

THE
QUEST
FOR TRUTH

REVISED EDITION

SHANNON HURLEY

The Quest for Truth

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my family. My wife Danielle is my best friend, my sweetest companion, and my fellow pilgrim. I praise God for the invaluable gift she is to me. My children (Emma, Elisa, Ethan, Ezekiel, Evan, and Emmitt), are my most precious treasures and my source of immense joy. I pray that the truths of this book will be deeply rooted in your hearts and will impassion your lives.

ABOUT SOS MINISTRIES

Sufficiency of Scripture Ministries is a unique 501-(c)(3) faith-based registered non-profit organization incorporated in the United States and Canada. By partnering with SOS Uganda, Sufficiency of Scripture Ministries seeks to equip the leadership of the church throughout the country of Uganda and to lovingly serve and disciple local communities. We pray that the impact of this resource will motivate some to consider partnering with SOS Ministries to advance God's Kingdom in Uganda. For more information and other available resources, please visit: www.sosministries.com.

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book can be used in a number of different ways. It can be used as a personal travel guide or as a group travel guide. Stated differently, it can be used to help a journeyman, or it can be used to help a mentor guide other journeymen. In many ways, this is an evangelistic, discipleship tool.

In light of that, I understand that this guide will meet different people at various stages in their journeys. Some may be tempted to say, “I don’t need this part.” Others might want to use this tool as a doctor would use medicine and treat not the whole body but just a specialized area of weakness. So I want to give the reader a few helpful hints for using this tool.

First, I want to help leaders understand the importance of a proper foundation. So many of our problems in the church are a result of poor discipleship or absence of discipleship. In reality, some pastors are trying to build houses on precarious foundations. I believe as leaders we too often expect that our followers are further along than they are. The end result is a dysfunctional building. So I encourage leaders and journeymen to slow down and go through the whole expedition. Before choosing to skip a section, be 100% sure that no cracks are left in the foundation.

Second, I want my readers to understand that the book has been designed in a sequential manner. I am seeking to take the reader step by step through the heart and soul of Christianity. Yet, before looking at Christianity directly (which is done in chapters 5–15), I spend chapters one to four dealing with essential presuppositional issues, such as: What is religion? Is belief in God logical? If one wants to deal with the most pressing gospel issues, he can start in chapter 8, which exposes man’s problem.

Third, I want the leaders to understand the importance of making sure that those they lead are encouraged to answer the questions for themselves and wrestle through the information. We live in a society where we are overloaded with information and desire pain-free instant results. In our culture, we have removed the time to think and wrestle through content. We want everything given in a style of a one-minute commercial. But such a worldview stunts growth. People are like trees; they need time and differing weather conditions to grow. The slower they grow, the deeper the roots extend, resulting in taller and sturdier trees which are prepared to weather the fiercest storms. We must inspire the reader to think. We must allow the reader to wrestle, fight, and struggle with the

material. All his questions will be answered in the end, so we need to allow the reader to sit in his confusion long enough that his brain can grapple with the information. Do not relieve the pain of the journey; let him work through it. It is through this pain that the growth can take place. Let us allow reader discover the truth for himself so he values the truth.

Fourth, each chapter of this book is broken up into lessons using the following format:

- Introduction: A brief introduction about the subject of the lesson.
- Thoughts to study: Questions to guide the reader as he embarks on a quest for the truth.
- Thoughts to contemplate: Questions to encourage the reader to think about the personal application of the truth and how it relates to his personal life.
- Looking forward: An introduction to the next lesson.
- Questions for Review: Questions to help the reader review what he has learned in the lesson.
- Scriptural Passages: We have inserted all of the Bible passages used in the lesson at the end of each section. We encourage each reader to find the passages in his own Bible, but we have also included them at the end of the lesson for easy accessibility. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture passages used in this book are taken from the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB).

Lastly, I want all readers to understand my heart. I desired to write a book that does not merely give each reader all the answers, but rather one that would lead to the answers. I want each reader to discover the precious jewels for himself. I can describe Africa in detail, but unless a man travels there, he may never understand it. So it is with truth. As a result, I have attempted to write it from a culturally-neutral perspective. I have attempted to gently encourage and guide each reader to think and form his beliefs about God and the Truth. I have purposely tried not to force my belief system on anyone, because I believe that if it is the truth, it will come with its own convincing power. Enjoy the journey.

Feel free to write and tell us what you learned from this book and how it has changed your life. You may contact us at admin@sosministries.com. For sermons or other resources, please visit our website at www.sosministries.com.

Servant of the King (1 Timothy 1:17),

Shannon Hurley

Sufficiency Of Scripture Ministries

INTRODUCTION

This book that you hold in your hands is more than just a book; it is a road map. It is penned with passion, concern, and thoughtful consideration for each one of you. It is motivated out of the confusing journey of my own life.

From the time I was a kid, I had an inward desire to understand the truth, but I did not know where to find it. My life then, could have been likened to a boy being dropped into the middle of a jungle and asked to find his way out. By God's grace, I was introduced to a form of Christianity in my youth, but it was a form that lacked substance and devotion. It was at this time that I learned religion. Yet my longing soul yearned for more. It was hungry for truth.

The disturbing questions of my youth were, What is Christianity? What is the truth? Is there really a God? If so, then how can I know Him? What does He have to say regarding man? What is this life all about? I was not content with clichés or “pat answers.” I wanted substance during these turbulent, youthful years.

One reality I quickly saw was that many people were sincere in their faith but ignorant of its content. They blindly followed their belief system, with no real answer regarding its content. For most, the shallowness of their religious devotion was evidenced by the fact that it had no impact on them beyond Sunday. All of this superficial faith led me to search the Bible for myself. I wanted to know what God had to say for Himself.

It is through this long, difficult, but ultimately satisfying journey that this book has been birthed. The journey was slow and tough because I had to go through the journey alone. I had no one who took my hand and helped me dig through the rubble of various philosophies. It was just a shovel and me. And it is for this reason I now write this book.

As I began to uncover the gold from within God's Word, I longed for a mentor, a shepherd, or a fellow journeyman to travel with me. Although I cried out in the midst of the fog for someone to give me direction, I heard no response. All I had was a faint road map (the Bible). The road map was faint, due to my inability to properly read it, but it was sufficient to bring me to the knowledge of truth.

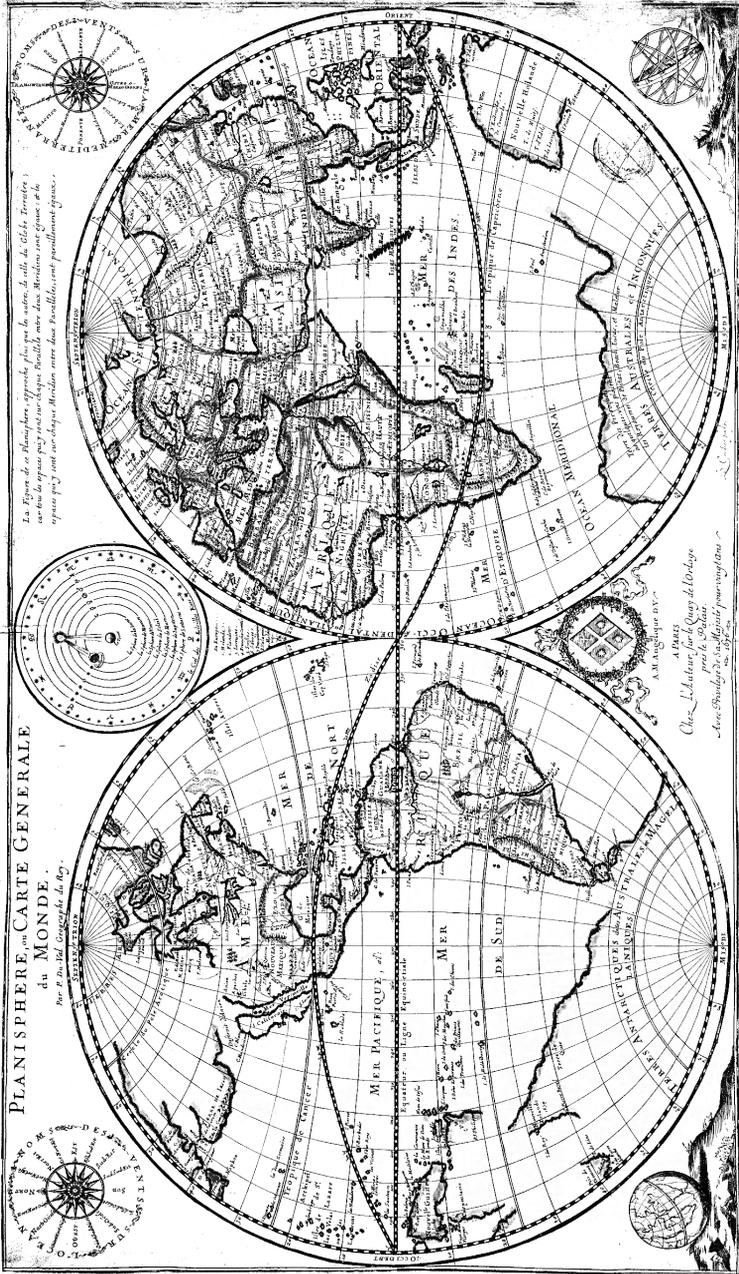
This book is designed to provide what I longed for. It is designed to be a guide. It is crafted with a heart for fellow journeymen. It is designed to help you down the well-trodden path toward Truth. Regardless of the help provided, I want you to know that you still have to make the journey for yourself. I can't make it for you. With God's help, I want to guide you through the fog by taking your hand along the path. But it is you who must be resolved to travel this path with me. The good news is that I will be there to help and encourage you each step of the way.

Looking back at my own journey, I am now thankful for my lonely expedition because I am now able to help others. Understand that this book will not take you all the way to the Celestial City; it will just give you the road map to its pearly gates. See, I can't take you where I have not gone myself. I too am just a pilgrim. I too am still traveling with my trustworthy road map. Although I have experienced reading this roadmap, there are still places I am yet to travel. All I can tell you at this point is that what you are about to see will change your life. So come with me. Pick up your walking stick and your shovel, and let us go on this quest for Truth together.

LESSON ONE

WHAT IS RELIGION?

-The Quest for Truth-



PLANISPHERE ou CARTE GENERALE
du MONDE.

Par Guillaume Blaeu.

La Figure de la sphère terrestre, qui se voit au centre de cette Carte, représente
ce que la terre peut paraître de l'espace d'un point de vue, avec deux Meridians sous forme de la
sphère qui est surchargée de l'axe des deux Meridians, et par conséquent d'axe.

A PARIS
Chez l'Auteur pour le Quay de Brétagne
par le Palais
à l'enseigne de la Vierge pour vingt sols
M. D. C. LXXV.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

THERE ARE AS MANY RELIGIONS IN THE WORLD AS THERE ARE PEOPLE.

People around the world have a vast variety of beliefs about God. Some of these beliefs are very popular, and other beliefs are not widely known. The major religions of the world include: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Chinese and African Traditional Religions, Hinduism, and Atheism. All of these religions have vastly different teachings. Some religions believe in one God; some religions, many gods; and others don't believe in any god whatsoever. How does one make sense of religion? How does one choose which religion to believe or not to believe? What is religion anyway? It is the attempt of this lesson to try to answer these common questions.

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

What definition would you give for religion?

There are various definitions given for religion. Considering the many definitions of religion, you will find some good and some bad, some broad and some specific. For example, one person says that religion is a “guide for people to be good.”¹ However, one dictionary provides this definition: “Any system of faith and worship. In this sense, religion comprehends the belief and worship of pagans and Mohammedans, as well as of Christians.”² Nevertheless, the simplest and broadest definition is that **religion is a person's belief about God.**

How many people are religious?

In light of the above, what is your definition of a religious person?

¹<http://imageverse.org/activities/religions/index.htm>

²Noah Webster, *The American Dictionary of the English Language*, 17th edition (Chesapeake: Foundation for American Christian Education, 2005).

If religion in its broadest definition is a belief about God, then, a **religious person** in the broadest definition would be a **person who holds to a belief about God**. Therefore, for the sake of this discussion, let's remove all preconceptions regarding who a religious person is.

For example, let's not view a religious person as one who attends religious services regularly, moves into a monastery, speaks with spiritual language, or reads from a prayer book. Rather, let's maintain a broad understanding of a religious person as being one who holds to a belief about God.

In light of the above definition, do you think all, most, or just a few people are religious?

In light of the above definition, do you think a Christian is religious? (Yes or No)

In light of the above definition, do you think a Muslim is religious? (Yes or No)

In light of the above definition, do you think an atheist—someone who does not believe in God—is religious? (Yes or No)

In light of the above definition, do you think a person who claims to be “non-religious” is religious? (Yes or No)

In light of the above definition, do you think you are religious? (Yes or No)

If religion is a person's belief about God, then one fact must be for certain: Every person is religious. Every person is religious because every person, by nature of human existence, has to have some sort of a belief or perspective about God. A belief that God does not exist is still a religious belief. To not care about holding to a belief in God is even a belief because it means that one believes God is not really worth knowing. Clearly, every person is religious—whether he is aware of it or not. *Therefore, to not be religious is to not be human.*

How many religions are in the world?

How many religions do you think there are in the world?

It has been said that there are as many religions in the world as there are people. In many respects, this statement is true because religions are made up of different beliefs about God, and there are millions of different beliefs about God in the world.

What influences people to choose their religions?

What do you think influences people to choose their particular religious belief systems?

A person's religion is formulated as a result of many differing circumstances. For instance, many people hold to a certain religion because it was passed down to them through their parents. For others, religion met a need in a time of crisis as a source of hope or was born out of calamity from their past that may have included hypocritical parents, the death of a child, or the feeling of abandonment by God when they needed Him most.

A person's religion might also be a result of an experience or information that has been obtained along life's journey. In this case, beliefs are often not pursued but unknowingly obtained. (Ironically, this is often the means through which religion is acquired.) Still others might have a particular religion because of a prompting in their conscience, culture, or habits. For those who have acquired their religion, faith is typically a mere formality practiced on holidays.

While some obtain their religious convictions unconsciously, there are others who consciously choose their religion because they are genuinely convinced its teachings are true.

There are many different reasons that influence a person to choose his or her particular belief system. What has influenced you to choose your particular belief system?

Can religions be categorized?

Having recognized that there are many different factors that influence a person to choose a certain religion and that there are as many religions in the world as people, another question needs to be considered. Can all the various beliefs in the world be categorized into religious groupings such as Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and others? For instance, some have labeled the following groups as “Christians”: Protestants, Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Pentecostals, Anglicans, Latter-day Saints, Evangelicals, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Quakers, and Baptists. Additionally, others have labeled the following groups as non-religious: Agnostics, Atheists, Secular Humanists, and people answering ‘none’ or ‘no’ religious preference.

Why do you think all the religions in the world are categorized as such?

Why do you think Protestants and Mormons (Latter-day Saints) are labeled by some experts in the world as “Christians”?

Why do you think Muslims (Islam) are not called Christians?

It seems that the various religious groupings of the world are categorized, not based on their specific teachings but on whom they claim their teachings follow. For instance, Protestants, Catholics, Pentecostals, Anglicans, Latter-day Saints, Evangelicals, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Baptist all claim to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ.

The Jewish faith claims to follow the teachings of Moses; Muslims, the teachings of Mohammed; and Buddhists, the teachings of Buddha. Thus, religious groupings indicate the one whose teaching they claim to follow.

To which religious grouping do you belong?

Whose teaching do you claim to follow?

Why are there so many denominations?

The next logical question that should be asked is, “If all these groupings are ‘Christians,’ why do you think they maintain separate names, such as Protestants, Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and others?” Stated differently, “Why don’t all those who claim to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ call themselves ‘Christians’ but instead carefully identify themselves in groups such as Protestants, Catholics, and Jehovah’s Witnesses?” Is the problem that they can’t get along, or is the problem more complex? The problem is more complex because the teachings of the various groups come from different sources or authoritative writings.

For instance, where do Protestants believe the teachings of Jesus are found?

Where do Mormons believe the teachings of Jesus are found?

Where do Catholics believe the teachings of Jesus are found?

Where do Jehovah’s Witnesses believe the teachings of Jesus are found?

Each of these denominations would answer this question differently. Mormons would say, “the Bible plus the Book of Mormon.” Catholics would say, “the Bible, plus the Pope, and the church fathers.” The Jehovah’s Witnesses would say, “the Bible, plus the Watch Tower.” The Protestants would say, “the Bible alone.” Therefore, in reality, what makes up the religious grouping or denomination is the source from which the belief originates. Consequently, it is probably better to categorize religions by the sources they claim to follow rather than by the person they claim to follow.

What source makes up your religious denomination?

Some of you who don’t identify yourselves as religious may say, “Wait a second! I don’t belong to a particular religion; I am independent.” If this is your situation, then what would you say is the source of your belief about God? Would you not say the content of your faith originates in yourself? In other words, you are the source of your own religion. Technically, instead of your religious grouping being categorized as “Non-Religious,” a more accurate category would be “Self-Religious.” The “Self-Religious” person would be categorized as such because he is the authority behind his own religion.

If this is the case, to which religious grouping do you think a “Self-Religious” person belongs?

Some may say, “Well, I believe God has revealed Himself through many different sources.” Such a person claiming to get his/her understanding about God from many sources is traditionally labeled as “eclectic,” meaning that he collects his view of God from multiple sources. When an “eclectic” person is asked, “By what means do you determine which information is from God and which information is not from God?” he will answer in one of two ways. Either he will respond, “God tells me through a small voice,” or “God tells me through my inner heart promptings.” If this is the case, then “eclectics” would also be considered “**Self-Religious**” because they get their information from within themselves.

Who do you think is the source of an “eclectic” person’s religion?

Can religions be categorized in any other way?

If you were to re-categorize all the religions of the world into just a few categories, how would you categorize them?

When one studies religion, it is interesting to observe how all religions originate from one of two sources: either an authoritative book or a person's own experiences and intellect.

Of these two sources just mentioned, where does your source of religion originate?

If God is going to reveal Himself to mankind, through which source do you think He would do it?

How important is your view of God?

The great American preacher A.W. Tozer said, "What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you."³

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

In what way do you think your view of God affects your life?

3A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper Collins Publications, 1961) 1.

If you did not believe in God, how would you live differently?

If you believed that God is going to punish you for every wrong thing you did, how would that impact the way you live?

If you believed that God is weak and powerless to change the circumstances in life, how would that impact the way you live?

By these simple questions, it is clear that everyone orients his life around his belief about God.

You can see that one's view of God impacts everything about the way one lives. Therefore, one's religion is very important. Unfortunately, today in some circles the word "religion" or "religious" has a negative connotation.

Yet, since everyone in the world is religious, it would seem that such a perspective would be irrational. Therefore, such feelings of distaste aren't a result of religion in general but are the effect of unfortunate events or individuals who have wrongly or unknowingly used religion negatively.

Now that we have stimulated your thinking, understand the goal of this lesson. The first goal was to help you realize the fact that you are religious. Second, it was to help you identify the source of your belief about God so that you can begin to evaluate whether or not the source of your faith is reliable. The third goal was to help you begin to ask yourself the question, "What is my view of God?" Whether you have realized it or not, you have an internal belief system that defines who you are as a person and how you live your life.

Therefore, it is important and healthy to evaluate these simple questions about religion. Please continue with us to the next lesson. After all, my goal is not to tell you what to believe but to help you begin to think through why you believe what you believe.

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

Most people have a belief in God, but what has influenced that belief? Is it a result of insecurities or weaknesses? Can belief in God be more logical than the belief that God does not exist? Does it also take faith to believe that there is no God?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What is religion?

What belief about God does a person who does not care about God have?

How many religions are there in the world?

What are some circumstances that influence people to have their particular belief system?

Why are the religions of the world categorized into the particular groupings?

To what religious grouping do those who are “Self-Religious” belong?

What are the two sources from which all religions flow?

Why do you think A.W. Tozer says that, “What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you?”

What did you think about this lesson?

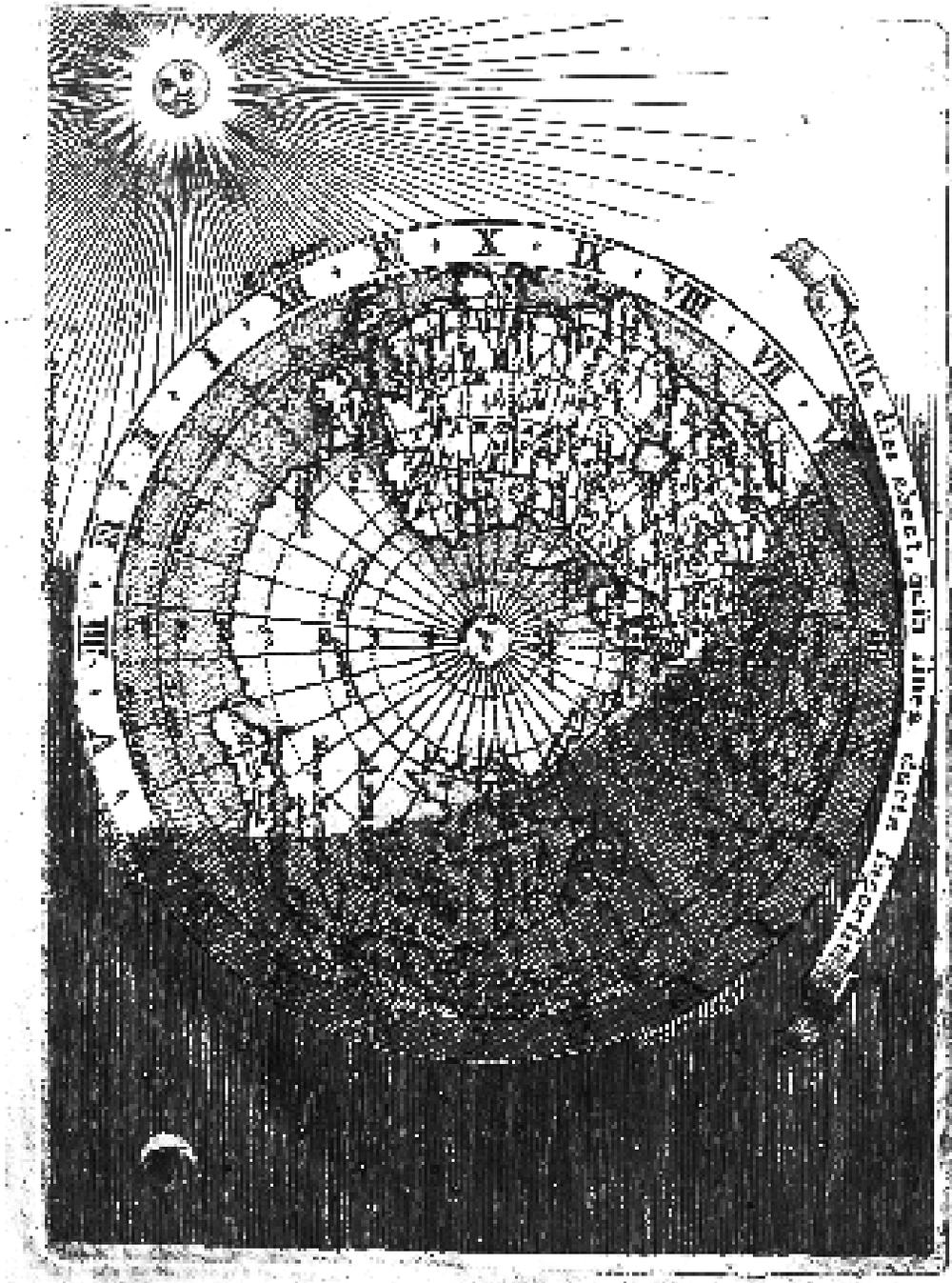
What did you find in this lesson to be most helpful or interesting?



LESSON TWO

IS BELIEF IN GOD LOGICAL?

-The Quest for Truth-



IS BELIEF IN GOD LOGICAL?

“A FOOL HAS SAID IN HIS HEART, “THERE IS NO GOD.” - PSALM 14:1

Throughout the history of mankind, there has universally been a belief in a supernatural God. Whether one looks at Asia (Buddha), North America (Jesus), the Middle East (Allah), or the remotest parts of Africa (wooden idols), one will find that belief in a god has always universally existed. However, within recent days, belief in God has been questioned. Today, some are proposing that the existence of God is completely old-fashioned, illogical, and foolish. For instance, the well-known psychologist Sigmund Freud asserted that mankind’s belief in God is a result of his inward need to feel loved and have his emotional desires secured. He said that mankind is afraid of such things as death, being alone, and nature (earthquakes, thunder, floods, and other disasters). He believed that every person inwardly wants to be loved by some knight in shining armor. Is Sigmund Freud right? Is God just merely an invention by mankind? Is belief in a supernatural God logical? It is the attempt of this lesson to show how belief in God is really the only logical conclusion for mankind.

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

Does it take faith to believe that there is no God?

Let’s start with some questions to initiate thought on this subject.

What are some good reasons for not believing in God?

What are some good reasons for believing in God?

What are some logical explanations, other than a supernatural God, that are being given today for the existence of the world?

It is said today that it takes more faith to believe there is no God than to believe in God. Why do people say this? Is it because when a person looks at the facts, this appears to be the only logical conclusion for man's existence? What reasoning is being given today for the existence of God? Whether you believe in God or not, these are important questions to be evaluated.

For those who don't believe in God, these questions will help ensure that you are embracing a belief that is logically the wisest and most probable. For those who already believe in God, the answer to these questions can help strengthen the confidence of your beliefs.

Are there any good reasons for believing in God?

There are plenty of good reasons for believing in the existence of God. In this lesson, we want to suggest four logical reasons for the existence of God.

The four logical reasons are as follows:

1. The complexity of the world demands the need for a designer.
2. A reproductive world demands the need for a pre-existent being.
3. Man's inward sense of right and wrong demands the need for a lawgiver.
4. The need for purpose demands the need for a purposeful creator.

Having stated these reasons let us now look at each one individually:

Is God a reason for the world's complexities?

First, the complexity of the world demands the need for a designer.

What do you think this statement is saying?

In essence, this is saying, **“The world is so complicated that it must be a result of God.”** Considering the human body and how the nervous system works, a reasoning person cannot say that this happened by a bang or by an evolutionary process.

Did you know that the brain serves as the computer of the body and the spine as communication channels? Within milliseconds, the brain can command an action by sending a message to the whole body through the nerves along the spine.

Another example of the body's complexity can be seen in the skeletal dynamics of the human body. Did you know that when a person is born his body consists of 350 bones? By the time he reaches adulthood, he only has 206 bones because many of them grow together.

Furthermore, at the end of each bone is a tough, smooth substance called cartilage. Cartilage is protected by a bag of slippery fluid called meniscus, which prevents the bones from rubbing together. This is just a brief look at two small aspects of the complexity of the human body.

How about the complexities of the earth, the universe, and the solar system? If one picks up a simple flower and looks at its complexities, he can't help but stand amazed. To say that these things just appeared by accident would be foolish. It would be like saying that, over time, a pile of metal gears, springs, dials, and wheels, came together to form a complex watch. Such thinking is illogical and scientifically impossible.

What would you say if I were to tell you that my clock or vehicle came together as a result of an evolutionary process?

Is it really logical or rational at all to come to such a conclusion? Can something lifeless and simplistic really become live and complex on its own? This conclusion or thinking would not originate logically but from a creative imagination or external influence.

If there is no God, what other possibility can there be for the creation of such a wonderfully complex universe?

Who came first?

Second, a reproductive world demands the need for a pre-existent being. What do you think this statement is saying?

What this is saying is that, **“Since everything in the universe is produced from something that existed beforehand, there must have been someone who has always existed.”** Stated differently, something cannot just appear from nothing.

For example, a child came into existence through his parents; the parent came into existence through his parents, and so on. But from where did the first child come? There had to be an originator.

Furthermore, history and science have shown that every species can only be reproduced according to its own species. For example, a dog does not create a whale nor does a bird create a giraffe. Consequently, each species would have had to have its own representative to begin its own process. Meaning, a dog would have had another dog as its parent (or representative), and so it is with each species. Not only does the whole of creation demand pre-existence, but every species demands pre-existence.

Therefore, it is evident that the reproductive process demands the need for a creator. To say that the reproductive process came about as a result of an evolutionary process and that each species subsequently came into existence, would not only be illogical but also impossible.

This demands the belief in a pre-existent Creator. For example, what do you think would happen if you were to tell a child that you came from nothing? Would the child believe you? Most likely, the child would argue that you came from parents just as he did. Not only does the reproductive process demand the need for a pre-existent creator, it demands the need for a creator who has the power to bring all species into existence.

If there is no God, then how did this whole reproductive process begin?

Did God create a sense of right and wrong?

Third, man's inward sense of right and wrong demands the need for a lawgiver.

What do you think this statement is saying?

What this is saying is **“Since there is a universal desire to live morally, God must have been the one to have created that desire.”** For example, why is there instinctively a universal knowledge of right and wrong within mankind? And even though one may argue that there is no right and wrong, why does mankind feel guilt for wrong-doing? From where did the standard of wrong come? Why are our societies not completely lawless? Clearly, there is universally an internal law system put within each person. In most cases, regardless of how immoral a person is behaving, each person still desires to do right and feels shame for wrong behavior.

If mankind evolved, would he evolve with moral standards, or would he just come into existence? Do you think there is something uniquely different about man from that of an animal?

Do you think mankind has a moral sense of right and wrong unique from animals?

It is believed that man has a soul, setting him apart from animals. From where would his soul have originated?

If there is no God, who put this system of morality within mankind?

Did God create purpose in life?

Fourth, the need for purpose demands the need for a purposeful Creator.

What do you think this statement is saying?

What this is saying is, **“Since everyone has the desire to live for something, there must have been someone who put that desire into mankind.”** This statement is asserting two points: one, that there is a purposeful Creator, and, two, that Creator put a purpose within mankind at creation. This first point about a purposeful Creator asserts that objects are not in existence without a purpose, but the whole of creation exists for a reason. For example, if one takes clay and molds a sculpture, that sculpture is molded for a purpose.

The second point suggests that mankind is unique from the rest of nature in that he desires a life aim or purpose. For example, mankind does not just wake up each day and sit on his bed. He wakes up and lives each day with purpose. The fact is that mankind cannot aimlessly live even one day, whereas a lion has no aspirations for achievement.

Who put the desire in mankind to want to live with an aim for his day? Who put the desire in mankind to make something of himself? What makes man unique from the rest of creation if they originated from simple material? Purpose does not only come from matter but from a purposeful Creator. For instance, if you make a bowl of clay, will that bowl have an inward sense of purpose or drive? No, because purpose does not come from matter. If one were to suggest that he could create purpose from matter, none would believe him. That is the reason man has never been able to create a robot with intellect and sincere feelings. Therefore, it is self-evident and logically clear that mankind's sense of purpose is from a purposeful Creator.

If there is no God, then who put this purposeful desire within mankind?

HOW CAN WE MAKE SENSE OF ALL THIS?

Having seen the logical proof for the existence of God, what other logical reasoning (other than the existence of God) can adequately explain creative existence?

Outside of God, **mankind really has no other good explanation for the world's existence.** The existence of the world is far too amazing for human conception. Other theories that have been considered include of evolution and the big bang theory. As stated in the introduction, throughout the history of the world man has intuitively explained nature and the creation of mankind as a result of God.

It is important for everyone to understand that the theory of evolution is still only a theory. Furthermore, due to the nature of science, this will forever remain a theory. Because the foundation of scientific theory is observation, it is clear that the theories of the big bang and evolution cannot be proven. It is impossible to find anyone who was alive to witness the

“event,” just as no one can successfully explain with certainty from where the substance came that was used for evolution or the big bang theory. Therefore, it should not be offensive to state that evolution is not a scientific theory but should be known simply as a theory.

Ultimately, every man needs to consider whether these new theories are really more logical than the historical belief of a Creator.

Based on the reasons given, I don't think so. This would be illogical. Rather, these new theories raise more questions than they provide answers.

If these new theories provide more questions than answers, what might be motivating these beliefs?

Could the motivation be more than simply a desire to understand how man came into existence and instead be an effort to devise a theory to disprove the existence of God as Creator? This question can't be answered, but it certainly should be considered.

What does the Bible say about God's existence?

While you may or may not believe the Bible is the truth, taking a look at what the Bible says about God's existence might be helpful as we process through this important subject.

Beyond the logical reasoning for the existence of God as stated above, there is also biblical reasoning for the existence of God.

For instance, what does Romans 1:19–20 say is the reason that mankind is without excuse for disbelief in God?

What does Psalm 19:1–2 say about knowing that God exists?

In the Gospel of John 1:1–4, we are shown that Jesus gave life to man by creating him (v.3) and that through His creation of man and woman, mankind is given “light”(or knowledge) to be able to know God (v.4). In what sense do you think this life becomes light/knowledge to mankind?

This passage is saying that God put knowledge of Himself into all people when He imparted life within them. This fact would also help Bible students understand why the Bible starts off with “In the beginning, God” (Genesis 1:1) and does not give an introduction about God to its readers.

Why do so many people not believe in God?

If the Bible is true and mankind really does inwardly know about God, then why do you think so many of mankind do not believe in God?

According to Romans 1:23 and 25, mankind does not believe in God because he does not want to live under God’s authority. Mankind desires to live as he pleases. Romans 1:18 says that they suppress the truth about God because of their unrighteousness. (Unrighteousness is another name for not living rightly or living in an un-right manner.)

QUESTIONS TO CONTEMPLATE

Do you think what the Bible is saying could be true?

Do you believe that faith in God is logical?

Do you think it takes more faith to believe that there is no God than to believe in God, or do you think it is about the same?

If you think that it requires about the same amount or more faith, why do you think people choose not to believe in God?

What was the goal of this lesson?

The goal of this lesson was to get you to thoughtfully consider whether or not belief in God is logical. As we look at the evidence, we believe that there is no other logical explanation for the existence of creation. From our perspective, belief about God is not old-fashioned, illogical, or foolish but simply a true fact which cannot be denied by mankind.

You may not have come to the same conclusion at this point, but the hope is that at least this lesson has stimulated your thoughts to understand that belief in God is a rational conclusion.

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

In Lesson Three, we want to look into the question: “What religion should I choose?” It has now been shown that belief in God is really the only conceivable logical conclusion (Lesson Two), and that each person by his human nature has some belief in God (Lesson One). Now, the next logical question should be, “What religion should a person choose to

follow?” Is there a right or wrong religion? It is important to note that the goal of this next lesson is not to answer these questions for you but to help you thoughtfully consider the wisest answer to this question.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What four logical reasons are given for the existence of God?

How does the complexity of the world demand the need for a Designer?

How does a reproductive world demand the need for a pre-existent Being?

How does man’s inward sense of right and wrong demand the need for a Lawgiver?

How does our need for purpose demand the need for a purposeful Creator?

According to the Bible, how does all of mankind have knowledge about God?

According to the Bible, why does mankind reject knowledge about God?

What do you believe caused the existence of the world?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Romans 1:18–25

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ²⁵For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Psalms 19:1–2

¹The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. ²Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.

John 1:1–4

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.



LESSON THREE

WHAT RELIGION SHOULD I CHOOSE?

-The Quest for Truth-

WHAT RELIGION SHOULD I CHOOSE?

WITH ALL THE RELIGIONS IN THE WORLD, HOW DO I KNOW
WHICH ONE I SHOULD CHOOSE TO FOLLOW?

It has been said that every individual makes over one thousand decisions every day. However, of these one thousand decisions, very few of them are consciously made with any sort of analysis. For instance, in the morning people choose to get out of bed, walk to the shower, turn on the shower, feel if the shower is warm, take off their clothes, get into the shower, put soap on their bodies, and rinse their bodies. How many of these choices are conscious? Our bodies are so complex and advanced that the mind is able to communicate to the rest of the body subconsciously.

This fact is actually very scary if we think about it. Our minds make big and small decisions without our even knowing it. Worst of all, decisions of eternal significance may be made subconsciously. Therefore, it is the desire of this lesson to help activate each person's mind to consider whether or not he or she is choosing the wisest religion.

Have you thought through your faith?

The question remains for all to answer, what is the right religion? Please note: It is not the goal of this lesson to tell you what to believe but to provide principles to evaluate your faith. Here are some simple questions to activate the mind:

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

What is your religion?

Why do you embrace your religion?

What do you believe will happen to you after you die?

For what purpose do you believe you are alive?

Why do you believe or not believe in God?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much time and thought have you placed on your religious choice?

Why do you think it is important for a person to have carefully thought through what he believes?

It is important for a person to have thought through his belief because there is potentially a lot at risk if one is wrong. For example, if one follows the teachings of Jesus Christ, he would be taught that God will separate believers in Christ from non-believers. The believers will go to heaven and the non-believers will go to a place of everlasting punishment called hell. (*If interested, see just a few passages from Christ's teachings ~ Matthew 25:31-46; 5:22, 29-30; 6:20; 7:13-23; 8:12; 10:26-33; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9*).¹ Consequently, if the teachings of Jesus are correct, then there is a lot at risk in one's religious choice.

¹Other passages on that subject: Luke 13:27-28; 16:24-26; Romans 2:5-9; 2 Peter 2:17; Revelation 14:9-10; 20:11-21:9

We discovered from Lesson One (*What is Religion?*) that there are many reasons a person embraces his or her religion (heritage, need for purpose or hope, relief from guilt, a person's past, intellectually convinced, along with other reasons.) Many of the motivations for a person's religion are very personal and emotional. For some, there is even great fear in analyzing their beliefs due to the risks at stake. Therefore, it is understandable if this subject is scary and difficult. However, for one to think through his religion is very important. *Life has proven that if something is true, it will stand the test of scrutiny.*

All religions flow from a source, and if one is to understand or evaluate his or her faith, he must go back to the source for evaluation. After all, if you claim to be Muslim but your beliefs are not the same as the Koran, can you really be considered a Muslim? A person's faith is determined by the source in which he is trusting.

What is the source from which your religion flows?

Since the goal of this lesson is to help one choose the wisest religion, it is important for one to evaluate his/her religion at the source level. **Furthermore, there are five important questions that can help aid someone in making the wisest religious choice.**

Is the source of your religion trustworthy?

Is the source from which your religion originates trustworthy?

This is an important question because one needs to evaluate whether or not his/her religion has a reliable source. For instance, if the source is personal (derived from your own opinions), is it really trustworthy? Can a human really understand the Divine? If a human can understand the Divine then the Divine must not be great but merely human. The Divine must be great and far beyond human thinking. It seems that if religion is a belief in God, then the source from which the religion flows must be a result of God revealing Himself to mankind. If the source is merely various religious views from various men, then what value does it have? Since man is fallible, how can human thinking be worthy of one's total trust? The source from which reliable religious teachings must flow is God.

Most religions in the world flow from mankind or specifically a preacher or teacher. Very few religions flow from an authoritative source that claims to be divine and can be validated by its teachings in holy writings.

Is the source from which your religion flows clearly Divine, or is it originating from yourself?

You should not put your eternal confidence in an earthly man! If finite man is going to know an infinite God, then God must be the one to reveal Himself. Furthermore, if God is going to reveal Himself, His revelation will be clearly evident and will claim to be Divine.

Is the source of your religion consistent?

Is the source from which your religion flows consistent throughout its teachings?

Most major religions believe in the Holy Bible plus some other writing(s). However, what happens when the teachings of each authoritative book are compared against one another? If the source is really from God, then it will remain consistent throughout. For example, the Mormon faith believes in the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, plus many other books from its church fathers. However, when one looks at the teachings of the book of Mormon, he learns that each person has the capability of becoming a god of his own universe;² yet, the Bible teaches that there is only one God now and forever.³ This contradiction proves that both teachings cannot be true and that at least one should be disregarded as being from God! Therefore, it is clearly not wise to trust in a religion that is not consistent in its teachings.

Have you intellectually evaluated the teachings of your religion? Are you 100 percent sure that they are consistent?

²In *Gospel Principles* found on pages 289–290 that Mormon children learn in Sunday school include: “As Man is, God Once was; As God is, Man may become.” In *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 321, it is explained “that exaltation which the saints of all ages have so devotedly sought is godhood itself and you have got to learn how to be gods yourself, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you to inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a god.” Cary Trivanovich, *Sharing Christ with Your Mormon Friends* (Columbia, TN: Promise Publishing, Inc., 1991) 289–290, 321.

³Deuteronomy 6:4–5; Exodus 15:11; 1 Kings 8:60; Isaiah 45:5–6; 45:21–22; 44:6–8; 1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:6; James 2:19

Is the source of your religion historically accurate?

Is the source from which your religion flows historically accurate?

When a person studies religion, that person is often astonished at how crazy religious claims can be. For example, from time to time there will be a person who claims that the world will end on a particular date. Or a person will claim that Jesus visited America after His ascension from Israel. Some may even claim that they are a prophet from God. False claims have been present in every generation. Since false claims have always been present, it is very important that all religious claims be tested and evaluated.

One good test is a historical test. For example, if the religion says that the Garden of Eden was in Utah, then that claim should be tested and validated. Or if their claim is that the Israelites lived in Egypt during the time of a great famine, that claim should be confirmed historically. Did Jesus really live during the first century AD? Such historical claims, if from God, will prove to be accurate. However, one must be careful that the tested historical information is accurately portrayed and is not presented with deceitful motivation. If at any time the claims of that religion are presented and are not proven to be historically accurate, then it is not wise to put your trust in that religion.

Is the source of your religion written by godly men?

Is the source from which your religion flows written and taught by godly men?

Who was Mohammed? Who was Buddha? Who was Jesus? Who was Joseph Smith? Or, who are the men teaching about Mohammed, Buddha, Jesus, or Joseph Smith? Could their teaching be motivated by a desire for personal gain, wealth, or power? These are very important questions. Along with “religion,” comes the potential for power, money, and prestige. In addition to what motivates your teachers, one should ask himself “what motivates me to be part of my religion?” Is it a desire for power or wealth?

Power, money, and prestige are often things after which mankind longs, and unfortunately, many are willing to compromise in order for them to be obtained. Therefore, it is important for us to evaluate the person we are following and to make sure we understand what motivates him.

Is the source of your religion divine in content?

Is your source of truth divine in content?

When you study the truth to which your church holds, does the reading and comprehension of the material appear to be divine? There are authoritative books that claim to be divine that speak of killing Christians and beating wives.⁴ Upon reading such material, can one logically evaluate and see that the material is not divine?

If the book is from God, then the teaching should be clear, relevant, consistent, and deeply profound in nature. The truth should be accurately prophetic and mentally vast in its content. If the religion which you embrace does not contain divine content, it is not wise to put your trust in it.

It is amazing how little study actually goes into evaluating our religions. These questions are set forth to aid you in your own evaluation. Although these questions are not designed to force you to one particular faith, hopefully they will be helpful in leading you away from all errors. Please note that these questions are just five of many questions that could be asked and are not all-inclusive.

Please be discerning and thoughtful about your religious choice; there is too much at stake for you and for your family.

It is interesting to study what the Bible says about why there are so many religions. We will next look at a few Bible passages which show some of the motivations behind many of the world's false religions.

⁴(Note that infidels are Christians or Jews) Islamic faith says: "Slay the idolaters wherever you find them" (Koran 9:5). "Kill those who join other gods with Allah wherever you shall find them; and seize them, besiege them, and lay wait for them with every kind of ambush; but if they shall convert, and observe prayer, and pay the obligatory alms, then let them go their way" (Koran 9:5). "Allah is an enemy to infidels" (Koran 2:92). "Fight for the cause of Allah" (Koran 2:245). "Allah loves no infidel" (Koran 2:276). "Let not believers take infidels for their friends rather than believers: whoso shall do this has nothing to hope from Allah" (Koran 3:27). "Verily, the infidels are your undoubted enemies" (Koran 4:102). "Believers! Wage war against such of the infidels as are your neighbors, and let them find you rigorous" (Koran 9:123). "Allah loves not the false, the Infidel" (Koran 22:39). "And if you shall be slain or die on the path of Allah, then pardon from Allah and mercy is better than all your amassings; For if you die or be slain, verily unto Allah shall you be gathered" (Koran 3:151-152). "And they who have fled their country and quitted their homes and suffered in my cause, and have fought and fallen, I will blot out their sins from them, and I will bring them into gardens beneath which the streams do flow" (Koran 3:194). "I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them" (Koran 8:12).

What motivates teachers?

Previously, we talked about the importance of evaluating teachers and what motivates them. This question rises in part because of all the Bible says regarding false teachers.

For instance, in Acts 8:9–11, we are given the example of Simon. According to this passage, what motivated him to falsely prophesy?

Additionally, we see in Jude 11 that Balaam also was wrongly motivated to falsely prophesy against Israel. What was Balaam's motivation?⁵

The Bible shows that both from the life of Simon and his desire to be great, and Balaam and his desire for money that there can be a number of reasons why people teach or preach a particular religion.

Paul also acknowledged that there are many motivations from which people preach. What does he say are some of these motivations in Philippians 1:15-17?

These passages show that teachers are not always seeking what is best for others. Rather, often they preach motivated by what is best for themselves. They are not concerned that others benefit eternally, but they are concerned with how they benefit temporarily. See other passages below.⁶

⁵That is why the Bible always exhorts its teachers to totally abstain from such things: 2 Corinthians 12:14–18; 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2.

⁶Here are a few verses on false teachers: Matthew 7:15–18; 24:11; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Peter 2:1–3, 14; 1 Timothy 4:1–2; 2 Timothy 4:3–4; Titus 1:10–11, 16; 3:10–11.

Why do people listen to false teachers?

In light of the fact that men can be so wrongly motivated, we should ask ourselves why people so easily listen and follow false teaching? Well, the Bible also reveals that teachers are not the only problem.

According to 2 Timothy 4:3, what are the reasons that people listen to false teachers?

The Bible reveals that some teachers will seek their own gain, and some listeners will seek their own desires. Therefore, both the teacher and the listeners accommodate each other—the listener gets flattered, and the teacher gets paid.

Even though they both might be happy, they also might both be wrong. And as a result their thinking and selfish desires might lead them to wrong conclusions, which might have significant consequences.

Does mankind know the truth?

At this point you may have come to the realization that what you thought was the truth isn't really the truth. This may leave you wondering if it is possible to really know the truth. That is why I have exciting news—the Bible reveals that mankind knows the truth!

According to Romans 1:19–20, how does mankind know the truth?

Mankind knows the truth because it is clearly revealed by God through creation. But according to Romans 1:18, it is rejected because of man's unrighteousness. This is because ultimately, man loves sin more than he loves truth. This can be proven not only biblically but logically.

You can tell a young single man to not engage in sexual relations before marriage because it's not wise, but will the truth about that fact stop him from engaging in such behavior? Or, you can tell a drunkard not to drink because it is destroying his life, but does the truth about alcohol stop him from drinking? The answer is no because ultimately sin is more desirable than truth.

Additionally, in Romans 1:21, 23, and 25, what does mankind embrace instead of the truth?

According to all these verses, all of mankind knows the right thing to do but does not do it because man loves the pleasure of sin. As a result, man ends up loving the false teaching from corrupted teachers. The end result is that man suppresses the truth so that he can live unrighteously (Romans 1:18).

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

Do you think that you have chosen your religion to fit your lifestyle?

Or, do you think that you have embraced your religion because it has proven to be true?

This is a very difficult question—a question that needs to be evaluated. Despite the difficulty of this question, please take the time to evaluate.

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

In Lesson 4, we want to look into the question “Is the Bible really God’s Word?” Many religions claim the Bible is from God. However, will a thinking man come to the same conclusion? Why should a person put his/her confidence in the Bible?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much time and thought have you placed on your religious choice?

From which source do the teachings of your religion originate?

Is the source from which your religion flows consistent throughout its teachings?

Is the source from which your religion flows historically accurate?

Is the source from which your religion flows written by godly men who have admirable motivations?

Is your source of truth divine in content? Do you think that you have chosen your religion to fit your lifestyle?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Acts 8:9–11

⁹Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; ¹⁰and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, “This man is what is called the Great Power of God.” ¹¹And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.

Jude 11

¹¹Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Philippians 1:15–17

¹⁵Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; ¹⁶the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; ¹⁷the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

2 Timothy 4:3

³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.

Romans 1: 19–20

¹⁹Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Romans 1: 21, 23, 25

²¹For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²³...and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

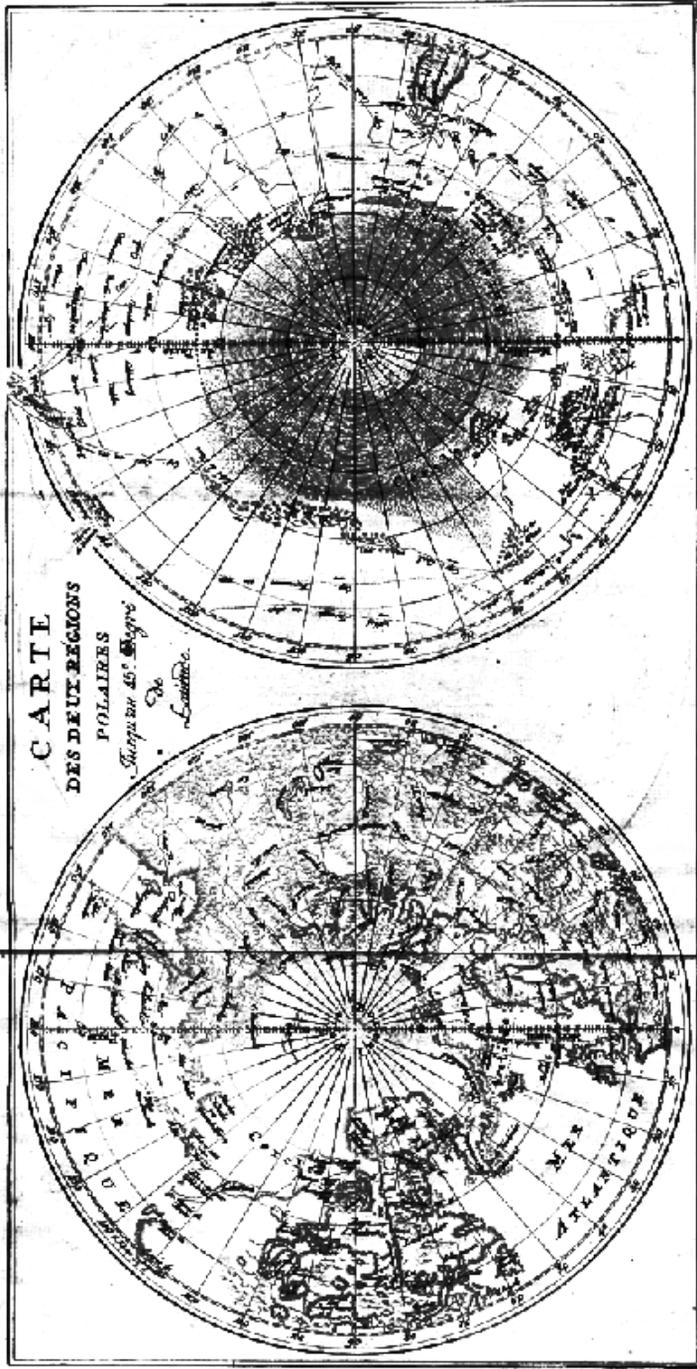
²⁵...for they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.



LESSON FOUR

IS THE BIBLE A RELIABLE SOURCE?

—The Quest for Truth—



IS THE BIBLE A RELIABLE SOURCE?

“NO PROPHECY OF SCRIPTURE IS A MATTER OF ONE’S OWN INTERPRETATION, FOR NO PROPHECY WAS EVER MADE BY AN ACT OF HUMAN WILL, BUT MEN MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT SPOKE FROM GOD.” - 2 PETER 1:20–21

In the world today, there are 2,173,183,400 people who claim to be Christians.¹ Stated differently, there are over 2 billion people in the world today that consciously or subconsciously claim to trust the Bible to be a reliable source of faith. Statistics reveal that “one-third of the American adult population believes the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally word for word.”²

Nevertheless, is the Bible really reliable? Is the Bible really God’s Word? Since one’s faith has an influence over every aspect of one’s life and thinking (not to mention the potential eternal consequences), it is essential that one really thoughtfully consider the reliability of what is traditionally called the Word of God. As discussed in the last lesson (What Religion Should I Choose?), all religions flow from a source which one must evaluate in order to understand or discern his or her faith. Therefore, it is the attempt of this lesson to look closely into the source of Christianity, the Bible, to see why Christians believe the Bible is the Word of God.

THOUGHTS FOR STUDY

Before we look at the subject at hand, here are a few questions to get the mind involved in this subject:

What are some reasons why you or someone you know does not believe the Bible is the Word of God?

Are the skeptics’ opinions determined by facts, or are they based on mere speculations?

¹<http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/greatc.html#worldpop> provided in 2006.

²Alec M Gallop Frank Newport, *The Gallop Poll: Public Opinion 2007* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008) 229.

If you are a Christian, why do you believe the Bible is the Word of God?

It is a fact that not all people believe that the Bible is the Word of God. What is the basis of their rejection? On what facts do they base their rejection? Is it based on solid evidence? Or, could it be based on a lack of knowledge and false preconceptions? The Christian faith, substantiated by the Bible, firmly believes in the reliability of its claims, and the validity of its facts. Christianity is not afraid of scrutiny because it is confident that its source is from God.

SEVEN FACTS WHY CHRISTIANS BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

There are seven facts given today for why Christians believe the Bible is the Word of God. (Please note: This writer agrees that each fact by itself does not prove the validity of the biblical text being from God, but the united voice as a whole provides irrefutable proof.)

Is the Bible the word of God?

Fact one: God speaks to man through the Bible.

According to 2 Timothy 3:15–16, what does the Bible claim the Scriptures are?

Please note: This term for sacred writing, “hieros grammata” (v.15), is referring to the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures. This term for Scriptures, “graphe” (v.16), refers to both the Old and New Testaments.³ Most importantly, the word inspired, “theopneustos” (v.16), literally means “breathed out by God” or simply “God breathed,” meaning that all the Scriptures (both Old and New Testaments) are from the very breath of God.

³John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 2 Timothy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995)144–145.

This fact of God's Word coming from the very mouth of God is further confirmed in 2 Peter 1:20–21. It says that Scripture is not a result of what two things?

Rather, 2 Peter 1:20–21 say the Scriptures are a result of what source?

When the Bible testifies about itself, it repeatedly gives testimony to the fact that it is God's very own words. Here are just a few of the many biblical passages which constitute its claims of divine origin. The biblical writers actually claim over 4,000 times that they are writing God's Word. It is believed that the Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the Old Testament) alone contains at least 680 claims to divine inspiration. Such claims are found 418 times in the historical books, 195 times in the poetic books, and 1,307 times in the prophetic books. The Bible claims to be God's Word.⁴ Here are just a few of the 1,400 claims of divine authority given in the New Testament for evaluation: Acts 1:16; Hebrews 4:12; Colossians 3:16; Psalm 119:24; 2 Peter 1:2–3; 1 Corinthians 2:13–16; 2 Corinthians 2:17; Galatians 1:11–12; Colossians 1:25–27; 1 Thessalonians 2:13. All 40 authors of the Bible share the same claim that they are speaking on behalf of God.

The Bible is not merely a novel that was found and then believed to be from God. The Bible is a book that, from its very penning, claimed to be from God—a fact that has been embraced since the beginning of history.

Why do all 40 authors claim to be writing divine revelation? Could it be a result of God being the author? What do you think about all these claims of divine authorship?

Is the Bible historically and geographically accurate?

Fact two: The Bible has proven itself to be the Word of God by its historical and geographical accuracy.

⁴John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 2 Timothy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995) 146.

The Bible is a book that claims to be comprised of real history—not legends, fables, or allegories. It contains history that takes place during various times, periods, cultures, civilizations, and locations. Furthermore, the Bible has various geographical settings in which it takes place. Despite the innumerable attempts to invalidate the accuracy of Israel’s history, critics have been unsuccessful.

One of the many examples of the Bible and its historical accuracy is the historical figure Joseph. The Bible speaks of a man by the name of Joseph who lived 4,000 years ago. His father Jacob moved with his sons from Israel to Egypt during a time of great famine. At the age of 17, Joseph was sold into slavery. He later became a high official in Egypt’s government and ultimately saved his family and nation from extinction. After Joseph’s death, Israel suffered under the rule of brutal pharaohs. The Israelites were later set free by God under Moses’ leadership. Every step of the way, exact dates and rulers are mentioned. Each event perfectly fits into Egyptian history.⁵

The Bible claims that Israel fought various wars and defeated various cities, all of which can be seen in the land of Israel today. The Bible speaks of a variety of major powers rising and falling, such as Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Persia and Rome. Each of these major powers perfectly fits into world history.

⁵Does Joseph’s life fit with history? According to the Biblical text, Joseph was born around 1916 B.C., entered Egypt around 1899 B.C., rose to power in Egypt in 1886 B.C., and died in 1806 B.C. at age of 110. According to this chronology, Joseph’s whole life span is in line with the magnificent Egyptian Dynasty 12. Joseph appears to have been sold into Egypt at the end of the reign of Ammenemes II (1929–1895 B.C.). His imprisonment would have occurred under Sesostri II (1897–1878). It is also Sesostri’s dreams that Joseph would have interpreted and for whom he would have worked as a high government official. It is well-documented that during this time massive land reclamations and flood control projects were undertaken. One of these main projects was a canal dug to connect the Fayyum Basin with the Nile: a canal which still has the name “River of Joseph” (Bahr Yusef). Sesostri died during the end of the period of prosperity. Sesostri III (1878–1843 B.C.) reigned during the period of famine. The major problem documented during the reign Sesostri III was an increase in the assertion of power by local governments (monarchs). This would be explained by the fact that people during this time were desperate and struggled in trusting the government to provide a solution. Joseph died in 1806 B.C., toward the end of the reign of the last great King Ammenemes III of Dynasty 12 (1842–1797). What happens historically during the time from Joseph’s death to the birth of Moses? This is a time within history in which the Old Testament is silent. Nonetheless, Egyptian history reveals that this is a time in which the people called the Hyksos dominated Egypt. These people held control of lower Egypt for about 150 years. It was during the Egyptian Dynasty 13 that the Hyksos took power away from the Egyptians. They remained in power for 150 years (1720–1570 B.C.), during the Egyptian Dynasties 13 through 16, which explains clearly why the Bible says, “a king (not a pharaoh) arose that did not know Joseph. It was during this time that the Hyksos popularized the horse and chariot and the composite bow. It is during Dynasty 17 that the downfall of the Hyksos started under the leadership of Seqenenre II. It was Seqenenre’s sons, Kamose and Amosis (founder of the 18th dynasty), who eventually pushed the Hyksos out of Egypt (1563 B.C.). The Hyksos were eventually driven out of Egypt, never to return. The exodus, conquest, and much of the time of the judges fall within the time frame of Dynasties 18 and 19 (1567–1200 B. C.). Dynasties 18 and 19 make up the third and final period of Egyptian greatness in the ancient near eastern world.

Additionally, Israel's King David's detailed description of his palace and the surrounding hills precisely fits the structures there today. The Bible says that Jesus was born in Bethlehem during the days of a ruthless king named Herod. All of this can be proven and validated by history. All the cities, cultures, structures, people, valleys, and nations mentioned in the Bible are validated by history.

If the Bible were just one book, it would be humanly impossible for the history and geography contained in it to be in agreement with ancient history and geography. However, the Bible is not just one book, but a collection of 66 books⁶ (spanning over 6,000 years) in one volume. Forty different human authors, from various backgrounds, wrote over a period of 1,500 years. With this kind of diversity and human intervention, it would be inevitable to have all kinds of historical and geographical blunders, but the Bible remains trustworthy, reliable, and inerrant (without error) in its original form. What other explanation can there be for such impossibilities? Could it be a result of God being the author?

Can you give another reason for the historical accuracy of the biblical text?

Is the Bible clear and consistent?

Fact three: The Bible has proven itself to be the Word of God by the clarity and consistency of its teaching.

A common excuse used for a person's mistakes is, "Forgive me. I am only human." This excuse reveals that man readily recognizes his fallibility. Therefore, if human authors are to write anything, it is recognized that it will be filled with error. As the phrase reveals, we are merely humans—fallible, inconsistent, unreliable, and imperfect. Nevertheless, the Bible does not reflect such human fingerprints. The Bible has one single, consistent, and clearly united theme which is without error in its original form. (Sometimes errors emerge

⁶Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991) 24.

while the Bible is copied, although this is quite infrequent.) The Bible does not have one teacher teaching one truth and then another teaching a contradictory truth. The Bible has no contradictions. The teaching about marriage in Genesis, before 4000 BC, is the same teaching given in Ephesians 5 in 40 AD. This teaching is still relevant, though the culture has had thousands of years to change.

The Bible does not contradict itself but remains thoroughly consistent. The more one studies Scripture, the more convinced one becomes of this point. How does one explain such a phenomenon? Could it be the result of God being the author?

What errors are you aware of regarding the biblical text?

What contradictions are you aware of regarding the biblical text?

What explanation can be given for the lack of human errors?

Are the Bible's prophecies true?

Fact four: The Bible has proven itself to be the Word of God by the fulfillment of its humanly impossible prophecies.

Unique among all the books ever written, the Bible accurately (with detail) foretells specific events thousands of years before they happen. It would be remarkable if a person made two accurate prophecies about specific events which were to take place in a thousand years. However, there are over a thousand prophecies given in the Bible. Eight hundred

prophecies are given in the Old Testament and about two hundred given in the New Testament, most of which have already been fulfilled. For Jesus Christ alone, there are over three hundred predictions about His birth, death, and resurrection, all of which were fulfilled perfectly.⁷ These fulfilled prophecies overcome all rational probabilities.

Mathematicians say that the chance that any man might have lived to fulfill eight prophecies is 1 in 100 trillion.

To illustrate this point, we take 100 trillion silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They would be two feet deep. Then, we mark one of the silver dollars and thoroughly stir the whole mass all over the state. Now, we blindfold a man, let him travel as far as he wishes, and give him one chance to pick up the marked silver dollar.⁸ Jesus did not fulfill eight prophecies; He fulfilled three hundred. How could this have happened if the Bible were not from God?

There are also many prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled, such as those pertaining to Israel's future. The Bible says in Ezekiel 34–40, Romans 11, and Zechariah 12–14 that when God finished disciplining Israel, He would bring them back into the land of Israel from all the other nations. One hundred years ago, skeptics said that this would be impossible since Israel was under British mandate (1920–1948) and there was no “land of Israel.” After the Holocaust, Jews were flooding into Israel. In 1948, when the last British forces had left, on the day before Israel went to war against the five invading Arab nations, Israel declared its independence. Against all odds, Israel drove out the Arab armies and Israel's independence was recognized. In man's eyes, Israel should not have been able to win that war, but miraculously emerged the victor. All of the exact prophecies have not yet been fulfilled, but the stage is set for God to show His sovereignty once again. What can be said about the Bible's seemingly impossible ability to declare specific events long before they happen? Could it be the result of God being the author?

7A few of these prophecies are: Jesus' ascension to the right hand of God - Psalm 110:1; 68:18; Proverbs 30:4; Birthplace - Micah 5:2; Burial - Isaiah 53:9; Darkness - Psalm 22:2; Gambling for clothes - Psalm 22:18; Lineage - Genesis 3:15; 9:26; 22:1; 26:4; 28:14; 49:10; 2 Samuel 7:12–16; Mocking - Psalm 22:6–8; Nakedness - Psalm 22:17; Piercing of side - Zechariah 12:10; Resurrection - Psalm 16:10; Hosea 6:2; Psalm 30:3, 9; Isaiah 53:10; Son of God - Psalm 2:6–7; Unbroken bones - Psalm 34:20; Vinegar - Psalm 69:21; Virgin birth - Isaiah 7:14.

8The probabilities are taken from Peter Stoner in *Science Speaks* (Moody Press, 1963) and can also be found in Josh McDowell's book *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. (Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc. 1972) 175.

Does the Bible have outstanding teaching?

Fact five: The Bible has proven itself to be the Word of God by its outstanding teaching.

What is fascinating about mankind is that no matter how atheistic one claims to be, when times of tragedy come, most turn to God and His Word for comfort. Why do people turn to God during their hardest days? They do so because there is no book like it to provide hope for the soul, direction for the lost, advice for the foolish, and protection for the vulnerable.

All who have opened the pages of this Divine Revelation have stood amazed at its teaching. The biblical text goes against human nature, thinking, and reasoning but shines forth as being deeply profound, immeasurably wise, usefully practical, and unbelievably sufficient.

Here are a few of its astounding claims: The Bible claims to provide direction: 2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 119:24, 105; 2 Peter 1:3, 19; Proverbs 6:23. The Bible claims to provide protection: from unwise decisions ~ Psalm 1; from sin ~ Psalm 17:4; 119:9–11, 33–40, 105; from false teachers ~ Acts 17:11; 1 John 2:22–24; Jude 1–16; from eternal separation from God ~ Romans 10:14–18. The Bible claims to provide hope: Romans 15:4; Psalm 119:49–50, 74, 81, 111, 147; Psalm 19:8. The Bible claims to obtain power to transform lives: Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12. The Bible claims to provide happiness and prosperity: Psalm 1:1–3; Jeremiah 17:7–8. The Bible provides advice for how to choose a marriage partner, how to parent, how to choose a friend, how to love, how to overcome conflict, how to be successful in business, how to handle your money, how to know God, how to know what happens when you die, how to overcome temptation or sin, and how to find encouragement. The Bible claims to be totally sufficient (or complete) to counsel you through anything in life (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:2–3).

Why do other religions respect and honor this book? Why do countries build their governments around the principles of this book? Why do men die for the preservation of this book? Could it be the result of God being the author?

What explanation can be given to explain why so many people, religions, and societies have trusted, loved, and devoted themselves to its teachings?

Does any book compare to the Bible?

Fact six: The Bible has proven itself to be the Word of God by the fact that there is no other equal claim for the purpose of mankind.

Apart from the Bible, man really has no other good explanation for the purpose for his existence. As stated in Lesson Two (Is Belief in God Logical?), the existence of the world is far too amazing for human comprehension.

The prevailing theory that has been considered is that of evolution. Outside of biblical claims, mankind has no real purpose; his existence is mere happenstance or chance. The biblical text provides clarity, direction, and hope as to the purpose of mankind. The biblical text sets forth the truth that man was created by God, for the purposes of God, and for the enjoyment of God. Who could have thought of such a rational purpose? Could it be the result of God being the author?

How did mankind come into existence?

For what purpose do you think man exists?

The purpose of man is to glorify God by serving and enjoying Him as King now and forever. We find throughout Scripture that we are created for God's glory (Isaiah 43:7), and that all we do is to give glory to God (1 Corinthians 10:31). All that we do in serving others is to be for His glory. "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven" (Matthew 5:16). It is in service to God that we let our light shine, and thus God is glorified. Therefore, we can come to no other conclusion as to the purpose of man. Not only man, but creation gives glory to Him. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1). It is important to realize that this means every creature gives glory to the King Who sits on the throne. "And I (John) heard every created thing which is upon the earth, and in the sea, and everything in them saying: To the One sitting

on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory, and dominion forever and forever” (Revelation 5:13). Man’s forever is clear. “For from Him and through Him and to Him be glory forever. Amen” (Revelation 11:36). There is indeed no other equal claim for the purpose of man than what the Bible teaches: the preeminent purpose of man is to glorify God by serving and enjoying Him as King now and forever.

How has the Bible changed so many lives?

Is it possible to glorify God without knowing Him? How then can we know God? God has given His Word, the Bible to reveal Himself to man. **Fact seven: The Bible has proven itself to be the Word of God by its ability (or power) to change lives.**

History has proven that the Bible has inconceivable power to transform the hearts of people. The Bible converts people from being thieves to givers, sex offenders to faithful husbands, haters to lovers, drunkards to sober-minded individuals, abusers to patiently self-controlled parents, and the depressed to the joyful. There is something about the Bible that is unexplainable, that is, its ability to soften the hard-hearted, convert the unconvertible, and change the unchangeable.

Millions of people throughout the history of the world have given their lives for the humanly foolish truths of the Bible, finding hope and joy in circumstances that appear intolerable. True Bible believers (as opposed to mere professing Christians) find contentment in living for heaven instead of worldly pleasure, having assurance and confidence in unseen things.

What can explain these irrationalities of how this one book, the Bible, can have such an incredible impact in the hearts and lives of people? Could it be the result of God being the author?

How is the truth about the Bible to be explained?

As stated earlier, the Bible (written over 4,000 years ago) has 40 different authors and covers 6,000 years with one equal claim of divine inspiration. At the same time, the Bible is without error historically and geographically, showing itself to be inexplicably wise, remarkably trustworthy, concisely sufficient, overwhelmingly powerful, uprightly truthful, hopefully purposeful; and it miraculously fulfills over one thousand prophecies.

What can be said about a book that two billion people have trusted to be from God? What can be said about a book that claims to be from God and has proven to be the greatest book ever written? Is the Bible really God's Word?

There seems to be only one logical answer to that question: Absolutely yes!

Therefore, after all of these seven facts have been revealed, do you think the Bible is a reliable source for one's faith?

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

What reasons do you think are the best for believing the Bible to be the Word of God?

How does the truth revealed in this chapter about the Word of God affect the way you live and think?

Do you believe the Bible is a reliable source for one's faith?

Do your lifestyle and actions reveal that you really have put your faith in the Bible as your source of faith?

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

In the next study we want to look into the question of “What is a Christian?” If there are two billion people who consciously or subconsciously believe in the Bible, does that mean that there are two billion people in the world who are Christians? What is a Christian? From where did the word Christian even come? These are a few of the questions that are going to be answered in the next lesson.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Why is it essential that one thoughtfully consider the reliability of what is traditionally called the “Word of God”?

What do you think are some reasons why people reject the Word of God?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

2 Timothy 3: 15–16

¹⁵ . . . and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. . . .

2 Peter 1:20–21

²⁰But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, ²¹for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.



LESSON FIVE

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

-The Quest for Truth-



WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

“IF ANYONE COMES TO ME, AND DOES NOT HATE HIS OWN FATHER OR MOTHER AND WIFE AND CHILDREN AND BROTHERS AND SISTERS, YES, AND EVEN HIS OWN LIFE, HE CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE.” - LUKE 14:26

Throughout the centuries, millions have called themselves “Christians.” People from many different faiths identify with the term “Christian.” Today, Protestants, Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, and even Mormons call themselves “Christians.” Since all these religions are so vastly different in their teachings, it begs the question:

What is a Christian?

It is the attempt of this lesson to allow God’s Word to answer this simple question. To answer the question ‘*What is a Christian,*’ we can look into many different sources. But rather than looking at recent sources, it seems wisest if we allow the Bible itself to answer this question. This would seem to be a neutral place to look since most who claim to be Christians claim to follow the Bible or the teachings of Christ found in the New Testament.

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

When we look into the Bible, the term Christian is used only three times, and all of the instances are found in the New Testament. In terms of answering this question, the most helpful text is Acts 11:26.

According to Acts 11:26, who was given the name Christian?

Therefore, according to Acts 11:26, what is a Christian?

Why do you think the people of Antioch called these disciples “*Christians*”? (Emphasis added.)

The word “Christian” is used two other times within the Bible: Acts 26:24–29 (specifically verse 28); 1 Peter 4:12–16 (specifically verse 16).

This term “*Christianos*” or “Christian” is a word formed after Roman style signifying a fanatic of Jesus. It appears that the disciples of Christ did not adopt this term until the second century. The term Christian seems to have been a vulgar name given to followers of Christ until the second century when it became a title of honor.¹ Clearly, **the Bible defines a Christian to be a person who is a disciple of Christ.**

What is a disciple?

If a Christian can be defined as a disciple of Christ, the next logical question would be what is a “disciple”? This word “disciple” is used numerous times throughout the New Testament. The word in the Greek, “mathetes” literally means “a learner”.²

For example, according to Matthew 9:14, these men who are asking Jesus a question are disciples of whom? (Don’t let “He” confuse you.)

According to Matthew 22:15–16, of whom are these men disciples?

Lastly, according to John 9:24–34 (specifically verse 28), of whom are these men disciples?

1W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Atlanta: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 101.

2W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Atlanta: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 171.

Therefore, the general New Testament idea of a “disciple” is “one who follows one’s teaching”.³ **That’s why the above verses use the word disciple in terms of people being learners of John the Baptist, learners of the Pharisees, and being learners of Moses.** Nevertheless, is that what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

The New Testament teaches that there are two types of disciples of Christ. **First, there is a general disciple, who is merely a learner of Christ’s teaching, but has not yet decided to follow Christ.** This “disciple” is not a Christian but has for one reason or another interest in intellectually learning about Christ’s teachings.

For example, look at John 6:66. (Read 6:59–68.) These disciples were learning from Christ, but according to this verse, they did what?

Again in Luke 6:17, we see a great cloud of people sitting at Jesus’ feet listening to Him, but these men were simply learning about Christ and had not necessarily committed themselves to His teaching. Therefore, the term disciple can be used in a broad sense to refer to anyone who is a learner of Jesus.

Second, there is a disciple of Christ who is a “true disciple.” This disciple is not only a learner of Jesus’ teachings, but he has surrendered his life to these teachings. This disciple is a Christian because his intellectual understanding and wholehearted submission to Christ’s teachings are evidence of the transforming work of God’s Spirit.

Who does Jesus say is truly His disciple in John 8:31–32?

It should be understood that the word “continue” (Greek “meno”) means to abide, dwell, endure, remain, or to stand.⁴ Jesus is saying that the test or evidence of true discipleship is not being attracted to the truth but living a life in submission to the truth, which is a result

³W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Atlanta: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 171.

⁴W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Atlanta: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 733.

of God’s grace working through the Holy Spirit. Notice: When Jesus refers to those who are “truly” His disciples, He implies that there are also some who are claiming to be disciples, though in reality, they are not true disciples. (This proves our previous point, which is that there are two types of disciples.)

Who does Jesus say is truly His disciple in John 15:8?

Again, who does Jesus say is truly His disciple in John 13:35?

What description is given for the true disciples in Acts 6:7?

The Bible is clear that a disciple is someone who bears fruit, loves others, and walks in obedience to Christ’s teaching. A true disciple is not merely someone who hears the truth, but someone who lives out the truth he hears.

Who is a true disciple?

Since the Bible speaks of two different types of disciples, how can one know whether he or she is a “true disciple” or just merely a learner? To what extent does the Bible say a “true disciple” adheres to the teachings of Jesus Christ?

To what extent is a “true disciple” willing to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ according to Matthew 10:32–39?

Again, according to Luke 9:23–27, who is the person who will save his life? (See also Luke 9:57–62.)

According to Jesus, a true disciple is willing to lose his life for the sake of following Christ. This is because his love for Christ far outweighs his love for anything else. That’s why Jesus states that a disciple will hate his father or mother in comparison to his love for Christ.

Jesus continues to make this clear in Luke 14:25–33. What does He describe as the cost of being a disciple?

What Jesus is implying in these passages is that a disciple will comprehend and believe the teachings of Christ to the point that he will surrender his life to those teachings. He will become so gripped by the reality of the truth revealed that it won’t matter who opposes him—even father, mother, brother, wife, children—or what the cost of following that teaching will entail. He will be willing to pay even the ultimate price of his own life because he will wholeheartedly know, believe, and surrender His life to the invaluable truth he has found. Jesus taught this because in His day, to follow Him was to deny Judaism which often resulted in being cast from the community and even one’s own family. Jesus’ point was that a true disciple is willing to pay such a price.

How do Jesus’ parables in Matthew 13:44–46 relate to what the Bible teaches about a “true disciple” or a “Christian”?

We see again from this passage that a true disciple of Jesus **sees such value in the teachings of Christ that he will joyfully surrender everything that he might obtain it.** The passage makes it clear that the value that Christ offers surpasses everything pertaining to this life. So what is a Christian? Biblically, it is a “true disciple” of Jesus Christ who shows such allegiance to Christ’s teachings that he has surrendered his life to Him.

Some might be saying: “What? That is a Christian? I know many Christians who aren’t radical or overly zealous like that!” If this is the definition of a Christian then how many people are truly Christians? Well, let’s see what Jesus says in Matthew 7:13–14.

According to this passage, how many will enter eternal life?

Jesus makes it clear that only few will be saved, but many will enter into destruction. This teaching can be confusing today because there are so many people who claim to be Christians. So what does this mean in light of the fact that so many people profess to be Christians? Does it mean that they have been deceived?

According to Matthew 7:22–23, what does Jesus say will happen to the many who are professing Christ to be their Lord?

Again, how does Jesus respond in Luke 13:22–30 when asked, “Are there just a few who are being saved?”

Wow! This teaching can be quite scary because it suggests that there are many who think they’re saved who aren’t. Due to the importance of this subject and the many religious people during Jesus time, He devoted much of His teaching to identifying the difference between the “true Christian” and the “self-deceived Christian.”

According to Matthew 13:1–9, how many different responses were there to God’s Word?

These verses reveal that there are four responses—those who hear the word but nothing happens (verses 4,19); those who hear the word and respond to it but fall away (verses 5–6, 20–21 and verses 7, 22); and lastly, those who hear the word, and the word brings fruit (verses 8, 23). It is clear that of these four responses and from the other teachings of Jesus Christ that only one was truly saved—the one who bore fruit.

Furthermore, it is important to see why they fell away. What were some of the reasons why many of these people did not truly receive Christ’s message of the Kingdom? (See Matthew 13:19, 21, and 22.)

Jesus’ teaching is further strengthened in Matthew 13:24–30 when He compares the Kingdom of God to a field being filled with both “wheat and tares.” The whole point of the parable is to show how the true and the false will grow up together and won’t be separated until the end. This is why Jesus says, “Allow both (wheat/saved; tares/religiously unsaved) to grow together until the harvest” (judgment).

Are you a Christian?

I understand that for many reading this chapter, Christ’s teaching can be alarming. Unfortunately, today many are being told that all one has to do to be a Christian is say a prayer, but Jesus has made it clear that being a Christian involves more than just saying mere words. Jesus has made it clear that being a Christian is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is not just a person who admires or appreciates Christ’s teaching, but one who is so impacted by Christ’s teaching that he is willing to surrender his life to it. He is one who abides in the truth he hears and that truth bears much fruit in Him. He is not one who hears truth but isn’t willing to consider the cost of walking in that truth. Rather, he is one who considers the cost and joyfully sells all he has that he might gain the prize of Christ and His kingdom. I know this is a little radical, but if we allow the Bible to define a Christian, this is the answer it gives.

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

In light of what we have learned, are you truly a Christian?

Have you surrendered to Christ and His teachings?

Are you a part of the many or the few? Are you a wheat or a tare?

These are important questions for which one should be able to confidently give an answer.

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

Since a Christian is someone who has understood the teaching of Jesus Christ and has surrendered his life to Christ's teachings, it is important for one to know who Jesus Christ was and what His teachings were. Therefore, in the next study (Lesson 6), we are going to answer the questions: Who was Jesus? Was Jesus just a good man, a prophet, or a good teacher? Was Jesus God? Who did Jesus claim to be?

Despite the difficulty of this teaching of a true/false Christian, please continue in this journey with us. As we move forward, we want to show you this incredible teaching to which all true Christians have surrendered their lives. To stop now is like looking at a brand new vehicle but never test-driving it. You don't have to buy into this teaching but at least understand it, see its value, and know what you are missing before you reject it. The price is too high. You never know. You, too, in your joy for the treasure might go and sell all that you have after you see what you are missing.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What is a Christian?

What is a disciple of Jesus Christ?

What is the difference between a general disciple and a “true disciple”?

What does Jesus say is the cost of being His disciple?

How many people does Jesus say will enter the kingdom of God?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Acts 11:26

²⁶ . . . and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Acts 26:24–29

²⁴While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.” ²⁵But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. ²⁶For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.” ²⁸Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.” ²⁹And Paul said, “I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such that I am, except for these chains.”

1 Peter 4:12–16

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as through some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. ¹⁴If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or a thief, or evil-doer, or a troublesome meddler; ¹⁶but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

Matthew 9:14

¹⁴Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?”

Matthew 22:15–16

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. ¹⁶And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any.”

John 9:24–34

²⁴So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, “Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner.” ²⁵He then answered, “Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” ²⁶So they said to him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” ²⁷He answered them, “I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?” ²⁸They reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where His is from.” ³⁰The man answered and said to them, “Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. ³²Since the beginning of time, it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.” ³⁴They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?” So they put him out.

John 6:59–68

⁵⁹These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. ⁶⁰Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?”

⁶¹But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, “Does this cause you to stumble? ⁶²What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? ⁶³It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. ⁶⁴But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe and who it was that would betray Him. ⁶⁵And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.” ⁶⁶As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. ⁶⁷So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.”

Luke 6:17

¹⁷Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. . . .

John 8:31–32

³¹So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

John 15:8

⁸“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

John 13:35

³⁵“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Acts 6:7

⁷The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Matthew 10:32–39

³²“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. ³⁴Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

³⁶and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. ³⁷He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it."

Luke 9:23–27

²³And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. ²⁵For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:57–62

⁵⁷As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go." ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." ⁵⁹And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." ⁶⁰But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." ⁶¹Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." ⁶²But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Luke 14:25–33

²⁵Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, ²⁶"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."

Matthew 13:44–46

⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Matthew 7:13–14

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Matthew 7:22–23

²²“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

Luke 13:22–30

²²And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. ²³And someone said to Him, “Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?” And He said to them, ²⁴“Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’ ²⁶Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’; ²⁷and He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers.’ ²⁸In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. ²⁹And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.”

Matthew 13:1–23

¹That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. ²And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. ³And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. ⁶But when the sun had risen, they

were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. ⁸And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. ⁹He who has ears, let him hear.”

¹⁰And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” ¹¹Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. ¹²For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. ¹³Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,

‘You will keep on hearing, but will not understand;
You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;

¹⁵For the heart of this people has become dull,
With their ears they scarcely hear,
And they have closed their eyes,
Otherwise they would see with their eyes,
Hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart and return,
And I would heal them.’

¹⁶“But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. ¹⁷For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

¹⁸“Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. ²⁰The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²²And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

Matthew 13:24–30

²⁴Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵But while his men were sleeping,

his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' ²⁸And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' ²⁹But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn." ' ' "



LESSON SIX

WHO IS JESUS?
(PART 1)

-The Quest for Truth-

WHO IS JESUS? (PART 1)

“NOW WHEN JESUS CAME INTO THE DISTRICT OF CAESAREA PHILIPPI, HE WAS ASKING HIS DISCIPLES, ‘WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT THE SON OF MAN IS?’ AND THEY SAID, ‘SOME SAY JOHN THE BAPTIST; AND OTHERS, ELIJAH; BUT STILL OTHERS, JEREMIAH, OR ONE OF THE PROPHETS.’ HE (JESUS) SAID TO THEM, ‘BUT WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?’ SIMON PETER ANSWERED, ‘YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.’ AND JESUS SAID TO HIM, ‘BLESSED ARE YOU, SIMON BARJONA, BECAUSE FLESH AND BLOOD DID NOT REVEAL THIS TO YOU, BUT MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN.’” - MATTHEW 16:13–17

In past lessons, we have come to understand that the Christian religion is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. We have also come to understand that Jesus demands all His disciples (followers or Christians) to surrender their lives to Him and to His teachings (Matthew 10:37–39; Luke 14:25–33).

Therefore, the comprehension of the subject at hand is very important. Thinking rationally, if the cost of following Jesus is everything for those who truly know Him, one must be wholeheartedly confident in Jesus’ person and His claims in order to yield such a commitment. Logically, lack of one’s knowledge of who Jesus is will cause a lack in one’s commitment to His person.

For instance, no one marries a person before first dating him/her (that is getting to know them) because an individual is not going to make a lifetime commitment to someone he/she doesn’t know. In the same way, it is crucial before choosing a religion or before becoming a Christian that people understand who Jesus is. Was He just a great teacher, a religious leader, a prophet, or was He from God? Who did Jesus claim to be?

It is the attempt of this lesson to look into the Word of God to answer these essential questions. However, it should be noted that man’s ability to understand Jesus is limited. Therefore, as students, our research is restricted to His revelation about Himself as is recorded in the pages of the Holy Scriptures.

Is Jesus the Christ?

To begin answering this question, let us begin by looking at Christ’s dialogue with Peter as recorded in Matthew 16.

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

In this passage, what does Jesus ask His disciples in Matthew 16:13? (Note: The Son of Man is referring to Jesus.)

In verse 14, what are four responses given by Peter to Jesus' question regarding who they say He is?

After Peter explains that people believe that Jesus is John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the Prophets, Jesus then asks Peter who he believes Jesus to be. And what is Peter's response in verse 16?

Peter says that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God! According to Jesus (verse 17), this response from Peter was exactly correct, having been revealed to him by God. This claim that Jesus was the "Christ" is found throughout the whole New Testament.

For example, Luke 23:2 says the religious leaders were accusing Jesus of claiming to be whom?

As a result of the religious leaders' accusations that Jesus claimed to be Israel's Messiah and King, Pilate responds by asking Jesus the question, "Are you the King of the Jews?" According to verse 3, what is Jesus' response?

Therefore, it is clear by Jesus' own words that He claimed to be Israel's Christ. Again, in Matthew 1:16, what does Matthew say Jesus was called?

The fact that Jesus is the Christ is such an important concept to the New Testament that the word "Christ" is used over 400 times and serves as an official name or title for Jesus. And this term in a most vivid way links Jesus Christ to the Old Testament. The Old Testament promises that a Messiah will come, whereas the New Testament shows the fulfillment of His having come.

What does the term "Christ" mean?

The word "Christ" is the Greek form of the Hebrew noun "Messiah," which means "Anointed One." This word "Anointed One" is used 39 times in the Old Testament.

Within these 39 times, this word is used in two different ways in the Old Testament. The term is used in a general way and in a personal way.

The general use of "Anointed One" was applied to those who were priests (Exodus 28:41; Leviticus 4:3), kings (1 Samuel 16:3; 1 Samuel 12:3), or prophets (1 Kings 19:16; Psalm 105:15), who were equipped to do a special task or special function for God and His rule over the nation of Israel.¹

The personal use of "Anointed One" (which appears 9 times²) refers to a specific person who would one day come through the line of David and be God's chosen King over Israel. This King is expected to come and rule over Israel's enemies and establish an everlasting kingdom (Jeremiah 23:5–6; 30:1–10; Zechariah 14:1–5).

For instance, Psalm 2:2 says that in the future, the kings and rulers will take their stand against whom?

¹William Varner, *The Messiah: Revealed, Rejected, Received* (Birmingham: Author House, 2004) 6.
²1 Samuel 2:10, 35; Psalm 2:2; 20:6; 28:8; 84:9; Habakkuk 3:13; Daniel 9:25–26.

God responds to those who want to stand against Him in verses 4 and 5 in what ways?

To deal with those rebelling against God, verse 6 says that God will appoint what for Himself?

After God appoints Himself a King, what do verses 8 and 9 say that this King will do to the nations? (Note: This is an appropriate response to people who come against the Lord, verse 2.)

This is the picture presented for the “Anointed One” in the Old Testament. This depiction is of a future King who will rule over these nations which come against God and His people. This is the “Anointed One” who the Jewish people of Jesus’ day were awaiting. This is the “Anointed One” who Jesus claimed to be. Therefore, the term “Christ” in the New Testament is referring to the special “Anointed One” or “Messiah” of the Old Testament.

Is Jesus pictured as King?

Jesus, being the Christ or Messiah, is the main purpose of the book of Matthew. He starts his gospel by explaining how Jesus was from the messianic kingly line (1:1–17), had a messianic kingly birth (1:18–25), a messianic kingly reception (2:1–23), a messianic kingly forerunner (3:1–12), received messianic kingly affirmation (3:13–17), experienced messianic kingly resistance (4:1–11), fulfilled a messianic kingly ministry (4:12–25), demonstrated messianic kingly teaching (chapters 5–7), and displayed messianic kingly powers (chapters 8–10).³

³It should be noted that the truth about Jesus being the Messiah was not limited to this one phrase “Christ” (Messiah or Anointed One). The Old Testament also speaks of Jesus as a deliverer who would crush Satan’s head and as the means of blessing for all mankind (Genesis 12:3). He is also described by a variety of other terms. Some of these terms are son (Psalm 2:7), branch (Zechariah 6:12, 13), servant (Isaiah 41–53), and king (Zechariah 9:9).

After the birth of Jesus, because Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, magi from Persia, influenced by the writings of the prophet Daniel, came and asked what question? (See Matthew 2:2.)

Furthermore, this is the reason Jesus speaks about what subject in Matthew 5:3, 10, 19–20; 8:11; 9:35; 10:7; 11:12; 16:19, 28; 18:1, 4, 23; 19:12, 14, 23, 24; 20:1; 21:31; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1?

Additionally, what subject does Jesus teach in Matthew 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 43–45, 47?

Lastly, in Matthew 22:42 what question does Jesus ask of the religious leaders?

As the promised King, Jesus preached about the Kingdom of Heaven, gave parables about the Kingdom, and asked the religious leaders questions about this promised King. Furthermore, people stood in awe when Jesus preached because He spoke as one who had authority. (Matthew 7:29; 8:27; 9:8, 33; 27:54).

Those who were following Jesus knew that He claimed to be this Messiah. That is the reason they described the content of Jesus' message as a gospel of what in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35?

This is why in Matthew 27:37 there was a sign which stood over Jesus' head which read what message?

Who Jesus claimed to be was without question. He claimed, proved, taught, and made known that He was, is, and forever will be the Christ, the Messiah, the “Anointed One”—the King of the Jews. Because of this claim, the Jewish religious leaders hated Him, the Romans arrested Him, and the people questioned Him. This is also why in Matthew 24:5, Jesus told His followers that people would wrongly come after Him claiming to be this Messiah. The Bible reveals that Jesus was consumed with teaching about the Messiah because He was the Messiah.

Since Jesus was a King, why didn't He rule?

What makes the least sense is that Jesus did not reign, but suffered and died. Therefore, how could He truly be this promised Messiah? The Old Testament speaks of the Messiah not only as a ruling King but also as a suffering Servant (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 9:9; 12:10; 13:7; Luke 24:25–27; 1 Peter 1:10–11; Daniel 9:24–26).

This was a mystery to the religious leaders of Jesus' day. Due to Israel's difficult history under the rule of other kings (the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Romans, especially the Romans, who put heavy burdens upon them), Israel's greatest passion was independence. The *desire* for their king became the major emphasis of Israel's priests, teachers, and writings. The emphasis of a ruling Messiah among the religious leaders resulted in Israel's neglect of the clear teaching regarding their suffering Messiah.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is the Old Testament's clearest teaching regarding the suffering Messiah. Verse 13 speaks of how God is going to send a Servant who will prosper, be high and lifted up, and be greatly exalted. (See how it was fulfilled in Christ in Philippians 2:9–11 and Romans 1:3–4.)

Despite this Servant's highly exalted position, the passage continues to explain the sufferings this Servant or Messiah will experience. For instance, what does Isaiah 53:3–4, 7 say about how Christ was treated? (See how it was fulfilled by Christ: Matthew 26:1–5; 27:27–44.)

According to Isaiah 53:5–6, for what purpose did this “Servant” die? (See how it was fulfilled in Christ in Matthew 1:21; Romans 5:12–21.)

What does Isaiah 53:7 say as to this Servant’s response to such oppression and affliction? (See how it was fulfilled in Christ in Matthew 26:47–68, 27:11–26.)

Isaiah 53:8–9 speaks of this suffering Messiah being “cut off from the land of living.” (This was fulfilled in Christ in Matthew 27:50.) Verse 9 states that “His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death” despite the fact that He had done no violence and with no deceit found in His mouth. (To see how it was fulfilled in Christ, read Matthew 27:19–23, 57–60.)

Lastly, Isaiah 53:10–12 explains that God was pleased to crush Jesus for what purpose? (To see how it was fulfilled in Christ, read Romans 3:25–26, Matthew 27:46.)

Consequently, it is clear that the Old Testament not only speaks about a reigning King, but also about a King who would suffer unjustly for the sake of sinners.

Was Jesus this suffering Servant?

John clearly states that Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah 53. (John 12:38 quotes from Isaiah 53:1 and prophecies about Jesus’ future death.) Therefore, the Bible claims that Jesus is the promised suffering Servant. Jesus Himself also claimed to be the suffering Servant. When Jesus was on the cross, He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (See Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.) When Jesus made this statement, He was quoting from Psalm 22:1, which is a prophetic Psalm describing in detail Christ’s predicted death.

What made Christ's claim of being the suffering Messiah most evident was that He was continually speaking of His future death. For instance, in Matthew 16:21, what does Jesus tell His disciples will happen in the future?

Again, what does Jesus tell His disciples in Matthew 20:17–19?

If Jesus was not the suffering Servant, how was He able to predict His death months before it happened? Without a doubt, such predictions would be impossible unless He was truly this suffering Servant.

Why was Jesus not understood to be the suffering Servant?

Regardless of the clear teaching of Jesus, few understood that the Messiah would die. Why? The reason is because this teaching did not coincide with the religious teachings of that day (Luke 24:21). This is seen clearly in Luke 24 by the two disciples Jesus met on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection from the dead.

According to Luke 24:19–20, what do these men say happened to Jesus?

According to Luke 24:21, what does it say that these men were hoping would happen?

In Luke 24:25, what does Jesus rebuke these men for not doing?

In Luke 24:26, what does Jesus say about what was necessary for the Messiah to do? (Note: Jesus was speaking about the Christ.)

According to Luke 24:27, what does Jesus do?

What is the men's response to Jesus' teaching in Luke 24:32–35?

Later in the same chapter, what does Jesus teach to all of His disciples in Luke 24:44–46?

We see that it was their present day understanding that hindered the people from seeing Jesus as the suffering Servant. As stated before, their expectation or hope was that Jesus was going to redeem Israel. Stated differently, they were hoping that Jesus would overthrow the Romans. These men, however, were confused when their expectations were not met, and instead their Messiah died. It wasn't until after Jesus' role as the suffering Servant was fulfilled, and Christ began to teach about Himself (that He would not only reign but would also suffer) that Jesus' disciples finally realized the truth. At this point, their spiritual eyes were opened, and they understood that indeed Christ was the promised Messiah.

The fact that Jesus' disciples understood this truth is made evident by Peter's message in 1 Peter 1:10–11 and Acts 3:11–26 (most specifically Acts 3:18). Also, it is through this same message (Isaiah 53) delivered through Jesus' disciple Philip that the Ethiopian eunuch is saved and declares, "I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Philip's message to the Ethiopian man still rings true today that you who want to be saved must "believe with all your heart" that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the Living God (Acts 8:37).

So Whom did Jesus claim to be?

In light of everything we have studied, who did Jesus claim to be? Clearly, Jesus was the Christ, Israel's promised Messiah! This was made evident by Jesus' life and message. The Jews of Jesus' day were aware that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah; Peter and the disciples understood His claims--and we today can also understand them.

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

Despite the confusion during Jesus' day regarding the misconception that Jesus the Messiah came merely as a deliverer, Jesus made it clear to all that the promised Messiah was to both suffer and rule. This suffering took place over 2,000 years ago, and His ruling is yet to come. Therefore, Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament's promise of a Messiah. Consequently, the same question that Jesus asked Peter 2,000 years ago is still before us today: "Who do you say Jesus is?"

This study is not exhaustive but is continued in the next lesson.

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

Due to the importance of this subject, it is critical that we clearly understand all of Christ's claims. In the next study (Lesson 7), we are going to continue to look at "Who is Jesus?" We want to look into some of the other claims Jesus made about Himself. In light of all the false claims made about Jesus today, it is essential to precisely understand Jesus' teaching about Himself. The next lesson will seek to accomplish this.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What was the correct answer to Jesus' question to Peter in Matthew 16:13–20?

Biblically, what does the word "Christ" mean?

To whom does the word “Christ” point?

What does Psalm 2 tell us about the “Anointed One”?

In what ways does the book of Matthew confirm the biblical truth about Jesus being the Messiah?

How does Jesus’ death on the cross prove that He is this promised ruling Messiah?

What caused the common people of Jesus’ day to not understand that Jesus needed to die first?

What does Isaiah 53 teach us about the Messiah?

How does John 12:27–41 relate to Isaiah 53, and why is it important?

According to Luke 24:19–46, what is Jesus’ lasting teaching about Himself?

What does Peter teach about Jesus in 1 Peter 1:10–11?

Through what passage does the Ethiopian eunuch realize that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God?

After studying this lesson, who do you say Jesus is?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Matthew 16:13–20

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He (Jesus) said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock ¹⁹ I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.

Luke 23:1–3

¹ Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate. ² And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.” ³ So Pilate asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And He answered him and said, “It is as you say.”

Matthew 1:16

¹⁶ Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

Psalms 2:1–9

¹ Why are the nations in an uproar
And the peoples devising a vain thing?

² The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying,

³ “Let us tear their fetters apart
And cast away their cords from us!”

⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.

⁵Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury, saying,

⁶“But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

⁷“I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord:
He said to Me, “You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.

⁸“Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.

⁹“You shall break them with a rod of iron,
You shall shatter them like earthenware.”

Matthew 2:2

²“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”

Matthew 5:3

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:10

¹⁰“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:19–20

¹⁹“Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 8:11

¹¹“I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. . . .”

Matthew 9:35

³⁵Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Matthew 10:7

⁷“And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ “

Matthew 11:12

¹²“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.”

Matthew 16:19

¹⁹“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

Matthew 16:28

²⁸“Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

Matthew 18:1–4

¹At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ²And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, ³and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 18:23

²³“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.”

Matthew 19:12–14

¹²“For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.” ¹³Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Matthew 19:23–24

²³And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Matthew 20:1

¹“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.”

Matthew 21:31

³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.”

Matthew 22:2

²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.”

Matthew 23:13

¹³“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.”

Matthew 25:1

²⁵“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.”

Matthew 13:11

¹¹Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.”

Matthew 13:24

²⁴Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.”

Matthew 13:31

³¹He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. . . .”

Matthew 13:33

³³He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”

Matthew 13:43–47

⁴³Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. ⁴⁴The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. ⁴⁷Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind . . .”

Matthew 22:42

⁴²“What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?” They said to Him, “The son of David.”

Matthew 4:23

²³Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

Matthew 9:35

³⁵Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Matthew 27:37

³⁷And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

¹³Behold, My servant will prosper,
He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.

¹⁴Just as many were astonished at you, My people,
So His appearance was marred more than any man
And His form more than the sons of men.

¹⁵Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;
For what had not been told them they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand.

¹Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

²For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

³He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

⁴Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

⁵But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

⁶All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.

⁷He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.

⁸By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

⁹His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

¹⁰But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

¹¹As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant,
will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

¹²Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,
 And He will divide the booty with the strong;
 Because He poured out Himself to death,
 And was numbered with the transgressors;
 Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
 And interceded for the transgressors.

John 12:27–41

²⁷“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” ²⁹So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.” ³⁰Jesus answered and said, “This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. ³¹Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³²And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” ³³But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. ³⁴The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?” ³⁵So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. ³⁶While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.” These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. ³⁷But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. ³⁸This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” ³⁹For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, ⁴⁰“He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them.” ⁴¹These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.

Matthew 16:21

²¹From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Matthew 20:17–19

¹⁷As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, ¹⁸“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, ¹⁹and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.”

Luke 24:19–21

¹⁹And He said to them, “What things?” And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. ²¹But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. . . .”

Luke 24:25–27

²⁵And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Luke 24:32–35

³²They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” ³³And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them. ³⁴saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.” ³⁵They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24:44–46

⁴⁴Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day.”

1 Peter 1:10–11

¹⁰As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, ¹¹seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.



LESSON SEVEN

WHO IS JESUS?
(PART 2)

-The Quest for Truth-

WHO IS JESUS? (PART 2)

“AND THE HIGH PRIEST SAID TO HIM, ‘I ADJURE YOU BY THE LIVING GOD, THAT YOU TELL US WHETHER YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.’ JESUS SAID TO HIM, ‘YOU HAVE SAID IT YOURSELF; NEVERTHELESS I TELL YOU, HEREAFTER YOU WILL SEE THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.’ THEN THE HIGH PRIEST TORE HIS ROBES AND SAID, ‘HE HAS BLASPHEMED!’” - MATTHEW 26:63–65

It is an undeniable fact that Jesus Christ has had the greatest impact on human history. His existence has caused confusion, conflict, and conversion. His teachings have shaped countries, families, and lives. His followers have brought impact, inspiration, and isolation. His name has turned people to worship, wonder, and war. There is no person in history who has so influenced mankind like Jesus Christ, which causes us to ask, “Who was He?”

Did Jesus claim to be more than the Messiah?

In the last lesson, we learned that Jesus claimed, taught, and announced Himself to be the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. But was that Jesus’ only claim? What did Jesus mean when He called Himself, “Son of God”? What did Jesus mean when He called Himself, “Son of Man”? Why did the angel call Him, “Immanuel”? Did Jesus really claim to be God? What did Jesus’ disciples mean when they called Jesus, “Lord”? It is the attempt of this lesson to look into the Word of God to answer and understand these essential questions.

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

It has become clear (from Lesson 6) that Jesus claimed to be the promised Old Testament Messiah. He was the One who was to suffer and reign on Israel’s behalf and on behalf of all mankind.

Was Jesus open with His claims?

Due to the times in which Jesus lived and the person He claimed to be, Jesus had to be very careful in how He presented Himself. Let me explain what I mean. During this period, there were two major powers occupying Israel: Jews and Romans. They each had their own rulers in power. The Romans, however, dominated the Jews and forced them into servitude. Nevertheless, Israel always aspired for freedom from the dominating control of the

Romans. This is the reason they always prayed for the coming of their Messiah. Therefore, if Jesus were to directly and loudly make His claim as Messiah known, He would have instantaneously caused a revolution and been seen as a troublemaker.

For example, before Pilate, according to Luke 23:2, 14, of what are the religious leaders accusing Jesus?

Pilate reveals that men were claiming that Jesus was inciting these people to rebellion because they were using His claims as “Messiah.” Due to the fears of the Romans, such a claim would receive execution. Someone claiming to be King and to bring freedom for Israel would clearly be a threat to the Roman authorities. Consequently, Jesus had no alternative than to make his **messianic claims** indirectly through what He did (miracles, teaching) and by referring to Himself with certain indirect Messianic titles.

For example, because of Jesus’ deeds, which indirectly showed him to be the Messiah, what does John the Baptist ask Jesus through his disciple in Matthew 11:2-3?

What is Jesus’ response to John in verses 4 and 5?

Jesus’ answer to John’s question regarding whether He is the Messiah was strategically formulated. Jesus’ words were to draw John the Baptist’s attention to Messianic passages like Isaiah 35:5-6 or Isaiah 61:1. (Note also Luke 4:16-21.) What do these passages state about this coming Messiah?

These passages speak of how the Messiah is going to come with power to heal. So, when Jesus tells John the Baptist what miraculous things He was doing, it was a discreet way of Jesus saying, “I am the promised Messiah.”

In regard to the use of indirect Messianic Old Testament titles, Jesus refers to himself as, “Son,” “Son of David,” “Son of Man,” and “Son of God.” The idea of “Son” easily brought people’s attention to various Messianic passages.

Why is Jesus referred to as a “Son”?

The use of the term “Son” appears often in the Old Testament. For instance, Psalm 2:7, 12 says what about the “Son”?

What does Isaiah 9:6 say about the “Son”?

What does 2 Samuel 7:12–13 say about a future “Son”?

What does Daniel 7:13–14 say about “The Son of Man”?

When this term is used, Isaiah, Samuel and Daniel are alluding to Old Testament passages concerning the Messiah. Psalm 2 is referring to the Messiah—a Son who would come, be God’s King, rule over the nations, and be worshipped by them. Isaiah 9 says that a child would be born, “a Son would be given” who would rule over the government and be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, the Prince of Peace.” In 2 Samuel 7, Samuel speaks as well of a Son who would come through the line of David and eternally rule as Israel’s King. Lastly, Daniel 7 speaks of a Son who would be placed by His Father (The Ancient of Days) to be Israel’s King forever.

Jesus Christ is not the only one who referred to Himself as a Son, but God the Father also referred to Jesus as a Son.

For example, in Matthew 17:5, who is speaking, and what does He say?

Again, in Matthew 3:17, what happened?

These words, which are used here by God, call attention to Jesus as His Son. In essence, God Himself is declaring that Jesus is their Messiah, His Son! Therefore, it is clear that the indirect statements regarding Jesus as Son are indirect claims to His being the Messiah.

Why the titles “Son of”?

Now, was there any further significance to the other terms of Jesus being the “Son of Man,” the “Son of David,” or the “Son of God”? Are these terms referring to anything other than just a normal Messianic reference? Why was this promised coming One not just called the “Son”? Why the “Son of Man,” “Son of David,” or “Son of God”? When you look at these names and how they are used, you see that there is definitely more significance than just that of being Messianic; each name brings out a different emphasis in the person of Christ.

Jesus, the “Son of David”?

For instance, the concept of Jesus being the “Son of David” brings in the significance of Jesus being born through the line of Israel’s most beloved king, David. In the Jewish mind, this term “Son of David” had a direct reference to the promise of 2 Samuel 7:12–13 that David’s descendant or Son would be Israel’s King and would establish an everlasting kingdom. That’s why in Matthew 12:23 all the people were amazed and were saying, “This man cannot be the Son of David, can He?” In essence, they were wondering, “Is this one the promised Messiah?”

Again in Mark 10:46–48, the beggar referred to Jesus as what?

What is intriguing is that the beggar, the outcast of society, even knew who Jesus was and wasn't ashamed to proclaim it—despite others feeling uncomfortable with His claims. Again, the beggar was essentially saying “This man, Jesus, is the promised One from the line of David.” The phrase “Son of David” is bringing emphasis to Jesus' lineage as the offspring of David.

Jesus, the “Son of Man”?

In like fashion, the term “Son of Man” (which was directly linked to the Messianic prophecy of Daniel 7:13–14 in the mind of the religious Jew) is putting emphasis on Christ's relationship to man or more specifically, Christ's human nature. Of all of Jesus' names, Jesus used this one the most. Jesus used “Son of Man” because it did not offend the Romans or the Jews openly.

Whereas, the term “Messiah” would have offended the Romans because they would feel threatened that someone would come to usurp authority; the term “Son of God” would have offended the Jews because it would imply in their minds that there was more than one God. For these reasons, Jesus used “Son of Man” the most often to refer to Himself.

For instance, to whom is Jesus referring with the use of “Son of Man” in Luke 7:34?

Again, to whom is Jesus referring in His warning to His disciples in Mark 8:37–38?

Often this term was used by Jesus to bring emphasis to His humanity. The word in Aramaic would actually be a phrase referring to man. Therefore, some people were confused because He claims to be a man but states that He could do extraordinary things.

For example, in Mark 2:10, what does Jesus say the “Son of Man” has authority to do?

According to Mark 2:28, who is the “Son of Man”?

Again, in Mark 8:31, what does it say the “Son of Man” will do?

Not only does He claim to be able to forgive sins and raise people from the dead, but what does Mark 14:61–62 say that the Son of Man will do?

Again, John 3:13 says the “Son of Man” is from where?

Lastly, what does John 6:27 say the “Son of Man” gives to mankind?

Understanding what Jesus was saying about a man would appear crazy to those listening to Him! Can you imagine a man telling you that he has power to forgive sins, raise people from the dead, and give a person eternal life? You and I both would say, “This man is outrageous!” It is for this reason that Jesus said to Peter, “flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17).

Jesus, the “Son of God”?

Well, if by the term “Son of Man” Jesus was referring to Himself as being human, then is it safe to assume that by the use of the title, “Son of God,” one is referring to Jesus as being GOD? This is exactly what is meant! For example, for what reason did the Jews accuse Jesus of blasphemy in John 10:36?

Notice: Why was it that the religious leaders questioned Jesus as being blasphemous? It was because of the claim He made to be the Son of God.

Again, in John 5:18, why did the Jews want to kill Jesus?

It is interesting to note that the response of the Jews to Jesus' claim to be God was to pick up rocks to stone Him. (See also John 8:59.) It is therefore understandable why Jesus abstained from calling Himself by this term very often. However, despite Jesus' limited use of this term, Jesus was clearly known to be the "Son of God" because everyone refers to Him as such. The term "Son of God" was either known or discovered through Jesus' words and teachings.

For instance, in Matthew 4:3,6, who calls Jesus the "Son of God"?

According to Luke 8:28, what do the demons say about Jesus?

It is interesting that Satan and his demons knew exactly who Jesus was—God. The angelic beings were not the only ones who came to understand this. Look at what Peter says in his great confession in Matthew 16:16.

What did Peter declare?

Peter declared Jesus to be the Son of the living God. It is important to note that Jesus affirms Peter's answer and explains how Peter came to this truth as a result of God revealing it to him. Not only was it evident to Jesus' closest followers, it was also evident to those less acquainted with Him.

For example, after the events of the cross, what did the Roman centurion declare in Mark 15:39?

Again, in Acts 8:37, as a result of the Scriptures, the Ethiopian eunuch, through the help of one of Jesus' disciples, came to what conclusion?

In Romans 1:4, Paul explains that God the Father declared before the world that Jesus Christ is the Son of God as a result of the Spirit of God raising Him from the dead. You see, the world would have thought that Jesus was a mere man or just a good teacher if He had not risen from the dead. But when He was raised from the dead, the world knew, once and for all, that He was the Son of God.

This is clearly what is meant when the angel called Jesus “Immanuel” in Matthew 1:23, which is translated as what according to this passage? (See also Isaiah 9:6.)

Therefore, we understand that by this title “Son of God,” the Bible reveals that Jesus is claiming to be the one and only God (Isaiah 42:8; 43:10; 45:5–7) who had come in human flesh to live among us.

Jesus, as “Lord”?

Before we move on to the next lesson, we need to understand one last term, the term “LORD.” This term is the same word as God or YHWH (Yahweh), which appears in the Old Testament over 6,000 times. (See Joshua 3:13–15; Exodus 3:14–15; Psalm 97:5.)

In the New Testament, the term is used in two different senses: 1) It is used in the form of respect like saying, “sir.” 2) It was used in a most exalted sense of God or YHWH, which carried with it the idea of owner, sovereign, or king. For instance, in that day people would say, “Caesar is lord!” To what were they referring? They were saying Caesar is god, owner, or king.

So, in what sense does the New Testament apply this to Jesus in most situations? According to Paul, in Philippians 2:9–11, what did God do?

Paul makes it clear that God gave Jesus the name which is above every name: the name LORD. This is profoundly important because the name given above every name in the Jewish mind is that which is found in Exodus 3:13–15, the name “LORD” or as the Jews

would have stated, “Yahweh.” (See also Isaiah 45:20–25.) Therefore, what Paul is saying about Jesus here is that Jesus Himself is God, the Sovereign One, the Ruler of heaven and earth. He is claiming that Jesus is equal with God.

That’s why in Mark 12:36, Jesus says that the Father is going to put all things under the feet of Jesus, who is the Christ or the Messiah.

Furthermore, in Acts 2:36, what did Peter proclaim to the House of Israel that they are to know for certain about Jesus who they crucified?

Again, this is also why Thomas, the Lord’s disciple, declares what about Jesus in John 20:28?

Thomas very clearly declares that Jesus is both Lord and God. Lastly, in Romans 10:9–10, the Bible makes it clear that all those who are truly Christians confess what about Jesus?

How can you explain it?

Throughout the history of Christianity, this central doctrine of Jesus being God has continuously been attacked. But the question for these critics is this: Who was this man that the Bible says created the world (Colossians 1:16–17; Hebrews 1:2–3; John 1:1–3), forgives sin (Colossians 3:13; Mark 2:5–12; Isaiah 43:25), gives everlasting life (John 10:28), answers prayers (John 14:14; Acts 7:59), raises the dead (John 5:21, 28–29; 11:24–25), judges the world (Acts 10:42; 17:31), has authority over all things (Colossians 1:16–17), is to be the object of one’s faith (Romans 10:9–10), and receives worship which is to be given to God alone (Philippians 2:10–11; Revelation 5:8–14; Hebrews 1:6; Matthew 4:10; John 9:38; Matthew 28:9)?

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

If Jesus were just a man, how could He do all these things?

By Christ's own claims, to know Him is to know God (John 8:19; 14:7); to see Him is to see God (John 12:45; 14:9); to believe in Him is to believe in God (John 12:44; 14:1); to hate Him is to hate God (John 15:23); to honor Him is to honor God (John 5:23); and to receive Him is to receive God (Mark 9:37). **He certainly was not just a man, but was God, very God!**

Again, the question before you is, who do you say is the "Son of Man"?

Be careful in how you answer that question because the Bible says in 1 John 2:23, "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also."

If anyone is still questioning the Bible's teaching about Jesus as God, here is more specific and direct teaching on the subject at hand. It is very important that we understand that the Bible very clearly states that Jesus is God. This is not an ambiguous teaching in the Bible. This teaching is so far beyond human thinking that it would never be contrived by followers unless it were clearly taught. Historical Christianity has always believed that Jesus is the one and only God, the second person of the Godhead. This is because the Scripture reveals this fact to be true. **As one looks at the whole of Scripture, three truths about God are evident:**

First, God is three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is made evident because the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can all be seen at the same time but in distinct persons. Furthermore, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are also seen acting independently throughout the whole Old and New Testament. (See Matthew 28:19–20; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 3:16–17; Genesis 1:26; 1 Corinthians 12:4–6; Ephesians 4:4–6; 1 Peter 1:2; and Jude 1:20–21.)

Second, each one of the persons is seen as being 100 percent God. For example, the Son is seen as God (John 1:1–4; John 20:28; Hebrews 1:3,8; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; Romans 9:5; Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 40:3; and Colossians 2:9). The Holy Spirit is seen as God (Acts 5:3–4; 1 John 3:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Jeremiah 31:31–34; and Hebrews 10:15–17). Therefore, the Father is always unquestionably understood to be God.

If the Bible taught only these two facts, there would be no logical problem; there would be three Gods. However, the Bible also teaches a **third** truth.— There is only one God. Despite the fact that there are three distinct persons, each being 100 percent God, the Bible teaches that there is but one God—comprised of three persons. (Deuteronomy 6:4–5; Exodus 15:11; 1 Kings 8:60; Isaiah 45:5–6, 21–22; 1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:6; and James 2:19 all speak of the fact that there is only one God.) Again, these thoughts are beyond human thinking but are believed because God has revealed them to us through the Bible and through the person of Jesus Christ.

For those of us who might struggle trying to gain understanding of this teaching, please understand that we don't submit to truth just because we understand it. We submit to truth because it is revealed. If God were like us, He would cease being God. But, since He is not like us and is beyond our understanding, He is thus worthy of our worship and allegiance. Therefore, don't let the incomprehensible facts about God hinder us from bending the knee to whom He is as Lord.

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

We have come to understand Jesus' claims to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Son of Man, who is the LORD to which every knee must bow and every tongue must confess. Now, in the next lesson (Lesson 8), we will seek to understand, "For what purpose did Jesus come?" This next lesson is really essential for anyone who wants to understand and know Jesus. It will help the reader truly begin to understand the heart and mission of Jesus. From where did Jesus come? For what purpose did He come? Did He come to earth to hang out? Was He bored in Heaven and needed something to do? Was He just curious? In this next lesson, we are going to look into the heart of Jesus and try to understand His purpose for coming to earth.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What was learned about Jesus from Lesson 7?

Why did Jesus often make His claims indirectly?

Why did Jesus answer John the Baptist the way He did in Matthew 11:4–5?

What was meant when Jesus was referred to as the “Son”?

What was Jesus saying when He called Himself the “Son of David”?

By what term did Jesus refer to Himself the most?

What was Jesus saying about Himself when He called Himself the “Son of Man”?

What was Jesus saying about Himself when He called Himself the “Son of God”?

What was the angel saying about Jesus in Matthew 1:23?

What is the term “Lord” saying about Jesus?

If Jesus were just a man, how could He do all that He did?

Who do you say Jesus is?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Luke 23:2, 14

²And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.”

¹⁴. . . and said to them, “You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.”

Matthew 11:2–5

²Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?”

⁴Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.”

Isaiah 35:5–6

⁵Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. ⁶Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arabah.

Isaiah 61:1

¹The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners.

Luke 4:16–21

¹⁶And He came to Nazareth, where He was being brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷And the book of the Prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸”The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me ¹⁹to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

²⁰And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Psalm 2:7, 12

⁷I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He has said to Me, “You are My Son, today I have begotten you.”

¹²Do homage to the Son, that He may not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

Isaiah 9:6

⁶For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

2 Samuel 7:12–13

¹²“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

Daniel 7:13–14

¹³“I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. ¹⁴And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

Matthew 17:5

⁵While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”

Matthew 3:17

¹⁷And behold a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

Mark 10:46–48

⁴⁶Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus,

Son of David, have mercy on me!”⁴⁸ Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Luke 7:34

³⁴“The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’”

Mark 8:37–38

³⁷“For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

Mark 2:10

¹⁰“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”— He said to the paralytic. . . .

Mark 2:28

²⁸“So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

Mark 8:31

³¹And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Mark 14:61–62

⁶¹But He kept silent and did not answer. And again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” ⁶²And Jesus said, “I am, and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

John 3:13

¹³“No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.”

John 6:27

²⁷“Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.”

John 10:36

³⁶“Do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

John 5:18

¹⁸For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Matthew 4:3, 6

³And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

⁶. . . and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’”

Luke 8:28

²⁸Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.”

Matthew 16:13–16

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” ¹⁶He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Mark 15:39

³⁹When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

Acts 8:37

³⁷And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

Matthew 1:23

²³“Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”

Philippians 2:9–11

⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Mark 12:35–36

³⁵And Jesus began to say, as He taught in the temple, “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶David himself said in the Holy Spirit, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet.” ’ ”

Acts 2:36

³⁶“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

John 20:28

²⁸Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

Romans 10:9–10

⁹ . . . that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.



LESSON EIGHT

FOR WHAT PURPOSE DID JESUS COME?

-The Quest for Truth-

FOR WHAT PURPOSE DID JESUS COME?

*“SHE (MARY) SHALL BEAR A SON; AND YOU SHALL CALL HIS NAME JESUS,
FOR HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.” - MATTHEW 1:21*

Together we have come to understand that Christianity is a wholehearted commitment to the teachings and person of Jesus Christ. As a result, we spent the last two lessons looking at who Jesus claimed to be. Now, we want to begin to unfold the purpose for which Jesus came to earth. I believe that a clear understanding of what Jesus came to accomplish will open the door to understand Jesus’ heart and teachings, thus Christianity.

The Jews of that day expected Jesus to come for the purpose of reigning over Israel and conquering their enemies. But was that the purpose for which Jesus had come? Was that His mission? Was He just bored in Heaven and needed something to do? Furthermore, if Jesus came to earth, from where did He come? These are some of the questions that we want to answer from God’s Word in this lesson.

From where did Jesus come?

In order to fully understand the significance behind Jesus’ human purposes, we need to properly understand from where Jesus Christ came. If one can understand the glories from which Jesus left, he will understand both the severity of man’s problem and the greatness of God’s solution. The Scripture records with great clarity the claims of Jesus’ pre-existence. Therefore, let’s begin to look into these claims together.

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

According to John 8:23, from where did Jesus come and not come?

John 6:38 records that Jesus is from where? (See also chapter 6:33, 41, 50, 51, 58, 62.)

Jesus makes it clear that He is come from Heaven. He is not like man because man's existence has only been an earthly existence. But Jesus claims that He comes from the Father, having left His heavenly home. This is affirmed again in John 3:13, 31 when Jesus claims that He alone, being the Son of Man, has descended from Heaven and is above all.

Jesus is from Heaven?

If Jesus is not of this world but is from Heaven, in what sense is He from Heaven? Was He created in a special way in Heaven? Was He pre-existent in Heaven? How long was He in Heaven? And, what was He doing in Heaven?

According to John 1:15 and 30, before what person did Jesus exist?

How could Jesus have existed before John the Baptist? If we know from Luke 1 and 2 that John was born 6 months before Jesus, how could this be? It is because Jesus existed before His birth; He was pre-existent.

Another example of this is in John 8:56–59 when Jesus says that He existed before whom?

Jesus not only claimed to exist before Abraham, but in Colossians 1:17, Paul declares that Jesus existed before what?

Despite the fact that Jesus was physically born after Abraham and after John the Baptist, the Bible teaches that Jesus not only existed before them but before all things. This is confirmed in John 17:24 when Jesus claims that He existed before the foundation of the world.

What was Jesus doing in Heaven?

If Jesus had always existed, then what had He been doing in Heaven? Had He been sitting around waiting until the time when He would come to earth? Had He been keeping track of all of mankind's wrongdoings? The clearest explanation of what Jesus Christ was doing in

His pre-existence is found in John 1:1–3. John 1:1 says that Jesus, who is described in this verse as the Word, as well as in John 1:14, existed in the beginning of time. Furthermore, the same passage says that Jesus existed with whom in the beginning?

Not only did Jesus exist with this Person, but who was Jesus (the Word) according to verse 1?¹

This passage is clearly expressing the fact that Jesus has always existed with God because He is God. And according to John 1:3, as God, what did He do?

Wait a second. If Jesus created the world, is He mentioned in Genesis where the creation of the world is recorded? The answer to this question is “Yes”—In Genesis 1:26, God the Father was talking to God the Son when He said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.”

Despite the fact that this is beyond our own thinking, God the Father and God the Son created the world. In a mysterious way as stated in the previous chapter, God the Father and God the Son are both together, the one and only God of the universe. They are not both gods but one God. Again, Genesis 3:22 and Genesis 11:7 reveal that God the Father did His creative work with someone—this someone was Jesus. 1 Corinthians 8:6 affirms this when it says that all things exist through Jesus Christ.

Hear the words of Colossians 1:16: “For by Him (Jesus) all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.” God’s Word could not be more clear that Jesus did not begin life in Bethlehem but that He Himself was the Creator

¹The translation “the Word was God” has been challenged by the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who translate it “the Word was a god,” implying that the Word was simply a heavenly being but not fully divine. They justify this translation by pointing to the fact that the definite article (Gk. *ho*, “the”) does not occur before the Greek word *theos* (“God”). They say therefore that the *theos* should be translated “a god.” However, their interpretation has not been followed by any recognized Greek scholar anywhere, for it is commonly known that the sentence follows a regular rule of Greek grammar, and the absence of the definite article merely indicates that “God” is the predicate rather than the subject of the sentence. (A recent publication by the Jehovah’s Witnesses now acknowledges the relevant grammatical rule but continues to affirm their position on John 1:1 nonetheless.) The inconsistency of the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ position can further be seen in their translation of the rest of the chapter. For various other grammatical reasons the word *theos* also lacks the definite article at the other places in this chapter, such as verse 6 (“There was a man sent from God”), verse 12 (“power to become children of God”), verse 13 (“but of God”), and verse 18 (“No one has ever seen God”). If the Jehovah’s Witnesses were consistent with their argument about the absence of the definite article, they would have to translate all of these with the phrase “a god,” but they translate “God” in every case. (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 234–235)

the One through Whom everything came into existence! (By the way, the Holy Spirit was also involved in creation according to Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; 33:4; Psalm 104:30; Isaiah 40:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10.)

What's interesting is in John 12:41, John says that Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus Christ and spoke of Him. But if Isaiah lived and died before Jesus' time, when would he have seen Jesus? According to Isaiah 6:1–3, Isaiah declares that he saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and His glory filled the temple. Could this have been when Isaiah saw Christ? Absolutely! Moses tells us that no one has seen the Father and lived (Exodus 33:20). John 1:18 also says that no one has ever seen the Father. So, who did Isaiah see? He saw Jesus sitting on a throne ruling in Heaven and receiving continual praise. (The glory that Jesus was receiving here is the same glory that Peter, James, and John saw in Matthew 17:1–8 and which John talked about in John 1:14.)

Interestingly enough, Scripture reveals that in Jesus' pre-existence, He not only created the universe, but He also ruled as King over His universe from His throne in Heaven, ceaselessly receiving praise, glory, and honor.

Jesus left Heaven?

What is amazing is that the Bible reveals that Jesus left His highly exalted position in Heaven and came to earth, taking on human flesh as a baby (Matthew 1:18–25). This is precisely what Philippians 2:5–11 is saying.

For instance, verse 6 explains that Jesus existed in what way?

Philippians 2:6–7 continues and says what about Jesus' attitude?

Having existed in the form of God, God the Son, of His own will, temporarily emptied Himself of being equal with the Father and made Himself to be nothing so that He could take the form of a servant.

As a result, Philippians 2:7–8 says He took the likeness and form of whom?

Philippians brings out clearly that Jesus left His exalted position as God for a humbling position as a servant. Jesus took the form of a servant and humbled Himself taking the likeness of man. This is beyond one's thinking: Who would ever remove himself from a highly exalted position to a position of being nothing? After all, we know that at Jesus' own birth there was no room for Him in the inn, He had to be born like an animal in a cave. Not only that, we know that while He was still young, his parents were forced to leave Bethlehem and flee to Egypt to spare the life of their Son. As Isaiah says, He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" and He was "like one from whom man hid their face." He was despised and was not esteemed (Isaiah 53:3). He was crushed, wounded, oppressed, afflicted, and ultimately put to death (Isaiah 53:4–5, 7–8, 10). Why would He leave His exalted position to come to earth to be mistreated by His creation?

As we see in Galatians 4:4, Jesus came on an assignment from whom?

According to Jesus' own words, He was sent on a mission from God the Father. In John 8:28–29, Jesus says that He does nothing of His own initiative but does only what is pleasing to the Father. Again, in John 8:42, Jesus says that He came and was sent by the Father. (See also John 17:18.) From these passages it is evident that Jesus came from the Father with a determined purpose.

For what purpose did Jesus come?

But for what reason did God send Jesus into the world? According to John 3:17, God sent His Son into the world for what purpose? (See also John 12:46.)

Jesus came to be a light to the world so that the world may no longer live in darkness but might be saved through Him. If Jesus came to save the world, what could possibly be the problem with the world that it would take the highly exalted King of Heaven to save it? How horrible is man's condition that it would need the Creator to not just speak a word, but

to actually come and provide a solution! What kind of a God would leave such an exalted position for helpless humanity? What was man’s problem? From what did he need to be saved?

Before Christ’s birth, an angel declares Jesus’ purpose in Matthew 1:21. What message did the angel bring?

Additionally, what does the great apostle Paul say in 1 Timothy 1:15 as the reason that Jesus came into the world? (See also 1 Corinthians 15:3.)

The problem that Jesus came to solve was man’s problem of sin. This is further confirmed by John the Baptist in John 1:29 when he refers to Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” The purpose for which Jesus came was not a hidden purpose but was clear—man’s sin.

What did Jesus Himself say in Mark 2:17? (See also Matthew 9:13 and Luke 5:31–32.)

This is beyond our thinking, but Jesus came for sinners. Unlike the fairy tale, which has the king leaving His throne for a beautiful princess, the Bible reveals that God left His throne for wicked sinners. Not only does He leave His throne, but Luke 19:10 reveals what about Jesus (the Son of Man)?

Not only did He leave His throne, but when He left His throne, He came seeking for the lost with a passion that He might save them. Never would a king come for unworthy subjects; he would only come for worthy ones. The King of Glory came not only to seek and to save the lost, but what does Mark 10:45 say that He came to do? (See also Matthew 20:28.)

Wow! This clear teaching reveals that this King of the Universe, the Creator of the world, left His glorious throne on which He receives unending praise and exaltation for the sake of sinners. Praise God! This Sovereign One left His glory and came seeking to save, serve, and surrender His life for those in rebellion against His rule. What a King! What a Savior! Philippians 2:8, Galatians 4:4–5, and Mark 10:45 reveal that Jesus went to the point of a humiliating death on a degrading cross for offensive lawbreakers.

Some might think it is beyond belief that God the Father would send God the Son to deal with man's sin problem, but Isaiah 53 promises that this would indeed be the case. God promises that He would send His Son who would suffer for sinful humanity. For instance, Isaiah 53:5 says that Jesus "was pierced through for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities" and that "by His scourging we are healed." Isaiah 53:6 reveals that "the Lord has caused the iniquity of all to fall on Him" (Jesus Christ). Isaiah 53:11–12 says that Jesus bore our iniquities and makes intercession for our transgressions.

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

So, it is clear that Jesus came for sinners. And, for some Divine purpose, sin's problem was so severe that Jesus Himself had to come by leaving Heaven's throne. Some of this teaching might be beyond our minds now but will become more and more clear as we continue in our quest for truth.

How should we respond?

The only fitting response to such love is found in the words of the great Christian hymn writer, Isaac Watts:²

“See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

In this lesson, we have come to understand the biblical truths that Jesus left the glories of Heaven to come to earth, with the understanding of His need to die on the cross—all for the purpose of saving the world from its problem of sin. But why?

What is so bad about sin that it would elicit such drastic measures? What is sin anyway? From where did it come? These are some of the questions we want to answer in the next lesson. The next lesson (Lesson 9) is very important, and I request you to study it very carefully because it is going to reveal the heart and soul of the problem of mankind.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

From where did Jesus come?

For how long has Jesus existed?

²Isaac Watts, “When I Survey The Wondrous Cross,” *The New Church Hymnal*, (Lexicon Music Inc., 1976) 156.

What was Jesus doing in Heaven?

How did Jesus come to earth?

For what purpose did Jesus come to earth?

What did Jesus leave in order to come to earth?

What is the most amazing thing about Jesus coming to earth?

For what purpose did Jesus die on the cross?

What is your response to such amazing truths?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

John 8:23

²³And He was saying to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.”

John 6:38

³⁸“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

John 1: 15, 30

¹⁵John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’”

³⁰“This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’”

John 8:56–59

⁵⁶“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” ⁵⁷So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” ⁵⁸Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” ⁵⁹Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

Colossians 1:17

¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

John 1:1

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:3

³All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Philippians 2:5–11

⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹For

this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Galatians 4:4

⁴But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.

John 3:17

¹⁷“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”

John 12:46

⁴⁶“I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.”

Matthew 1:21

²¹“She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

1 Timothy 1:15

¹⁵It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

1 Corinthians 15:3

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

John 1:29

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”



LESSON NINE

WHAT IS SIN?

-The Quest for Truth-

WHAT IS SIN?

“ARE WE (JEWS) BETTER THAN THEY (GENTILES)? NOT AT ALL; FOR WE HAVE ALREADY CHARGED THAT BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS ARE ALL UNDER SIN.” - ROMANS 3:9

There is no subject that is more foundational and essential for a person’s understanding than the subject of sin. Without a correct understanding of this subject, the door to true Christianity cannot be opened, and the necessity for Christ to leave His throne in heaven and to come to earth cannot be completely fathomed.

Nevertheless, a true biblical perspective of this subject is foreign to the world today, even by some claiming to hold to Christ’s teachings. For us to understand the teachings of Jesus Christ, this door of understanding must be opened. What is sin? Where did sin originate? What is its nature? In what way does sin affect mankind? Who is being affected by sin’s presence? These are some of the questions that we want to answer from God’s Word in this lesson. Due to the importance of this subject, I want to request that each reader come with the passion of exploration and not with a delusional spirit of complacency or familiarity so that his eyes may be exposed to the life-changing truths of Christ and His teachings.

Is mankind basically good?

Despite the evident immorality of our society (such as its passion for self gratification, obsession for money, self-promotion, arrogance, rebellion against authority, ingratitude, recklessness, anger, bitterness, and uncontrollable sin nature), it is commonly believed that mankind is basically good.

THOUGHTS FOR STUDY

What do you think? Is mankind good or bad?

If mankind is good, why do people not trust their governments? If mankind is good, why do people lock their doors at night? Why is a strong police force so important to a moral society?

Why are there so many divorces, adulterous relationships, and dysfunctional families? If there is nothing wrong with mankind, why are there jails? Why do we employ judges? Obviously, all would have to agree that at least some of mankind has a problem. After all, psychologists and sociologists are paid millions of dollars to try to find the answer to these questions.

Do some or all of mankind have a problem?

Do you think some or all of mankind have a problem?

What is interesting when people are asked, “Do you ever lie?” or “Have you ever stolen?” or “Have you ever had lust for another person?” The natural response is, “Of course! I am human, am I not?” What is even more interesting is that this is exactly how Jesus expected mankind to respond when being faced with God’s Law. (These questions are in reference to three of the Ten Commandments from God’s Law given to Moses.)¹

An example of this is seen in Romans 3:20. (See also Romans 5:20, 7:7.) According to this passage, what knowledge comes through the Law of Moses?

According to the teaching of Christ, God’s law was given to mankind so that all mankind would come to understand what is and is not proper behavior. Nonetheless, some may still argue that mankind does not have a problem. If so, we still need to answer the question, “Why do we ALL lie, lust, steal, get angry, cheat, and struggle with discontentment?” “Can we not all agree with the fact that at times even unbelieving mankind does not do what he wants to do? And that unbelieving mankind does not do what he knows he should do?”²

If we are all honest with ourselves, we would all agree that inwardly there is a problem.

¹The three commandments from Exodus 20 are “Thou shall not bear false witness” (v.16), “Thou shall not steal” (v.15), and “Thou shall not commit adultery” (v.14). Compare this with what Jesus says in Matthew 5:27–30. Check out www.livingwaters.com for more information on this subject.

²Romans 7:14–15.

What is man's problem?

The important question that needs to be answered is what is man's problem. Jesus, who is the Creator, says that the reason mankind steals, lies, cheats, fights, and is dysfunctional is due to a problem called sin.

If this is the case, the next question is: how many people have this problem? (See Romans 3:10, 23.)

According to the Bible, **the problem is universal. EVERY person has sinned and falls short of God's standard.**

What is sin?

Well, if every person universally has a problem with sin, it begs the question, *What is this thing called sin?*

What do you think sin is?

The common answer given for this question is found in Webster's Dictionary, which defines sin as "any voluntary transgression of the divine law, or violation of a divine command."³

Consequently, most would agree with this definition and would define sin simply as doing bad deeds. Jesus' teaching, however, goes beyond our deeds to include even our thoughts. To even think something against divine law in your heart is also sin.

For example, in Matthew 5:22, what does Jesus say will happen to the person who says to his brother, "You good for nothing" or "You fool"?

³Noah Webster, *Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language* (Chesapeake: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1995).

Again, in Matthew 5:28, what does Jesus say a man is doing if he looks at a woman with lust in HIS HEART?

According to Matthew 5:29, what will happen to a person who sins in this way?

Therefore, one theologian defines **sin** as “**any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.**”⁴ Therefore, if sin is failure to conform to God’s moral standard in **attitude, as well as deed**, who can honestly say that he does not sin? If that is the standard, we would all have to agree with the Bible’s teaching that “all have sinned.”

What about you, do you think you have sinned?

It has been said that a man who claims he has never sinned is like a fish claiming it has never been wet. Since his whole environment is filled with sin (or water) he cannot see himself accurately.

The Bible proves this to be true in Isaiah 6 when Isaiah sees God before His throne. What is his response in verse 5?

Is that all that Jesus had to say about sin? The answer is, “Absolutely not!” This first definition looks at sin from the perspective of man’s actions (in deed and thought), but the Bible also teaches sin from the perspective of mankind’s sin nature. God’s Word teaches sin from two different perspectives. **First, sin is understood from the perspective of a deed. Second, sin is pictured from the perspective of a nature.** It is this point that so few have ever known or understood Jesus’ teachings regarding man’s problem.

What does Jesus teach about sin and anyone who commits sin in John 8:34?

⁴Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 490.

According to Jesus, the committing of sin is not the source of man’s problem, but is only a symptom of a greater problem within man’s nature. Stated differently, unbelieving mankind commits acts of sin because his nature is enslaved by the power of sin.

For example, what does Romans 6:6–7, 17–18, 22 say about mankind’s relationship to sin?

What do these same passages (Romans 6:6–7, 17–18, 22) say man needs to have happen?

According to the teachings of the Bible, if a man has to be freed from sin, what does that imply about sin’s relationship to the person? (How one is freed from sin will be further discussed in Lessons 14 and 15.)

The biblical image of man’s relationship to sin is that of being a slave, a prisoner, or one in bondage (Romans 7:14, 23–24). The picture is that of a man in chains under the control of a master from whom there is no escape. The clearest passage explaining man’s relationship to sin is found in Romans 3:9–18.

According to Romans 3:9, what is mankind’s (both Jew and Greek) relationship to sin?

Paul says that man is “under sin.” What? Under sin? What does that mean? The phrase “to be under sin” means a lot more than doing bad deeds in heart, mind, or action. It means to be helpless captives under sin’s power.⁵ This phrase reveals the fact that mankind does not just do bad things, but is dominated by sin, is under its power, under its rule, under its empire, under its sway, or under its control.⁶

⁵Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996) 201.

⁶Donald Gray Barnhouse, *Man’s Ruin – God’s Wrath* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959)199.

Therefore, to be “under sin” is to be controlled by another power other than you.⁷

In Romans 7:19, with what is this person frustrated?

According to Romans 7:14 and 20, why is this person experiencing such frustration?

Clearly, every person who is in touch with himself has experienced the frustration and discouragement of not doing what he wants to do, instead of doing what he knows he should not do. According to the teaching of God’s Word, this is because of the sin that dwells in him and controls his mind, his desires, his emotions, and his actions. **When viewed from the perspective of its nature, sin can be defined as an evil power that controls and dominates the mind, emotions, and actions of unbelieving mankind.** My dear friends, let me say this another way.

According to the Bible (Isaiah 64:6; 1 John 1:8; Romans 3:23), every person has been born with a problem within himself. The problem is sin. This evil power resides within and controls him all the days of his life, causing him to live in rebellion against his Maker. Until this power is removed, mankind has no hope of obeying God, knowing God, or enjoying God.

How about you?

Consequently, a very important question needs to be asked: Have you ever experienced this frustration of not being able to live the way you want?

⁷Augustine points out that slavery to sin is worse than other forms of slavery: ‘At times a man’s slave, worn out by the commands of an unfeeling master, finds rest in flight. Whither can the servant of sin flee? Himself he carries with him wherever he flees. An evil conscience flees not from itself; for the sin he commits is within. He has committed sin to obtain some bodily pleasure. The pleasure passes away; the sin remains. What delighted is gone; the sting has remained behind. Evil bondage!’ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988) 458.

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

Do you have sin residing within you?

Having experienced this frustration, do you now understand that sin can be defined as an evil power that controls and dominates the mind, emotions, and actions of mankind?

According to the Bible, mankind's problem is sin, both in deed and nature. Unbelieving mankind's nature has an evil power, called sin, controlling and dominating his mind, emotions, and actions. And as a result he also fails to conform to God's moral law in his nature, attitude, and actions. Shockingly, this problem is universal and is embedded in every person that has ever lived. Therefore, it means that every person needs to look inside himself and be honest. Each of us needs to see sin's problem and make sure we are freed from it.

For most people these truths are too much! For some, these teachings make them uncomfortable, sad, depressed, or angry.⁸ To be honest, these are the natural responses to such teaching. After all, Jesus did die on a cross by the hands of murderers because they did not like His teaching. But I want to encourage you to not stop this journey in understanding the teachings of Jesus Christ. Please, go through this whole journey and at least know what Jesus has to say. After all, this information can't hurt but can only help. Having gone all the way through this journey myself, I cannot tell you the exhilaration found at the end of this expedition.

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

Having now understood what sin is, it is my desire in the next lesson to help you understand these next logical questions: How is sin's nature practically affecting the way mankind lives? What are the realistic results for those who never receive victory over sin's nature? Who or what is ultimately behind sin's nature? This next lesson is powerful and will go a long way in helping you understand the world around you.

⁸By the way, I am not teaching you! I am just showing you what has been taught by Jesus Himself. If one does not like this teaching, one will have to discuss that with God Himself. My goal is to simply explain what Jesus taught. Please know that I understand that the truth hurts, but I also know the power of this truth after it is understood. Believe me when I tell you that this truth has the power to set you free! (This will be explained in Lesson 14.)

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What do you think? Is mankind good or bad?

Do you think all of mankind is bad or just some?

Why do you think mankind sins?

What is sin as it is viewed as a deed?

According to Jesus (in John 8:34), why does mankind sin?

According to the lesson, what is man's main problem?

What does it mean to be a slave of sin?

What is sin from the perspective of its nature?

What do you think is your relationship to sin?

What do you think of the Bible's teaching about sin?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Romans 3:20

²⁰Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

Romans 5:20

²⁰The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

Romans 7:7

⁷What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “You shall not covet.”

Romans 3:10, 23

¹⁰As it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Matthew 5:22

²²“But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.”

Matthew 5:28–29

²⁸“But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.”

Isaiah 6:5

⁵Then I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

John 8:34

³⁴Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”

Romans 6:6–7

⁶Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷for he who has died is freed from sin.

Romans 6:17–18, 22

¹⁷But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ²²But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

Romans 3:9–18

⁹What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jew and Greeks are all under sin; ¹⁰as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; ¹²all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one. ¹³Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips; ¹⁴whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; ¹⁵their feet are swift to shed blood, ¹⁶destruction and misery are in their paths, ¹⁷and the path of peace they have not known. ¹⁸There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Romans 7:19

¹⁹For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practiced the very evil that I do not want.

Romans 7:14, 20

¹⁴For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

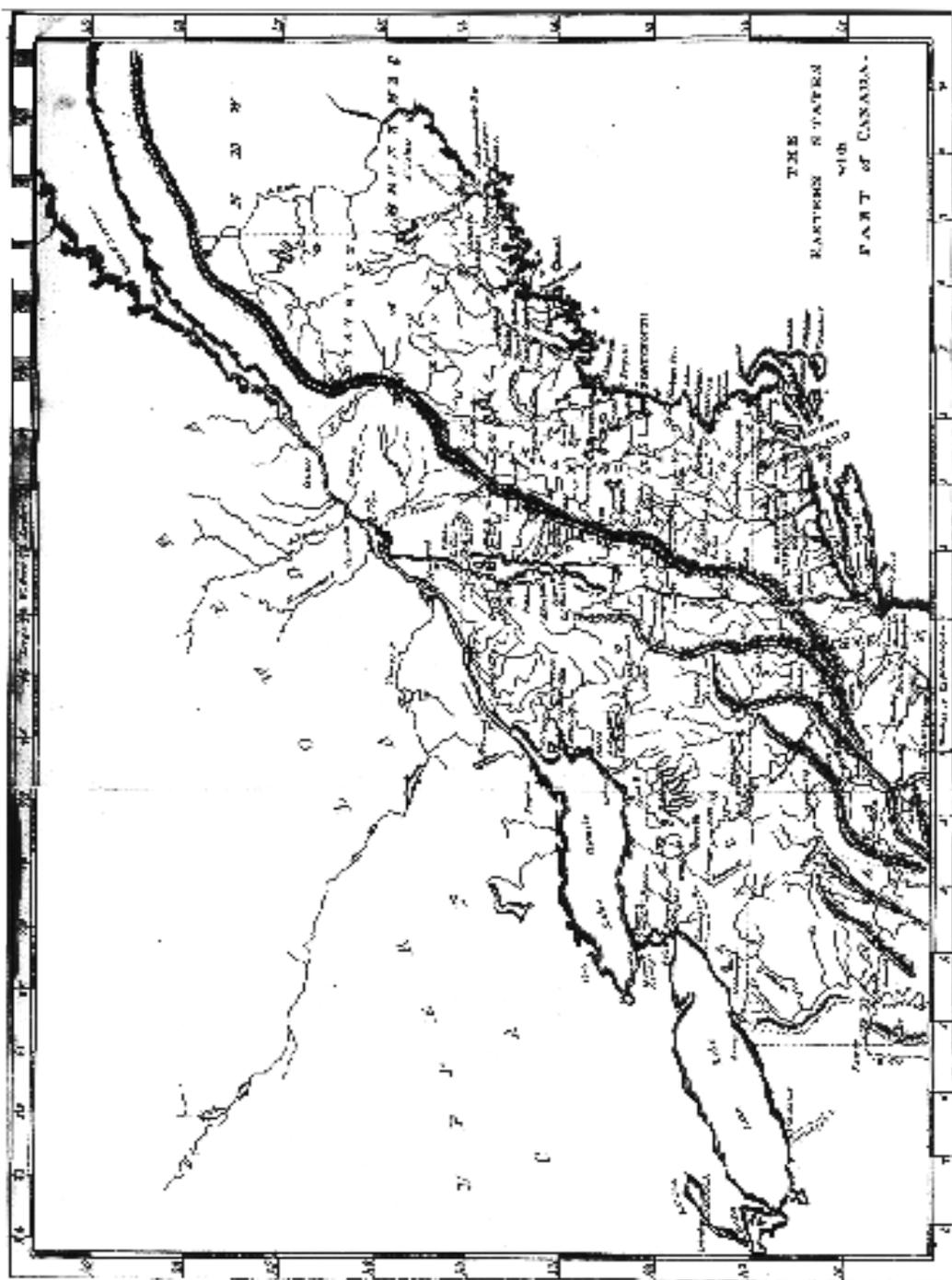
²⁰But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.



LESSON TEN

WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF SIN?

-The Quest for Truth-



WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF SIN?

“THROUGH ONE MAN (ADAM) SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD, AND DEATH THROUGH SIN, AND SO DEATH SPREAD TO ALL MEN, BECAUSE ALL SINNED.” - ROMANS 5:12

As discussed in the last lesson (Lesson Nine), sin is mankind’s greatest problem. Its horrific nature lies at the heart of every unbelieving man, woman, and child ever born. This nature is an evil power that controls man and dominates his mind, emotions, and actions in his unbelieving, natural condition.

Sin’s nature is like a cancer; it eats away the conscience (God’s protective gift to all mankind), causing man to commit acts of sin until it produces its desired results of regret, shame, and destruction. How is sin practically affecting the way mankind lives? What are the realistic results for those who never receive victory over sin’s nature? Who or what is ultimately behind this awful problem? These are the questions before us in this lesson. Let’s look together into God’s Word for the answers. Despite the fact that this lesson is a little longer than the past lessons, please persevere with passion all the way to the end.

Have you understood?

In the last lesson, we established the fact that all created human beings commit acts of sin. There is not one person in the world who is perfect or sinless. The Bible confirms this to be true.

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

In 1 John 1:10, we are told that if we say we have never sinned, what two things are true about us?

As we learned in the last lesson (Lesson Nine) from Jesus, “everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin” (John 8:34). This means that man’s inner-person is not able to act freely (Romans 6:6–7, 17–18, 22; 7:13–14, 24) but is under sin’s control, dominion, power, and authority. For someone who has never heard this before, these truths are devastating and disturbing. However, if one studies the truths of the Bible and is honest with himself, these truths are undeniable.

According to 1 John 1:8, what two truths are factual for those who deny that sin is an evil nature or principle within themselves?

Therefore, regardless of one's desire to run from these painful truths, one must face the fact: sin is a reality. Furthermore, one must also come to grips with how sin's nature is practically affecting mankind each day. Since unbelievers are controlled by this evil power, it is very important to know how this sin nature is affecting each unbelieving person in our world and societies.

Romans 3:10–20 is a passage that deals precisely with sin's practical effects on unbelieving mankind. Let's look together at these teachings. Again, these truths will be very alarming, but very insightful for those who understand them. Remember, Romans 3:9 declares that mankind is ALL "under sin," referring to being under sin's power or control. **Here, in verses 10–20, Paul reveals five effects of such a terrible situation.**

The first effect of sin's nature:
"THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS..."

Paul reveals the **first** effect of sin's nature is that there is none who is righteous (Romans 3:10).

What do you think, "...there is none who is righteous..." means?

Why do you think he repeats himself by saying "...not even one"?

"There is none righteous, not even one." What does that mean? **To be unrighteous is to not be right or in line with God's moral standards. Another way of saying this is that man is unholy, stained with sin, and unlike God in perfection.** This truth is a major teaching in the first three chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans.

Why is this important? In Romans 1:17 and many other passages, Paul declares that **it is only a righteous man who will live eternally in heaven**. Wait a second! Only a perfectly righteous man shall live eternally in heaven? Yes! That is what the text says!

The problem is that due to sin, every person is unrighteous. Therefore, not one person left to himself is able to live eternally. This is exactly what Paul has been saying in Romans 1:18 to 3:10.

In Romans 1:18–32, he makes it clear that the **non-religious** are not righteous but rather resist the Truth about God because of their unrighteousness (Romans 1:10). Due to sin, all men hate the Truth, twist the Truth, and walk in opposition to the Truth.

For instance, what does Paul say about mankind in Romans 1:21?

What does Romans 1:25 say that men do with the Truth?

Not only does Paul reveal that the non-religious are unrighteous, he also reveals that the **religious** are unrighteous (Romans 2:1–29). Verse 1 reveals that the religious know some form of truth because they use it to judge others. However, despite their condemnation of others (or their knowledge that sin is wrong and has consequences), they themselves don't even submit to the Truth.

For example, what does a religious Jew claim to be in Romans 2:19–20?

However, despite these claims, what do they do according to Romans 2:21–24?

Paul's point is driven home in Romans 3:9 with a telling question, "Are we (Jews/religious) better than they (Gentiles/non-religious)?" Which receives a powerful answer, "No, not at all...both Jews and Greeks, are under sin." In today's language, Paul is bluntly saying, "No, there is no one who is without sin because all people are under sin's power."

Paul's point is driven home further by his quote from the Old Testament. "As it is written," saying, "There is none righteous, not even one." Do you see Paul's point? His point is that mankind is not good, righteous, or holy. This is why Paul tells his readers in Galatians that if mankind were good or righteous, then there would have been no purpose for Jesus to die or to even come at all (Galatians 2:21).

The implications of man's unrighteousness are devastating! The Bible reveals that the result of mankind's unrighteousness is that all are separated from God. For example, God removed Adam and Eve from the garden where they had fellowship with Him (Genesis 3:8, 24). Also, God would not let anyone approach Him—not Moses (Exodus 3), not the Israelites (sacrificial system), and not even the high priest (with the exception of one time a year). God also reveals that He will not let imperfect or unrighteous people enter heaven. Hebrews 12:14 warns that without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

According to Matthew 5:20, what does it say one must do to enter the Kingdom of Heaven?

Your righteousness must surpass the religious Scribes and Pharisees who were the most devotedly religious people of that time. Is it possible to have such righteousness? No, that is Jesus Christ's whole point. The Bible clearly reveals that God will reject all men who are not 100 percent righteous. This is because God's holy nature hates sin and cannot tolerate even the thought of it. The only question that remains is: If all of mankind are unrighteous and left to themselves, what can be done to save one's soul? This will be answered starting in the next lesson.

The second effect of sin's nature:
“THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS” SPIRITUAL THINGS.

The **second** effect of sin's nature is revealed in Romans 3:11: “There is none who understands.” What do you think this means?

1 Corinthians 2:14 gives insight for us into this statement. It speaks of the natural person—that is, the person left in his original sinful condition. What does this passage say that a natural person does not do?

He does not understand or accept the things of the Spirit of God (or spiritual things). Why can he not understand? The passage provides the answer. It is because he sees these things as foolishness, unable to be understood without the help of God's Spirit. The idea is that an unbeliever is unable to accurately see or determine spiritual truth. He cannot correctly make out the path that leads to life, blessing, and glory because he does not have the Spirit of God to shed light on God's truth for him.

In contrast, how can those who are born again (who have the Spirit of God), understand spiritual things according to 1 Corinthians 2:10?

What does John 14:26 tell us about the Holy Spirit?

According to Ephesians 2:1, what is the spiritual condition of an unbeliever who does not have the Holy Spirit?

Can a dead person understand things? Can a dead person react when another yells, kicks, or hits him? The obvious answer is “Absolutely not.” In the same way, a spiritually dead person cannot really understand spiritual things because he is spiritually dead¹ and without the Spirit.

According to the passage above, rather than being controlled by the Holy Spirit, an unbeliever is controlled by sin. Sin controls the person’s mind, preventing his spiritual ears from being opened.

According to Ephesians 2:2, what is the effect of sin’s forces on his walk?

According to Ephesians 2:3, for what purpose do unbelievers live?

According to Ephesians 4:17–18, what causes unbelievers (or Gentiles) to walk in the futility (or uselessness) of their minds?

Paul, when giving his testimony in 1 Timothy 1:13, confessed that he was a blasphemer, persecutor, and a violent aggressor against God because he acted **IGNORANTLY**. Paul did not understand what he was doing; thus, his sinful behavior revealed his ignorance. The interesting thing is that Paul was 100 percent convinced in his mind that he was doing the right thing. **Man’s problem is not that he cannot think intellectually, but rather that unbelieving mankind does not think spiritually or accurately.** Therefore, the Bible reveals that because of sin, all unbelieving minds are controlled by sin and its lies.

Darkened minds cannot inwardly understand the Scripture because they are not spiritually alive. As one man put it, the best a man can do without the Holy Spirit is to “gnaw the bark of Scripture without getting to the wood.”²

¹This death is what was promised to Adam and Eve if they disobeyed God and ate of the tree which was forbidden (Genesis 2:17).

²Martin Luther said, “The Bible cannot be understood simply by study or talent; you must count only on the influence of the Holy Spirit.” John Calvin wrote: “The testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason. For these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. God must open the eyes of our understanding

The third effect of sin's nature:
“THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD.”

The **third** effect of sin's nature is revealed in Romans 3:11, which says, “There is none who seeks for God.” Wait a second! How can this be true? There are thousands of different religions, are there not? The answer is “yes,” but these religions are not seeking the one true God but a false god—a god made by the hands, minds, and the natures of men. It should be noted that any “man-made religions are demon-inspired efforts to escape from God, not find Him.”³

God should not be “man-made” but should be acknowledged for whom He has already revealed Himself to be in the Holy Scriptures. It is a fact that most do not really seek to know God. Most hold to a religion of which they know very little and possess little interest. If mankind is honest, he would have to agree that his focus is on himself and what he can get from God rather than on worshipping and obeying God.

Romans 8:7 reveals that unbelieving mankind is hostile to God and not able to submit to Him. Therefore, man is not running to God but away from Him.

In Luke 18:26–27, Jesus' disciples asked Him, “Who can be saved?” What was Jesus' response?

It is impossible! What is the meaning of Jesus' response? Jesus was saying it is impossible for mankind to come to God because his nature does not seek God.

According to John 6:44, who does Jesus say can come to Him?

before we can truly know and rightly interpret His truth. His truth is available only to those with a regenerate spirit and in whom His Spirit dwells, for only the Spirit can illuminate Scripture. Just as the physically blind cannot see the sun, the spiritually blind cannot see the Son. Both lack proper illumination.” John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1 Corinthians* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1977) 64.

³John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Romans* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1977) 185. (This same truth is revealed in 1 Timothy 4:1–5.)

Jesus makes it clear that the only one who can come to Him is the one God draws. Why? Because sin's nature kills man's ability, desire, and mental capacity to even seek after God. Mankind is actually spiritually blind. The result of sin's effects becomes clear as one continues to look at the rest of Romans 3:12. **Paul gives two reasons for not seeking God:**

First, "All have turned aside." That is, they have all run in their own direction rather than the direction of God. Isaiah 53:6 says it in a different way: "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." Each following the way that seems "right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

Second, "Together they have become useless." That is, they become of no value for God to use for His purposes. They are like a fruitless tree, fit only to be cut down and burned (John 15:6).

Therefore, **the third effect of sin's nature** on unbelieving mankind is that he not only **does not seek Him** but also is rebelliously running from Him.

The fourth effect of sin's nature:
"THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD..."

The **fourth** effect of sin's nature is, "There is none who does good, there is not even one" (Romans 3:12). You say, "Wait a minute! I know many non-religious people who do good things." So then, you wonder what Paul means when he says, "There is none who does good?"

In order to understand this statement, we need to first understand what God perceives to be good. The word good, used here, refers to something that is morally upright from the perspective of God's standard of holy perfection.

For example, if a man walks an old woman across the street because she is too frail to cross the street unassisted, is that a good deed or a bad deed?

If we are using God’s standard of perfection, the answer cannot be found in only the **outward** deed, but must be seen from the perspective of the **inward motive** as well. Now, imagine seeing the deed from the perspective of the man’s heart motives. As this man is walking the old woman across the street, the whole time he is thinking to himself, “I hope all these people see how great I am by this act.”

Now, is this man’s deed good or bad?

This simple example reveals **that a deed is not good based on the action alone, but on the action as well as the motive.** Therefore, an action can be perceived as good in the eyes of man, but in the eyes of God, the deed is not good. A good deed is one that is ultimately motivated by its desire to bring glory to God, not man.

This fact that man does no good deed might be difficult to acknowledge because we tend to look at situations through our own eyes rather than through God’s eyes. But according to God’s Word, this truth is still undeniable.

According to Isaiah 64:6, how does God perceive **ALL** of our deeds?

In light of God’s holiness, how did Isaiah perceive man’s deeds? (See Isaiah 6:3–5.)

Remember that what God is doing in Romans 3:10–18 is showing us a picture of ourselves from His divine camera or view. And God, who searches the motives and intentions of man’s heart (1 Corinthians. 4:5; Proverbs 16:2), has an accurate picture of mankind. If a man is doing a deed to make his own name known and not God’s name known, that deed is not good before the eyes of God. Therefore, man can do deeds that appear outwardly good, but when seen from the inward perspective, according to our passage, “There is no one who does good, not even one.” **The truth is that sin’s nature has affected every part of man, including his thoughts, intentions, motivations, and deeds.**

Are you doing deeds that seem good outwardly, but are not the true intentions of your heart?

Practically, the picture Paul is drawing of human nature in Romans 3 portrays man's heart as an open grave and explains how this heart is manifested through one's perverse tongue and depraved actions.

Romans 3:13–15 reads as follows:

Men's "throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; Their feet are swift to shed blood;"

The saddest part about sin's nature is that:

"Destruction and misery are in their path, and the path of peace they have not known."

No wonder we have so many challenges, problems, and broken relationships. Please stop and think. Look around at your friends, neighbors, and even yourself. Can this be true?

The fifth effect of sin's nature:
"THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

The fifth and final effect of sin is that "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:18).

A man named Robert Haldane communicated what this passage is saying most clearly. He said, "It is astonishing that men, while they acknowledge that there is a God, should act without any fear of His displeasure. Yet, this is their character. They fear a worm of the dust like themselves, but disregard the Most High."⁴

What do you think about Robert Haldane's statement?

⁴John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Romans* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1977) 193.

Scripture supports what Robert Haldane is saying. What does it say in Romans 1:20–21?

If one is honest, he must agree that sin has paralyzed mankind from giving God the proper honor and fear He is due.

What can be said for all of this? What is the ultimate result of sin's damning effects? According to Romans 3:19, what does Paul say is the result?

The result is that everyone's mouth is closed and held accountable to God. What does that mean?

The picture is that of a guilty criminal before the judge after he realizes that he no longer has any defense against the correct charges brought against him. He knows for sure he is guilty and is awaiting judgment. Paul is ultimately showing what will take place in heaven one day when all of humanity stands before God, totally guilty for willfully and inexcusably violating His will and awaiting the sentence of judgment for the wrong actions done.⁵ **The criminal will sit there silently because he will know he is guilty.**

⁵Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996) 205.

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

Where do you stand before God?

What will happen to you when God judges the thoughts and intentions of your heart?

The Bible has made it clear in James 2:10: “If you keep the whole law (that is all of God’s holy demands) and yet stumble in one point (demand), you have become guilty of all.” Who among us can say that he is perfect and has never offended God?

Therefore, I ask again, what will happen to you when God judges the thoughts and intentions of your heart, and you are shown to be guilty?

In concluding this lesson, I think it is appropriate to quote from Elon Foster’s *New Cyclopaedia of Prose Illustrations*⁶ because it powerfully and accurately describes man’s greatest enemy, sin:

It is a debt, a burden, a thief, a sickness, a leprosy, a plague, poison, a serpent, a sting; everything that man hates it is; a load of curses, and calamities beneath whose crushing most intolerable pressure, the whole creation groaneth...

Who is the hoary sexton that digs man a grave? Who is the painted temptress that steals his virtue? Who is the murderess that destroys his life? Who is this sorceress that first deceives, and then damns his soul? - Sin.

⁶Elon Foster, *New Cyclopaedia of Prose Illustrations* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1877) 696.

Who with icy breath blights the fair blossoms of youth? Who breaks the hearts of parents? Who brings old men's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? - Sin.

Who, by a more hideous metamorphosis than Ovid even fancied, changes gentle children into vipers, tender mothers into monsters and their fathers into worse than Herods, the murderers of their own innocence? - Sin.

Who casts the apple of discord on household hearts? Who lights the torch of war, and bears it blazing over trembling lands? Who by divisions in the church, rends Christ's seamless robe? - Sin.

Who is this Delilah that sings the Nazirite asleep and delivers up the strength of God into the hands of the uncircumcised? Who with winning smiles on her face, honey flattery on her tongue, stands in the door to offer the sacred rites of hospitality and when suspicion sleeps, treacherously pierces our temples with a nail? What fair siren is this who seated on a rock by the deadly pool smiles to deceive, sings to lure, kisses to betray, and flings her arm around her neck to leap with us into perdition? - Sin.

Who turns the soft and gentlest heart to stone? Who hurls reason from her lofty throne, and impels sinners, mad as Gadarene swine, down the cliff, into a lake of fire? - Sin.

Are you still under sin's control?

Have you been set free from sin's power?

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

Having now understood the terrible reality of sin's nature and effects on all mankind (this is also called the Bad News), it is now my desire in the next lesson to show you the Gospel (which is also called the Good News). What is the Good News? How does Jesus' coming relate to mankind's problem of sin? Who can set mankind free from this evil disease called sin? These questions will be dealt with in our next lesson (Lesson 11).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What are the five effects of sin's nature on mankind?

What is meant by the term "there is none righteous?"

What are the devastating consequences of mankind's unrighteousness?

In what sense does mankind not understand God?

What is meant by the term "there is none who seeks for God?"

How can it be true that "there is none who does good, not even one"?

What is the reality of mankind's heart or speech? (Hint: Romans 3:13–14)

What are the ultimate consequences of sin for mankind?

Do you think sin is mankind's biggest problem?

Do you think you are controlled by sin's nature?

What is your response to this teaching?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

1 John 1:10

¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

Romans 3:23

²³For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

1 John 1:8

⁸If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Romans 3:9–20

⁹What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jew and Greeks are all under sin; ¹⁰as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; ¹²all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one. ¹³Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips; ¹⁴whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; ¹⁵their feet are swift to shed blood, ¹⁶destruction and misery are in their paths, ¹⁷and the path of peace they have not known. ¹⁸There is no fear of God before their eyes.” ¹⁹Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

Romans 1:17

¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith.”

Romans 3:10

¹⁰As it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one.”

Romans 1:18–32

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ²⁵For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. ²⁸And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³²and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Romans 2:1–29

¹Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ²And we know that judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶who will render to each person according to his deeds: ⁷to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. ⁹There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace to everyone

who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹For there is no partiality with God. ¹²For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged ¹³for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. ¹⁴For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, ¹⁵are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ¹⁶on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. ¹⁷But if you bear the name 'Jew' and rely upon the Law and boast in God, ¹⁸and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, ¹⁹and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, ²¹you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? ²²You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? ²⁴For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' just as it is written. ²⁵For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? ²⁸For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Romans 3:9

⁹What then? Are you better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin

Galatians 2:21

²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

Matthew 5:20

²⁰"For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Romans 3:11

¹¹”There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God.”

1 Corinthians 2:14

¹⁴But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

1 Corinthians 2:10

¹⁰For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

John 14:26

²⁶”But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

Ephesians 2:1–3

¹And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Ephesians 4:17–18

¹⁷So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.

Romans 8:7

⁷ . . . because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.

Luke 18:26–27

²⁶They who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷But He said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.”

John 6:44

⁴⁴”No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Isaiah 64:6

⁶For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Isaiah 6:3–5

³And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.” ⁴And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. ⁵Then I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

Romans 1:20–21

²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Romans 3:19

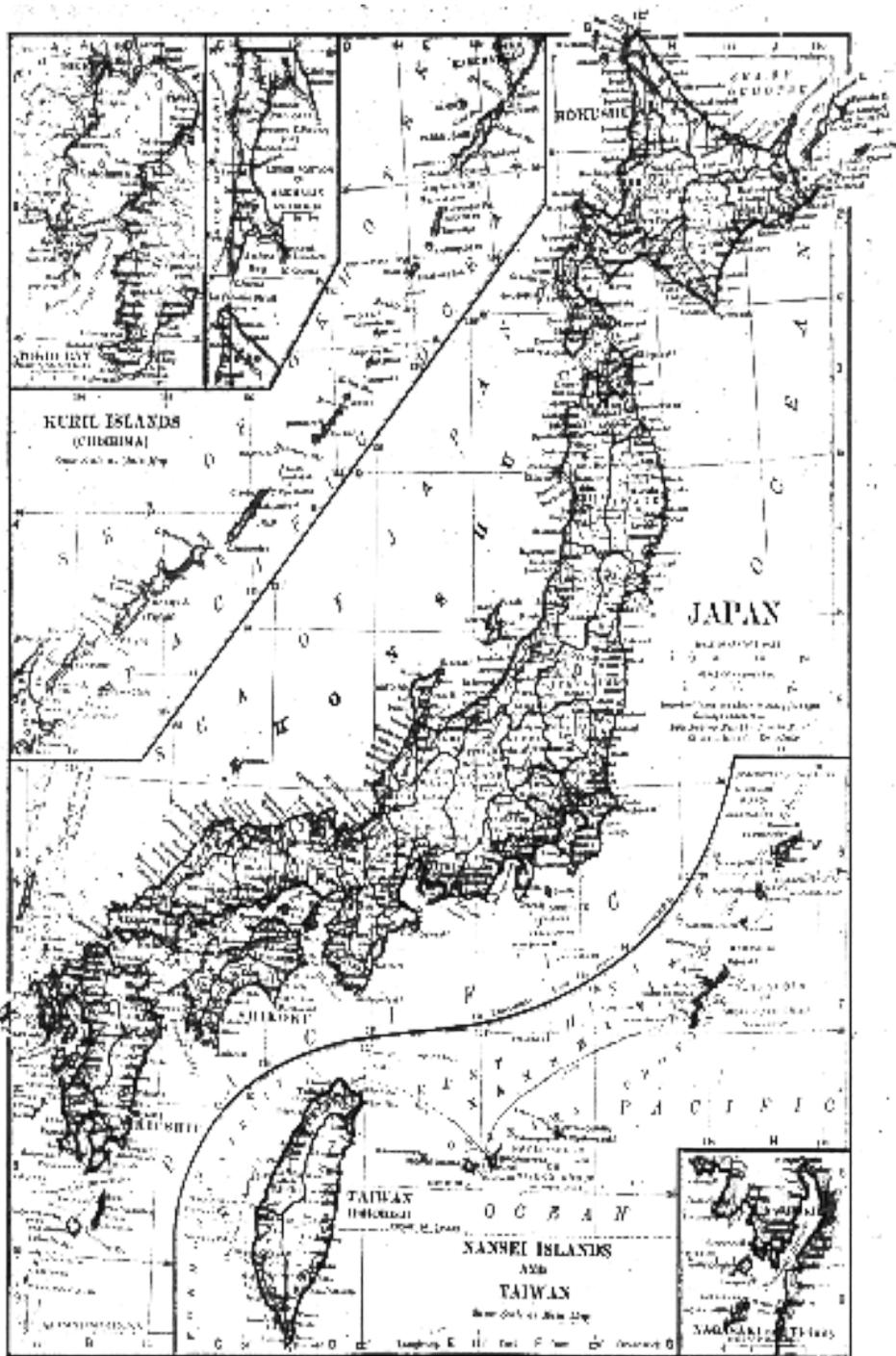
¹⁹Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God.



LESSON ELEVEN

WHERE IS THE HOPE?

-The Quest for Truth-



WHERE IS THE HOPE?

“SO JESUS WAS SAYING TO THOSE JEWS WHO HAD BELIEVED HIM, ‘IF YOU CONTINUE IN MY WORD, THEN YOU ARE TRULY DISCIPLES OF MINE; AND YOU WILL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH WILL MAKE YOU FREE.’” - JOHN 8:31–32

There are few words that match the splendor of the word freedom. The very sound of the word brings joy. It conveys pictures of nations being set free from domineering dictators, slaves being liberated from tyrannical masters, and prisoners being released from oppressive confinement. The price one is willing to pay for freedom can be captured in the well-known words of Patrick Henry, “Give me liberty or give me death!”¹ The Christian message reflects this same passion for freedom. However, the freedom of the Christian message is not freedom from an outside influence but rather freedom from the inward bondage called sin — to the liberating joy of Christ! This force, which has put mankind under its bondage, has forced its victim to cry out, “Who will set me free from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24). It is the attempt of this lesson to allow God’s Word to answer this simple question.

What is the Gospel?

The Christian belief, as revealed through the passages of Scripture, can be summed up in one word, Gospel. The word Gospel comes from the Greek word “euaggelion”. The word “originally denoted a reward for good things. Later, the idea of reward dropped, and the word stood for the Good News itself.”²

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

The Good News is the Christian message! This is the message which was prophesied by the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 40:9–11); which John the Baptist proclaimed (Luke 3:18); which Jesus came down and made known (Matthew 4:23, 9:35; Mark 1:14–15);³ which the disciples were commanded to proclaim (Mark 16:15); which the apostles announced (Acts 8:25, 14:7, 15; 16:10); which God called Paul to communicate to the non-Jewish world (Acts 9:1–31, 9:15, 15:9);⁴ and which was promised to be declared to the whole world (Matthew 24:14).

¹Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory for Children* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, a division of Baker Book House Company, 1992) 121.

²W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr, *Vines Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Atlanta: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 275.

³Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:14; Luke 4:18; 7:22; 9:6; 16:1; 20:1

⁴Acts 9:1–31; 15:9; Romans 1:1; 15:16; Galatians 2:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 2:12

It is this message to which Paul, the first messenger of the Gospel to the Gentiles, surrendered his existence (Acts 20:24; Philippians 1:7; 12–20); proclaimed in its entirety (Romans 15:19); was eager to preach (Romans 1:15); was under compulsion to announce (1 Corinthians 9:16); was never ashamed to make known (Romans 1:16); directed every decision in his life (1 Corinthians 9:23); and of which Paul said, “Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

The Gospel is called the Good News of God (Romans 15:16; 2 Corinthians 11:7); the Good News of Christ (2 Corinthians 9:13); the Good News of the kingdom (Matthew 9:35; Luke 16:16); the Good News of salvation (Ephesians 1:13); the Good News of Truth (Colossians 1:5); the Good News of hope (Colossians 1:23); the Good News of peace (Ephesians 6:15); and the Good News of power (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18). Finally, this is the Good News to which the world is called to believe, obey (2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17), and surrender (Matthew 10:32–39; Luke 14:15–33).

What is so great about the Gospel?

But, what is it about this Gospel that generates such devotion and dedication? What is it about the Gospel that has caused men and women throughout history to surrender their entire lives to its message? According to Romans 1:16, what is so great about the Gospel? (Hint: what does it have the power to do?)⁵

What is so great is that in this very message there is power from God to bring about salvation and freedom from the inward bondage of sin. That is why 1 Corinthians 1:21 explains how a person who hears and believes the foolishness of the Gospel message preached will enthusiastically declare that this message is the power of God. (See also verses 18, 24.)

Furthermore, according to John 8:31–32, what will those who intimately know the truth of the Gospel experience?

⁵See also Colossians 1:18–25; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; Romans 10:14–15, 17; John 8:31–32.

According to the context in John 8:24, 34, from what does the Gospel set one free? (See verse 24, 34.)

Wow! That is why the Gospel is so beloved—that is what is so great! The Gospel has the power to save. The Gospel has the power to set one free from sin’s bondage. The Gospel contains within it the very power of God. That is exactly what the Bible teaches.

According to Romans 10:17, faith comes from hearing what?

What does Romans 10:14–15 say about the preacher of the Gospel?

From where does the Gospel get its power?

What is it about the Gospel that provides power to bring about salvation? According to the New Testament, the power comes from God (by means of the Holy Spirit)⁶ through the content of God’s message⁷, the Gospel. Let me illustrate this on a human level. Electricity, in essence, contains power, but that power is made available only through the use of power lines. Without power lines, electricity cannot be utilized. In the same way, the essence of spiritual power is found in God alone but is made available to mankind through the understanding of the Gospel. Without the Gospel, mankind does not receive God’s power.

⁶The Holy Spirit brings illumination and power through the content of the message. John 14:26; 1 John 2:27; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10–12.

⁷The Gospel content must be mentally comprehended, believed, and obeyed (Ephesians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; Romans 6:17). Without the mental comprehension of the true biblical text there is no hope of salvation. It is for this reason that Satan is continuously trying to distort the pure truth of the Gospel (1 Timothy 4:1–5; Jude 3–16), and Paul is continuously commanding his fellow servant to preserve the purity of the Gospel (1 Timothy 4:6, 13; 2 Timothy, 4:1–2).

What is it about the Gospel that provides this power to bring about salvation? According to Romans 1:16–17, the Gospel is God’s saving power to everyone who genuinely believes (v.16). In verse 17, what is revealed in the Gospel? (Notice the “for,” which is functioning in the sentence to explain the previous truths of verse 16.)

According to Paul, in the Gospel, the content about God’s righteousness is discovered. This passage is saying that whenever the true Gospel is being proclaimed, the message about God’s righteousness will be made known.⁸ And within this message about God’s righteousness lies the power of God.

What is this righteousness of God?

What is “the righteousness of God?” O, my dear friend, **the righteousness of God is the heart and soul of the Good News! It is what unlocks the door to God’s power! It is mankind’s only hope! It is the message which provides freedom from bondage! It is the truth that provides eternal life with God!**

For example, according to Romans 1:17b, who is going to live (eternally) by faith?

The Bible makes it clear that it is the righteous man. Now, according to this verse (17a), whose righteousness is this? Mankind’s own righteousness or God’s?

For the apostle Paul, this message about the righteousness of God is the heart of God’s Gospel, and it alone has the power of God to save mankind. This is most powerfully made clear in the first four chapters of Paul’s letter to the Romans.⁹ After stating that the man who has been made righteous by God will live eternally by faith, Paul proves his statement in 1:18–4:25.¹⁰

⁸The Gospel reveals the righteousness of God if the true biblical Gospel is being preached. However, if one is honest, the preaching of God’s righteousness is lost today. The church must turn back to the true Gospel, which has as its center the message about the righteousness of Christ.

⁹The purpose of Paul writing this letter was to make the Gospel clearly known to the church in Rome. Since Rome was so strategic, being the center of the world, it was important for this message to get there. Paul had tried to go several times but could not, so he just wrote the Gospel in letter form and sent it to this church (Romans 1:8–15).

¹⁰Note: This is the function of the word “for” in Romans 1:18

Paul proves this by first revealing the bad news (Romans 1:18–3:20)¹¹ that all of mankind is unrighteous.

Then, Paul replaces the bad news about man’s unrighteousness with the Good News of the provision of God’s righteousness. Paul begins the presentation of the Good News of God’s righteousness in Romans 3:21, where he reveals the amazing truth that Jesus has provided a new kind of righteousness, a righteousness which belongs to God and is made available to all of mankind.

SEVEN TRUTHS ABOUT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

In these verses (Romans 3:21–24), Paul introduces this righteousness, which has the power to save and transform mankind by revealing seven truths about it.

The first truth about this righteousness is that it belongs to God. Paul reveals that this righteousness which has been manifested belongs to whom?

Notice that this righteousness is not man’s, but God’s. This is the same truth revealed in Romans 1:16-17. This truth is astounding! Up to this point, the only means of meeting God’s demand for righteousness has been man’s own effort, which falls dreadfully short of pleasing God or providing a soul-saving standing before Him (see preceding verses 3:19-20). But now a new and different righteousness not within man—a righteousness not belong to man, but outside of him—one which belongs to God Himself. This righteousness has the ability to save—to put man in right standing with God—because it is a perfect righteousness. It is this righteousness that necessitated Christ leaving heaven to come to earth (which will be made clear as we move along) and it is this righteousness which is mankind’s only hope.

The second truth about this righteousness is that it is manifested apart from the Law. What do you think it means that it is now manifested “apart from the Law?”

¹¹In Romans 1:18–32, Paul shows his reader that the non-religious are unrighteous. In Romans 2:1–16, Paul shows how the religious are unrighteous. In Romans 2:17–3:8, Paul shows how the Jews are unrighteous. Lastly, in Romans 3:9–20, Paul shows how all mankind is unrighteous.

This righteousness is not revealed through adhering to the do's and don'ts of Israel's Old Testament law or through obeying the Ten Commandments. It is revealed in a different way. That is, it is different from that which was perceived by the nation of Israel in the New Testament days. In the days of Jesus and the apostles, the only way righteousness was obtained was through obeying the do's and don'ts of the Mosaic Law—Ten Commandments and other commandments given by God. Therefore, in the mind of a Jew, if he were to “love his neighbor,” and “honor his Father and Mother” (Exodus 20:1–17), he would perceive himself as righteous. This wrongful perception that man could be righteous through his own obedience was ingrained in New Testament Jewish beliefs. However, this man-made righteousness was revealed by Jesus to be unacceptable in God's sight and worthy of God's wrath (Matt. 5:20, 22, 28-29, 48). It is for this reason that Paul makes it clear in Romans 3:21 that this righteousness is apart from the Law and apart from man-made obedience. This righteousness is not found within man, but found outside of him. It is from God through the work of Jesus Christ.

The third truth is that the righteousness of God has been witnessed in the Old Testament. According to Romans 3:21, by what two means was this righteousness made known?

This verse is revealing that this righteousness was not a new message but is one that was revealed by the Old Testament in the Law and through the Prophets (Genesis 15:6; Psalm 32:1–2; Isaiah 53:5–6, 11–12). Paul is suggesting that this message, even though new to a Jew, is not a new message. It is actually a message clearly revealed in and throughout the whole Old Testament (Daniel 12:3; Genesis 15:6; sacrificial system;¹²). This is an important point for Paul because he wants his readers to know that the authority of this Gospel message is God's Word and not his own words. Therefore, he makes it clear to his readers that this message is firmly rooted in the Old Testament.

The fourth truth about the righteousness of God is that it is obtained through faith in Jesus Christ. Notice Romans 3:22 says that this righteousness from God is through what and for those who do what?

¹²It is illustrated through means of the sacrificial system where the spotless lamb temporarily covered the sin of God's people.

It is obtained through faith, and it is available for those who believe. This is amazing news! Paul is revealing that mankind can obtain or have God's righteousness through faith and belief (which are synonymous terms made evident in a later chapter). Notice this faith and belief is in Whom? (See Romans 3:22.)

The object of the Christian faith is Jesus Christ—that is, faith in His person and work. This is not faith in Allah or faith in Mary but faith in Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that Christians have always emphasized the point that there is only one way to God – through the Person of Jesus Christ. Paul says this same truth in Galatians 3:1-5, where he brings out the fact that Christians receive the Spirit of God not through the means of their works, but by means of faith in Christ (the Messiah) Jesus. Paul has very carefully worded his presentation of this truth about this soul-saving righteousness. He words it in such a way as to contrast it from the non-soul-saving righteousness. He powerfully displays this soul-saving righteousness as not obtained through adherence to God's law (negatively stated in verse 21), but through a sinner putting his faith in Jesus Christ (positively stated in verse 22). Therefore, Paul is making it clear that God has provided a righteousness that can be obtained or made available if one puts his faith (or total confidence) in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

The fifth truth revealed is that God's righteousness is for all (See Romans 3:22.). What is Paul saying? He is declaring that this righteousness is provided or given for all those who believe, that is, to both Jews or Gentiles. It is important for you to understand Paul's use of the word "for" in this verse. It is suggesting that this righteousness has been provided or is made available to all who genuinely believe in Christ's message, regardless of your ethnicity or social status.

Throughout Romans, Paul continuously makes an emphases on the fact that this righteousness is for everyone, because during Paul's day it was believed that God would only save Jews, not Gentiles. So Paul that God makes no distinction because all are unrighteous (Rom 3:23). Both Jews and Gentiles are in need of God's righteousness and to both of them this righteousness has been made available if they will put their faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The sixth truth is that this righteousness is freely given as a gift by God's grace (Romans 3:24). Here Paul continues to reveal the profound thought that this righteousness is not earned or acquired by man's effort by bringing out the fact that this righteousness is **given as a gift of grace**. According to Romans 3:24a, mankind is justified (or declared righteous, which is a better translation) as a result of what?

This righteousness is given as a **gift**, and this gift is a result of **God's grace**. This is overwhelming! God has made His righteousness available to mankind for FREE—as a gift (Romans 4:3-5; 4:13-16; 5:15-21; 6:23; and other references). The fact that it is a gift means this righteousness is not earned, but is wholly and freely provided. The verse is clear that this righteousness that belongs to God is provided not as a result of man, but entirely as a result of God and His gracious intervention. Therefore, you do not earn God's righteousness; rather, it is given. Consequently, this righteousness is not a possible outcome, but it is a guaranteed promise (Romans 4:13–16).

The seventh truth about this righteousness is that it was made possible as a result of the death of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24b). Verse 24 announces that we are declared righteous (justified) as a gift by His grace as a result of what activity?

Paul is clearly and powerfully displaying the fact that this righteousness from God is made possible through the redeeming payment made by Jesus Christ. Stated conversely, without the redeeming payment of Jesus Christ, God's righteousness would not be made available to mankind.

Thankfully, Christ intervened and provided this redeeming payment (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:15)! This precious truth declares that this righteousness, which is available as a gift from God to all sinful mankind who place their faith in Jesus Christ, is made available as a result of Christ's redemption.

What is Redemption?

Allow me to explain what this means by first defining this word redemption. Redemption is a word that makes clear the great expense that Christ took to make God's righteousness possible to mankind. It literally means "liberation (freedom or deliverance) through payment of a price."¹³

Paul's use of this word pictures someone paying money to set a person free. During Paul's day, people would buy slaves by paying a ransom or payment, which would thus set them free or redeem them from their masters. The slave would then become a slave of the master who bought him. In light of this information, we understand that Paul's last point about the righteousness of God is that this righteousness is made possible as a result of the liberating

¹³Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996) 229.

or freeing payment made by Jesus Christ. This payment was provided through His sacrificial death on the cross.¹⁴ (The necessity of Christ's death on the cross will be discussed in great detail in Lesson 12.)

Are you then saying that the Bible teaches that God will give His righteousness to make an unrighteous man right with God? Well, according to 2 Corinthians 5:21, what did God do to His own Son?

For what purpose did God make Jesus come to know sin, according to 2 Corinthians 5:21b?

In Romans 5:17, what does Paul say will happen to the one who receives the gift of God's righteousness?

Therefore, the provision of God's righteousness is the heart and soul of the Good News, and it is Jesus Christ who made it available to all who put their faith in Him. The Bible is clear that God sent His own Son into this world to make unworthy mankind righteous. Without this provision, unrighteous mankind is hopeless. Left in his unrighteousness, fellowship with a holy God would be impossible (Romans 5:10).¹⁵

How is God's righteousness given to mankind?

It is important that we finish this lesson by answering one final question. If God's righteousness is mankind's only hope, how does God give it to mankind? Well, according to Romans 4, God's righteousness is given to him by means of it being credited or imputed. This means that God takes His righteousness and gives it to us.

¹⁴Romans 3:25; 5:8–10; Colossians 2:13–14; Ephesians 1:7,2:13

¹⁵See others in Romans 4:3–6, 9, 13, 22; 5:17–21; 8:4,10; 10:3–4, 6, 10.

How is God's righteousness credited to mankind?

Illustrated in human terms, it would be as if a poor man is \$100 million in debt and is facing the penalty of life in prison if he does not pay immediately.

Unexpectedly, a man hears of the problem and goes to his bank and wires \$100 million over to this poor man's account to save him from his troubles with no obligation of repayment. In the same way that this \$100 million was credited to the poor man's account, God has credited His righteousness through Jesus Christ to the account of those who put faith in Him. It is important to remember that this righteousness is not man's; it is God's. Man did not deserve it, earn it, or even desire it. God's righteousness was given as a gift by His grace and mercy.¹⁶

Let's look at how Abraham was made righteous by God in Romans 4:1–5. According to this passage, Abraham was not saved by his works but as a result of what work of God? (See Romans 4:3–5)

The righteousness that Abraham received from God was credited to him on the basis of faith. It was not earned but credited as a gift. That means he did not earn it, but was a recipient of it.

In Philippians 3:8–9, Paul speaks of this same experience. He declares all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of **knowing Christ Jesus** and **being found in Christ**, not having a righteousness of his own derived from the law.

Paul rejoices that he has now found a righteousness that has been derived from what source? (See Philippians 3:8–9.)

¹⁶Again, see Romans 5:15, 17; Ephesians 2:8–9; 1 Timothy 1:13–14; Titus 3:3–5.

What is so important about the righteousness of God?

Paul rejoices in a righteousness which **came from God**. It was a righteousness that was foreign to him and found in the person of Jesus Christ. According to Romans 10:3, what was the problem with the religious leaders of Paul's day?

This is a shocking verse. Unfortunately, religious people throughout history are continuously trying to appear righteous before God through their own behavior. But, Paul makes it clear that choosing man-made righteousness is futile. Rather, he cries out for the sake of his friends because they have rejected the only righteousness that could save them: the righteousness of God.

It is clear that there are two kinds of righteousness: one that is man-made and one that is credited by God as a gift on the basis of faith. Yet, there is only one that results in salvation: the righteousness given by God.

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

So what? It is clear that the righteousness of God is the heart and soul of God's Good News. This message is unlike any other message because in it is God's power to save.

In light of all that we learned in the last two lessons about the power of sin's bondage, we have come to understand that we are hopeless to save ourselves. Due to sin, mankind is blinded to the truth (1 Corinthians 2:14), enslaved to living out sin's lust (Titus 3:3), and under the power of Satan himself (Ephesians 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4). So, what can release a prisoner from his confining chains? What can make a blind man's eyes to see? What can bring hope to a hopeless situation? The answer the Bible gives is the Good News of the Gospel. It alone contains God's power! It alone contains the liberating truth about God's righteousness! It alone unlocks the door to freedom! And without this Gospel, there is no hope!

These same truths of hope are captured in the famous words of the hymn written by Edward Mote:

“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ the solid rock, I stand - all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.”¹⁷

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

In the next study, we want to take a close look at how the life of Christ fits into God’s plan of salvation. We will seek answers to the following questions: Did Jesus have to live 33 years? Why did He not just come, die, and then go back to heaven? Why did Jesus have to die at all? What is the significance of Jesus’ resurrection? This next lesson will help bring more clarity to the whole story of Jesus’ life, death, burial, and resurrection.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What is it about the Gospel that causes people to be totally dedicated to its proclamation?

According to Jesus’ words in John 8:31–32, what does the truth do to those people in bondage to sin?

What is it about the Gospel that provides the power of God to save people?

According to Romans 1:17a, what truth is contained in the Gospel message?

According to Romans 1:17b, what will happen to the righteous person?

¹⁷Henry van Dyke, *The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration*, (Waco, Texas: Word Music, 1986) 404.

What are the six truths that Paul reveals about God’s righteousness according to Romans 3:21–24?

What does it mean that the righteousness of God is revealed “apart from the law” (Romans 3:21)?

What does Paul mean when he says that the righteousness of God is “for all who believe” (Romans 3:22)?

According to Romans 3:24, what role did Jesus play in the provision of this righteousness? (See section on redemption.)

How does God give His righteousness to His children?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Romans 1:16

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

1 Corinthians 1:18, 21, 24

¹⁸For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

²¹For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

²⁴...but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

John 8:31–32

³¹So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

John 8:24

²⁴“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”

John 8:34

³⁴Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”

Romans 10:17

¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Romans 10:14–15

¹⁴How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good News of good things!”

Romans 1:16–17

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith.”

Romans 3:21–22

²¹But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction...

Romans 3:24

²⁴...being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Romans 5:17

¹⁷For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Romans 4:1–5

¹What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁴Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Philippians 3:8–9

⁸More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.

Romans 10:3

³For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.



LESSON TWELVE

WHAT DID JESUS DO TO PROVIDE HOPE?

-The Quest for Truth-

WHAT DID JESUS DO TO PROVIDE HOPE?

“BUT GOD DEMONSTRATED HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US. MUCH MORE THEN, HAVING NOW BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE. AND NOT ONLY THIS, BUT WE ALSO EXULT IN GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THROUGH WHOM WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED THE RECONCILIATION.” - ROMANS 5:8–11

The Christmas season brings many warm feelings of love and happiness. It is a time when gifts are given, families are enjoyed, and the world turns its attention toward the little town of Bethlehem. This little town is where the world turns to celebrate the birth of a King who was born in a manger and whose name was Jesus or “Immanuel” (meaning “God with us!”) Throughout the season, songs about this Savior are sung by choirs, played on radios, and talked about in churches. However, what was the significance of this birth? Why did Jesus even have to come to the earth? Why didn’t Jesus just come for a few years and then return? Why did Jesus have to die? And if Jesus had to die, why did He wait 33 years to do it?

As we learned in Lesson 8, this pre-existent Creator and ruling King left the glories of heaven for the purposes of saving His people from their sins. In Lessons 9 and 10, we discovered the terrible nature of sin and its damning effects from which He came to save. But, we have yet to see how Jesus’ death, life, and resurrection have impacted man’s relationship with sin. In this lesson, we are going to focus our attention on these specific issues. This teaching will powerfully show us how Jesus’ work is the foundation on which the hope of the gospel has been made possible.

What did Jesus’ death accomplish?

Picking up from the last lesson (Lesson 11), we have come to understand that mankind’s only hope is found in the power of God working through the gospel to break the power of sin.

The heart and soul of God’s gospel message is the truth that an unrighteous man can be made righteous through God’s gracious gift of His own righteousness. Furthermore, it was made known that this righteousness was “made possible as a result of the liberating or freeing payment made by Jesus Christ, which was His sacrificial death on the cross.”¹ Now, we want to begin this lesson by making this statement more clear. What we were

¹Lesson 11

saying in the last lesson is that Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross (known as His sacrifice for our redemption) was essential to God's ability to provide His righteousness (and also forgiveness). But, the question that needs to be asked is why?

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

Why do you think the provision of God's righteousness necessitated a payment² to be made by Jesus Christ? (Answer in your own words.)

The answer is found in the **moral problem caused by God's righteousness being credited to an unrighteous person**. Stated differently, the apparent moral problem is that God forgave a guilty criminal without punishment. What do I mean? Well, can a good judge let a guilty criminal go free without a penalty or ransom? Would that not be morally unethical?

Let me illustrate this for you. What would you say about the character of a judge who lets a guilty criminal go unpunished after brutally killing your closest friend or family member? Or what would you say about a judge who lets a guilty criminal go unpunished after he stole and spent \$50,000 of your money?

Would you not say, "This judge is ungodly?" "How could this judge not provide a just sentence?" Humanity's inner moral conscience cries out for the courts of law to provide a punishment to fit the crime. God's own moral justice demands an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."³

This is the problem of God's righteousness without Christ's payment. For God to declare a person innocent of committed sins without someone paying the just consequences of those sins is morally contemptible.

²For verses on the necessity of Jesus' death, Wayne Grudem in his *Systematic Theology* is very helpful (569–570). He provides the following verses: Matthew 26:39; Luke 24:25–27; Romans 3:26; Hebrews 2:17; 10:4; 9:23, 25–26.

³Exodus 21:23–24

God, who is the King and Judge of the universe, cannot allow a guilty person to go unpunished. For God to be a just or righteous judge, He must punish the guilty sinner. There must be consequences for wrongs done.

According to Romans 6:23, what did God Himself say that the consequence of sin is? (See also Romans 1:32; 5:12; 6:16.)

Consequently, if justice demands death, then **death must be paid**. This is the exact reason why God sent His Son Jesus Christ to earth to die. However, Jesus did not die for His own sin—since He was sinless—but for the sin of those who believe.

According to Romans 5:6 which says that “while we were still helpless, at the right time,” Christ died for whom?

This truth is inconceivable to the thinking mind because it goes against human understanding. This is what Paul testified in Romans 5:7–8: “For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. **But God** demonstrates His love toward us, in that **while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**”

Why did Jesus die?

The Bible has made it very clear that this death, which God predetermined and to which Jesus surrendered Himself, was for two purposes: 1) Jesus’ death set mankind free from the penalty man deserved. 2) Jesus’ death was to justify (or make right) God’s action of forgiving sinners. Let’s look at each one of these separately.

First, Jesus’ death was to set mankind free from the penalty man deserved. The Bible teaches that Jesus took the punishment for the sins of those who believe in Him. He did this by transferring their sin upon Himself and dying in their place.

For example, 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that God sent His own Son, who knew no sin, into the world to become what on our behalf (v. 21a)?

For what purpose did God make Jesus come to know sin, according to 2 Corinthians 5:21b?

As we see from this passage, it is clear that Christ **took the penalty of sin** upon Himself that He **might make the sinner righteous**.

Galatians 3:13a further illustrates this point when it says that Jesus Christ redeemed His believers from the curse of the law. According to the passage, how did He do this?

Wait a minute! What is the curse of the law? Paul gives the answer in Galatians 3:10. He says, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law to perform them.” (Notice the words “everyone” and “all.”⁴) What Paul is teaching is that if someone is not perfectly 100 percent righteous (meaning they have never sinned), then they are cursed. They are cursed because they are unrighteous and thus are unable to appear in God’s presence. Galatians 3:13a makes it clear that Jesus redeemed believers from this curse through His hanging on a tree and thus became the curse.

This is further verified in Colossians 2:14 which says that God has forgiven His children’s sins having canceled out what certificate?

How was the **record of debt** removed from the sinner according to the end of Colossians 2:13-14?

⁴Other passages on redemption: Galatians 4:5; Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 7:23

Paul's teaching again reveals that man had a problem with sin and refers to this sin problem as a debt that cannot be paid and which was removed when it was nailed to the cross and paid for by Christ.

That is why 1 Peter 2:24 says that Jesus Christ bore our sins in His body on the cross. And He did this so that we might die to sin's penalty and live in a new status of righteousness. It is here where Peter declares the famous words that it is by Christ's wounds that believers are healed from their sins.

Additionally, Romans 4:25 says that Jesus was delivered over for what purpose?

This idea of Jesus being delivered over **because of our transgressions** isn't originating with Paul but is a teaching that is firmly rooted in the Old Testament.

For instance, Isaiah 53:5 says that Jesus was pierced through (or wounded) and crushed for what purpose?

Isaiah 53:6 says that the Lord has laid what on Jesus?

According to Isaiah 53:8, Jesus took the punishment that was due to whom?

Isaiah 53:12b says that Jesus bore or took what upon Himself?

Therefore, it is clear that the Old Testament promised that some suffering Servant would come and do what Christ did—that He would be pierced, crushed, scourged, cut off from the land of the living, numbered with the transgressors, and would be poured out to death. And, all of this was to pay for the penalty of man's transgressions.

This whole concept in theological terms is called “penal substitution.”⁵ This term simply means that Jesus bore the full penalty for the sins of those who would be saved. Instead of our dying, He died! Jesus took our death and gave us His life! Jesus took our sin so that He could justly give us His righteousness!

Second, Jesus died to justify (or make right) God’s action of forgiving sinners. The Bible teaches that God is holy, and His holy nature demands that He punish all sin. However, throughout history God has allowed sinners to go unpunished without the due penalty for their sin. For instance, Abraham slept with Sarah’s maid; David committed murder; and Solomon turned his heart from God to other gods. Yet all were saved and forgiven for their transgressions having never received any eternal penalty or punishment, but suffered earthy consequences. As a result of these sinners being forgiven without punishment, God’s righteousness as a good judge was questioned. Therefore, if God is a good and righteous judge, He had to do something, not just for His name, but for the purpose of justice. God predetermined to justify His actions before the world. Therefore, God chose the death of Jesus to publically demonstrate His righteousness as the universal Judge. He chose Jesus, His own Son, to be the one upon whom He would pour His wrath. This resulted in His holy wrath being appeased and the consequences of man’s sin paid.

Having paid for their sin, this act would then allow God to be righteous in punishing mankind, while at the same time, be righteous in setting mankind free—men of the past, present, and future.

This teaching is presented most clearly in Romans 3:25–26. Let’s look at these verses together. In Romans 3:25a, how did God display Jesus before the world?

What does the word **propitiation** mean? Propitiation literally means “the removal of wrath.”⁶ This word is associated with the sacrificial system. It was a sacrifice that sought to appease the wrath of God for sins committed. Simply stated, this word carries the idea of appeasement or satisfaction.⁷ Therefore, in Romans 3:25, Paul is saying that Jesus was displayed before the world as the appeasing or wrath-removing sacrifice on behalf of

⁵This is a term used historically by evangelical theologians. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 579.

⁶Leon Morris, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Romans* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988) 180.

⁷Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996) 37–231.

mankind.⁸ Remember Hebrews 9:22 tells us that shedding of blood is necessary for the removal of sin. Because of this fact, it was necessary for Jesus to live out this role as a wrath-removing sacrifice.

How does 1 Peter 1:18–19 describe Jesus? (See also John 1:29.)

Peter describes Jesus as a lamb unblemished and unspotted because, in the Old Testament, those were the necessary requirements for a proper wrath-appeasing sacrifice. Coming back to the main point, God chose to use Jesus Christ to show the world that sin must be punished because God as a holy universal Judge cannot let sin go unpunished.

In light of this, according to Romans 3:25, why was it important for Jesus to be displayed as a wrath-removing (propitiatory) sacrifice? (Hint: What did God do?)

You see, **the problem was that in the Old Testament, God passed over the sins previously committed.** What Paul is saying is that as a result of passing over the sins of Abraham, David, and Solomon, the world looked at God and said, “See, God is unjust!” Therefore, God provided the sacrifice of His Son to pay for those sins. This sacrifice was done publicly because God wanted to show all mankind that on Christ the sins of the world were punished and thus paid.

What did God **demonstrate** at this “present time” (Romans 3:26a)?

In Romans 3:26b, Paul brings out the fact that God used Christ’s death to make a **proclamation that He Himself is righteous.** God made it known that He is righteous (just) because He fittingly punished sin. He made it known that He is the One Who releases men from the consequences of their sin, makes sinners righteous by forgiving their sin (Justifier), takes the punishment for their sin, and provides His righteousness to cover their sin.

⁸See also Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.

The modern hymn writers put it this way:

“This the power of the cross - Christ became sin for us. Took the blame, bore the wrath; We stand forgiven at the cross! Oh to see my name written in the wounds; for through your suffering I am free. Death is crushed to death, life is mine to live, won through your selfless love. This the power of the cross - Son of God slain for us. What a love, what a cost, we stand forgiven at the cross.”⁹

What did Jesus’ life accomplish?

The purposes behind Jesus’ death are clear. But why didn’t Jesus just come and die immediately? Why did Jesus live 33 years and then die? What answer would you give for these questions?

This is a very important question! The Bible teaches that the life of Jesus Christ was just as important as His death! The life of Jesus Christ made the death of Jesus Christ a suitable, fitting payment for sin. You see, the death of Jesus takes care of the **penalty** and guilt of our unrighteousness, but His death does not solve all of man’s sin problem. The additional problem of our unrighteousness is our inability to stand in God’s presence. This is because God is holy and unable to be in the presence of anything unholy.

In the last lesson, we learned that the good news is that mankind is given a righteousness that is not his own but is a righteousness from God. We did not, however, talk about how this righteousness was *made possible through the **life** of Jesus Christ*. This is exactly what the Bible teaches.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:30 call Jesus? (Note: Jesus became to us wisdom and three other things.)

When Jesus was talking to John the Baptist, He told John to baptize Him because of what needed to be fulfilled.

⁹Keith and Kristyn Getty; *“In Christ Alone,”* MMVI Gettymusic.

According to Matthew 3:15, what needed to be fulfilled?

In what sense did He need to fulfill all righteousness? He needed to obey every requirement that the law demanded. That is why Jesus says in Matthew 5:17, “I did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law.” You see, Christ had to live a life of perfect obedience to God in order to earn a perfect righteousness for us.¹⁰

This teaching is most clearly communicated in Romans 5:1–21. By what are we saved (Romans 5:10)?

This passage shows us that this was accomplished through the perfect **Life** of Jesus Christ. That is why in Romans 5:18, Paul says that it is through the one act of obedience that resulted in mankind being declared righteous and becoming recipients of eternal life. Furthermore, this is why in Romans 5:19, Paul says that it is through the **obedience** of the One (Jesus Christ) that the many will be made righteous.

Profound verses on this topic are found in Romans 8:3–4. Paul shows us that since the keeping of the law could not save mankind, God therefore intervened and sent His own Son in the likeness of human flesh so that what could be accomplished? (See verse 4.)

How do you think God’s sending of His Son enables the requirements of the law to be fulfilled in us?

In the last lesson, we discussed how God has chosen to save His people by giving them the gift of His righteousness. It was stated that this gift is given by means of God crediting it to the accounts of His unrighteous children. This plan was predetermined before the foundation of the world but was brought to completion through God sending His only begotten Son into the world.

¹⁰Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 570.

For this plan to be accomplished, Jesus Christ had to live a life that would fulfill all the requirements of the law. This had to be done so that He could obtain righteousness that could be given to others. In doing so, all those who are saved by Jesus Christ receive this fulfillment of the law's requirement (Christ's righteousness).

Therefore, we see that Jesus' life was essentially important. Without Jesus' life, man is left to earn favor with God, which the Bible says is totally impossible if left to man's own efforts. Yet, through the life of Jesus Christ, God has provided his righteousness that mankind might find favor with Him.

What did Jesus' resurrection accomplish?

So far, we have learned that both the death and life of Jesus Christ were essential. The death of Jesus took care of the penalty of sin (condemnation - Romans 8:1), and the life of Jesus Christ took care of our unrighteous standing before God. The last thing we'll look at is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. **It was essential because it provides the promise (or confirmation) of final salvation from sin**—eternal life with God. Since Christ rose from the dead, we have living proof that Christians will also.

Without a doubt, the most suspenseful days within the history of mankind were the days after the death of Jesus Christ and before His resurrection. These silent days held in balance the agonizing nightmare of the dissipation of future hope and the wonderful excitement of the obtaining of future promises (1 Corinthians 15:13–19).

If Christ remained dead, all hope was gone. If Christ rose from the grave as He promised, all hope was restored. And in accordance with God's predetermined plan, Jesus unquestionably rose from the grave, conquering both sin and death. The Bible reveals this resurrection as the event that sealed the victory or the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation for mankind.

Romans 4:25 says that Jesus "was put to death for our transgressions and raised because of" what work of God?

Jesus was raised for our justification or so that we may be declared righteous. It is for this reason that 1 Peter 1:3 says that “we have been born anew to a living hope **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**” You see, the resurrection of Jesus Christ delivered the hope!

The Bible goes on to say that because Jesus rose from the grave, all who are His children will be raised from the dead with Him (Ephesians 2:5–6; Colossians 3:1; Romans 6:3–7).

Additionally, 1 Corinthians 6:14 says that God will not only raise the Lord, but who else will also be raised?

The Lord will raise us, that is, all who have been saved by Jesus Christ. Romans 8:11 also says that He who raised Jesus from the dead will also give what gift?

The most powerful section of the Bible pertaining to the wonderful truths of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is 1 Corinthians 15:1–58. I would encourage you to read this whole chapter on your own. In verse 20 of this section, the Bible describes Jesus as the “first fruits” of those who have fallen asleep. This means that He is the first of the many who are to be raised from the dead.

Then, in 1 Corinthians 15:54–55, the Bible reveals that Jesus’ resurrection brings victory over the sting of what?

Jesus brings victory over the sting of death. What is the **sting of death** according to 1 Corinthians 15:56? The imagery is that of an insect landing on a person for the purpose of inserting its deadly stinger into his flesh and the person having victory over this deadly sting. As you may have guessed from the last few chapters, the sting of death is sin. It is for this reason the passage in 1 Corinthians 15:57 goes on to declare the words: “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The whole context reveals that the Christian’s victory is a result of Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Paul concludes this incredible chapter with what encouragement for his “beloved brethren” (v.58)?

My friends, the resurrection is the event that confirms the ultimate victory for all who are truly God's children. Therefore, as a result of Christ's resurrection, all Christians can know that their hope is not in vain.

What should our response be?

As we have seen, Jesus Christ is the foundation of salvation's hope. He is the centerpiece through which all humanity stands or falls. He is mankind's Hero, Redeemer, Righteousness, and Savior.

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

Therefore, how do these truths about Jesus' death, life, and resurrection affect your thoughts about Jesus Christ?

How do these truths about Jesus' death, life, and resurrection affect the way you live?

In conclusion, the hymn writer Phillip Bliss best communicates the proper response to such a topic in his hymn, "Man of Sorrows"¹¹:

"Man of Sorrows!" What a name for the Son of God, who came,
Ruined sinners to reclaim! Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my place condemned He stood,
Sealed my pardon with His blood: Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Guilty, vile and helpless we, Spotless Lamb of God was He; Full atonement!
Can it be? Hallelujah, what a Savior!

¹¹Phillip Bliss, "Hallelujah, What a Savior!" *The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration*, (Waco: Word Music, 1986), 175.

Lifted up was He to die, “It is finished!” was His cry; Now in heav’n exalted high:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

When He comes, our glorious King, All His ransomed home to bring,
then anew this song we sing: Hallelujah, what a Savior!

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

These truths about Jesus’ hope and victory are wonderful, but by whom can they be obtained? Who are the beneficiaries of Christ’s work? What does mankind have to do to obtain this salvation? Does He have to earn favor with God? How does being under the power of sin relate to man’s ability to come to faith in Jesus Christ? These are a few of the questions that we want to attempt to answer in the next lesson.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Why was Jesus’ death on the cross essential to God’s ability to blamelessly provide His righteousness?

For what two purposes did God send Jesus to die on the cross?

What did Jesus do with His children’s sin?

How does Jesus’ death make God’s forgiveness of unrighteous mankind a right or just action?

How does Jesus’ death justify God’s action of forgiving a guilty sinner?

Why did Jesus have to live 33 years before He could die?

How is the gift of God's righteousness made possible through the life of Jesus Christ?

What does Romans 8:4 mean when it says "that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us"?

What is the purpose of the resurrection within God's plan of salvation?

By His resurrection, what victory did Jesus provide?

What is your response to all these truths about Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Romans 6:23

²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 1:32

³²And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Romans 5:12

¹²Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. . . .

Romans 6:16

¹⁶Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

Romans 5:6

⁶For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Galatians 3:13

¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”

Galatians 3:10

¹⁰For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.”

Colossians 2:13-14

¹³When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

1 Peter 2:24

²⁴And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Romans 4:25

²⁵He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

Isaiah 53:5–6

⁵But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. ⁶All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

Isaiah 53:8

⁸By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

Isaiah 53:12

¹²Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.

Romans 3:25–26

²⁵ . . . whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Hebrews 9:22

²²And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

1 Peter 1:18–19

¹⁸ . . . knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

John 1:29

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

1 Corinthians 1:30

³⁰But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. . . .

Matthew 3:15

¹⁵But Jesus answering said to him, “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permitted Him.

Matthew 5:17

¹⁷“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”

Romans 5:1–21

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. ⁶For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. ¹²Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—¹³for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. ¹⁶The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. ¹⁷For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. ²⁰The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 8:3–4

³For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 4:25

²⁵He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

1 Peter 1:3

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. . . .

1 Corinthians 6:14

¹⁴Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

Romans 8:11

¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

1 Corinthians 15:54–58

⁵⁴But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.



LESSON THIRTEEN

WHAT MUST I DO TO OBTAIN
THE HOPE OF CHRIST?

(PART 1)

-The Quest for Truth-



WHAT MUST I DO TO OBTAIN THE HOPE OF CHRIST? (PART 1)

“FOR WE WERE ONCE FOOLISH OURSELVES, DISOBEDIENT, DECEIVED, ENSLAVED TO VARIOUS LUSTS AND PLEASURES, SPENDING OUR WHOLE LIFE IN MALICE AND ENVY, HATEFUL, HATING ONE ANOTHER. BUT WHEN THE KINDNESS OF GOD OUR SAVIOR AND HIS LOVE FOR MANKIND APPEARED, HE SAVED US, NOT ON THE BASIS OF DEEDS WHICH WE HAVE DONE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY, BY THE WASHING OF REGENERATION AND RENEWING BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHOM HE Poured OUT UPON US RICHLY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOR, SO BEING JUSTIFIED BY HIS GRACE WE WOULD BE HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE.” - TITUS 3:3–7

Throughout the past two lessons, we have been seeing and admiring the wonderful truths of the Good News (Gospel) of Jesus Christ. This Good News is filled with the unbelievable truth that an unrighteous sinner can be made righteous as a result of the finished work of Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. However, many logical questions follow including: How can this righteousness, which belongs to Jesus Christ, be applied (or credited) to a sinner? What must the sinner do to be given this gift? Can a person be saved by his good deeds? Does a person have to be part of a certain organization? What does God require of us to be saved?

These are extremely important questions because there is no value in knowing about this great salvation provided by Jesus without knowing how it can be obtained. It is like a person admiring a beautiful car but never getting to drive it. Having seen the beauty of the salvation that Jesus has provided, we now want to know how we can be recipients of it.

Due to the importance of this subject and because it is very misunderstood, wrongly communicated, and not clearly taught, I want to take two lessons to address it. Therefore, this lesson (Lesson 13) will reveal what the Bible says a person cannot do to save himself, and in the next lesson (Lesson 14), we want to look into what God requires of a person to be saved.

Where do the two roads lead?

To begin our study we need to understand that there are two roads that one can follow. According to Matthew 7:13, there is a road that leads to destruction – one for those not being saved; and there is a road that leads to eternal life – one for those being saved. So let’s begin our study by looking at what the Bible says about each of these roads.

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

In Matthew 7:14, we learn that there are few who will travel which road?

Jesus taught that a few will travel down the road that leads to everlasting life. But how many are a few? If you were to take 100 people, how many of them would you see as being a few?

A few people out of one hundred is most commonly assumed to be 3 or 4 people. In theory, as a statistic, that would mean 3 or 4 percent of the world will be saved according to Matthew 7. Obviously, there is no *exact* percentage Jesus meant by a few. This is a clear and shocking teaching by Jesus Christ. The concern is that in the world today over 50 percent of the world's population believe that they are Christians and are going to heaven when they die. These statistics are in direct contrast to the teachings of Jesus Christ in Matthew 7. The Bible says few, not many, will be saved.

Therefore, is it few or many? If only few will be saved, then what do you think that means for the many?

If only few are being saved, then the many must be confused, misled, self-deceived, uninformed, or trusting in a salvation that they don't have. They are like those jumping out of an airplane with faulty parachutes on their backs, unaware of their horrific destinies.

According to Matthew 7:21, not everyone who says what statement will enter the kingdom of heaven?

According to Matthew 7:22-23, how many who say, “Lord, Lord,” will be told by God “depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness”? (Please note: “Depart from Me” means that you are not welcome into the kingdom of heaven.)

We see from these passages that MANY people will verbally claim to be Christians or have a relationship with God (even expressing Jesus to be their Lord), but there is no reality to these claims because they have misled and deceived themselves. The result for many who will claim to know Jesus Christ personally will be rejected in the end. This very thought is frightening, but it is clearly taught in the Bible.

Are you building your faith on sand?

One major reason for such self-deception is that some people put their confidence in the wrong source. Jesus expressed this same concern in Matthew 7:24–27. In this passage, He shows us that there are two different types of people: those who put their confidence in God’s Word and those who put their confidence in other sources. Jesus makes it very clear that those who put their faith and confidence in God and His Word are like the man who builds his house on a rock. Those who put their confidence in other sources are like the man who builds his house on the sand.

According to Matthew 7:27, what is the end result?

You see, this is the problem that man has. At times, he listens to the voice of others in regard to how he is to be saved rather than to the voice of God. Therefore, according to our text, for a person who becomes self-deceived, confused, misled, and uninformed, the result is “a GREAT FALL.”

You may ask, “Well, to what other voices would a person listen?” He or she could listen to the voice of a society, a school, their own inner-instinct, a pastor, an organization, or other worldly voices. As Christians, our confidence should be in the words of Jesus Christ found in the pages of the Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, too often “Christians” end up following

a person or a tradition rather than the Scriptures. This is exactly what is happening today. That is why I have taken so much care, even in these lessons, to show you God's Word so that your confidence is in Him and His word, not in me as the communicator.

Do we simply need to ask Jesus to come into our hearts?

Let me ask you a question: "If you were to stand before God, and He were to ask, 'Why should I let you into the kingdom of heaven?' what would you say?"

When I was a child, I was asked that question, and I had no clue how to answer it. I thought to myself, "Well, I asked Jesus Christ into my heart." This answer is commonly given today. Other common answers are, "I am a good person," and "I have been a Christian since I was born." Though these are popular responses, none of them would be acceptable to God. The Bible clearly reveals that God does not accept a person on the basis of a prayer, a confession, a good deed, an act of circumcision, a ceremony of baptism, a law observed, or belonging to a certain denomination.

Despite the fact that these are the most common answers given by churchgoers today, they find no support within God's Word. Ultimately, confidence in such teaching would be like building your house on the sand.

Does God merely require a confession for salvation?

The idea of a person "asking Jesus into his heart" or "accepting Jesus" is found nowhere in the Bible. John MacArthur, in his classic book *Faith Works*, expresses this same concern when he writes: "The Western church has subtly changed the thrust of the gospel. Instead of exhorting sinners to repent, evangelicalism in our society asks the unsaved to 'accept Christ.' This modified gospel depicts conversion as 'a decision for Christ' rather than a life-transforming change of heart."¹ These words by John MacArthur are exactly right. Today's gospel has been "modified or subtly changed." The teaching of a person accepting Jesus into his heart, although popular, is found nowhere in the Bible.

¹John F. MacArthur, *Faith Works* (Nashville: W Faith Publishing Group, 1993) 74. (The two books *Faith Works* and *The Gospel According to Jesus* by John MacArthur are must reads for those who live in America. They really capture the essence of the false gospel that is being propagated within American evangelicalism.)

There are only two passages that would suggest this kind of a response. The first is John 1:12: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the sons of God.” You say, “See, all we have to do is receive Him into our hearts.” But we fail to see that the verse does not stop there but continues: “to those believing in His name.” The context reveals that to receive Jesus Christ is to continuously believe in His name. Many teachers look at “receive” and interpret it as being an invitation for Jesus to enter into them, but that’s not how Jesus was explaining the term to receive Him. Jesus made it clear that to believe in Him is not to invite Him in, but to believe in Him and put one’s total confidence in Him.

In the second verse, Romans 10:13, what is the result when you “call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ”?

However, when you look at the context, the very next verse (v. 14) says that a person cannot call on someone in whom they have not believed.

You say, “Wait a minute, Romans 10:9 says that ‘if you confess with your mouth you will be saved.’” But look again, the passage says “if you confess with your mouth” and do what else, you will be saved?

Confessing with your mouth is not enough; it must be accompanied with belief in your heart. (The question of belief will be addressed later in Lesson 14.) The Bible is filled with examples of people who confess but don’t really believe.

One such example is Judas Iscariot. According to Matthew 27:3, why did Judas return the thirty pieces of silver?

Clearly, Judas never repented. He was remorseful, but remorse is different from repentance. If he had truly repented, it would have resulted in humility, brokenness, and reconciliation in his relationship to Christ, not suicide.

Furthermore, the Bible reveals in John 13:2 that who actually entered into Judas? (Also, see what Jesus calls Judas in John 6:70.)

Furthermore, John 17:12 clearly reveals that Judas was not saved. How is he described?

Two other good examples of the fact that a confession does not save anyone are the Pharisees and Sadducees as recorded in Matthew 3:6–8. What did John say to the religious leaders after they confessed and were baptized? (See Matthew 3:8.)

What does 1 John 1:6 state regarding a person who says that he has fellowship with God (confession) but walks in darkness?

What does James 2:14–17 say about the person who says that he has faith but does not live out what he professes? (See verse 17.) (Please note: Dead means that the faith is not alive or real.)

Therefore, we see that a confession does not save anyone, even if it is expressed through remorse, baptism, a prayer, or some other outward sign. What is being said here is really important because pastors in today’s pulpits call people to “accept Jesus as their personal Savior.” However, this is problematic because this term is found nowhere in the New Testament. The call to “accept” is causing many to think that they are saved when they actually are not. I would call this evangelical heresy. Walter Chantry, in his book *Today’s Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?*² said, “Our ears have grown accustomed to hearing men told to ‘accept Jesus as your personal Savior,’ a form of words which is not found in Scripture. It has become an empty phrase. These may be precious words to the Christian—‘personal Savior.’ But they are wholly inadequate to instruct a sinner in the way to eternal life.”

²Walter Chanty, *Today’s Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* (Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 1970) 48–49.

A.W. Tozer also wrote in his book, *That Incredible Christian*, that “The formula ‘Accept Christ’ has become a cure of universal application, and I believe it has been fatal to many... The trouble is that the whole ‘Accept Christ’ attitude is likely to be wrong. It shows Christ appealing to us rather than our appealing to Him. It makes Him stand hat-in-hand awaiting our verdict on Him, instead of our kneeling with troubled hearts awaiting His verdict on us. It may even permit us to accept Christ by an impulse of mind, painlessly, at no loss to our ego and no inconvenience to our usual way of life.”³

Therefore, it must be made clear once again that confession does not save anyone, even if it is expressed through remorse, baptism, a prayer, or some other outward sign.

The parable in Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23 provides great insight to this whole subject. In this passage, Jesus makes it clear that there are various responses to the gospel, but only one response leads to salvation.

According to verses 4 and 19, there are some who hear the word but are not prompted to make a response. Then, there are two who are generated to temporarily respond (vv.5–7, 20–22). These two probably make professions—this is more implicit than explicit—because the text says that they “receive it with joy” (v.20), but are never really saved. The passage says that they “fall away” because of the “affliction and persecution” or because of “the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth.”

Lastly, there is one who is forever changed (vv.8, 23). It is clear that a past action in which a momentary confession is made, is not enough to bring about God’s gift of His righteousness. For someone to trust in a past confession as a means of obtaining God’s great salvation would be to build his house on sand because such belief is not found in God’s Word.

Does God require good deeds?

The notion that a person needs to be good enough to be saved is a lie that has been around since the beginning of human history. God has made it very clear that man cannot get to heaven by means of his own works.

3A.W. Tozer; *That Incredible Christian*, (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1977) 18.

What does Romans 3:20, 28 say about the “works of the Law”?

According to Galatians 2:16, by what means is a man clearly not saved?

By what means stated in 2 Timothy 1:9 has God NOT saved us?

Each of these passages reveals that works do nothing for men in regard to salvation. Isaiah 64:6 makes the reason clear as to why this is the case. This prophet declares that in God’s eyes our righteousness is as filthy rags. In fact, the grossness of the prophet’s term “filthy rags,” he is referring to the rags used to collect a women’s blood during her monthly cycle. The imagery isn’t attractive but neither are our deeds in the sight of God.

Jesus continues to communicate this idea in Matthew 5:20. What will not occur “unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees”?

Therefore, Jesus is saying that man’s righteousness must be absolutely perfect, which is entirely impossible. Although mankind may believe that works can save him, because Jesus is saying righteousness must be perfect, mankind’s works cannot save him. Jesus wanted the religious leaders of that day to understand that they could not save themselves. The common belief in that day was that a person could be saved by adherence to the law. This belief is still common today. It is a popular belief that God will save a man as long as his good deeds outweigh his bad deeds. But, my dear friends, this is not what the Bible teaches.

This is what Paul discovered. That’s why he says in Philippians 3:3 that if anyone were qualified to put confidence in his performance it would be him. Philippians 3:6 reveals that Paul was of the elite in status, zeal, and good works. Yet, according to Philippians 3:8–9, he counts all of his religious achievements as loss.

For those who are zealously seeking to earn God’s favor through their works, Romans 10:1–2 is a sobering passage. It reveals that zeal is not enough to find favor with God. According to Romans 10:2, what did the Jews have?

Romans 10:2 also reveals that while they had zeal for God, what was their zeal lacking?

So the Jews had zeal, but that zeal had a problem – it didn’t have the proper knowledge. You may ask, “What knowledge did they not have?” Well, Romans 10:3 tells us that they lacked what knowledge?

It is evident that the Jews lacked the knowledge of God’s righteousness, so they sought to establish their own righteousness. Thus as a result, they rejected the only righteousness that could save them—God’s righteousness. If the religious leaders of Jesus Christ’s day were trying to earn salvation and were not able to obtain it, even though they were God’s chosen people, can we who are not God’s chosen people earn it? Can our righteousness really surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees? The answer is “Absolutely Not!” Galatians 2:21 says that if righteousness comes through the Law (that is, by human merit) then Christ died for nothing.⁴

What does Paul mean by this? He means that if our works saved us, then Christ’s life, death, and resurrection would be pointless. Christ came because there was a problem that man could not solve. If man could solve the problem, then Christ would never have needed to come. The mere fact that Christ came is evidence that man was and is hopeless to save himself. The irony within our day is that man is still believing that his achievements can affect his standing before God, which is another way of building a house on the sand.

Is this not scary?

The Bible says in Proverbs 14:12, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” This is a scary truth to think that we could believe we are on the right road, the road leading to life, but in the end, find that we are on the road to destruction.

⁴Other passages: Galatians 2:15–16, 21; 3:11; James 2:10; Romans 2:25–29; 5:6–8; Luke 18:23–27; 1Peter 1:18.

We could think we are building our house on the rock, but in the end, discover we had built on sand.

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

Where is your confidence? By what means are you seeking to obtain the gift of God's righteousness?

As I consider this subject, I am reminded of what was said about Jesus Christ in Matthew 9:36: "seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd." Too often, instead of being sheep that follow our Master Jesus Christ, we are sheep being led by other blind sheep.

To whom or to whose voice have you been listening?

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

Having made it clear in this lesson what is not required by God to obtain Christ's righteousness, in the next lesson we want to look into what the Bible teaches are God's requirements for obtaining Christ's righteousness. The Bible is very clear in its explanation of how a man is to obtain the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We will look into this very important subject together in the next lesson.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What does Matthew 7:13–14 teach us?

What can we learn from Matthew 7:21–22?

According to Matthew 7:24–27, who are the people who build their faith on the rock?

What would you say if you were asked by God, “Why should I let you into My kingdom in heaven”?

Does the Bible speak of a person’s need to ask Jesus into his heart?

Will asking or receiving Jesus into your heart save you?

According to John MacArthur, what has happened to the Gospel today?

Will a person’s mere confession of Christ result in God’s saving gift?

What are the four different responses to the hearing of God’s Word found in Matthew 13:18–23?

Will a person be saved on the basis of good behavior?

In regard to obtaining salvation, to whose voice have you been listening?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Matthew 7:13–14

¹³Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Matthew 7:21–23

²¹“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. ²²Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

Matthew 7:24–27

²⁴Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.

Romans 10:13–14

¹³For “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

Romans 10:9

⁹. . . that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Matthew 27:3

Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.

John 13:2

During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him . . .

John 6:70

Jesus answered them, “Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?”

Matthew 3:1–8

¹Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ³For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!’ ” ⁴Now John himself had a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; ⁶and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. ⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance.”

1 John 1:6

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. . . .

James 2:14–17

¹⁴What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

Matthew 13:1–9

¹That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. ²And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. ³And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. ⁶But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. ⁸And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. ⁹He who has ears, let him hear.”

Matthew 13:18–23

¹⁸“Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. ²⁰The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²²And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

Romans 3:20

Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

Romans 3:28

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Galatians 2:16

Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

2 Timothy 1:9

Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.

Isaiah 64:6

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Matthew 5:20

For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

1 Peter 1:18

Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers . . .

Philippians 3:3–9

³For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, ⁴although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. ⁷But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.

Romans 10:1–4

¹Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. ²For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. ³For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Romans 3:21

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.

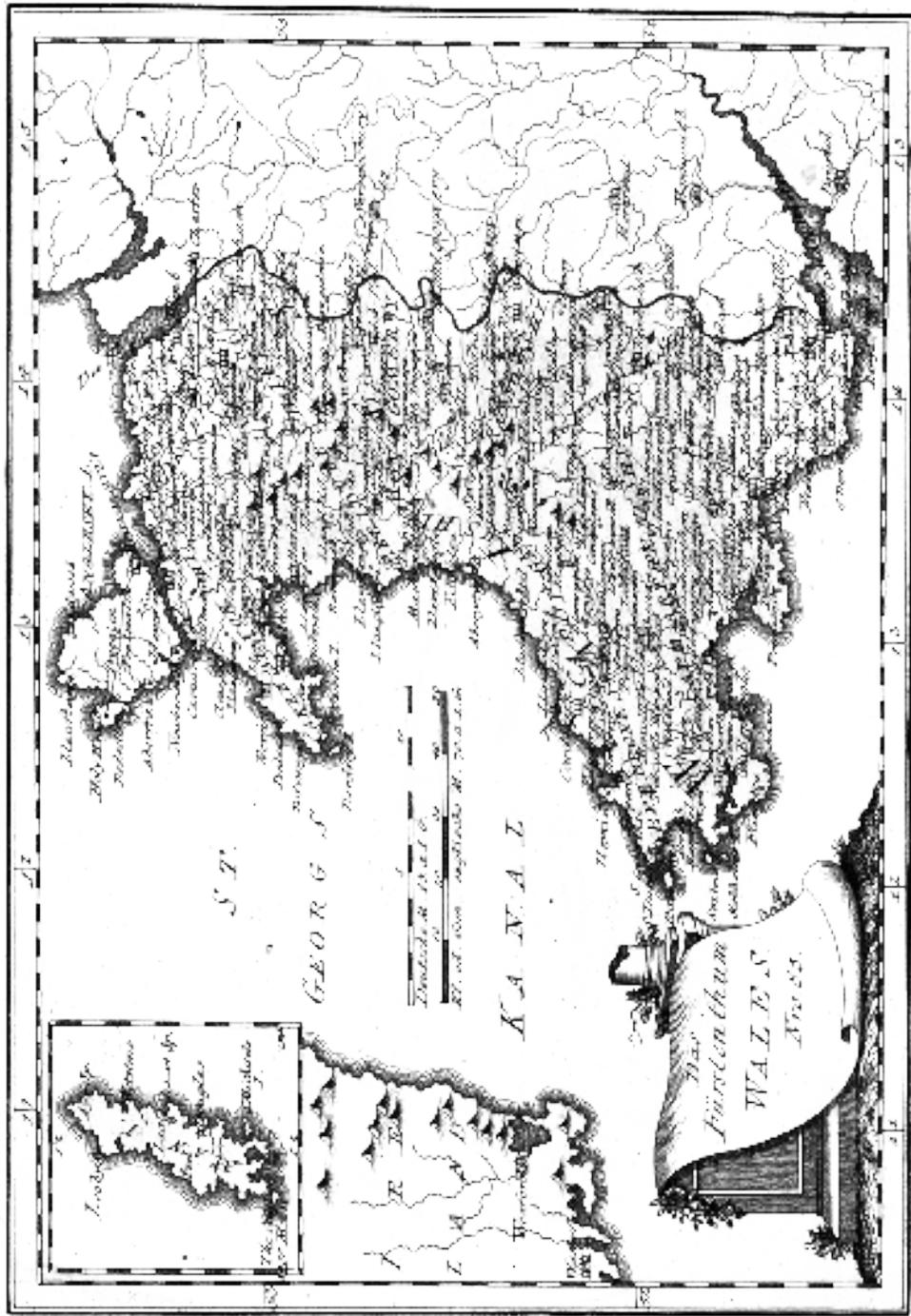


LESSON FOURTEEN

WHAT MUST I DO TO OBTAIN
THE HOPE OF CHRIST?

(PART 2)

-The Quest for Truth-



WHAT MUST I DO TO OBTAIN THE HOPE OF CHRIST? (PART 2)

“JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID TO HIM, ‘TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, UNLESS ONE IS BORN AGAIN HE CANNOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.’ ” - JOHN 3:3

As we begin this lesson, I am reminded of a little boy who was given three shots with a basketball to try and win a grand prize. As the game director took this boy's money, he thought to himself, "This boy is way too small to make this basket." But the little boy stepped up to the foul line, and with all of his effort he threw the basketball only to fall terribly short of his target. The director looked at the young boy's total disappointment and was moved with compassion. The director said to the boy, "Even though you are supposed to shoot from behind the foul line, go ahead and take two steps forward and try again." With excitement the boy smiled and said, "Thank you, thank you!" After moving forward, once again the little boy shot the basketball with all of his might, but it still fell dreadfully short. As the boy looked and saw the embarrassing results of his best effort, he was instantly drawn to tears as he considered the impossibility of being able to win the grand prize. As the director looked at the boy's tear-filled eyes, he thought to himself, "Should I let the boy come right up under the basket?" After much consideration, the director told his little friend, "Please come all the way up to the basket and try again." In shock, the little boy wiped his tears and excitedly stepped up underneath the basket. After bouncing the ball once, the brave little boy shot the basketball one last time. The director nervously looked on as the ball left the boy's hand. The ball hit both sides of the basket and shamefully fell to the ground. This time, both the director and the boy were filled with disappointment. Nevertheless, the director yelled, "Winner! Winner! Winner!" To the boy's shock and delight, the director handed the boy his well sought-after grand prize.

This story perfectly illustrates what has been going on in Christian circles for the last 50 to 100 years. As ministers look with devastating disappointment at their congregations and their inability to meet God's demands for obtaining God's righteousness, they have compassionately but wrongly lowered God's standards. They have made God's righteousness appear to be so easily available that anyone can obtain it. Thus, ministers seek to give away the grand prize of heaven, even though it has not really been obtained. Both ministers and congregations have been deceived. Today, many throughout the world are putting their confidence in a heaven that they have never properly obtained because they never clearly understood the standard to which God has called them.

What does God require?

It is imperative that we look very closely at what the Bible teaches regarding how a man can obtain the righteousness of Christ so that he can be saved from his sin and receive entrance into God's heavenly kingdom. Having looked at what the Bible says a person cannot do to save himself in the last lesson, we now want to look into what the Bible says a person must do to be saved.

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

In Luke 18:18 a rich young ruler asks Jesus a very fascinating question. What question does he ask?

This question regarding how a person can be saved has been asked throughout the history of the world. But here, this question is being asked of Jesus Christ—God in human flesh. Before we look specifically at Jesus' response, I want to look at the response that is given by the disciples to Jesus' demand.

What is the disciples' response to all that Jesus said to the rich young ruler in Luke 18:26?

What is Jesus' response to His disciples in verse 27?

What? Impossible? Whatever Jesus had asked of this young ruler in their conversation, the end result was that it was too great to be accomplished by men; it needed God's intervention. But what did Jesus ask of the rich young ruler? What does Jesus ask of each one of us today? What must man do to be saved from his sin? How can mankind obtain the hope of Christ?

Throughout biblical history, it is evident that God calls or demands all mankind to respond to the truths about Him in five different ways. As we look at these demands, we will be forced to say with the disciples, “Then who can be saved?” These five demands must be heard loudly and clearly so that the gospel can be restored to its biblical roots.

A man must surrender his life.

Remembering the encounter Jesus had with the rich young ruler in Luke 18, we see God’s first demand for those who are to obtain the hope of Christ.

According to this encounter, what did Jesus require of this young man in Luke 18:20–22?

The demand was clearly a demand to surrender his life! In verse 22, Jesus tells the rich young ruler that he needs to do two things to receive the treasure in heaven. One, surrender everything to God by giving it to the poor. Two, come and follow Jesus Christ. Stated differently, the rich young ruler had to get rid of his god of money (his trust in material possessions) and needed to surrender his total allegiance to Jesus Christ. Although this passage is referring specifically to rich people, its application is for all people. This will become evident as we move along.

According to Luke 18:23, what was the ruler’s response?

After the rich young ruler became depressed, what did Jesus say about the rich entering the kingdom of heaven in Luke 18:24–25?

What do you think Jesus meant when He said, “For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God”?

In Biblical understanding, a camel was one of the largest animals, and an eye of a sewing needle was one of the smallest objects. Therefore, Jesus’ statement is showing the impossibility of a rich man saving himself. For the rich man to surrender everything to follow Jesus would be impossible because it would involve his loving Jesus more than loving the things of this world. This is the same thing Jesus says in Luke 14:33.

According to Luke 14:26–27 and 33, what must one do in order to become a disciple of Jesus Christ? (Important to note: The whole context of this section, before and after, is dealing with salvation.)

Again, in Luke 9:23–25, what does Jesus say you must do to enter the kingdom of heaven?

It is important to see that if you are not willing to surrender your life, the Bible says that what is at stake is that you will lose your life and forfeit your own soul. This same concept is also communicated in Matthew 10: 28–38 when Jesus tells His followers in verses 37–38, “He who loves his father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me (surrender) is not worthy of Me.”

What do you think Jesus means by the phrase, “He who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39)?

To lose your life means that you surrender complete control of your life to Jesus Christ. Stated differently, it means you exchange your life's plans, dreams, and aspirations for God to use for His purposes as He chooses. This means you no longer live for your own purposes but for those of Jesus Christ—which is ultimately His own glory (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23).

One further passage is Matthew 13:44–46. In these two parables, what does Jesus say a person will do to obtain the kingdom?

The point of these parables is to show the dramatic response of any person who is able to comprehend the value of God's kingdom. Jesus Christ clearly teaches that any person who sees the surpassing value of the kingdom will be willing to surrender everything for it.

Have you truly seen the surpassing value of the King and His Kingdom, and are you willing to surrender everything for it?

If you remember back to Lesson 5, it was explained that a Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ and is a person who surrenders his whole life to follow after Him. We now recognize that this is not a second step in a Christian's life but is what God demands of all He saves

John MacArthur said it well:

“It means taking up the cross daily, giving all for Christ each day with no reservations, no uncertainties, no hesitations. It means nothing is unknowingly held back, nothing purposely shielded from His lordship, nothing stubbornly kept from His control. It calls for a painful severing of the tie with the world, a sealing of the escape hatches, a ridding oneself of any kind of security to fall back on in case of failure. A genuine believer knows that he is going ahead with Christ until death. Having put his hand to the plow, he will not look back (Luke 9:62). This is how it is when you sign up to follow Jesus Christ.”¹

¹John F. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006) 202.

This is what God is demanding of all who come to Jesus for salvation.

“Everyone who receives Him must surrender to His authority, for to say we receive Christ when in fact we reject His right to reign over us is utterly absurd! It is a futile attempt to hold onto sin with one hand and take Jesus with the other.”²

Therefore, we recognize that the first thing that God demands in order for a person to obtain the hope of Christ is that he surrender his life to Jesus Christ. What do you think about Jesus’ first demand?

A man must be born again.

A second demand that God gives for a person to obtain the hope of Christ is revealed through another encounter Jesus had in John 3. This time it was not with a rich ruler but with a religious ruler named Nicodemus.

The Bible reveals that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night to ask Him a question. Jesus, knowing his mind, answered the question before it was even asked. In light of Jesus’ answer, the question in the religious ruler’s mind must have been, “How can I see the kingdom of God?”

According to John 3:3–5,7, how does Jesus answer Nicodemus?

A man must be born again? What do you think that means?

Literally from the Greek, the word used for “Born again” means “born from above.” According to verse 4, we know that it is not a man going back into his mother’s womb. Also, according to John 3:5–6, we know that being born from above is not a birth of flesh but is a birth of man’s spirit. According to Ephesians 2:1, man’s spirit is spiritually dead,

²Ibid., 210.

but God, due to His love (verse 4), puts life in man's spirit. This is precisely what it means to be born from above. It is the One from above creating spiritual birth within those below. Jesus makes it clear that if a man is to enter into the kingdom of heaven, his spirit must be born from above by God's Spirit. Jesus says that this happens through God's Spirit doing what work? (See John 3:8.)

John Calvin, the great theologian of the Protestant Reformation, said, "By the term born again He means not the amendment of a part but the renewal of the whole nature. Hence it follows that there is nothing in us that is not defective."³ John Calvin asserts that when a man is born again, his inward being is totally changed. Biblically, we know that a person born of God goes from being controlled by sin to being controlled by the Spirit of God.

That is why 1 John 2:29 says that a person born of God practices what habit?

Again, that is why 1 John 4:7 says that a person born of God does what action?

Furthermore, 1 John 5:1 says that a person born from above does what deed?

Therefore, to be born again is to be totally changed and awakened in the inward man by the Spirit of God, thus resulting in belief in God, the practice of righteousness, and a love for people.

In light of this, what was Nicodemus' response in John 3:9?

Clearly, Nicodemus was shocked, and Jesus knew that he would be. That is why He told Nicodemus in verse 7, "Do not be amazed." But why was Nicodemus shocked? Because "if Nicodemus, with his knowledge, gifts, understanding, position, and integrity cannot enter into the promised kingdom by virtue of his standing and works, what happens to anyone who seeks salvation along such lines? Even for Nicodemus, there must be a radical transformation, the generation of a new life, comparable with physical birth."⁴

³D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Pillars New Testament Commentary) (Leicester:InterVarsity Press; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990) 190.

⁴Ibid., 190.

Wow! Are you hearing these words, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). If Jesus Christ is truly saying that mankind will not see God’s kingdom unless he has been changed from within, the question which must be asked is have you been born from above?

Therefore, we recognize that the second thing that God demands for a person in order to obtain the hope of Christ is that he be born again.

A man must repent.

In His very first sermon, Jesus reveals a third demand given for a person to obtain the hope of Christ. In this sermon, recorded in Matthew 4:17, what does Jesus preach?

In Jesus’ last message to His disciples, what did He say would happen to Him (Luke 24:46–47)?

It is important to note that the repentance that Jesus preached was for the forgiveness of sins. This further verifies that repentance is not an option. If one wants his sins forgiven, mankind must truly repent.

This is the same message that was preached by Jesus’ forerunner John the Baptist. What did John the Baptist preach in Matthew 3:2?

This same message was preached by Jesus’ disciples after Jesus’ ascension. This is verified in Acts 2:37 when the crowd in Jerusalem was pierced in their hearts by Peter’s sermon, and therefore asked, “What shall we do to be saved?” According to Acts 2:38, what was Peter’s response?

Peter also said you must repent and believe for the forgiveness of sins. Clearly without repentance, there is no forgiveness of sins. Peter also validates this in 2 Peter 3:9 when he says God “is not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.” Notice the fact that Peter provides two options—either one will perish or one will come to repentance. Therefore, this verse is suggesting that access into heaven is through the act of repentance since perish is referring to eternal separation from God in hell. It is for this reason that in Acts 17:30, Paul proclaims that God is now declaring to all men everywhere that they should repent.

According to Acts 17:30-31, Paul says all people everywhere should repent for what reason?

What the Bible is teaching is that the forgiveness of sins results when a person truly repents. According to Paul’s teaching, this is essential because there has been a future day fixed by God in which He will judge the whole world according to His perfect righteous standards. Knowing about this future judgment, Peter begs his readers to repent that they might have their sins forgiven and thus be saved from sin’s penalty. It is this forgiveness that David speaks of in Psalm 32:1–2, “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose lawless deeds the Lord will not take into account.”

You say, “Wait a second, I see God’s demand to repent, but I don’t really understand what this term ‘repent’ means.” John the Baptist gives us a big hint regarding what true repentance is in Matthew 3:8. In this passage, he confronts the religious leaders for pretending to follow Jesus without demonstrating true repentance.

In Matthew 3:8, what does John tell the religious leaders to do? (See also Luke 3:7–9.)

What John’s statement is suggesting is that true repentance will be evidenced through some sort of outward works that would be manifested by a transformed heart. This is the same repentance of which Paul speaks in Acts 26:18–20. Paul first speaks in Acts 26:18 of how he turned away from darkness and Satan to what two things?

According to Paul, when one repents and turns to God, two things result—forgiveness of sins and a future inheritance. Then, in Acts 26:20, Paul says that he kept declaring that people “should repent and turn to God, performing” what things?

Here we learn that true repentance involves three things:

1. a recognition of sin;
2. a turning away from Satan and sin;
3. a turning to Jesus Christ and righteousness.

The original Greek word for repentance is “metanoia”. According to *Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, the word means “a radical conversion, a transformation of a nature, a definitive turning from evil, a resolute turning to God in total obedience (Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17; 18:3) . . . It affects the whole man, first and basically the center of personal life, then logically his conduct at all times and in all situations, his thoughts, words, and acts.”⁵

Famous preacher, Dr. Martin-Lloyd Jones said, “Repentance means that you realize that you are a guilty, vile sinner in the presence of God, that you deserve the wrath and punishment of God, that you are Hell-bound. It means that you begin to realize that this thing called sin is in you, that you long to get rid of it, and that you turn your back on it in every shape and form. You renounce the world whatever the cost, the world in its mind and outlook as well as its practice, and you deny yourself, and take up the cross and go after Christ.”⁶

These definitions are in exact agreement with the reasons Paul praised God regarding the Thessalonians after they “turned to God from idols” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Anything less than total remorse and abandonment to one’s old lifestyle and total surrender to a new life

5].Behm, “metanoia” in Gerhard Kittel, ed; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 4: 1002

6D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon of the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) 2: 248.

in Jesus Christ is not repentance and will never result in the forgiveness of sins. God's third demand for obtaining the hope of Christ is repentance. Once again, we see that God's demand is great and involves our total allegiance.

The challenging question remains: Have you truly repented and permanently turned from sin to God?

A man must have faith and believe.

The fourth and fifth demands are the most common demands God gives for a person to obtain the hope of Christ. The fourth demand is the demand for one to put his faith in Jesus Christ. The fifth demand is for one to believe in Jesus Christ. Both of these demands are essentially the same and are used interchangeably within Scripture.

Ephesians 2:8 says that mankind is saved through what act?

Romans 3:28 says, "For we maintain that a man is justified," (made righteous) by what, "apart from the works of the Law"?

Again, in Romans 10:9–10 Paul tells us that if you do what two things "you will be saved"?

Then, according to verse 10, what is the result of someone believing with his heart?

Paul's forth and fifth demands are: one must put his or her faith in Jesus Christ and believe in Him. This is further confirmed in Galatians 2:16 when Paul says that a man is made righteous or justified through faith and belief in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 11:6 says the same thing but in a different way.

What does 11:6 say about faith and belief in God?

The Bible teaches that it is impossible to please God without putting our faith in Him. And for this reason, who, according to John 3:15–16, will have eternal life?

These final two demands for faith and belief are very clearly mentioned throughout the whole Bible.⁷ It is this faith and belief that saved Noah (Hebrews 11:7), Abraham (Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:3), David (Romans 4:6), all the Old Testament saints (Hebrews 11:2), and according to the clear teaching of the New Testament, it is what saves each one of us today.

But what does it mean to have faith? What does it mean to believe? This is the question that needs to be answered. Does placing your faith and belief in God simply mean that you are acknowledging facts about Jesus Christ? Or, does saving faith and belief involve more than just intellectual ascent to certain truths about Jesus?

What do you think it means to put your faith (or belief) in Jesus Christ?

Hebrews 11 gives us a clear definition of this faith. According to Hebrews 11:1, what is faith?

⁷Other scriptural passages are John 3:36; 5:24; 6:35, 40, 45, 47; 7:38; 11:25–26; 12:44, 46; 20:31; Acts 10:43; 13:39; Romans 1:16; 3:22; 4:5; 9:33; 10:4.

The Bible teaches that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.” To have conviction and assurance in Jesus Christ means that a person has an immovable confidence in the realities of the truth about Jesus Christ. Hebrews 11:2–40 goes on to reveal that true faith causes mankind to live radical lives of uncompromising, dedicated commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

According to Hebrews 10:38–39, what does a person who has true faith not do?

The Bible teaches that faith does not shrink back or abandon its confidence in God. James 2 gives more insight to the nature of this saving faith and belief. What does James 2:14–17 reveal about the nature of true saving faith?

James’ point is very clear in this section of Scripture. His point is that saving faith manifests itself through action. For example, I think of a teacher who told his classroom that he put a bomb in his desk, and it was going to blow up the whole classroom in 10 seconds. Then, after the class laughed, the teacher began to count down from 10 to 1. When the teacher reached 1, everyone was still sitting in his or her chair. It is clear that they never really believed the teacher. If they really believed him, they all would have run out of the classroom.

Therefore, to believe or have faith is to trust a body of truth to the point of aligning one’s life in light of its content or for a person to live his life in light of the truths he claims to believe. This is exactly what James 2:14–26 is talking about. True faith is faith that acts on the truth it believes. Any other faith according to James 2:19 would resemble the faith of demons who know the truth of God—which is why they shudder—but don’t bend the knee to its authority. Therefore, James concludes in 2:26 that faith that doesn’t result in action (works) is dead. Did you hear that? Faith without works is dead!

“Faith without works is dead” means that faith that does not produce action is not really saving faith. When a person puts his faith in Jesus Christ, he is surrendering his life to the truthfulness of Jesus Christ. Or stated differently, a Christian is a person who believes the truth about Jesus Christ to the point of surrendering his life to His teaching.

Louis Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology* says that there are three elements to genuine faith:

“An intellectual element (notitia), which is the understanding of truth; an emotional element (assensus), which is the conviction and affirmation of truth; and a volitional element (fiducia), which is the determination of the will to obey truth.”⁸

MacArthur says:

“A concept of faith that excludes obedience corrupts the message of salvation⁹. . . Merely knowing and affirming facts apart from obedience to the truth is not believing in the biblical sense. . . Clearly, the biblical concept of faith is inseparable from obedience.”¹⁰

This is why James tells his readers to “prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (James 1:22).

Therefore, we have seen that the fourth and fifth demands of Jesus Christ also call for total allegiance to the person of Jesus Christ. Do you really believe and have put your faith in Jesus Christ?

A man must obey God's commands.

You may say, “Okay, I think I understand, but why are there so many demands?” This is a good question. However, when we look closer at all five of these demands, we see that they are really saying the same thing but from different perspectives or approaches. All five of these demands are calling you to receive the truth about Jesus Christ, be totally changed by them, and live the rest of your life differently in light of them.

However, the message was delivered in different ways depending on the person to whom it was delivered:

⁸Louis Berkof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1939) 503–505.

⁹John F. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006) 172.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 174.

- To those who were living for this world, the message was presented as something that demanded one's whole life, using the term surrender.
- To a self-reliant person, the message was delivered as a miracle, using the term born again.
- To those who were overcome with their own sin, the message was presented as a need to give up one's sin, using the term repentance.
- To a person who was embracing the wrong truth, the message was presented as being an embodiment of truth, using the term faith or belief.

Regardless, the call was the same—a call that said, “Come, understand the truth, be changed by the truth, and surrender allegiance to the truth.” Any other response is unsatisfactory and will not result in one obtaining the incredible hope of Christ's imputed righteousness, which Jesus' life, death, and resurrection has freely provided. Any other demand is a false demand and will result in one thinking that he has obtained the grand prize of heaven, when in reality he has not.

THOUGHTS TO CONTEMPLATE

How about you? When you look at your life, have you responded to God's demands?

Have you surrendered your life to Christ?

Has God caused you to be born again from within?

Is it evident by your new lifestyle that you have repented of your sins?

Would your friends testify by your lifestyle that you truly believe and have faith in the person of Jesus Christ?

“Okay, hold on. I am confused. I thought you said that we were not saved by our works; aren’t these demands works? After all, you are telling me that I have to do something, aren’t you? If these are works, are we saved by our works or not saved by our works?” These questions are the focus of our final lesson.

LOOKING FORWARD

PREVIEW OF THE NEXT STUDY

In the next study, we want to look into the following questions: How can we meet God’s demands in light of our problem of sin? If we are in bondage to sin and don’t seek after God, how are we able to come to Him in repentance, faith, and belief? By what means is a man able to meet the demands that God has set forth? Are my allegiance, being born again, repentance, faith, and belief all works of man or God? What should I do practically to deal with my sin problem? These are some of the questions that we want to answer in our final lesson.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What does John MacArthur say about today’s gospel in the beginning of the lesson?

What are the five demands that are given to obtain the hope that Jesus Christ is offering?

What does it mean to be born again?

What is true saving repentance?

What does it mean to believe or have faith?

What do you think Jesus means in Luke 18:27?

Why does God give so many different demands?

What have you done with the demands Jesus Christ has put on you?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Luke 18:18

¹⁸A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

Luke 18:26–27

²⁶They who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷But He said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.”

Luke 18:20–25

²⁰“You know the commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” ²¹And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.” ²²When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” ²³But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. ²⁴And Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Luke 14:26–27, 33

²⁶“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. . . .”

³³“So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”

Luke 9:23–25

²³And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. ²⁵For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?”

Matthew 10:28–39

²⁸“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰But the very hairs of your ³¹head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows. ³²Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is heaven. ³⁴Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household. ³⁷He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”

Matthew 13:44–46

⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

John 3:3–8

³Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” ⁵Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

1 John 2:29

²⁹If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

1 John 4:7

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 5:1

¹Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

John 3:9

⁹Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be?”

Matthew 4:17

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Luke 24:46–47

⁴⁶And He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Matthew 3:2

²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Acts 2:38

³⁸Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

2 Peter 3:9

⁹The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Acts 17:30–31

³⁰“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, ³¹because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

Matthew 3:8

⁸“Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance.”

Luke 3:7–9

⁷So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father,’ for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Acts 26:18–20

¹⁸” ‘. . . to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’ ¹⁹So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.”

Ephesians 2:8

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. . . .

Romans 3:28

²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Romans 10:9–10

⁹. . . that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Galatians 2:16

¹⁶Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

Hebrews 11:6

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

John 3:15–16

¹⁵ . . . so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. ¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Hebrews 11:1

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 10:38–39

³⁸“But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”

³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

James 2:14–26

¹⁴What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. ¹⁸But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” ¹⁹You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²²You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned

to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead..



LESSON FIFTEEN

WHAT MUST I DO TO MEET
GOD'S DEMANDS?

-The Quest for Truth-



WHAT MUST I DO TO MEET GOD'S DEMANDS?

“FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD; NOT AS A RESULT OF WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE MAY BOAST. FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS FOR GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD PREPARED BEFOREHAND SO THAT WE WOULD WALK IN THEM.” - EPHESIANS 2:8–10

In 1867, John Newton wrote the classic hymn “Amazing Grace.” This famous song begins, “Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found/Was blind, but now I see”. These words are sung all throughout the world today, and in many ways, this song is the anthem of the Protestant church. However, very few today have really stopped to understand the significance of its meaning. What does John Newton mean when he says, “I once was lost but now I am found”? What does Newton mean when he says, “I...Was blind but now I see?” How does grace relate to John’s being found? How does grace relate to John now seeing? What is so sweet about the sound of amazing grace?

In the last lesson, we unfolded God’s five demands for all who are to come to Jesus Christ and obtain the hope that He is offering. We discovered that if any man is to obtain the righteousness of Jesus Christ, he must have genuine faith or belief. If any man is going to have the death of Jesus Christ pay the penalty for his sin, he must truly repent of his sin and turn to Jesus Christ. If any man is going to be considered a follower of Jesus Christ, he must surrender his life to Jesus Christ. If anyone is to enter the kingdom of heaven, he must be born again.

Confused?

Biblically, God’s five demands of surrendering, being born again, repentance, faith, and belief are foundational to one being saved from sin and being reconciled to God. If a person does not do these five demands, he will not be saved. But how does a man meet these demands? Aren’t these demands actions that are done to find favor with God? These demands sound like works that we do, right? Are we saved by our works or not saved by our works? These are some of the questions that we want to address in this final lesson.

THOUGHTS TO STUDY

In Lessons Nine and Ten, we discovered the nature and effects of sin. In Lesson Nine, we learned that sin is an evil power that controls the inward being of every human person. We came to understand that man's inner-person is not able to act freely (Romans 6:6–7; 17–18, 22; 7:13–14, 24), but is under sin's control, dominion, power, and authority.

In Lesson Ten, we learned that sin causes all men to be blinded to understanding spiritual things, powerless to seek after God, unable to do good, and incapable of fearing God (Romans 3:11–18; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:7; Ephesians 2:1–3; Titus 3:3; Ephesians 4:17–18).

However, in Lesson Fourteen, we were given five demands that Jesus requires of all men in order to be saved. The question that one must ask when comparing these two chapters is this: If one is in bondage to sin and is incapable of understanding and seeking after God, how is he able to carry out these five demands? After all, if man does not fear God, how can he surrender to Him?

If man does not understand spiritual things, how can he put his faith and belief in something he does not understand? If a man is in bondage to sin, how can he repent of sin that he loves?

How would you answer these questions?

Is it Impossible?

The answer to all these questions is found in Luke 18:24–25. What is Jesus' point in this passage?

The point of Luke 18:24–25 and the answer to the above questions is that mankind does not and cannot fulfill these God-given demands. They are impossible for man to do. It is actually impossible for man to save himself. Mankind does not have the ability within himself to surrender his life to Christ, to be born again, to repent, to have faith, or to believe.

Although these are works that God demands, mankind cannot fulfill them. Sin is the barrier that hinders mankind from fulfilling these demands. No matter how hard man strives after these things, he is unable to fulfill God's requirements for salvation apart from God's intervention. That is the reason man cries out when he realizes his condition, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24).

Does God give salvation?

But what is the hope for such a dreadful and depressing situation? Jesus gives us the answer in Luke 18:26–27. After the disciples realized that Jesus was saying that it is impossible for mankind to be saved (Luke 18:24–25), what was the next logical question that they asked according to verse 26?

According to verse 27, what is Jesus' response to the disciples' question, "Then who can be saved?" (See also Matthew 19:26 and Mark 10:27.)

What is IMPOSSIBLE with people is POSSIBLE with GOD!

What do you think Jesus is saying here?

In this verse, Jesus is revealing two truths:

1. It is impossible for man to save himself.
2. Salvation is only possible through God.

Darrell Bock comments on this passage by responding:

“Jesus answers the dilemma of who can be saved: the human situation is not hopeless because of God’s power. What is impossible is possible with God. This response acknowledges the impossibility of anyone—rich or poor—saving oneself. Salvation is in the hands of a powerful God who is able to effect the needed change of perspective. In replying this way, Jesus gives the divine side of the picture of humanity and faith, as he notes without details that God is able to change the human heart and its orientation toward life.”¹

Therefore, for mankind to come to salvation, God must intervene. This truth is seen all throughout the pages of Scripture.

In Ephesians 2:1–3, we see that mankind is dead in his sins. The result of mankind being dead in his sins according to verse 2 is that man walks “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air,” or, in other words, in accordance with Satan.

If this is the case, according to Ephesians 2:4–5, how does a man go from being dead in his sins (v.1) to being alive in Christ?

Ephesians 2:4–5 says that God makes us alive. Wow! Unbelievable! Why does He make us alive? Verse 4 gives us two reasons why God makes us alive: 1) because He is rich in mercy; 2) because He has great love for us.

Therefore, according to Ephesians 2:8, by what are we saved?

¹Darrell I. Bock, (Luke 9:51–24:53), *Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994) 1487.

Salvation is by grace. That's why Ephesians 2:9 tells us that salvation is not according to works so that no man can boast. Furthermore, Ephesians 2:10 declares what truth regarding God's dealings with mankind?

These same truths found in Ephesians are also found in Titus 3:3–5. Paul reveals that all mankind before salvation was foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, and spending their lives in malice and hate until what two things appeared? (See Titus 3:4.)

After God's kindness and love appeared, what happened to this sin-enslaved man? (See Titus 3:5.)

Notice very clearly that in the midst of man's hopelessness, God came and saved him, not on the basis of his deeds, not on the basis of his righteousness, but in accordance with God's mercy. He saved mankind on the basis of his mercy by means of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit which he richly poured on the object of His love.

Therefore, Titus 3:7 says that men are justified by what gift?

There is a third passage that reveals these same truths.

Colossians 1:21–22 says that God delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son. Despite the fact that we were alienated and hostile to God, what does Colossians 1:21–22 reveal that God did for believers?

What amazing truth is revealed for those who were dead in their transgressions and sins according to Colossians 2:13?

The Bible teaching here reveals that it is God who makes man spiritually alive or causes man to be born again. It is God who causes our sins to be forgiven. It is God who pays the penalty for man's sin and gives him salvation. That is why in Romans 6:17–18, Paul says: “Thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin,² God accomplished what work?”

Therefore, it is God who sets man free from sin, and it is God who makes man a slave of righteousness. And it is God who makes believers obedient from the heart. That is why John 6:44 declares what truth?

The Bible is clear that God does the work of saving mankind and sets him free from his inward problem of sin. If this truth were not profound enough, Jesus declares in John 8:36 that when the Son sets you free from sin, “you will be free indeed.”

One great example of God's saving work is found in the life of the apostle Paul. In I Timothy 1:12–14, Paul thanks God because even though he was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent aggressor, God showed him what two things?

When you look at Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus in Acts 9, you realize the truthfulness of Paul's testimony. In this account, he does nothing for his salvation. It was given to him as a gift motivated by the love, mercy, and grace of God.

² In Greek, this is a passive verb; meaning that the person was not the one enslaving himself but that it was sin that had him enslaved. Note: Verse 18 says that we have been freed from sin. This word for freedom is a passive verb suggesting that it is God who takes the initiative and frees us. This same truth is being communicated in verse 22.

Salvation is a gift?

The Bible is clear that salvation is a gift motivated by grace. This grace is independent from man doing anything. In Romans 3:24, by what act are we justified (made righteous)?

What gift in Romans 5:15 is abounded to the many?

Additionally, in Romans 5:17, Paul writes that "...those who receive..." what two things "will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ"?

Notice man receives both the abundance of grace and the gift of God's glorious righteousness. It is for this reason that Romans 6:23 reveals that "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life." Let's think this through. If I say that a gift is free, what does that mean?

Salvation is a free gift, meaning the gift is not something we need to earn, buy, or manipulate to receive. God gives salvation out of love for His own. He is motivated for no other reason. This is exactly Paul's point in Romans 5:5-8.

From where do faith, belief, being born again, surrender, and repentance come?

You say, "Wait a second! Are you saying that salvation is 100 percent from God, including one's ability to surrender his life to Christ, be born again, repent, have faith, and believe?"

This is exactly what the Bible teaches. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith..." and this faith is a _____, "not as a result of _____."

Therefore, we see that faith does not originate in man, but it originates in God.

Not only is faith a result of the great mercy of God, but according to 1 Peter 1:3, what has God caused us to be?³

Therefore, God not only gives faith, but he also causes one to be born again. The same can be said regarding repentance, according to Acts 11:18 which says that God is the one who grants “repentance that leads to life.”

This is why Paul, in 2 Timothy 2:25, tells Timothy to be gentle in correcting others in opposition, if perhaps God may do what action?

It is God who grants repentance because man is in bondage to his sin and is unable to repent, nor does he even want to do so. Regarding belief, Philippians 1:29 says what two things have been granted by God?⁴

Philippians 1:29 reveals that belief is also from God. You see, all five of God’s demands for salvation are granted as a result of God’s work in the sinner. It is for this reason that Philippians 1:6 makes it clear that it is God who begins the good work of salvation in us, and it is God who will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Charles Wesley in his hymn “And Can It Be That I Should Gain” put it this way:

“Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature’s night. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray; I woke the dungeon flamed with light! My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee. Amazing love, how can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me!”

You see, “We loved God because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). We don’t meet halfway. We don’t even meet a part of the way. In fact, we are running the other way. God comes to us. He causes us to be born again, to put our faith and belief in Him, and to repent and surrender our lives to Him.

³If you look at Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus closely, you will find that Jesus tells Nicodemus in verse 8 that God and God alone, through His Spirit, is the one who causes mankind to be born again (since the Spirit blows where it wishes). It is for that reason Nicodemus responds by saying, “How can these things be?” (John 3:8–9).

⁴As you look as this concept of suffering, you need to know that it is a part of the Christian life. It is something that God allows for our spiritual growth (James 1:2–4; Romans 5:3–5), and it is something that God allows to make His name known. The Bible is clear that when you come to Christ, you will suffer. (See also Romans 8:17, Acts 14:22.)

Where then is boasting?

Salvation is all of God and none of us. That is why Paul said in Romans 3:27, “Where then is boasting? It is excluded.”

Again, in Galatians 6:14, “May it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 1:30, Paul says, “By His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, just as it is written, ‘LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.’”

The gospel shuts every mouth and makes all accountable to God (Romans 3:19, Galatians 3:22). The only response we can give to these truths is, “Wow! God, help us!” One of the most powerful poems ever written to depict the soul’s journey to find the truth about Jesus Christ was written by an anonymous poet. It reads:

O long and dark the stairs I trod
With trembling feet to find my God
Gaining a foothold bit by bit,
Then slipping back and losing it.

Never progressing; striving still
With weakening grasp and faltering will,
Bleeding to climb to God, while he
Serenely smiled, unnoting me.

Then came a certain time when I
Loosened my hold and fell thereby;
Down to the lowest step my fall,
As if I had not climbed at all.

Now when I lay despairing there,
Listen... footfall on the stair,
On that same stair where I afraid,
Faltered and fell and lay dismayed.

And lo, when hope had ceased to be,
My God came down the stairs to me.⁵

⁵John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Romans 1–8, (Chicago: Moody Press, 2011) XIII.

What should I do?

You say, “Wait! If salvation is all of God, is there any responsibility that I have in God giving me salvation?” The answer to this question is, “Yes!”

What does the Bible say that you should do in Luke 13:24?

The Bible says in Proverbs 8:17, that those who diligently seek God will do what?⁶

The Bible calls every unbelieving soul to diligently seek God. How are we to “strive to enter the narrow gate” and seek God? The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:23 that we are born again through what source?

The Bible reveals that we are born again through the living and enduring Word of God. Again, the Bible says in Romans 10:17 that “faith comes from” what action?

So, our faith will come through sitting under the Words of Christ, or according to the context of Scripture, through the hearing of God’s Good News (Romans 10:15). That is why Paul said in Romans 1:16 that he was “not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation.” You see, this message that has been given in these lessons has power to bring about salvation.

Each of us needs the power of God to save us, and the Bible reveals that this power is in the gospel about God. This power of God contained in the gospel can overcome the power of sin in each one of our hearts and set us free from sin and death. Therefore, if we have never been born again, we need to seek God by seeking to understand His gospel.

Remember what Hebrews 4:12 says: “The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Therefore, it is this “Word of God” that can save you as you seek God through it.

⁶See also Deuteronomy 4:29; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Matthew 7:8.

There is one other passage that gives us advice regarding this subject. Luke 18:9–14 recounts a parable about some religious people, “who trusted in themselves that they were righteous,” and it contrasts it with a sinful tax collector.

In the parable in Luke 18:11–12, what does Jesus reveal about how the religious man prayed?

But then, Jesus speaks of the tax collector who knew of his sinful condition, and, therefore, would not even lift his head to heaven. What did he cry out in Luke 18:13?

Ironically, Jesus reveals that because of his self-righteousness, the religious man could not see his need for Christ, whereas the tax collector fully recognized his inability to stand in God’s presence. As a result, he was overcome with his unworthiness in light of God’s supreme holiness. Whereas the religious man saw no need to pray for his own lost condition, the sinfully rebellious man saw no hope apart from crying out for the mercy of God.

Therefore, what does Luke 18:14 say about the result of the sinful tax collector’s cry for mercy?

Jesus closes his parable by saying, “He who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” You see, that is the point. Jesus told us when He was here that He did not come for the healthy but for the sick. He tells us that all those who are sick and truly call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But those who never take their lost condition seriously and are self-sufficient, not recognizing their need for the salvation that God has provided, are left without any hope.

THE QUESTION TO CONTEMPLATE

Remember, Psalm 51:17 says, “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” And Psalm 34:18 reads, “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Additionally, Matthew 5:3 says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Philippians 3:3 makes it clear that the true believers are those “who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”

You say, “I am already broken and in full recognition of my sinfulness and my need for God to change me. What should I do?” The answer is, “Repent!” Put your faith in Jesus Christ. Confess your sin with your mouth and believe on the Lord to save you (Romans 10:9). Surrender your life to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

When you recognize these things have been done from your heart, and an eternal change has taken place toward sin. Rejoice knowing that God “has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you who are protected by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5).

LOOKING FORWARD

What’s next? Well, for all of you who have gone through this journey, you now know the heart of Christianity. Some will say, “That’s great, but I don’t believe it.” I appreciate your walking this journey with us! I pray that God will lead you to find rest for your soul. Please, just remember “to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, will receive wrath and indignation” (Romans 2:8).

However, if you have come to believe and put your faith in Jesus Christ, I encourage you to take the next steps.

First, you need to make a public confession that Jesus is going to reign in your life instead of sin. Biblically, this confession is displayed through baptism (Matthew 3:6; 28:19; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; 9:18; 16:15).

Second, you need to find a Christian church that is very committed to teaching the Bible. However, be careful! There are many churches that claim to be committed to the Bible but are not biblical at all. If you need help finding a church, please feel free to email us at admin@sosministries.com.

Third, you need to stop saturating your mind with all negative influences that will hinder you from obeying Jesus Christ (influences such as friends, music, television programs, and advisors—(Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 4:14; 13:20; 14:7; 1 Corinthians 15:33)).

Fourth, you need to start studying the Word of God (Psalm 1:2; 19:7–14; 119:9–11; Joshua 1:8; 1 Peter 2:2).

These four things will help you grow “like a tree planted by the streams of water” and will cause you to prosper in whatever you do (Psalm 1:3; Joshua 1:8).

For those of you who are already Christians, I pray that this has aided you to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Our prayer is that this has helped fill in some cracks in your foundation and will aid you in your knowledge and proclamation of God.

This book is intended as a tool to lead you to Scripture to see and understand the heart of Christianity. But, the journey to the heart of Christianity is only the beginning of the pilgrimage. The end of the pilgrimage is the heavenly city in which our glorious Savior lives eternally. The Word of God to which we have sought to point you is sufficient to carry you all the way home.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

What did John Newton mean when he penned the words “Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see.”?

What was Jesus saying in Luke 18:24–25?

What was Jesus saying in Luke 18:26–27?

How can a man fulfill God's demands to repent, believe, have faith, be born again, and surrender his life if he is in bondage to his sin?

How is a person who is dead in his sin to be made alive or made freed from sin's death?

What does the Bible mean when it says that salvation is a gift from God?

From where does the ability come to surrender one's life to Christ, be born again, repent, have faith, and believe?

Can a person who is saved boast in anything pertaining to his salvation? Why is this true?

Biblically, what four responsibilities does an individual have who desires to be saved?

If I choose not to believe in the Bible teachings, what should I remember?

If I am going to follow Jesus Christ, what four things should I start doing right away?

**For more helpful tools, including a study on Romans 1–8,
please visit www.sosministries.com.**

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Luke 18:24–27

²⁴And Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶They who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷But He said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.”

Ephesians 2:1–5

¹And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved). . . .

Ephesians 2:8–10

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Titus 3:3–7

³For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, ⁵He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Colossians 1:13

¹³For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. . . .

Colossians 1:21–22

²¹And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, ²²yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.

Colossians 2:13–14

¹³When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Romans 6:17–18

¹⁷But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

John 6:44

⁴⁴“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”

John 8:36

³⁶So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

1 Timothy 1:12–14

¹²I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, ¹³even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:24

²⁴...being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...

Romans 5:15

¹⁵But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

Romans 5:17

¹⁷For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:23

²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Peter 1:3

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. . . .

Acts 11:18

¹⁸When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.”

2 Timothy 2:25

²⁵. . . with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the Truth.

Philippians 1:29

²⁹For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. . . .

Luke 13:24

²⁴“Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”

Proverbs 8:17

¹⁷“I love those who love me; And those who diligently seek me will find me.”

1 Peter 1:23

²³ . . . for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. . . .

Romans 10:17

¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Luke 18:9–14

⁹And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

**I want to personally thank you
for persevering through this study.
May God's grace abound in your life!**

