



THE RESCUE

BIBLICAL LESSONS FOR THE HELPLESS, HURTING & HUNGRY

THE RESCUE

Copyright © 2015 by Campus Ministry International

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from the author.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Cover and Interior Design: Jeremy Hart (Hart Creative + Design)
Written by: Paul Records



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Lost and Found.....4

LESSON ONE

The Bible...Why Does It Matter?.....6

LESSON TWO

A Bible Breakdown.....14

LESSON THREE

A World of Gods.....22

LESSON FOUR

What Can Jesus Do for Me?.....28

LESSON FIVE

Save Me, Jesus.....35

LESSON SIX

The Hope of the Holy Ghost.....42

LESSON SEVEN

Things to Come.....47

LESSON EIGHT

A Life That Matters.....53



INTRODUCTION

LOST AND FOUND

It is likely that we all remember misplacing or losing a valuable object. Very often, we are able to find what was lost. However, sometimes what is lost stays lost forever.

In elementary school, there is a place where lost objects accumulate. If something is found and the owner is unknown, it is put in a box or on a shelf labeled “Lost and Found.” This phrase tells us two things: First, that it is the location of many lost objects. Second, this phrase illustrates the purpose of the box or the place on the shelf. It is where we go to recover what was lost.

This curriculum has been designed to connect with unchurched college students that have little to no prior knowledge of God or the Bible. In the following eight lessons, we at Campus Ministry International pray that the hurting, helpless, and hungry find hope. We desire that with these lessons as a resource, the lost will be found.

Hungry souls do not have to lie in a box or remain on a dusty shelf in a closet. There is a Savior searching, looking, and reaching for students on every college campus in America and around the world.

A WORD TO TEACHERS

If you are a CMI leader, this curriculum is dedicated to you. May it support and supplement your ministry and Bible study efforts. Each lesson is packed with content. In fact, if taught all the way through the average length of each lesson would be around one hour and fifteen minutes. We recognize that may be longer than a normal campus Bible study. That is why we recommend you personalize each lesson for your specific needs. Each lesson is broken down into sections. Therefore, leaders can be free to teach the sections that are most beneficial to their group.

The job of every teacher is to communicate any given material clearly and precisely. The following eight lessons were written so they can be used verbatim when teaching. Scattered throughout, you will find discussion prompts and key points. They are there to provide deeper context or further discussion about a particular topic. Also included in the bottom margins are footnotes with extra notes and citations. You may choose to share them with your students or leave them as extra material.

As you stand to speak, remember to accomplish the following objectives. They will increase your effectiveness as a communicator, provide a standard of excellence, and make it easier for your students to remember the material.

BE PREPARED

Before you attempt to convey the material in The Rescue, study the curriculum as a whole. Make written notes on your copy and highlight points that stick out to you. Before you begin, consider the setting for your class. Will it be a classroom, auditorium, kitchen table, or living room? Ensure that you have enough chairs for your students and provide pens or pencils if the need arises.

- View the handouts before you pass them out so that you will be familiar with the content.
- Encourage your students to follow along and give time at the end of the session to discuss what was covered.
- Be sure that all of your students understand the questions and are able to fill in the blanks provided on the handouts.

You may even consider writing certain things on a chalkboard or whiteboard, or possibly displaying the PowerPoint included with this curriculum if the technology is available. Also be sure to remain aware of who you are teaching. Stay after each session and mingle with your audience. If certain people are new to the Bible, consider spending more time on certain passages. Make yourself available to answer any questions that arise.

BE PRAYERFUL

If we desire to have a lasting influence and make any spiritual impact on people, we must have the help of Heaven. The week before the course begins, spend extra time in prayer. Clean out your heart in repentance and ask Jesus to guide and direct your thoughts. Pray that your students will understand and remember what they hear. Begin and end each session with a time of prayer.

It is likely that as Jesus leads, certain individuals will express a desire to know more or possibly experience a spiritual new birth if they have not done so already. Prepare your heart to respond if this happens and be ready to tell them about repentance, baptism in Jesus' name, and what it is like to be filled with the Holy Ghost. In every situation, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

BE PASSIONATE

With a topic like God's Holy Word, we should not act as if it is common. The Bible is more than a book; it is a living Word. As you study it, teach it, and explain it, do so with passion. Be enthusiastic about the privilege of telling college students about its truths. With faith, believe that Jesus will anoint you to rescue those that are lost on your campus. You have what it takes. Your campus is waiting.



LESSON ONE

THE BIBLE...WHY DOES IT MATTER?

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: Matthew 24:35, Psalm 119:89

KEY MISSION: To establish the Bible as the infallible Word of God.

Our subject, the Holy Bible, is matchless. No other text considered by a people to be sacred can even compare. It towers far above the Vedic Texts of Hinduism, the writings of Confucius, the Book of Mormon, and every best seller (religious or otherwise) that has ever or will ever be written. Even apart from its divine inspiration, the Bible is unparalleled in its formation, construction, and prophetic power. Unlike the Qur'an, it was written by multiple people over many lifetimes that were for the most part unaware of each other's existence and the fact that their writings would later be assembled into one book.

In the sixth century, Muhammad, the founder of Islam, wrote what he considered to be "revelations" from God. Until his death in AD 632, he lived and conquered as the ultimate prophet of Allah (God), with presumed authority and revelation greater than that of Abraham, Moses, and even Jesus. His writings form the *Qur'an*, the scriptures of Islam. After Muhammad, considered by Muslims to be "God's chosen one," died in poor health at the age of sixty-two, he never spoke another word.

A QUICK COMPARISON

Qur'an – 114 *surahs* (chapters) and approximately 6,000 verses written by one man in one lifetime.

The Bible – Nearly **40** individual writers on **3** different continents in **3** different languages wrote **3,566,480** letters, **810,697** words, **31,175** verses, **1,189** chapters, and **66** books over **1,500** years to produce 1 book, harmonious and unique in its continuity.¹

Even more spectacular than this incomparable construction is the element of **prophecy** intertwined within the biblical text. No other book uses the past to show the future, nor paints the horizon of the future with such vivid and illuminating detail. Even further, no other religious text describes a God who still lives and speaks to individuals.

¹ These numbers are according to the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. It should also be noted that the numbers of letters, words, and verses depend on which edition of the KJV is used.

No other sacred text has done more to uplift human welfare or social progress than the Bible. Not only did Jesus revolutionize human thinking in the Roman era, but every era since. As teacher H. I. Hester writes, “From the Bible we have learned the true ideals and values of the social order. From the Bible we have learned the dignity and worth of personality. Jesus, whose teachings are recorded in the Bible, was the first to give the world the idea of the brotherhood of man. The Bible’s teachings have contributed immeasurably to the uplift of women and children. The Bible has done more to eradicate human slavery than all other books combined. Because of the truth that the Bible teaches, all the charitable institutions that minister to underprivileged and needy people have come into existence.” ²

No other text ever produced has done more to usher hope to the hearts of humanity. Truly we can declare, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

IT’S MORE THAN A BOOK

Around 1500 BC, Moses wrote and compiled the Book of Genesis. Nearly 1,000 years later, during the latter half of the fifth century BC, the prophet Malachi wrote the final book in our current Old Testament. With the New Testament, it forms the Holy Bible. Divided into two testaments, these sixty-six books form the infallible Word of God. Apart from the books contained in the Bible, there are no other divinely inspired Scriptures.

Given of God, these sixty-six books contain a map for living and the key to eternal salvation. Through the ages, God anointed certain men like Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, John, Luke, and Paul to write His Word. This Word is a guidebook and vessel through which the people of the world can find eternal purpose and meaning.

Many do not know that the Bible made some outrageous claims when it was first written that were later established as scientific facts:

- *The life-sustaining role of blood (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:14).*
- *The vital role of the heart in blood circulation (Proverbs 14:30).*
- *That the earth hangs in outer space (Job 26:7).*
- *The roundness of the earth (Isaiah 40:22).*
- *The immense number of stars, far more than the eye can see (Genesis 22:17).*
- *The water cycle, in which rain on land originates in water evaporated from the ocean (Ecclesiastes 1:7).*

These examples illustrate that the Bible is more than simply a book with ancient stories. It is full of the wisdom of nature, anatomy, and science.

- **DISCUSS:** Do you think there is a connection between the Bible and science? Does Scripture validate or undermine scientific discovery?

Not only is the Bible the Word of God—inspired, powerful, and true—but it is also forever strong. The Word of God is never weak and will always be trustworthy.

“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89).

The Word of God is forever established in Heaven. It has an eternal foundation, settled and established by the almighty Creator and maker of the universe.

In John 10:35, Jesus tells us that “the scripture cannot be broken.” It cannot be set aside, canceled, or annulled.

² H. I. Hester, *The Heart of the New Testament* (Liberty, MO: The Quality Press Inc., 1972), 8.

The truths, declarations, and promises in the Bible will never let a person down. It's impossible for the Bible to falter or fail. If it did, it would cease to be the infallible, unfailing, foolproof, watertight, steady, solid, and perfect Word of God. Even when all other things falter and fail, it will stand strong. Matthew 24:35 declares that nothing has more power and strength than the Word. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

At the end of time, when every tall building, every great mansion, every polished politician, and every massive mountain has withered away, the Word will be just as strong as it was when it was first spoken. Nothing has the strength to weaken what God says or the wisdom to strip His Word of its truth. It is and always will be forever and eternally strong.

GOD BREATHED

Writing to his young protégé Timothy, who at the time was pastor of the church at Ephesus, the apostle Paul composed a passage that establishes the authority of the Bible:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17, NKJV).

These two verses help us to understand the nature of the Bible, but may also bring some confusion. To understand how something written by men can carry such divine power, we look to the word "inspiration" in verse 16. Because Scripture is inspired of God, it is divine and true.

Interestingly, the biblical context for the word "inspiration" is deeper than its modern meaning. In the modern sense, "to be inspired" means to be encouraged or uplifted by something. Many things can give us a shot of hope or a positive drive: Works of art with unconventional design or passionate and vivid colors inspire us. Songs with beautiful melodies and soft musical rhythms inspire us. People who rise to success and live bold lives in spite of great adversity inspire us. In the modern context, to have inspiration can also mean to have a creative idea like the sudden flash of a lightbulb above your head.

Reaching into history, we find that the biblical context of the word "inspiration" signifies something quite different. The original Greek translation of the word "inspiration" is a compound word, *theopneustos* (Strong's #2315). It is derived from two Greek compound word parts:

1. **theos** - meaning "God"
2. **pneo** - meaning "to breathe or to blow" (the *p* is silent)

Patched together, the word literally means "God breathed." Stating that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, II Timothy 3:16 helps us to understand the divine origin of Scripture. Though it was written by the hands of man, it was divinely breathed into existence by God.

As the various writers wrote the Scriptures, they wrote a mirrored image of what God wrote in them. They were the pens in His hand.

In ancient times when a person wrote, they used a small reed and a quill. A quill was a container that held a water-based ink. Though men of various classes and vocations physically wrote with a reed and quill, they were supernaturally used as the reed to God's quill. They were the instruments through which the ink passed. As they wrote, God breathed into them. Thousands of years later, we have the finished product.

PROVEN BY PROPHECY

We've established that the Bible is a God-breathed book. As keen investigators we now will discover two lines of proof for this fact recorded in history. This will be accomplished by looking at a few of the outrageous claims made by the Bible. These outrageous claims were written hundreds and even thousands of years before they were shown to be true. The Bible is the only book in the world that foretells that future and does so with incredible detail.

ISRAEL BECOMES A NATION – MAY 15, 1948

In May 1948, after much conflict and opposition, Israel became an officially recognized nation. In the years leading up to this historic event, thousands of Jews returned to Israel from every corner of the world. It was as if a giant hand gathered the Jewish people from all over the world and set them into the disputed region. At the eve of the twentieth century there were a little over 80,000 Jews living in Palestine. Today there are over 5,000,000 Jews who call Israel home.³

Apart from a heated political topic, the gathering of Jews into the official nation of Israel in 1948 is fulfilled biblical prophecy. Over 2,500 years before 1948, it was prophesied to occur by prophets in the Old Testament.

In Isaiah 11:11-12, the prophet Isaiah said, "It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people." The Lord will "set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." In Jeremiah 29:14, the prophet Jeremiah delivered a message from God to the Hebrew people: "I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you *again* into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive" (emphasis added).⁴ (For further prophecies on this topic, see Isaiah 43:4-6 and Amos 9:14-15.)

In viewing these Old Testament passages, a question arises: How is it possible that these mere men could speak so accurately about an event to occur 2,500 years in the future? We have their words recorded in the Bible. They make claims that only God could have known.

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM – AD 70

In AD 70, in response to a Jewish uprising, a Roman army led by General Titus besieged the city of Jerusalem. In a short time, the entire city was sacked and destroyed. Titus ordered his troops not to leave one brick in the city upon another. The destruction was total and complete. The Temple in the city was burned to the ground.

Apart from a historical event due to political turmoil between Jews and Romans, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is fulfilled biblical prophecy. Nearly forty years before AD 70, Jesus said it would happen.

Speaking to His disciples at the Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus said, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2). One generation later this prophecy, no doubt still emblazoned upon the tablet of their consciousness, became a vivid and horrifying reality.⁵ Further, in Luke 19, Jesus wept over Jerusalem saying, "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another" (Luke 19:43-44). (To see this tragedy further illustrated, see Matthew 23:37-38.)

³ Statistics taken and updated from the *Exploring God's Word* home Bible study course. Teacher's Manual (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1991), 124.

⁴ Isaiah 11:11 says that God will set His hand again to recover Israel a "second time." The first time He did this was in the years following their Babylonian captivity. Judah was conquered and destroyed in 586 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar. In 538 BC, the Jews were released by the Persians and they returned to Judea to rebuild their homeland. In like manner, God "recovered" the Jews a second time in 1948.

⁵ Hank Hanegraaff, *Has God Spoken?: Proof of the Bible's Inspiration* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 30.

Viewing these scriptural passages, the question arises: How is it possible that Jesus could speak so accurately about an event to occur forty years in the future after His death? We find the answer in II Timothy 3:16, which declares that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

In modern times, not only do we have the gift of hindsight, but we are also not far removed from one of the most significant manuscript finds of the twentieth century. In 1948, a Bedouin shepherd boy found ancient scrolls and manuscript fragments housed in a series of caves a few miles southeast of Jerusalem near the Dead Sea. These ancient scrolls are referred to as the Dead Sea Scrolls. They are significant for many reasons.

First, the Dead Sea Scrolls include a complete copy of the Book of Isaiah, another fragment of Isaiah, and fragments of almost every Old Testament book.

Second, before 1947 the oldest known biblical manuscripts dated back to the Masoretes of medieval times. With the find of the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars had texts 1,000 years older than that. The scrolls and fragments had survived for nearly 2,000 years in the sand.

Third, they were written at the time of Jesus and tell us about the religious and political atmosphere of the time. But most important, the Dead Sea Scrolls (apart from insignificant spelling variations and other small differences) match the Hebrew text that is the basis of today's Old Testament. They predated the Masoretic text by more than 1,000 years, yet they had no significant difference in substance! This shows modern Bible readers that what they read remains pure and has been amazingly preserved from generation to generation.⁶

If God would orchestrate the right men at the right time, and through His divine inspiration birth the Scriptures, wouldn't He also orchestrate history and exercise His sovereignty to preserve those Scriptures? Clearly, the answer is yes.

In short, the Dead Sea Scrolls established what countless people all over the world already knew—that the Bible is just as true as it was when it was first written. It is a valid and unchanging source of the heart and mind of God, and it is trustworthy!

THE PROMISED MESSIAH

For further evidence of the Bible's divine inspiration, we look to the many messianic prophecies it records. In no other religious text considered by a people to be sacred (e.g., the Qur'an, Vedic scriptures of Hinduism, Book of Mormon, the writings of Confucius, etc.) is a spiritual leader prophesied to come almost a century before his birth. Amazingly, in the Old Testament, holy men inspired of God prophesied about the coming of a Messiah. We know this "Messiah" to be Jesus.

The prophet Micah wrote in Micah 5:1 that a "judge of Israel" will come, and when He does people will "smite" Him "with a rod upon the cheek." A verse later, Micah spoke of a small city called Bethlehem and said it would one day be the birthplace of the "ruler" of Israel. "Bethlehem . . . though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). The Messiah that Micah spoke of is Jesus, the judge and ruler of all things.

Over 740 years after these words were spoken, a young virgin named Mary gave birth to a baby boy in a dusty manger in Bethlehem. She and her husband, Joseph, wrapped the child in swaddling clothes. Matthew 2 tells us that wise men came from the East and fell down to worship this baby as the promised King. A little over thirty years later, Jesus was convicted to die on a cross. Mark 15:19

⁶ The Masoretes were early medieval Jewish scribes who are mostly known for adding vowel points into the ancient Hebrew text, which was originally composed of only consonants.

tells us that on the way to His death, soldiers “smote” Jesus on the head with a reed, thus fulfilling Old Testament prophecy.

These two Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Jesus were written hundreds of years before He was born on Earth. Amazingly, there are over 300 Old Testament verses of Scripture that were fulfilled in the lifetime of Jesus alone. In the following chart, ten of these amazing prophecies are illustrated.

10 MESSIANIC PROPHECIES		
Isaiah 40:3	It was prophesied that Jesus would be preceded by a messenger. This was fulfilled in John the Baptist.	Matthew 3:1-2
Isaiah 7:14	It was prophesied that Jesus would be birthed by a virgin. This was fulfilled by Mary.	Matthew 1:18
Isaiah 7:14	It was prophesied that Jesus would be Immanuel, God with us. This was fulfilled in the words of the angel to Joseph.	Matthew 1:23
Zechariah 9:9	It was prophesied that Jesus would enter Jerusalem on a donkey. This was fulfilled in full view of the Jews and Pharisees.	Luke 19:35-37
Psalms 35:11	It was prophesied that Jesus would be accused by false witnesses. In Jewish law, to convict a person to death, two witnesses were needed. When none came forward at the trial of Jesus, the chief priests brought forward two false accusers.	Matthew 26:59-60
Isaiah 53:5	It was prophesied that Jesus would be wounded and bruised. This was fulfilled as He was beaten by Roman soldiers.	Matthew 27:26
Isaiah 53:12	It was prophesied that as Jesus died, He would be numbered with transgressors. This was fulfilled as He was crucified between two thieves.	Matthew 27:38
Psalms 22:17-18	It was prophesied that as Jesus was dying, people would stare at Him. This was fulfilled as He suffered upon the cross.	Luke 23:34-35
Psalms 22:18	It was prophesied that people would rip and gamble for the clothes of Jesus. This was fulfilled when Roman soldiers tore the garments of Jesus in four parts and “cast lots” for the pieces.	John 19:23-24
Amos 8:9	It was prophesied that night would fall in the middle of the day. This was fulfilled the day Jesus died.	Matthew 27:45

When Jesus walked the earth, taught, worked miracles, and was crucified, He fulfilled prophecy after prophecy. The prophet Zechariah even pointed to the exact amount of money Judas would later take to betray Jesus (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 27:1-10).

How is it possible that Old Testament writers (mere men) could speak so accurately and with such detail about the life of one man 700 years before He was born? The claims they made were things that only God could have known. Again, to answer this question we point to II Timothy 3:16 and the fact that the Bible is God breathed. Truly, it is a light in the world.

To declare a thing shall come to pass long before it is in being, and to bring it to pass, this or nothing is the work of God. – Justin Martyr

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Justin Martyr is known to have stated, “To declare a thing shall come to pass long before it is in being, and to bring it to pass, this or nothing is the work of God.” What does he mean by this statement? Do you think the Bible is a strong example of this statement?

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: Matthew 24:35, Psalm 119:89

KEY MISSION: To establish the Bible as the infallible Word of God.

In the Bible . . . nearly 40 individual writers on 3 different continents in 3 different languages wrote 3,566,480 letters, 810,697 words, 31,175 verses, 1,189 chapters, and 66 books over 1,500 years to produce 1 book, harmonious and unique in its continuity.

How is the Qur'an different than the Bible?

In II Timothy 3:16, what does the word "inspiration" indicate?

The span of time between the last Old Testament book (Malachi) and the first New Testament book (Matthew) is how long?

If you were an Old Testament priest, where would you go to experience the presence of God? In what place is the presence of God found in the New Testament?

Imagine you are a Bible scholar lecturing at a university. As your lecture ends, a student raises a hand and asks, "Oh mighty scholar, what leads you to believe that the Bible is *still* trustworthy?" As a "mighty" scholar, how would you respond?

Provide one reason explaining why the Dead Sea Scrolls are significant.



LESSON TWO

A BIBLE BREAKDOWN

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: II Peter 1:21, Luke 24:44

KEY MISSION: To analyze the history, makeup, and parts of the Bible.

Today, the written Word of God is commonly referred to as the “Bible.” In ancient times and as it was being written, the written Word of God had other designations such as the Law, the Book of the Covenant, Sacred Writings, Sacred Books, and Scriptures. All of these terms designated the same thing at different points in history. As the various New Testament writers lived, the “Scripture” they commonly referred to was the Old Testament. In their day, the New Testament was not yet in written form. They were living it.

The word “Bible” is derived from the Greek word “Biblia,” which was used in *reference* to “the books” that are acknowledged as holy, inspired Scripture. It is different from the singular Greek word “Biblion,” which was used to denote any kind of written document. As the collections of Jewish (Old Testament) and Christian (New Testament) texts increasingly came to be considered as one unit, the same plural term in medieval Latin began to be understood in popular usage as a singular term, no longer denoting “the books” but “the book.”⁷ In time, the word “Bible” stuck.

HAS THE BIBLE BEEN CORRUPTED BY TIME?

When talking with skeptics about the validity, truth, and trustworthiness of the Bible, the following three questions are likely to arise:

1. Can we really trust what we read in the Bible to be identical to its original manuscripts?
2. Copies of copies normally have flaws, so how can we really know that the Bible, which has been copied through time, hasn't been corrupted?
3. Isn't it likely that with the sheer number of scribes and copyists that have handled the Bible throughout history, some have inserted their own agendas and ideas into the text?

All of these questions are completely legitimate and must be answered to cast out the doubt held by many. The answers to these three questions will determine whether or not the Bible is really

⁷ *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 78-79.

trustworthy, whether or not it is a valid source of history, and whether or not it is able to stand as a book of divine truth. As we shall see, these questions each have a solid answer, raising the standard of the Bible far above all other sacred texts. In the words of Hank Hanegraaff, author and president of the Christian Research Institute, “Old Testament scribal luminaries ranging from Ezra to the Masorites [*sic*] set an unimaginable standard of excellence in their copyist practices—a standard that should provide us with complete confidence in the Old Testament canon.”⁸ When looking to the New Testament, critics argue that the thousands of variants in manuscripts strip the Bible of its legitimacy. But as scholar Ron Rhodes points out:

Of these 150,000 variants, 99% hold virtually no significance whatsoever. Many simply involve a missing letter in a word; some involve reversing the order of two words (such as “Christ Jesus” instead of “Jesus Christ”); some may involve the absence of one or more insignificant words. Really, when all the facts are put on the table, only about 50 of the variants have any real significance—and even then, no doctrine of the Christian faith or any moral commandment is affected by them.⁹

Looking into history, we find that ancient scribes and copyists held their task in the highest regard. Prior to beginning their work, they washed themselves and put on clean clothes. Jews had such an exalted view of the Old Testament that they perceived the missing of a mere tittle (a microscopic appendage at the end of a Hebrew letter) to be an affront to the holiness of their creator.¹⁰

To explain this point further, consider the exhaustive process by which Scripture was copied by Jewish scribes. In their day there were no computers or typewriters. Everything that was written, and in our case copied, was written by hand, sentence by sentence, word by word, letter by letter.

To prevent errors, Jews developed a series of rules to govern their work. They had two scrolls in front of them: One was a copy of the Scriptures written by an earlier scribe, and the other was blank. Writer Larry Stone points out:

- No word or even a letter could be written from memory. A scribe must have another scroll open before him and pronounce every word and letter out loud before copying it.
- Before writing the name of God, a scribe must reverently wipe his pen and say, “I am writing the name of God for the holiness of His name.”
- Every letter had to have some space around it. If one letter touched another or if a letter was defective because of incorrect writing, a hole, a tear, or a smudge so that it could not be easily read, the scroll was invalidated.
- Each column must have no fewer than forty-eight nor more than sixty lines and must be exactly like the manuscript being copied.¹¹

After manuscripts were completed, a particular kind of an editorial scribe referred to as a Sopher (meaning “counter”) counted every word and every letter.¹² These editors “would also make sure that the middle word on each page of the copy was the same as the middle words on the manuscript being copied.”¹³ In some cases, if mistakes were found that could not be fixed, a manuscript was burned. In other cases for more severe errors, manuscripts were buried in the ground. But even before this laborious process was started, scribes tested their reed pens to ensure that each was writing well.

The contention that careless, capricious copyists created cartloads of clearly contaminated copies simply does not correspond to reality. –Hank Hanegraaff

⁸ Hank Hanegraaff, *Has God Spoken?: Proof of the Bible's Inspiration* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 12.

⁹ Ron Rhodes, “Manuscript Evidence for the Bible's Reliability” © Ron Rhodes, 2012. <http://www.ronrhodes.com> (accessed October 31, 2012).

¹⁰ Hank Hanegraaff, *Has God Spoken?*, 11.

¹¹ Larry Stone, *The Story of the Bible: The Fascinating History of Its Writing, Translation, and Effect on Civilization* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 21.

¹² Hank Hanegraaff, *Has God Spoken?*, 10.

¹³ Larry Stone, *The Story of the Bible*, 21.

Later in time, a group of scribes referred to as Masoretes received the task of copying the Scriptures for future generations. Their efforts were just as meticulous and intensive. In the words of Bible scholar Dr. Kenneth Barker,

The Masoretes developed a system of checks to ensure that every copy was as nearly perfect as humanly possible. . . . They counted the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurred in each book. They noted and recorded the middle letter of the entire Old Testament. They recorded the middle letter on each page and the number of letters and words in each column. They examined every copy of the Old Testament and withdrew from circulation all copies in which any error was discovered.¹⁴

By this arduous system, modern readers can rest assured that the Bible has not lost its originality and can be as trusted as it was thousands of years ago.

WHY DO CERTAIN BIBLES HAVE EXTRA BOOKS?

Interestingly, during the span of time that the sixty-six books of the Bible were written (nearly 1,500 years), other religious books were written as well. Ecclesiastes 12:12 exclaims, “Of making many books there is no end.” This verse of King Solomon teaches that even back in ancient times many different books existed. Today, some of these books are known as the Apocrypha. Many Catholic Bibles contain apocryphal books. They were written during the intertestamental period and first century.

The word *apocrypha* means “hidden.” Those who liked these books believed that their writers were given secret hidden knowledge. Unknown men who did not claim to be divinely inspired wrote them. Much of these books are works of fiction, legends, and are quite mystical fables. One writer points out that “no New Testament writer ever quoted from any of these books as Holy Scripture or gave them the slightest authority as inspired books, even though they often quoted from the Old Testament as Scripture.”¹⁵

- **KEY POINT:** Jesus and His disciples in the New Testament ignored these books and never once even acknowledged their existence. Some of the apocryphal books even have historical errors (see the apocryphal book of Judith).

As long as the Scriptures contained in our Bible have been around, the apocryphal books have existed. Some Bible publishers even place them between the Old and New Testament.

In 1546 a significant movement was sparked within Europe. History calls it the Protestant Reformation. In the Reformation, many Christians stood up and opposed the dominant Roman Catholic Church. It was during this time that the Catholic Church declared the apocryphal books as Holy Scripture at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Roman Catholic Church leaders of the time did this to defend many of their unbiblical beliefs as a response to the Reformation and to justify some of their otherwise “unbiblical” actions. This is why some Bibles have extra books apart from the original sixty-six.

A BOOK OF TWO TESTAMENTS

The Bible has two parts known as “testaments.” These are the Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament records the history of the Hebrew people, also known as Israelites. It contains the revelations of God and His will communicated to the Hebrews before the time of Christ. It follows the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, out of which came the Hebrew people and the promised Messiah.

¹⁴ Dr. Kenneth Barker, “Copying the Old and New Testament Manuscripts,” http://www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/5Bible/TransCopyingTheOTNTManuscripts_Barker.aspx (accessed November 18, 2012).

¹⁵ Ron Rhodes, *The Complete Guide to Bible Translations* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 244.

The Old Testament has thirty-nine units of Scripture called *books*. These books were written during a span of about 1,000 years (c. 1400-400 BC). Originally, the Old Testament books were written mostly in ancient Hebrew and briefly in Aramaic.

The span of time between the last Old Testament book (Malachi) and the first New Testament book (Matthew) is about **400 years**. This length of time is called the **intertestamental period**. In short, it consists of what occurred between the two testaments.¹⁶

The second part of the Bible is called the New Testament and begins with the Book of Matthew. Matthew, along with the other New Testament books, continues and completes the story of the Old Testament. Its main focus is the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. After Jesus died, was buried, and resurrected, He poured out His Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and empowered a group of disciples who laid the foundation of the modern-day church. The New Testament has twenty-seven books written over a span of about fifty years (c. AD 45-95). It was originally written in ancient Greek.

Together, the Old and New Testaments have sixty-six books. The entire span of time in which these sixty-six books were written consists of about 1,500 years.

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN SHORT

As already discovered, the first part of the Bible is called the Old Testament. It was written by a diverse group of individuals.

Moses, a Hebrew who grew up as the son of a pharaoh in Egypt, wrote the first five books of the Old Testament: **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy**. He was a desert shepherd at one point in his life, but eventually God called him to lead the Israelites out of their Egyptian bondage.

Next in the Old Testament is what many refer to as the books of History. They are referred to as such because they record the history of the nation of Israel as it left Egypt and eventually settled in the Promised Land of Canaan. For the most part, these history books are in chronological order.

Joshua, Judges, and Ruth record the history of Israel as it fought to conquer the land of Canaan. They also describe a period of time leading up to the rule of the Israelite kings. **I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, and I and II Chronicles** describe the age of Old Testament history as the Israelites were ruled by kings. Toward the end of their rule, the sin of Israel led it to be conquered by outside nations. After its defeat, the people of Israel were taken into captivity. The books of **Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther** describe the age of Israel's captivity and also its return to Jerusalem.

Next in the Old Testament, we find the books of Poetry: **Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes**, and the **Song of Solomon**. These books contain many proverbs, godly wisdom, and psalms.

Listed last in the Old Testament are the books of Prophecy. These books were written by prophets called by God to serve as His mouthpiece to the people of Israel either before, during, or after their Babylonian captivity. Interestingly, many of their writings are prophetic in nature and foretell events to come in future ages. These books of prophecy are: **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi**.

¹⁶ It is significant to note that the Bible does not record a single event that occurred during the 400 years between the two testaments. This is why some theologians refer to this time as "the 400 years of darkness." History teaches that during this period, the Jewish Maccabees revolted against Hellenistic powers such as Antiochus IV, who persecuted Jewish leaders, slaughtered the Jewish people, and set up an idol of Zeus in the Temple at Jerusalem. The best explanation for the lack of historical coverage by the Bible during this time is because nothing spiritually significant occurred that played into the larger story of the Bible.

When studying Scripture, it is helpful to know who wrote a particular book in the Bible. This information will provide context and deepen a student's understanding of a particular passage. One should also keep in mind that some Old Testament Bible writers used literary assistants. For example, Jeremiah 36:4 records the process by which Jeremiah dictated his words to a scribe (Baruch), who wrote them in a scroll. This is also made clear in the last chapter of Deuteronomy, which records the death and burial of Moses. The first five books of the Bible are attributed to Moses, but it is unlikely that he wrote about his own funeral. This passage was most likely recorded by his successor, Joshua.

Still further, questions arise in the case of I and II Samuel. The prophet Samuel dies in I Samuel 25, so who wrote the rest of the book and II Samuel? Jewish tradition holds that the prophets Nathan and Gad composed the rest of I Samuel and all of II Samuel.¹⁷ This is no stretch of the imagination because one of the requirements of a spiritual leader such as a priest or prophet was to be careful to speak truth, walk in equity, and turn from iniquity (Malachi 2:6). "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 2:7). The individuals whom God chose to record the Old Testament scriptures were men who were fully aware that they handled a Word that was divine and not their own.

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN SHORT

Turning to the New Testament, we find twenty-seven books originally written in ancient Greek. The first five of these books are as follows:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – These four books were named after the men who wrote them. They are called the four Gospels, and each tells of the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They tell the same story, but each from a different perspective.

Acts – This book, also written by Luke, records the Day of Pentecost and shows how Jesus poured out His Spirit upon His believers. It also gives the story of the birth of the church and shows how the disciples went out as missionaries into the world.

Most of the other books of the New Testament were originally written as letters, or epistles, to specific churches. The Book of **Romans** was originally written to the church in Rome, **I and II Corinthians** to the church at Corinth, the Book of Galatians to a series of churches in the region of **Galatia**, the Book of **Ephesians** to the church at Ephesus, **Philippians** to Philippi, **Colossians** to Colossae, and **I and II Thessalonians** to Thessalonica.

Many of these titles are derived from the names of the cities where the churches were located. Other New Testament letters are named after certain church leaders to whom they were originally written (**I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon**). The great missionary and church planter, Paul of Tarsus, wrote most of these letters.¹⁸

Also in the New Testament are "general epistles" written originally to the church as a whole (**Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, I-III John, Jude**). Last in the New Testament is the famed Book of **Revelation**, written by the apostle John (who also wrote the fourth Gospel).

OLD AND NEW COVENANT

To understand the relationship between the Old and New Testament, it is beneficial to consider the human body. Inside our chest and rib cage are the lungs: two light, spongy, and elastic organs. They help us breathe and pump fresh air throughout our bodies. Each part works alongside the other and complements the other's function. The Old and New Testaments do the same for each other. Like

¹⁷ *The Nelson Study Bible* book notes, New King James Version (Thomas Nelson Bibles by Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1997), 505.

¹⁸ The apostle Paul was first a prominent Jewish intellectual. After his conversion, the Lord used his academic abilities and led him to write thirteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament.

two puzzle pieces that fit together, they feed each other's purpose. William Owen Carver writes, "Without the Old Testament, the New Testament could never have been. Given the Old Testament, if its apparent source, significance, and claim were true and genuine, the New Testament had to be. They supplement and explain each other. The Old anticipates the New: the New presupposes and uses the Old. Each in part explains and interprets the other."¹⁹

Everything in the Old Testament points to Christ. In the New Testament, Christ is revealed. The Old Testament laid the groundwork for the future redemption of mankind, and in the New Testament, we find that redemption in Jesus Christ. Everything significant that took place in the New Testament (or will eventually take place) was a fulfillment of that which was prophesied in the Old Testament.

We are able to see what the two testaments really are when we look at what the word "testament" denotes. It simply means a "covenant."

The Old Testament is the old covenant between God and man. The New Testament is the new covenant between God and man. To be saved under the old covenant (in the Old Testament), a person had to sacrifice animal offerings on an altar to be forgiven for their sins. In the new covenant (New Testament), the sacrificial offerings are replaced with the one spotless Lamb, Jesus. He replaced the animal sacrifices of the old covenant with Himself. Now, redemption and the forgiveness of sins are found only in Him.

In the Old Testament, or old covenant, the presence of God was found in a tabernacle or temple. In the New Testament, under the new covenant, the physical wood and stone of the temple is replaced with the body of the believer. Now, the presence of God is able to dwell within the hearts of people.

THE CENTRAL FIGURE OF SCRIPTURE

With what has been told of Scripture today and in ages past, many wonder how it is possible that this book is able to do all of that. Simply, because it introduces you to and connects you with Jesus!

During the time of the New Testament, the Jews divided their Bible (the Old Testament) into three sections:

- *Torah* – the five books of Moses, also known as "the Law"
- *Nevi'im* – the Prophets
- *Kethuvim* – the Writings, also known as "the Psalms"

Adherents to the Jewish religion during the time, as well as the disciples and apostles of Christ, were well aware of this threefold division. The Hebrew Bible has the same books as the Old Testament, just organized in a different manner. This is why in His last instructions before His ascension, Jesus explained:

"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me" (Luke 24:44, NKJV).

By referring to the common division of "the Law," "the Prophets," and "the Psalms," Jesus identified the entire Old Testament in Himself. With these words He also ratified the canon of the Old Testament as it was received by the majority of the population. As William Smith, creator of *Smith's Bible Dictionary* affirms, "By declaring that these books contained prophecies which must be fulfilled, Jesus established their divine inspiration, since God alone can enable men to foretell future events."²⁰

¹⁹ William Owen Carver, *Why They Wrote the New Testament* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1946), 13.

²⁰ William Smith LL.D., *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, Rev. Ed. (A. J. Holman Company), 439.

- **DISCUSS:** After learning the context of Luke 24:44, explain why it would have been significant for New Testament Jews to hear Jesus use this Scripture in this way.

If one were to sum up the entire Bible in one word, it would undoubtedly and unquestionably be “Jesus.” Every word, every sentence, and every chapter in the Bible points to the Lord of Heaven and Earth—Jesus Christ. Our great God became flesh, yielded Himself to the cross, and welcomed death. Then, after only three days, He rose from His earthly grave and to this day, He lives. He is not simply a holy man like Muhammad, Buddha, or Confucius, but He is the holy Creator revealed personally and intimately to man. The bodies of every other religious leader rotted in their earthly grave, but Jesus defeated death and has all authority and power to this very day.

In John 5:39, Jesus instructs us to “search the Scriptures,” for they “testify of Me.” The Old Testament points to the future Messiah and Redeemer, and that Messiah and Redeemer is revealed in the New Testament as Jesus Christ.

Jesus is in the business of healing the abused, delivering the captive, and washing the dirty. He gives light to those in darkness. He loves the unlovable. He saves the sinner. If you will allow Him to, He will use His Word to establish your life.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Has your perspective of the Bible been changed now that you know that the word *testament* denotes a “covenant”?
- Do you think that after understanding the process by which biblical manuscripts were copied in history that skeptics would be more open to the truths in the Bible?

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: II Peter 1:21, Luke 24:44

KEY MISSION: To analyze the history, makeup, and parts of the Bible.

What evidence is there that the Bible has been copied throughout history with integrity?

What is the relationship between the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)?

Which apostle wrote a majority of the New Testament epistles?

What took place during the Council of Trent (1545–1563) as a response to the Protestant Reformation?

According to Luke 24:44 and John 5:39, who is the central figure of Scripture?

For what reason would Luke 24:44 be significant to a New Testament Jew?

Jesus is in the business of healing the abused, delivering the captive, and washing the dirty. He gives light to those in darkness. He loves the unlovable. He saves the sinner. If you will allow Him to, He will use His Word to establish your life.



LESSON THREE

A WORLD OF GODS

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: John 8:56-58, I Timothy 3:16

KEY MISSION: To discuss what makes Christianity unique among other religions in the world.

In the world today there are countless religions expressed by various rituals, rites, and forms of worship. Across the Asian continent, there are nearly 324 million adherents of various forms of Buddhism (close to 6 percent of the world's population).²¹ Spread throughout India and Nepal, nearly one billion people adhere to the Hindu religion and worship thousands of various gods by reciting from religious scripts, chanting, lighting lamps, and offering food to images of deities.²²

Centered in the Middle East, over 1.5 million people worship Allah as God in the religion of Islam (nearly 24 percent of the world's total population). Further, almost 1.1 billion people worldwide profess to be nonreligious, agnostic, or atheist. By these facts and statistics, we can easily deduce that our planet is a world full of gods. These listed are only four of the world's religious groups.

The largest religion in the world today is Christianity, with more than 2 billion adherents. This means that approximately one out of every three people on earth is identified in some way with Christianity.²³ Knowing this, the question can be asked, "What qualities make Christianity the world's largest religion?" Further, "What is it about the God of the Christians that attracts people?" Questions such as this will be the foundation of this lesson.

A GOD OF REVELATION

The whole of Christianity is founded upon the life of Jesus Christ. His impact was so revolutionary that His name is still being proclaimed in every part of the world. Whether or not a person believes in the God of Christianity has everything to do with how they view Jesus Christ.

²¹ 1998 Encyclopedia Britannica Book of the Year (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998), 298.

²² It's sadly ironic that the Hindus of India offer food to idols when 55 percent of India's population of 1.1 billion, or 645 million people, live in poverty. Close to one-third of the world's poor live in India, yet there are still millions of people who dedicate portions of their food to idols.

²³ 2014 Encyclopedia Britannica Book of the Year (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014), 325.

When Jesus walked the earth during the first century, some people were deeply offended by His teachings. The Pharisees (Jewish religious leaders) did not accept Jesus because they were blind to His identity. They acted and lived as if He was just a man or wise teacher.

The Pharisees asked Jesus many questions, and at times He chose not to respond. However, He *a/ways* answered questions about His identity.

During His trial in Mark 15:3, Jesus offered no defense against the accusations the chief priests brought against Him. Later, when Pilate asked Him, “Art thou the King of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “You have said it.” In other words, “Yes.” Pilate asked other questions, but Jesus said nothing.

Earlier, when Jesus had been brought before Caiaphas the high priest, He had been asked “Are you the Christ?” He gave them the same reply He gave to Pilate: “You have said it.” Hearing this, Caiaphas tore his clothes in disgust, saying, “He hath spoken blasphemy!” They then spit in His face and began to hit Him.

To Caiaphas, it was shocking that Jesus would claim to be the Christ. They decided to crucify Him, because in their minds Jesus spoke blasphemy. John 5:18 says that the Jews sought to kill Him because He made “himself equal with God.” The Jewish dilemma is that they do not know who Jesus is. To the modern Jew, Jesus is just a man who died over 2,000 years ago. They see no connection between Jesus and God.

The reason Jesus always answered questions concerning His identity is because He wanted everyone to know who He was. Still today, He desires that all know His true identity.

A study of the Bible will manifest the truth that *God is interested in revealing who He is*. The God of the Bible is a God of revelation. Therefore, He does not withhold His character or desires. Because God desires to have a personal relationship with every individual, it was needful for God to connect with humanity on a human level. To die as man and purge humanity of sin, it was needful of God to take on the form of a man. In Scripture, we find that Christ “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:7-8, NKJV).

Jesus “took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham . . . to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest . . . to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:16-17).

When Jesus walked the earth during the first century, He walked as the promised Messiah and the almighty God revealed *in flesh* (I Timothy 3:16). The Jews of Jesus’ day did not understand this. Seeing Jesus, they saw only a man and did not perceive that He was God. Many things He said confused them.

• **READ ALOUD:** John 8:56-58.

Responding to a crowd of Jewish listeners in the Temple, Jesus made this statement:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56).

By referring to Abraham in this way, Jesus referenced the father of the Hebrew people who were all descendants of Abraham. Hearing this, the people replied,

“Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” (John 8:57).

The people were confused. Before them was a man claiming not to be just their Messiah, but One who spoke as if He had an intimate relationship with Abraham, their forefather who had been dead for nearly 2,000 years! As an answer to their question, Jesus spoke of His own divine nature and gave the people a pretty big hint that He was more than just a man.

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

Saying this, Jesus identified Himself with the ‘I AM’ of the Old Testament, who spoke to Moses from the midst of the burning bush (Exodus 3:13-14). In their minds, Jesus’ claim to be the ‘I AM’ was blasphemous. Hearing this, the people picked up stones to throw at Him.

The Jews did not know that Jesus was God, their Father and the Creator of the universe, revealing His character to them. Many of them did not receive the revelation that the invisible, infinite, all-powerful Spirit of Jehovah whom they worshiped and followed was the Spirit and manifested presence of Jesus—*whom they hated and eventually crucified*.

THE FATHER IN FLESH

Many times in the New Testament, the word *father* is used in reference to God. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew people knew God as *Jehovah*. Though they never saw God personally revealed, they did experience God in certain manifestations such as a burning bush, pillar of fire, glory cloud, or a voice from Heaven. In these ways God showed them His power and glory, but it was only in the New Testament that He came personally and intimately to humanity.

In the Old Testament, the Jews worshiped the *Father* as an invisible Spirit. This understanding, that God is a Spirit, was carried over into New Testament times. Scripture declares that “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24).

- **KEY POINT:** Anytime the words *Father* or *God* are used in Scripture, they identify with the invisible, infinite God.

This helps us to understand why it was so hard for the Jews to accept Jesus as God. They knew God only as an invisible, infinite Spirit.

Many times in the New Testament, the word *Son* is used in reference to Jesus. This seems to denote that Jesus is the “Son” of God as in a father/son relationship. However, interpreting Scripture in this way allows for a trinity, which cannot be true. Nowhere in the Bible is the word *trinity* mentioned. When the word *Son* is used in Scripture, it does not allude to a person of the trinity, but rather identifies with the “flesh” of Jesus.

- **KEY POINT:** Anytime the word *Son* is used in Scripture in reference to Jesus, it always identifies with His flesh.²⁴

As the almighty, infinite Spirit revealed in flesh, Jesus was the flesh of God (1 Timothy 3:16). Notice the verses of Scripture below and see how the words *Father*, *God*, and *Son* are used. Each denotes a different aspect of the total character of God.

“Thou art the Christ, the Son [flesh] of the Living God [Spirit]” (Matthew 16:16).

“I and my Father [Spirit] are one” (John 10:30).

²⁴ What did Jesus accomplish in the flesh? *The Cross*! When the word *Son* is used in Scripture in reference to Jesus, it always points to the saving work of Calvary.

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son [flesh], and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God [the Spirit] with us” (Matthew 1:23).

“For God [Spirit] so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son [flesh], that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Understanding this helps us to see the dual nature of Jesus—that *He was both God and man*. He was 100 percent God and 100 percent man at the same time. A good example of this is Isaiah 9:6, which identifies both the Son (flesh) and the mighty God/Everlasting Father (Spirit) in Jesus.

THE DUAL NATURE OF CHRIST	
AS A MAN (FLESH)	AS GOD (SPIRIT)
He was born in humility	He was worshiped by angels
He was tempted in all ways	He defeated every power of the devil
He grew weary	He had all power in Heaven and on Earth
He became hungry	He caused bread to grow and fish to multiply
He was scorned by men	He was obeyed by demons
He was crowned with thorns	He was the Creator of the thorn bush
He suffered and died	He arose from the dead
He lay in a tomb	He emerged from the grave victorious

In John 14:8-9, Philip asked Jesus to show him the Father. Evidently, he had yet to make the connection between Jesus and God. His request reveals that Philip understood Jesus was the Son (or flesh) of God, but he did not understand that Jesus also contained all the Spirit of God. He did not perceive that Jesus was the Father.

Jesus answered Philip by asking two probing questions: “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” In these statements, Jesus identified the Father in Himself.

A GOD OF TWO TESTAMENTS

Studying the Bible, we learn that there is only one true and living God.

OLD TESTAMENT

- Deuteronomy 4:39 – “Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is **none** else.”
- Deuteronomy 6:4 – “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is **one** LORD.”
- Psalm 86:10 – “For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God **alone**.”
- Isaiah 43:10-11 – “Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and **beside me there is no saviour**.”

- Isaiah 44:6 – “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and ***beside me there is no God.***”
- Isaiah 44:24 – “Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth ***by myself.***”

NEW TESTAMENT

Mark 12:29 – “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is ***one Lord.***”

Ephesians 4:5-6 – “***One*** Lord, ***one*** faith, ***one*** baptism, ***One*** God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

James 2:19 – “Thou believest that ***there is one God***; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”

With these passages in mind, it is important to know that people knew God differently in the Old Testament than they knew Him in the New Testament. Humanity was not able to experience God personally in the flesh until New Testament times.

The Old Testament Jews had many names for God. Some examples are ***Elohim*** (God), ***Adonai*** (LORD), and ***Yahweh*** (the self-existent One, or “the Eternal”).²⁵

In the Old Testament, God was referred to as the Father and Creator of the universe. Unique of the Hebrew people in the Old Testament and the later Jews of the New Testament, is that they worshiped God (the Father and Creator of all) as an invisible Spirit. They never saw Him personally revealed, though they did experience Him in certain manifestations such as a burning bush, pillar of fire, glory cloud, or a voice from Heaven. In these ways, God showed them His power and glory, but it was only in the New Testament that He came personally and intimately to man. In Jesus, the Jehovah of the Old Testament has become our salvation. This means that any quality given to God in the Old Testament also applies to Jesus in the New Testament.

OT – The LORD and King of Israel is ***the first and the last*** (Isaiah 44:6).

NT – Jesus is ***the first and the last*** (Revelation 22:13).

OT – The Lord is my ***shepherd*** (Psalm 23:1).

NT – Jesus is the good ***shepherd*** (John 10:11).

OT – The Lord is my ***light*** and my salvation (Psalm 27:1).

NT – Jesus is the ***light*** of the world (John 8:12).

Whether you need a counselor, an everlasting Father, a Prince of peace, or an almighty God, Jesus is able to be that to you.

FOR FUTHER DISCUSSION

- Based on what we have covered in this lesson, explain why many Jews had a hard time believing the deity of Christ. Do you think their traditions prevented them from accepting Christ as God? Explain your answer.

²⁵ Another word for God is *Jehovah*. Related closely to Yahweh, Jehovah is almost always translated into English by the word “LORD.”

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: John 8:56-58, I Timothy 3:16

KEY MISSION: To discuss what makes Christianity unique among other religions in the world.

The Pharisees asked Jesus many questions, and at times He chose not to respond. However, He always answered questions about His identity. Why was this so?

- **KEY POINT:** Anytime the words Father or God are used in Scripture, they identify with the invisible, infinite God.
- **KEY POINT:** Anytime the word Son is used in Scripture in reference to Jesus, it always identifies with His flesh.

THE DUAL NATURE OF CHRIST	
AS A MAN (FLESH)	AS GOD (SPIRIT)
He was born in humility	He was worshiped by angels
He was tempted in all ways	He defeated every power of the devil
He grew weary	He had all power in Heaven and on Earth
He became hungry	He caused bread to grow and fish to multiply
He was scorned by men	He was obeyed by demons
He was crowned with thorns	He was the Creator of the thorn bush
He suffered and died	He arose from the dead
He lay in a tomb	He emerged from the grave victorious

What three verses of Scripture would you use to teach someone that there is only one God? Explain how this is a truth taught in both the Old and New Testaments.



LESSON FOUR

WHAT CAN JESUS DO FOR ME?

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: II Corinthians 5:17, I Corinthians 5:7

KEY MISSION: To view examples of the redeeming love of Jesus.

If you have ever attempted to find your way in a dark room, you understand the value of light. Without light, we are lost and can only wander and stumble our way forward. Life is no different. Without a light illuminating the path before us, we are left to wander and stumble between past choices, broken relationships, and a meaningless future.

As we will see, sin is like a darkness of the soul. Without the light of Christ, it darkens the hope of hearts and like an anchor, ties down our spiritual potential. As we begin this lesson, this simple fact must be clearly understood: *Sin brings death to the human heart.*

According to the Bible, everybody has sin in their heart. Even you have sin in your heart. You may try to cover it up or hide it from your friends, but all hearts with sin are dark.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (I John 1:8).

Like a broken branch on a tree, a life lived in darkness is soon to fall. Sin, whether you know it or not, will always take away. It never gives. The Book of Romans reveals the ultimate price of sin.

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

In this verse, we find that the cost of sin is death. We also find that Jesus is able to reverse the destructive power of sin. The Bible has much to say about the redeeming love of Jesus.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9).

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:10-11).

One day as John baptized people in the Jordan River, Jesus walked up to where he stood. As He did, John knew that He was more than just a man.

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

Toward the beginning of His earthly ministry, we see Jesus teaching in the Temple. It seemed to be a normal day until His lesson was interrupted.

- **READ ALOUD:** John 8:1-11.
- **After reading, discuss the woman’s story.** It is interesting to note that she was never named. It is as if she was known only by her lifestyle choices. She was labeled and marked as an adulterous woman. Have you ever felt that people ignore the potential of your future and instead label you by past choices?

In this Bible passage, Jesus came to the Temple and began to teach the people. As He did, a mad mob walked up to Him. We will call them *the accusers*. They brought before Him a woman caught in the very act of sin. They thought she should be punished. In that day, the worst crimes were punishable by death. If properly convicted, the woman would be stoned. It would be a horrible, gruesome, and dark way to die.

The accusers, in a mad fury, questioned Jesus. “What should we do?” They asked. “She deserves to die! She was caught in the very act of sin. There is no doubt about it; we have irrefutable proof of her actions.”

As though He didn’t even hear them, Jesus reached down and began to write with His finger on the ground. Then He said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”

Again, He reached down and wrote on the ground. The accusers were dumbfounded, and each was hit by the sudden weight of his own conscience. Each of them lived in sin, and by Jesus’ standards none of them were worthy to stone her. Slowly, one by the one, the accusers left.

Looking to the woman who was known by all to live in darkness and disobedience, Jesus asked, “Where are your accusers? Can’t even one of them accuse you?”

“No, Lord,” she said.

Then He told her to go and sin no more. He would not condemn her. Though He very well could have cast sentence upon her to die, because He alone was without sin, He did not. Her death was not His desire. You see, He wants no man and no woman to live in darkness eternally. He wants all to find the light and live in it.

After the woman left, Jesus turned to the people He had been teaching and said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12, NKJV).

That was His goal. His purpose on the earth was to bring light to people of every culture, nation, and tongue. Though He has the power to send all into utter darkness and leave them there for all eternity, He does not. Instead, He shows love and compassionately draws those in darkness unto Himself. He is the light of the world.

Later in His earthly ministry, Jesus made His mission clear by repeating nearly the same words.

“I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness” (John 12:46, NKJV).

WHEN IDENTITIES ARE CHANGED

In first century Palestine during the time of Christ, the Roman Empire exercised control over the Mediterranean world. They levied taxes on the Hebrew people living in Palestine, and the Jews hated Rome for this. The reason Joseph and Mary had to return to Bethlehem at the birth of Christ was due to Roman taxation. A decree went forth from the Caesar that stated the entire world would be taxed. The decree also commanded that the people of Palestine return to their home city to be counted in a census.

In this process, Rome appointed certain officials to count and collect taxes. Those designated to do so were called publicans. A publican's job was to collect tribute money for the Roman Empire. In essence, a publican was a tax gatherer, and many of them became wealthy. Their pockets were filled by Roman money.

Because of the nature of their job, the tax gatherers were greatly despised by the people. Many historical records reveal the scorn people had for publicans.

Nobody in that day liked the publicans, Jews especially. They were a burden and represented the authority of the pagan Roman Empire. They were even regarded as traitors—those who had turned on their Hebrew brethren to be made rich by Roman money.

Many times in the New Testament, publicans were put in the same category as heathens, harlots, and sinners. People did not like them at all. A publican had a bad reputation. Nobody liked the publicans, especially those who were religious. However, when Jesus stepped on the scene He reached out to them, embraced them, and gave them a better life. This is one of the reasons why Jesus stuck out like a sore thumb all over Palestine. He talked with, spent time with, and ate with the people nobody liked. One of the bitter insults flung at Christ was that He was a friend to the tax gatherers.

“And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:9-13).

Studying the life of Matthew, we find that he was originally named Levi. That was his name as a despised and hated tax collector. However, Jesus took Levi, gave him a new identity, and invited him to be one of His disciples. In this process, Jesus even granted him a new name. He would no longer be despised and hated, but he would be Matthew. In the Hebrew language, the name Matthew means “gift of Jehovah.”²⁶

Matthew became one of the twelve disciples of Jesus and a later apostle in the New Testament church. Using his ability as a record keeper (which he had acquired while keeping the money records as a tax collector), he recorded the first book in our New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew (which portrays Jesus as the Messiah).

²⁶ Jesus took a person considered to be a traitor and turned him into a gift!

This is the ministry of Jesus—*people*! His ministry was, and still is, people. He came to seek and to save those that are lost and in need of a rescue.

Matthew 9:13 tells us that Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. Matthew 18:11 says, “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” Again in Luke 19:10, Scripture declares, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Jesus talks with those who are despised and hated. He eats with people nobody else likes. His desire is to take people out of a life of sin and give them a fresh start.

Matthew eventually found so much purpose in his new identity and became so sold out to the cause of Christ that he was willing to die a martyr’s death. At the end of his life, he was beheaded by a Roman axe in an act of persecution, but rejoiced in that he was counted worthy to suffer with Christ (cp. Romans 1:16; I Peter 4:12-16).

That is the ministry of Jesus. He gives new life to people of every nation, tongue, color, and language. He takes people who have no purpose and gives them not only a reason to live, but also a reason worth dying for.

- **DISCUSS:** Is your life similar to the kind of life that Matthew had before he found Christ?

THE POWER OF HIS BLOOD

The Old Testament Book of Exodus tells the story of the Israelites’ bondage in Egypt. It shows how the Israelites, God’s people, were delivered from bondage and slavery.

- **READ ALOUD:** Exodus 1:1-14.

Scripture paints a brutal picture of the Israelite bondage. There was nothing good about slavery. While in Egypt, the people were forced to work in the fields, build temples, transport massive rocks, and mix hay and mud to make bricks. It was a hard, dirty, and degrading existence.

Seeing His people suffer under the heavy weight of slavery, God chose a man to lead them out of Egypt. His name was Moses, and he was chosen to be God’s tool of deliverance.

To help Moses accomplish this humanly impossible task, the Bible says God sent ten plagues to show Pharaoh (the leader of Egypt) His awesome power. However, the Pharaoh was not impressed. No matter what God did, he would not let the Israelites go.

- **READ ALOUD:** Exodus 5:1-10.

Because Pharaoh hardened his heart toward God, God sent an angel of death to all the firstborn sons of Egypt (Exodus 12:29-30). In the midst of this, God gave the Israelites a specific pattern of protection that allowed them to avoid the death angel’s touch. He told them that the blood of a spotless lamb would save them.

Using Moses, God told the people to kill a lamb and apply its blood to the doorposts of their homes. As the death angel went through Egypt spreading death and killing all firstborn sons, it did not touch the homes that were “covered by the blood.” A spotless lamb used at the Passover was designated as a “Passover lamb.”

- **KEY POINT:** In the Bible, this event is called the Passover because the death angel “passed over” all the homes that were covered by the blood of a spotless lamb.

Eventually, Pharaoh was convinced of God's power and decided to let all the Israelite slaves go free. Once they left Egypt, they left bondage and slavery.

To some, this may be a strange story. However strange, it is powerful because it illustrates what Jesus did on the cross. It shows us that Jesus died on the cross to free us from the bondage of sin.

Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." This tells us that everybody has sin in his or her heart. Nobody can hide it. Sin is a problem that everybody has to deal with.

We find in I John 1:8 that "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." A person may try to live a good life and deny any wrongdoing, but the truth is *everybody* has sin in his or her heart.

The penalty of sin is something we cannot escape. That is why we need Jesus to take away our sin. This is why John the Baptist was so excited when Jesus came to him. That is why he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

In John 10:10-11, Jesus tells us, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." He died on the cross to give his life *for* us; He died on the cross to give life *to* us; and He died to take away our sin.

This is where we connect Christ's love with what occurred in Exodus. I Corinthians 5:7 exclaims, "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." As our Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ saves us from the death caused by sin. Covered by His blood, we are able to avoid the touch of death.

I Peter 1:18-19 says that we are able to be redeemed, or saved, with "the precious blood of Christ," who on the cross was a spotless Lamb.

- **KEY POINT:** As the blood of a spotless lamb in Egypt saved the Israelites, the blood Jesus shed upon the cross saves us.

As powerful as the redeeming love of Christ is, many will never know it. Many do not know how to identify with the gospel He preached.

- **Read Luke 13:3; Proverbs 28:13; and Mark 2:17. What do these Bible verses have in common?**
-
- **Read Acts 22:16; Acts 4:10-12; and Galatians 3:27. What do these Bible verses have in common?**
-
- **Read Acts 2:1-7 and Acts 2:38. What do these Bible verses have in common?**

In the above verses, we discover how to experience the redeeming love of Jesus Christ. We are born again and receive this new life by repenting of our sins, being baptized in the name of Jesus, and being filled with the Holy Ghost evidenced by speaking in other tongues.

In repentance, we die to sin and turn from the darkness of our past. At baptism, the blood of Jesus washes away our sin. Last, when we are filled with the Holy Ghost and speak in tongues for the first time we are resurrected into new life.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- With a friend, discuss how the Samaritans in Acts 8:5-8, 12, and 14-17 experienced a new spiritual birth.
- Acts 2:39 says the promise of salvation is for everybody. There are no exclusions to the redeeming love of Jesus Christ. How does this fact give you and your friends hope?
- According to Jesus, we must be born again of water and of Spirit (John 3:5) to experience His new life. If this is what it takes to be born again, what is preventing you from repenting of your sins and being baptized right now?

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: II Corinthians 5:17, I Corinthians 5:7

KEY MISSION: To view examples of the redeeming love of Jesus.

In Scripture, we find that the cost of sin is death. We also find that Jesus is able to reverse the destructive power of sin. The Bible has much to say about the redeeming love of Jesus.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9).

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:10-11).

Explain how Jesus changed the identity of Matthew.

What occurred in the Book of Exodus at the Passover? How does this event relate to our New Testament salvation?

In what ways did Jesus fulfill the Old Testament requirements for a Passover lamb?

How does Pharaoh’s hard heart illustrate the fallen condition of humanity?



LESSON FIVE

SAVE ME, JESUS

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: II Chronicles 7:14, Acts 22:16

KEY MISSION: To discuss the plan of salvation and discover how to put it into practice.

Lesson 4 discussed biblical examples of the redeeming love of Jesus. Viewing the life of the adulterous woman, the life of Matthew, and by analyzing the Passover, we are able to see the saving hand of Christ at work.

Being an active book, alive by the Spirit, the Bible calls to you and me to identify with the gospel. Heeding that call, we must put action to our faith. We must act upon the call to salvation. In prayer, we must learn how to talk to the Lord. We must repent of our sins and then we must be baptized, calling upon the name of Jesus. Acting in the manner in accordance to the Word of God, we are promised that in response the Lord will do His part and fill each of us with the Holy Ghost. Moving forward, let us further analyze the plan of salvation.

PRAYER

Prayer in its simplest form is talking to Jesus. When people open their mouths and use their words to glorify or talk to God, their relationship with Him grows. Therefore, the most powerful thing you can do in prayer is open your mouth and talk to the Lord. The Bible says that death and life are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21). Activities such as Bible reading and prayer will help you “know” Jesus Christ.

The best prayers are the ones that are true and sincere. As Charles Spurgeon said, “Only the prayer which comes from our heart can get to God’s heart.”

Through prayer, we receive the peace of God. That peace will preserve our hearts and minds.

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

God is not deaf to our needs. He receives and hears our prayers. If we pray, God will give guidance and direction.

“The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer” (Psalm 6:9).

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

If we repent to God in prayer, He will forgive us and heal our lives.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chronicles 7:14).

Prayer is powerful. It shakes situations, breaks chains, and releases burdens. It gives us boldness in hard situations and allows the Holy Ghost to fill hearts.

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).

Prayer will give us strength in temptation.

“And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation” (Luke 22:45-46).

We will not receive from God unless we ask Him. God wants us to bring our needs to Him. We should not be shy. No prayer is too small or too big for God. He wants our heart to be full of joy.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23-24).

Last, prayer has no limits. It makes all the difference. Prayer is powerful.

“Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:13-16).

- **READ ALOUD:** II Kings 20:1-7 and II Kings 20:2-3.
- **DISCUSS:** What did Hezekiah do that changed the future course of his life? How does this illustrate the power of prayer, even in the midst of certain death? Take a moment to consider the elements of your life that are destroyed or in disarray or have caused you to be discouraged. How can this event in Hezekiah's life serve as a promise to your particular situation?

REPENTANCE

Repentance is a vital aspect of our salvation. In the New Testament, the doctrine of repentance is taught over and over again.

“Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).

“But go ye and learn what that meaneth: I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:13).

“And they went out, and preached that men should repent” (Mark 6:12).

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

In Scripture, both Jesus and His disciples taught repentance.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).

“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31).

When a person repents, a death occurs. The old sinful life of flesh dies, allowing a new person to live through the Spirit. In repentance, a person turns from a life of sin and severs his eternal attachment to the world.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

The New Testament is not the only place to find the teaching of repentance. The Old Testament also teaches its importance. The Old Testament gives many *physical* illustrations of the *spiritual* New Testament salvation. We find a stirring example of this in a quick study of the events contained in the Book of Exodus.

The Book of Genesis ends with the death of Joseph. The Book of Exodus describes what happened after he died.

“And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them. . . . Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. . . . And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour” (Exodus 1:6-14).

There was nothing comfortable about Egyptian bondage. It was a hard thing. Bondage was ruthless, without mercy, and it was a difficult burden. Being hard and miserable, Egyptian bondage illustrates what sin does when allowed to reign in our hearts. Sin is a spiritual bondage and a hard burden to bear.

- **KEY POINT:** What Egypt was to the Israelites is what sin is to us.

When the Israelites left Egypt, they turned away from their past life of bondage. Something similar occurs in a person’s heart when he repents.

Just as the Israelites turned from Egypt and left it behind in repentance, a person turns from sin and leaves his spiritual bondage in the past. In repentance, the old person dies so the new person in Christ can live.

Repentance also identifies a person with the death of Christ. This is why the apostle Paul declared that one aspect of the gospel is the death of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 6:1-5). Just as Christ died on the cross, we die to sin when we repent. The physical death of Jesus allows us to die a spiritual death to sin.

Repentance is powerful and beautiful, and it is a cause for celebration. When just one person repents, it brings joy to Heaven.

“I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10).

- **READ ALOUD:** II Samuel 11:1-5, 14-17; 12:1-13.

- **DISCUSS:** The Bible does not neglect to portray the flaws and failures of its characters. This fact is seen in the life of David and his sin with the wife of Uriah. When David discovered that because of his sin a child was conceived, he sought to cover it up. With these events in mind, consider how Proverbs 28:13 can be applied to David’s life.

WASHED BY THE WATER

When Jesus came to the earth in the first century, He brought a message of salvation that He extended to every nation, people, and culture of the world. This message taught the necessity of a new birth (John 3:3-5).

In the Book of Acts, the disciples of Jesus spread the new birth message throughout the then-known world. People of all kinds repented, were baptized, and were filled with the Holy Ghost. This is seen consecutively by the actions of the Jews in Acts 2, the Samaritans in Acts 8, and the Gentiles in Acts 10.

Baptism forms a vital step in our salvation process. After we repent of our sins, we must be baptized in water by immersion in the name of Jesus. In a late-night meeting with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, Jesus said these words:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Jesus was very clear. He spoke plainly to Nicodemus.

- **KEY POINT:** Unless a person is born both of water and of the Spirit, they cannot (and will not) enter into the kingdom of God.

With the New Testament Bible verses in mind, it is easy to see that to “be born of water” is to be *baptized* in water. We find a great example of this truth in Acts 19. As the chapter opens, the apostle Paul is seen traveling from the coast of modern-day Asia Minor to the city of Ephesus. While there, he found a group of disciples that followed the teachings of John the Baptist. In conversation, Paul presented two important questions:

“He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied” (Acts 19:2-6).

Let us not miss what is expressed here. Because baptism is so important, and because it is so important to be baptized the *right way*, Paul led the disciples of John the Baptist to be rebaptized *in the name of Jesus*. He did not undermine their previous spiritual experience, but he encouraged them to *continue* in their experience to be born of both water and the Spirit.

ONLY BY THE NAME

- The Bible declares that the name of Jesus is *more excellent than the angels* (Hebrews 1:4), an *everlasting name* (Isaiah 56:5), a *holy name* (Isaiah 57:15), and a *name that is great in might* (Jeremiah 10:6).
- We are told to *ask* in His name (John 14:13), *fear* his name (Malachi 4:2), *love* his name (Psalm 69:36), and to *praise* his name (Psalm 138:2).
- The Bible declares that the name of Jesus is above every other name (Philippians 2:9), we should do all in the name of Jesus (Colossians 3:17), and it is only by the name of Jesus that we are saved (Acts 4:12).

Much confusion and debate has arisen around the interpretation of Matthew 28:19, which reads, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Here, Jesus is commissioning His disciples directly before ascending into Heaven.

- **KEY POINT:** It is important to notice that Jesus used the word “name,” which denotes a singular name.

The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are all identified with a singular name. By John 5:43, we know that the name of the Father is *Jesus*; by Matthew 1:21 we know that the name of the Son is *Jesus*; and by John 14:26 we know that the name of the Holy Ghost is *Jesus*. Rather than refer to a triune God, Matthew 28:19 points to the one God of Heaven and of earth, Jesus.

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE OF JESUS’ NAME BAPTISM

- Jesus stated that “remission of sins” would be *in His name* (Luke 24:47).
- Peter told the Jews to be baptized *in the name of Jesus* (Acts 2:38).
- The Samaritans were baptized *in the name of Jesus* (Acts 8:16).
- The Gentiles were baptized *in the name of Jesus* (Acts 10:48).
- The apostle Paul rebaptized the disciples of John the Baptist *in the name of Jesus* (Acts 19:5).
- At Paul’s baptism, he was challenged to be baptized *in the name of Jesus* (Acts 22:16).
- Colossians 3:17 encourages us to do all that we do *in the name of Jesus*.

Last, we find in Ephesians 3:14-15 that the whole family of God is named after Jesus Christ. To be a part of that family, we must “put on” Christ (Galatians 3:24-29). This can be done only by water baptism *in the name of Jesus*.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Read Acts 8:26-38 and consider the revelation received by the Ethiopian eunuch. What did he discover by the teaching of Philip that gave him a desire to be baptized? Do you think it was according to God's purpose that the eunuch was sitting in that exact spot on that day, or was it simply coincidence? Explain your answer.
- Knowing that sin left covered will only make things worse, consider any sin(s) in your own life. If you are willing, conclude the lesson by praying your own prayer of repentance.
- Knowing the necessity, importance, and power of water baptism in the name of Jesus, ask yourself the same question the eunuch asked Philip: "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" If you are willing, ask your teacher to help you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: II Chronicles 7:14, Acts 22:16

KEY MISSION: To discuss the plan of salvation and discover how to put it into practice.

A life of prayer creates a relationship with God. Of the Bible verses listed in this lesson, which better serves as a support to your prayer life?

When a person repents, a death occurs. The old sinful life of flesh dies, allowing a new person to live through the Spirit. In repentance, a person turns from a life of sin and severs his eternal attachment to the world.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9).

Just as the Israelites turned from Egypt and left it behind, in repentance a person turns from sin and leaves his spiritual bondage in the past. In repentance, the old person dies so the new person in Christ can live.

Repentance also identifies a person with the death of Christ. This is why the apostle Paul declared that one aspect of the gospel is the death of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 6:1-5). Just as Christ died on the cross, we die to sin when we repent. The physical death of Jesus allows us to die a spiritual death to sin.

If the disciples of John the Baptist in Acts 19 already had a religious experience, why did the apostle Paul suggest that they be rebaptized?

What evidence is there in Scripture that baptism should be specifically *in the name of Jesus*? Pick one example from the Book of Acts of a person being baptized in the name of Jesus and describe it below.



LESSON SIX

THE HOPE OF THE HOLY GHOST

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: Ezekiel 37:14, Acts 1:5

KEY MISSION: To discover the power available by the infilling of the Holy Ghost.

Ezekiel 37 tells a stirring story. The prophet Ezekiel is taken in the Spirit and carried to a valley full of dead, dry bones.

- **READ ALOUD:** Ezekiel 37:1-3.

Intending to teach him a lesson, God tells Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones and command them to live.

- **READ ALOUD:** Ezekiel 37:4-6.

Ezekiel does as he is commanded, and the entire valley begins to shake. In amazement, the prophet watches as the many bones begin to rattle and join back together into the form of many skeletons. Next, muscle tissue and skin appear and wrap around the lifeless bodies. What a sight to behold!

- **READ ALOUD:** Ezekiel 37:7-8.

Using the valley of bodies as a visual illustration, God tells Ezekiel to prophesy once more. However, this time he is commanded to speak to the wind.

- **READ ALOUD:** Ezekiel 37:9-10.

Ezekiel is dumbfounded. Next, God uses the sight before him to describe the future outpouring of the Spirit.

- **READ ALOUD:** Ezekiel 37:11-14.

Just as the wind brought life to the dead souls in the valley, the infilling of the Spirit brings life to sinful hearts. It has a restorative power in the lives of individuals. As the “exceeding great army” was brought together, mended, and created into life, the Spirit brings healing to broken lives. As we shall see in this lesson, there is significance in the fact that God compared the Spirit to the blowing of the wind.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

In the Old Testament, God used the tongue to divide the world at the tower of Babel. In the New Testament, God used the tongue to unite the church. We find this illustrated many times in Scripture.

- When the *Jews* were filled with the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, they spoke with tongues (Acts 2:1-4).
- When the *Samaritans* were filled with the Holy Ghost, they spoke with tongues (Acts 8:13-23).
- When the *Gentiles* were filled with the Holy Ghost, they spoke with tongues (Acts 10:44-48).
- When the *disciples of John the Baptist* were filled with the Holy Ghost, they spoke with tongues (Acts 19:1-6).

After His resurrection and prior to His ascension, Jesus told the disciples to go to Jerusalem and “wait for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). This promise that Jesus alluded to was the Holy Ghost that was poured out in Acts 2. Next, Jesus told His disciples,

“For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts 1:5).

In this verse, Jesus referred to what would happen on the Day of Pentecost. He continued to say that when the Holy Ghost came upon them they would receive the power needed to be witnesses in the world (Acts 1:8).

The power that Jesus spoke of comes only by the Holy Ghost. This Holy Ghost, which is the presence of Jesus in the heart of an individual, will empower and bring righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17).

In Acts 2, we see the words of Jesus fulfilled. It is important to note that when the Holy Ghost was first poured out, a particular sign accompanied. This sign, which is the initial evidence of the Holy Ghost, is *tongues*.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

Here we find that speaking in tongues is not a work of man. It comes only through the Spirit. It is a heavenly language. It is an *outward* sign of the inward work of God.

In the Old Testament after the Flood, God made a covenant with Noah. In this covenant, He promised that He would never again cleanse the whole earth with water. As a sign of this promise, God gave Noah the first rainbow. From this point forward, when the rainbow stretches across the sky, it is evidence, a sign, of the covenant between God and man (Genesis 9:8-19).

Today, under the covenant of the New Testament, the grace of God allows us to experience a new spiritual birth. In this new birth experience, the Holy Ghost is a promise and a gift given to us.

- **KEY POINT:** As God gave a sign to Noah by the rainbow, He gives us a sign to accompany the promise of the Holy Ghost. This sign is seen and heard when a person speaks in tongues.

This is reiterated by Peter in Acts 2:33. Peter said on the Day of Pentecost that the Holy Ghost is something a person can see and *hear*.

WHAT IS THE HOLY GHOST?

Jesus, the one God of Scripture, reveals His character as the Father in creation, the Son in redemption (the Cross), and the *Spirit* dwelling in the life of the believer. As part of the new birth, a person is filled with the Holy Ghost—the *Spirit of God*. A word study will be helpful to our understanding of the Holy Ghost.

Holy (Greek *hagia*) sacred, pure, blameless, consecrated; clean and perfect

Ghost (Greek *pneuma*) a current of air, a breeze, a breath; God, Christ's Spirit, the Holy Ghost; life. Comes from the root word *pneo*, which means to breathe hard or to blow.

Patching the Greek meanings together, we see that the Holy Ghost is the sacred, clean, and perfect breath and life of the almighty God. The words *household*, *temple*, and *habitation* are used in Ephesians 2:19-22 in reference to each born-again believer. This language tells us that each person is meant to be a dwelling place for God. God desires to live inside of us. This is accomplished when a person is filled with the Holy Ghost.

In Matthew 27, as Jesus was being crucified, He cried with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then a very powerful event occurred. Scripture declares that when Jesus cried again with a loud voice, He "yielded up the ghost" (Matthew 27:50). At that moment the veil of the Temple was ripped in two from top to bottom, an earthquake shook the earth, and bodies of the saints came to life and rose out of the graves. This moment was the fulfillment of much Old and New Testament prophecy. What's unique is that in this passage the word *ghost* has the same original Greek meaning as *pneuma*.

- **KEY POINT:** To say that Jesus yielded up the ghost means that the life, or breath, was taken from His body. In other words, He died.

The life, or breath, that Jesus gave up is the same life, or breath, that fills a person when they are filled with the Holy Ghost. When Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:5 that he must be born of water and of the Spirit, He was alluding to water baptism and the infilling of the life, or breath (*pneuma*), of God.

In Genesis 2:7, "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This is a powerful illustration of what happens when a person is filled with the Holy Ghost. A vessel that was once lifeless or dead in sin is made alive by the infilling of the presence of Jesus. Understanding this, we clearly see that the Spirit is not a person of the Trinity. Rather, it is the breath and life of Almighty God.

- **DISCUSS:** Knowing that the Holy Ghost is the breath or life of God, how does the story in Ezekiel 37 gain new significance?

THE HOLY GHOST IS . . .

- A **promise** (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:39)
- A **comforter** (John 14:16; 16:7)
- A **teacher** (John 14:26)
- A **guide** (John 16:13)
- A **gift** (Acts 2:38; 10:44-45)
- **Fire** (Matthew 3:11), **hope** (Romans 15:13), and **boldness** (Acts 4:31)

HOW DOES A PERSON RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST?

1. **BELIEVE.** Faith is the first step of any spiritual experience. Faith is the currency of Heaven. God honors and responds to faith (John 7:38-39).
2. **REPENT.** Before Jesus fills a person with His Spirit, they must first repent and “die out” to sin (Acts 3:19; Luke 13:3, 5).
3. **PRAISE.** Open your mouth and give honor to your Savior. With words, praise His majesty and power. Cry out to Him. Tell Jesus you need Him and love Him (Psalms 22:14; 150; James 4:8).
4. **GIVE THANKS.** Thank the Lord for His grace and mercy. Thank Him for dying so that you can be free of sin. Give thanks to His name (Psalm 100:4).

The most powerful thing you can do in prayer is open your mouth and talk to the Lord with your words. Prayer in its simplest form is talking to Jesus. When you turn from sin and give the Lord control of your life and open your mouth in prayer, Heaven stands at attention. If this happens, Jesus, Lord of Heaven and Earth, will fill you with His Spirit. It is a promise!

If you are willing, ask your students if they desire to pray for the gift of the Holy Ghost. Join with them and together seek for the Spirit in prayer.

“Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Psalm 81:10).

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Understanding the nature of the Holy Ghost, why is it significant that on the Day of Pentecost Acts 2:2 declares, “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind”?

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: Ezekiel 37:14, Acts 1:5

KEY MISSION: To discover the power available by the infilling of the Holy Ghost.

How does the wind described in Ezekiel 37 compare with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost today?

- When the *Jews* were filled with the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, they spoke with tongues (Acts 2:1-4).
- When the *Samaritans* were filled with the Holy Ghost, they spoke with tongues (Acts 8:13-23).
- When the *Gentiles* were filled with the Holy Ghost, they spoke with tongues (Acts 10:44-48).
- When the *disciples of John the Baptist* were filled with the Holy Ghost, they spoke with tongues (Acts 19:1-6).

Holy (Greek *hagia*) sacred, pure, blameless, consecrated; clean and perfect.

Ghost (Greek *pneuma*) a current of air, a breeze, a breath.

Patching the Greek meanings together, we see that the Holy Ghost is the:

THE HOLY GHOST IS . . .

- A **promise** (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:39)
- A **comforter** (John 14:16; 16:7)
- A **teacher** (John 14:26)
- A **guide** (John 16:13)
- A **gift** (Acts 2:38; 10:44-45)
- **Fire** (Matthew 3:11), **hope** (Romans 15:13), and **boldness** (Acts 4:31)



LESSON SEVEN

THINGS TO COME

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: II Corinthians 5:6-8, Revelation 22:17

KEY MISSION: To understand what the Bible says concerning Heaven and eternity.

One of the most fascinating prophecies in the Bible is recorded in Daniel 2. As the chapter opens, the great King Nebuchadnezzar is leader in Babylon. One night while lying in his bed, he had a terrifying dream. Being anxious to understand its meaning, Nebuchadnezzar called for all his magicians and sorcerers and commanded them to reveal its meaning. Unable to fulfill his wish, the king grew angry and sentenced them all to die.

At this juncture, the prophet Daniel, one of the many Hebrew captives in Babylon at this time, stepped onto the scene. Having the favor of God, Daniel was able not only to interpret the dream, but also recite all of its details without any help.

In the dream Nebuchadnezzar saw a great metal man whose head was made of gold. The chest of the man was made of silver, and his belly and thighs were made of brass. He had legs of iron with feet made partly of iron and partly of clay.

Dramatically, a stone struck the feet of the man and he crumbled to the ground. The wind blew away the pieces and the stone then became a great mountain that filled the whole earth. After all was said, Daniel revealed all of its meaning.

- **READ ALOUD:** Daniel 2:27-45.

Having the knowledge of God, Daniel declared that these four metals in the great statue represented four great empires that would successively rule over the civilized world. Having the hindsight of history, we are able to firmly establish the following four empires according to Scripture.

WORLD EMPIRE	DESCRIPTION
Babylon	Head of Gold
Medo-Persia	Chest and Arms of Silver
Greece	Belly and Thighs of Brass
Rome	Iron

Interestingly, Daniel also revealed a fifth kingdom that would eventually rule the earth, represented by feet composed of both iron (Rome) and clay.

It is during the rule of this ten-part (ten-toed) kingdom that Jesus Christ, a great stone cut out without human hands, will come to the earth, destroy the kingdoms of man, and set up a kingdom that will fill the whole earth.

Aligned with other biblical prophecies, we are able to establish that this ten-toed kingdom points to the future rule of the Antichrist.

For more on this ten-part kingdom and its abominable ruler, refer to Revelation 17:12-14.

It is quite spectacular that more than 2,600 years ago a prophet of God was given a glimpse of the future and was able to see not only a succession of nations, but also the ultimate triumph of Jesus Christ.

- **READ ALOUD:** Malachi 4:1. Compare to Revelation 19:11-20.

In the end, only one kingdom will reign victorious. At the end of the day, the Lord is in control of it all. In the end, Jesus will come out on top and reign in complete victory for all of eternity! This is why it is vital that we each do what it takes to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord.

A TALE OF TWO CHOICES

Every person on this planet has an eternal destination. When life is over, we each will spend eternity somewhere. The Bible says that there is a Heaven and a Hell. It also says that this world in all of its splendor will one day fade away. It will not last forever. Every skyscraper, flashy car, house, every fad, every famous monument, every school and gym will one day cease to be. Everything made by earthly hands will one day cease to exist.

Only godly things, heavenly things, and spiritual things will last forever. This is why it is very important that we make sure we do what is necessary to make it into Heaven and avoid the fiery pits of Hell.

As Jesus was dying upon the cross, there were two thieves crucified with Him. One was on His right and the other on His left. In a desperate and sincere moment, one thief humbled himself and cried out in repentance, while the other turned away his head and cursed Jesus. One thief turned to the Lord; the other turned away. One admitted his wrongdoings and sins; the other ignored the opportunity to change. These two thieves represent two very different choices and show us alternate paths available to humanity.

These two very different choices show us how people are living their lives today. Some people humble themselves and turn to Jesus, but others turn away. Each has a very different eternal destination.

THE END IS STILL TO COME

While on earth living out His first coming, Jesus spoke much and in great detail of His second coming. In fact, He challenged His disciples to be aware of the events that would occur around the time of His second coming. Consider these snippets from Mark 13 (NKJV).

5 – Watch out that no one deceives you.

7 – The end is still to come.

9 – You must be on your guard.

23 – So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

29 – When you see these things happening, you know that My return is near, right at the door.

33 – Be on guard! Be alert!

35 – Therefore keep watch.

37 – What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch!

Jesus never rebuked His disciples for seeking to know more about the prophetic passages concerning the end time. However, He did rebuke them for ignoring the signs of His coming.

IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE

In Scripture, we are told to “set [our] affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). We are challenged to look upward toward Christ and live with a hopeful anticipation of His return.

To fully understand what will happen on the day that Christ returns and raptures His church from off the earth, we must discuss what happened to two Old Testament characters: Enoch and Elijah. To begin, we look to the events surrounding Enoch.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5).

We find here a description of the very end of Enoch’s life. He is one of only two people recorded in Scripture that did not experience an earthly death. Genesis 5:24 says, “Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” He pleased God so much that God “took” him, or translated him, and he did not experience death while on the earth.

In this sense, the word *translated* indicates what will happen at the time of the Rapture. Enoch was snatched up and raptured into Heaven. Enoch was in one place in space and time, in one form of existence, when God simply and suddenly transferred him to another.

The story of Elijah is a bit different. In II Kings 2:11, we find that he also did not experience a physical death. At the end of his life, God sent a chariot of fire down from Heaven that picked Elijah up and carried him upward in a whirlwind.

That is what happened to Enoch and Elijah. Interestingly, something similar will happen on the day that Christ returns to the earth to translate, or rapture, His church. On that day, all those who have been saved according to Scripture (Acts 2:38) will ascend to Heaven with Christ.

When that day comes, we will be taken in an instant. If we have been cleansed by repentance, water baptism, and the Holy Ghost, we will be translated like Enoch into Heaven. As He did for Elijah, Jesus will send His heavenly chariot throughout every part of the earth to collect His bride, the church, for which He shed His blood upon the cross. Will you be ready?

In many places, the Bible describes what will happen on that day. I Corinthians 15:52 says we shall be changed “in the twinkling of an eye.” Christ will shout from Heaven and “the dead in Christ will rise first: then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

In the passage in Romans, the term “caught up” in its original Greek is the one word *harpazo*, which means “snatched up” to be with Christ.

I Corinthians 15 says it will happen in the “twinkling of an eye,” which indicates quickly, suddenly, and abruptly.

In Matthew 24:42, we are told, “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” Speaking of the return of Christ, I Thessalonians 4:18 encourages us, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

OUR ETERNAL HOPE

Speaking of our heavenly reward, the apostle Paul said that “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (II Corinthians 5:8). Writing to the Corinthian church, Paul declared that this understanding gave him hope. Looking ahead in anticipation of the day when he would be able to join Christ in Heaven gave him comfort.

- **READ ALOUD:** II Corinthians 5:1-10.

In verse 1 of II Corinthians 5, the word “tabernacle” is used to signify our body of flesh. When it is destroyed in our death, we will be given a new, eternal body not made with human hands. Further, it is with that body that we will live with Christ in eternity.²⁷

The apostle Paul was honest. He said he “groaned” or “grew weary” in his earthly body. We can relate to his admission when our bodies begin to age: our bones ache, our skin wrinkles, our muscles begin to shrink, and our joints get “rusty.”

In his weariness, Paul longed for the day when he would go to Heaven. He did not seek death, but he anticipated the hope of Heaven, because on that day his dying body would be swallowed up in life.

In verse 5, Paul described the “guarantee” we have in the Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Ghost, it serves as a kind of down payment on our journey to Heaven. The Spirit provides a glimpse of what we will ultimately experience in our heavenly home. Looking toward this hope, we “walk by faith, not by sight.” In conclusion, Paul stated that his aim was to please the Lord so that he could reap the ultimate benefits of the Spirit-filled life. May we all have a similar desire for Heaven.

THE NEW JERUSALEM

In Revelation 21:10-11, the apostle John was given a vision of the New Jerusalem as “that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.” The appearance of the city was that of a bright light like “a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” It was pure, undefiled, and holy.

Revelation 21 describes the city as being in the shape of a cube, with an equal length, height, and breadth of 12,000 furlongs (1,500 miles). Its walls were beautifully adorned with pure gold, as clear as glass. The twelve foundations of the city were studded with all sorts of precious stones. It had twelve gates, three on each side, all made of pearl. Its streets were pure gold. The glory of the city was the

²⁷ This understanding is discussed further in Paul’s earlier letter to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

glory of God. The light of Heaven has the radiance of God's complete character, reflecting the wonder and beauty of His being.

The city called Heaven will not require a temple or place of worship to access the presence of God, because the almighty God will be present as our temple.

There will be no need of the sun or moon or light or fire because the glory of God will shine as our light. There will be no night there, no darkness, and nothing warped by the curse of sin (Revelation 21:27).

Everything will be pure and undefiled. Heaven will be a place of indescribable joy.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:4-5).

This is why the great apostle acted as he did and said what he said to the Corinthians. After a long life, he was anticipating being called up to be with the Lord, being able to see Jesus face to face, and being told, "Well done, good and faithful servant." In his last words to Timothy, we recognize Paul's anticipation.

"There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:8).

Jesus is calling you and me to drink from the cup of salvation. Heeding that call, we will gain access to our heavenly hope on the day of Christ's return.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Anticipating the hope of Heaven, what comfort do you receive in Revelation 21:4? Which aspect of this verse is most appealing?

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: II Corinthians 5:6-8, Revelation 22:17

KEY MISSION: To understand what the Bible says concerning Heaven and eternity.

Having the hindsight of history, we are able to firmly establish the following four empires according to Daniel 2.

WORLD EMPIRE	DESCRIPTION
Babylon	Head of Gold
Medo-Persia	Chest and Arms of Silver
Greece	Belly and Thighs of Brass
Rome	Iron

How do the two thieves crucified with Christ represent two opposing eternal destinations?

While on earth living out His *first* coming, Jesus spoke much and in great detail of His *second* coming. Consider these snippets from Mark 13 (NKJV).

- 5** - Watch out that no one deceives you.
- 7** - The end is still to come.
- 9** - You must be on your guard.
- 23** - So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.
- 29** - When you see these things happening, you know that My return is near, right at the door.
- 33** - Be on guard! Be alert!
- 35** - Therefore keep watch.
- 37** - What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch!

Jesus never rebuked His disciples for seeking to know more about the prophetic passages concerning the end time. However, He did rebuke them for ignoring the signs of His coming.

How does the translation of Enoch and the death of Elijah compare to the rapture of the church?



LESSON EIGHT

A LIFE THAT MATTERS

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: I Corinthians 9:19, I Peter 2:9

KEY MISSION: To learn that we each have a spiritual purpose, a place in the church, and a God-ordained ministry to fulfill.

In a recent survey by the Barna Research Group among eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds, the following statistics were discovered:

- One out of three believed church to be boring.
- One out of four said faith is irrelevant and Bible teaching is unclear.
- One out of five said that God was absent from their church experience.²⁸

By these statistics, we can deduce that many who attend church say that they receive little. Why? What is it about their church experience that leaves them feeling empty? What is the missing piece needed to build a life that matters in the context of a local church?

To answer this question, we turn to a biblical principle called *the principle of the harvest*. In Galatians 6:7-9, we find that people reap what they sow. Simply stated, a person will benefit or receive from the Spirit in proportion to how much they invest into it. The principle of the harvest is also found in II Corinthians 9:6.

“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (II Corinthians 9:6).

Normally, those who think church is boring contribute little, are uninvolved, and neglect developing any sort of personal ministry. On a similar note, if a person is contributing to their church, involved in the mission of Christ, and actively pursuing a personal ministry, it is unlikely that they will be bored in church.

Many people who attend services without engaging in ministry or sharing Christ soon turn apathetic

²⁸ David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church...and Rethinking Faith* (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 43.

and spiritually cold. Just as athletes lose muscle tone and physical endurance if they stop exercising, church goers will lose spiritual passion and an interest in the church if they do not find ways in which to contribute, serve, and minister. In his book *So You Want to Serve*, Pastor Jack Dehart offers the following bit of wisdom.

“The power and the dynamics of the early church rested upon people power, not just preacher power. God worked with all the believers with signs following, just as Jesus said would happen (Mark 16:17). . . . The solution to apathy and church boredom is to get everyone on the team out of the grandstands and onto the playing field. Christianity is not a spectator sport. It is an endeavor in which everyone is expected to participate.”²⁹

GET IN THE GAME

Imagine that you are at one of your favorite sporting events watching your favorite team crush their opponent in the championship game. The crowd is on its feet and everybody is cheering. Now envision the final play. The quarterback takes the snap, the pinch hitter walks up to the plate, or the star player steps onto the court. You get the picture. In moments like this, you can feel the tension and the anxious anticipation in the air. What will be the outcome? Who will win? Which team will reign victorious?

In the final seconds at just the right time, the right player makes the right move and scores the winning touchdown, a grand slam homerun, or a catapulting slam dunk. The crowd goes wild! People start throwing popcorn and giving each other exuberant high fives. Aw, the sweet taste of victory!

It is an exhilarating experience to witness events like these from the stands. When friends who missed the game ask you all about it, you are able to describe every last detail. You were there, you saw it all, and you won't ever forget. Witnessing and watching all the action unfold will give you quite a story to tell.

Those who were personally involved, who gave a key block or caught a pass or scored the winning point will always have an even better story to tell because they were in the game. Spectating never compares with the thrills and chills of being in the middle of the action.

Those in the stands went to bed that night having observed a great game. Those on the field or the court went to bed that night having played a great game; even better, they were exhilarated knowing their contribution impacted others. This understanding shows us two kinds of people: those who make things happen and those who watch things happen. These types of people can be further described as participators and spectators. In the kingdom of God, people either invest into the field to gain a harvest or neglect to do so. In the end, those who invest little or nothing gain little or nothing.

EVERYONE HAS A PART TO PLAY

All of this has tremendous implications in what we do for God in His kingdom. Ephesians 2:10 speaks of the work of God: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” This verse tells us that when we experience new birth in Christ, a new life is created within us. We can also know that when we leave the altar, the work of Christ continues within us.

We are His workmanship. Jesus not only saves us, but He takes us in His hands and weaves the very fabric of our lives. He gives us a job and a ministry to do. He sends us on a mission. He calls us to serve.

²⁹ Jack Dehart, *So You Want to Serve* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1990), 13.

Ephesians says He has “good works” for us to accomplish. He gives us a certain path to walk and a significant life to live. Jesus, our Creator and Redeemer, has an intentional purpose and work for every human being.

If you have breath in your body, then you can be sure that God has an important calling for you. He has a place fashioned just for you in His kingdom. He made you unique so that you may accomplish things that nobody else can accomplish.

There are countless people all across the nation who go to church but never venture out, take a step of faith, and involve themselves within the church.

As the game is being played in the Kingdom, as the battle for souls is raging, they are satisfied to sit in the stands and watch. All the while God is calling, tugging, pulling, and drawing them to get out of their seat, stand up, walk down the aisle, sign up to play, and get in the game.

The church was designed to be primarily a volunteer organization. The power of the church is “the power of everybody” as men and women, young and old, offer their gifts to work out God’s redemptive plan. . . . By choosing people like Peter, James, John and others, Jesus chose to use people who had jobs outside of the church. He chose to advance the kingdom on the shoulders of ordinary people who live in the real world of family and business and community.³⁰

The apostle Paul was a volunteer. He had an outside profession that supported his ministry within the church. He was a tentmaker. Paul spoke of his profession in I Corinthians 9:19. “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.” Even though his outside profession and salary made him free from all men, he made the decision to step inside the church to serve so that he might “gain the more.”

Paul understood that there was something to receive and something to gain inside the Kingdom as a servant that he could never get outside of the church in a day job.

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

According to I Peter 2:5, 9, every saint is anointed as a priest as they experience a new birth in Christ:

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. . . . But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (I Peter 2:5, 9).

By speaking of a “royal priesthood” in I Peter 2, Scripture refers to the power and purpose of the church.

In the Old Testament, priests of the tribe of Levi served in the Tabernacle and Temple. At that time, the Lord separated the tribe of Levi to bear the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord, to minister to Him, and to bless His name (Deuteronomy 10:8). According to Old Testament law, the priests . . .

- were a people set apart for the Lord’s special use (Numbers 1:47-54).
- were a pure people that went through a sanctification process before beginning their service. They were to live holy before God and wear special garments (Exodus 28, 29).
- had special authority given by God (Deuteronomy 21:5; 24:8).

³⁰ Bill Hybels, *The Volunteer Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 18.

Uniquely, each of these characteristics can also apply to the New Testament church.³¹ In like manner, we are anointed for the ministry as we are filled with the Holy Ghost.

In Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit of Christ filled those who had gathered in the upper room. As this happened, Jesus gave His disciples a spiritual anointing to mirror the physical anointing of the priests in the Old Testament. As spiritual priests today, we have direct access to God. We are to be set apart for the Lord's special use. However, along with the benefits of the "royal priesthood," there are certain responsibilities that we must fulfill.

- As priests, we are to live holy before God (1 Peter 1:15-16).
- As priests, we are to serve as ministers.

These responsibilities are given to every born-again Christian, not just pastors and preachers. As spiritual priests, our purpose is to reconcile fallen humanity to the Messiah.

We act differently and live differently than the rest of the world. We are not supposed to be "just like" everybody else. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19, we are not our own. We belong to God. He has purchased us with His blood (Acts 20:28).

If you have experienced the salvation of Christ, then you have stepped into the office of a priest.

- **NOTE TO TEACHER:** Have the audience repeat this statement: "I am a priest!"

If you have been filled with the Holy Ghost, not only has the Lord saved your soul, He also has given you a responsibility with eternal implications. You have a ministry.

As we look back to the Old Testament, one of the key responsibilities of the priests was to carry the Ark of the Covenant on behalf of the people. When the people moved from one place to the next, it was the job of the priests to pick up the Ark on their shoulders and carry it in front of all the people. It was a sacred task.

Carried on the shoulders of the priests, the Ark brought the pillar of fire that led the people by night and the glory cloud that led the people by day. Carried on the shoulders of the priests, the Ark gave all the people of God victory in battle and allowed them to overcome their enemies.

In the age of the New Testament, a part of our responsibility is to carry the ark on behalf of a lost and dying world. Imagining the priests carrying the Ark illustrates the weight and burden of ministry. Without leaders serving, working, and operating in their individual ministries, the church goes nowhere. Without church leaders, the lost are left to wander through the darkness of the world. The ark may be heavy at times, but nothing is more fulfilling and worthy than walking in a God-ordained calling.

WHY HOSPITALITY MATTERS

In the Old Testament, God instructed Israel to welcome strangers, to do them no wrong, and to love them as members of their family.

"And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:33-34, NKJV).

³¹ It is interesting to note that before their service, the priests had anointing oil poured over them, which sanctified them to do a job no one else could do (Exodus 40:9-16; Numbers 1:51). In the New Testament, we are anointed for ministry as we are filled with the Holy Ghost.

“Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 23:9, NKJV).

In Exodus 23:9, God commanded His people not to “oppress” the stranger.³²

- **DISCUSS:** Using the two Scriptures above, why did God tell the Israelites not to “oppress” the stranger? What was His reason for this commandment?

As the Lord has welcomed us to a better life, we should be welcoming to others. The Bible says much about this.

- Be hospitable to one another without grumbling (1 Peter 4:9).
- Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, distributing to the needs of the saints, and given to hospitality (Romans 12:10-11, 13).
- A bishop must be hospitable (Titus 1:8).
- In the description of a virtuous woman, Proverbs says she “extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy” (Proverbs 31:20, NKJV).

In Matthew 20:25-28 (NKJV) Jesus taught about greatness. After showing how the Gentiles ruled with authority and power, He turned to His disciples and uttered one of His greatest leadership principles: “Whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”³³

This principle taught by Jesus has a lot to say about the church. As leaders, each of us should operate and exist with the full knowledge that we are ministers. Each of us should get to a point in our spiritual growth that we grow out of our need to always be ministered to. If we are truly growing spiritually, we should grow to the point where we are readily able, willing, and wanting to minister to others. Biblically, if we have given ourselves to Christ then we belong to Him. We are not our own. We are His. Therefore, we should serve His purpose.

THE PURPOSE OF JESUS

In Luke 15, Pharisees came to Jesus and complained about His association with sinful people. The fact that Jesus spent time with people who had spiritual needs made the Pharisees uncomfortable. It bothered them that Jesus often hung out with “bad” people, and they couldn’t understand why these people’s bad situations didn’t bother Jesus as well. They thought this way because they did not understand the mission of Jesus.

- “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).
- In 1 Peter 3:9, we find that He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Jesus did not do what He did to chill with the up-and-coming. He did what He did to reach the down-and-out. That is why He chose to sit next to those with apparent needs at dinner parties rather than by the “popular” people. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:13).

³² In this sense, the word *stranger* indicates someone who has no home or sense of belonging; a wanderer or lost individual.

³³ This is repeated in Mark 10:45.

Jesus came to reach the lost and to help all people know Him. That is His purpose. As His disciples and followers, we should pattern our lives and ministries after His life and ministry.

If we truly desire to be Christian, or Christlike, we must internalize and seek to fulfill the purpose of Christ. His passion must be our passion. His mission must be our mission. If He came to seek out and save people, so should we.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- With a friend, discuss whether or not you believe that church is boring. Do you think there is a strong connection between inner fulfillment and the development of a personal ministry?
- How does the theme of this lesson play out on a college campus? How can we become better servants to our fellow students?

FOCUS SCRIPTURES: I Corinthians 9:19, I Peter 2:9

KEY MISSION: To learn that we each have a spiritual purpose, a place in the church, and a God-ordained ministry to fulfill.

- I was saved to _____!

What is the difference between a participator and a spectator?

The power of the church is “the power of everybody” as men and women, young and old, offer their gifts to work out God’s redemptive plan. By choosing people like Peter, James, John, and others, Jesus chose to use people who had jobs outside of the church. He chose to advance the kingdom on the shoulders of ordinary people who live in the real world of family and business and community.

- According to I Peter 2:9, we are called to be spiritual _____.

If you have been filled with the Holy Ghost, not only has the Lord saved your soul, He also has given you a responsibility with eternal implications. You have a ministry.

How is the Old Testament practice of carrying the Ark similar to the New Testament work of the ministry?

In Luke 15, Pharisees came to Jesus and complained about His association with sinful people. The fact that Jesus spent time with people who had spiritual needs made the Pharisees uncomfortable. It bothered them that Jesus often hung out with “bad” people, and they couldn’t understand why these people’s bad situations didn’t bother Jesus as well. They thought this way because they did not understand the mission of Jesus.

If we truly desire to be Christian, or Christlike, we must internalize and seek to fulfill the purpose of Christ. His passion must be our passion. His mission must be our mission. If He came to seek out and save people, so should we.



**FOR OTHER GREAT RESOURCES, VISIT
CAMPUSNOW.ORG**