The study of correct Bible doctrines is absolutely important to a growing relationship with God. But it is also a vast area of study that requires several lifetimes to master. However, we must begin somewhere. In this book we will explore some BASIC BIBLE TRUTHS which we need as foundation for life and ministry as disciples. Later, we can go on to deeper studies of truths that God has revealed in His Word.

The basic Bible truths may be placed in our hand.

- Palm: TRUTHS ABOUT THE BIBLE
- Thumb: TRUTHS ABOUT GOD
- Pointing Finger: TRUTHS ABOUT CREATION
- Middle Finger: TRUTHS ABOUT SIN AND SALVATION
- Ring Finger: TRUTHS ABOUT THE CHURCH
- Little Finger: TRUTHS ABOUT LAST THINGS

In this lesson we will discuss FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT THE BIBLE. We place the Bible on the palm of the hand, because all doctrines and teachings relating to our relationship with God and our walk with Christ are taken from the Bible. There are five truths about the Bible, which we as disciples of Christ need to know. (Note: It may take more than one session to cover each lesson in this book. Please use your discretion as to how much material you will discuss adequately for each session.)

TRUTH 1: ONE BOOK

The Bible contains 66 books, but it is really ONE BOOK. The origin and history of the word "Bible" illustrate this amazing truth. "Bible" comes from the Greek word "biblia", which means "books," because before the invention of modern printing, the different portions of Scriptures were kept as separate books or scrolls: 39 books (scrolls) in the Old Testament, 27 books (scrolls) in the New Testament.

Later on, when the same word passed from Greek into Latin, "biblia" looked like a singular noun in Latin, so it came to mean "book". Scholars say that grammatically speaking, turning the Greek plural "biblia" into a Latin singular may be considered a mistake. But from the standpoint of the real nature of God's Word, it was not a mistake. Rather, it happily brought out the amazing truth that the Bible is truly ONE BOOK, though it contains 66 books. This book, the Bible, is called the WORD OF GOD.

> ***Isaiah 40:8: The grass withers, the flower fades. But the WORD OF OUR GOD stands forever.***
>
> ***1 Peter 1:23: ... having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the WORD OF GOD which lives and abides forever.***

TRUTH 2: ONE AUTHOR

The Bible had about 40 human writers and it took about 1500 years to write and compile the Bible. Amazingly, however, there are no real contradictions among the human authors. Opponents of the Bible have pointed out contradictions. But more and more research has shown that these contradictions are apparent, not real. Why is that? Because above the many human authors, who wrote over a long period of time, from different places and backgrounds, the Bible has only ONE AUTHOR – God Himself. As the Author, God watched over and enabled the human writers to record His Word. This process is called the divine inspiration of the Bible.

What do the following verses say about the divine inspiration of the Bible? Let's read 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 2:13

- In 2 Timothy 3:16 the word "inspired" means "God-breathed". The message of the Bible came from the very depths of God's being, and He breathed out or communicated His message to His chosen human instruments, the prophets and apostles, who then proclaimed and wrote down the message they had received from God.

- According to 2 Peter 1:21, this communication came through the Holy Spirit who moved – carried along, led, controlled, and safeguarded – the prophets and apostles, so that they would write down only what God wanted them to communicate to others.

- We are assured in 1 Corinthians 2:13 that the Holy Spirit made sure that the message was correctly received and correctly put into just the right human words.

For further study about how the human writers came to write God's Word, look up these verses: Exodus 24:3-4; Isaiah 30:8; Jeremiah 30:2; Habakkuk 2:2; Revelation 1:19.

TRUTH 3: TWO MAJOR DIVISIONS

The Bible has two major divisions: Old Testament and New Testament.

"Testament" essentially means a God-given covenant or agreement which governs the relationship between God and His people. The OLD Testament governed the divine-human relationship before the coming of Christ into the world. The NEW Testament may be described as the Old Testament "updated" by Christ's coming into the world, and it is now the covenant which governs the present divine-human relationship to the end of time.

- Old Testament

The Old Testament consists of 39 books divided as follows: 5 – 12 – 5 – 5 – 12:

- 5 Books of Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy)

- 12 Books of History (Joshua to Esther)

- 5 Books of Wisdom (Job to Song of Solomon)

- 5 Major Prophets (Isaiah to Daniel)

- 12 Minor Prophets (Hosea to Malachi)

Following the MacArthur Study Bible, we may summarize the Old Testament flow of history as follows:

1. Creation of the universe
2. Fall of man
3. Judgment flood over the earth
4. Fathers of the Chosen Nation (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob/Israel)
5. The History of Israel
   - Exile in Egypt – 400 years
   - Exodus and wilderness wanderings – 40 years
   - Conquest of Canaan – 7 years
   - Era of Judges – 350 years
   - United Kingdom (Saul, David, Solomon) – 110 years
   - Divided Kingdom: Judah (Southern Kingdom, capital: Jerusalem); Israel (Northern Kingdom, capital Samaria) – 350 years
   - Exile in Babylon – 70 years
   - Return and rebuilding the land – 140 years

PERIOD BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS
(Malachi to John the Baptist) – 400 years

- New Testament

The New Testament consists of 27 books divided as follows: 4 – 1 – 13 – 8 – 1

- 4 Gospels (Matthew – John)

- 1 Church History (Acts)

- 13 Letters by the Apostle Paul (Romans – Philemon)

- 8 Letters by Various Apostles (Hebrews – Jude)

- 1 Prophecy (Revelation)

We quote this summary of the New Testament from the MacArthur Study Bible:

After the completion of the OT, there were 400 years of "silence", during which God did not speak or inspire any Scripture. That silence was broken by the arrival of John the Baptist announcing that the promised Lord Savior had come. The NT records the rest of the story from the birth of Christ to the culmination of all history and the final eternal state; so the two testaments go from creation to consummation, eternity past to eternity future.

While the 39 OT books major on the history of Israel and the promise of the coming Savior, the 27 NT books major on the person of Christ and the establishment of the church. The 4 gospels give the record of His birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Each of the 4 writers views the greatest and most important event of history, the coming of the God-man, Jesus Christ, from a different perspective. Matthew looks at Him through the perspective of His kingdom; Mark through the perspective of His servanthood; Luke through the perspective of His humanness; and John through the perspective of His deity.

The book of Acts tells the story of the impact of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord Savior – from His ascension, the consequent coming of the Holy Spirit, and the birth of the church, through the early years of gospel preaching by the apostles and their associates. Acts records the establishment of the church in Judea, Samaria, and into the Roman Empire.

The 21 epistles were written to churches and individuals to explain the significance of the person and work of Jesus Christ, with its implications for life and witness until He returns.

The NT closes with Revelation, which starts by picturing the current church age, and culminates with Christ's return to establish His earthly kingdom, bringing judgment to the ungodly and glory and blessing for believers. Following the millennial reign of the Lord Savior will be the last judgment, leading to the eternal state. All believers of all history enter the ultimate eternal glory prepared for them, and all the ungodly are consigned to hell to be punished forever.

TRUTH 4: ONE THEME AND ONE PURPOSE

Since the Bible is one Book with one Author, it has only ONE THEME. This theme is Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament the coming of Christ to earth is foretold; in the New Testament the story of His actual coming is told.

The Bible has only ONE PURPOSE, which is related to its one theme. The purpose of the Bible is to bring us to personal faith in Christ, and as a result we will receive His gift of eternal life.

What do the following verses say about the ONE THEME and ONE PURPOSE of the Bible?

Luke 24:44-47 . . . . . .

John 20:31 . . . . . .

TRUTH 5: FIVE PRACTICAL USES

The Bible was inspired by God for practical uses. What are these? Please study 2 Timothy 3:16-17. God's Word is profitable for:

- Doctrine - to tell us what to believe;
- Reproof - to stop us when and where we are going wrong;
- Correction - to bring us back to the right way;
- Training or Instruction - to enable us to stay on right path.
- Equipping – to provide us with the resources to serve God.

After you believe in Christ and receive Him as your Lord and Savior, the Bible becomes your guide for daily living. With the help of the Bible you are equipped for a life of purpose and meaning, for a life spent in doing good works to glorify God and bless other people.

MEMORIZE

(1) First, memorize the Books of the New Testament, one group of books at a time:

- Group 1: 4 Gospels, 1 Church History
- Group 2: 13 Letters of Paul
- Group 3: 8 Letters by Various Authors; 1 Prophecy

(2) Next, memorize the Books of the Old Testament, one group of books at a time:

- Group 1: 5 Books of the Law
- Group 2: 12 Books of History
- Group 3: 5 Books of Wisdom
- Group 4: 5 Major Prophets
- Group 5: 12 Minor Prophets

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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LESSON 2

PALM: FIVE BASIC LAWS OF INTERPRETATION

Some people ask, "Isn't there a danger in letting people do their own interpretation of the Bible?" There are always dangers, but these dangers do not excuse us from obeying the command of Christ Himself for us to know the truth.

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

John 17:17:
(Jesus praying to God the Father): "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

To be true followers of Jesus, we must be faithful students of His Word, the Bible. It is through the truth, God's Word, that we become truly free – free from false beliefs and false values and false ways of living. Only through God's Word can we be sanctified – cleansed from the moral impurities that falsehood brings upon our life.

TWO TYPES OF MISINTERPRETATION

As we study and interpret the Bible, we must beware of two types of misinterpretation. Please study Revelation 22:18-19; according to this passage, what are two types of misinterpretation? This warning in Revelation applies specifically to the contents of the book of Revelation, but it generally applies to all other parts of the Bible.

The two main types of misinterpretation are:

- ADDING to Scripture: A person adds to the Scripture when he makes it to say or mean what it does not actually say or mean.

- SUBTRACTING from the Scripture: A person subtracts from the Scripture when he ignores, conceals, or contradicts what the Bible really says or means.

There are many laws of correct interpretation, but we shall study only five of these. Knowing and applying these laws will safeguard us from misunderstanding or misinterpreting God's Word.

LAW 1: LAW OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Only a person who has been born again spiritually and who has the indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit has the ability to understand and interpret the Bible. Please study 1 Corinthians 2:12-14.

The Christian, who has the Spirit of God, is contrasted with the non-Christian person or natural man. The natural man (1) does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; (2) he considers the things of God as foolishness; and (3) he cannot know or understand the things of God. On the other hand, the Christian is able to understand and receive the things of God through the help of the Spirit of God.

LAW 2: LAW OF LANGUAGE

Bible interpretation is subject to the rules of grammar and the rules of literary types. Grammar refers to words, tenses, sentences, and their relations. Literary types include prose, poetry, proverb, parable, narrative, history, prophecy, etc. Each literary type must be interpreted according to its own rules.

Illustration 1: Please study Hebrews 10:10, 14:

The GRAMMAR of Hebrews 10:10 demands that we interpret the death of Christ as happening only once and for all time, and His sacrifice is never to be repeated in any form or manner whatsoever. From Hebrews 10:10 and other related verses, we see, for example, that the teaching which says that the Roman mass repeats or "re-presents" the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood is a misinterpretation.

Illustration 2: Please study Psalm 91:4:

An example of literary type is Psalm 91:4. In this verse God is pictured to have wings. This is poetical imagery, and we must not therefore interpret the verse to say that God is some kind of bird. Rather, the verse is saying that just as the mother bird protects its little ones with her wings, so does God protect His people.

LAW 3: LAW OF CONTEXT

The context refers to the surrounding verses in which a particular verse is found. The law of context demands that we interpret a verse in relation to the preceding and succeeding verses.

Illustration: 1 Corinthians 15:19:

This verse is a favorite of Jehovah's Witnesses. They interpret this verse to say that IF YOU HOPE ONLY IN CHRIST, you are the most pitiable of all people. If we study the context, however, we shall see that 1 Corinthians 15 is actually saying that IF ONLY IN THIS LIFE we have hope in Christ then we are the most miserable of all people. But according to the context, since Christ rose from the dead, the person who believes in Christ has hope NOT ONLY IN THIS LIFE BUT ALSO IN THE LIFE TO COME! Therefore the Christian is of all people the most blessed and the most to be envied!

LAW 4: LAW OF UNITY

This law demands that we must seek that interpretation, which is consistent with the clear teachings of the other parts of the Bible. We must reject an interpretation, which makes different parts of the Bible to contradict each other, or which makes us ignore or set aside one part in favor of another.

This law specifically applies to difficult passages. When interpreting a difficult passage, you should make sure that you do not make the difficult passage contradict the passages which are very clear.

Illustration: Luke 14:26; Matthew 5:44:

Luke 14:26 is a difficult passage. What does Christ mean when He says "hate your father and mother"? We must interpret this in the light of the clear teaching of Matthew 5:44, which tells us to love even our enemies. In Luke 14:26, to hate means to LOVE LESS or to put in second place. Christ is saying that when the demands of God come in conflict with the demands of family, then we must choose to obey Christ instead of family; this means that we must love Christ MORE and our family LESS; we must be willing to forsake family members, if necessary, for the sake of Christ. But when we do this, this will come across to our family as practically hating them.

LAW 5: LAW OF OBEDIENCE

Please summarize in your own words the thought of Deuteronomy 29:29.

The law of obedience demands that we are responsible and accountable to obey those truths that are clear to us. Christ does not require us to do that which we do not know or understand. In studying the Bible there will be many things which you will not immediately understand; and there will be some things that you will never understand at all. The "secret" or "hard" things we must be content to leave in God's hands. But those things which we understand, those things we must obey.

The fifth law of interpretation demands a certain attitude: we must study the Bible for practical Christian living. We must not study the Bible merely for the purpose of adding to our knowledge. Rather, we must always study the Bible so that we will love and obey God more and more. Please study Matthew 7:24-27.

APPLICATION

We have learned that the Bible is GOD'S WORD. How does this truth affect our life? What do we do with this truth? In the account of the first temptation we find the bottom line issue regarding our attitude to God's Word, the Bible. In this account Satan comes in the form of a cunning Serpent to tempt our first mother, Eve.

Please study Genesis 3:1-5. Eve faced the bottom line issue: Whose word would she believe, and whose word should guide her life – God's Word or the Serpent's word? God's Word said: Don't eat of the forbidden tree or you will die. Satan's word said: Go ahead, eat and you will not die. Unfortunately, Eve along with Adam, chose to follow Satan's word and brought sin and death upon the whole human race.

Today the issue is still the same for you: Whose Word will you follow to guide your life – God's Word or Satan's word? In a short statement, write down your choice below.

_____

MEMORIZE:

> ***Hebrews 4:12: For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. – Hebrews 4:12***

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LESSON 3

THUMB: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT GOD

WHEN God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, He told him, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5).

As we study about God we should remember that we are standing on holy ground; like Moses we must take off our sandals. In other words, we must maintain the attitude of humility and worship. The only reason we are able to study about God is because He has made Himself

known in His Word, and He has made it possible for us to know Him by making us members of His family through His Son Jesus Christ (John 1:18). He has also given us His Holy Spirit, who will enlighten us to understand what God has revealed about Himself in the Bible (1 Corinthians 2:12). We may begin by studying five truths about God.

TRUTH 1: GOD IS CREATOR

What is the first truth revealed about God in the Bible? God is Creator. (Genesis 1:1)

The Bible tells us WHO was responsible for all creation: GOD. The Bible tells us two things about HOW creation came to be: First, God created everything by His Word. Second, God created everything out of nothing.

Whenever we human beings make anything, we have to use previously existing materials. In the beginning, there was only God, and He did not have any pre-existing material to use. He caused everything to come into existence OUT OF NOTHING. Theologians say in Latin: God created EX NIHILO. God SPOKE things into existence from nothing.

Read Genesis 1:3: Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. This creative word, "God said," is repeated in verses 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). Let's also study Psalm 33:6; Hebrews 11:3.

Scientists have proposed all kinds of theories about the beginning of everything. However, most, if not all, of their theories require that a pre-existing material must already be available to produce everything that we now see in the universe – from the smallest atom to the biggest galaxy. In the beginning, only God had the power and wisdom to create something out of nothing.

TRUTH 2: GOD IS SUSTAINER

The Bible reveals that God did not leave His creation to continue operating on its own apart from Him. God continues to sustain and govern His creation. From the following verses describe God's work as Sustainer.

Psalm 36:6; Isaiah 40:22,26; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3.

Note specially Colossians 1:17 and Hebrews 1:3. These verses reveal to us that everything in the present creation is held together and kept in proper working order by the power of Jesus Christ.

The universe needs constant maintenance! Scientists tell us that we may expect the universe to do two things, either to fly apart, with planets and stars scattering in all directions away from one another; or to collapse upon itself, planets and stars crashing into one another into one big crunch – but it doesn't. Why not? Because of the power of GOD THE SUSTAINER, who keeps all things together in their proper places.

TRUTH 3: GOD IS REDEEMER

The Bible tells us that everything was created perfect in the beginning, but something terrible happened to mar this perfection. Humanity fell into sin, and as a result everything in creation became subject to decay and death. God could have decided to discard the ruined creation – people and all – and start fresh. But against this dark background, another aspect of God's nature was revealed. God manifested Himself not only as Creator and Sustainer, but also as Redeemer or Savior of His creation, specially as Redeemer of human beings. Please note the name of God in the following verses:

Isaiah 44:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Jeremiah 50:34; Titus 3:4,5.

Let's think of this truth on a personal level. Each time we sin, God has all the right to judge and punish us instantly. But He doesn't. In stead He has provided a way for us to be forgiven of our sins and to be restored to Himself and restored to the right path He has set for us. This way is through His Son Jesus Christ who redeemed us – paid for our sins – on the cross. When we believe in Christ as our Lord and Savior He forgives all our sins and gives us new life and power to live in the way God wants us to live. We may call God our Redeemer "the God of second chances". He always gives us a chance to begin again. Do you realize that you have strayed away from God? Why don't you ask God's forgiveness – and begin again with Him today?

TRUTH 4: GOD IS FATHER

The truths about God as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer are awe-inspiring. But here is a still more awe-inspiring truth: God gives Himself to us as our FATHER! This story is told about one U. S. president. One day he was meeting with very important persons from different nations; all these persons were very formal and careful as they talked with the president. But on the floor, at the foot of the president, his son was playing with his toys. Whenever he had a little problem with his toys he tugged at his daddy's coat tails and the president would put all his guests on hold while he attended to his son. This story is only a faint illustration of what God wants to be to us as Father – very close, very intimate, very personal.

In the Old Testament, the Fatherhood of God was only hinted at. In the New Testament the full blaze of the Fatherhood of God was revealed by Christ. However, Christ's revelation came both as Good News and Bad News. The Bad News is that, because of sin, God's Fatherhood is no longer universal; it is conditional. The Good News is that Christ came precisely to restore sinful man to relationship with the heavenly Father.

BAD NEWS: Because of sin, who has become the father of sinners? John 8:44

GOOD NEWS: How may we restore our relationship with God as our Father? John 1:12

GOD THE FATHER calls us to a Father-Child relationship. Please study 2 Corinthians 6:17-18.

JESUS CHRIST THE SON teaches us to pray to God our Father. Matthew 6:9

THE HOLY SPIRIT enables us to call to God in the most intimate terms. Galatians 4:6

A PERSONAL QUESTION: Are you sure that your relationship with God as your heavenly Father has been restored? You may have it restored by inviting Christ to come in your heart as your Lord and Savior.

TRUTH 5: GOD IS PERFECT

God has attributes or qualities which He alone possesses in perfection. We shall mention nine of His innumerable attributes. Please study the following verses and meditate on each attribute that's mentioned.

- *ETERNAL (no beginning and no end)* Psalm 90:1,2; Revelation 1:8
- *OMNIPOTENT (all-powerful)* Luke 1:37; Jeremiah 32:17
- *OMNISCIENT (all-knowing)* Psalm 139:1-6
- *OMNIPRESENT (present everywhere)* Jeremiah 23:23-24; Psalm 139:7-10
- *SOVEREIGN (controls everything)* Daniel 4:34-35; Romans 11:36
- *LOVE (merciful and gracious)* 1 John 4:8-10; Jeremiah 31:3
- *FAITHFUL (unchanging; fulfills His promises)* Lamentations 3:22-23; 2 Corinthians 1:18-20.)
- *HOLY (pure; does not tolerate any sin)* 1 Peter 1:15-16; Isaiah 6:3.
- *JUST (punishes sin exactly and fairly)* Romans 2:5-6; 1 Peter 1:17.

NOTE: NAMES OF GOD

In the Old Testament, God has many names, such as EL, ELOHIM, ADONAI, and combinations of EL (EL-SHADDAI, EL-ELYON) as well as combinations of YWHW (such as the traditionally pronounced JEHOVAH-JIREH, JEHOVAH-RAPHA, JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, JEHOVAH-SHALOM, JEHOVAH-SHAMAH).

In Exodus 3:13-18, God revealed His personal covenant name YHWH ELOHIM (YAHWEH God: LORD God) (verses 15, 18) as the name by which Israel would henceforth call Him, as a sign of their covenant relationship with Him.

Significantly, the New Testament brings the final revelation that salvation can only be found in the Name of Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Therefore, we are commanded to be witnesses to Christ (Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8; Philippians 2:6-11). As regards God the Father, Jesus taught His disciples to call God “Our Heavenly Father” (Matthew 6:9-13); the Holy Spirit enables the believer to call God “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15,16; Galatians 4:6).

Following the example of the Septuagint (LXX) Greek Old Testament translation, which most of the early Christians used as their Bible, the Greek New Testament consistently translates the name YHWH as KURIOS, LORD (John 12:38; Acts 7:30-34, 37; Romans 1:29; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Hebrews 1:10). Hence, most of the earlier English translations also adopted the traditional translation LORD (all caps) for YHWH, though in some passages they used JEHOVAH.

However, modern scholars agree that JEHOVAH is certainly not accurate for this reason: because the Jews considered YHWH too holy to be pronounced, they inserted the vowel points of the word ADONAI as a signal that they were not to pronounce YHWH but instead pronounce ADONAI or simply say HA-SHEM (THE NAME). English translators made the mistake of transliterating YHWH using the vowel points of ADONAI, resulting in the hybrid word JEHOVAH. The modern scholarly consensus gives YAHWEH as the most probable pronunciation, although this is not hundred percent assured.

But as pointed out above, JESUS CHRIST is the name that God Himself gave as the name by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Hence, let us keep on witnessing for Jesus Christ as the only Way, the Truth, and the Life that leads to God (John 14:6). Any group promoting any other name as the way of salvation is a cult, because it diminishes or denies the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of the world.

APPLICATION

How should our knowledge of God affect how we relate to Him and how we live our lives?

(a) WORSHIP – As our CREATOR and SUSTAINER, and as One who possesses all PERFECT ATTRIBUTES, God deserves our worship. Revelation 4:1-11 describes how God is worshiped in heaven; please note verses 10-11. 1 Chronicles 29:10-18 is a good example of a prayer of worship.

(b) RELATIONSHIP - As our REDEEMER and FATHER, God calls us into relationship with Him. Are you sure you have a personal relationship with God? John 1:12.

If you already have a relationship with God, are you living worthily before your Heavenly Father? 1 Corinthians 10:31.

MEMORIZE:

> ***John 17:3: And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. – John 17:3.***

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LESSON 4

THUMB: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT CHRIST

WHEN Christ was on earth He asked His disciples two questions in Matthew 16:13-16.

- First, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"
- Second, "But who do you say that I am?"

As a follower of Christ you need to answer the same two questions. What have you heard others say about Christ? What do you personally believe about Christ? Your belief about Christ should include the following truths.

TRUTH 1: CHRIST IS GOD

When we say "Christ is God" we mean that He has the same divine nature as God the Father. One false cult teaches that Christ is only a man. Another false cult teaches that Christ was originally the first and highest angel created by God.

What does the Bible say about Christ? Let's look at key passages.

1. ISAIAH 9:6: This verse is a prophecy about Christ's birth. This verse gives two titles of Christ that proves He is God: MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER (or Father of Eternity).

2. JOHN 1:1: In this verse Christ is called the Word. This verse proves that Christ is God by saying: THE WORD (CHRIST) WAS GOD.

3. HEBREWS 1:8,10: In these two verses God the Father is speaking to His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Father calls His Son: GOD and LORD.

4. JOHN 5:19-23: The Jews wanted to kill Christ because He claimed to be equal with God (John 5:18). Instead of denying it, Christ explained what kind of equality He possessed with the Father.

(a) Christ claimed that He could do all that the Father could do. If Christ were only a man, could He do what only God could do? Since Christ can do all that God the Father does, is Christ God or not?

(b) Christ claimed that He is worthy of the same honor as the Father. If Christ were only a man, He would be committing blasphemy if He took the honor that God alone deserved. Since Christ deserves the same honor as God the Father, is Christ God or not?

5. PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11: This passage tells about Christ before He came to earth and about the position He occupied after He went back to heaven.

(a) What FORM did Christ have before He came down to earth? Christ had the FORM OF GOD. FORM follows NATURE (essence). Only someone with the nature of God has the form of God, in the same way that only someone with the nature of man has the form of a man. Since Christ possessed the FORM OF GOD, what kind of NATURE did He have?

(b) The Bible declares that only God deserves the worship of all His creatures, and He does not give His glory to another (Isaiah 45:14, 18, 21, 23; 48:11; Matthew 4:10). Philippians 2:9-11 says that God decrees that all creatures must worship and bow the knee to Christ and confess that He is Lord. Therefore is Christ God or not?

TRUTH 2: CHRIST BECAME A HUMAN BEING

Although Christ was God, what did He become? John 1:14

Christ the Eternal Word became flesh, taking on human nature.

(a) Christ was born of a virgin. Luke 1:30-35 describes the virgin birth.

When God created the first man Adam, He took some material from clay and out of that clay He formed Adam. In a similar way, God took some material from the womb of the Virgin Mary and out of that material God formed the human body of the baby Jesus, and Mary brought Him forth through the virgin birth.

(b) Christ lived a normal human life:

- He was born of a human mother (Luke 2:1-7)
- He grew up as a normal human child (Luke 2:52)
- He experienced ...

1. Hunger (Matthew 4:2)
2. Thirst (John 4:7)
3. Fatigue (John 4:6)
4. Sleep (Mark 4:38)
5. Temptations (Luke 4:1,2,13; Hebrews 2:18; 4:15)
6. Sorrow (John 11:35)

7. He had flesh, bones, and blood (Luke 24:39-40; John 19:34)
8. He died and was buried (Luke 23:46; John 19:38-41)

(c) Although Christ experienced all temptations like any human being, He was different in that He committed no sin and lived a perfect life of obedience to God. This was because He was born to become the Second Head of the human race in place of Adam. He came to succeed where Adam failed. 1 Peter 2:22; John 8:29, 46; Hebrews 4:15; 5:7-9; Romans 5:12-18.

(d) Christ became a human being to enable Him to die for the sins of the world. Hebrews 2:14-17; 10:5

(e) Christ was more than a man. His resurrection proved that He was indeed the Son of God, who possessed the same God-nature as God the Father. Romans 1:4; John 10:17-18,30.

TRUTH 3: CHRIST IS SAVIOR AND LORD

(a) The primary purpose of Christ's coming to the earth was to do the work of a Savior. From the following verses note the things from which Christ saves people:

- From sin: Matthew 1:21
- From fear of death and from bondage to the devil: Hebrews 2:14-15:
- From God's wrath at the end of the world: 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:9.)

(b) Christ is able to save because of His perfect life, His death, burial and resurrection, His ascension, His ministry as high priest, and His second coming. Hebrews 9:11-14: Acts 10:36-43

(c) Christ's work as Savior should not be separated from His position as Lord. If we believe in Him as Savior, we must also submit to Him as our Lord. According to the following verses, how should we demonstrate that Christ is the Lord of our life?

- Believe Him in our heart and with our lips confess Him as Lord: Romans 10:9-10
- Live in continual obedience to Him: Colossians 2:6-7; Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21-23.

(d) A personal question: Have you truly believed in Christ as your Savior and Lord? Are you consistently living in obedience to His commands? Are you encouraging others to believe in Him and follow Him?

TRUTH 4: CHRIST IS THE ONLY MEDIATOR

After completing His work of redemption on earth, Christ ascended back to heaven to assume His work as Mediator at the right hand of God the Father.

(a) Because Christ is the God-Man and because of His work as Savior and Lord, He is the only Mediator between God and people. He is the only Person who can bring people back to God. He is the only Person we must approach in order to have a personal relationship with God. John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16.

(b) This is the reason why we say, "I pray in the Name of Jesus Christ", because He is the only Mediator. John 14:13,14

(c) Most precious of all, as Mediator He is also our High Priest who continually prays for us. Just imagine this, Someone is always praying for us! Hebrews 7:25

(d) A personal application: Some people pray to certain saints because they believe that the saints "have influence with God". This is an insult to God and to His Son. God gave His Son precisely so that He alone might become our only and most effective Mediator with God (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5). Let us approach God through the only Go-between He has provided; God Himself declares that He will accept no other mediator, only the One who died and rose again for us, Jesus Christ our Savior, Lord, Mediator, Friend!

TRUTH 5: CHRIST IS THE COMING KING AND JUDGE

The next big event that we should be waiting for is not WORLD WAR III. We should be waiting for the Second Coming of Christ. At His Second Coming He will put an end to present human history as we know it, and He will establish His visible kingdom on earth over which He will reign personally. There are differences among sincere Bible-believing Christians regarding specific details of the Second Coming. But we must not lose sight of the most important thing: All Christians believe that Christ will come again!

(a) Christ promised He will come again (John 14:1-6);

(b) Immediately after Christ's ascension, the angels assured the disciples that Christ will come again in the same way that He left, in a visible way (Acts 1:9-11);

(c) The events attending the Second Coming are described in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17;

(d) The Second Coming will inaugurate the visible Millennial (1000 years) Reign of Christ on earth, after which the Last Judgment will be set up to be followed by the eternal kingdom of God (Revelation 20-22).

NOTE: We will study more about the Second Coming when we study LITTLE FINGER: TRUTHS ABOUT LAST THINGS.

APPLICATION

(a) Have you believed in Christ and received Him as your Savior, Lord and God? (John 20:28)

(b) Have you surrendered your self to Christ and to His purpose for your life? (Acts 26:15-19)

(c) Are you seeking to know Christ more and more everyday? (Philippians 3:7-11)

(d) Are you helping to make Christ known to the whole world? (Acts 1:8)

MEMORIZE:

> ***Matthew 16:16: Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." – Matthew 16:16.***

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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LESSON 5

THUMB: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

IN the technologically advanced nations of the west, people who have been educated in modern science no longer believe in a world of spirits. In most of the developing countries in the East, the Philippines among them, people still believe in spirits. In the east, these spirits are often more real and personal to people than God, and their fear of them is sometimes much stronger than their faith in God. However, there is now in the west a growing interest in spiritualism and even spiritism. For the Christian to have a sound view of the spirit world, he/she must begin by knowing and understanding the person and work of the Holy Spirit of God.

TRUTH 1: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD

The deity of the Holy Spirit is easy to prove by simple reasoning. In the same way that the spirit of man has the nature of man, so the Holy Spirit of God has the nature of God. There are many verses which prove that the Holy Spirit is God.

1. The Holy Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3-4). How does Peter's statement to Ananias prove that the Holy Spirit is God? Peter said to Ananias, "You have not lied to men but to God?" Which God did Peter mean? God the Holy Spirit.

2. The Holy Spirit possesses attributes and qualities of God.

- ETERNAL - Hebrews 9:14

- OMNIPRESENT - Psalm 139:7-8
- OMNISCIENT - 1 Corinthians 2:10
- OMNIPOTENT - Luke 1:35 (Note: The Holy Spirit is the POWER OF THE ALMIGHTY GOD.)

TRUTH 2: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON

The real issue about the Holy Spirit is whether He is a DISTINCT PERSON just like God the Father and God the Son are. By PERSON we mean a being with a mind, emotion and will of his own. Some sects call the Holy Spirit merely as a "force" like wind or electricity. "Force" has no mind, emotion, or will, and is therefore not a person. Does the Holy Spirit have mind, emotion, and will? Please study the following verses:

1. JOHN 16:13 – How does the Holy Spirit's ability to teach prove that He has a MIND?

2. EPHESIANS 4:30 – How does the fact that the Holy Spirit can be grieved prove that He has EMOTION?

3. ACTS 13:2 – How does the Holy Spirit's ability to choose missionaries prove that He has a WILL?

4. JOHN 14:26; 15:26 – Based on the fact that the Holy Spirit can be sent by either the Father or the Son, how can we prove that the Holy Spirit is a DISTINCT PERSON from the Father and from the Son?

5. The importance of the PERSON of the Holy Spirit is this: Just as we can relate either to the Father or to the Son because each is a PERSON with mind, emotion, and will; even so we can relate to the Holy Spirit and He can relate to us in inter-personal relationship. We can talk to the Holy Spirit and He can talk to us, and He can relate to us in all the different ways that persons connect with one another.

(NOTE: At this point, you may be asking: Do we have three Gods – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit? There is only ONE God, although subsisting in Three Persons. This will be explained under the topic "Trinity" in Lesson 6.)

TRUTH 3: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Life (Romans 8:2), and His primary work is to give life (John 6:63). From the following verses, describe the part of the Holy Spirit:

1. In PHYSICAL creation. Genesis 1:2; 2:7; Psalm 104:30

2. In SPIRITUAL creation:

(a) The Holy Spirit brings about the new birth, by which He imparts new spiritual life to every person who believes in Christ. John 3:3, 5; Titus 3:5

(b) The Holy Spirit is also responsible for bringing spiritual transformation which changes the believer into the image of Christ. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

TRUTH 4: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE COMFORTER

The word "Comforter" translates the Greek word PARAKLETOS, which can also mean companion, guide, helper, counselor, teacher, someone who is called to stand alongside a person. In John 14:16 Christ called the Holy Spirit as "another Comforter". Scholars point out that in the original Greek language of the New Testament, there are two words which may be translated as “another” but they have different connotations: ALLOS (another of the SAME KIND); and HETEROS (another of a DIFFERENT KIND). Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to be the ALLOS PARAKLETOS. This means that all that Christ was as the first PARAKLETOS to the disciples when He was with them on earth, the Holy Spirit would be another PARAKLETOS of exactly the same kind to be with Christians today! From the following verses, what can you expect today from the Holy Spirit as your Comforter?

1. Romans 8:16
2. Ephesians 1:13
3. John 14:17
4. 1 Corinthians 6:19
5. John 14:26
6. John 16:8-11
7. Acts 1:8
8. Romans 8:2
9. Romans 8:14
10. Romans 8:26

TRUTH 5: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE GIVER OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

To live victoriously as a child of God and to serve effectively as a disciple of Christ, you need power, ability and resources. These are provided by the Holy Spirit through spiritual gifts that He imparts to believers. Please study 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and answer the following questions:

1. Who alone gives spiritual gifts? (verses 4, 7, 11)

2. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? (verse 7)

3. List some of the spiritual gifts. (verses 8-10)

4. In NewLife Book 13 we will study 20 spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible, classified as follows:

- Gifts for Serving

  Service
  Helps
  Giving
  Mercy
  Healings

- Gifts for Teaching

  Word of wisdom
  Word of knowledge
  Exhortation
  Various tongues
  Interpretation of tongues.

- Gifts for Leading

  Leadership
  Governments
  Faith
  Miracles
  Discernment.

- Basic Ministry Gifts

  Apostles
  Prophets
  Evangelists
  Pastors
  Teachers

APPLICATION

The Christian life is life in the Holy Spirit. We are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18); and we are to continue living and working in the power of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16,22-25).

MEMORIZE:

> ***John 14:16-17:*** ***[16] And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— [17] the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. – John 14:16-17.***

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your faith in Christ?

LESSON 6

THUMB: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT THE TRINITY

WE learned that three Persons deserve to be called GOD, because they possess the same God-nature: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This raises the question: Does the Bible teach that there are THREE GODS? The answer is NO. And the explanation is found in the truth about the TRINITY. The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, but the truth it describes is clearly taught in the Bible. The truth of the Trinity is a REVELATION TRUTH – it is something we could not have discovered by our human reason or human senses; it is something God revealed about Himself. It is only because God revealed the truth of the Trinity to us that we accept it and believe it. We need to know five truths about the Trinity.

TRUTH 1: TRINITY DOES NOT MEAN THREE GODS

The Bible is very clear that there is only ONE GOD. Opponents of the Trinity accuse Christians of teaching and believing in three Gods. We must insist that we teach and believe that there is ONLY ONE GOD, and the Bible clearly teaches that there is only One God. Please study Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:6

TRUTH 2: TRINITY MEANS THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

Trinity means there is only ONE GOD subsisting in THREE PERSONS – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Bible that teaches THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD is the same Bible that teaches there are THREE PERSONS who share in the nature of the One God. This is REVELATION

TRUTH; we could not have known about the THREE PERSONS except that God revealed about the Three Persons in the Bible.

We have already proved the deity of God the Father (Lesson 3), the deity of the Son Jesus Christ (Lesson 4), and the deity of the Holy Spirit (Lesson 5). In this lesson we need to prove the UNITY of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(a) THE UNITY OF THE FATHER AND THE SON.

Christ taught that He and the Father are DISTINCT PERSONS from each other, but at the same time they are not separate but ONE with each other.

- CHRIST AND THE FATHER HAVE DISTINCT PERSONS: John 5:31,32; John 8:17,18

- CHRIST AND THE FATHER HAVE THE SAME NATURE:

Opponents ridicule the idea of the Trinity by asking what, they say, is a very simple question of arithmetic. They ask: "One plus one plus one equals how many?" The answer, of course, is three. But the Trinity is not about human arithmetic. Let's look at the "arithmetic" of Christ.

In John 10:30 Christ says: "I and the Father are one." Putting this in arithmetic symbols:

I	**and my**	***Father***	**are**	***One***
1	**+**	**1**	**=**	**1**

JOHN 10:30

Opponents say that Christ meant, "I and my Father are one in purpose and work." Christ meant no such thing as John 10:31-33 shows. In fact, His listeners understood very well that Christ was claiming equality with God and they attempted to stone Him for the sin of blasphemy.

- CHRIST CLAIMED UNITY AND ONENESS WITH THE FATHER. Please study John 14:8-10.

(b) THE UNITY OF GOD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A DISTINCT PERSON FROM THE FATHER AND THE SON. The Father can send the Holy Spirit in the name of Christ (John 14:26); and Christ can send the Holy Spirit from the Father (John 15:26). This is further explained in TRUTH 4 below.

- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IDENTICAL WITH THE LORD (JEHOVAH): Please study 2 Corinthians 3:16-17.

In 2 Corinthians 3:16-17 we see the unity and identity of God with the Holy Spirit. The background of verse 16 is about Moses, who took off his veil when he turned to face the Lord (Yahweh or Jehovah). According to 2 Corinthians 3:17, who is this Lord (Yahweh or Jehovah)? Jehovah is the Spirit. In other words, Jehovah and the Spirit are one.

- So, if the Father and the Son are one; and if Jehovah the Lord and the Spirit are one, then the THREE PERSONS are ONE GOD!

TRUTH 3: THE TRINITY IS HINTED AT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

(a) In the very first chapter of Genesis the truth of the Trinity is already hinted at. Please study Genesis 1:26-27.

In verse 26 God says, "Let US make man in OUR image, in OUR likeness...." To whom was God talking? Opponents say that God was talking to angels. It could not be, because in verse 27 it does NOT say, "So God created man in THEIR image, in the image of God AND ANGELS He created him...." Rather, verse 27 says, "So God created man in HIS image, in the image OF GOD He created him...."

(b) Please also study Genesis 3:22-23. Notice the use of the plural in verse 22 (when God speaks as a FIRST PERSON) and the singular in verse 23 (when God is described in the THIRD PERSON). By the way, this is a good illustration of Law 2: Law of Language in interpretation – we must understand the GRAMMAR of these verses. If God speaks in the PLURAL in the first person and if God is described as SINGULAR in the third person, either we have a grammatical violation, or we have a hint of the Trinity – that there is ONE GOD, and this one God speaks of Himself as more than one. person

(c) Compare similar use of plural and singular in Genesis 11:5-8.

(d) Genesis 1:1,2 implies at least TWO PERSONS of the Trinity: God the Father (verse 1) and the Holy Spirit (verse 2).

(e) Proverbs 30:4 recognizes the existence of the FATHER and the SON.

TRUTH 4: THE TRINITY IS ASSUMED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

(a) In the New Testament there are passages which assume the unity of the Three Persons of the Trinity. From the following verses, please show how the unity of the Three Persons are assumed or implied. Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2

(b) During the Baptism of Jesus we see the Three Persons in operation together: the FATHER speaking from heaven and the HOLY SPIRIT like a Dove descending upon the SON. Matthew 3:16-17

(c) The DISTINCT PERSONS of the Trinity are indicated very clearly in John 14:16-17. Note: Here, we see the THREE PERSONS doing distinct and separate works: JESUS praying to the FATHER to send the HOLY SPIRIT to the disciples.

(d) A helpful illustration

The TRIANGLE provides a helpful illustration. There is only ONE TRIANGLE (there is only ONE GOD) but it is made of THREE ANGLES (there are THREE PERSONS who share in the nature of God), but the three angles (Three Persons) are connected in a UNITY that is permanent and which cannot be separated from each other.

Some people do not like the word mystery, but this word describes the truth of the Trinity. The same Bible that tells us there is only ONE GOD is also the same Bible that tells us THREE PERSONS are called God. How do you reconcile these two seemingly contradictory truths? Humanly speaking, we cannot. It is a MYSTERY, but we believe it because God Himself revealed it to us in the Bible.

TRUTH 5: THE TRINITY IS DEMONSTRATED IN THE UNITED WORK OF THE THREE PERSONS

In Lesson 3 we studied three works of God, as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. The Bible shows that the Three Persons are equally responsible for these works.

1. CREATOR

God the Father and the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1,2); the Son (Hebrews 1:8, 10).

2. SUSTAINER

The Father (Psalm 36:6); the Son (Hebrews 1:3); the Holy Spirit (Psalm 104:30).

3. REDEEMER

The Father (John 3:16); the Son (1 Peter 3:18); the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:14).

APPLICATION

(a) The Trinity is a REVEALED TRUTH to be believed, Because:

- God in His Word tells us that there is ONE GOD;
- He tells us in His Word that THREE PERSONS deserve to be called God;
- He tells us that the Three Persons are ONE; Therefore we believe and teach these truths as the Trinity or Three-Persons-In-One-God..

(b) The Trinity will always remain a MYSTERY. Someday in heaven God will make everything plain, but here on earth we must humbly accept that the Trinity is a mystery that we cannot fully explain.

(c) Before the TRIUNE GOD our best attitude and posture should be that of worship and thanksgiving, especially in regard to our salvation.

- We worship and thank the FATHER for planning our salvation even before the foundation of the world;
- We worship and thank the SON for accomplishing our salvation on the Cross;
- We worship and thank the HOLY SPIRIT for applying that salvation to our hearts.

(d) The truth of the Trinity is demonstrated in the most practical way in PRAYER:

- We pray TO THE FATHER (Matthew 6:9),
- We pray in the name of JESUS CHRIST THE SON (John 16:24),
- We pray with the help and guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT (Romans 8:26,27).

TWO COMMON ERRORS

Though we may use some earthly illustration (such as the triangle) to help us understand in some way the truth of the Trinity, we must humbly admit that it will always remain a mystery. For how can ONE be THREE, and THREE be ONE at the same time? In our attempt to make the Trinity somewhat more understandable, we must beware of two (among many) common errors.

ERROR #1: TRITHEISM

In our emphasis that the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God we may end up teaching that we do actually have Three Gods. Dr. Norman Geisler explains: "Tritheism is the belief that there are three gods or three separate beings in the Godhead. Few, if any, have held this view consciously, though unwittingly many have fallen into it verbally by their incautious language about the Godhead. By correctly stressing the three persons as *distinct*, it is easy to slip into the language of tritheism, which wrongly posits three *separate beings."* (Systematic Theology, Vol. 2, page 195)

ERROR #2: MODALISM

"Modalism holds that God is only one person who appears in different modes or roles at different times in the divine economy, from which it gets the title 'Economic Trinity,' as opposed to the ontological Trinity of orthodox theology." (Geisler, loc. cit.)

A very common modalistic illustration goes like this: "I am one person, but I am also a son, I am also a husband, and I am also a father." What's wrong with this illustration? It emphasizes ONE BEING but it does not recognize THREE DISTINCT PERSONS. In the Divine Trinity, the Father is not the Son is not the Holy Spirit; all Three Persons are distinct and yet they are ONE GOD.

The "ONENESS" group commits the error of MODALISM because they don't believe in the distinction of PERSONS. They teach that the Father is Jesus and is the Holy Spirit. Some of them explain it this way: In the Old Testament, God operated as the Father; in the New Testament, God operated as the Son; and today God is operating as the Holy Spirit. The passage in John 14:16-17 exposes the error of the "ONENESS" group, because these verses show that the THREE DISTINCT PERSONS simultaneously operate and interact with one another.

(For those who want to study this topic further, please consult standard systematic theology texts such as Dr. Geisler's Systematic Theology, where other errors about the Trinity are listed and defined, namely: *Arianism, Docetism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Patripassianism, Monothelitism, Apollinarianism, Subordinationism, Monarchianism, Adoptionism, Binitarianism*.)

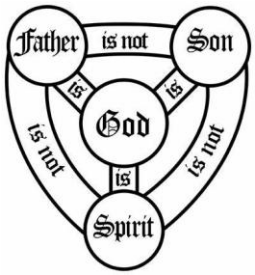
PLEASE STUDY THE DIAGRAMS

1. The TRINITY means THREE PERSONS share in the same nature of GOD, but they are NOT 3 Gods, rather they are 3 Persons united in the TRI-UNITY OF ONE GOD.

2. The TRINITY means there are distinctions of PERSONS. Hence, the Father is NOT the Son, is not the Holy Spirit; the Son is NOT the Father, is not the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is NOT the Father, is not the Son. But the Father IS God, the Son IS God, the Holy Spirit IS God, united as ONE GOD in the Tri-Unity we call TRINITY.

3. The TRINITY as a word is not found in the Bible. But the fact and reality of the THREE PERSONS UNITED IN THE ONE NAME OF DEITY is very clearly revealed in Matthew 28:19.

4. From the first to the last chapters of the Bible we see the THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY always operating together (Genesis 1:1-3; Revelation 1:4, 5).



MEMORIZE:

> ***Matthew 28:19: 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. – Matthew 28:19.***

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LESSON 7

POINTING FINGER: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT MAN

HUMAN beings are the crowning glory of God's creation. Of all that God created, humans are the most precious. How do we know this? We know this from the supreme demonstration of love, which God showed toward human beings when He gave His only Son for their redemption. We may, therefore, ask with the Psalmist: "What is man, that you, O God, are mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:4). Our answer to this question should include five truths about man. (Please note: In this lesson, the word "man" is used in the traditional inclusive sense of "man and woman".)

TRUTH 1: MAN WAS CREATED BY GOD.

In their effort to avoid the truth that God created all things, many scientists believe in the theory of evolution, by which (they say) everything, including man, came into existence through random chance, without a designer or creator. However, a good number of scientists reject the theory of evolution. They believe that everything in the universe shows intelligent design, pointing to an All-wise, All-Powerful Creator and Designer. For example, theistic scientists ask: "Can you imagine a watch without a watchmaker? Man is infinitely more complicated than a

watch." The Bible reveals to us this truth: God created man. From Genesis 1:26-27 please note the following:

(a) Man was created in God's image (to be discussed in Truth 2).

(b) Man was created to rule over God's creation, as God's overseer and manager and keeper.

(c) Man is male and female together. God imparted certain qualities to the male, and He imparted certain qualities to the female, and assigned certain roles for each to fulfill, so that, together, the male and the female will achieve the kind of life and relationship that God intended for people. Together, male and female will find their highest destiny. Apart or in competition, they will fall short of God's great purpose and blessing for them. Male chauvinism (insisting on male superiority which tends to treat women merely as objects of pleasure and servants) and radical feminism (insisting on leveling all gender differences and roles, which tends to treat men as rivals) are both contrary to God's wise order and plan for partnership and mutual respect and fulfillment between the sexes.

TRUTH 2: MAN WAS CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE.

Of all God's creation, only man was given something of God's nature and personality. From Genesis 1:26-27 we learn that God created man in His own image. What qualities or attributes are included in this image?

1. SPIRITUAL IMAGE

(a) Although man was created out of the dust of the earth, he had something more permanent than his material physical body. According to Genesis 2:7, what spiritual "component" did God impart to man at his creation? Genesis 2:7

(b) In the New Testament, Christ distinguished between the two components of man: a physical component (body) and a spiritual component (soul). Matthew 10:28

(c) The New Testament reveals that man consists of a tripartite personality consisting of body, soul and spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:23

- The BODY is the physical "house" of the living person who consists of the immaterial soul and spirit. Through the body a person relates to the physical environment and to things in it. When the soul and spirit of a person leave the physical body, the body dies; but the soul and spirit live forever.

- The SOUL is that which relates to self and to other persons; it is the seat of consciousness (expressed through the five physical senses) as well as sub-consciousness; its faculties include the mind, emotion, will, memory and imagination, and conscience.

- The SPIRIT is that which relates to God and to spiritual realities.

2. INTELLECTUAL IMAGE

Man was created with the power to know, and he was given knowledge of God. This intellectual image was impaired when man fell into sin. The restoration of this knowledge is one of the objectives of Christ's renewing work. Please study Colossians 3:10.

3. MORAL IMAGE

(a) Man was created with a free will, which means the freedom and ability to choose coupled with accountability for every choice. This free will makes human beings truly human and not robots or machines. According to Genesis 2:16-17, the first man Adam was given the opportunity very early on to exercise his free will. This opportunity came in the form of a command, a prohibition regarding a particular tree called the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Genesis 2:16-17

(b) The moral image also means that in the beginning God gave to man certain perfect moral qualities. Ephesians 4:24 mentions two qualities – righteousness and holiness; these were lost through sin, but they would be restored through Christ.

TRUTH 3: MAN FELL INTO SIN AND LOST HIS ORIGINAL PERFECTION AND POSITION

1. Everything that God created, including man, was good and perfect in the beginning. Genesis 1:31

2. After man fell into sin, what consequences did sin bring to humanity and to the whole earth? Genesis 3:17-19; 6:5

3. Before his fall into sin, what was man's position? Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8:6

4. After man yielded to the temptation of Satan, the serpent, what authority and power did Satan claim over the world? Luke 4:5-6

TRUTH 4: MAN WOULD BE REDEEMED FROM SIN

On the very day that man fell into sin, God announced His plan to redeem man. This plan centered on the coming Seed (Son) of the woman. In the Old Testament it was not immediately known or understood who this Seed would be. The New Testament revealed this was Jesus Christ, who was born of a virgin. Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4,5; Matthew 1:21. Note: More about this later under the topic: “Five Truths about Salvation” (Lesson 12).

TRUTH 5: MAN WOULD BE RESTORED TO HIS ORIGINAL PERFECTION AND POSITION

1. Describe the pattern of perfection after whom God is recreating people. Romans 8:29; Ephesians 4:13. Christ is God's pattern, and God's purpose is to make every Christian to be transformed to become like His Son in His perfect humanity.

2. What position will be occupied someday by those who are perfected in Christ? Romans 8:16-17; Revelation 2:26-27; 3:21; 21:1-5; 22:3-5. Redeemed humanity will live with God and reign with Him forever and ever in God's eternal kingdom!

APPLICATION

For our application, let's meditate on the following comments by James Montgomery Boice on Psalm 8:

[Psalm 8] describes [man] as being "a little lower than the heavenly beings" rather than "a little higher than the beasts." It could have been written the other way around. If man really is a mediating being, as the psalm maintains, it would have been equally accurate to have described him as slightly higher than the beasts rather than as slightly lower than the angels. But it does not, and the reason it does not is that, although men and women have been given a position midway between the angels and the beasts, it is nevertheless humanity's special privilege and duty to look upward to the angels (and beyond angels to God, in whose image women and men have been made), rather than downward to the beast. The result is that they become increasingly like God rather than increasingly beast-like in their behavior.

Boice continues:

Western society has lost sight of God. It no longer sees man as a creature made in God's image, whose chief end is "to glorify God and enjoy him forever." It has eliminated God from its collective conscience. But then, because it no longer looks to God to derive its sense of identity and worth from him, it looks in the only other direction it can look. It looks downward to the beasts and derives its identity from the animal kingdom.

This is what evolution is all about. Eliminate God, and evolution is the only theory left. We are only slightly advanced beasts, according to this theory. Besides, since we see ourselves as beasts, we begin to behave like beasts. Indeed, we behave worse than beasts, for we end up doing things the animals would not even dream of doing. (James Montgomery Boice, *An Expositional Commentary on the Psalms*, Vol. 1, pp. 71-72).

MEMORIZE:

> ***Psalm 8:4-5: [4] What is man that You are mindful of him,***
> ***And the son of man that You visit him?***
> ***[5] For You have made him a little lower than the angels,***
> ***And You have crowned him with glory and honor. Psalm 8:4-5***

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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LESSON 8

POINTING FINGER: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT THINGS

BY "things" we refer to all creation other than humans and spirits in earth and sky and to the limits of outer space – living things like plants, flowers, trees, microscopic life, birds, animals, and non-living things such as rocks, rivers, planets, stars, and galaxies. We must know five truths about things.

TRUTH 1: THINGS SHOW FORTH THE GLORY OF GOD

As we thoughtfully consider the things around us, what truth do they help us to see? Psalm 8:1; Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20

TRUTH 2: THINGS SUPPLY THE NEEDS OF MAN

1. According to God's plan, how was man's physical need for food to be supplied? Genesis 1:29; Genesis 9:3

2. God created not only plants and trees for food; He also created plant and trees that were beautiful to look at. How did these beautiful plant and trees satisfy man's intellectual and aesthetic sense? Genesis 2:9

3. Look at Genesis 2:9 again. How do the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil meet man's spiritual and moral needs? Answer: These trees provided man with the opportunity to exercise moral choice.

4. In what way does man's position as ruler over the earth meet his higher need for growth, adventure and creativity? Genesis 1:28

5. In summary, through things He created God supplied man's needs – food for his physical life; beauty for his aesthetic sense; choices for his moral powers; and authority and dominion for his creative powers. How complete and wonderful was God's provision for the human beings He created!

TRUTH 3: THINGS ARE INTERDEPENDENTLY RELATED

People have now become aware of the importance of the relationship of all creation to one another (ecology). For example, forests affect water supply. When forests are destroyed ground water sinks deeper into the earth or disappears altogether; rain water is not conserved, instead it causes flash floods that cause a lot of damage to life and property.

(1) Though the Bible was not written to explain ecology, there are passages which show God's concern for proper balance in nature. Please study Genesis 2:15. How does the double responsibility of man (to work or till the ground, and to keep or take care of the garden) show God's concern for ecology?

(2) How does the command in Deuteronomy 20:19-20 show God's concern for the relationship between man and trees?

(3) Even the land had a God-given right to rest. What do you think is the purpose of the sabbath law for the land? Leviticus 25:2-4

(4) The lesson is clear. We may use things, but at the same time we must care for them. Under this proper care comes the importance of stopping all kinds of pollution, specially of the air and water. If we do not take care of our air and water, very soon we shall destroy the world on which our physical life depends.

TRUTH 4: THINGS ARE TO BE MANAGED WITH PROPER STEWARDSHIP

1. Stewardship means that we do not own creation, but we have been placed as managers of creation according to the purpose of the Owner and Creator. From the following verses, show who the Owner is, and what are the things He owns. Psalm 24:1; Psalm 50:10-12

2. Since God owns everything and we are merely His stewards, how are we to manage His things? 1 Timothy 6:17,18; Ephesians 4:28; Luke 3:10,11

TRUTH 5: ALL THINGS WILL BE MADE NEW

1. Because of man's sin, what happened to God's first creation? Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 8:19-21

2. God has planned to create a new heaven and a new earth at the end of time. Describe how the new heaven and new earth will be different from the old? Revelation 21:4-5

3. In view of God's plan, how are we to live our lives today? 2 Peter 3:13-14

APPLICATION

Romans 1:20 tells us: "For since the creation of the world His (God's) invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead..." Modern science is helping us to appreciate God's power and wisdom in creation.

Those of you who enjoy science, you'll find this very interesting. Apart from any theistic presupposition, scientists have discovered what they call the ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE in creation. Dr. Norman L. Geisler describes this principle:

The *anthropic principle* (Greek: *anthropos,* "human being") states that the universe was fitted from the very first moment of its existence for the emergence of life in general and human life in particular...

... For life to be present today, an incredible restrictive set of demands must have been present in the early universe. Note the following examples:

1. Oxygen comprises 21 percent of the atmosphere. If it were 25 percent, fires would erupt, if 15 percent, human beings would suffocate.

2. If the gravitational force were altered by 1 part in 10 to the 40th power (that's 10 followed by forty zeroes), the sun would not exist, and the moon would crash into the earth or sheer off into space (Heeren, 196). Even a slight increase in the force of gravity would result in all the stars being much more massive than our sun, with the effect that the sun would burn too rapidly and erratically to sustain life.

3. If the centrifugal force of planetary movements did not precisely balance the gravitational forces, nothing could be held in orbit around the sun.

4. If Jupiter was not in its current orbit, we would be bombarded with space material. Jupiter's gravitational field acts as a cosmic vacuum cleaner, attracting asteroids and comets that would otherwise strike earth (ibid., 196).

5. If the thickness of the earth's crust was greater, too much oxygen would be transferred to the crust to support life. If it were thinner, volcanic and tectonic activity would make life untenable (ibid., 130).

6. If the rotation of the earth took longer than 24 hours, temperature differences would be too great between night and day. If the rotation period was shorter, atmospheric wind velocities would be too great.

7. Surface temperature differences would be too great if the axial tilt of the earth were altered slightly.

8. If the atmospheric discharge (lightning) rate were greater, there would be too much fire destruction; if it were less, there would be too little nitrogen fixing in the soil.

9. If there were more seismic activity, much life would be lost. If there was less, nutrients on the ocean floors and in river runoff would not be cycled back to the continents through tectonic uplift. Even earthquakes are necessary to sustain life as we know it. (From *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* by Norman L. Geisler)

NOTE: Please search on the internet the topic "anthropic principle" to see more examples of exact parameters in the physical universe that make life possible on earth.

A PERSONAL QUESTION TO ANSWER:

How should the *anthropic principle* motivate us to worship and love and serve God even more?

MEMORIZE:

> ***2 Peter 3:13-14: [13] Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. [14] Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless. – 2 Peter 3:13-14.***

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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LESSON 9

POINTING FINGER: FIVE TRUTH ABOUT ANGELS

THERE was a lot of interest in angels in past movies and tv shows . Most of the stories about angels treat them as if they are like human beings still in training or going through a probationary period. From the Bible we may know five truths about angels.

TRUTH 1: ANGELS ARE SPIRIT BEINGS CREATED BY GOD

1. Angels were created by God. Nehemiah 9:6; Colossians 1:16

2. Hebrews 1:14 describes angels as "ministering spirits" that serve God's people. (More about this in Truth 4.)

3. Spirits do not have earthly or material bodies, although they may appear in human form. Below are some of the qualities or characteristics of angels:

(a) Powerful – Psalm 103:20

(b) Holy – Matthew 25:31
(c) Do not marry – Matthew 22:30
(d) Created perfect in the beginning. When Lucifer (that's Satan's name in the beginning, Isaiah 14:12 KJV) revolted against God, theologians believe that a third of all the angels followed him and were cast out from God's immediate presence in heaven (Revelation 12:4, 9). Hence, there are now two kinds of angels: good angels, who remain faithful to God, and bad angels or demons or evil spirits, who follow Satan.

TRUTH 2: ANGELS HAVE NAMES AND RANKS

1. Some angels are called CHERUBIM (Genesis 3:24). They seem to be responsible for guarding the holiness and justice of God.

2. Some angels are called SERAPHIM (Isaiah 6:2,3). They seem to be responsible for the worship of God.

3. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL is the special protector of the nation of Israel (Daniel 12:1; Revelation 12:7,8).

4. GABRIEL is a special messenger of God (Luke 1:19, 26, 27).

5. Angels seem to have different levels of rank and strength (Daniel 10:12-14)

TRUTH 3: ANGELS ARE SERVANTS OF GOD

1. In Hebrew and Greek the word "angel" simply means "messenger," whether human or spirit being. In the New Testament angels refer primarily to God's heavenly messengers. From the following verses, discover some of the works of angels in serving God.

(a) They worship God. Revelation 7:11

(b) They perform God's commands. Psalm 103:20

(c) They help people. Acts 5:19; 10:3-6

2. Angels had and will have a special ministry to Christ.

(a) They announced Christ's birth. Matthew 1:20-21; Luke 2:10-12

(b) They assisted Christ during His time of temptation. Matthew 4:11

(c) They announced Christ's resurrection. Matthew 28:5-7

(d) They will accompany Christ at His Second Coming. 2 Thessalonians 1:7

TRUTH 4: ANGELS SERVE GOD'S PEOPLE

1. From the following verses, describe some ways by which angels serve God's people.

(a) They protect God's people. Psalm 34:7; 91:11-12

(b) They deliver God's people. Acts 5:17-20; 12:6-10

2. Although angels serve God's people, human beings should not worship angels. Why not? Revelation 22:8-9

TRUTH 5: ANGELS WILL BE JUDGED

1. For some reasons not clearly revealed in the Bible, some angels sinned against God. What does the Bible say about the future of fallen angels? 2 Peter 2:4

2. God did not have a plan for redeeming fallen angels. Hebrews 2:16

3. Christians will judge angels someday. 1 Corinthians 6:3 is a difficult passage to interpret. We do not know how or why Christians will judge angels, but one thing is clear – there will be a judgment for angels, and they will receive corresponding punishments, and Christians will be involved in some way in judging them.

APPLICATION

We hear or read about experiences of people having encounter with angels. We ourselves may have a story about this. How do we treat such purported experiences? Here are some guidelines:

- GUIDELINE 1: Let's admit there are genuine experiences with angels, as the example of Bible characters prove.

- GUIDELINE 2: Let's keep our focus on God, not on angels. Our trust, our prayers, our thanks must be directed to God alone, never to angels.

- GUIDELINE 3: Genuine experiences with angels should lead people to worship and love and serve God more; counterfeit experiences magnify the angels and the experiences. In short, we must always stay God-conscious, not angel-conscious.

MEMORIZE:

> ***Hebrews 1:14: Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? – Hebrews 1:14.***

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LESSON 10

POINTING FINGER: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT SATAN AND DEMONS

MANY people ask, "Did God create Satan and demons? Why did God create them, and why does He allow them to continue operating in the world?" A Christian should know five truths about Satan and demons.

TRUTH 1: SATAN AND HIS DEMONS WERE CREATED SINLESS IN THE BEGINNING.

1. Genesis 1:1 and John 1:3 show that God, through Christ, created all things in heaven and on earth. And according to Genesis 1:31 God created everything good and perfect in the beginning. Hence, we may correctly conclude that Satan and his demons were originally created sinless, but that later on they sinned and became enemies of God.

John 8:44

1 John 3:8

2. Two passages in the Old Testament seem to hint at Satan's original revolt. In Isaiah 14:12-14 KJV, Satan is called "Lucifer"; in Ezekiel 28:12-15 he is called the "Anointed Cherub".

Isaiah 14:12-14

Ezekiel 28:12-15

3. Dr. Merrill F. Unger comments:

"Theologians to a large extent have refused to apply the far-reaching prophecies of Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:12-15 to Satan under the contention that they are addressed solely to the king of Babylon in the first instance and to the king of Tyre in the second. Others contend this interpretation is unwarranted for two reasons. First, it fails to take into account the fact that these prophecies far transcend any earthly ruler and, second, it ignores the close connection Satan has in Scripture with the government of the satanic world system (Dan. 10:13; Ephesians 6:12) of which both ancient Babylon and Tyre were inseparable part. In their full scope these passages paint Satan's past career as 'Lucifer' and as 'The Anointed Cherub' in his pre-fall splendor. They

portray as well his apostasy in drawing with him a great multitude of lesser celestial creatures (Rev. 12:4).

"These fallen angels (demons) fit into two classes: (1) those that are free and (2) those that are bound. The former roam the heavenlies with their prince-leader Satan (Matt. 12:24) and as his emissaries are so numerous as to make Satan's power practically ubiquitous. The angels (demons) that are bound are evidently guilty of more heinous wickedness and are incarcerated in Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6). ..." (From Baker's Dictionary of Theology).

TRUTH 2: SATAN AND HIS DEMONS ARE AN ORGANIZED ARMY

1. In Matthew 25:41 and Revelation 12:7 we read about "the devil (dragon) and his angels." Satan is the commanding general of his army of fallen angels.

Matthew 25:41

Revelation 12:7

2. From Ephesians 6:12 we discover the ranks in Satan's army.

Ephesians 6:12: "For our conflict is not against flesh and blood, but against (1) the rulers, (2) against the authorities, (3) against the world rulers of this darkness, (4) against the spiritual hosts of evil in the heavenlies" (numbers provided for clarity). These titles suggest ranks or levels of authority and power.

3. Satan and his angels are fighting unitedly to achieve their objective. To defeat Satan and his army, Christians, too, must learn to fight unitedly under Christ their Lord.

TRUTH 3: SATAN AND HIS DEMONS DECEIVE AND DESTROY PEOPLE

1. Please study the following verses:

John 8:44

Ephesians 6:12

(a) According to John 8:44 Satan (the thief) first tells lies, then he kills and destroys. In other words, first, he deceives; and then he destroys. His demons follow a similar strategy.

(b) According to Ephesians 6:12, the works of Satan and his demons are of two categories: works of darkness, and works of wickedness.

- Works of DARKNESS refer to the invention and promotion of false belief systems, both religious (like false religions) and secular (like evolution). These lead to false worldviews and false values.

- Works of WICKEDNESS refer to the invention and promotion of sinful practices and vices. Wickedness is behavior that is destructive to oneself and to others. Examples: addictions (to drugs, wine and liquor, gambling); over-indulgence of normal appetites (like food and sex) outside of God-given boundaries.

TRUTH 4: SATAN AND HIS DEMONS ARE UNDER GOD'S CONTROL

Why does God allow Satan and his demons to continue? Why did He not throw them immediately into hell when they first sinned?

We don't know all of God's reasons, but one reason is clear: God is using these enemy spirits to test and train believers. Satan and his demons are tools in God's hands, and as tools they are completely under God's control. Please study the following verses:

Luke 22:31-32

1 Corinthians 10:13

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Romans 8:28

TRUTH 5: SATAN AND HIS DEMONS HAVE BEEN DEFEATED BY CHRIST AND WILL EVENTUALLY BE PUNISHED.

1. The defeat of Satan was prophesied on the very day that he caused man to fall into sin. Genesis 3:15 foretold how Satan was to be defeated.

2. When Christ, the Seed of the Woman, came He defeated Satan and his demons.

Philippians 2:9-11

Colossians 2:15

Hebrews 2:14-15

3. Based on His victory on the Cross, Christ gave believers authority over Satan and his demons.

Luke 10:17-19

Mark 16:17

Revelation 12:11

4. What do the following verses say about the final destiny of Satan and his demons?

Matthew 25:41

Revelation 20:10

APPLICATION

1. How do we overcome Satan and his demons? The Bible shows us how: by putting on the whole armor of God and by prayer. Ephesians 6:13-18

2. Two questions:

(a) Do you always put on your armor? (verses 13-17)

(b) Do you consistently maintain the attitude of prayer? (verse 18)

MEMORIZE:

> ***Revelation 20:10: The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. – Revelation 20:10.***

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LESSON 11

MIDDLE FINGER: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT SIN

WHAT is sin? We need to answer this important question if we are to understand ourselves, other people and human problems. Sin is at the root of all the problems in the world. More importantly, we need to know what sin is and its results in order to realize our need for salvation. There are five truths about sin that we need to know.

TRUTH 1: SIN IS DOUBTING GOD'S WORD

1. How do the following verses describe sin?

1 John 5:10

Romans 14:23

2. Unbelief – doubting God's Word – is the beginning of sin. When Satan tempted Eve, he began by sowing doubt about God's Word. Satan asked, "Did God really say?" (Genesis 3:1). When a person doubts God's Word, he begins to sin against God.

TRUTH 2: SIN IS DOUBTING GOD'S CHARACTER

1. Describe the meaning of sin from Romans 1:18, 21.

2. Ungodliness and unbelief are twins. After Satan had cast doubt on God's Word, he next cast doubt on God's character. He told Eve, "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:5) In other words, Satan implied, God is really selfish. He does not really care about people; all He cares about is Himself, that's why He gives all these laws forbidding this and forbidding that.

3. Ungodliness is thinking unworthy thoughts about God; this leads to refusing to honor God as He really deserves. Under ungodliness we may put idolatry and all other forms of false worship, which are all an insult to the majesty of God. For example, when a person worships an image (whether of human form or animal form), he is bringing God down to that level.

TRUTH 3: SIN IS BREAKING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

1. From the following verses, describe what sin is.

1 John 3:4

Isaiah 53:6

2. Sin is lawlessness; lawlessness is law-breaking. Adam and Eve committed lawlessness; they broke a clear law of God. God's law was very clear to them: "Do not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil." Adam and Eve rejected God's law and ate of the forbidden fruit.

3. Lawlessness is going your way and doing your will. Lawlessness is rejecting God's will and putting your desires as a law unto yourself. Somebody said, "Sin is spelled S-I-N, with the big, proud 'I' in the middle." Lawlessness is rejecting God as Lord and Master and putting yourself as the king/queen on the throne of your life. This is the meaning of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When Adam and Eve ate of this fruit, instead of asking God about what's good and right, they began deciding what's good and right for themselves.

TRUTH 4: SIN IS FALLING SHORT OF GOD'S STANDARD

1. How do the following verses describe sin?

Romans 3:23

James 4:17

2. According to Bible scholars, one of the most common words used by the Bible for sin in the original Hebrew and Greek means "to miss the mark." Sin is falling short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23); this means, falling short of God's standard, “missing the mark” God has set for us to aim at. We see this illustrated in the experience of Adam and Eve. After they sinned, they sought to cover themselves; they were ashamed to face God; and they hid themselves. Why? They had lost their perfect state, and they no longer felt worthy to face God, they had fallen short of God’s approval.

3. To fall short of God's glory also means to fail to do what he requires (James 4:17). This shows the total hopelessness of man's condition. Even if we grant that a man never breaks God's law because he does not do what the law forbids, can he guarantee that he will do perfectly all that the law requires in everything that he does? In other words, NOT DOING all that God forbids is not enough; you must also DO PERFECTLY all that God requires. But who of us can do perfectly all that God requires?

TRUTH 5: SIN BRINGS FORTH DEATH

1. What do the following verses say about the relationship between sin and death?

Ezekiel 18:4

Romans 6:23

2. Death is the punishment which God decreed upon sin. Essentially death means separation. There are three ways that this separation is experienced.

- Spiritual death. Right now, in this life, the sinner is in a state of spiritual death or spiritual separation from God.

  Ephesians 2:1-3

  1 Timothy 5:6

- Physical Death. A person experiences physical death when his soul separates from his body.

  Genesis 3:19

  Luke 23:46

- Second Death. Unsaved persons will experience the second death. This means eternal separation from God and unending suffering in a place of torment.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9

Revelation 21:8

3. The eternal punishment of sin is very scary and terrible. For this reason, we must cry out to God for salvation.

APPLICATION

1. This story is told about a medical doctor, a specialist in cancer research. They say that a deep anger motivates him; he is deeply angry with cancer and deeply angry at what cancer is doing to people; this anger fuels his passion for cancer research.

2. Sin is infinitely more deadly than cancer. What is your attitude toward sin – anger? Tolerance? Compromise? Ask God to make you see the true nature of sin and what it does, and ask God to give you a deep and genuine hatred for sin.

3. God has such holy anger against sin that He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross to provide a way to get rid of sin from people's lives and from His universe.

MEMORIZE:

> ***James 1:14-15: [14] But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. [15] Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. – James 1:14-15.***

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LESSON 12

MIDDLE FINGER: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT SALVATION

IF sin is at the root of man's problem, salvation is the only effective means that attacks that deadly root. Salvation is what man needs and longs for, even if many times he thinks he needs something else. What five truths do we need to know about salvation?

TRUTH 1: SALVATION: WORK OF THE THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY.

The Triune God in Unity is the author and accomplisher of salvation. The following three actions regarding salvation are joint actions of the Trinity. It may help us to appreciate our salvation better if we understand the role in salvation of each Person of the Trinity.

1. GOD THE FATHER PLANNED SALVATION. How do the following verses describe the part of the Father in providing salvation?

John 3:16; Ephesians 1:4-5, 9-10

2. JESUS CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED SALVATION. How do the following verses describe the part of the Son in accomplishing salvation?

1 Peter 2:24; Revelation 5:9-10

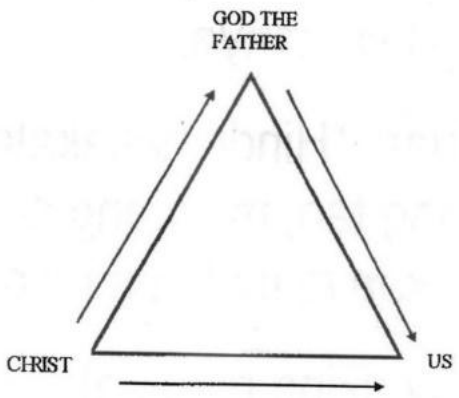
3. THE HOLY SPIRIT APPLIES SALVATION. How do the following verses describe the part of the Holy Spirit in applying salvation?

2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13-14

NOTE: Just as it is incorrect to say that only one Person of the Trinity did the specific action "assigned" to that Person, it is also incorrect to say that only the Holy Spirit is now active in the work of salvation. The Three Persons of the Trinity continue to work together in saving people. Study the following verses: John 6:37, 65; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Hebrews 7:25; John 16:8-10.

TRUTH 2: SALVATION: THREE RESULTS*

To understand better the three results, James Montgomery Boice suggests that we imagine a triangle. Above the top angle (apex) of the triangle let's write "God the Father"; beside the left base angle let's write "Christ"; beside the right base angle let's write "Us" (meaning, humanity).



3 RESULTS OF SALVATION
PROPITIATION: ARROW FROM CHRIST TO THE FATHER
REDEMPTION: ARROW FROM CHRIST TO US
JUSTIFICATION: ARROW FROM THE FATHER TO US
(Credit: James Montgomery Boice)

1. PROPITIATION

In our triangle illustration, let's draw an arrow from Christ, pointing to God the Father. The first result of Christ's death shows us:

- God is a God of holiness and justice. Because He is holy and just God cannot and will not tolerate sin, no matter how seemingly small, to stain His universe or to stay unpunished (1 John 1:5). God's holiness and justice makes Him angry with sin and with sinners who stay unrepentant of their sins (Romans 1:18). Some people dislike the idea of an angry God; but it's only because they don't fully understand the nature of God as absolutely holy and just.

- God's anger needs to be propitiated and appeased. God Himself provided the way to propitiate (appease) the wrath of His justice against sin through the death of Christ His Son. There on the cross, God poured out the full force of His wrath and displeasure and anger against all sin, and Christ interposed between us and God's wrath, thereby deflecting from us the judgment we deserved while at the same time satisfying all the demands of God's holiness and justice by receiving the full fury of the punishment upon Himself (1 John 2:1,2). Christ PROPITIATED God's wrath on our behalf. However, the interpretation is wrong that says God hates sinners but Christ loves sinners so much He interposed Himself between God and sinners in order to receive the punishment due to them. It is absolutely important to remember that God Himself by His grace provided Christ as the propitiation for His own wrath (Romans 3:24-26),

2. REDEMPTION

Let's draw an arrow from Christ, pointing to us. The second result of Christ's death shows us:

- Sin brings sinners under slavery and bondage (John 8:34). This slavery is the most cruel, most painful, and most hopeless form of bondage from which there is no human help for escape (Ephesians 2:11-12; 4:17-19; Romans 7:14-24). Satan is the meanest slave-driver of all (John 10:10; Hebrews 2:14-15). And the sad fact of it all is that we have chosen this bondage, and we deserve all the painful results of our choice.

- But God is a God of love and mercy (Romans 5:6-10). Mercy means that God withholds from us what we deserve. When looking at our miserable bondage God could have said, "Serves you right." Instead, God's love showed mercy toward us and through the death of Christ He provided the redemption price required to buy us out of our slavery. Satan had kidnapped our souls and Christ's blood became the Ransom payment that released us (Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19; John 8:36).

  NOTE: The ransom payment was not paid to Satan. In committing sin, we did not become indebted to Satan; rather, we became indebted to the justice of God. God could not simply take us out from Satan's grasp, because Satan could say to God, "You cannot let these sinners go free without punishing their sins." After Christ paid for our sins, Satan had no longer any basis for charging God of acting inconsistently with His just nature, and Satan had no more reason to keep us in bondage.

3. JUSTIFICATION

Let's draw an arrow from God the Father, pointing to us. The third result of Christ's death shows us:

God is a God of goodness and grace. Whereas mercy withholds the punishment that we deserve, grace gives the favor we do not deserve. God is able to show us this undeserved favor based on the propitiation and redemption accomplished by Christ's death (Romans 3:24-26). This favor is called justification. Justification is a legal term. In the court of heaven, God the Judge Himself makes two declarations about our standing with Him:

- First, He declares us "Not Guilty". This doesn't mean that we are innocent or that we did not sin; rather, it means that though we are the worst of sinners and the most wicked violators of His law, we are no longer liable to judgment and punishment because Christ had already taken the judgment and punishment. This is the meaning of God being both just and the justifier (Romans 3:26). As the just God, He made sure that the proper punishment was administered through Christ's death; and having satisfied the demand of His justice, He can now be the justifier, the one to declare us "Not Guilty".

- Justification has a second declaration: "Completely Accepted". This means that we are fully restored to a position of right standing with God, with all rights and privileges restored as members of His family. Again, this doesn't mean that we have done anything to deserve God's full acceptance; we are accepted in and through God's beloved Son (Ephesians 1:6 KJV). God puts us into union with Christ as our representative. As our representative Christ performed the perfect human obedience that now provides the basis for our acceptance (Matthew 3:16-17; 17:1-5; Hebrews 5:7-9). Through our union with

Christ we share in all His rights and privileges as the beloved Son of the Father (John 1:12; Romans 8:15-17). This position of full acceptance is the basis of all the promises of answered prayer (John 14:13-14; Romans 8:32) as well as of our co-heirship with Christ in eternity (Romans 8:15-17). This union with Christ cuts of our former union with Adam the first representative. Our union with Adam brought upon us the guilt and curse of his sin. Our union with Christ brings to us the blessings of His perfect human life of complete obedience to God. Romans 5:12-21 explains this transfer of union from Adam to Christ.

NOTE: This section is taken with some adaptation from James Montgomery Boice's* **Commentary on Romans.

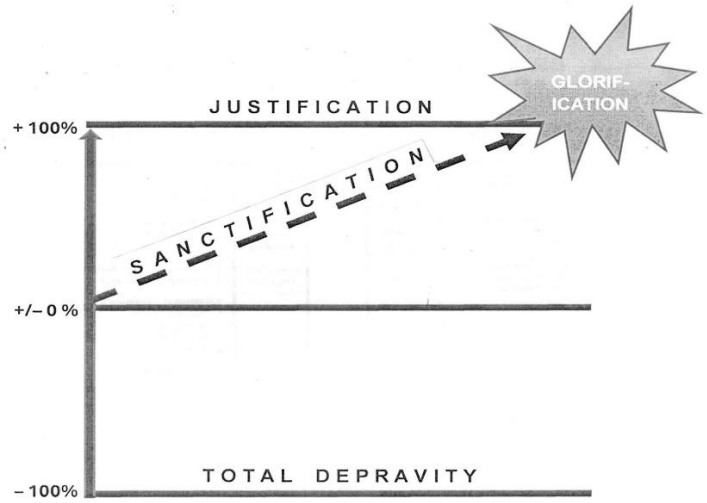
TRUTH 3: SALVATION: THREE TENSES

1. From John 5:24, describe the three tenses of salvation:

- Past: Passed from death to life
- Present: Has eternal life
- Future: Shall not come into judgment

2. Another way to describe the three tenses is in how salvation delivers us from sin:

- We are delivered from the PAST GUILT of sin (Romans 8:1,33)
  JUSTIFICATION
- We are being delivered from the PRESENT POWER of sin (Romans 7:20-25; 8:2).
  SANCTIFICATION
- We will be delivered from the FUTURE PRESENCE of sin (Romans 8:29-30; 2 Peter 3:13; Philippians 3:20, 21; Revelation 21:22-27).
  GLORIFICATION



TRUTH 4: SALVATION: GRACE, REPENTANCE, AND FAITH

1. SALVATION BY GRACE.

(a) According to the following verses, is salvation to be received as a gift of grace, or is it a reward or salary we must work for?

Romans 3:22-24

Romans 4:4-5

Romans 11:6

Ephesians 2:8-9

(b) Salvation is God's gift of grace; it is not something we work for. According to Ephesians 2:9, why does God give salvation as a gift?

2. SALVATION THROUGH FAITH WITH REPENTANCE

(a) Faith is accompanied by repentance. Before we can receive salvation, we must have real repentance. What did the following persons emphasize regarding repentance?

John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1, 8)

Peter (Acts 2:38)

Paul (Acts 20:21; 26:20)

Christ (Matthew 4:17)

(b) Repentance may be pictured as throwing away the sin, which we formerly held in our hand. Faith may be pictured as getting hold of the gift of salvation, which God offers. The throwing away is as necessary as the getting hold. A person who refuses to throw away sin does not really want to get hold of God's salvation.

(c) Another way to picture repentance and faith is as follows: Sin is turning our back on God. Repentance is turning right about face, so that our back is now turned toward sin; and faith is turning our face toward God in total dependence upon His grace and forgiveness.

Theologians who want to safeguard the absolute "grace" quality of salvation (that is, that salvation is totally an undeserved gift and favor from God to us, uninfluenced in any way whatsoever by anything we do) warn us against making "repentance" a requirement for salvation. They ask, "How sorry must I feel before God forgives me? How do I know when God is satisfied by the intensity and sincerity of my repentance?" This warning is necessary because many people grew up in the tradition that they must "prove" the intensity and sincerity of their repentance by doing something. For example, some people walk on their knees from the door of the church to the altar; others, usually during Good Friday, walk barefoot and bareback while whipping themselves on the back with whips embedded with broken glass splinters; still a few, also on Good Friday, allow themselves to be literally crucified; all this to prove how intense and sincere is their repentance. Most people usually make some promises (to deny themselves of some pleasures or to do certain charitable works) in an effort to "convince" God they are really repentant. So that when you ask these people, "What is your basis for believing God forgave you?" they will answer in a way that exposes they are depending on self-inflicted sacrifices which they did, rather than on God's grace alone.

God forgives our sins absolutely on the basis of grace alone, uninfluenced by anything we do or feel. So, where is the place of repentance? The root meaning of repentance (in Greek, METANOIA) will help us; literally, it means "a change of mind" (not necessarily a change of emotion, though it is usually accompanied by emotions of remorse and regret). It is changing our mind about what we think about God, about ourselves, and about the nature of our deeds and attitudes, in order to agree with what God says about these things. Repentance may also be described as simply a change of direction and orientation from our previous turning away from God to now turning toward God.

Repentance is illustrated by the Prodigal Son: first, he changed his mind regarding his father, regarding himself, and regarding what he had done; second, he changed his direction and orientation, when he turned his face toward his father and started walking toward home.

One hymn expresses the spirit of genuine repentance with these words: "Just as I am without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me; and that Thou biddest me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

(d) By faith we receive, we appropriate, we take hold of God's salvation. What things are involved in faith?

- We believe in the Savior (Acts 16:31).

- We believe in His work (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
- We give evidence of our faith with our mouth and with our heart (Romans 10:9-10).

TRUTH 5: SALVATION: DIVINE ASSURANCE & HUMAN PROOF

Can a Christian ever lose his/her salvation?

1. In answering this question, Christians are generally divided into two groups: ARMINIANS and CALVINISTS.

a. ARMINIANS adopt the view of the theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609).

This view essentially states that a person who receives Christ must "endure to the end" in order to go to heaven. If a Christian goes back to a life of sin and dies in that condition without repentance, he will still end up in hell. A key verse is Matthew 24:13.

b. CALVINISTS adopt the view of the theologian John Calvin (1509-1564).

This view is usually summarized in the popular saying, "Once saved, always saved" and "If you are born again, you cannot be unborn again". A key verse is John 10:27-29.

2. The BIBLE VIEW is neither Arminian nor Calvinist. The Bible assures believers of their salvation; the Bible also challenges believers to prove the genuineness of their faith.

a. GOD GIVES ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.

What assurance does God give regarding our salvation?

John 3:18

John 10:27-29

1 John 5:11,12

Philippians 1:6

b. TRUE BELIEVERS PROVE THE GENUINENESS OF THEIR FAITH.

How do true believers prove their faith is genuine?

Romans 6:1-2

2 Timothy 2:19

1 John 3:2,3

Ephesians 2:10

c. TRUE BELIEVERS CONTINUE TO GROW AS DISCIPLES

What do the following verses say about growth in discipleship?

Colossians 2:7

1 Peter 2:2

2 Peter 1:5-11

2 Peter 3:17-18

Hebrews 5:12-6:3

APPLICATION

The apostle Peter challenges Christians: "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things you will never stumble" (2 Peter 1:10).

The apostle Paul gives a similar warning: "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you -- unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

We need to answer three questions honestly:

- Question 1: Have I truly, sincerely believed in and received Christ as my Lord and Savior? (Has God implanted the new life in me through the new birth?)

- Question 2: If Christ is my Lord and Savior, do I consistently trust and obey Him in every area of my life? (Is the new life that God implanted in me bearing the fruit of God's Spirit? Galatians 5:22-24)

- Question 3: Am I growing as a disciple of Christ? Am I following a plan for growth in discipleship (such as this *NewLife Discipleship Studies* or a similar Bible study series)?

MEMORIZE:

Ephesians 2:8-9: [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, [9] not of works, lest anyone should boast. – Ephesians 2:8-9.

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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THIS WEEK

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(1) To have Daily Devotional Time together;

(2) To review your memory verses.

LESSON 13

RING FINGER: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT THE CHURCH

WHAT is the Church? Is it any group or building that puts up a sign saying they are the "Church of Christ"? Our answer should be based on five truths that are revealed in the Bible.

TRUTH 1: THE CHURCH: FOUNDED BY CHRIST.

What does Matthew 16:18 say about the founding of the Church? From this verse let us note the following:

1. Christ is the Founder of the Church. He said, "I will build my Church."

2. Christ is the Rock-Foundation of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church claims this Rock is Peter. Greek scholars tell us that two words for ROCK are used in Matthew 16:18: Peter's name is PETROS (a piece of rock), while the Foundation of the Church is PETRA (massive rock), referring to Christ.

(a) Matthew 16:18 literally reads: "And I also say to you that you are Peter (PETROS), and on this rock (PETRA) I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

(b) Christ is the same PETRA that the apostle Peter himself refers to in 1 Peter 2:8: And a stone of stumbling, and a rock (PETRA) of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." (KJV). The apostle Peter himself calls Christ as the PETRA, the Rock that people rejected but which God chose to become the Cornerstone of the Church.

1 Peter 2:6-8:
[6] Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,
"Behold, I lay in Zion
A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,
And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."
[7] Therefore, to you who believe, *He is* precious; but to those who are disobedient,

"The stone (LITHOS) which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone,"
[8] and
"A stone (LITHOS) of stumbling
And a rock (PETRA) of offense."
They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

(c) The apostle Paul agrees with the apostle Peter when he writes in 1 Corinthians 3:11 that there is no other foundation for the Church except Christ: "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Only Christ the PETRA, not Peter the PETROS, can be the foundation of the Church.

3. This FOUNDATION is laid in the heart of every believer when he/she makes the same confession that Peter made: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16; Romans 10:9,10)

4. The true Church has not been and never will be overcome. Some cults claim that they revived or re-founded the Church after (so they claim) it had been lost. Christ promised that the gates of hell would never overcome the Church; it could never be lost. In spite of the fact that persecution and apostasy have sometimes reduced the number of true Christians, yet the Church has continued, because the Founder Himself promised that His Church will never be defeated by the enemy.

TRUTH 2: THE CHURCH: CALLED-OUT PEOPLE

The Church is the congregation of the CALLED-OUT PEOPLE OF GOD. This is seen from the meaning of the word EKKLESIA (consisting of two words: EK, out of; KLESIA, call). The Church consists of people who have been called out of the world to belong to God. Please study the following verses:

John 15:16

John 17:6, 14

Acts 2:39

Galatians 1:4

Colossians 1:13

1 Peter 2:9, 10

TRUTH 3: THE CHURCH: UNIVERSAL

1. The Church has a UNIVERSAL aspect. Universal means that the Church consists of all true born-again believers from all time, from all places, and from all races and classes of people. The

classical Greek word is KAT' HOLIKOS, transliterated in English as CATHOLIC (meaning literally, UNIVERSAL); unfortunately, the word CATHOLIC became permanently attached to the name Roman Catholic Church; hence, it is less confusing for non-Roman Catholics to use the word UNIVERSAL.

(a) The UNIVERSAL CHURCH consists of all people whose names are written in the Book of Life in heaven. Only God's membership list in heaven matters; the membership list of churches or religions on earth have no value in God's eyes. Please study the following verses:

Luke 10:20

Hebrews 12:23

Revelation 20:12, 15

2. The UNIVERSAL CHURCH is described under four primary symbols:

- The Church is the FAMILY OF GOD. This symbol emphasizes the need for spiritual new birth in order to become a part of the Church (John 1:12; 3:3,5; Ephesians 2:19). Members have all one heavenly Father and all are brothers and sisters.

- The Church is the BODY OF CHRIST. This symbol emphasizes three truths: (1) the AUTHORITY OF CHRIST THE HEAD over His Church (Colossians 1:17); (2) the UNITY and DIVERSITY of the members of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:12,13); (3) the TEAMWORK of the Church as the diverse members of the Church serve under the direction of One Head (Ephesians 4:15,16).

- The Church is the BRIDE OF CHRIST (Ephesians 5:23-33; Revelation 21:2). This symbol emphasizes the love-relationship between Christ and the Church (John 21:15-17; Revelation 2:4); and the beauty, purity and perfection of the Church (Revelation 21:2).

- The Church is the TEMPLE OF GOD (John 4:23,24; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19,20; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4,5; Revelation 21:3,22; 22:3-5). This symbol emphasizes (1) the spiritual worship of the Church, which is not dependent on time and place; and (2) the eternal destiny of all the saved people as the dwelling place of God in such a manner that they are in the closest possible relationship with one another forever and ever!

TRUTH 4: THE CHURCH: LOCAL

The Church has a LOCAL aspect. This means that for all practical purposes the Church on earth can only gather as a LOCAL BODY of believers. Someday in heaven, all Christians will gather as one UNIVERSAL CHURCH; but on earth believers can only gather in their respective localities. The seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are examples of the LOCAL aspect of the Church; they were described as churches in their respective localities. Matthew 18:20 gives us the foundational principle governing the gathering of the local church:

(a) CHRIST THE EVER-PRESENT HEAD: When just even two or three believers gather in the name of Christ – because of their faith in Christ and because of their desire to worship and serve Christ – Christ promises to be present in their midst in the person of the Holy Spirit, His designated PARAKLETOS (Representative, John 16:7-15). This means that Christ is always the EVER-PRESENT LORD AND HEAD of the Church. Where the Head is present, His Body may function.

(b) BELIEVERS FUNCTIONING AS THE BODY OF CHRIST: The local Church gathers in order to fulfill the following ministries as the Body of Christ in their locality (Acts 2:36-47):

(1) Preach the Gospel (vss. 36-40);

(2) Baptize new believers (vs. 41);

(3) Promote the basic functions of the local Church (vss. 42-47)

- Doctrine or Teaching (today this is accomplished through preaching and teaching based on the Bible); groups of Christians and churches (usually called denominations) also adopt a set of doctrinal statements and distinctives, which provide their basis for cooperating with one another.

- Fellowship (believers relating to one another in mutual caring, upbuilding and discipline);

- Breaking of Bread (the Lord's Supper represents the worship ministry of the church);

- Prayers (the intercessory ministry of the Church);

- Fulfill the Great Commission: Evangelism and Missions (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 8:4; 13:1-4)..

TRUTH 5: THE CHURCH: GOVERNMENT

The New Testament does not explicitly prescribe any specific type of government for the local churches. But different groups of believers throughout Church history have claimed to follow one of three forms of church government, with certain scriptures backing their claim. A closer look at their practices usually reveals that all three forms are combined in some form or another:

(a) Congregational: Rule by the Congregation

Also called democratic, the final decision rests upon the majority of the membership voting or deciding. Acts 6:1-6 is usually given as an example of the democratic process, when the congregation was instructed to select the "deacons". Today Baptist-type churches predominantly follow this congregational form of government.

(b) Presbyterian: Rule by the Elders

Interestingly, Acts 6:1-6 can also be interpreted to support this form of government, because the elders (the apostles) told the congregation to select candidates which were then presented to the elders for final confirmation. Presbyterian-type churches today represent this form of church government.

(c) Episcopal: Rule by a Bishop

(1) The churches that follow the episcopal form of government include the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Methodist Church.

(2) Some Charismatic churches are reviving what they call the "apostolic gift and office", whereby one gifted pastor (usually the founder of a movement) exercises authority and care over a group of pastors and churches, who share in his vision, teachings, and church practices.

NOTE: As shown in TRUTH 4 above, Bible-believing Christians believe that Christ is the ever-present Head of the Church through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the true Vicar of Representative of Christ. Believers have direct and immediate access to Christ, and each one has the responsibility of following his/her own conscience (Matthew 18:20; John 14:16). No matter which form of government your church follows, you must always make sure that you are really seeking and following the will of Christ the Head through the guidance of the Holy Spirit based on the Bible and prayer.

APPLICATION

It is important to become a member of a local church.

1. When we are born again, the Holy Spirit incorporates us into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

2. In the physical realm, there are no floating, unattached body parts. Even so in the Christian life; new believers should not be floating but added to a local church (Acts 2:41,47).

3. Normally, you join the church that led you to Christ. But when you move to another place, you must look for and join a local church of the same or similar faith and practice.

4. There is no perfect local church. Someone said, if you find a perfect local church, don't join it; or you'll ruin it. You become a member of a local church in order to grow together with other members, and in order to serve God together with the other members.

Challenge: Are you a member of a local church? If not, why not? Which local church do you believe the Lord is leading you to join?

MEMORIZE:

Ephesians 1:22-23: [22] And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, [23] which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. – Ephesians 1:22-23.

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LESSON 14

LITTLE FINGER: FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT LAST THINGS

WHAT will happen after death? What will happen at the end of the world? This is a riddle that has puzzled all peoples and challenged the greatest thinkers. Only Jesus Christ brought the answer, because He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Let us learn five truths about last things. Theologians call the study of last things ESCHATOLOGY, from the Greek words ESCHATON, end; and LOGOS, knowledge.

TRUTH 1: DEATH IS NOT THE END

What happens to a person after death? Christ lifted the curtain into the great beyond in Luke 16:19-31, by telling about what happened to two men who died.

1. Who were the two men who died?

2. Where did Lazarus go after death?

3. Where did the rich man go after death?

4. A living person on earth has five physical senses (seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, tasting) and four non-material faculties (mind, emotion, will, imagination). Which of these senses and faculties did Abraham (who died long time ago) and the rich man (who died recently) have after death?

5. Abraham's bosom is a description of the place of saved persons; Hades, the place for unsaved persons. According to verse 26, after death is it possible to change places – from Hades to heaven, or from heaven to Hades?

6. Prove (from verses 27-30) that the experience of the rich man in Hades happened after his death simultaneously while the life of his brothers continued on the earth.

7. Death is not the end. When a person dies his soul separates from his body and the soul will go directly to its eternal destination – if saved, in heaven (symbolized by Abraham's bosom) or if unsaved, in Hades (a place of torment).

8. In Philippians 1:23-24 the apostle Paul adds more light. According to Paul, after he departs from the earth at death, where will he go?

9. Like Paul, when a Christian dies he goes on to be WITH CHRIST. What is the condition of those who die and go to be WITH CHRIST (Revelation 14:13)?

10. For the Christian death is a time of rest, while he waits for the resurrection of his body. For unbelievers, death is already the beginning of eternal suffering in Hades (usually called Hell by most people today).

TRUTH 2: THE CHRISTIAN WAITS FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

1. Although the Christian knows that death is unavoidable, yet he is not waiting for death. What is the Christian waiting for?

Philippians 3:20-21

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

2. This expectation of the Second Coming is symbolically expressed through the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Describe the attitude of expectancy from 1 Corinthians 11:26.

3. Between now and the Second Coming, the Christian life should be characterized by total involvement in the fulfillment of the Great Commission.(Matthew 28:18-20). Through the Lord's Supper Christians are reminded to "show forth the Lord's death" (continue proclaiming the Gospel) until the Lord comes.

4. According to Acts 1:6-8:

(a) Concerning the TIMING of the Second Coming, what does the Lord Jesus tell us (verse 7)?

(b) Instead of worrying about the timing of the Second Coming, what should Christians be concentrating on (verse 8)?

(c) How does the Great Commission affect the timing of the end of the world (Matthew 24:14)?

5. For the sake of future study, you need to be aware about the most common interpretations about the end of the world; they are described in relation to the ONE THOUSAND YEARS (millennium) mentioned in Revelation 20; below are general descriptions of the positions:

(a) A-MILLENNIALISM – According to this view, the millennium is a symbolic number. The present world will grow worse and worse until the Antichrist will finally take over. The Second Coming of Christ will end the reign of the Antichrist, after which the Last Judgment will be held. Then the Eternal Kingdom of God, the new heaven and new earth, will be set up to last forever.

(b) POST-MILLENNIALISM – According to this view, the millennium is a symbolic number. The Gospel will continue to spread and things will get better and better until humanity achieves the perfect state of the Eternal Kingdom of God.

(c) PRE-MILLENNIALISM – This view considers the millennium as literal 1000 years of Christ's personal reign on earth, which will be inaugurated at His Second Coming. This view also teaches that there will be SEVEN YEARS TRIBULATION immediately preceding the millennium. There are two main positions, depending on when the RAPTURE will occur, before or after the TRIBULATION:

- POSITION 1: PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE. Christ's Second Coming is divided into two parts: Before the Tribulation begins, Christ will come FOR HIS SAINTS (He will Rapture or snatch them away from the earth to save them from going through the Great Tribulation). While the Tribulation is going on in the earth, Christ and the Saints will hold the MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB in the heavenlies. When the Tribulation is ended, Christ will come down to earth WITH HIS SAINTS in order to start Christ's literal 1000 years reign upon the earth.

- POSITION 2: POST-TRIBULATION RAPTURE: Christ's Second Coming is viewed as only ONE EVENT: He will come down from heaven at the end of the Tribulation, bring about the resurrection, bind Satan for a thousand years, and set up His millennial reign upon the earth.

  NOTE: Some Bible teachers hold a MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURE, but this view is not as well known as the two above.

6. REMINDER: Whichever position you take, you must be aware of the danger inherent in both positions:

- DANGER 1: For PRE-TRIBULATIONISTS, the danger is to believe that Christians will not go through tribulation of any kind at all. Please summarize in your own words the teaching of the Bible regarding tribulation from following verses:

  John 16:33

  Acts 14:22

2 Timothy 3:12

- DANGER 2: For POST-TRIBULATIONISTS, the danger is to be overwhelmed by the prospect of coming persecutions. Even if you believe that Christians will suffer the Great Tribulation, remember Christ's assured promise for times of persecution. Please summarize the following verses in your own words:

  1 Corinthians 10:13

  2 Corinthians 12:9-10

  1 Peter 5:8-10

TRUTH 3: THERE WILL BE TWO RESURRECTIONS

1. Describe the two resurrections:

   Daniel 12:2

   John 5:28

   Revelation 20:4-6

(a) RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS. This will happen at the Second Coming of Christ; it involves both dead and living Christians. Dead Christians will first be resurrected from their graves; then, living Christians will experience instantaneous transformation from their mortal body into their resurrection body (1Thessalonians 4:15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51).

What will the resurrection body look like? As an over-all description, the resurrection body of Christians will share in the qualities of Christ's resurrection body. Please study the following verses describing the power of Christ's resurrection body: 1 John 3:2; John 20:9; Luke 24:31; Luke 24:37-40; Luke 24:41-43; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.

(b) RESURRECTION OF UNBELIEVERS. Unbelievers will be resurrected separately from believers at the Last Judgment (Revelation 20:5, 11-15). The Bible does not describe exactly what this body will look like; but it will be a body in which unbelievers will experience eternal suffering. What do the following verses say about the eternal condition of unbelievers? Revelation 14:9-11; Revelation 20:14-15; 21:8.

TRUTH 4: AFTER DEATH THE JUDGMENT

1. What happens after death? Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10

(a) JUDGMENT OF BELIEVERS: At the Second Coming of Christ, believers will be judged, not for salvation, but for rewards. Describe the judgment of believers from 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

Explain the meaning of gold, silver, precious stones; wood, hay, stubble: Matthew 6:19-21; Colossians 3:23,24; Galatians 6:7,8.

Gold, silver, precious stones represent works done by us for the glory of God and motivated by love for God and love for people.

Wood, hay, stubble represent works done by us from selfish motives and selfish benefits and for earthly pleasures and worldly achievements.

(b) JUDGMENT OF UNBELIEVERS: All unsaved people, from the beginning to the end of history, will be judged at the Great White Throne or the Last Judgment, at the end of the millennium. They will be judged for degrees of punishment. How God will do this is not explained in the Bible; it is something that we have to leave in the hands of God. From Revelation 20:11-15 describe the Last Judgment.

NOTE: Some Bible teachers teach eternal punishMENT (whereby unbelievers will be ANNIHILATED and they will simply cease to exist), as opposed to eternal punishING (whereby they will continue to suffer conscious pain forever and ever). ONE THING is clear: the punishment is of such TERRIBLE MAGNITUDE that God was willing to send His own Son to die on the cross to save us from this eternal tragedy (John 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

TRUTH 5: CHRISTIANS WILL REIGN WITH GOD AND CHRIST FOREVER

All of God's plans will culminate in the Eternal Kingdom. In this Kingdom Christians will reign with God and with Christ forever and ever. How do the following verses describe the Eternal Kingdom?

Revelation 21:1-7

Revelation 21:22 - 22:5

APPLICATION

(a) No matter what view of the Second Coming we may have, what should be our constant attitude:

Matthew 6:9-10

2 Peter 3:11-14

Hebrews 12:25-29

2 Timothy 4:6-8

(b) The important thing is that Christ will come again, and we must always be ready to welcome Him anytime!

MEMORIZE:

> ***1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: [16] For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. – 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.***

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

Continue your PRAYER PARTNER evangelistic outreach, using Book 1 with your prospects.

THIS WEEK

Meet with your Bible study leader:

(1) To have Daily Devotional Time together;

(2) To review your memory verses.

Lesson 15

HOW WE GOT THE OLD TESTAMENT: INSPIRATION, INSCRIPTURATION, COLLECTION, DISSEMINATION & PRESERVATION

We begin our survey of the Old Testament by talking about the events in the long process that brought into existence the different scrolls (books) which became the Hebrew Old Testament scriptures. At least five sets of events (many related happenings went into each set of events) may be mentioned:

- INSPIRATION (God communicated His Word to His messengers through the inspiration of His Spirit at different times and places and means);

- INSCRIPTURATION (these messages were first delivered orally but eventually they were written down on scrolls made of materials such as those made from papyrus or animal skins; in fact, the earliest writing materials were made of clay or rocks);

- COLLECTION (then these scrolls were at first located in the places where they were originally written and later gathered from those places into one collection);

- DISSEMINATION (copies of the original collection were then made and disseminated to God's people wherever they were found);

- PRESERVATION (the question naturally arises, how were the physical safety and content integrity of the copies safeguarded? Here we see God's providence and faithfulness in safeguarding the scrolls and their contents).

The above five sets of events are described or implied in the following recounting of the FOUR STEPS which the Old Testament books went through in their production.

STEP 1: UNDER MOSES

1. GOD: ORIGINAL WRITER ON THE TWO TABLETS

   When God revealed Himself on Mount Sinai to His people, whom He newly delivered from Egyptian bondage, He wrote the first copy of the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stones which He gave to Moses to deliver to His people as the summary of His covenant with them.

   Exodus 32:16:
   Now the tablets *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

   (See also Exodus 24:12; 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10).

2. MOSES AND THE PENTATEUCH

   After God's original writing of the Ten Commandments on the two tablets of stone, Moses wrote, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, all the detailed commands, precepts, and instructions which applied to the nation's religious, civil, and social life. In due course, under the Holy Spirit's inspiration, Moses also wrote the background story of the nation of Israel, all the way back to creation. Eventually, Moses' writings were collected to form the PENTATEUCH or the first five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), called by the Jews as TORAH (LAW). The original copy was deposited beside the Ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 31:24-29). Prophetically speaking, Moses required the future king of Israel to make a copy of the law for himself to study as his guide in ruling God's people with justice and wisdom (Deuteronomy 17:18-20). Joshua kept a copy of the book of the law along with other covenant words between God and the people under a rock near the sanctuary (Joshua 24:26).

During the subsequent periods of Israel's history, God raised up prophets (from the time of Samuel until the last prophet Malachi) to whom He gave messages for His people. Some of these prophets wrote down their messages. Kings also had their royal secretaries and scribes who recorded the deeds and exploits of the kings, including significant events during their reign. Later on, under the over-all superintendence of the Holy Spirit, relevant portions of these prophecies and historical records were collected as part of sacred Hebrew scriptures.

STEP TWO: UNDER EZRA.

1. After the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC, nobody knows what happened to the Ark of the Covenant and to the Book of the Law (the Torah) which it contained. But when the Babylonian exiles returned under Ezra, we find him as having a copy of the Book of the Law. This is how Ezra was described:

   Ezra 7:6, 10:
   6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.
   10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

2. TANAKH. During the time of Ezra, we believe that he had a complete copy of the Torah (the 5 books of Moses). The rest of the OT books were gradually collected within the 400-year period between the last Old Testament prophet Malachi and the New Testament prophet John the Baptist, achieving their final form in the Hebrew Bible known by the acronym TANAKH, a collection of 24 scrolls classified under three divisions:

   (a) TORAH (the Law) 5 Scrolls

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

(b) NEVI'IM (Prophets) 8 Scrolls

- Joshua
- Judges
- Samuel
- Kings

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- The Twelve (Minor prophets in the OT, considered as one book)

(c) KHETUBIM (Writings, Poetical or Wisdom books) 11 Scrolls

- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Job
- Song of Songs
- Ruth
- Lamentations
- Ecclesiastes
- Esther
- Daniel
- Ezra-Nehemiah
- Chronicles

STEP 3: GREEK SEPTUAGINT (LXX) TRANSLATIONS

1. It is believed that it was a copy of the Torah, which Ezra used, that was later translated into Greek in the 3rd century BC, known as the Septuagint (LXX) "at the request of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–247 BCE) by seventy-two Hebrew translators—six from each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel" (Wikipedia).

2. The LXX Greek OT became the Bible version used during the time of Christ and of the early Christians.

3. APOCRYPHA. In addition to the 24 books in the original Hebrew, there were also religious writings in Greek later known as Apocrypha, which became included in the Septuagint Bible. Not one of these writings was written by any prophet; nonetheless, they were included in the Septuagint for their inspirational and instructional contents.

   Whereas the Hebrew TANAKH contains only the 24 original Hebrew scriptures, on the contrary the Roman Catholic Old Testament Bible includes 7 books of the Apocrypha: Tobias, Judith, Baruch, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom, First and Second Maccabees and also the Greek additions to Esther and Daniel.

The Protestant Bible retains only the 24 books of the Hebrew TANAKH, but with a different arrangement, alternatively listing the 12 minor prophets as separate books, thus making the Protestant Bible to contain a total of 39 Old Testament books

STEP 4: MASORETIC TEXT

"A History of the Masoretic Text" (slightly condensed)
by **Jeff A. Benner**, www.ancienthebrewresearchcenter.org

The Hebrew texts of the Bible were originally written with only the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which only represent consonantal sounds.

Around the 10th Century AD, a group of Jewish scribes called Masorites, created a system of dots and dashes, called nikkudot or vowel pointings and added these to the Hebrew text. These vowel pointings served to supply the vowel sounds to the text in order to codify the pronunciation. The Masorites also included notes in the margins of the text.

Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the oldest Hebrew manuscript known to exist is the Masoretic text called the Aleppo Codex which was written in 826 A.D. This text is considered the most authoritative Hebrew manuscript and all future editions are based on this text.

Another important Masoretic text is the Leningrad Codex, written in 1008 AD. Both the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex are called Ben-Asher texts, as they both come from the Ben-Asher tradition of the Masorites. Both of these texts are virtually identical, the only difference being paragraph locations and vowel pointings, but the actual texts themselves are identical.
The next major editions to the Masoretic text are the Mikraot Gedolot, meaning Rabbinic Bibles. These Hebrew texts are again identical to the Aleppo and Leningrad Codexes, but include variations in the vowel pointings, paragraph locations and the marginal notes, but also the addition of commentaries. One of these Rabbinic Bibles is Jacob Ben Chayyim's Rabbinic Bible first published by Daniel Bomberg in 1525.

It is this Ben Chayyim Rabbinic Bible that the King James Translators used for their translation. There are only nine textual differences between the Ben Chayyim text and the Ben Asher texts of the Aleppo and Leningrad Codexes: They are 1 Kings 20:38; Proverbs 8:16; Isaiah 10:16; Isaiah 27:2; Isaiah 38:14; Jeremiah 34:1; Ezekiel 30:18; Zephaniah 3:15; and Malachi 1:12." Other than these nine differences, all of the Masoretic texts are identical.

The next major editions to the Masoretic Hebrew Bible was the Biblia Hebraica and the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. The Biblia Hebraica was published in 1906 by Rudolph Kittel and was a copy of the Ben Chayyim Rabbinic Bible , but did not include the marginal notes. The Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia was printed by Paul Kahle in 1977 and is a copy of the Leningrad Codex, but revised the marginal notes. In both cases, the Hebrew texts of the Biblia Hebraica and the

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia are identical to each other and to the Ben Chayyim and Ben Asher texts. The bottom line is that while there are many different Masoretic texts, they are all the same when it comes to the text itself.

EDITORIAL NOTE:

In 1948 the DEAD SEA SCROLLS were discovered. These scrolls date back to the time of Christ. Among the scrolls is a complete copy of Isaiah, which is virtually identical with the Masoretic Isaiah Text which we have today, proving that the ancient Hebrew Bible texts from at least the times of Ezra have been faithfully copied (we believe) under divine superintendence. The witness of the DSS gives us confidence that we have essentially God's Word as written by the original inspired writers. Existing variations are not significant enough to affect the meaning of major doctrines that deal with God's Plan of Salvation as pointing to the promised Redeemer, and they do not affect God's abiding laws on how we should relate with Him and with one another.

BIG PICTURE OF THE BIBLE

To have a proper understanding of the Bible, we must see the BIG PICTURE, first, by doing an overview of the whole Bible, Old and New Testaments.

1. The Bible: Beginning and End

a. BEGINNING: The Bible opens with the account of how God created everything perfect in the beginning (Genesis 1:1, 31).

b. END: The Bible closes with the account of God creating a new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21:1).

WHAT HAPPENED?

If you pause and compare these two statements about the beginning and the end of the Bible story, you will wonder: What happened to the perfect first heaven and earth? What made it necessary for God to make a new heaven and new earth?

The Bible tells the tragic story about how at the beginning, Adam and Eve, our first parents, fell into sin and brought upon all humanity and all creation the curses produced by sin.

The fall did not catch God by surprise. Immediately after their fall, God gave His first promise of a coming Redeemer. This promise is contained in the curse pronounced on Satan the tempter (Genesis 3:15). The coming Redeemer would be born of a woman; He would crush the head of the serpent; He would bring about the redemption of humanity and restore the whole creation back to the original perfection that God intended for it.

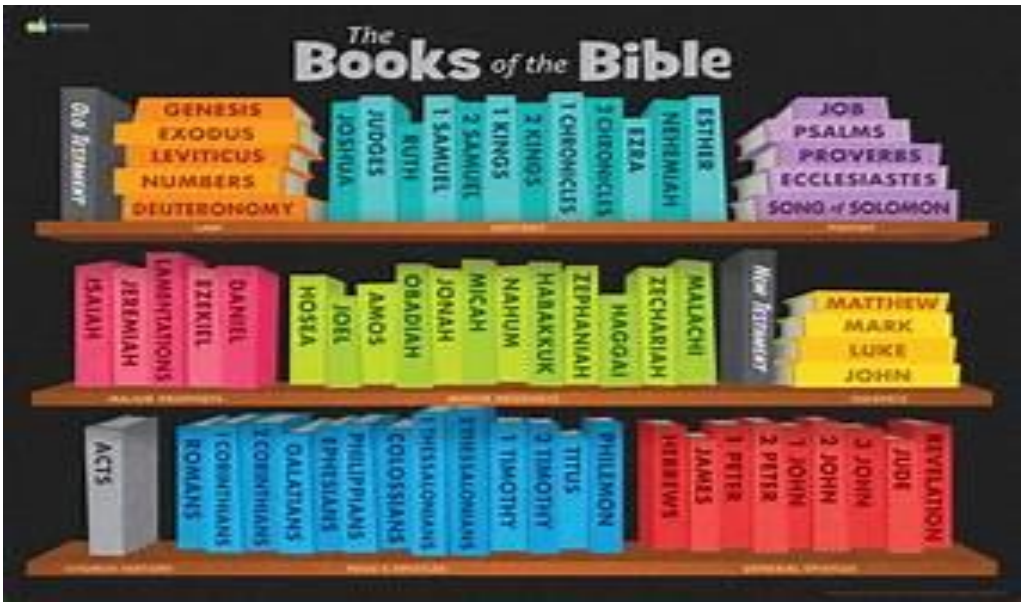
The BIG PICTURE story of the Bible is about the Redeemer.

- THE OLD TESTAMENT tells the story of how the Redeemer's coming was promised and prepared for.

- THE NEW TESTAMENT tells the story of the Redeemer's arrival on the earthly stage and His work of redemption.

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is one book. But it is actually a library containing 66 books of varying lengths, some longer, some shorter. The Old Testament (written before the coming of Christ) contains 39 books, the New Testament (written after the coming of Christ) contains 27 books.



OVERVIEW OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The first five books of the Old Testament is usually called TORAH or THE LAW, written by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

- GENESIS

Genesis (Greek word means "beginning") is a divinely inspired record of the beginning of all things.

1. CREATION: Genesis 1, 2: The beginning of the universe and of humanity.

2. FALL: Genesis 3: The Fall: the beginning of sin, evil (natural, moral), death; the first promise of the Redeemer, vs. 15.

3. POPULATION MULTIPLICATION: Genesis 4, 5: Humans multiply; sin reaches full fruition, requiring divine judgment.

4. FLOOD: Genesis 6-9: God destroys sinful humanity in a global Flood; begins anew with Noah and his 3 married sons.

5. BEGINNING OF NATIONS: Genesis 10: Genealogy of Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; the beginning of nations; Shem was chosen to carry the line of the promised Redeemer.

6. PEOPLES & LANGUAGES DISPERSED: Genesis 11: Tower of Babel, confusion of languages, dispersion of nations.

7. HISTORY OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL: CALL OF ABRAHAM TO THE BABYLONIAN EXILE: Beginning at Genesis 12, all the rest of the Old Testament concentrates on the history of the Jewish people. Israel's history is told in the historical books from Genesis 12 to 2 Chronicles, from the call of Abraham until the Babylonian Exile.

8. EXILE & RETURN: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther. Esther tells the story of one mighty deliverance of the Jewish people during the time of the Exile. Ezra and Nehemiah tells the story of the Jewish return from Babylonian exile and of the rebuilding of the temple and of the walls of Jerusalem. The Old Testament closes with the post-exilic prophets Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Between the Old Testament and the New Testament lies the period called the 400 YEARS OF PROPHETIC SILENCE, which would eventually be broken by the appearance of the prophet John the Baptist.

OT PROPHETS TIMELINE
In the order listed in the Bible and their place of ministry, either in the Southern Davidic Kingdom of Judah or in the Northern Kingdom of the Separated 10 Tribes of Israel.

MAJOR PROPHETS

Isaiah (739-685 BC) – Judah
Jeremiah (627-580 BC) – Judah
Ezekiel (592-570 BC) – Babylon (during exile)
Daniel (606-530 BC) – Babylon; Persia (during exile)

MINOR PROPHETS

Hosea (760-720 BC)	– Israel
Joel (830 BC?)	– Judah
Amos (760 BC)	– Israel
Obadiah (845 BC?)	– Judah?
Jonah (780-760 BC)	– Israel (Nineveh)
Micah (737-690 BC)	– Judah
Nahum (ca 664-612 BC)	– Judah
Habakkuk (650-610 BC?)	– Judah
Zephaniah (640-608 BC)	– Judah
Haggai (520-516 BC)	– Judah (post-exile)
Zechariah (520-518 BC)	– Judah (post-exile)
Malachi (430 BC)	– Judah (post-exile)

OUTLINE OF THE STORY OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

1. THE PATRIARCHS: ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB

GENESIS 12-50: God calls Abram (later called Abraham) and makes a covenant with him in order for him to become the father and founder of the Jewish nation. Henceforth, through Abraham and his descendants (particularly through the Messiah to be born from his line) God promised to bless all the nations of the world. These chapters in Genesis tell about a series of sovereign choices God made among Abraham's descendants: Isaac instead of Ishmael; Jacob instead of Esau; and from the 12 sons of Jacob (Israel), Judah was chosen to carry the line through whom the promised Redeemer would come into the world.

The last chapters of Genesis tell about how Jacob and his 12 sons and their families migrated to Egypt because of famine. Years before, because of envy, Joseph's brothers sold him to a travelling caravan who in turn sold him in Egypt as a slave. But God blessed Joseph in Egypt so that he eventually ended up as Pharaoh's right hand person, and thus God used him to provide a home in Egypt for the entire clan of Jacob for the next 400 years. While Joseph remained alive, the Israelites were treated favorably and multiplied became a great nation.

2. FROM EGYPT TO THE PROMISED LAND.

EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY

Long after Joseph's death, a new king, who knew nothing of Joseph's great accomplishments, took over the throne of Egypt and made the Israelites into slaves while implementing at the same

time a system of genocide by having all male Jewish babies killed. By divine providence baby Moses was found hidden among the reeds in the Nile river by the daughter of Pharaoh, who adopted him and raised and educated him as her own son in the royal palace. Later at 40 years old, Moses felt it was time to help deliver his people. In the attempt, he murdered an Egyptian slavedriver and fled for his life into the desert of Midian, where he worked as a shepherd for 40 years. At 80 years old God miraculously appeared to him and commissioned him to deliver the people of Israel.

a. The book of EXODUS tells about the deliverance of the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses; about God making a covenant with Israel and of the giving of the Law, as summarized in the Ten Commandments; about the making of the Tabernacle, a portable tent that served as a dwelling place of God's presence, which traveled with the nation on their journey to the Promised Land.

   We have to look more deeply into the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel that He has delivered from Egypt; it is often called the SINAI COVENANT because it was made at the foot of that mountain.

   (1) Their deliverance was a fulfillment of God's covenant promise to Abraham (Genesis 15).

   (2) Through His mighty acts of deliverance, God was continuing His plan of redemption for the world to be accomplished through the nation of Israel (Genesis 22:15-18; Exodus 19:3-6).

   (3) God's covenant with Israel was purely of God's grace and justice, and it set before the nation both life and death. Life if they stayed faithful to God and His covenant; death if they broke the covenant and strayed after other gods (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 31:24-29).

b. The book of LEVITICUS contains laws and regulations for the tabernacle services and sacrifices and for the priestly functions and responsibilities as well as various instructions for community life.

c. The book of NUMBERS (so named because of the numberings or census-taking contained in it) tells the story of 40 years of wandering in the wilderness by the nation of Israel because of their failure to believe and obey, when first given the opportunity to enter the promised land.

d. DEUTERONOMY (literally, "second (giving of the) law" is Moses' extended farewell message to the nation of Israel before his death. In his message he rehearsed the main

points of God's covenant requirements while reviewing important lessons from the nation's history starting with their exodus from Egypt and through the 40 years of wilderness wandering. Moses also gave long-term prophecies about Israel's exile and return, with implications for the present day.

3. ISRAEL IN THE PROMISED LAND UNDER JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES.

a. The book of JOSHUA tells about Israel's conquest of Canaan under Joshua's leadership and of the distribution of the land to the 12 tribes.

b. After Joshua died, the 12 tribes were led by JUDGES, mighty leaders that God raised up to lead Israel in times of national crises. Sadly, the story follows the vicious cycle of "apostasy-discipline- repentance-deliverance-peace" followed by a slide into apostasy again. The book of Judges summarizes Israel's story during this period in a twice-repeated sentence: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6; 21:25, KJV).

c. The book of RUTH happened during the time of the Judges. It gives the ancestral background of King David.

4. ISRAEL: THE UNITED KINGDOM

a. Samuel was the last of the judges as well as the leading prophet during the united kingdom. In response to the people's insistent demand, God instructs Samuel to anoint Saul as the first king, establishing God's people into a kingdom.

b. These books (1 SAMUEL; 2 SAMUEL; 1 KINGS 11:43; 1 CHRONICLES-2 CHRONICLES 9:31) tell about Israel as a UNITED KINGDOM under the first three kings, Saul, David, and Solomon. Solomon committed so much idolatry at the end of his reign because of his many foreign wives. As punishment, God took away 10 tribes from his son. This led to the DIVIDED KINGDOM: (1) The kingdom of JUDAH in the south, under David's descendant, with capital in Jerusalem; and (2) the kingdom of ISRAEL, consisting of the 10 northern tribes, under non-Davidic kings, with capital in Samaria.

5. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

a. These books (1 KINGS 11:43; 2 KINGS 1-25; 2 CHRONICLES 10-36) tell the parallel stories about the two kingdoms and how they both ended in exiles. Both kingdoms followed a downward course of apostasy from their covenant with God into deeper and deeper idolatry and violations of the Ten Commandments through falsehoods, injustices,

and immoralities. God never failed to send His prophets to warn them of inevitable exile if they did not repent.

- EXILE OF NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL – 722 BC (2 Kings 17:5-41): The kingdom of Israel was conquered and its peoples exiled by Assyria in 722 BC. No record of the 10 tribes returning, hence they are known as the "10 Lost Tribes" to this day. The Assyrians brought in peoples from other nations to resettle the territory of Israel; these became the Samaritans, which develop a syncretistic Jewish religion mixed with their pagan beliefs and practices.

  Prophets to the kingdom of Israel:
  ELIJAH, ELISHA, JONAH, AMOS, HOSEA

- EXILE OF SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH – 586 BC: (2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36:15-21): The kingdom of Judah was conquered by Babylon in 586 BC. Jerusalem and the Temple were razed to the ground, and the population (except for the very poor) and the temple treasures were taken into exile in Babylon, to remain there for 70 years as Jeremiah prophesied. JEREMIAH stayed with the remnant left in Judah, of which a rebellious group escaped to Egypt, forcibly carrying Jeremiah with them, where he died. No record of the rebels ever returning to Judah.

  Prophets to the kingdom of Judah:
  ISAIAH, MICAH, NAHUM, ZEPHANIAH, HABAKKUK, JEREMIAH, OBADIAH

6. JEWS IN BABYLONIAN EXILE

a. EZEKIEL was a prophet among the exiles.

b. DANIEL was a member of the council of wise men in King Nebuchadnezzar's court. During his time in Nebuchadnezzar's service, Daniel received prophecies concerning future world empires up to the end of the world. He subsequently served as a top official under King Cyrus, who conquered Babylon.

c. ESTHER is a story of God's mighty deliverance of His people in exile during the reign of King Ahasuerus.

7. JEWS RETURN FROM BABYLONIAN EXILE IN 3 STAGES

   2 CHRONICLES 36:22, 23 tells of King Cyrus giving a decree authorizing the return of the Jews from their Babylonian exile. This decree was issued in 538 BC. The return came in 3 stages:

- STAGE 1: 538 BC (Ezra 1-6) led by Zerubbabel & Joshua, during the reign of King Cyrus.

- STAGE 2: 458 BC (Ezra 7-10) led by Ezra during the reign of Artaxerxes. The rebuilding of the temple was completed.

- STAGE 3: 445 BC (Nehemiah 1-13) led by Nehemiah during the reign of Artaxerxes. The wall of Jerusalem was completed.

  HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, MALACHI are the prophets to the exile returnees, with Malachi as the last prophet, closing the Old Testament record.

8. 400 YEARS OF PROPHETIC SILENCE BETWEEN THE OT & NT

   (a) After Malachi there was a prophetic silence for 400 years.

   (b) JEWS WERE RULED successively by the Persians, the Greeks, the Hasmoneans, and the Romans.

   (c) DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS SECTS arose during the 400-year period, including the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Zealots, Essenes, etc.

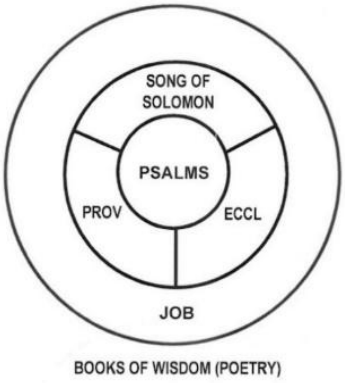
9. PROPHETIC SILENCE BROKEN.

   The prophetic silence was broken during the reign of the Roman Empire over the then known world when John the Baptist was raised up by God in order to announce the arrival of the promised Redeemer.

Lesson 16

SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS (Part 2)

We shall now survey the rest of the Old Testament books.



THE POETICAL OR WISDOM BOOKS

JOB, PSALMS, PROVERBS,
ECCLESIASTES, SONG OF SOLOMON.

These books are called poetical or wisdom books because they are mostly written in poetical form, and their subject matter is about gaining wisdom for godly living. The diagram above shows the different emphases of these wisdom books and how they relate to one another.

- JOB

Written during the time of the patriarchs, it deals with the problem of evil in the world, specially with the question "Why do bad things happen to good people?" This book draws aside the curtain that separates the two realms of heaven (where God and other spirits, both good and bad, live and operate) and earth (where humans spend their lives apparently being the prize contested by heavenly forces). In the conflict between good and evil, Satan seems often the winner. However, the message of the book of Job is that God is always in control and His will always prevails, although He does not explain what He is doing or the reasons for His decisions and actions. The biggest lesson Job learned may be expressed by these words from a Gospel song: "When you don't understand, when you can't see His hand, trust His heart."

- ECCLESIASTES

The book of ECCLESIASTES looks at all of life from birth to death as a repetitious cycle of nature and as an exhausting daily grind of human labor. At first reading, this book seems to offer a cynical view of life, which may be summarized as follows: Life is short, death ends it all, why bother? (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14).

However, on closer examination the book offers a practical philosophy of life, summarized in two passages:

Ecclesiastes 9:7-10:

[7] Go, eat your bread with joy,
And drink your wine with a merry heart;
For God has already accepted your works.
[8] Let your garments always be white,
And let your head lack no oil.
[9] Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that *is* your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.
[10] Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with your might; for *there is* no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14:
[13] Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man's all.
[14] For God will bring every work into judgment,
Including every secret thing,
Whether good or evil.

- PROVERBS

Whereas Ecclesiastes looks at the big picture of life, the book of PROVERBS is a book that seeks to impart wisdom in how to live one's daily life in the fear of God.

Proverbs 1:7:
The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 9:10:
The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

The book of PROVERBS was believed to have been originally designed as a manual for training young men for service in the king's court. However, it is full of practical and common sense counsel on how to live with godly wisdom in relation to God, to people, and to the concerns of daily life.

- SONG OF SOLOMON

The Bible is a very realistic book. It offers the worldview that all of God's creation is good, and every human faculty, ability, and desire are good in their right places. The SONG OF SOLOMON is a tribute to the joys of love and sex and marriage. This book talks about sexual pleasures in very frank and graphic terms, such that many have questioned why it was included in the Bible at all. But wise Bible readers and teachers have seen God's wisdom in including it in order to show that He is the inventor of love, the most powerful emotion in the universe.

Expressed and enjoyed within the bounds of faithful marriage, love is the most powerful and creative force for the preservation and elevation of humankind. Handled in the wrong way, it can destroy the world.

Some early Christian interpreters treated the SONG OF SOLOMON as an allegory of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Noble as their motivations may be, and the results of their devotional meditations spiritually inspiring, yet these cannot be reasons for ignoring the plain meaning of the book as a tribute to one of God's best gifts to humans, the gift of love, sex, and marriage and family.

Of course, there is a proper time and place for reading and studying this book. As far back as Jerome and Origen, it was said that Jewish rabbis did not permit young men to read the Song of Solomon until they were thirty. Discretion on the part of Bible teachers and preachers is indeed required for when to introduce this book for individual or group study.

- PSALMS

The book of PSALMS may be considered to be the heart and center of the wisdom books. Generally, it has been called the Prayer Book of God's People. It has even been called "The Prayer Book of Jesus", and one author has tried to show Jesus as praying in every psalm. The main themes of the Psalms include the following:

- Worship and praise to God.
- About the righteous.
- About the wicked.
- Psalms of the covenant people.
- Royal psalms.
- Messianic psalms.
- The Word of God.
- A book for all seasons. This is beautifully summarized in Psalm 23, which describes a believer's journey through life. This is unquestionably the most loved psalm by all believers throughout the world.

MAIN THEMES OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS
Main themes from: http://www.miketaylor.org.uk

- ISAIAH (739-685 BC) – Judah

MAIN THEME:
"To whom will you compare me, or who is my equal?" says the Holy One - Isaiah 40:25
Covers pretty much every topic in the Bible: God's holiness, warning of coming judgement, call to repentance, vision of future blessing, messianic predictions, the servant songs, and extraordinary poetry (e. g. chapter 40)

- JEREMIAH (627-580 BC) – Judah

MAIN THEME:
"O house of Israel, can I not do with you as the potter does?" declares the Lord. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel." - Jeremiah 18:6
Covers the transition from last days of the kingdom into exile. Warnings to repent are unheeded, and Jerusalem falls. Jeremiah then predicts future restoration after seventy years of exile, and warns the remaining Judaeans not to go down to Egypt. Jeremiah is distinguished by his understanding of God's will, his acceptance of it, and his willingness to persist with the very unappreciated ministry to which God had called him.

- EZEKIEL (592-570 BC) – Babylon (during exile)

MAIN THEME:
"I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory" - Ezekiel 43:2
Part of Ezekiel was written before the final destruction of Jerusalem: the theme of this part is that judgement will follow sin. The rest was written after this point, and the theme is that restoration will follow. The book is punctuated by complicated, confusing and occasionally terrifying visions, and by symbolic actions on the part of the author. The overriding theme is the glory of God.

- DANIEL (606-530 BC) – Babylon; Persia (during exile)

MAIN THEME:
"[...] the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth - Daniel 2:35b"
The book of Daniel begins with several chapters of history and stories about Daniel and his contemporaries' exemplary faith in extremely hostile circumstances. The remainder of the book is a series of highly figurative prophecies concerning the rise and fall of subsequent empires, and the eventual end to all things. Throughout, the emphasis is on the sovereignty of God.

- HOSEA (760-720 BC) – Israel

MAIN THEME:
"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? [...] My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused" - Hosea 11:8
Hosea's message is of the unshakeability of God's love and compassion in the face of constant unfaithfulness on the part of his loved people. More than any other prophet, he conveys not just God's anger at the failures of his people, but also his sadness, and even weariness. Hosea's life was a parable for his message: he married a prostitute who was unfaithful to him, but took her back.

- JOEL (830 BC?) – Judah

MAIN THEME:
"Even now", declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." - Joel 2:12
Joel uses a recent plague of locusts as an analogy for the coming Day of the Lord, warning that devastation is in store, and that repentance is required. The Day is seen as one of division: to those who love God, it brings blessing; to those who hate or ignore him, destruction. Part of his prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost.

- AMOS (760 BC) – Israel

MAIN THEME:
"Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria" - Amos 6:1a
The earliest prophet to Israel, Amos's book states the themes that recur throughout the prophets: condemnation of immorality, warning of coming judgement, and an appeal to turn back to God, and obtain mercy. God is both holy and loving. Amos was not a priest or a "professional" prophet, so brings a layman's objectivity and straightforwardness to his message.

- OBADIAH (845 BC?) – Judah?

MAIN THEME:
"Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down", declares the Lord - Obadiah 4
A message of woe to Edom, a neighbouring country which took advantage of Judah's disarray after the Babylonian triumph to raid weakened villages. Edom was descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob (Israel), and had always been a thorn in the Hebrews' sides. Obadiah denounces their pride and security in their mountain strongholds, predicting a total annihilation of the Edomite nation.

- JONAH (780-760 BC) – Israel (Nineveh)

MAIN THEME:
When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened - Jonah 3:10
Jonah's own message was simply one of warning to Nineveh. The message of the book, however, is that God is unlimited by geography, can use circumstances to achieve his own ends, and loves everyone: not just the Hebrews.

- MICAH (737-690 BC) – Judah

MAIN THEME:
"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" - Micah 6:8
Predicts judgement on Judah not just because the people have turned away from God, but also because of moral consequences of that apostasy. Emphasises the need for ethical behaviour in secular life as well as religious purity.

- NAHUM (betw. 664-612 BC) – Judah

MAIN THEME:
The Lord has given a command concerning you, Nineveh. "You will have no descendants to bear your name." - Nahum 1:14
A condemnation of Nineveh, together with both prediction of, and rejoicing in, its destruction. Unlike Jonah's message, which was a warning intended to bring about repentance, Nahum's message is final, a statement of what will surely occur rather than a warning of a fate that can still be avoided.

- HABAKKUK (650-610 BC?) – Judah

MAIN THEME:
"Though it linger, wait for it. It will certainly come, and will not delay" - Habakkuk 2:3b
The book takes the form of a dialogue: Habakkuk asks God why he allows injustice to continue in Judah. When God replies that he will end it by means of the Babylonians, he asks God how he can use those even more unrighteous as agents of judgement. God replies that all wickedness will surely be judged at the proper time. Habakkuk concludes that he can rejoice in God whatever the circumstances.

- ZEPHANIAH (640-608 BC) – Judah

MAIN THEME:
"The great day of the Lord is near - near and coming quickly" - Zephaniah 1:14

The first prophet in Judah after a gap of more than fifty years, he warns of the coming Day of the Lord, emphasising that Judah will not be exempt from the judgement due to the surrounding nations merely because of its history: God's people must seek him for themselves, not rely on their ancestors' relationship with him. Predicts the survival of a faithful remnant when God's judgement falls on Jerusalem.

- HAGGAI (520-516 BC) – Judah (post-exile)

MAIN THEME:
"Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while [God's] house remains in ruins?" - Haggai 1:4
One of the most focused of the prophets, this book is a combination of history and prophecy, recounting how Haggai drove the returned Judaeans to rebuild the temple.

- ZECHARIAH (520-518 BC) – Judah (post-exile)

MAIN THEME:
"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit", says the Lord Almighty - Zechariah 4:6b
Zechariah's message is a rich brew of visionary and apocalyptic imagery, some of it extremely difficult to interpret. The early part of the book is concerned with rebuilding the temple; the later part is a glimpse into the New Covenant future. A contemporary of Haggai, the substance of at least parts of his message is similar; but the style totally different.

- MALACHI (430 BC) – Judah (post-exile)

MAIN THEME:
"Return to me and I will return to you", says the Lord - Malachi 3:7b
Whereas most of the prophets rebuke outright sin, Malachi has to deal with apathy: the temple worship is being observed, but half-heartedly. Malachi emphasises that God wants the best we have to offer, not just the least we can get away with.

OLD TESTAMENT PREPARATIONS FOR THE COMING REDEEMER, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Old Testament prepared for the coming of the promised Redeemer in at least three ways:

- Through Prophecies
- Through Types and Symbols
- Through the Law

PROPHECIES

A Sample List of Messianic Prophecies:

1. Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem
Micah 5:2; fulfilled in Matt. 2:1-7; John 7:42; Luke 2:4-7

2. Messiah is to be born of a virgin
Isaiah 7:14; fulfilled in Matthew 1:18-2:1; Luke 1:26-35

3. Messiah is to offer Himself without resistance as the atoning Lamb sacrifice for the sins of His people
Isaiah 53; fulfilled in Matthew 26:62, 63; John 19:9; 1 Peter 2:23.

4. Messiah is to be executed by crucifixion, by having His hands and feet pierced
Psalm 22:16; fulfilled in John 19:28

5. Messiah is to be executed without having a bone broken
Exodus 12:46; Psalm 34:21; fulfilled in John 19:33-36

6. Messiah is to be buried with the rich when dead
Isaiah 53:9; fulfilled in Matthew 27:57-60

7. Messiah is to be raised from the dead
Isaiah 53:9-10; Psalm 2:7; 16:10; fulfilled in Matthew 28:1-20; Acts 2:23-36;13;33-37; 1 Corinthians 11:4-6

Note: Bible scholars estimate that the Old Testament contains around 300+ prophecies concerning Jesus, the Messiah.

TYPES AND SYMBOL

The types and symbols which pointed to the coming Redeemer are found primarily in the Old Testament sacrificial system.

God's law required that sin must be paid for, and the payment must be in the form of blood sacrifice (Hebrews 9:22).

When Jesus came, John the Baptist identified Him as the Lamb of God, who fulfills the OT types and symbols (John 1:29).

The following symbols pointed to the person and work of Chris.

1. God provides garments of skin for Adam and Eve.

Soon after Adam and Eve fell into sin and realized their shameful nakedness, God provided garments of animal skin for them in place of the fig leaves they tried to cover themselves with (Genesis 3:21). We see in the act of killing an animal to provide covering for the sinners as the first symbolic indication pointing to the need for the Redeemer to die in order to provide a covering for our sins.

2. The Passover Lamb

In Exodus 12:1-13 we see the highly symbolic killing of the Passover lamb, whose blood was to be applied to the lintel and doorposts of the house, and God's promise: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Christ is the Passover Lamb that would provide protection from the wrath of God.

3. Day of Atonement: Double Goat Offering

Leviticus 16 describes the annual rite of the Day of Atonement. This involves two animals, one animal was to be killed and its blood applied on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant inside the Holy of Holies. The second animal was to be kept alive to serve as a "scape goat"; after the high priest had confessed over its head all the sins of the people; this "scape goat" was then taken far out into the wilderness there to be released, symbolically carrying away all the sins of the people.

In these two animals the double work of the Redeemer was dramatized: First, the goat that was killed symbolizes that through the Redeemer's shedding of His blood on the cross, all our sins are paid for; second, based on the payment made by His Son, God can now forgive our sins (symbolized by the scape goat, carrying the nation's sins far away), never to remember them against us anymore!

THE LAW

The Law (The Ten Commandments and all its related ordinances and regulations) was part of the Old Testament preparation for the coming Redeemer. This is explained in Galatians 3:22-25.

In relation to the nation of Israel, the Law was God's complete plan for how they were to live as the covenant people of God.

In relation to the coming Redeemer, the Law served to prepare people in three important ways:

- The Law showed in no uncertain terms God's unchanging standard of holiness and justice.

- The Law showed in equally powerful ways that humans absolutely fail to measure up to God's standard and are therefore only deserving of God's wrath.

- The Law showed the need of a Redeemer who would save people from the wrath of God and from the power of sin, and a Redeemer who would help them to fulfill the requirements of God's righteousness.

USES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TODAY

How do New Testament believers use the Old Testament today? We may summarize the uses as the 5 P'S OF THE OLD TESTAMENT:

- Plan
- Provision
- Precepts
- Promises
- Punishments

1. PLAN

The Old Testament reveals that God had a PLAN for creation and for all of human history. This is centered in His Plan of Redemption to restore everything back to the perfect universe He had always had in mind.

2. PROVISION

The Old Testament further reveals that God made full PROVISION for the accomplishment of His Plan of Redemption, and His provision was completely bound up in His Son Jesus Christ.

3. PRECEPTS

The Old Testament reveals that God gave all the PRECEPTS or instructions to people as to how they can be part of His Plan of Redemption. These precepts are contained in God's laws, specially in the Ten Commandments, which remain valid for all time and places and peoples. These precepts are contained in God's written Word, the Bible, which serves as the divinely inspired "User's Manual" for living in right relationship with God, with others, and with creation.

4. PROMISES

The Old Testament contains God's promises of blessings for faith and obedience, as demonstrated in His dealings with people in Bible times, most clearly in His dealings with the nation of Israel. These promises were given within definite historical contexts to specific persons, but they contain timeless principles which are grounded in the unchanging character of God, thereby making them to have continuing application for God's people for all times.

5. PUNISHMENTS

The Old Testament also contains examples of God's punishments for unbelief and disobedience. Punishments are grounded in the law of sowing and reaping, both in the natural as well as in the spiritual realm. "Whatsoever a man sows, that he shall also reap." Threats of punishment or consequences prove the other aspect of God's love, which erects boundaries that people may transgress to their peril.

NEW TESTAMENT GUIDELINES

Two New Testament scriptures serve as guidelines in how believers may use the Old Testament today.

Romans 15:4:
4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

1 Corinthians 10:6, 11:
6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. . . . **11** Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our [c]admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

MEMORIZE:

> ***Psalm 119:9, 11: 9 How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. 11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Psalm 119:9, 11***

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

Continue your PRAYER PARTNER evangelistic outreach, using Book 1 with your prospects.

THIS WEEK

Meet with your Bible study leader:

(1) To have Daily Devotional Time together;

(2) To review your memory verses.

Lesson 17

HOW WE GOT OUR NEW TESTAMENT

In our previous lesson we asked: How did the Hebrew Old Testament scriptures get written?

The answer is this: God spoke first, and He was the first to write down His Words. He made a covenant with the people of Israel, first by speaking to them about the terms of the covenant, and then writing down the substance of that covenant in two tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments. Then Moses, and after him, other prophets, wrote down more words that God gave to His people.

Now we ask a similar question: How did the Greek New Testament get written?

The answer is the same: In the New Testament God spoke first to His people.

But this time, there was a big difference.

In the Old Testament God spoke through human messengers, the prophets. In the New Testament, God spoke through His own Son, Someone exactly like Him in His own divine nature. Through this Son, God delivered His final Word to the world.

Hebrews 1:1-3:
1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, **2** has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; **3** who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Hence, we may trace the giving of the New Testament as happening in TWO STEPS. We will discuss each step carefully.

- STEP 1: CHRIST: GOD'S LIVING WORD

Christ, God's promised Messiah in the Old Testament, came into the world at exactly God's appointed time.

Galatians 4:4:
4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born[a] of a woman, born under the law.

(1) He was born of a virgin, grew and lived as a normal human person, away from the public eye for 30 years; albeit with one difference: by God's grace He lived a perfect, sinless life (Luke 2:40, 52; Hebrews 2:17, 18; 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21-23).

(2) When He was about 30 years old, He began His public ministry to deliver the Word God entrusted to Him to teach people.

(3) He communicated God's Word through His own living Person, through His life, His Words, His Works, most specially through His redemptive suffering, death, burial, resurrection and ascension.

(4) His message communicated the following truths:

(a) About God (John 1:18; 14:9-11; 17:1-3);

(b) About God's plan of salvation for the world to be accomplished through Him as the promised Messiah-Redeemer (John 3:13-17);

(c) About how He came in fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises and prophecies (Luke 24:25-27, 44, 46);

(d) About how the Gospel, God's plan of salvation through the Messiah, must be proclaimed to the whole world (Luke 24:47);

(e) About how God's kingdom becomes a reality now in the lives of those who put their faith in Him as their Messiah and about how they are to live as His kingdom citizens while awaiting His Second Coming (John 3:3, 5; Matthew 5-7; 24; 25);

(f) About the end of the world, after the Gospel has been proclaimed to all the nations (Matthew 24:14).

(5) Before going back to heaven, Christ, the Living Word:

(a) Commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to all nations in order to make disciples from the peoples of all ethnic groups throughout the world (Matthew 28:18-20);

(b) Promised to send them the Holy Spirit who will help them primarily in two ways: first, to empower them as witnesses for Christ (Luke 24:48, 49; Acts 1:8); second, to teach them all things they needed to know, including reminding them of the Words

Christ taught them while He was with them; to enable them to understand more deeply about God the Father and the Son; and to tell them about things to come (John 14:26; 16:7-15).

- STEP 2: CHRIST: GOD'S WRITTEN WORD\

After Christ returned to heaven, His apostles and first disciples obeyed His command for them to go into all the world to proclaim the Gospel and to make disciples of all nations. As people responded and believed in the Gospel, they were gathered into local congregations or churches.

Of course, these young churches needed spiritual nurture and care.

In the early years, the apostles were able to personally provide instruction to the growing numbers of believers. But as churches were planted in more distant and widely scattered areas, they resorted to writing letters to communicate teachings and spiritual directions needed by the churches. Though originally addressed to specific recipient churches, soon these letters were copied and shared with other churches.

Foremost, the believers in these churches wanted to know more about their Savior and Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, about His eternal nature as Son of God, about His human birth, His life, words, works; about His redemptive sufferings, death on the cross, burial, resurrection, ascension, and promised Second Coming. So some of the original eyewitnesses or those closely associated with the eyewitnesses wrote accounts of Jesus' life, words and works. These accounts became known as "gospels", copies of which were made to be shared with other churches. Four accounts received greatest credibility and acceptance, and these became known as the Gospel according to Matthew, the Gospel according to Mark, the Gospel according to Luke, and the Gospel according to John.

OTHER WRITERS, LETTERS, GOSPELS

However, we need to be aware of one fact. Aside from the apostles and their close associates, there were other writers who wrote letters and Gospel accounts, all writing with good intentions and communicating what they believed were good moral teachings as well as faithful accounts of the life of Jesus. Sadly, there were writers who promoted ideas that were questionable or obviously not consistent with the true teachings of Jesus as delivered by His apostles.

Therefore, after the apostles and their close associates died, the leaders of the early church decided to determine which of the letters and Gospels in circulation were to be considered as authoritative scriptures for Christians. They used THREE TESTS:

- AUTHORSHIP (APOSTOLICITY). The book or letter must have a credible history of having been written by an apostle or by a close associate of an apostle. For example, Mark was a close associate of the apostle Peter; Luke was a close associate of the apostle

Paul, on top of the fact that Luke did careful interviews and research with remaining live eyewitnesses of the Lord's life and ministry.

- ACCORDANCE (ORTHODOXY). The book or letter must show without a doubt that its contents are theologically sound and in accord with the teachings handed down by Christ and His apostles.

- ACCEPTANCE (CATHOLICITY). The book or letter must have a history of being accepted by the majority (Greek, KAT' OLIKOS) of Christian churches from earliest times. Note: The word KAT' OLIKOS ("catholic") means UNIVERSAL in its original meaning.

EARLIEST APPROVED LISTS

In the Greek-speaking eastern churches, in A.D. 367, Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, wrote his 39th Paschal Letter, in which he mentioned 27 books which the eastern church accepted as comprising the New Testament.

In the Latin-speaking western churches, "at the African synods of Hippo Regius (A.D. 393) and Carthage (A.D. 397 and 419) the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were accepted."

One author comments: "Putting these two dates together makes evident that by the middle-to-late fourth century the church had no question about the 27 books that would comprise the New Testament. No really serious question has risen since."

This is how we got the 27 books that comprise our New Testament today (included in the Bibles of all branches of the Christian church).

CHRIST: GOD'S WRITTEN WORD

We call the New Testament "CHRIST: GOD'S WRITTEN WORD" because all 27 books included in it are all about Christ.

- The GOSPELS are about His eternal person, His earthly birth, life, words, works, redemptive suffering and death, burial, resurrection, ascension, present high priestly ministry, and promised Second Coming.

- The BOOK OF ACTS tells the story of how Christ's Gospel message of salvation began to spread to the whole world.

- The LETTERS explain how Christ's life and death and words should govern and guide the lives and works of those who believe in Him.

- The BOOK OF REVELATION reveals how God will bring to completion His plan for all ages through Christ His Son through whom and for whom God had brought into existence all creation in the beginning (Revelation 1:5, 18; 3:14; 11:15; 21:22, 23; 22:1-5, 13; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-18; Ephesians 1:9-12).

MAJOR OBJECTION:
COPIES OF COPIES OF COPIES

HOW RELIABLE IS OUR MODERN NEW TESTAMENT?

One major objection by atheists and other non-religious people is this: Because the New Testament manuscripts were repeatedly copied by hand, many copyist errors must have accumulated over centuries. How can we be sure that we have what the original inspired authors wrote?

Until the invention of modern printing by Gutenberg around 1440, all literary works were written on scrolls of papyrus or animal skins, inscribed by hand usually by professional scribes or in other cases by less trained copyists. Hence, errors in copying were inevitable. The books of the New Testament were subject to this same process with all its accompanying handicaps of copyist errors.

Hence, this valid objection: How reliable is our modern New Testament?

Present evangelical textual scholars answer: Very reliable. Through the science of modern textual criticism, we can be confident that we have about 99.99% of what the original authors of the New Testament wrote.

Please note the following reasons:

(1) THOUSANDS OF MANUSCRIPTS. Thousands of ancient manuscript copies of the New Testament in varying lengths and sizes and from earliest times have been discovered. In addition, we have ancient translations of the New Testament into other languages.

The first complete copies of single New Testament books appear around 200, and the earliest complete copy of the New Testament, the Codex Sinaiticus, dates to the 4th century. (Wikipedia)

The New Testament, written in Greek, was first translated into Syriac, Latin and Coptic - all before the time of Emperor Constantine (300). By the year 500, the Bible had been translated into Ge'ez, Gothic, Armenian and Georgian. (Wikipedia)

By comparing these ancient manuscripts and translations, modern textual scholars have produced critical versions of the New Testament which they believe reproduce with 99.99% accuracy what the original inspired authors wrote.

(2) MAJORITY OF ERRORS ARE MINOR. Majority of copyists errors involve items such as spelling, word order, duplication or accidental omissions, which are considered insignificant and are easily correctible.

(3) NO MAJOR DOCTRINES AFFECTED. None of the copyist errors affect doctrines of salvation or major Christian beliefs and practices.

CONCLUSION

Hence, according to modern evangelical textual scholars, we can be confident that we have in our hands today practically what the original inspired authors wrote. Our present New Testament contains all that we need in order to be sure of our relationship with God and to be guided in how to live a life that's well-pleasing to God and a life that's a blessing to others.

Note: Regarding NT manuscripts, please see Dr. Dan Wallace on YouTube.

SURVEY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
(Part 1)

We must now proceed to a survey of the New Testament.

400 YEARS OF SILENCE

First, we must remind ourselves of the 400 years of prophetic silence between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Four hundred years earlier, in fulfillment of God's promise through Jeremiah, the exiles did return to Jerusalem after seventy years in Babylon. They were able to rebuild the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. The temple services, rituals and sacrifices were restored.

During those four hundred years of prophetic silence, Jerusalem was run over and dominated successively by the Persians, the Greeks, the Hasmoneans, and the Romans.

But God continued to watch over His chosen people. In spite of the confusing mixture of religious groups claiming faithfulness to the Torah and to the Temple, God had His remnant of true believers. Representative of this remnant were the priest Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, her cousin Mary engaged to be married to Joseph, and two elderly saints who privately

maintained prayer lives in the Temple, the widow Anna and an aged man named Simeon. Doubtless there were many more devout believers who were waiting for the promised Redeemer.

THE SILENCE WAS BROKEN

Suddenly, the 400 years of prophetic silence was broken!

God again spoke and His Word announced two births.

First, the word about the birth of the FORERUNNER of the Messiah. God sent His angel Gabriel to announce to Zacharias and his wife that they would have a son in their old age, who will serve as the forerunner prophet of the Redeemer. They would name him John.

Second, the word about the birth of the MESSIAH. Six months after the announcement of the forerunner's birth, Gabriel was sent to announce to the virgin Mary that she would give birth to the Redeemer through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancée, was assured in a dream that his espoused wife's Son was from the Holy Spirit and that he would name him Jesus, signifying that He would save His people from their sins.

The New Testament tells the story about how God finally fulfilled His promise to send the Redeemer into the world, a promise first given in Genesis 3:15.

THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

The New Testament consists of 27 books, divided as follows:

- 4 GOSPELS: Matthew, Mark, Luke & John tell the story of the Messiah.

- 1 HISTORY: The Book of Acts tell the story of the beginning of the Christian church and of the spread of the Gospel to the world.

- 21 LETTERS OF INSTRUCTION: 13 letters by the apostle Paul; 8 letters by others, addressed to churches and individuals containing instructions about the Christian faith and conduct.

- 1 BOOK OF PROPHECY: The Book of Revelation by the apostle John unveils God's plan for the end of the world.

NEW TESTAMENT (27 BOOKS)				
4 GOSPELS	1 HISTORY	13 LETTERS OF PAUL	8 LETTERS BY OTHERS	1 PROPHECY
MATTHEW *Jesus as King* MARK *Jesus as Servant* LUKE *Jesus as Perfect Man* JOHN *Jesus as Son of God*	ACTS The spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem To Judea To Samaria To Rome & to the Ends of the World	ROMANS 1, 2 CORINTHIANS GALATIANS EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS COLOSSIANS 1, 2 THESSALONIANS 1, 2 TIMOTHY TITUS PHILEMON	HEBREWS JAMES 1, 2 PETER 1, 2, 3 JOHN JUDE	REVEL-ATIONS Prophetic picture of the Church thru the ages, the Great Tribulation, Christ's Second Coming, His Millennial Reign, the Last Judgment, and the Eternal State
		These letters give clarity to the revelation that God graciously granted in the OT & NT (about the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit); they provide all the necessary salvation truths to enable Christians to live their new life IN CHRIST in the power of the Holy Spirit individually & corporately as the FAMILY OF GOD, as the BODY OF CHRIST, as the TEMPLE OF GOD, and as the KINGDOM OF GOD in the present world.		

SURVEY OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

We begin with the apostle John's presentation of Jesus' story.

It is true that Matthew is the first book of the New Testament and the first of the three so-called "synoptic Gospels" (Matthew, Mark, Luke) because they give very similar accounts of Jesus' earthly life and ministry.

However, we survey John's Gospel first because he tells of the Redeemer as the SON OF GOD. the eternal LOGOS who existed before creation, long before being born on the earth as SON OF MAN.

ETERNAL PRE-EXISTENCE

John 1:1-5:
1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** The same was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In him was life; and the life was the light of men. **5** And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

We must be clear about the identity of the Redeemer. In Genesis 3:15 He was described as the "seed" (descendant) of the woman. But He was not going to be just any ordinary human baby born of a human mother. He was to be virgin born because He was no other than the eternal Son of God, the pre-existent Word.

John wants us to know the following things about the pre-existent Word (John 1:1-5).

a. The Word did not begin to exist in the beginning. He WAS already there in the beginning.

b. The Word was WITH God. He was a distinct person like God the Father, able to relate in every way to the person of God the Father.

c. The Word was GOD. He had the same nature as God the Father had.

d. All things were made by and through the Word. He was not a part of creation, He was not among the created things, because ALL CREATION came into existence through Him, and apart from Him, nothing that exists in creation today could have come into existence apart from the Word's agency.

e. The Word possesses LIFE, and He imparts life to all creation, both to animate and to inanimate.

f. The Word continues to sustain, uphold and HOLD together the whole universe. Christ, not gravity, keeps the universe working in orderly manner, so that it does not crash on itself or fly apart (Colossians 1:15-17).

Note:

"Firstborn" (PROTOTOKOS) does not mean the first among creation, but the rightful heir of all creation, because He is BEFORE all things, and ALL things were created BY HIM and FOR HIM (as John 1:1-3 already showed us).

"Consist" (SUNESTEKEN) means "hold together"; this agrees with Hebrews 1:2.

ENTRY INTO HUMAN HISTORY

John 1:14, 16-18:
14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. . . . **16** And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. **17** For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. **18** No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Please note the following truths about the Word (John 1:14, 16-18):

- The Word made flesh. The mystery of the incarnation. The eternal Son of God took on the full nature of humanity, apart from sin.

- The glory of the Word became evident to people, especially to the disciples. In becoming fully human, He did not lose any of His attributes as God; He only chose not to use these attributes.

- The Word brought grace and truth. In contrast to the Law, which only told people what to do but did not give them the power to obey, the Son of God as the Word-made-flesh came to accomplish God's full plan of salvation based on grace and truth. He came to be the Second Representative of the Human Race in place of Adam the First Representative. Where Adam failed, Christ came to gain victory using the same divinely-given resources originally available to Adam and which are also available to all those who believe in Christ. These resources include God's Word, the Holy Spirit, absolute faith and total obedience to God. Using these resources:

  (1) He lived a perfect human life.

  (2) He offered Himself as the unblemished Lamb of God offered on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for all the sins of the world.

  (3) He rose again from the dead, thus completely defeating death and Satan and all powers of darkness, and was raised by God to His right hand as King of kings and Lord of lords.

- The Word is no other than the Son who was eternally in the bosom of God the Father, and who brought the full revelation of who God is as the author of the eternal Plan of Salvation.

THE "I AM'S" OF CHRIST

Notable in the Gospel of John are the SEVEN "I AM" declarations of Christ about Himself:

(1) Bread of Life (6:35)
(2) Light of the World (8:12)
(3) Gate (Door) (10:7)
(4) Good Shepherd (10:11)
(5) Resurrection and the Life (11:25, 26)
(6) The Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
(7) True Vine (15:1)

These 7 I AMs are all encompassed by His most radical I AM claim regarding His essential nature and identity in relation to the God of the Old Testament; compare the two scripture passages below:

John 8:58: Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

Exodus 3:13, 14: **13** And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? **14** And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.
John concludes his gospel account of Christ with these words:

John 20:30, 31:
30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: **31** But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

a. To believe that Jesus is the Son of God means to believe He is fully God in every way that the Father is God. To believe that Jesus is the Christ means to believe that He is the promised Redeemer who would bring salvation to people and restoration to the fallen creation. To believe in Jesus as the Son of God and as the Christ is to receive life in His name.

b. To receive life means to be born again and to receive the power and authority to be a child of God, to live as worthy sons and daughters of the Family of God, and to be kept completely safe in the hands of the Father and the Son in this present world and, afterwards, to enjoy with Jesus the eternal glories He obtained for all those who have truly put their faith in Him (John 1:12, 13; 10:27-30; 17:15-26).

TWO MOST LOVED PASSAGES

The Gospel of John contains probably the two most loved passages in the whole Bible.

1. JOHN 3:16: GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

Here we see the infinite greatness of God's love in contrast to the utmost sinfulness of humans. This passage summarizes God's non-stop pursuit of humanity from the time of Adam and Eve's sin in the beginning when they launched humanity's relentless escape from God's presence (John 3:19).

In sending His own Son into the world God set into motion His master plan of finally catching up with the fugitive sinners. Sadly, the people's response remained unchanged: When at last they came face to face with the pursuing Light, they retreated even deeper into their cave of darkness.

But what were they rejecting? God's love, God's forgiveness, God's free offer of eternal life, God's promise of rescue from eternal loss.

2. JOHN 19:30: "IT IS FINISHED!"

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

What was finished?

God's Plan of Redemption, promised in Genesis 3:15, was finished.

Through His coming into the world, through His perfect life, death on the cross, resurrection and ascension back to the right hand of God, the Redeemer completely accomplished God's eternal Plan of Salvation. The unfolding of the results of salvation will be in two stages:

- STAGE 1: RE-CREATING THE PEOPLE

This stage covers the period from Christ's first coming to His second coming. God is presently calling to Himself people from all races to believe in His Son. Satan and his hosts, though already defeated, are allowed to operate to serve God's purposes in molding and perfecting the members of His eternal family under the sovereign control of the Holy Spirit.

- STAGE 2: THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH.

This stage covers all the events prophesied in Revelation 20-22, inaugurated by Christ's second coming and culminating in the last judgment and in the ushering in of the new heavens and new earth and of the eternal state in God's forever kingdom.

MEMORIZE:

> ***John 20:30, 31:***
> ***30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.***

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THIS WEEK

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(1) To have Daily Devotional Time together;

(2) To review your memory verses.

Lesson 18

NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY
Part 2

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The focus of the Gospel of Matthew is on Jesus as THE KING.

The Gospel account of Matthew begins rightly with a genealogical table (believed by scholars to be traced through Joseph's legal line), which connects Jesus to Abraham to whom God promised the "seed" who would bless the whole world, and to David to whom God promised the Son who would establish the Davidic kingdom forever. Note that Luke gives an alternative genealogy (believed by scholars to be traced through Mary), which traces Christ's lineage all the way back to Adam.

Matthew is similar to Luke in two unique ways, in that both provide a table of genealogy and they tell the infancy stories of Jesus. In addition, Luke gives summary account of Jesus' early life and development as a normal carpenter's Son up until He was about thirty years old, when He launched His public ministry.

The rest of Matthew's account has parallels with Mark and Luke in recording the words and works of Jesus and of His death, burial, and resurrection.

MEMORABLE FEATURES IN MATTHEW

1. EVENTS SURROUNDING THE BIRTH OF JESUS

- Matthew 1: The virgin birth; His name Jesus means "He will save His people from their sins"; His name Immanuel means "God with us".

- Matthew 2: The visit of the Three Wise Men; Herod's massacre of Bethlehem children in attempt to kill Jesus; escape to Egypt of the Holy Family.

2. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

- Matthew 5-7: The Sermon on the Mount; the Beatitudes; the Lord's Prayer; the two builders.

Jesus the King announced the coming near of the kingdom of heaven; near in the sense that it is now here, and people may now enter it by putting their faith in the King. The Sermon on the Mount lays down the spiritual principles by which His kingdom citizens should live.

3. THE GREAT INVITATION
   This is Jesus' great invitation:

- Matthew 11:28-30:
  28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

4. PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

- Matthew 13: These parables show how Christ's kingdom operates.

5. FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH

- Matthew 16: Peter's confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus' declaration: "You are Peter (PETROS, a piece of rock), and upon this Rock (PETRA, a massive rock), I will build my church." Christ, the PETRA, is the foundation of the church (1 Peter 2:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 3:11). Peter was given the key to open the kingdom as the first proclaimer of the Gospel to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and the first proclaimer of the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10).

6. END TIME PROPHECIES & WARNINGS

- Matthew 24: The Second Coming; signs of the end of the world.

- Matthew 25:1-13: The 5 Wise and 5 Foolish Virgins.

- Matthew 25:31-46: Judgment of Nations: Sheep nations separated from Goat nations.

7. CHRIST ABANDONED ON THE CROSS, TEMPLE CURTAIN TORN FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

- Matthew 27:46-51: On the cross, Jesus' cry of abandonment: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The curtain of the Temple, separating the Holy of holies.

From the time when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin had remained as the impenetrable wall that separated people from God. But the moment Christ died on the cross as the full atoning sacrifice, God broke down the wall of sin, symbolized by the tearing apart of the thick temple curtain separating the holy of holies from the people, dramatically ending the separation caused by sin between God and sinners. The fact that the curtain was torn from the top means that God Himself is the author of the Plan of Salvation, which brought about the ending of the separation.

8. THE GREAT COMMISSION, THE GREAT COMPANION

- Matthew 28: Jesus' resurrection; the Great Commission; Jesus' promise, "I am with you always to the end of the age" (verses 18-20).

  After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into all the world to proclaim the Good News that people may now come freely to God through the way opened by the blood of Christ!

  But how could the disciples accomplish that impossible task? They could, because they would never be alone. Christ Himself would be their Great Companion, to give them all the resources needed to do all He commanded them to do.

SURVEY OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

The focus of the Gospel of Mark is on Jesus as THE SERVANT.

The MacArthur Study Bible gives an excellent summary of the distinctive features of the Gospel of Mark:

Mark presents Jesus as the suffering Servant of the Lord (10:45). His focus in on the deeds of Jesus more than His teaching, particularly emphasizing service and sacrifice. . . .

Mark demonstrated the humanity of Christ more clearly than any of the other evangelists, emphasizing Christ's human emotions (1:41; 3:5; 6:34; 8:12; 9:36), His human limitations (4:38; 11:12; 13:32), and other small details that highlight the human side of the Son of God (e. g., 7:33, 34; 8:12; 9:36; 10:13-16).

SURVEY OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

The focus of the Gospel of Luke is on Jesus as the PERFECT MAN.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

1. BASED ON CAREFUL RESEARCH

The Gospel of Luke is actually a part of a two-volume work, detailing the history of the Christian movement. Part one is the Gospel, which tells the story of the Founder, Jesus Christ. Part two is the book of Acts, which tells the story of how the early followers of Jesus began to spread the message of Jesus to the world.

Significantly, Luke tells us that his two-volume work was the result of careful research. Originally dedicated to and written for the benefit of a person named Theophilus (probably the sponsor of the project), the work was eventually included in the canon of New Testament scriptures for the instruction of all Christians (Luke 1:1-4).

2. THE "HIDDEN YEARS" OF JESUS

Only Luke gives us a glimpse of the so-called "hidden years" of Jesus from His childhood until He began His public ministry at about 30 years old. Jesus spent those "hidden years" going through the normal stages of development from childhood to adulthood (Luke 2:40, 52).

3. THE MISSION OF JESUS

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus describes the mission which He came to accomplish (Luke 4:16-21).

4. MEMORABLE PARABLES

The Gospel of Luke records parables that have become memorable to many people today, both Christians as well non-Christians.

- The Prodigal Son (15:11-32)
- The Good Samaritan (10:30-37)
- The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)
- The Rich Fool (12:15-21)

5. COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

In the Gospel of Luke Jesus spells out very clearly the cost of becoming His true disciple (Luke 9:23-25; 14:25-35).

6. CHRIST: THE THEME OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Gospel of Luke closes with Christ explaining clearly that the theme of the Old Testament is all about Him, His life, death, and resurrection, and how this Gospel must be proclaimed to the whole world that forgiveness of sins is possible through faith in His name alone (Luke 24:44-47).

FROM JERUSALEM TO THE END OF THE WORLD:
THE BOOK OF ACTS TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

On the day of Christ's ascension back to heaven, He gave His disciples a commission and a promise.

- The commission: To be His witnesses, beginning at Jerusalem to Judea and to Samaria and to the end of the world.

- The promise: He will send down the Holy Spirit to become their all-sufficient power and resource to enable them to accomplish the humanly impossible commission.

The statement, "From Jerusalem to the end of the world" has both a literal and symbolic meaning.

- Literal Meaning: The apostles and early disciples did obey Christ's commission and carried the Good News about the Lord Jesus Christ from Jerusalem to the end of the world. The Book of Acts begins with the account of the apostle Peter giving his Gospel message on the day of Pentecost, the day the Holy Spirit came down from heaven upon the first group of Christian believers. The Book of Acts ends with the account of the apostle Paul providentially brought to the capital of the empire, the City of Rome, as a prisoner for the Gospel under house arrest for a period of two years, having full freedom to proclaim the message of Christ to all who came to him.

- Symbolic Meaning: The New Testament, from the Book of Acts to the last book of Revelation, recounts the story of the church from the ascension of Christ at Jerusalem until His Second Coming at the end of the world as prophesied in the Book of Revelation.

BETWEEN ACTS AND REVELATION

Between the Book of Acts and the Book of Revelation, the New Testament preserves the letters of instruction that the apostles and some of their close associates wrote to Christian local churches and individuals. These letters taught the early believers more fully the elements of the Christian faith and guided them in how to live as faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and in how to be fruitful witnesses for Him.

- THE BOOK OF ACTS

After His death, burial and resurrection, and just before He ascended back to heaven, Christ gave this commission to His disciples:

Acts 1:8:
But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The Book of Acts tells the story of the beginning of the Christian church. It tells the story of how the apostles and early Christians obeyed the Lord's command to go into all the world to proclaim the message of forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ.

What was this Gospel message? The message was about Jesus, His life, words, and works, and His death, resurrection, ascension and coming again. The message always ended with a call to repent and to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and Lord. Two sermons of the apostle Peter give the core substance of their Gospel message and the expected response from the listeners (Acts 2:36-42; 10:34-48).

The first chapters of the Book of Acts describe how the Gospel was proclaimed by the apostles first in Jerusalem, and the last chapters tell of how the apostle Paul proclaimed the Gospel to the Gentiles until he eventually arrived in Rome where he proclaimed the Gospel freely and without hindrance for two whole years in the heart of the empire. Acts 1-12 essentially focus on Peter as the main character and his ministry to the Jews; Acts 13-28 shift the focus on Paul and his ministry to the Gentiles, consisting in three missionary journeys, which resulted in the establishment of churches among the Gentiles and culminating in his bringing the Gospel to the heart of the empire, to the capital city of Rome itself.

The Book of Acts has no formal or definite ending. Some Bible teachers have suggested, rightly we believe, that the Holy Spirit continues to write the history of the church through the lives and labors of all Christians that have followed in the steps of the apostles. This includes us Christians today who seek to obey the same commission that Christ gave to His original followers. We continue the story of the expansion of the church as our own Acts chapter 29.

- THE NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

As the Gospel spread outward and churches were established in many parts of the then-known world, believers in those churches needed continuing instruction in the faith and in how they were to conduct themselves as God's people in their pagan environments. To provide this instruction, the apostles wrote letters to these Christians and churches (13 letters by the apostle Paul, 8 letters by others). Most of the letters sought to resolve problems that the churches were experiencing; some gave instructions on church administration and leadership. Though originally written to specific churches or individuals, these letters were eventually copied and collected and shared with other churches and with Christians everywhere. In the end this collection of letters, along with the Gospels, became known as the New Testament and, bound

together with the Old Testament, that complete collection is the Bible that we know and love today.

- THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The New Testament contains one book of prophecy, the Book of Revelation.

Below is a condensed version summarizing the four major approaches to the interpretation of the Book of Revelation from the website EVIDENCE AND ANSWERS: FOUR VIEWS OF REVELATION by P. Zukeran, November 4, 2012.

VIEW #1: The Idealist View

- Uses the allegorical method. introduced by Origen (185-254 A. D.); made prominent by Augustine (354-420 A. D.)
- According to this view, the events of Revelation are not tied to specific historical events. The imagery of the book symbolically presents the ongoing struggle throughout the ages of God against Satan and good against evil. In this struggle, the saints are persecuted and martyred by the forces of evil but will one day receive their vindication. In the end, God is victorious, and His sovereignty is displayed throughout ages.

VIEW #2: The Preterist View

- Full preterists (means past) and partial preterists. Both views believe that the prophecies of the Olivet discourse of Matthew 24 and Revelation were fulfilled in the first century with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. Chapters 1-3 describe the conditions in the seven churches of Asia Minor prior to the Jewish war (66-70 A. D.). The remaining chapters of Revelation and Jesus' Olivet Discourse describe the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans.
- Full preterists believe that all the prophecies found in Revelation were fulfilled in 70 A. D. and that we are now living in the eternal state, or the new heavens and the new earth.
- Partial preterists believe that most of the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem but that chapters 20-22 point to future events such as a future resurrection of believers and return of Christ to the earth.

VIEW #3: The Historicist View

The historicist approach teaches that Revelation is a symbolic representation that presents the course of history from the Apostle's life through the end of the age.

- The symbols in the apocalypse correspond to events in the history of western Europe, including various popes, the Protestant Reformation, the French Revolution, and rulers

such as Charlemagne. Most interpreters place the events of their day in the later chapters of Revelation.

- Many adherents of this position view chapters 1-3 as seven periods in church history. The breaking of the seals in chapters 4-7 symbolizes the fall of the Roman Empire. The Trumpet judgments in chapters 8-10 represent the invasions of the Roman Empire by the Vandals, Huns, Saracens, and Turks. Among Protestant Historicists of the Reformation, the antichrist in Revelation was believed to be the papacy. Chapters 11-13 in Revelation represent the true church in its struggle against Roman Catholicism. The bowl judgments of Revelation 14-16 represent God's judgment on the Catholic Church, culminating in the future overthrow of Catholicism depicted in chapters 17-19.

VIEW #4: The Futurist View

The futurist view teaches that the events of the Olivet Discourse and Revelation chapters 4-22 will occur in the future.

- Futurist divide the book of Revelation into three sections as indicated in 1:19: "what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later." Chapter 1 describes the past ("what you have seen,") chapters 2-3 describe the present ("what is now,") and the rest of the book describes future events ("what will take place later.")
- Futurists apply a literal approach to interpreting Revelation. Chapters 4-19 refer to a period known as the seven-year tribulation (Dan. 9:27). During this time, God's judgments are actually poured out upon mankind as they are revealed in the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Chapter 13 describes a literal future world empire headed by a political and religious leader represented by the two beasts. Chapter 17 pictures a harlot who represents the church in apostasy. Chapter 19 refers to Christ's second coming and the battle of Armageddon followed by a literal thousand-year rule of Christ upon the earth in chapter 20. Chapters 21-22 are events that follow the millennium: the creation of a new heaven and a new earth and the arrival of the heavenly city upon the earth.

Conclusion

The book of Revelation is a fascinating book, and the debate regarding its interpretation will continue. Despite our various views, there are some common threads upon which Christians agree.

- All views believe that God is sovereign and in charge of all that occurs in history and its ultimate conclusion. Except for full preterism and some forms of idealism, all believe in the physical second coming of Christ.
- All views believe in the resurrection from the dead. All believe there will be a future judgment.

- All believe in an eternal state in which believers will be with God, and unbelievers will be separated from Him.
- All agree upon the importance of the study of prophecy and its edification for the body of Christ.

Unfortunately, the debate among Christians has often been harsh and hostile. It is my hope that the debate would continue in a cordial, respectful manner which will challenge every believer to accurately study and interpret the Word. We all await the return of our Lord and together with the saints of all ages say, "Amen, come Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). (End of by P. Zukeran's article)

FINAL CHALLENGE

\CHRIST IS COMING SOON!

Believe in Him as your Savior.

Submit to Him as the absolute Lord of your life.

Love and serve Him with all of your heart and strength in the remaining time that He gives you.

BEGINNING NOW, TODAY!

MEMORIZE:

> ***Revelation 22:12, 13: [12] "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. [13] I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." Revelation 22:12, 13:***

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WHAT'S NEXT?

NOTE: AFTER COMPLETING BOOK 5,

INSERT SEPARATE STUDIES

BOOK SIX-A:
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

BOOK SIX-B:
FOR MARRIED COUPLES & ENGAGED SINGLES