

## THE LOVE OF GOD DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

By C. D. Hildebrand

### PART ONE GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU

The purpose of the Love of God Discipleship Series is to equip the believer with sound Biblical truths and practical guidance for spiritual living. In this first work, God's Love for You, you will study basic Bible doctrines taught through the eyes of God's love for you. Part Two, entitled Your Response to God's Love, continues to teach sound doctrine and emphasizes God's love and grace as the motivation for your response to Him. Part Three, God's Love through You, will help you discover how to allow God's love, grace, and power to work through you as you reach out to others.

This series is a new look at discipleship. While it adheres quite clearly to the truths that believers hold dear, it departs from the customary rules and regulations that are so commonly added. If you trust that God is able to love someone so much that they would "want" to seek Him, and believe that His grace and Spirit are capable of teaching and leading a sincere believer, you will appreciate this work.

How do Christians go from that initial joy of salvation to being completely miserable as a believer? My opinion is that well-meaning "mature" Christians, sometimes from day one, teach the new believers that following Jesus is *difficult*. They ignore that Jesus Himself said that His yoke is *easy*, and His burden is *light*.

My husband and I started out our Christian journey with all the joy and hope and faith a Christian could have, but very systematically, had our joy preached right out of us. We were taught that part of pleasing God is submitting to our leaders, and that the leaders are not to be questioned. Since what we wanted most of all was to please God, we obeyed. With all of our hearts we did everything we were told to do. We got as involved as possible in ministries, too; even got licensed, then ordained and served as pastors. Everything seemed wonderful at first, but little by little it all got turned upside down. Instead of doing what we did because we were so full of love for Jesus, we began thinking that those things we were doing were making us more holy, acceptable, and closer to God. In other words, we based our relationship with God on what we did and didn't do. We didn't know that we were severing ourselves from the work of the cross of Christ.

After we realized that we had taken a wrong turn, it took many years to get free from all the religious knots that we and others had tied over our lives, but one by one, they were removed as God kept leading us back to His word. As we tried to find a church that believed in the love and grace of God, we became increasingly aware, that what we had experienced was not at all unique, that the body of Christ, nearly as a whole, does not understand grace beyond initial salvation. Out of this extreme frustration and the realization that so many Christians have fallen from grace and don't even know it, came this work you hold in your hands.

The sad fact that many Christians today do not understand their continued salvation is a strong indication that they do not have a firm understanding of New Testament doctrine. They go to church on Sunday, read a few scriptures during the week, read a Christian book now and then, but never really take the time to study sound Bible teachings. Josh McDowell in his book, The Last Christian Generation, points out this problem and predicts that in one generation, Christians will know nearly nothing about the Bible. So, along with the desire to declare boldly the grace of God, there is that of giving a firm foundation for what Christians believe. Every effort has been made to state theology in digestible form and always from God's perspective of love for the people He has created. I hope that after reading this book, you will understand what you believe and why you believe it along with understanding in a deeper way God's love and grace for you.

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## ✿ 1 ✿

**THE EXISTENCE OF GOD****WE BELIEVE . . .**

. . . that there is one God who has always existed and Who will always exist Who created the heavens and the earth.

When endeavoring to understand a topic, it is easiest to begin at the beginning. When we study God, this task is not so simple. We deal with a world in which things have a clear beginning and a clear end. That is often referred to as a *finite* world. We can examine and prove what is finite, and we are comfortable believing in what we can perceive through our five senses. As they say, “Seeing is believing.”

However, when we begin to contemplate the existence of God, our finite way of thinking is turned upside down because God is not finite. He has no beginning and He has no end. It is enough to stretch the mind beyond its capability to try to understand that God has always existed and always will. Just think about that for one minute and you will sense your mind being severely challenged to take it in.

So, how do we human beings even know there is a God? How could we, who live in such an “advanced” culture, possibly believe He is there when we are taught that we human beings are just the end-product of a long process of evolution? To believe in God’s existence is almost presented as a form of weakness or ignorance. Certainly, no well-educated person would believe such legends, we are told. Of course, if someone does believe in God, it is thought that he/she needs a crutch to help him/her through life. It is thought a well-educated and mentally sound person does not need to believe in a divine being.

**Creation Speaks**

However, God knows our limitations, and He knows it is difficult for us to think beyond what we can see, hear, feel, taste, and touch; so, He has gone to elaborate means to let us know He exists.

In Psalm 19:1-4 we read:

- <sup>1</sup> *The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament shows His handiwork.*
- <sup>2</sup> *Day unto day utters speech,  
And night unto night reveals knowledge.*
- <sup>3</sup> *There is no speech nor language  
Where their voice is not heard.*

*<sup>4</sup> Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their words to the end of the world.*

God is constantly speaking to the world of His existence through the beauty He has created. The planets and the stars shout, "God is here!" Each day and each night and in every language God is saying, "I exist!" There is no place anywhere in the world where anyone can deny the existence of God because every minute of everyday and every night, creation is shouting that He is here.

Science often seeks to minimize the things God has created by trying to explain their origins, but even in the most detailed study of evolution, no one, but no one, can account for the moment life began. They theorize. They extrapolate. They guess, basically. Still, no one can explain it apart from a higher being lighting the original flame of life. This is because only God can create life. So, when we look at living trees, living animals, and living human beings, deep inside of every person on the entire face of the earth, no matter what the language, there is a realization that there is a God who caused it all to be. In Romans 1:18-20 we read,

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.*

Notice in verse 20 that "since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." God's creation has been speaking of His existence from the beginning. Whether you think that beginning was six thousand years ago, or millions of years ago, for however long, it has been shouting, "There is a God who made all the beauty and life that surround you."

Take a minute or two to think about this. Forget about nature and the galaxies for a minute which by themselves should be enough to speak to us. Take a look at yourself. Look at your hand. If you are healthy, you can bend each of your ten fingers with barely a thought. You can grasp, slap, clap, make a fist, touch, conduct a symphony, write, draw, paint, even communicate...with just your hands. Your very skin on your hands is a living organism put there to protect you from pathogens that would otherwise destroy you. How could skin just happen? Under your skin are muscles and bones, blood and tendons, and nerves! Each of these systems is composed of minute cells, each differently structured depending on its purpose. Each of these is perfectly placed in the shape of a hand. Think about that also—just the shape of your hand itself! If you look at your hands long enough, you will be amazed about every little detail. Your hand is connected to your wrist, your arm to your elbow; and so the song continues. Get out an anatomy book and take an unbiased look at the pictures. Then read further how each system functions, not only that it functions, but that each system is related to the other, that they work in perfect harmony. If one little thing goes wrong, the body begins to do its job to make things right again. All of this begs the question, "Can you seriously believe that the human body evolved on its own?" Evolution? It does not make one ounce of sense. All of this wisdom, order, and beauty are the product of an infinitely intelligent Designer.

A common illustration, which I will modernize, is to open up the back of a computer. This is frightening for most people, but amazingly, many people can look inside and know what each part is and what each part does. No one would seriously tell you, “Really, it just happened that way. I put some silicon, some heavy metals, some wire and information in a bag and shook it, and out came this device.” You would tell him he is a maniac and needs to seek professional help. You have enough sense and knowledge to look at the inside of a computer and realize that it has a designer—someone with superior intelligence who planned and put together an intricate device without which most of us would not want to live in today’s world. So it is with our human bodies. Take a look inside, not just the things you can see with your naked eye, but also the things too small for that! There is no reasonable and unbiased person who can see the perfection of the human body and believe that it “just happened”. It is too amazing to not have been designed by a being superior to itself. It takes more faith to believe it “just happened” than it does to believe it was designed and created.

Even if it were possible to shake and bake a computer, we would still have to explain the origin of the elements in the bag. From where did the wire, silicon, and information come? So it is with evolution, we can believe that species change over time based on their environment and adapt. Not only is this believable, it is observable to a certain extent. However, evolution cannot and will never be able to explain the *origins* of life. Life—no one can create *life* but God. Even if you believe there was a big bang to start the whole ball rolling...what made things explode and what exploded and where did all of *that* matter originate? The only explanation, no matter what your beliefs about how it all actually got started, is that there is a God.

## Our Conscience Speaks

It is not true that we are born a blank slate. Even science knows this. Each person is born a unique individual. Of course, our experiences will help shape what we believe and how we perceive things, but each is different. However, in one way, we are all the same. God has given each person a conscience.

If someone tells a lie, a normal person will have a sense that this is wrong. In order to find peace about telling a lie, someone will have to justify in their mind the telling of it. We know it isn’t correct to lie, but we tell ourselves that if the lie brings about the desired outcome then it is ok. If we steal, we know that is wrong also, and in order to not feel guilty about stealing, we have to come up with a reason it was justified, such as stealing to feed one’s family, or stealing because it isn’t fair someone has something we don’t.

This is often explained to us as societal guilt. It is implied that if society didn’t tell us certain behaviors were unacceptable, then we wouldn’t think that they were. However, reverse the tables, and we all understand that certain things are wrong. If someone lies to *you* or steals from *you*, you are *sure* it is wrong, and society doesn’t need to teach you that!

The argument here isn’t that certain things are right and wrong. The point is that each of us has a conscience. That conscience knows what is right and wrong. Over time, we can excuse ourselves and ignore our conscience to the point that our conscience doesn’t bother us anymore. We see this sadly all over the world. People steal from, kill, and purposely destroy each other without giving it a thought and apparently without much guilt.

There is a good example of conscience in John 8. Perhaps you know the story of the woman who was caught in the act of adultery. The Law of the Jews stated that if people committed adultery, they were to be stoned. So, the woman was brought out to the people for justice. They brought this woman to Jesus, and Jesus said, "Let he who is without sin, be the first to cast a stone at her." That story is amazing enough, but there is something about the human conscience in what is said. In John 8:9 it is written, "Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last." These men were ready to stone this woman to death and according to their law, had every right to do so. There were not even Christians, but they knew deep in their conscience, that none of them was without sin. So, even though they had the right according to their law to kill this woman, the higher revelation that they also were sinners, caused them to walk away.

## Faith

In Hebrews 11:6 Paul writes, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." In order to come to God, we have to believe He exists. Yet, how do we believe He exists if we cannot see Him? By faith. God has put in each man the ability to believe in Him. This is called faith. It is, in one way, a sixth sense, the ability to perceive beyond what our senses tell us.

We are born with faith. By faith we accomplish dozens of tasks each day. A baby takes his first step. We turn on water. We turn off and on lights. We sit in a chair without looking back. We put a car in gear and drive. We move forward when the light turns green. We eat. We drink. We use credit cards. We turn on all sorts of electrical devices. We believe what someone tells us when we ask them a question. We also usually believe what we read in a newspaper or hear on a news report. All of these things require faith.

Faith is both natural as in the examples above and supernatural as a response to hearing good news about God. Paul wrote in Romans 10:17 that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. When we hear the good news of Jesus Christ, faith supernaturally comes to our hearts to believe in God and what is true about Him. By faith, someone who once explained the existence of world through the eyes of evolution, is now able to "see" the truth about creation.

In Hebrews 1:3 we read, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible." By supernatural faith, we understand certain things, and one of them is that God formed the world by his words. He made things exist that never existed simply by speaking. It takes faith to believe this because it just does not exist in this world apart from God. We human beings can try speaking to a rock to become a toad, but it is not going to happen.

Each human being has faith. When we hear the truth about God, supernatural faith comes to us and we are able to believe truths we once sought to deny. Here is where our will enters. God does not force us to receive Him. Even when our eyes have been opened to believe, we still have the ability to reject Him. Yet, who would be so foolish? When God reveals Himself to us, let us respond with the faith He has given and embrace Him with open arms.

God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. He said, "Let there be birds in the air," and there were. You cannot believe this with finite thinking. Creation is

speaking. Our consciences are speaking. Both are telling us the good news of God's existence and power as the Creator of all that is good. Let us respond in faith.

## One God

Not only do we believe God has always existed, but that there is only ONE God. There are few things that will infuriate more our world today than saying this. In fact, many non-Christians do believe in the existence of a god, and they will defend your right to both believe it and say so publicly. However, let the words come from your lips, "There is only ONE God," and anger raises its ugly head. You will be accused of being a fanatic, an extremist, even self-righteous.

Why is this? We as human beings, don't like to impose our views on others, and we especially don't appreciate someone else imposing their views on us. This is especially true in countries where freedoms are valued. When you say there is only one God, the perception can be that you exclude the beliefs of others and imply that their views are invalid. In countries where there is one religion only, if you say that your God is the only true God, you will be hated and persecuted.

We will talk in the next chapter about why we believe the Bible to be the inspired word of God, but assuming it is, the word has many things to say about there being just one God. Here are several verses that speak to the existence of only one God.

*Isaiah 44:5* "I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God."

*1 Timothy 2:5* "For there is one God."

*John 1:3* "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

*Ephesians 4:4-6* "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

*Isaiah 45:14* "Surely God is in you, and there is no other; There is no other God."

*Isaiah 45:21* "And there is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior; there is none besides Me."

*1 Corinthians 8:4* "Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one."

## LIFE APPLICATIONS

Looking again at Hebrews 11:6, we see that not only do we need to believe that God is (that He exists) but that "He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him". Believing that God exists is just the beginning. We see in this verse that God wants us to believe in more than His existence. He wants to believe that He rewards those who seek Him. In other words, when we reach out to Him, He answers our prayers. God, who created the universes by His word, wants you to know Him personally. That is why He sent His only Son because of His love for us, His desire to give us freely eternal life. The God who "made the stars also" *loves* you.

Believing that there is one God who has always existed, will not necessarily gain you popularity among friends and family, but it will bring peace to your life. When we realize that the one true God who has always existed and who will always exist loves

us, we will realize that there is more to this life than just you and I and what we can know and do on our own.

So, what is God like? We will study that in detail in Lesson 5, but let us examine a few of His qualities. First of all, God is all-knowing (omniscient). He can see what is going on everywhere in the entire universe at the same time. He knows the thoughts of every person. When we join our lives to His through Jesus Christ, our lives are led by the One who knows everything. We don't have to try and know everything ourselves. We can do our research, of course, but then pray for guidance, and know that we are connected to the God who knows all. His guidance will be far superior to our human reasoning.

God is also everywhere-present (omnipresent). This means there is no place that He is not. No matter where we go, He will be there with us. This gives us confidence to live each day knowing we will never be alone. It also inspires us to live in such a way that brings joy to His heart.

Another quality that expresses God's being is that He is all-powerful (omnipotent). There is nothing impossible for Him. We can ask Him to meet our needs, and He will have no trouble meeting them. He will remove obstacles in our life, give us strength to live victoriously, and protect us.

So, there is only one God who has always existed and who will always exist. He is all-knowing, everywhere-present, and all-powerful. This same God also loves you and wants you to know Him personally through His Son.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW

1. Why is it difficult for human beings to believe that there is one God who has always existed?
2. How does God speak to us through creation?
3. According to this lesson, how does God speak to us through our conscience?
4. What role does faith play in our ability to believe in the existence of God?
5. Why is it acceptable to most people to say that God exists, but it is not acceptable if one says that there is only ONE God?
6. What do these three qualities of God mean, and in what ways are they important in our everyday lives?
  - Omniscient
  - Omnipresent
  - Omnipotent
7. Why is simply *believing* that there is one God not enough? What else does God want us to know? (Hebrews 11:6)



## THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURES

### WE BELIEVE . . .

. . . the Bible was given by inspiration of God.

Since God is everywhere-present, all-knowing, and all-powerful, He is capable of communicating with the human beings whom He has created. In this lesson, we will consider first what the Bible says about itself. Then we will briefly explore the history of the Bible so that we can understand how it came to be what it is today. Finally, we will discuss how trusting in the truth of the Bible can change our lives.

### What the Bible Says About Itself

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (a letter written to Timothy from the Apostle Paul), we read, “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.” This means that all of what is considered Scripture was given by God through a process called inspiration. “Inspiration” means “God-breathed”.

A theological term that you might encounter when studying this topic is “verbal plenary inspiration”. This expresses the belief that each and every word in Scripture was given by God. Each word is important and carries meaning and message from God. The Old Testament scribes understood this concept. Their primary focus in life was to make manuscripts of the Word of God. They copied each tiny line in complete detail, not wanting to change in any way what was written. They believed each and every word came from God.

### Verbal Plenary Inspiration and Bible Translations

Believing that each and every word is given by God’s inspiration means that when translating the Bible, translators take special care not to change the words or meanings of what is written. Bibles that take the utmost care to keep the original text are called “translations”. Some popular Bible translations are *The King James Bible* (written in old English), *The New King James Bible*, *The New American Standard Bible*, the *English Standard Version Bible*, and *The Amplified Bible* (which translates the words as you read the text). “Bibles” that take liberty to explain from the author’s understanding of what is written, or that have put the Bible text into the author’s own words are called “paraphrases”.

When you chose a Bible to study, you should buy a *translation*. If you want a paraphrase, remember that it is NOT the exact word of God, but will likely contain some opinion. In fact, some paraphrases are quite erroneous and ridiculous. It is safe to memorize and trust a reputable *translation* of the Bible but memorizing a paraphrase and putting your trust in someone’s opinion is not helpful to you. If you do choose a paraphrase as your main Bible (which we don’t recommend) at least also own a translation, so that you can compare them from time to time. There are also Bibles available that have more than one translation and/or paraphrase side by side. These are called parallel Bibles.

Study and Reference Bibles can be very helpful in your study of God’s Word. However, you must keep in mind that the comments made in reference Bibles are not given by inspiration of God. They too often contain opinion. Usually, the comments are helpful and can

give you important historical or archaeological information. At other times, it is clear the author of the comments has a theological bias. So, while using a study or reference Bible, always separate in your mind the inspired words of God, and the words of the commentator. Of course, we do not challenge the Word of God, but it is perfectly acceptable to disagree with a commentator.

### **Are the Epistles in the Bible Scripture?**

2 Peter 1:20-21 says, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” This is the most common Scripture used to indicate that the word of God was not written because some person wanted to write it. What happened is that men of God spoke as they were moved of the Holy Spirit. This was recorded in writing. It was and is believed that every single word they spoke was the word of God.

One might say, “Wasn’t that referring to the Old Testament?” Mostly likely, it was. However, here is a verse that indicates that the New Testament is also considered Scripture. 2 Peter 3:15-16 says, “—and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,<sup>16</sup> as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” Here Peter is clearly referring to Paul’s writings as Scriptures. Paul wrote a large portion of our New Testament.

### **A Strong Warning**

We need to beware of those who add to or subtract from what the Bible says. Some will want to make the word of God something it was never meant to be by adding in their own philosophy or their own religious views. Others will omit the portions of Scripture which don’t exactly fit their concepts of God. The Bible gives warnings to us not to engage in this activity. Here are two Scriptures of major importance about this.

#### ***Revelations 22:18-19***

*“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’”  
(This was written near the end of the book of Revelations and most likely is referring to that book. Some have reasonably expanded the meaning to apply to all Scripture.)*

#### ***Galatians 1:8-9***

*“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”*

We see in these two verses how seriously the original preachers of the gospel took their messages. They knew how easy it would be to add to or subtract from the true gospel. Paul was so adamant about it, that he pronounced a curse even on himself if he ever strayed from the truth.

This gives us very important reasons to know what the word of God teaches so that we also will not unwittingly add or subtract from it. Without a strong foundation in the word of God, we can be deceived. It is a significant reason to seek out a trusted *translation* of the Bible and not rely on a paraphrase.

## Evidences That Demand a Verdict

For many Christians, it is not important to know the history of the Bible. They accept by faith that it is the word of God, and don't feel a need for that to be proven to them. There is nothing wrong with this on a personal level. However, it is a question you will be asked by people who don't believe, and who will want evidence to support your claim that the Bible is the word of God. 1 Peter 3:15 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear". So, even if you don't feel a need to have it proven to you, it is good to have at least an introductory understanding of the history of the Bible so that you can give reasons for others to hope as well.

Some of you may want to dig deeper into this topic. Josh McDowell was an atheist who decided to study the topic carefully in order to disprove Christianity, and through his studies came to the conclusion that the Bible was indeed the word of God. In his book More Than a Carpenter Josh explains three basic principles of historiography: the bibliographical test, the internal evidence test, and the external evidence test. Below is a summary of those tests.

### Bibliographical Test

The *bibliographical* test is "an examination of the textual transmission by which ancient documents reach us from the past"<sup>1</sup>. It has to do with the reliability of the documents, the number of them, the consistency between them, and the length of time between the original copies and the current copies. He shows a contrast between other ancient manuscripts which are widely accepted as authentic and the New Testament manuscripts.

There are over 5,000 manuscripts of the New Testament which are remarkably close to the original writing. No other book comes close to having so many manuscripts written so close to the first copies. The only writing that comes anywhere near to having as many manuscripts as the Bible is Homer's Iliad with only 643. We consider Homer's Iliad to be authentic with far less evidence. Certainly then the Bible passes the bibliographical test.

### Internal Evidence Test

The *internal* evidence test has to do with the proximity of the writer in time and geography to the event recorded and the common knowledge of the event. The authors of the New Testament were eyewitnesses of the things about which they wrote or based their writings on eyewitness accounts of others. Assuming that those recording these events had no purpose to distort the information, it can be trusted.

However, to check the possibility that the writers changed facts for their own personal or group motives, we have the common knowledge factor. The disciples were careful to record these events accurately because it would have been extremely easy to dispute what they wrote if they lied as there were thousands of eyewitnesses, both believers and non-believers who could testify to their authenticity or prove that what was being said was false. In his book Josh quotes historian Will Durant as saying,

*"That a few simple men should in one generation have invented so powerful and appealing a personality, so lofty an ethic, and so inspiring a vision of human brotherhood, would be a miracle far more incredible than any recorded in the Gospels."*<sup>2</sup>

### External Evidence Test

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<sup>1</sup> More Than a Carpenter, Josh McDowell, 1977, 2005, Tyndale House Publishers, pg. 42

<sup>2</sup> More Than a Carpenter, Josh McDowell, 1977, 2005, Tyndale House Publishers, pg. 52

The third principal of historiography is the *external* evidence test. This has to do with other evidences apart from the document in question that either verify or deny the accuracy of the text. This can come in the form of someone who knew the author and could testify in one way or another to his/her integrity. Archaeology is also external evidence. It has on many occasions confirmed the words of Scripture as fact instead of fable. If you would like more detail about the three basic principles of historiography, consult with Josh McDowell's book, [More Evidences That Demand a Verdict](#).

He writes,

*“After personally trying to shatter the historicity and validity of the Scriptures, I have been forced to conclude that they are historically trustworthy. If one discards the Bible as unreliable historically, then he or she must discard all the literature of antiquity. No other document has as much evidence to confirm its reliability.”<sup>3</sup>*

### **How Did We Get the Bible We Use Today?**

There are many excellent resources about the history of the English Bible. In fact, whole books are written dedicated to this topic. If you are curious to know more about the timeline of the English Bible Translation History, you should visit [www.greatsite.com](http://www.greatsite.com) or read other reliable resources. What is important to know is that over the years, instead of each translation becoming less and less accurate, the opposite is true. What happened was that with each new version of the Bible, the translations became more and more based on the original Greek and Hebrew.

### **LIFE APPLICATIONS**

When we realize that the Bible is authentic and that it contains living words, not just historical words, we understand that it is very significant in our lives. Let's look again at 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

*But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, <sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

#### **Able to Make Us Wise for Salvation**

The words written in the Bible are able to give us the wisdom to be saved, not just initially, but as we go on through this life, and ultimately at Christ's return. The word of God will give us information and form our experience. We will learn that our salvation is through faith in Christ Jesus, and in Him alone.

#### **Profitable for Doctrine**

Doctrine, simply stated, means “teaching” and includes the principals by which we live. Without doctrine, there are no absolutes. Without doctrine, we may all think and do

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<sup>3</sup> More Than a Carpenter, Josh McDowell, 1977, 2005, Tyndale House Publishers, pg. 55

whatever we believe is right. However, the Scriptures do not teach this. As we will learn, there are clearly taught concepts of God and His desire for what He has created. By doctrine, we learn how it is that a sinful man can become a righteous man and have a relationship with God that is based on love and not fear or shame.

It is reasonable to ask why there are so many Christian denominations. This is, in part, because of false doctrine. Of course, each denomination believes its own doctrine is correct. In reality, there is only one doctrine, but we don't all understand everything perfectly. In 1 Corinthians 13:9-10 it says, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part will be done away."

There are certain foundational truths, however, which all mainstream denominations believe, and we will discuss those in this book. Doctrines which make one denomination different from another are called "distinctives." All denominations have distinctives.

On the other hand, there are false doctrines which are considered heresy by all mainstream Christian denominations. One of the major doctrines considered to be false by all major denominations is the one that teaches that Jesus was only a man. Mainstream Christians believe that Jesus is God. If a church does not believe this most basic doctrine, we refer to it as a cult.

So, the word of God can keep us from believing false doctrine. That's why it is important to study it carefully. Deception is everywhere; but by knowing sound doctrine, you will stand firm in your faith.

## **Reproof**

Reproof has to do with conviction, evidence, and proof. The Scriptures are meant to convince of what is true and right. They give evidence for our faith and beliefs. They also are the proof to us that God is who He says He is and will do what He says He will do. An example of this is found in Bible prophecy (2 Peter 1:19). Hundreds of Old Testament prophecies have already been fulfilled down to minute detail. The death of Jesus was described hundreds of years before the method of crucifixion was even imagined. The Bible is evidence for itself.

## **Correction**

Let's face it; even the most diligent and sincere person can go astray either in their beliefs or in their way of living. The Scriptures can solve this problem. By them, we know what God has done for us and the power He has bestowed in us. When we are discouraged or in error, the Bible can encourage us or make us know the truth. The more we know of the Scriptures, the less we will need to be concerned about being deceived. If we are full of His words, the enemy will not be successful at convincing us of his lies.

## **Instruction in Righteousness**

When we are born again, we are made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. This is a core teaching of Christianity. Without it, we are left to our own efforts to be made right before God. Our own efforts can never be good enough. Through the Scriptures we learn that our righteousness is from Him. The more you read the Bible, the more clearly you will see this truth. When we understand that we are righteous, we will live righteously. This cannot be reversed. Living righteously does not make us righteous. Rather being made righteous (by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ) is what causes us to live righteously. Living righteously is the result of being made righteous.

## **That the Man of God Might Be Complete**

This is a very assuring thought. God's wants us to be complete. Complete speaks of wholeness, of nothing lacking. When we understand the Scriptures, we realize we are complete in Him (Colossians 2:9). We learn that everything we need for our spirit, soul, and body, we have in Him. As we apply these truths to our lives, we change. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). Our minds are renewed by understanding who we are in Christ.

Completeness also implies that nothing is lacking. When we are complete in Him, we do not lack. If we need wisdom, He tells us in His word to ask for it (James 1:5). If we need knowledge, He says we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). If we need healing, He says that by His wounds we were healed (1 Peter 2:24). The Scriptures lead us to be complete in Him, but you have to know the Scriptures to walk in them. Let the journey begin!

### **Thoroughly Equipped for Every Good Work**

In the heart of every born again Christian, there are a calling and gifts from God. This calling is what He wants you to do for others. The gifts are what He gives to fulfill your calling. The Bible also says that He works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). That means He gives us the desire to work for Him, and the ability.

However, just as you would not allow a child to drive a car or a person off the street to do surgery on your brain, the Lord wants us to be equipped to do the work He has for us. If our doctrine is incomplete, we could actually lead someone astray. If we don't know the power of God that lives in us, we could become defeated. If we aren't aware of the enemy's tactics, we could be destroyed. God wants to give us the equipment to do the job He is calling us to do. How quickly we obtain this information is partially up to us. If you have enough time to study the Bible several times a day, your knowledge will increase faster than someone who can only devote shorter periods of time. It isn't a contest. There are no set rules about how much to study the Bible. However, it is obvious, the more you study the Scriptures, the more you will learn. Understand also, that knowledge apart from wisdom is of little use to someone else. Wisdom grows as our experience expands.

Let's say that God is calling you to be an evangelist. It will be especially important, then, that you thoroughly understand the gospel. Yes, God will use us right away to share the gospel with others but being fully equipped to share the gospel is another thing. This will come through study, experience, and wisdom.

Experience and wisdom come as you cooperate with God in your development. Those who resist applying the word of God to their lives, usually grow much slower than those who get in the habit of saying "Yes," to Jesus.



So, you might have a sense for what God is calling you to do, you may even recognize various gifts He has given you, but through the Scriptures you will be thoroughly equipped to do that work and use those gifts. This is a very good reason to study the word of God. By learning true doctrine, and applying what you learn, you will gain wisdom. This is an ongoing process throughout the Christian life. It is also a constant source of joy and strength.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW**

1. Define the term "verbal plenary inspiration".
2. What evidences do we have that the Bible is the Word of God?
3. In arriving at the Bibles we use today, how is it that the translations became more accurate and not less accurate?

4. What is the difference between a translation and a paraphrase of the Bible? Why is it important to study the word of God using a translation? What must we always keep in mind when reading paraphrases or commentaries?

5. Write your own paraphrase of 2 Timothy 3:15-17. Use some of the information in the Life Applications section of this lesson to help you.

 3 **THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST****WE BELIEVE . . .**

. . . that Jesus is God.

The statement that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh is one of the most amazing claims of any world religion. Moses and Mohamed claimed only to be prophets. Imagine the fury felt by the adherents to these world religions when Christians claim that Jesus was more than a prophet; that He was God Himself. How can a man claim to be God? It just doesn't make sense to our human mind.

Whether someone believes this statement or not, it is necessary to investigate this claim. Were there signs that Jesus is God? Did He do anything to reveal this? Did others think He was God? Did He Himself claim to be God? What does Scripture have to say about who He was?

**Jesus Performed Miracles**

The fact that Jesus did miracles should get our attention. He began by turning water into wine. He went from there to healing blind eyes, opening the ears of the deaf, giving voice to the mute, cleansing leprosy, and if that were not enough, raising the dead! It is easy to see that the people would be amazed by what they witnessed or heard had happened. How could someone who was only a man do such miracles? To top that off, He gave the same authority to his disciples, and they went out and healed the sick. Jesus also did some other amazing miracles. He had authority to cast out demons. He fed thousands with only some bread and fish, He walked on water, and he commanded the wind and the sea, and it obeyed Him.

Probably the most controversial miracle that Jesus claimed to do which pointed to His deity was to forgive sins. This is not referring to our normal ability to forgive someone for doing something against us. This was the ability to declare someone innocent before God.

There is a story in Luke in which a woman was washing Jesus' feet with her tears and drying them with her hair. The host was not pleased at this spectacle because he knew her to be a sinner. Jesus pointed out that the woman loved much because she had been forgiven much. Then Jesus said to the woman, "Woman, your sins are forgiven," (Luke 7:48).

On another occasion, a crowd gathered to be healed by Jesus. Some men came to the house carrying their paralyzed friend to see Jesus. The only way they could get in was to open the roof and lower him down to the interior of the house. Then Jesus said something that stunned the religious leaders of that day!

***Luke 5:20-21***

*Jesus said to the man, "Your sins are forgiven you."  
And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this  
who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

The Jews rightly believed that only God could forgive sins. Jesus told them that it was just as easy for him to heal someone as it was to forgive them. Then he told the man again that his sins were forgiven; and to pick up his bed and walk. The man was healed and forgiven.

Another famous story of Jesus forgiving sins is the one in which he forgave the thief dying next to him on the cross. One of the criminals had reviled Jesus, but the other had asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom. Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) Jesus, as God, had authority to offer forgiveness and Paradise.

### **Jesus Accepted Worship**

In the book of Revelation we see that John was given an amazing vision of things to come. At the end of the vision, John was overwhelmed and was going to bow down and worship the angel who had shared the vision with him. We read of this event in Revelations 22:8-9.

*Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.  
9 Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."*

To bow down to worship another human being as God was strictly forbidden, but receiving worship as God was also not acceptable. We read in this account Acts 12:21-23 of the fate of someone who received worship.

*So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. 22 And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" 23 Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.*

Yet, Jesus was worshipped while on earth and He received it, too! Why would He do this? Here are some accounts.

#### **Matthew 2:11**

*And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and **worshipped** Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

#### **Matthew 8:2-3**

*And behold, a leper came and **worshipped** Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." 3 Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

#### **Matthew 9:18**

*He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and **worshiped Him**, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live."*

**Matthew 14:33**

*Then those who were in the boat came and **worshiped Him**, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."*

**Matthew 15:25**

*Then she came and **worshiped Him**, saying, "Lord, help me!"*

**Matthew 28:9**

*And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and **worshiped Him**.*

**Matthew 28:17**

*When they saw Him, they **worshiped Him**; but some doubted.*

**Luke 24:52**

*And they **worshiped Him**, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,*

**John 9:35-38**

*He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" <sup>36</sup> He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" <sup>37</sup> And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." <sup>38</sup> Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he **worshiped Him**.*

It is reasonable that people who experienced miracles at the hand of Jesus might get confused and think He was something more than only human. They had never seen people healed like that. They had never seen someone calm the storm or cast out a demon with His word. So, when these things happened, they might have jumped to conclusions and worshiped Him in error. However, Jesus RECEIVED this worship. If He were just a man or an angel, He would have told the person to get up and worship God only, just as the angel in the book of Revelations, but He didn't. He received this worship. By doing so, He was either the most blasphemous person to ever walk the planet, or He was acknowledging His right to be worshiped.

## Jesus Claimed to Be God

This leads us to an important question. Did Jesus actually claim to be God? It would seem that by accepting worship, He was indicating that He was God, but did He ever come right out and say it?

Let's take a look at an exchange of words between Jesus and the religious leaders recorded in John 8:52-58 in which they asked him directly who He was

*Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.' <sup>53</sup> Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?" <sup>54</sup> Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. <sup>55</sup> Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. <sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." <sup>57</sup> Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" <sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." <sup>59</sup> Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

Just what was going on? What did Jesus mean when He said, “Before Abraham was, I AM,”?

To answer this question, we need to take a little journey to the book of Exodus. There we catch up with Moses who had been in exile for forty years. While out and about one day, Moses saw a bush that was being burned, but not consumed. I'm sure you would agree that this would catch your attention! Moses approached the bush, and God spoke to him from the bush. The voice told Moses that he was going to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt. Moses wasn't sure he was the best person for this job, but finally accepted. Still, he was not sure He had the authority he needed. We read in Exodus 3:13-14,

*Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”<sup>14</sup> And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”<sup>15</sup> Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.’*

When Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I AM,” He was clearly stating His claim to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The religious leaders knew exactly what he was saying, that is precisely why they were getting ready to stone him to death, for blasphemy.

Another account recording Jesus' claim to deity is found in the book of John. Jesus healed a man, and when the Jews saw that he was healed, they asked him who healed him. You would think they would be happy for the man, but what they were angry. Why were they angry? Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath day. Imagine that. When they complained to Jesus about this, here is what transpired next,

*But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself **equal with God**.*

In John 10:23-33, there is an amazing portion of Scripture speaking of Jesus being our Shepherd. In it He reveals that He indeed claimed to be God.

*Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter.<sup>23</sup> And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch.*

*<sup>24</sup> Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, “How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.”<sup>25</sup> Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.<sup>26</sup> But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.<sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.<sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.<sup>30</sup> I and My Father are one.”*

<sup>31</sup> Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. <sup>32</sup> Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

<sup>33</sup> The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, *but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.*"

It is important to notice, that Jesus not only claims that He and the Father are One, but when the religious leaders accuse Him of making Himself God, he does not deny it.

## Scripture Declares Jesus to Be God

There was no question in the minds of the writers of the New Testament books that Jesus was indeed God. These amazing verses declare clearly that the disciples understood Jesus' deity.

### **John 1:1-3; 14**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. <sup>14</sup> And the **Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.***

### **Philippians 2:5-7 (NASB)**

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although **He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant,***

## LIFE APPLICATIONS

While it is important to understand who Jesus is, it is even more valuable to realize how this applies to our lives. Dozens of books have been written on this very topic. We could not possibly discuss every reason in this lesson. It will take a lifetime to take it all in. However, let us discuss a few.

## Jesus Came Because He Loved Us

Why did Jesus come to earth? What would motivate God, to take on the form of a man; to live on earth as a human being; to suffer the difficulties on earth; to be rejected by His own; to be accused of blaspheming His own name? The answer is not complicated. In John 3:16, we read, "For God so *loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

First, He came because He loved us so much. No one can possibly understand this love completely, but perhaps you have loved someone so much you would have given your life for them. Or maybe someone has loved you that much. This is just a fraction of what God feels for us. He **LOVES** us. He not only loves us, but He loves YOU! Let that sink into your mind and heart. Say it out loud. "God loves me." He knows everything there is to know about you, and He still loves you. He loves you enough to have died for you.

The second reason God came to earth is so that we would not perish. We will study this topic more in future chapters, however, here is a summary. When Adam surrendered himself to Satan by eating of the tree God had forbidden him to eat, he turned over all of mankind to death. Each person is born spiritually dead because of Adam's transgression. Man was heading toward destruction. The only way that man could be freed from this spiritual death was through a perfect sacrifice. Jesus was the only perfect man, and when He gave His life, He purchased life for all who would believe. Those who would have certainly perished, will not, if they believe in Him.

The third reason Jesus gave His life, was so that we could have *everlasting* life. This means that after we receive Jesus, we are his forever, without end. We have passed from death unto life. We died with Him, and we are resurrected with Him. Every single day, we have His life. One day He will return, and those who have died believing in Him, and those who believe in Him who are still alive will be called up to meet Him in the air, and forever be with the Lord.

All of this was done for us out of a motive of pure love. It was love we did not deserve. We can imagine that someone on earth would die to save the life of a loved one, but it is difficult for us to even consider that someone would die for an enemy. Yet in Romans 5:8 we read, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." When we were living the complete opposite of what He wanted for us, He died for us. Why? Because He loves us. If He loved us even when we were going against Him, how much more does He love us now?

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW

1. Why types of miracles did Jesus do while on earth? How might these indicate to us that he was God in the flesh?
2. Jesus accepted worship from those whom He had healed. Why does the fact He accepted worship point out that He was claiming to be God?
3. Give one example of how Jesus stated clearly that He was equal to God.
4. Take one of the Scriptures that declares Jesus is God and tell how you would explain this to someone who does not yet believe.
5. What does it mean to you personally that the God of the Universe would leave the glories of heaven to come and live as a human and die to set you free?

## ❧ 4 ❧

### THE TRIUNE NATURE OF GOD

#### WE BELIEVE . . .

. . . that there is one God, eternally preexistent as the God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Just what does it mean when we say that God is “eternally preexistent as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”? “Eternally preexistent” is a statement that means God has always existed and that He always will. Furthermore, we believe He has always existed as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There is one God in three distinct persons. Unlike the concept of the Greek gods who competed with and fought against each other, the one true God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in complete harmony and are One. Each is deity. Each exists at the same time. Each has His own work. Yet, the three persons constitute what is referred to as the Godhead (Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:9).

Some erroneously believe that the one true God was the Father in the Old Testament, became the Son in the New Testament, and is now the Holy Spirit. There is no evidence at all in Scripture for this concept (that of God changing modes of existence) and mainline Christian churches view this as a dangerous heresy. Others mistakenly believe that the One True God *transforms* Himself to sometimes be the Son, sometimes be the Father, and sometimes be the Holy Spirit. This is also not substantiated in Scripture and is considered heresy.

Part of the argument given by these denominations is the fact that they believe there is ONE true God. We also believe this. However, they claim that the concept of the Trinity (which we believe) implies that we have three Gods. They do not accept that there are three different persons in one God.

Part of this is due to only using a human perspective. We already discussed in lesson one how difficult it is for our finite minds to understand that God has no beginning and no end. He has always existed and He always will. Still, we accept it by faith and on the *basis of our study of the word of God*. In studying what God is like, we must look at the whole of Scripture. We cannot focus on one Scripture that says there is only one God and ignore the abundance of Scripture that clearly indicates that the one true God has a triune nature.

#### The Nature of God as Seen in the Old Testament

It is important that we look throughout the whole Bible when studying the nature of God. So, let us take a look in the Old Testament. The plural nature of God can be seen beginning in Genesis 1:1-2.

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*

At first glance, one might not notice what is going on in this verse, but you will clearly see the triune nature of God in this verse as we continue. We can view this verse in retrospect by reading John 1:1-4. Here we have it side-by-side with Genesis 1:1-2.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*

Putting these two verses together, we see that God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning. We also see that the Word, who was Jesus (see John 1:14) was there in the beginning with God. Jesus was with God in the beginning. This clearly implies two persons. It also clearly states that Jesus was God while this was happening, and furthermore goes on to say that all things were made through Him. Made through Him by whom? Next, notice that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Thus, we see God (the Father), the Word (Jesus), and the Spirit all clearly involved in creation.

Perhaps you think it isn't correct to impose a retrospective view on the verses in Genesis. Perhaps the apostle John wrote what he did to make it look like there were three persons involved. So, we have to read on in the chapter to see if there is any more evidence of a plural nature of God. Let's examine Genesis chapter one verses 26-27.

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."  
<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

Here we clearly see the plurality of God. God said, "Let US make man in OUR image, according to OUR likeness." Why did God say "Us" and "Our"? We know that only God can create life. Only He can speak so that something will be created from nothing. As far as Scripture teaches us, before the creation on earth, only God existed with the angels. Angels cannot create. He wasn't asking help from the angels. That is ridiculous. He didn't need their consent or assistance. He said, "Let US CREATE in

OUR image.” Man was created in the image of God, not in the image of angels. Verse 27 reads, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him.”

Man was created in the image of God, not partly in the image of God and in partly in the image of angels. Therefore “Us” can only refer to God, and if “Us” is God, then God is plural. We believe that this “Us” was God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are not three different Gods, but one God who exists in three persons.

## Teachings of the Trinity in the New Testament

We have used the verses in John to combine with the verses in Genesis to get a picture of just Who was involved in creation. Now we move on to teachings in the New Testament about the triune nature of God.

We begin at the scene where Jesus has come to be baptized by John the Baptist. John clearly stated before the people who had come to be baptized by him that he, John, was not the Messiah, but only called to announce Him. When Jesus arrived at the Jordan River John said, “Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world,” (Jn. 1:29). Then the following is recorded in Matthew 3:16-17.

*When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. <sup>17</sup> And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

Do you see it? **Jesus** was baptized by John—ONE. The **Spirit of God** descended on Jesus like a dove—TWO. The **Father** spoke from heaven about the Son—THREE. This is one of the clearest pictures of the Trinity. At the same moment, we see the three persons in operation. Jesus is in the water. The Dove is on Him. The voice speaks from heaven. How could Scripture be more obvious? Yet, there are many more Scriptures that clearly represent the plural nature of our God.

## More Evidence

In Mark 9, we read about what is called the Transfiguration. Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him to a high mountain. Suddenly, He was transfigured before them. Then there appeared with Him Elijah the prophet and Moses. After Peter had suggested that they construct a temple for each one of them, we read in verse seven, “And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’ <sup>8</sup> Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.”

In this record, we see a cloud descending (which one could reasonably see as the Holy Spirit), Jesus being transfigured, and a voice declaring Jesus to be His Son. Here we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit at the same time, but distinct from each other.

In Matthew 27 we are witness to the crucifixion. One of the last things Jesus said is recorded in verse 46, “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”

How could it be any clearer that Jesus was calling to a separate person, His Father? Otherwise, Jesus was asking Himself why He had forsaken Himself, which would make Him a crazy lunatic!

The Father sent the Son.

*John 8:42*

*Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me."*

The Father honors the Son.

*John 8:54*

*Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God."*

The First Martyr

*Acts 7:54-56*

*When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. <sup>55</sup> But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, <sup>56</sup> and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"*

Again, in one verse, we read of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

*Acts 10:38*

*. . . how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*

*1 Peter 1:1-2*

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied."*

The Apostle John and Three in One!

*1 John*

- 1:3 "that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."
- 2:1 "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."
- 2:22 "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son."
- 2:23 "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also."
- 3:24 "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."

In 2 Corinthians 13:14 it clearly states that there is one God manifested as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all.**

## LIFE APPLICATIONS

### The Triune God

What are the implications of understanding the Holy Trinity of God? First of all, to deny the Father and the Son is to be antichrist, against Christ. None of us want to do that! This is on the negative side of the equation. The beautiful side of the story is that all of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, lives in us, loves us, and is working in our lives.

### All of God Lives Inside of You

#### GOD THE FATHER

**John 14:23**

*Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.*

**Ephesians 4:6**

*One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

#### GOD THE SON

**Colossians 1:27**

*To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

**Hebrews 13:5**

*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

#### GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

**John 14:17**

*The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

## All of God Loves You

### GOD THE FATHER

**John 14:21**

*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”*

**John 16:27**

*for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.*

**1 John 3:1**

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*

### GOD THE SON

**Galatians 2:20**

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

**John 15:9**

*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.*

**Ephesians 3:17b-19**

*...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— **19** to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

### GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Romans 15:30**

*Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,*

**Romans 5:5**

*Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

## All of God is Working in You

### GOD THE FATHER

**1 Timothy 1:2**

*To Timothy, a true son in the faith: **Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.***

**2 Thessalonians 2:16-17**

*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and **given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.***

### GOD THE SON

### GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

**John 16:13**

*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will **guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and **He will tell you things to come.***

**GOD THE FATHER****John 3:16**

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

**Philippians 2:13**

...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure

**Acts 5:30**

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.

**Colossians 1:12**

giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

**2 Corinthians 2:3-4**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

**Ephesians 1:3**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

**GOD THE SON****Ephesians 2:18**

For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

**1 Timothy 2:5**

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus

**Romans 3:24**

being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus

**1 John 2:1**

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

**Romans 5:17**

For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

**1 Corinthians 1:4**

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus

**1 Corinthians 1:30**

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and

**GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT****Romans 5:5**

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us

**Jude 1:20**

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit

**John 14:26**

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

**Ephesians 1:13-14**

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

**Titus 3:5**

not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit

**Acts 1:8**

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem,

*sanctification and redemption*

*and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*

## GOD THE FATHER

**Ephesians 1:17**  
that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the **spirit of wisdom and revelation** in the knowledge of Him,

**Jude 1:1**  
Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, **sanctified** by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:

**Romans 15:13**  
Now may the God of hope **fill you with all joy and peace in believing**, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## GOD THE SON

**1 Corinthians 15:57**  
But thanks be to God, who gives us the **victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**1 John 1:7**  
But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have **fellowship with one another**, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanses us from all sin.**

**John 15:15**  
No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you **friends**, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

## GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

**1 Corinthians 2:9-11**  
But as it is written:  
“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the heart of man  
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”  
**10** But God has **revealed them to us** through His Spirit. For the Spirit **searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.** **11** For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

We will spend a lifetime learning about all that God has done and is doing in our lives. It is a constant adventure as He reveals His love to us each day. We don't have to worry that our minds can't quite put the nature of God into a tidy little human box. God is who He is. Based on His word, and by faith, we accept this, even though in many ways it is mysterious to us.

What a blessing it is for us to have the Godhead working in us 24/7/365. Even when we are not faithful, He still is. He promised to never leave us or forsake us, so we can know that He is always here and that we can draw near to Him at any time without fear.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW

1. Give some evidences for the triune nature of God from Genesis 1.
2. Many Scriptures were shared during this lesson, which show the triune nature of God. Which three do you believe to be the most clear?
3. Write here how you would explain the Trinity to someone.

4. Record some of the things each person in the Godhead has done or does in your life.

God the Father

God the Son

God the Holy Spirit

## 5

## THE NAMES OF GOD

## WE BELIEVE . . .

. . . the names of God reveal to us His character.

As we read the Bible we find that God frequently revealed His character to men. Knowing more about God helps us realize his perspective of us and what He wants to do in us and through us. It is important to first know this fact: as a born again believer, you already know God. You do not have to strive and struggle over many years to know God. He has made Himself known to you through His New Covenant. Jeremiah 31:31-34 reads,

*Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—<sup>32</sup> not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.<sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.<sup>34</sup> No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*

Under the new covenant that God has set up, we automatically know the Lord. This is utterly amazing. We can talk to Him at any time. There is no need for formulas or repentance to approach Him because our sins and iniquity He remembers no more. Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us,

*Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.<sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly<sup>4</sup> to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

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<sup>4</sup> Verse 16 in the NASB reads, “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

You may have already come across teachings about how to approach God in prayer. If you haven't, you will. The truth is that if you are a child of God, there is no formula for approaching God. Coming with confidence before God is based on having Jesus as our High Priest. Not only does His blood continually cleanse us from all sin (1 Jn. 1:7), but He understands our weaknesses having lived on earth as we do.

So, important fact number one for this lesson is that you already know God well enough to talk to Him at any time of day. Important fact number two is because of the work of Jesus Christ, you may come to God without a formula. If every Christian understood those two facts all at once, I believe there would be a collective sigh of relief so enormous that the world would float a little lighter.

So, why study the names of God if we already know Him? In one sense, over time, in fellowship with God, we would know His character increasingly without a written word. Yet, He has provided for us such a rich resource in His word, that it only makes sense to learn more about Him through it.

We can look at it this way. When someone meets someone, falls in love, and gets married, he or she knows that person well enough to make a very serious commitment. However, anyone who has been married will tell you that he/she actually knew very little about his/her mate before getting married. Over time, we get to know more about our spouses. This is similar with God. We know Him immediately upon being born again, but through study in His word and experience with Him, we know more about Him.

## The EL Names of God

“El” is a generic name for “God” that was used by other persons than the Israelites. However, in Scripture, El is combined with aspects of who God is. Some believe that this personalizes God. As you read these names, take a moment to consider how each aspect of God will help you understand Him better, influence your life, and help you better communicate about Him to others.<sup>5</sup>

***El-Shaddai*** “God of the Mountains” or “The Almighty God.” This term is more closely associated with the patriarchal period and can be found most frequently in the books of Genesis and Job. Exodus 6:3 underlines El-Shaddai as the name revealed to the patriarchs. God used it to make His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:1-2).

***El-Elyon*** “The Most High God” or “The Exalted One” (Num. 24:16; 2 Sam. 22:14; Ps. 18:13). Melchizedek was a priest of El-Elyon and blessed Abraham in this name (Gen. 14:19-20), referring to El-Elyon as “Maker of heaven and earth.”

***El-Olam*** “God of Eternity” or “God the Everlasting One” (Gen. 21:33; Isa. 26:4; Ps. 90:2). God’s sovereignty extends through the passing of time and beyond our ability to see or understand.

***El-Berith*** “God of the Covenant” (*Judg. 9:46*) transforms the Canaanite Baal Berith (*8:33*) to show God alone makes and keeps covenant.

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<sup>5</sup> This list is from the Holman Dictionary.

***El-Roi** “God who sees me” or “God of vision” (Gen. 16:13). God sees needs of His people and responds.*

***Elohim** Plural form for deity. It is a frequently used term and the most comprehensive of the “El” combinations. The plurality of this word is not a hint of polytheism. It is a plural of majesty. It is a revelation of the infinite nature of God. In the creation narrative we read: “Then Elohim said, “Let us make man in our image” (Gen. 1:26). This name suggests that there is a mystery to the Creator God which mankind cannot fully fathom. God is absolute, infinite Lord over creation and history. The Christian sees in this term a pointer to the Trinitarian reality of creation.*

## **Jehovah (Yahweh) Names of God<sup>6</sup>**

Also known as the covenant name of God, “Yahweh” speaks of God’s commitment and promise. Jehovah is not a different name, but the English translation used for Yahweh. Following is a list of the Jehovah or Yahweh names of God. Again, take a little time with each name in order to know God’s character and promises to you and how who He is will change your life and how it can change the lives of others you know.

***Yahweh-Jireh** “The Lord will provide” (Gen. 22:14). This was the name given to the location where God provided a ram for Abraham to sacrifice in the place of Isaac.*

God will provide everything we need, from provision to deliverance.

***Yahweh-Nissi** “The Lord is my banner” (Exod. 17:15). Moses ascribed this name to God after a victory over the Amalekites. The name of God was considered a banner under which Israel could rally for victory. The Lord’s name was the battle cry.*

God gives us victory over any enemy.

***Yahweh-Mekaddesh** “The Lord sanctifies” (Exod. 31:13). Holiness is the central revelation of God’s character.*

God is the one who sanctifies you. He sets you apart from the world and unto Him for His purposes. By the blood of Jesus we are made holy. We are thus able to sanctify ourselves as Jesus did; apart from this world and unto the purposes of God.

***Yahweh-Shalom** “The Lord is peace” (Judg. 6:24). This was the name of the altar that Gideon built at Ophrah signifying that God brings well-being not death to His people.*

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<sup>6</sup> This list was copied from the Holman Dictionary. The main text and bulleted text below the names are this author’s comments.

Peace is defined as the absence of war. God is not at war with us (Luke 2:14). We are not at war with Him. In every situation, we can find peace because God is peace (Philippians 4:6-7). He works for us, not against us (Romans 8:31).

***Yahweh-Sabaoth** “The Lord of hosts” (1 Sam. 1:3; Jer. 11:20; cp. 1 Sam. 17:45). This can also be rendered “the Lord Almighty.” It represents God’s power over the nations and was closely tied to Shiloh, to the Ark of the Covenant, and to prophesy. The title designates God as King and Ruler of Israel, its armies, its temple, and of the entire universe.*

God is not only ruler of our lives, but everything else. We can safely trust Him to be almighty on our behalf.

***Yahweh-Rohi** “The Lord is my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1). God is the One who provides loving care for His people.*

*To expand on the meaning of this name, read again Psalm 23, which begins, “Yahweh-Rohi is my shepherd,” and then goes on to demonstrate very beautifully how God behaves toward us, His sheep (Psalm 95:7).*

***Yahweh-Tsidkenu** “The Lord is our righteousness” (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:16). This was the name Jeremiah gave to God, the Righteous King, who would rule over Israel after the return from captivity. He would establish a new kingdom of justice.*

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 it says, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

***Yahweh-Shammah** “The Lord is there” (Ezek. 48:35). This is the name of God associated with the restoration of Jerusalem, God’s dwelling place.*

God now dwells in us and among us. God is there. (2 Corinthians 6:16)

## **Names or Descriptions Used of God in the New Testament<sup>7</sup>**

Most of the names we find in the New Testament are descriptions or roles. They tell what position God plays in our lives and allow us to see more of his character. Some of the names we think of as being New Testament names actually are recorded in the Old Testament because they were prophecy. So, let’s begin in the Old foretelling of the New.

In Isaiah 9:6 we see these names, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called:

- ***Wonderful***
- ***Counselor***

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<sup>7</sup> This list is not exhaustive.

- ***Mighty God***
  
- ***Everlasting Father***
  
- ***Prince of Peace***

We have already extensively discussed these names, but let's put them on the list.

- ***The Father***
  
- ***The Son***
  
- ***The Holy Spirit***

Here are more names used for Jesus in the New Testament.

- ***Messiah*** John 4:24-2
- ***Lamb of God*** John 1:29
- ***The Way*** John 14:6
- ***The Truth***
- ***The Life***
  
- ***The Door*** John 10:9
  
- ***The Light of the World*** John 8:12
  
- ***Jesus***
  
- ***Redeemer*** Titus 2:14
  
- ***Savior*** 2 Timothy 1:10
  
- ***The Good Shepherd*** John 10:11
  
- ***Overseers of Our Souls*** 1 Peter 2:25

- *Son of Man* Matthew 18:11
- *Immanuel (God with Us)*
- *Bread of Life* John 6:48
- *Brother* Mark 3:35
- *Friend* John 15:15
- *High Priest* Hebrews 4:14-15
- *Advocate* 1 John 2:1
- *Mediator* 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 9:15-16; Hebrews 12:24
- *Lord* Philippians 2:10-12
- *Master* Ephesians 6:9

## LIFE APPLICATIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

### The Names of God

1. Look again at the “El” names of God. Record what you can know about God through them.
  
2. We learned that *Yahweh-Rohi* means “The Lord is my shepherd” as recorded in Psalm 23:1. Here is Psalm 23 in the Amplified Bible (which expands on the meaning of the words used). Read it slowly and out loud.

<sup>1</sup> *The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.*

<sup>2</sup> *He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.*

<sup>3</sup> *He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of righteousness  
For His name's sake.*

<sup>4</sup> *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil;*

*For You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

*<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
My cup runs over.*

*<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
All the days of my life;  
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
[and His presence] shall be my dwelling place.*

3. In what ways is the Psalmist David showing us the character of God in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm? How does the fact that God takes care of us like a shepherd takes care of his beloved sheep, affect our understanding of God?
  
4. Take another look at the other Yahweh names of God. Choose two or three and share why they are meaningful to you.
  
5. Go back to names of God found in the New Testament. Write below how each name of God touches your life or how it might help someone else you know.

 6 **THE FALL OF MAN****WE BELIEVE . . .**

. . . that man was created perfect and without sin, but that he willingly and deliberately chose to transgress the command of God which brought sin and death to all men.

**Creation of Man**

In Genesis 1:26-31 we read:

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." <sup>29</sup> And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. <sup>30</sup> Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. <sup>31</sup> Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

God did not create the animals in His own image. Only man has this honor and distinction. Man was created in the very image of God. Notice also that God gave man dominion over every animal. Were there dinosaurs at creation? I don't know, but if there were, man had no fear of them or any other living being. Imagine Adam taking a nap with a lion, or Eve riding a bear! There was no fear of death at all.

Then God blessed man, told him to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it. Adam and Eve were to subdue the earth and have dominion over everything. Nothing would intimidate or harm them. They were told they could eat everything, too. Think of how wonderful each plant must have tasted, and there was no fear that any certain plant would make them sick or kill them.

How pleased God must have been with His creation. Have you ever created something? Have you sewn a quilt, built a house or a fence, rebuilt an engine, painted or sculpted, written a song or felt the satisfaction of knowing you did a good job raising your children? Surely, you have experienced that moment when you looked at

what you had done, and you felt a certain sense of pleasure. That is just a hint of how God felt when he looked at what He had created. (That is also how He feels about us when He now sees how you and we are growing in Him. He's proud of us!)

It is safe to say that Adam and Eve had it made. They had every need met. They had a constant source of food. They had no fear. There was no possible way they could die. They spent their days enjoying God's presence and each other's. They played with any animal and ate anything their hearts desired.

Well, almost anything. In Genesis 2:15-17 it is written,

*Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

One limitation in life, just one. Don't eat of that tree. You may eat from thousands of other trees, but not that tree. Now, Adam, here is a garden for you to tend and keep. You have dominion over every animal. Name them. Enjoy them. To top it off, I will make you a companion who is equal to you. What do you think of her, Adam? Be fruitful and multiply! He had it all. Just one very small limitation. Don't eat of that tree in the midst of the garden.

Forever have theologians speculated, what would have happened if Adam obeyed? It seems reasonable to say that Adam and Eve would have had children whom they would have taught to honor and respect their Creator, and not to eat that tree. They would have all been in fellowship with God. The serpent would have tested each one, and they would have ignored him. Yet, it seems to me that eventually, one of their descendants would have broken that commandment, and we would have ended up in the same condition. Fallen.

Please read Chapter 3 in the book of Genesis before continuing.

## **Fall of Man**

In 1 Timothy 2:14, we read that Eve was deceived. She actually believed what the serpent told her. However, Adam willingly transgressed. He knew what the serpent was saying was against God's commandment. He made a fully knowledgeable decision to disobey God. By doing so, he submitted himself and mankind and the entire world to the authority of Satan. Before this, Adam and Eve had dominion over the whole earth. By disobeying God, they forfeited their authority. By Adam's transgression, death came to all men. Even the animals would begin to eat each other, and man would no longer have total dominion over the animals. Somehow, I believe, even certain plants became poisonous. Death entered man, and death entered the earth.

## **Foreshadow of Redemption**

In Genesis 3:21 it says that right after the fall of man, "Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them." There is something very tender in this statement. God did not abandon man. He was naked. He needed clothing. God, the Almighty everlasting God, made Adam and Eve clothes. To do this, an animal had

to be killed. Some have speculated that this shedding of blood was a foreshadow of blood covering sin. Others hotly disagree. Without arguing one side or the other, we can simply say that blood was shed by God to make clothing to cover Adam and Eve. Also in Genesis 3, we read that God said to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

The Seed that would bruise the serpent's head is referring to Jesus. Even in the judgment of the serpent, God promises a Redeemer. In fact, the Redeemer had been provided even before man fell. In Revelation, Jesus is referred to as the, “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”. This means that before the world was founded, the provision for man's sin had been made.

## Communication with God

Many say that at this point, man was cut off from communion with God. Yet, we go on to read that right after the fall of man, Adam and God communicated. He also communicated directly with Cain after he killed his brother Abel. Apparently, if someone wanted to communicate with God, they were able. Take Enoch for example. It says that he walked with God, “and was not, because God took him”. Enoch had some sort of relationship with God that pleased Him so much, He just took him right off the earth to be with Him. God spoke so clearly to Noah, that Noah was able to receive detailed instructions on how to build an ark that withstood the worst storm on earth. Few people today get that clear of communication for God. God spoke with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, too. He told them where to go. He allowed men to reason with him. He granted requests. He gave instructions. He made promises. So, it isn't correct to say that when Adam fell, man no longer had a relationship with God. There are far too many examples to deny this.

## The Result of Adam's Disobedience and of Jesus' Obedience

Even though God still communicated with man, the results of Adam's fall were devastating. Death and sin entered the world and dominion of the earth was handed over to Satan. However, God loved the world so much, that He sent His only Son to redeem (buy back) man and the earth. He purchased man with His blood, and thereby brought righteousness and life back to man, to those who would believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is so clearly demonstrated to us in Romans 5:12-19 (underling and boldfacing mine).

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—<sup>13</sup> (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.<sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.<sup>16</sup> And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. <sup>17</sup> For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive*

abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) <sup>18</sup> Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

<sup>19</sup> For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

There are some very important facts in this passage of Scripture that are worth noting.

1. Through Adam's transgression, sin entered the world.
2. Through Adam's transgression, death was spread to all men.
3. Death reigned from Adam to Moses. Amazingly, it says that their sin was not imputed to them (counted against them) until the Law.
4. Through Jesus Christ's obedience (his sinless life and willing death), the grace of God (underserved favor of God) abounds to many.
5. Adam's offense resulted in judgment and condemnation.
6. Jesus' obedience resulted in grace and justification.
7. By Adam's offense, death reigned.
8. Through Jesus Christ, those who receive His grace and the gift of righteousness, will reign in this life.
9. By Adam's transgression, many were made sinners.
10. By Christ's obedience, many are made righteous.

## LIFE APPLICATIONS

### The Love of God as Seen in the Fall of Man

It is completely amazing that as soon as Adam transgressed, God did not kill them both! He told them that the day they ate of that tree, they would surely die, but obviously, God did not intend to kill them. However, death did come to all man through Adam's disobedience. Yet, we see the love of God, who not only let man live, but came to him at his moment of transgression, prevented him from eating of the Tree of Life (which would have allowed Adam to go on living forever in his sinful and dead state), and provided clothing for him. How wonderful are the tender mercies of God. He had also already provided for man, long before He created him, a Redeemer in the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth.

He did not abandon man. He continued to communicate with His creation. He even imputed righteousness to those who believed in Him, as we see in the life of Abraham (Romans 4). He delivered His people from their enemies. He rescued those who believed in Him from the mouths of lions, from a fiery furnace, from the plots of evil men. He did miracle after miracle to show His love for man.

Many responded to this love and sought to please Him. However, many more rejected His kindness and rejected God. Even after a whole nation had completely turned against Him, He still brought them back from their captivity. When the fullness of time had come, He sent His Son to permanently provide life for those who believe in Him and receive Him as their Lord. Even though man has a history of disobeying God, He still loves us, His unique creation whom He formed in His very image.

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW**

1. Describe in your own words, what is meant by “the fall of man”.
2. What did God mean when He told Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?
3. Why is it not true to say that when Adam sinned man was no longer able to communicate with God?
4. Contrast what Adam’s disobedience accomplished with what Jesus’ obedience brought about.
5. What comparisons and/or contrasts do you see in the temptation of Adam and the temptation of Jesus? (Genesis 3 and Matthew 4:1-11)
6. What can we learn about God’s love for us in studying the fall of man?



## OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

### WE BELIEVE . . .

. . . that the Old Testament is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, and that Old Testament writings must be considered and viewed in light of New Testament revelation.

### Distinguishing between the Old and New

It is not true that because we are New Testament believers we might as well cut out the pages of the Old Testament from our Bibles and burn them in a bonfire. In fact, the New Covenant cannot be understood nor fully appreciated without the explanation for it as revealed in the Old Covenant<sup>8</sup>. The Old Testament reveals to us our beginnings, the roots and history of the Israelites, His covenant with them known as The Law of Moses, and foretells of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Without record of the Old Testament, our understanding of the New Testament would be limited.

In Chapter ten of 1 Corinthians, Paul recounts to Christians the bad examples set by the Israelites while in the desert and encourages us not to follow them. In verse eleven, we read, “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

Paul also used the Old Testament to give positive examples to New Testament believers. In Hebrews eleven Paul gives us shining examples to follow as he recounts the stories of the “cloud of witnesses” from the Old Testament who set examples of faith in God. Of course, he does this to inspire each one of us to believe in the greatness and goodness of God.

Even Jesus, as He walked to Emmaus with two disciples who did not at that time recognize Him, used the Old Testament. They had spoken to Him about the events of the crucifixion and reports of the resurrection. In Luke 24:27 it says, “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” So, if Jesus used the Old Testament to teach of Himself, of course we will do the same.

The Old Testament is full of vivid and worthy examples both good and evil, of the weak being made strong, of men and women who dared to believe in the Lord their

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<sup>8</sup> Covenant = Testament

God. Without the Old Testament, we could not learn from Joseph who lived one of the most flawless lives in Scripture, nor from the three brave Hebrew men who refused to bow down to the Babylonian God, were thrown into a furnace of fire, and walked out without being burned; nor from dozens of other examples. However, even greater things are in store for us.

Jesus said "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matthew 11:11) You see, when Jesus Christ died and rose again, the door was opened for a new type of believer who would be greater than John the Baptist who himself was greater than all previous human beings! He was referring to you and me, those who would believe in Jesus and receive from Him the salvation that He purchased with His own blood. Even the very least among us is greater than anyone in the Old Testament! For most of us, there is a hesitation to accept this, but Jesus is the one who said it.

### Using the New to Appreciate the Old

All of the above is written as a background for this lesson on the Old Testament. While it is true that we cannot understand the New Testament without the Old, it is also true that in order to understand the Old Testament, you must understand the New. We cannot form our New Testament beliefs on Old Testament doctrine because when Jesus died on the cross, the Old Covenant died as well (Colossians 2:14<sup>9</sup>). We are not under the Old Covenant, but the New. So, as you read through the Old Testament, keep this thought in mind:

**That was then. This is now.**

Understanding this can give us new appreciation for our Old Testament heroes and lead us to even greater success in this life. Without being born again, these men and women demonstrated courage, faithfulness, and sincere love for God. If they could do these things without the advantage of being free from sin and being new creations, how much more can we accomplish who have Christ living in us and are empowered by the Holy Spirit?

When you read the prayers of Old Testament believers such as those found in the Psalms, you should do so in light of New Testament doctrine. **Keep in mind that they longed for what we already have.** We can understand their prayers, but many of them would not be necessary for us as New Covenant believers. They prayed looking ahead to what God would do. We pray looking back to what He has already done.

One very good example of this we find in Psalm 51:10-11 where David wrote, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me." If we are not careful, we will find ourselves singing along, but we must think first. (Thinking is a very good Christian habit.)

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<sup>9</sup> **Colossians 2:13-14**

*And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, <sup>14</sup> having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*

Has Jesus not already created in us a clean heart? (John 15:3) Has He not promised to never leave us or forsake us? (Hebrews 13:5) Didn't he say that His Spirit would be in us forever? (John 14:6) Yes, He did. It was perfectly appropriate for David to pray these things. He longed for what we already have. What we should pray is something more along these lines, "Thank-you Father that through the death and resurrection of your Son, you have created a clean heart in me. You have given me a steadfast spirit. Thank-you, that You will never leave me or forsake me, and that I can live continually in your presence. I praise you that the Holy Spirit which you gave me will abide with me forever." That is the difference between an Old Testament prayer and a New Testament prayer. The Old longed for what the New already has. The New gives thanks for what God has accomplished in us already!

Still not convinced? I understand. For so long, the church has not made a clear distinction between the Old and the New Covenant. However, we must. To incorporate the Old Testament requirements into the New is to negate the cross of Christ. So, this is an important matter. Following is a Scripture in Hebrews 8:7-13. Paul is quoting the prophet Jeremiah (from the Old Testament) to make a difference between the Old and New Testament, and to show that the Old is obsolete.

*For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. <sup>8</sup> Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— <sup>9</sup> **not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers** in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. <sup>10</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>11</sup> None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. <sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." <sup>13</sup> In that He says, "A new covenant, "**He has made the first obsolete.** Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

With all of that in mind, specifically that the Old Testament is obsolete, but also that we can still learn from it, let us take a closer look at the Old Testament.

## Categories of the Old Testament

First, you should know that the Bible is not assembled in chronological order but is organized into the following categories.

- **The Pentateuch** (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)
- **Historical Books** (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther)
- **Wisdom Writings** (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs)
- **Major Prophets** (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel)

- **Minor Prophets** (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi)

Memorizing the names of the books of the Bible in the order in which they appear will be very helpful to you in your study of Scripture. If you should take on this task, you might want to consider pausing after each category. (When children memorize the names, they say, "First and Second Samuel" etc. instead of "First Samuel, Second Samuel", etc.)

### Chronological Order of the Old Testament<sup>10</sup>

As you begin reading the Bible, you will soon realize that stories are repeated. This is because the books are not in chronological order. To help you better understand the order in which events actually took place before the birth of Christ, you might find the following information helpful. It gives the books in chronological order. You might find reading the Old Testament in this order to be less confusing.

<i>Genesis 1 - 22</i>	<i>Psalms 64, 70</i>	<i>II Chronicles 23 - 26:8</i>
<i>Job (approx.)<sup>11</sup></i>	<i>II Samuel 21, 22</i>	<i>Isaiah 1 - 5</i>
<i>Genesis 23 - 50</i>	<i>Psalms 18</i>	<i>II Chronicles 26:9 - 23</i>
<i>Exodus</i>	<i>II Samuel 23, 24</i>	<i>Isaiah 6</i>
<i>Psalms 90</i>	<i>Psalms 4 - 9, 11 - 17, 19</i>	<i>II Chronicles 27 - 32</i>
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>- 22, 24 - 29, 31, 35 -</i>	<i>Isaiah 7 - 66</i>
<i>Numbers</i>	<i>41, 53, 55, 58, 61, 62,</i>	<i>Hosea</i>
<i>Deuteronomy</i>	<i>Psalms 65, 68, 72, 86,</i>	<i>Micah</i>
<i>Psalms 91</i>	<i>101, 103, 108 - 110, 138</i>	<i>Nahum</i>
<i>Joshua</i>	<i>- 141, 143 - 145</i>	<i>II Chronicles 33, 34</i>
<i>Judges</i>	<i>I Kings 1 - 4</i>	<i>Zephaniah</i>
<i>Ruth</i>	<i>Proverbs</i>	<i>II Chronicles 35</i>
<i>I Samuel 1 - 16:13</i>	<i>Song of Solomon</i>	<i>Habakkuk</i>
<i>Psalms 23</i>	<i>I Kings 5 - 11</i>	<i>Jeremiah 1 - 6, 11, 12,</i>
<i>I Samuel 16:14 - 19:11</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>	<i>26, 7 - 10, 14 - 20, 35,</i>
<i>Psalms 59</i>	<i>I Kings 12 - 22</i>	<i>36, 45, 25, 46 - 49,</i>
<i>I Samuel 19:12 - 21:15</i>	<i>II Kings 1 - 14:25</i>	<i>Jeremiah 13, 22 - 24, 27</i>
<i>Psalms 34, 56</i>	<i>Jonah</i>	<i>- 29, 50, 51, 30 - 33, 21,</i>
<i>I Samuel 22:1, 2</i>	<i>II Kings 14:26-29</i>	<i>34, 37 - 39, 52, 40 - 44</i>
<i>Psalms 57, 142</i>	<i>Amos</i>	<i>Lamentations</i>
<i>I Samuel 22:3-23</i>	<i>II Kings 15 - 25</i>	<i>II Chronicles 36:1 - 8</i>
<i>Psalms 52</i>	<i>Psalms 1, 2, 10, 33, 43,</i>	<i>Daniel</i>
<i>I Samuel 23</i>	<i>66, 67, 71, 89, 92 - 100,</i>	<i>II Chronicles 36:9 - 21</i>
<i>Psalms 54, 63</i>	<i>Psalms 102, 104 - 106,</i>	<i>Psalms 137</i>
<i>I Samuel 24 - 31</i>	<i>111 - 125, 127 - 136, 146</i>	<i>Ezekiel</i>
<i>II Samuel 1 - 7</i>	<i>- 150</i>	<i>II Chronicles 36:22, 23</i>
<i>Psalms 30</i>	<i>I Chronicles 1 - 16</i>	<i>Ezra 1 - 5:1</i>
<i>II Samuel 8:1-14</i>	<i>Psalms 42, 44 - 50, 73 -</i>	<i>Haggai</i>

<sup>11</sup> Italics mine

*Psalm 60*  
*II Samuel 8:15 - 12:14*  
*Psalms 51, 32*  
*II Samuel 12:15 - 15:37*  
*Psalms 3, 69*  
*II Samuel 16 - 20*

*85, 87, 88*  
*I Chronicles 17 - 29*  
*II Chronicles 1 - 21*  
*Obadiah*  
*II Chronicles 22*  
*Joel*

*Zechariah*  
*Psalms 107, 126*  
*Ezra 5:2 - 6:22*  
*Esther*  
*Ezra 7 - 10*  
*Nehemiah*  
*Malachi*

**Timeline of the Old Testament**

You might be interested to know that there is considerable dispute about dating the Old Testament. One thing most agree upon is when it ends which is about 400 years before the birth of Christ. Conservative estimates place creation at about 4,004 B.C. Others argue that it was earlier. Most of the disagreements come from the wording of genealogies and how years are counted between generations. I don't believe that a perfect knowledge on this topic is necessary nor do I think you will be asked this in order to enter heaven! However, here is an estimated timeline (condensed) as given by Ussher<sup>12</sup>.

<b>Old Testament Highlights Timeline</b>	
Genesis 4004 to 1635 B.C. <sup>13</sup>	
4004	Creation
Before 3,874 (birth of Seth)	Fall of man
3017	Translation of Enoch
2348	The Flood
2233	Tower of Babel
1996 - 1760	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
1725- 1635	Joseph - Israel to Egypt
Time of the Patriarchs <sup>14</sup>	<b>Job</b> (approx.)
<b>Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy 1635 to 1531 B.C.</b>	
1571	Birth of Moses
1531	Moses flees to Midian
1491	Exodus from Egypt
1491 - 1451	The Law is Given/Desert Experience
1451	Moses Dies
<b>Joshua 1451 to 1427 B.C.</b>	
1451	Children of Israel enter Canaan
1427	Joshua dies
During the time of the Judges	<b>Ruth</b>

<sup>12</sup> Adapted from Easton's Illustrated Bible Dictionary

<sup>13</sup> The author is aware of the B.C.E. (Before Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era) designations but chooses to use B.C. and A.D.

<sup>14</sup> Nelson's Study Bible suggests Job as having lived during the time of the Patriarchs and likely before the Exodus.

## 1 & 11 Samuel, 1 & 11 Kings, 1 & 11 Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon 1091 - 976 B.C.

1091	Saul anointed king
1065	David anointed king
1015	Solomon anointed king

### Time of the Prophets

At this point in the timeline, the Kingdom of Israel was divided into Judah and Israel. We will now switch to a timeline of the prophets instead of following the lines of the two kingdoms. This will help you put these prophets into perspective.

### Approximate Timeline of the Major and Minor Prophets

PROPHET	TIME	RECIPIENT OF PROPHECY
Jonah	770 B.C.	to Nineveh
Amos	760	to Israel
Hosea	760 - 730	to Israel
Isaiah	740 - 700	to Judah
Micah	737 - 690	to Judah
Habakkuk	630	to Judah
Zephaniah	627	to Judah
Jeremiah	627 - 580	to Judah
Daniel	605 - 530	to Judah
Ezekiel	593 - 570	to Judah
Nahum	593 - 570	to Nineveh
Haggai	520	to Judah
Zechariah	520 - 518	to Judah
Joel	500	to Judah
Obadiah	500	to Edom
Malachi	433 B.C.	to Judah

### Appropriate Use of Old Testament Prophecies

It is inevitable that if you have not already heard this you will. Teachers will direct Old Testament prophecies toward New Testament believers. The idea that Christians replace Israel is not correct (see Romans 9-11). Here are some important things to consider when studying the prophets. It is basic hermeneutics (how to interpret the Bible).

1. During what *time period* did the prophet prophecy? What was going on during that time in history?

2. What was the *purpose* of the prophesy?
3. To *whom* was the prophet prophesying?
  - There are prophecies in the Old Testament that foretell of the coming of Christ. Those help us substantiate His claim to be the Messiah. Many of the prophecies have already been fulfilled. Those help us understand the past.
  - Also, there are many Scriptures which have yet to be fulfilled. These help us understand the future.
  - However, it is entirely inaccurate to take a Scripture such as Malachi 3:9 and apply it to believers. It reads, “You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.” The passage goes on to say that Judah had robbed God by not giving tithes and offerings . . . a requirement of the Law. Indeed, they were cursed for not tithing and giving offerings and for disobeying many other laws of God. However, Christians are under NO SUCH CURSE!!! Read Galatians 3:10-14 (underlining mine).

*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”, 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith).*

It is sad to report that many mean and manipulative things are said from the pulpit each Sunday all across the world to condemn those who are not condemned (Rom. 8) and to manipulate the unlearned USING THE PROPHETS. It is therefore so important for you to understand the context and audience of each prophet, or at least to not immediately receive as “truth” for you, what was truth for a certain people. Most of those prophecies are written to a completely reprobate nation of Israel, not to believers made righteous by the blood of Jesus Christ.

## Old Testament Narrative

The Old Testament is so vast that it seems unfair to condense it into a few paragraphs. The advantage of doing so, however, is that we see the big picture instead of getting lost in the details. Following is a very condensed look at the Old Testament.

Unlike the animals, God created man in His own image. Man was without sin, and God gave him one commandment, which he chose to break. When he fell, all of mankind died with him. Because of God's love for man He had created, He promised a Redeemer would come through the woman. Men began to increase on the earth, and became increasingly evil until everyone did evil constantly. God sent a flood to destroy an entirely evil world, but Noah found grace in God's eyes.

Then God chose to make a nation out of Abraham. Abraham had Isaac. Isaac had Israel. Israel had twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel. One of Israel's sons, Joseph, was sold into slavery by his brothers, but God used Joseph to

provide protection in Egypt for His father and family. They eventually became slaves in Egypt, but they grew and multiplied there for over 400 years.

Moses was raised up by God to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt. Through many signs and wonders and finally, the Passover, they were finally allowed to leave. They spent forty years in the wilderness because they refused to believe God and enter the Promised Land. While in the wilderness, God gave the Law of Moses, and instructions on how to build a portable tabernacle where the children of Israel could offer sacrifices for their sins.

Led by Joshua, the Children of Israel finally went into the Promised Land and conquered the enemies and possessed their lands...well, most of them. They did disobey a few times, and this turned out to cause huge problems for them. Eventually, the children of Israel began to do only what they wanted and were ruled by judges whom God would raise up from time to time to deliver them.

After this, we read that the Israelites asked for a King against Samuel's advice. Beginning with Saul, David, and then Solomon, the kings reigned. After Solomon, the kingdom was divided into two, the Kingdom of Judah which was ruled by Rehoboam, and the Kingdom of Israel ruled by Jeroboam. There were some good kings who obeyed the commands of the Lord (for the most part), and there were multiple kings who did evil in the sight of the Lord. All along, the line of David is carefully recorded. From His line would come a promised Prophet known as the Messiah, Jesus.

During the times of the Kings prophets came to warn the nation of Israel that they would be punished for their wickedness if they did not repent. Sometimes, they would repent, but when the next evil king came along, most people followed his example.

Finally, the kingdoms did fall. About 250 years after Solomon, the Kingdom of Israel came under captivity by the Assyrian empire. Then about 130 years after that, Judah was taken captive by Babylonian empire. At the end of their captivity other prophets came along to inspire them to rebuild Jerusalem, which they did. The Old Testament ends about 400 B.C.

## **LIFE APPLICATIONS**

### **Understanding Our Place in God's History**

It is very important for us to realize where we stand in history. We are not living during the times of the Patriarchs, the Wilderness, the Promised Land, nor under the Kings and Prophets. Where we are is the most perfect place human beings have ever been in history. God loved us so much that He sent His Son to redeem us and give us eternal life. From the start, He had a plan to save us, and He carried that plan out. What was foretold about the Messiah has come to pass in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are not the before picture. We are the after. According to Jesus, the least among us is greater than any other saint that ever lived before Christ. So, let us learn from them, but always realize that in every way we are very different in our relationship with God.

### **Bad Examples**

There are plenty of bad examples in the Old Testament for us not to follow. Let us look closer now at the passage in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. As you read, underline what bad examples we are not to follow.

*Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,<sup>2</sup> all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,<sup>3</sup> all ate the same spiritual food,<sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.<sup>5</sup> But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.<sup>6</sup> Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.<sup>7</sup> And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."<sup>8</sup> Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell;<sup>9</sup> nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;<sup>10</sup> nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.<sup>11</sup> Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.<sup>12</sup> Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.<sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

Paul was not saying that we need to be afraid that God is going to allow the things that befell them to befall us. Thankfully, "God has not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation" due to the death of his Son (1 Thes.5:9). However, from this lesson we learn about the things that certainly do not please God: lusting after evil things, idolatry, sexual immorality, challenging God, and complaining. (Ouch!) When we read of how poorly they handled the wilderness (which is not where God wanted them to be in the first place), we wonder how they could act like that. We see them as ungrateful, whining, evil children. Yet verse twelve says, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." In other words, we will be tempted also, but we have their examples. Also, we can know that we will not be tempted beyond what we can bear. We have multiple means of escape in Christ.

## Good Examples

Bad examples are good, but let us not imitate bad examples. Let our lives be examples to follow as in Hebrews 11. Underline the positive examples we can follow as you read (there will be a discussion question on this passage later). The entire chapter has been included because not only does it give us positive examples, but it recounts for us again the Old Testament, giving the examples in chronological order.

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.<sup>2</sup> For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.<sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.<sup>4</sup> By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.<sup>5</sup> By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.<sup>6</sup> But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.<sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.<sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.<sup>9</sup> By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;<sup>10</sup> for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker*

is God. <sup>11</sup> By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. <sup>12</sup> Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. <sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. <sup>14</sup> For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. <sup>15</sup> And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. <sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, <sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” <sup>19</sup> concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. <sup>20</sup> By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. <sup>21</sup> By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. <sup>22</sup> By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. <sup>23</sup> By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. <sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, <sup>25</sup> choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, <sup>26</sup> esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. <sup>27</sup> By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. <sup>28</sup> By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. <sup>29</sup> By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned. <sup>30</sup> By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. <sup>31</sup> By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. <sup>32</sup> And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: <sup>33</sup> who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. <sup>35</sup> Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup> Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— <sup>38</sup> of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. <sup>39</sup> And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, <sup>40</sup> God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

## Careful Application of the Word of God

It is truly worth repeating that we are to take care how we apply the Old Testament to our lives. While we are to learn from both positive and negative examples, we must always keep in mind that as Christians we are different from any other believer in the Old Testament. We must remember that the things for which they longed, we have. Instead of asking for God's presence to be with us, for example, we recognize that His presence is inside us, and that He will never leave us or forsake us.

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW**

1. In what ways can we use the Old Testament to better appreciate the New?
2. In what ways could the New Testament help us better understand the Old?
3. As New Testament Believers, what must we keep in mind when reading prayers and poetry by Old Testament believers?
4. What are the questions we should ask ourselves when interpreting what was written by the Prophets?
5. How has this chapter added to you understanding of the Old Testament?
6. What information from this chapter do you believe will affect your understanding of how much God loves you?

 8 **THE ATONEMENT****WE BELIEVE . . .**

. . . that man's only hope of redemption is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and that His death fully and forever satisfied the righteous judgment of God against sin.

**In Need of Salvation**

When we look into the face of a little baby we often think, what could be more perfect than that? In fact, there are religions that believe that babies are born without sin. That fits well into our logic because we think, "The child has never sinned, so how could he/she be a sinner?"

What we fail to recognize is that we are all *born* in need of a Savior. As we learned in Lesson Six, because of Adam's transgression, death came upon all of mankind. It may not seem "fair" to our finite minds, but every single person born on this earth is born dead and in sin. Even if someone could go throughout life without committing one sin, he would still be dead and in need life.

**1 Corinthians 15:21-22**

*For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.*

*<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*

**Definition of Atonement**

The American Heritage dictionary says that atonement is "amends or reparation made for an injury or wrong; expiation". Where I live, that could bring about the following question, "Say WHAT?"

Well, let's take that apart. We have all heard of the expression to "make amends". When we offend someone or damage their property, we need to make amends. That is to say, we make right what is wrong, by either restoring the relationship or restoring the property. When a wrong is made right by a certain action, that is atonement. You are atoning for the wrong you did. It also implies that the amends you make is satisfactory to the offended one. There is hopefully forgiveness and the willingness to "let it go".

Reparation has to do with being compensated for damage or injury. It has to do with repairing damages done. If a bulldozer rides over your car, and your car is

smashed flat, there is no way to restore the same car. However, reparations can be made in the form of the offender (or usually the offender's insurance company) giving you money to buy a new car. The money is the atonement for the damage. Its purpose is to make things right.

Reparation is also used to describe actions taken by an offending nation in war to make up for injustices done during war to the nation or individuals in that nation. The reparation is a way of making right the wrong, and even though, after war, a reparation hardly adequately compensates the wronged individuals or nation (one can't replace someone's limb, for example), the idea is that by making a certain payment, there is an atonement for the wrong done.

Now, to expiate which means, "To make amends or reparation for; atone: expiate one's sins by acts of penance". To expiate is to do some act of penance to pay for a wrong done. You have heard the term, "Actions speak louder than words." This can be used in multiple situations, but for expiation it would mean, "It is one thing to say you are sorry, and another thing to show you are sorry." If your sister comes to visit you from San Diego, and she breaks your favorite vase, she will likely say that she is sorry, but actually, that is not enough. If she is a woman of honor, she will go out of her way to replace what was broken, or at the very least pay for the vase in some way.

Let's read our original definition again, but this time with understanding. Atonement means, "amends or reparation made for an injury or wrong; expiation". In other words:

**Atonement = amends = reparation = expiation**

## **Blood Payment**

In Hebrews 9:22, we read, "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." Remission is a payment. Without blood, there is no payment for sin.

Let's take the perspective for one minute of someone who does not know Jesus Christ and almost nothing about the Bible. Wouldn't it be fair for them to ask, "What is all this talk about blood?" In our day and age, the thought of blood sacrifices sounds so primitive and uncivilized. Most of us did not grow up needing to kill an animal in order to eat. Some of us have not even fished a fish out of water, killed it, gutted it, cut off its head, nor skinned it. We go to the store, buy a pound of beef, two chickens, a fish, some crab legs, and a turkey. We avoid thinking of these little guys alive and well running around on the ranch or swimming in the sea awaiting their fate in order to supply us with food. We don't visualize their innocent blood flowing out of them or the act of them being killed. Most of us see them as food. We marinate them and put these fellows on the barby with the least thought possible of their origin. This is said not to advocate someone being a vegetarian, but rather to point out that most people in the U.S. are far removed from bloody matters. When we talk to them about the blood of Jesus paying for our sins, they have reason to cringe. How can blood pay for sin?

## **Blood Atonement in the Old Testament**

### *THE PASSOVER*

In the early chapters of Exodus we read about an event known as the Passover. The children of Israel had found refuge and provision in the nation of Egypt when Israel's son, Joseph had become second in command under Pharaoh. However, the Pharaoh that had shown such favor to Israel eventually died. For hundreds of years, the children of Israel came under bondage as slaves to Pharaoh. They labored under heavy burdens. However, the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied. Pharaoh decided to put a stop to this by commanding the midwives to throw into the river all male children born to the Jews. Of course, with no males, eventually, the female children would have no other option than to marry Egyptian males, and the Jewish nation would cease to exist. However, without thinking about it, Pharaoh was killing off his future work force! He obviously wasn't a very forward-looking king.

The midwives refused to follow the king's command, and would let the children live. One of these little boys was named Moses. Most people know the story of how his mother made a little waterproof basket and had her daughter float him in the water. He was retrieved by none other than Pharaoh's daughter who adopted him as her own. Moses grew up as a grandson of Pharaoh.

However, Moses had a calling. He sensed that he was to deliver the children of Israel from his grandfather's oppression. One day he tried to rescue a fellow Hebrew by killing the one attacking him. Out of fear that he would also be killed for what he'd done, he fled to Midian and for forty years tended the sheep of his father-in-law.

In Exodus 2:23-25 we read,

*Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. <sup>24</sup> So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. <sup>25</sup> And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.*

God had plans for Moses. He spoke to him out of a burning bush and said to him:

*"I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. <sup>8</sup> So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, . . . Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup> Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Exodus 3: 7-10*

He asked Moses to be His instrument of deliverance. Moses argued the issue, but he did eventually go back to Pharaoh with this message, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let My people go'" Exodus 5:1. Pharaoh basically laughed that off.

Then, God sent plagues on the Egyptians, but even after the rivers were turned to blood, an invasion of frogs, then lice, and then flies, he still wouldn't let them go. Then most of their livestock were killed, boils broke out on each Egyptian, hail fell and damaged all vegetation and killed unprotected livestock, locusts ate what was left and invaded the homes, and total darkness for three days came upon the land of Egypt. Pharaoh still refused to let the people go.

Before we continue this story, let us make some comparisons. In many ways, all of mankind is like the children of Israel. They are in bondage. Some are helplessly addicted to drugs or alcohol. Others are bound up by selfish desires and self-centered living. Still others sit depressed with no way of escape. Many are bound endlessly to poverty sickness or debt. Many more have a sense of guilt for the way they are wasting or have wasted their lives. Even if someone were to claim to be perfectly happy and free, he would not truly be so, because all men, whether “content” or not, are bound by sin and death.

What is God's perspective when He sees human beings like this? It is the same as it was then with the children of Israel. Let's read Exodus 3:7-10 again. I have underlined some words to point out God's attitude to His people who were under bondage.

*“I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.<sup>8</sup> So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, . . . Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.<sup>10</sup> Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”*

Can you hear God's heart of love in those verses? He saw *His* people in bondage. He *heard* their cries. He *saw* their oppressors. He was sending Moses to deliver them. Not only would He deliver them from bondage, but He would bring them to a good and large land flowing with every good thing they would need. This is what He desires to do for men and women today.

Now, let's go back to our story of the Passover. Where does the blood come in? There would be one more judgment on Egypt. God instructed the people of Israel that each household was to take a first born male lamb without spot or blemish and keep it for fourteen days. Then they were to kill the lamb at twilight and take some of the blood to put on the two doorposts and the lintel of each house. Then they were to eat the entire roasted lamb. They were to eat it with their belts and sandals on and their staffs in hand (readiness to depart). God told them that He would pass through the land of Egypt and kill all the firstborn in Egypt of both man and animal.

The Israelites were told to stay in their homes, and when God would pass over their homes and see the blood, that He would pass over them and not allow the destroyer to strike them. This Passover was to be celebrated each year from that date forward to remember how that God delivered them from Egypt.

So, it was that the children of Israel were spared. So horrific was the scene of every Egyptian having lost his firstborn that Pharaoh finally let the children of Israel go. The story gets very exciting after this. If you'd like to read more about it, see the book of Exodus. However, the story of the Passover is complete. When the Lord saw the blood that had been shed by a spotless first born male lamb, He did not allow the destroyer to enter the house. This final judgment resulted in the liberation of the children of Israel.

In the same way, the blood sacrifice of Jesus has set us free from the bondage of death and sin. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

## THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

“The annual Day of Atonement<sup>15</sup> under the Law called for two goats as a sin offering. The first was slain and its blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, the solid gold cover of the ark of the covenant. Under the Mercy Seat were the Ten Commandments written on tablets of stone. The Law that had been broken demanded death and judgment. But when the blood was sprinkled, God no longer looked at the broken law, but at the death of the spotless animal that the blood represented. With the spotless life having been given, there were grounds for mercy, grace, and forgiveness. The second goat as a scapegoat, literally ‘a goat for removal’, was sent off into the desert to indicate that the sins were not only forgiven, they were gone. All of this pointed ahead to the death of Christ, by which we receive forgiveness and our sin and guilt is gone.”<sup>16</sup>

Again, we see the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins. We also see the removal of sins. This concept is expressed in Psalm 103:11-12 where it says

*<sup>11</sup> For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;  
<sup>12</sup> As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

However, this sacrifice happened only once each year and it only removed past sins. It did not deal with the future sins. A new atonement for the people had to happen again the following year, and the next, and the next.

## Jesus, the Only Perfect and Lasting Sacrifice

Since Adam's transgression, all of mankind has been born dead, and there is absolutely NOTHING anyone can do for himself/herself to change this condition. Man stands guilty before God, and without His intervention, there is no hope. Thankfully, there was intervention in the form of God's only Son Who brought to us eternal redemption. This truth is beautifully expressed in Hebrews 9.

*But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. <sup>12</sup> Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? <sup>15</sup> And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

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<sup>15</sup> Some prefer not to refer to what Christ did for us as atonement since originally, it only covered sins temporarily. Christ's sacrifice was complete and did not cover, but removed sin completely. We use atonement because it is a widely accepted term.

<sup>16</sup> Bible Doctrines, William Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, footnote page 99

<sup>16</sup> For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. <sup>17</sup> For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. <sup>18</sup> Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. <sup>19</sup> For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, <sup>20</sup> saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." <sup>21</sup> Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. <sup>22</sup> And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. <sup>23</sup> Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup> For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; <sup>25</sup> not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— <sup>26</sup> He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. <sup>27</sup> And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

## Results of the Atonement

God sent His Son for a reason. We were dead in our sins. We were powerless to be free from them. The atonement, which we will examine more closely in the next section, changed everything.

Luke 19:10 says, "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." In John 3:17 we read, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." This was Jesus mission, to save us. However, salvation includes more than forgiveness of sins.

Let us take a closer look at the word "save". In the Greek, the word is "sozo", and the definition is, "to save, that is, deliver or protect (literally or figuratively): heal, preserve, do well, be (make) whole". This word sozo is translated repeatedly as "heal". The atonement provided for our salvation, our healing, and our well-being.

One of the clearest verses demonstrating that healing was provided in the atonement is found in 1 Peter 2:24 where it says, "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed." By His wounds, His awful deep and painful wounds, we were healed, and just as salvation was already provided for us at the cross, so healing is already released. It is the purchased right of every believer.

## LIFE APPLICATIONS

### No Greater Love

These famous words of Jesus recorded in John 15:12-13 express the love of God for us by laying down His life. "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for

his friends.” Surely, if the atonement of Christ teaches us anything, it is how greatly God loves us. We could not atone for our own sins, nor could a priest. Only with the blood of the spotless Lamb of God could our sins ever be taken away from us forever. Only through His ultimate sacrifice would we ever be free from sin’s power. It is so easy when studying this topic to get caught up in simply understanding how atonement works, but we must never forget to what lengths God went to demonstrate His love for us<sup>17</sup>. In Romans 5:6-11 we read,

*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. <sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. <sup>11</sup> And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation (atonement).*

## Accomplishments of the Cross of Jesus

Following is a chart I presented to my students for a class I taught on the Life of Christ. It does not cover every single reference in the New Testament to what was accomplished, but it includes most of them. I recommend that you set some time aside to focus on these Scriptures so that you truly appreciate everything contained in them, and that you remember both the cost and motivation of our atonement. Christ gave everything for us *because* He loved us. Only He could atone for us, and He could have provided all that we need.

✝ **The message of the cross is foolishness to some, but to us, it is the power of God.**  
 “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the **cross of Christ should be made of no effect**. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

*“ I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
 And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”*

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

✝ **The cross demonstrates the love of God for us...for me.**  
**John 3:16**—For God so **loved** the world that He gave His only begotten Son  
**Ephesians 5:2**—And walk in love, as Christ also **has loved us and given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice** to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.  
**Romans 5:8**—But God demonstrates **His own love toward us**, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.  
**Galatians 2:20**—I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, **who loved me and gave Himself for me**.

<sup>17</sup> For a physicians detailed description of the act of crucifixion, see <http://the-crucifixion.org/physician.html>

**1 John 4:10**—In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

**Ephesians 5:25**—Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

✠ **Through the cross we are crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to us.**

**Galatians 6:14**—But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

✠ **His cross removed the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles and man and God.**  
**Ephesians 2: 14-18** For He Himself is our peace, who has made both (*Jew and Gentile*) one, and has **broken down the middle wall of separation**, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might **reconcile them both to God** in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 **For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.**

✠ **Because Jesus submitted to the cross, He has been given a name above every name.**

**Phil. 2:8-11**—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. 9 Therefore God also has **highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name**, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

✠ **Through the cross of Christ, we who were once separated from God and were His enemies are reconciled to God, brought near to God, we have peace with God, and boldness to enter the presence of God (the Holiest)**

**Colossians 1:19-22**—For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to **reconcile all things to Himself**, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, **having made peace through the blood of His cross.** <sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now **He has reconciled** <sup>22</sup> in the body of His flesh through death, **to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—**

**Ephesians 2:13**—But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off **have been brought near** by the blood of Christ,

**Hebrews 10:19**—Therefore brethren, **having boldness to enter the Holiest** by the blood of Jesus . . .

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

**Romans 5:10**—For if when we were enemies we were **reconciled to God through the death of His Son**, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

**Colossians 1:21-22**—And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now **He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death**, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

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

✠ **Gentile believers never were under the law, but He has set all believers free from the requirements of the law and the curse of not obeying the law. The Old Covenant is no longer in effect, and the New Covenant has been established.**

**Colossians 1:13-14**—And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, **having forgiven you all trespasses**, 14 having **wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us**, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

**Galatians 3:13**—Christ has **redeemed us from the curse of the law**, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”)

**Matthew 26:28**—For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

**Hebrews 13:20**—Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

✠ Through His cross we have been set free from sin and forgiven of all trespasses. We now have a clear conscience, are continually cleansed from sin because He bore our sins on the cross.

**Matthew 26:28**—For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

**Colossians 1:13**—And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

**Colossians 1:14**—in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins

**Ephesians 1:7**—In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according the riches of His grace.

**1 John 1:7**—But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

**Revelation 1:5**—and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

**Hebrews 7:27**—who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

**Hebrews 9:26**—He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world, but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

**Hebrews 10:11-12**—And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,

**1 Peter 2:24**—Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—

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

**Romans 6:1, 6**—Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

✠ We have been given eternal life and an eternal inheritance.

**John 6:54**—Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

**Hebrews 9:15**—And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

✠ With His blood, we have been purchased/redeemed by God.

**Acts 20:28**—Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

**Ephesians 1:7**—In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according the riches of His grace.

**Colossians 1:14**—in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins

**Hebrews 9:12**—Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

**1 Peter 1:18-19**—Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

**Revelation 5:9**—And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worth to take the scroll, And to open its seals, For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

**1 Corinthians 1:30**—But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—

**Titus 2:14**—Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

✠ **By His Cross, we have been made, holy, blameless, are beyond reproach, justified, sanctified, made righteous, have a clean conscience, and have newness of life.**

**Galatians 2:21**—I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

**Colossians 1:21**—And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

**Romans 3:24**—being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ

**Romans 5:9**—Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

**2 Corinthians 5:21**—He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

**Hebrews 13:12**—Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

**Hebrews 9:14**—How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

**1 Corinthians 1:30**—But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—

**Titus 2:14**—Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

**2 Corinthians 5:17**—Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

✠ **Satan was destroyed, the power of death in our lives was destroyed, fear was destroyed, bondage due to the fear of death was destroyed, we overcome, and we are delivered from this present age by the work of the cross.**

**Romans 5:17**—For if by the one man's (*Adam's*) offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

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

**Revelation 12:11**—And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

**Galatians 1:4**—Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

**Colossians 1:15**—Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (*the cross*).

✠ **By Jesus' suffering and his wounds we are healed. He purchased it for us. It is ours.**

**1 Peter 2:24**—Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—**by whose stripes you were healed.**

✠ **JESUS' HORRIBLE SACRIFICE MERITS OUR MOST SINCERE RESPONSE. WHATEVER HE PURCHASED, WE SHOULD POSSESS. HE IS WORTHY OF THIS. WE MUST NEVER DOWNPLAY WHAT HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED FOR US BY LIVING BELOW WHAT HE HAS PROVIDED FOR US. If He says we are holy, sanctified, righteous or new creations then**

we are. If He says we are forgiven for all sin, then we are forgiven. If He says we are redeemed from the curse of the law, then we are redeemed from the curse of the law. If He says that by His wounds we are healed, then by His wounds we are healed. If He says we have access to the Holiest place, let us enter. We need to treasure and receive all that for which He has paid such a dear price.

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW**

1. What problem did man have?
2. Put into your own words an explanation of “atonement”.
3. How or why was the death of Jesus the only acceptable final sacrifice for sin?
4. What does salvation (sozo) include?
5. Name at least ten things that resulted from the atonement using the chart.
6. After reading this chapter, why do you believe the atonement is the ultimate demonstration of God's love for mankind?

## 9

**NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY****WE BELIEVE . . .**

. . . that New Covenant annuls the Old Covenant and has only two commandments: to believe on the name of God's Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another.

It is hoped that this lesson will give you a clearer picture of the contents of the New Testament and explain further the differences between the Old and New Covenants. We begin where we left off at the end of Lesson Seven, Old Testament Survey.

**Between the Old and New Testaments**

The 400 years after the book of Malachi are often referred to by Bible scholars as the "quiet period" because there were no prophets or writings recorded. However, it was hardly quiet in the historical sense.

During this time the Roman Republic<sup>18</sup> was continuing to grow strong. It would bring about greatly improved transportation routes throughout the world. Also during this time we see the rise of Alexander the Great and the spread of Hellenistic (Greek) culture and the Greek language to most of the known world. During the third century B.C., the Old Testament Scriptures were translated into Greek, the Septuagint, making them accessible to more people.

The Jewish people were still oppressed during this time. In the second century B.C. the Maccabean period came into play bringing deliverance for the Jews. From that time period came the rise of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

In 63 B.C. Jerusalem was brutally conquered by the Roman General Pompey. This persecution caused the Jews to long even more for their promised Messiah to deliver them from the Romans. In 27 B.C. the Roman Empire began which ended the constant warring and brought about the Pax Romana which was a relatively peaceful time in the Roman Empire between 27 B.C. and 180 A.D. This "peace", Roman roads and navigation routes, the Greek language, and the desire of the Jews to have their Messiah, set the stage perfectly for the coming of Christ and the eventual spread of the Gospel.

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<sup>18</sup> The Roman Civilization is thought to have existed over 900 years before Christ. The Roman Republic began about 500 years B.C. and is not to be confused with the Roman Empire. The Roman Republic was a representative government and is characterized by constant warfare. The Roman Empire ruled by Caesars began about 27 AD.

## Divisions of the New Testament

The New Testament is sorted into the following divisions.<sup>19</sup>

Section	Books
The Gospels: dealing with the <i>manifestation</i> of our salvation	Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
The Historical Book: dealing with the <i>propagation</i> of our salvation	Acts
The Doctrinal Books: dealing with the <i>explanation</i> of our salvation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Pauline Epistles</li> <li>• The General Epistles</li> </ul>	Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews  James, 1&2 Peter, 1,2,&3 John, Jude
The Prophetic Book: dealing with the <i>consummation</i> of our salvation	Revelation

## Chronology of the New Testament Books

You might find it interesting to read the New Testament in chronological order. The Gospels are grouped together here, but then Acts is split between the different letters which are placed in the order it is believed they were written.

Matthew	I Thessalonians	Titus
Mark	II Thessalonians	Philemon
Luke	Acts 17:11 - 18:11	I Timothy
John	I Corinthians	II Timothy
Acts 1 - 14	II Corinthians	I Peter
James	Acts 18:12 - 20:1	II Peter
Acts 15	Ephesians	I John
Galatians	Romans	II John
Acts 16	Acts 10:2 - 28:30	III John
Philippians	Colossians	Jude
Acts 17:1 - 10	Hebrews	The Revelation

<sup>19</sup> Terminology adopted from Myer Pearlman, Through the Bible Book by Book, pgs. 5-6

## Timeline of New Testament Events

Following is a timeline of the New Testament.<sup>20</sup>

B.C.	
Nativity of Christ <sup>21</sup> . Birth of our Lord, as now generally received. Death of Herod the Great at Jericho. Archelaus becomes king in his stead.	4
A.D.	
Jesus at the age of twelve visits the temple.	8
John the Baptist imprisoned and beheaded by Herod Antipas	30
Crucifixion of our Lord; The Pentecostal effusion	33
Martyrdom of Stephen; Conversion of Saul of Tarsus	36
Saul's first visit to Jerusalem ( <u>Gal. 1:18</u> ); Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea, deposed and banished; Was succeeded by Herod Agrippa	40
Conversion of Cornelius	41
The first Gentile church at Antioch	43
Herod Agrippa I., king of Judea and Samaria, beheaded James (Zebedee's son)	44
Paul's first missionary journey (about 3 years)— <u>Acts 13-14</u>	47
Council at Jerusalem ( <u>Acts 15:1-35</u> )	60
Paul's second missionary journey (more than 3 years)— <u>Acts 15:36-18:23</u>	51
Wrote from Corinth the epistles to the <i>Thessalonians</i> ( <u>1 Thess. 1:7, 8; Acts 18:5</u> )	52
Paul's third missionary journey (about 4 years)— <u>Acts 18:23-21:14</u>	54
During his stay at Ephesus ( <u>Acts 19</u> ) Paul wrote epistle to the <i>Galatians</i> ( <u>Acts 20:2; Gal. 6:11</u> ), and probably <i>First Corinthians</i> ( <u>1 Cor. 16:8</u> )	57 or 58
Wrote from Macedonia Paul wrote <i>Second Corinthians</i> ( <u>2 Cor. 1:23; 7:5</u> )	57
Paul Wrote from Corinth epistle to <i>Romans</i> at close of his stay there ( <u>Acts 20:3; 1 Cor. 16:6</u> )	58
Paul visits Jerusalem. Is brought before Felix, and imprisoned for two years at Cæsarea ( <u>Acts 21:17-26</u> )	58
Paul before the procurator Porcius Festus; is sent a prisoner to Rome	60
Paul arrives at Rome in spring of	61
Paul writes from Rome his epistles to the <i>Ephesians</i> , <i>Colossians</i> , <i>Philemon</i> , and the <i>Philippians</i> , and probably <i>Hebrews</i>	61-63
Paul probably released	63
Paul's movements after his release are uncertain. Some think that at Corinth he wrote the <i>First Epistle to Timothy</i> and the <i>Epistle to Titus</i> .	64
Paul arrested at Ephesus, and sent prisoner to Rome	65
Paul wrote <i>Second Epistle to Timothy</i> from Rome; Suffered Martyrdom (?)	66
Others think that Paul wrote <i>First Epistle to Timothy</i> from Macedonia, and the <i>Epistle to Titus</i> from Ephesus, and that he spent the winter of this year at Nicopolis, where he was taken prisoner and sent to Rome, whence he wrote the	67
<i>Second Epistle to Timothy</i> ; Paul suffered martyrdom (?)	68
Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the Roman general	70
John probably writes his Gospel and the epistles	80-90
John writes the book of Revelation.	95
Death of John	98

<sup>20</sup> Condensed from Easton's Illustrated Bible Dictionary

<sup>21</sup> The exact year of Christ's birth is debated. Some believe He was born the year of Jubilee which was 7 B.C.

## LIFE APPLICATIONS

### New Covenant, New Commandments, Better Promises

Many Christians today do not understand that there is a clear distinction between the Old and New Covenants. They see the two as one. As we studied in Lesson Eight, we need the Old Testament to understand the New and vice versa, so we do not throw away the Old Testament Scriptures. Yet the New Testament is what we live in as new believers. The Old Testament is . . . well . . . OLD. While we can learn from its examples, we are not under its requirements, and thus, are not under its curse.

Following are some scriptures that show that we are under a new covenant and that the Old is done away. I have underlined parts of the passages to point out the distinction of the Old and the New. Let us begin with Hebrews 8:6-13 in which Paul quotes the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34.

*But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. <sup>7</sup> For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. <sup>8</sup> Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— <sup>9</sup> not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. <sup>10</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>11</sup> None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. <sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."<sup>13</sup> In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

That scripture clearly shows that God gave a better covenant based on better promises and that the Old Covenant is now obsolete. However, just to clarify, let us define obsolete.

## OBSOLETE: no longer in use or no longer useful

The Old Covenant is no longer in use and it is no longer useful. It was REPLACED by the New. While we can benefit from reading ABOUT IT and gain insight from both positive and negative examples within, we err if we place ourselves under it. The Old Testament was annulled by God when Christ was nailed to the cross. Colossians 2:13-14 says,

*And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, <sup>14</sup> having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*

The requirements of the Old Covenant and the curses that were against those who did not obey the Law are wiped out, erased, done away with, taken out of the way, nailed to the cross. Jesus not only died to save us, but to set us free from the Old Testament requirements. Shall we who have been set free from them now place ourselves under them?

In his insightful book, Love Revolution: Rediscovering the Lost Command of Jesus, Rev. Gaylord Enns writes,

*Many of us as Christians embrace the New Covenant but then awkwardly link it with the Commandments that were given with the Old Covenant. In so doing, we attempt to live in two covenants at once—something that is impossible to do. We live in what I've come to think of as a "no man's land" between the two covenants, vulnerable to confusion and condemnation. We miss the empowerment that comes through grace and the powerful simplicity of the "new".*

## The Commandment of Christ

The next logical question is this. Are there commandments under the New Covenant, and if so, what are they? We find the answer to this question in 1 John 3:23 which says, "And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment."

1. *Believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ.*
2. *Love one another.*

Perhaps you attend a church that does teach the commandment of Christ, but I am sorry to report that in many churches today, you are more likely to hear a sermon along the line of the Ten Commandments than you are to hear a sermon about loving one another.

When Jesus was getting ready to give His life as a willing sacrifice for us, he celebrated the Passover with His disciples, also known as the Last Supper. We all have heard that when someone knows he is going to die, he often shares with those he loves what is most important to him. Jesus had already declared that the work of God was to believe on Him whom He had sent (John 6:29). Now, He would leave a very personal command to His disciples (John 13:34-35).

A new commandment I give to you,  
that you love one another;  
as I have loved you,  
that you also love one another.  
By this all will know that you are My disciples,  
if you have love for one another.

Is it really so amazingly simple? Yes, it is. Our New Covenant commands us to believe in Jesus and to love one another. Believe in Him and love one another, and you will fulfill every teaching in the New Testament.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW**

1. What did you learn in this chapter about the New Testament books that you didn't know before?
2. Why was there a need for a New Covenant?
3. Look up these Scriptures and fill in the chart below showing how things were under the Old Covenant and how they are now. Add any others that come to your mind, if you like.

Scripture	Old Covenant	New Covenant
Rom. 6:14		
2 Cor.5:17		
2 Cor. 5:21		
Hebrews 4:14-16		
John 1:17		

4. Come to class prepared to discuss how the New Covenant is an expression of God's love toward us.

## 10

### THE GRACE OF GOD

#### WE BELIEVE . . .

. . . that we have been saved, are being saved, and will be saved by grace through faith, not by works.

#### Definition of Grace

The word “grace” comes from the Greek word *charis*. Simply stated, it means “undeserved acceptance and love received from another”.<sup>22</sup> When we refer to the grace of God, we first make reference to the undeserved acceptance and love shown to us in the giving of God’s only Son to die in order to save us. It was grace because we did nothing to deserve it. In fact, we did plenty to NOT deserve it.

#### Motivation of Grace

Even though we know that the grace of God comes to us without deserving it, this is not to say that God’s grace has no motivation. God had a very clear reason for granting us grace. It was love. He loved us. It was God’s love for us that motivated Him to give us His grace. Furthermore, this love for us and grace toward us were not just words, they were demonstrated when God allowed His only Son to suffer and die for us.

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:16-17*

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<sup>22</sup> In the Holman Bible dictionary, grace is defined as “undeserved acceptance and love received from another, especially the characteristic attitude of God in providing salvation for sinners. For Christians, the word ‘grace’ is virtually synonymous with the gospel of God’s gift of unmerited salvation in Jesus Christ. To express this, the New Testament writers used the Greek word *charis*, which had a long previous history in secular Greek. Related to the word for joy or pleasure, *charis* originally referred to something delightful or attractive in a person, something which brought pleasure to others. From this it came to have the idea of a favor or kindness done to another or of a gift which brought pleasure to another. Viewed from the standpoint of the recipient, it was used to refer to the thankfulness felt for a gift or favor. These meanings also appear in the biblical use of *charis*, but only in the New Testament does it come to have the familiar sense which ‘grace’ bears for Christians.”

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8*

*For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. <sup>4</sup> But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, <sup>5</sup> not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:3-7*

*In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:9-10*

### **Why Did God Love Us?**

This question is even easier to answer, yet worthy of a lifetime of reflection. Why did God love us? In 1 John 4:8 we read, “God is love.” God loves us because HE IS LOVE. It is His very nature to LOVE us. It was LOVE that caused Him to create us in His image. It was LOVE that did not completely destroy rebellious man though He had every right to do so. God is love. He has always been love. He will always be love. He loved us. He loves us. He will always love us. He sent His Son because He loved us. This love, so underserved, will sustain us until the end of time.

### **The Gospel of Grace**

The key scripture that rings throughout history is this one in which the means of our salvation is clearly and concisely stated. Along with how we are saved, it clearly states how we are not saved. I think perhaps if someone understood this one verse, he/she could live a successful life in Christ. Yet, think of how it has been perverted or ignored over the centuries. If you haven't memorized this verse, please do. It will bless your heart again and again.

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

One perversion of the gospel of grace is to ignore grace. Some seem to believe that if we have faith alone, we can be saved. The truth is without the grace of God, our faith would be worthless. In what would we be putting our faith, in our faith? Faith alone can save NO ONE because it does not need the cross of Christ.

Others emphasize the grace of God. Some believe that because of God's grace all will be saved like a blanket that has been thrown across the earth making everyone recipients. This idea teaches that it doesn't matter whether people believe (have faith) or not. Everyone is going to heaven.

Still others believe that this grace is only extended to select individuals and even without faith, they are destined to be saved. **Titus 2:11** says, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." His grace is available to all. In **2 Peter 3:9**, we read, "The Lord . . . is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." Also, we return to **John 3:16** which says, "that whoever believes in Him, will not perish, but have everlasting life." You can see more clearly in this verse that both grace and faith are at work; the love (grace) of God that sent His only Son to die for us, and the salvation extended to EVERYONE who believes (has faith).

The fourth major heresy<sup>23</sup> is that of grace and faith plus works. This has been in existence from the beginning and is still prevalent today. Paul referred to this as a "different gospel, which is not another"<sup>24</sup>. Shortly after a Gentile converted to Christianity, a certain group of perverted Christian Jews called Judaizers would come along and tell the new believers that now that they were saved, they needed to be circumcised and keep the Law. (I truly doubt this was Good News to the Greek believers who did not practice circumcision.) Paul was not pleased with this perversion of the gospel of grace,<sup>25</sup> when he wrote in **Galatians 1:6-9**,

*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, <sup>7</sup> which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. **8** But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

Paul actually pronounced a curse on himself if he preached something different, along with angels and men. He was saying,

*I am shocked and stunned that you are so quickly turning away from the Christ who loved you and extended His grace to you without you deserving it at all; to a different gospel...it is nothing like what you received. It is completely different. Now, there isn't really a different gospel, but there are some evil men who want to completely twist the Good News of God's grace to be something other than what it is. Let me tell you this, I don't care if an angel appears to you, even if I myself or any of the ones who minister with me, preach to you any other message to you than the one we have already taught you, specifically that you have been saved by grace through faith, not of*

<sup>23</sup> There are others such as the Gnostics who believed that special knowledge was also necessary for salvation.

<sup>24</sup> Galatians 1:6 "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ."

<sup>25</sup> Paul was the one who referred to the Gospel as the "Gospel of Grace", in other words, the Good News of God's Grace. In Acts 20:24 we read, "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

*works; if you hear anyone preaching grace and faith plus works, let me say it again. . . let that person be eternally doomed.*

I don't know about you, but that gets my attention. It makes me want to understand several things. First of all, what is the true gospel? That's what I want to believe, and that is what I want to teach. It also makes me want to understand what this false gospel was. I don't want to believe it, and I don't want to teach it either<sup>26</sup>.

How does this apply to us today? First of all, all "Christian" cults pervert the gospel in the same way. Besides all of their misconceptions about who Jesus is, they teach that salvation is through works. That is a huge generalization, but it is still true.<sup>27</sup> All major cults teach that you are saved in some way by works. So, of course, we need to steer clear from them.

Even more dangerous is how this gospel of works has entered mainstream Christianity.

### **Saved by Grace Made Perfect by Law?**

There is a prevalent idea in the church today that we are saved by grace, but stay saved or become more saved by our works...what we do and don't do. This is contrary to the gospel of Christ. There are plenty of opportunities to hear this "other gospel". It is preached from the pulpit each Sunday in many churches around the world. We also read it in books, see it on television, hear it on radio, tapes, guest speakers, and from friends and family. Most of these sources are well-meaning. They believe what they are teaching will make you a "good" and "solid" Christian. They honestly believe and then teach that we are saved by grace through faith, but after that our salvation is up to us by not doing certain activities and by doing other activities frequently called "spiritual disciplines"<sup>28</sup>. This process is often called sanctification.<sup>29</sup> Some even teach that if you do the don'ts and don't do the do's, you might not make it to heaven. The biggest complication in this way of believing is obvious, "Who exactly decides what the do's and don'ts are?"

Paul clearly taught that there would be no purpose for Jesus Christ to die for us if we were able to be made perfect by the Law.

*We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be*

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<sup>26</sup> I regret to say that I innocently did teach a doctrine of grace and faith plus works at one time in my life. I have since then repented, and am thankful for Christ's forgiveness.

<sup>27</sup> If you would like to study more specifically what different cults teach, I suggest you read Kingdom of the Cults by Walter Martin in which he gives a side-by-side comparison of the cults with classic Christianity.

<sup>28</sup> The author of this book is not opposed to being living a disciplined life, only by being justified or condemned by it.

<sup>29</sup> Sanctification occurs at salvation (1 Corinthians 6:11, Heb. 10:10, Hebrews 13:12, 1 Corinthians 1:2), but we also sanctify ourselves, just as Christ sanctified Himself (John 17:19). Obviously, Christ did not need to be made holy, but He chose to sanctify (separate) Himself. In the same way, we are made holy at salvation, but we then chose to separate ourselves from the world (1 Pet 3:15). However, this choice to sanctify ourselves does not impart holiness to us. Nothing we do can impart holiness to ourselves; otherwise, Christ did not need to die to impart His holiness to us. It is actually a result of the holiness we already have been given that we are able to sanctify ourselves (Galatians 2:21).

*justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." Galatians 2:15-21*

When we set laws for ourselves (or subject ourselves to the laws of others) and then somehow feel justified before God when we do them and condemned by God when we don't, we are saying that Jesus died for no reason since we are capable of justifying ourselves (or not).

*This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Gal. 3:2, 3*

It is perfectly natural for us to set laws or let others set laws for us. We are very religious by nature. We set a time schedule for ourselves. We have dietary laws we set and society sets. We have exercise laws. We also have rules about what we can and cannot say. Now, I am not saying that all of these are evil. It's good to have standards and live by them, but the trouble is, often when someone becomes a Christian, he/she brings these laws along for the ride and incorporates them into their walk with God. Then, if he breaks the law he has set for himself, he/she tends to feel guilty before God...or worse, feels he is quite the someone for being so disciplined and tends to look down on others with disdain.

Added to that is something even more dangerous. For too long now, discipleship courses include in them a list of things a person must do. It goes something like this. Perhaps you've heard about it already. "Pray for one hour (some say for at least fifteen minutes) each day. Read ten chapters of Scripture each day. Memorize Scripture. Meditate on Scripture. Sing it." (There are many other things they tell you to do with Scripture actually, but I'll spare you here.) "You must not just pray but fast," some say weekly, others suggest more often. "Pay tithes," (or you are cursed). "Give generous offerings above your tithes. Witness to anything that breathes. Heal the sick. Raise the dead. Cast out demons. Worship this way and that. Go to church each time the doors opened." This used to mean Sunday morning (both Sunday School and worship service), Sunday night, and Wednesday night. That was the bare minimum. "If you are really spiritual get involved with ministry on another night of the week, too...or more. Not just one, but as many as you can. In fact, get involved in every ministry possible."

There is always "more". If you aren't feeling the joy of your salvation or seeing revival in your city, or having some problem with sinning, they say, "Pray two hours or four instead of one." One fellow came to our church once and shared how he read the entire Bible once a month, the New Testament every week, Psalms and Proverbs each month, and the book of Revelations each and everyday. Wow, I thought, and gave it a try. This same fellow taught that after you receive the Lord, all of your sins are forgiven. Clean slate. However, after that, each and every sin was recorded and would be broadcast for all to see at the judgment. Oh, my goodness, you say? This is still taught today. If you haven't heard it yet, you will.

The point is that they believe, yes, you are *saved* by grace through faith, but after that, your salvation **depends on you**. They feel justified teaching the do's and don'ts, because they honestly believe, if they don't beat you up now and then, you won't do what is right. They do not trust in the finished work of Christ.

Don't believe it, and if you are wound up tightly already in this way of thinking, let me advertise right now the next Part of this series entitled, "Your Response to God's Love". In it I have deliberately written to untie all those spiritual knots, so that you can be free to enjoy the true gospel...the one you did not earn nor ever could maintain by your own works. It isn't easy letting go of all the "truths" you have held dear, but once you see that they are all wrapped up in the reason your Christian walk is so dreary, you will begin to let go, and will once again know the joy of being loved by God. Remember "truth sets free, but lies bind."<sup>30</sup> You might be so bound up, that you don't even know it, let alone understand why. Ask God to open your heart and let you see if you are believing THE one true gospel, or if you believe "another".

## LIFE APPLICATIONS

### How Grace Continues to Work in Our Lives

The grace of God is not just an initial investment. We continue to be saved and will ultimately be saved by God's grace. Here are some Scriptures that show how grace works in our life day to day.<sup>31</sup>

What Grace Does	Reference	Scripture
Grace teaches us to live holy lives.	Titus 2:11-14	For the <u>grace of God</u> that brings salvation has appeared to all men, <b>12 teaching us</b> that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, <b>13</b> looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, <b>14</b> who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself <i>His</i> own special people, zealous for good works.
The word of His grace builds us up and gives us an inheritance.	Acts 20:32	So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
Grace causes us to reign in life through Jesus Christ.	Romans 5:17	For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)
Because we are under grace not the law, sin has no dominion over us.	Romans 6:14	For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.
Spiritual gifts are given to us according to grace given us.	Romans 12:6	<b>Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them</b>

<sup>30</sup> It seems odd to reference this obvious saying, but I believe the first time I heard it articulated, was by Andrew Wommack.

<sup>31</sup> This list includes *some* of the things God's grace accomplishes.

The grace of God gives us wisdom in the work of God.	1 Corinthians 3:10	According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it.
God enables us to labor abundantly in His work by His grace.	1 Corinthians 15:10	But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.
The grace of God is with us.	1 Corinthians 16:23	The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
Grace causes thanksgiving to abound to God.	2 Corinthians 4:15	For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.
When we give graciously, God causes grace to abound to us so that we have an abundance for every good work.	2 Corinthians 9:8	And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.
God's grace is sufficient for us during times of difficulty and weakness.	2 Corinthians 12:9	And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."
By His grace, we are made accepted in Jesus.	Ephesians 1:6	to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.
He will continue to show the exceeding riches of His grace to us in the ages to come.	Ephesians 2:7	that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
God gives us grace to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.	Ephesians 3:8	To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
We can impart God's grace to others by our words.	Ephesians 4:29	Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.
God gives us an everlasting consolation (comfort) and good hope by grace.	2 Corinthians 2:16	Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.
We can come boldly before the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace in time of need.	Hebrews 4:16	Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
Our hearts are established by grace.	Hebrews 13:9	Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

## Twice Fallen from Grace: A Personal Testimony

by C. D. Hildebrand

For many years in my Christian life, I did not understand this verse.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty  
by which Christ has made us free,  
and do not be entangled again  
with a yoke of bondage.

Galatians 5:1

I was taught that this meant that once you are a Christian, don't go back and get entangled again with sin. I thought the yoke of bondage referred to coming back under sin's power. Yet, Paul goes on to explain just a couple of verses down, when he says, "You have become estranged (SEVERED, CUT OFF) from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Galatians 5:4

The common thinking has always been that when someone "falls from grace", they have gone back into sin, but this verse is not saying that at all. It is declaring that when we begin to seek justification before God because of our actions, what we do and don't do, we fall from grace. Now, it makes perfect sense, that of course by grace we are saved, and by grace we stay saved. So, if someone thinks he can save himself by his actions, then he doesn't need the grace of God. He has fallen from grace in the true sense of the Word.

This happened to me, I'm sad to say, twice in my life. Yes, It pains me to write that I fell from grace TWICE. I was raised in a Christian home. Loving Jesus was always on my mind as a small child. Then, at about age nine, I officially asked Jesus to come into my heart. (I say "officially" because I believed in Him my whole life prior to that time.) I did it alone, just between me and Jesus. Jesus was my life. I was not ashamed to share Him and as I grew older began to read the New Testament. I wrote poetry about God in high school, and tried to live like Christ taught. Over time I began to see Christianity as a list of things one does not do. I thought if someone just didn't do those things, then they would go to heaven. Without putting that into these words at the time, I began to think that what I did not do made me a Christian. By the time I hit college, I stopped calling myself a Christian. It wasn't because I didn't believe. What I told myself was that I did not want to be like the hypocrites I'd met in my church who talked about Jesus, but who didn't want other races to attend our church. How convenient that was for me to justify sinning. I could blame the "hypocrites", and feel somewhat noble not calling myself a Christian anymore in order to get away from all the rules and do what I wanted.

In college, the professors worked overtime to try and convince their students that there was no God and that any self-respecting educated person should not believe in such nonsense. Still, I could never bring myself to deny God. One night I asked Him if He was there to show me. I fully expected bolts of lightening to enter my room for my very bold question. Instead, a very gentle thought settled in my heart, "If you don't believe in Me, why are you talking to Me?" That would be the beginning of finding my way back. I opened the New Testament again, and there He was. I

realize that all that time I doubted and rebelled, I was constantly talking to Him. He never left me or forsook me. He listened patiently while I grew up.

So, I, a prodigal daughter, returned home, and guess what I discovered? Christianity wasn't about a list of don'ts! It was a relationship with Jesus. Suddenly, my desire to do the don'ts disappeared. I could care less about sinning. All I wanted was to please God. Little by little, God showed me areas in my life that weren't the best, and I gladly gave each one up because I was so in love with Him! I spent hours praying, reading the Bible and witnessing to my shocked and amazed friends about what had happened to me. Every single minute of every single day was love, love, love. Love from God, love to God, and God's love through me to others. I was consumed with this joy.

Enter the grace killers<sup>32</sup>. I believe with all of my heart that the grace killers in my life meant to do no harm. They honestly believed that the best thing for my eager heart now that I had given my life to Him was discipline<sup>33</sup>. DISCIPLINE! Not just discipline, but lots and lots of laws. I call these the Christian do's. The dooties of Christianity will kill grace just as fast as the don'ts.

At first, I was a very willing participant. I enjoyed being disciplined. It fit well with my perfectionist personality. It gave me a sense of accomplishment. It earned me the respect of my pastors. If I was told I needed to pray an hour a day, no problem. Read ten chapters? Such a joy. Go to church each time the church doors opened. Piece of cake. Serve in Sunday School? What an honor! I was so happy to be serving Jesus, I would have done just about anything I was told pleased Him, and I did!

Little by little, year after year, the list got longer and longer. I was one who was pretty good at it, but those who weren't so good at it were viewed as "less committed". I'm sorry to say that many of those people left the church out of discouragement. They just couldn't keep up the pace. It was too far from their personality. They were more random and spontaneous to their approach to life. Not for me. I was a shining star. I wondered why they were so weak, and I was so strong in the Lord. I had gone from no one to Primary Sunday School teacher, to High School Sunday School teacher, to song writer, to song performer, to Youth Pastor's wife, to College Pastor's wife, and was even studying to become a minister.

However, little by little I was falling from grace . . . AGAIN. I was seeking to be justified before God by all the things I was doing! I didn't care one ounce about sinning. That had been settled in my mind, but I was a very good doer. In only four short years, I had an amazing realization. I was a miserable Christian. I was unhappy. I was so sad, that I would not even want my own father to get saved because I didn't want him to be as miserable as I was. Imagine that, in only four years. I was not doing the don'ts. I was doing almost every do known to the Christian world. Yet, I was distressed. I had fallen from grace, and I didn't even know how it happened.

It would be years before I figured it out. This is true for many Christians. They fall from grace, and have no idea they have fallen. They know something is wrong, but they usually blame themselves. They just live unhappy lives without knowing why, and they do this for years on end. To compensate for this lack, they might do as I did, pray MORE, read MORE, serve MORE. Some put themselves in harm's way to prove their dedication to God by going on extreme missions to dangerous parts of the

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<sup>32</sup> The only person I have ever heard used this term is Chuck Swindoll in his excellent book, Grace Awakening.

<sup>33</sup> The author of this book lives a very disciplined life. FYI.

world<sup>34</sup>. Others travel from city to city looking for where the “presence of God”<sup>35</sup> is being manifested.

Not until God put me in a situation in which I was unable to do my dooties did I rediscover the joy of my salvation. By the way, the very same thing, falling from God's grace, happened to my husband at just about the same pace, but we never discussed it because we had been taught not to “touch God's anointed” which would involve disagreeing with what we were taught. Furthermore, my husband was by then employed by our church.

Later, we left that church and began to work as home missionaries. You would think that now would be our chance to break free, but no. We pretty much continued as we had been taught. We did have some slight glimpses of light along the way, but just little tiny views of the possibility that God might still love us, even like us. Still, it was a dark time. The church was not an easy place to minister<sup>36</sup>, and there were several deaths in my family, including my best friend who was my mother. Plus, I was raising our three children, becoming the ordained minister I had always desired to be, had gone back to school to become the teacher I had wanted to be, and well, there was no time to try and figure out why it seemed like God was forever far away. I would pray, “God, I don't know if I have done something to offend that's causing me to feel this way, or if this is just normal, but I don't understand why you seem so far away. I do love you God, and I trust you will show me what is wrong.”

God was to answer those prayers in a big way. We had just finished up five years as home missionaries. We looked high and low for a place to minister next, but it soon became apparent that we were both going to have to seek secular employment. I began to work as a teacher never having done so before. That one sentence began my journey back to God's grace. I was up at 5:00 a.m. so I could leave by 6:00 to miss the traffic. I worked all day, came home, fixed dinner, took care of my children, then had to work all evening to prepare for the next day...until 1:00 a.m. sometimes, and it was back up again by 5:00 a.m. The wonderful problem with this picture is I HAD NO TIME TO DO THE DO'S. We also tried without any success to find a place to go to church, to minister again...but it just wasn't working out like we'd planned. We finally ended up “just” attending somewhere. Even worse, we forced to be what we had called “church hoppers” and “pew warmers”.

## Returning to Grace . . . Again

It sounds like and awful way to live, but it was a pivotal time in my life. It was impossible for me to do my list of do's. Because of this, I could not put my trust in them to be acceptable to God. I learned day after day that I didn't need to pray an hour a day...that he heard me all day long and that ALL PRAYER “counted”. I learned that the Word of God was alive in my heart, and even though I couldn't read it for

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<sup>34</sup> The author does not pretend to know the thoughts and intents of the heart of others. It is possible that someone could go on such a trip as this for all the right loving motives. Still there is a tendency for people who have fallen from grace to try and compensate for the lack they sense. Most of them honestly do not know what has happened to them. Only until the grace of God once again shines through will they begin to be set free again.

<sup>35</sup> This is more often true of Pentecostals who remember a time in their lives when it seemed the presence of God was working in their lives. They want that joy and power back, and hear that God is “moving” in this place or that, and so off they go, looking for what they believe to be the “manifestations” of God. All the while, God is still inside of them, and His power is available to them.

<sup>36</sup> That is the biggest understatement in this book.

weeks on end, what I already had there was speaking to me. I learned that serving the children at work and my family at home was ministry enough in my life. I gave up huge chunks of my DO list, and began to feel alive again. I would not have put it in these words because I wasn't totally aware of what had happened to me or what was happening, but by faith I was returning to His grace.

After we left Los Angeles, my husband came to the same realization when he got hold of a book entitled Classic Christianity by Bob George. A year earlier, we would have been too proud to even read his book because we were Pentecostals and *he* wasn't. We would have called him a compromising Christian because he taught that we are saved by grace through faith alone. We would have esteemed him a sort of "half brother" for being so simplistic. Yet, that book saved my husband's life. I'm sure of it. When he heard what Bob was teaching, he didn't believe it at first, but after he began to research Scripture, he found out that what he was teaching was true. He discovered again that God really loved him apart from his works and he felt like he was born again, again.

That was in 1987-89. We were not applauded by our friends for this discovery. In fact, most of our Christian friends turned away snobbishly. We understood, but it hurt. Finding a church came close to impossible because everywhere we went, the bad news of works was taught. Again and again, each sermon proclaimed the same message, "This is what is wrong with you, and this is what YOU need to do about it." We started to feel very alone in the sense of Christian community. That was another amazing thing to learn. Even though we could not find a fellowship (and it was our deepest desire to do so), God kept ministering to us and through us. His Word was more alive to us than ever. Little by little God untied all the knots that we and others had tied in our hearts and lives, and we were happier and freer each time we let go of one of them. Those "truths" we had embraced so dearly were lies and had bound us. The truth set us free.

## **Standing Fast**

It is not always easy standing fast in the liberty in which Christ has set us free, but we are DETERMINED never to fall from grace again! We never again want to leave the message of the love and grace of God.

Over the years, a desire began to grow so strong in us to one day have an opportunity to help others untie the knots of legalistic religion. That is one of the major motivations for this work. We want to share the good news of the love and grace of God with others. We believe that when God's people understand His love and grace, they will be inwardly motivated to please Him, and they will do it without condemnation and without pride.

In my lifetime, I hope to see what will happen when someone who comes to Christ is actually allowed to live in the grace of Christ and not be crushed by religious do's and don'ts. I picture a perfectly free individual full of faith and flowing in the power of God. Hopefully, that person will be you.

So, keep your eyes open for those who want to steal your liberty in Jesus. They want to put you under the bondage of their concept of what a Christian is. They will try to make you feel guilty for your liberty. They are everywhere. Most of them mean well. Others seek to make you as miserable as they are. However, you, please—

Stand fast therefore in the liberty  
by which Christ has made us free,  
and do not be entangled again  
with a yoke of bondage.

Galatians 5:1

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW

1. Why did God extend His grace to man?
2. Why does God love us?
3. Write an expanded paraphrase of this verse, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9
4. Have you ever “fallen from grace” in the true sense? Perhaps you are just now seeing that you are under the yoke of bondage, and you want to be free. Share your experience here.
5. Complete this sentence. The truth sets us free, and lies \_\_\_\_\_.
6. How can you explain the grace of God to another believer who is bound up with the do's and don'ts?

## ✧ 11 ✧

### OUR BLESSED HOPE

#### WE BELIEVE . . .

. . . in the resurrection of the living and the dead in Christ, the Rapture of the Church which is our Blessed Hope.

#### The Resurrection

We learned in Lesson Six that before coming to Christ, we were dead in our sins. We had no hope of eternal life. Most of us only had a guess as to what would happen to us after death. Some thought that death was just a moment when one ceased to exist. Others hoped that if there was some sort of afterlife that we might make it because we *tried* to do what was right. Others lived in fear thinking that if there was a heaven or a hell, we would certainly go straight to the latter. Some just ignored the subject, living from day to day. Whatever our opinions, something inside of each person understands that something must happen after this life. That is why most people fear death. Be it fear of the unknown, a desire to still live, or fear of possible judgment, normal people would rather live than die.

There was a man named Lazarus who had two sisters named Mary and Martha. This family knew Jesus personally. When Lazarus became deathly ill, his sisters sent for Jesus to come and heal him, but Jesus arrived four days after Lazarus died. Imagine the disappointment in the hearts of his sisters knowing that if Jesus had just been there, their brother would not have died. In John 11:21-27, we join this story where Martha expresses her regret that Jesus had not come sooner.

*“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” 23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24 Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” 25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” 27 She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”*

I am the resurrection and the life.  
He who believes in Me,

though he may die,  
he shall live.  
And whoever lives and believes in Me  
shall never die.  
Do you believe this?

All true believers experienced resurrection when they were born again. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans that we are dead to sin and alive to God.

*Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. Romans 6:4-5*

However, when theologians speak of The Resurrection, they refer to a time in the future when we will forever be with the Lord. Mainstream Christians see this resurrection happening in two stages. The first part will be when those dead in Christ and those still living on earth at the time are caught up from the earth. The second stage is seven years later when Jesus will gather those who were redeemed during the Tribulation.

Knowing that there is eternal life for us after death, removes from Christians the ultimate fear of death. It doesn't mean that anyone of us looks forward to being martyred or dying, just that we know that after our bodies die, we go on living. Here are some more scriptures about this topic.

▪ **Hebrews 9:27-28**

*And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,<sup>28</sup> so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.*

▪ **2 Corinthians 5:8**

*We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

▪ **Hebrews 2:14-15**

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

▪ **Philippians 1:21-23**

*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.<sup>22</sup> But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.<sup>23</sup> For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. I have finished my course I have run the race.*

**▪ 1 John 3:1-3**

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

**▪ 1 Corinthians 6:14**

*And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.*

**▪ Romans 8:10-12**

*And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. **11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

Without the resurrection, there is no Christianity. Christianity is simply a way of life. Without the hope of the resurrection we might as well pack our bags and go home. Without this hope, that one day we will be changed and live eternally, we are just living meaningless even worthless lives. Paul expressed this quite adequately in 1 Corinthians 15:13-19.

*But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. <sup>15</sup> Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! <sup>18</sup> Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. <sup>20</sup> But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*

## The Rapture

It seems quite odd to me that even though I grew up going to church, I have no memories of learning about the Rapture as a child. I understood that Jesus would return for His own or that I when I died, I would be with Him, but I do not remember that it was ever clearly explained to me as a child in a way that I could understand it because I remember being completely amazed when I learned of it as an adult.

We tend to assume that every Christian knows everything. I am not going to do that in this lesson. I am beginning with the thought that either this is the first time you have heard of the Rapture or that you've heard about it, but never understood it very well. If you are an expert on the topic, forgive my simplicity. However, I am not going to teach the topic in detail. If you have a strong interest in the study of end times, they are many books available.

The Rapture is an event that will happen at any moment in which the Lord will come down from heaven in order to receive His own. The bodies of those now dead who believed in Jesus will come out from where they are and be raised. Immediately

thereafter, we who are alive in Christ will be caught up off the earth to meet them and the Lord in the air and will forever be with Jesus. Christians call this event the Rapture of the church or our Blessed Hope.

It's important to understand why we use *Rapture* to refer to this event since the word does not appear in our English Bibles. According to the Holman Bible Dictionary, when the Greek New Testament was translated into Latin, the word *rpto* was used to translate the Greek word *harpadzo* which means "to seize: - catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take (by force)". It is from the word *rpto* that we get our word Rapture. It means to imply that there is a certain event in which believers will be snatched away from this earth.

## Scriptures about the Rapture

As we learned earlier in this lesson, most mainstream Christian denominations believe that the resurrection of the just will occur in two phases. The first phase will be the catching up of believers from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. There are many scriptures that give us hope for the Rapture. Let's begin with the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 24:36-44.

*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. <sup>37</sup> But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>38</sup> For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>40</sup> Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>42</sup> Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>44</sup> Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

From this passage we learn the following about the Rapture:

1. No one knows the hour (but if you read the previous verses, we will be able to tell it is near).
2. Life will seem normal to most people up until the moment we are taken off the earth. Common man will have no clue that anything is coming.
3. People will be going about their business. One will be taken and another left.
4. Jesus instructs us to be ready to go at any moment.<sup>37</sup>

There are even clearer references to our blessed hope in the epistles. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 it says,

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<sup>37</sup> *If you do go on to study this topic, you will find that there are many different views among those who study it. Some believe this passage refers to a different event. My overall view about end time prophecy is that it will happen as it will happen and ultimately it won't matter what one believes as that won't affect God's plan. However, there are teachings out there which are purely false which have been generated by people who seek to dominate or deceive believers into following them. We advise focusing on Jesus instead of topics. He will never fail you.*

*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

Let's list what we can observe from that passage.

1. Jesus is going to descend from heaven with a shout and with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God.
2. The dead in Christ will rise first.
3. Then those believers who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.
4. Then we will forever be with the Lord.

Notice the use of the word "hope" in verse thirteen above. That reference and the following are why the Rapture is also called our Blessed Hope.

*Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 1 John 3:2-3*

Another key scripture that describes the Rapture is found in 1 Corinthians 15:50-57.

*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. <sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

**" O Death, where is your sting?  
O Hades, where is your victory?"**

*<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

From this passage, we can conclude:

1. The rapture is a mystery. It is one of the treasures that is ours in Christ.
2. Not everyone is going to die in order to get to be with the Lord.
3. Some of us will be changed in a moment.

4. The rapture will happen so quickly, almost no one would notice, except that millions of believers will be instantly missing.
5. A trumpet will sound.
6. The dead in Christ will be raised incorruptible.
7. We who are still alive will be changed as well.
8. We will no longer be corruptible (perishable).
9. We will not longer be mortal (we will live forever).
10. We will never die (again).

## Who Will Be Raptured and Who Will Not?

Though this topic is debated, I feel confident in saying that all who put their faith in Jesus as the Lord will go up in the Rapture. I do not believe the Rapture is reserved for those super special saints who fulfill all the don'ties and dooties. We are saved by grace through faith and not by works. John 3:16 clearly states, "that whoever believes on Him, will not perish, but have everlasting life." If you are placing your faith in Jesus, you will be raptured.

Stanley Horton and William Menzies write about this topic in their book Bible Doctrines.<sup>38</sup>

*Another common teaching is that the Rapture will be limited to a special group of "overcomers", and that the main body of the Church will be left behind to go through the Tribulation or to go up in later raptures. If we examine what the Bible has to say about overcomers, however, we see that only those who overcome will eat from the tree of life, they will not be hurt by the second death or the lake of fire, and will not have their name blotted out of the Book of Life (Rev. 2:7, 11; 3:5). To overcome means to conquer, to win. If we do not win, we lose. These verses in the Book of Revelation indicate that those who do not overcome lose out forever. Who then are the overcomers? First John 5:4 tells us, "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." All the born again believer has to do to overcome is to believe (be an obedient believer and keep on believing) that Jesus is the Son of God. Then God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor, 15:57). He makes us winners."*

Those who do not believe in Jesus will be left behind. I also believe there is room to say that those "who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup> and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come", (Hebrews 6:4-6) but who have completely and deliberately rejected Him, will not be taken. I also must say that I do not believe this verse refers to Christians who get caught up again in sinning, but to a very select few who cease to believe and purposely reject Christ. Whatever one might believe about our eternal security, this we must agree upon: There will be no one in heaven who does not believe in Jesus, and there will be no one in hell who will justly blame God for it.

Let me add that we believe that there is only one way to God and to receive eternal life. My generation<sup>39</sup> generally believed that whatever someone believed was

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<sup>38</sup> Pulished by Gospel Publishing House, 9<sup>th</sup> printing, pg. 218-219

fine as long as he was faithful to his beliefs and was not a hypocrite. However, Jesus denied such thinking and left no room for other saviors when He said,

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

### Three Different Views on Timing

Not all Christians agree about when this resurrection will take place, but all mainstream Christian churches do believe there will be a Resurrection. Here are the three main views held by Christians.

1. Pretribulationists: These hold to the view that Jesus will return for His saints prior to the last seven years (which we will discuss in the next chapter).
2. Midtribulationists: Some believe that Christians will still be on earth until the middle of the seven year end time.
3. Posttribulationists: Those that hold this view believe that Christians will be caught up after the final seven years before the millennial reign of Christ.

### Why Most Christians Believe in the Pre-Tribulation View

#### HIS IMMINENT RETURN

Without going deeply into Bible prophecy, there is an event which starts the clock ticking for the final seven years before Jesus returns with His saints. The Antichrist will make a peace agreement with the nation of Israel. When this occurs, the seven years following this time is called the Tribulation or the final seven years. After three and a half years, this agreement will be broken and the wrath of God will be unleashed upon the earth. Also during this time, there will be horrible persecution on those who become believers during the Tribulation.

In Matthew 24:36 & 42 Jesus said that no one knows the day or hour of His coming. If the mid-tribulation is correct, we would only need to count three and a half years from the signing of the treaty and would know the very day of His return. If it is going to occur at the end of the tribulation, this could also be determined by certain events also giving us nearly the day of the Rapture, which would mean everyone would know the exact date.

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<sup>39</sup> Only those who actually read the footnotes will discover that I was born in 1954 and am therefore a baby boomer. However, I was never a hippy. My husband tried to be a hippy, but miserably failed.

## NORMAL DAILY LIFE

Jesus said that just as people were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage before the flood came in Noah's time, so it would be when the catching up of the church occurs. I concede that during the first three and a half years into the tribulation, life might seem somewhat normal, but that does deal with the imminent aspect. However, nothing will be normal about life during the second half of the tribulation. So, this quality could not happen given the post-tribulation view.

## THE WRATH OF GOD

Often those who hold the mid-tribulation and post-tribulation view believe that the church must go through a time of testing so *that they will be pure*. However, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 we read,

*But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. <sup>4</sup> But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. <sup>5</sup> You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. <sup>6</sup> Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. <sup>7</sup> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.*

Notice that this passage of Scripture follows the one at the beginning of this lesson about the Rapture. Paul is very clear that those in darkness will have sudden destruction come upon them and won't be able to escape. However, God's children are not appointed for wrath but to obtain salvation. I believe this means that we will be taken off the earth before the wrath of God comes upon it. Others believe this means that during the Tribulation, we will be protected from God's wrath.

In one very interesting way, it doesn't matter what you think or I think. It is only going to happen one way. All of our theories and books on the topic won't change how God has destined for the Rapture to happen. What we do know is that it is going to happen, that it could happen at any time, and that no one can predict the day or hour. We also can rest assured that God is not going to pour His wrath upon His children because He already poured it out on His Son Jesus. We are already complete in Him<sup>40</sup> due to the blood of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>40</sup> Colossians 2:9-11 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; **10** and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

## LIFE APPLICATIONS

### The Love of God

One of the scriptures I memorized as a child was John 14:1-3. In these verses, I can sense the love of Jesus for us. He didn't want the disciples to be troubled. He was leaving, but He'd be back. In the meantime, He would prepare a place for us.

*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup> In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

Notice also the anticipation in the Lord's words when He promised that He would come again and receive us to Himself, that where He is, we will be also. That touches our hearts in so many ways. It would have been enough for Him to give His life for us and accomplish all He did for us. He went even further. He promised to take us off of this earth to be with Him. This hope of the Resurrection is truly Our Blessed Hope. Our Lord and Savior will come again for us because He loves us.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW

1. When we speak of the Resurrection what do we mean?
2. To what do Christians refer when they talk about the Rapture?
3. When suddenly every Christian in the world is removed, what other religions might take over? What kind of chaos do you imagine will happen right after the Rapture?
4. What are the three main schools of thought about when the Rapture will occur?
5. What is the belief of mainstream Christianity about when the Rapture will happen? What reasons are given in this lesson that point to that view?
6. Share your views based on Scripture about who will go up in the Rapture and who will not.
7. In what ways can Our Blessed Hope affect how we live our daily lives?

## 12

### THE THINGS WHICH ARE TO COME

#### WE BELIEVE . . .

. . . that there will be a final judgment of mankind resulting in either eternal reward or eternal punishment.

. . . in the literal return of Jesus Christ with His saints to reign upon the earth for one thousand years.

. . . that there will be a new heaven and a new earth in which there will only and forever be righteousness.

Studying Bible prophecy can be very interesting but often problematic. There are several things to take into consideration. First of all, we often don't know what a prophecy precisely means until it is actually fulfilled, which makes predicting its significance difficult. Take for example Psalm 22:16-18.

*For dogs have surrounded Me;  
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.  
They pierced My hands and My feet;  
I can count all My bones.  
They look and stare at Me.  
They divide My garments among them,  
And for My clothing they cast lots.*

At the time this was written, it might have been interpreted to be David's account of his own experience, but there is no record of this happening to him. So, the reader of that day would be left to wonder what it meant. Yet, in it we have a vivid description of Christ's death. Hundreds of years before crucifixion was practiced, Christ's death was described in detail even mentioning that they cast lots for his clothing (Matthew 27:35). Only in looking back could anyone have known what it described. After Jesus rose from the dead, people began to see what had been foretold about Him in Scripture. It was as if the prophecies came into focus after they were fulfilled.

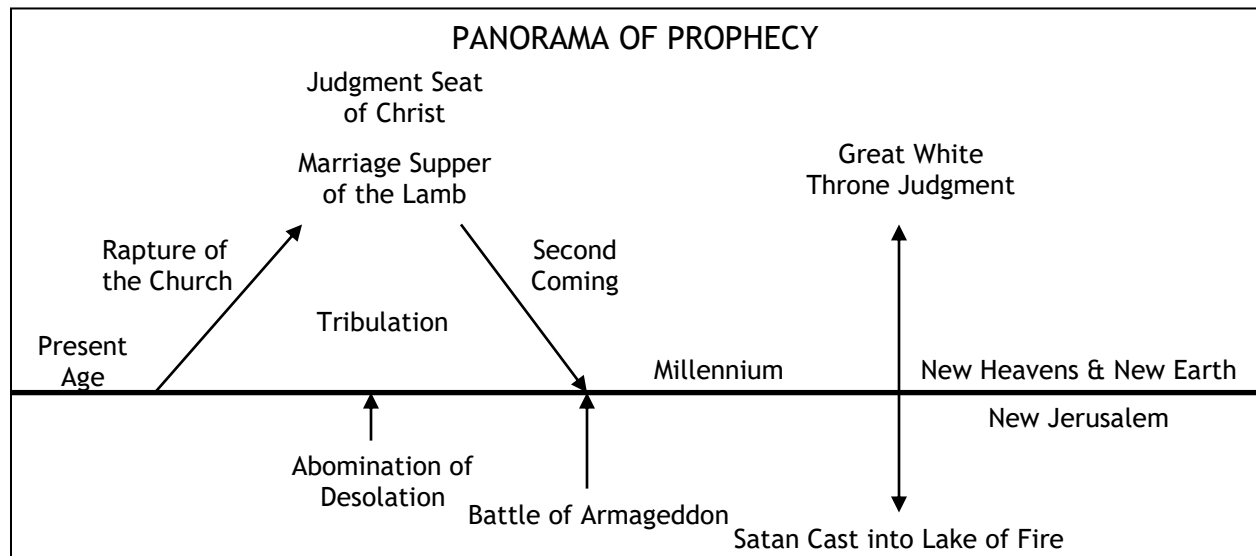
So, we see, there is a sort of mystery when we read Bible prophecy such as the book of Revelation that makes us pause and wonder, "How will this actually take place?" The prophet, seeing things to come has only his current view of understanding his world with which to describe his vision. This allows us to wonder what was he really seeing then that perhaps did not exist, but now does.

Two other aspects about Bible prophecy that can be challenging is that it is not always presented in chronological order and it is located here and there throughout many different books in the Bible. Consequently, in order to understand Bible prophecy, one has to understand the contents of the entire Bible.

Beginners beware! That which might seem to be a prophecy for something in our day may have already been fulfilled and have no future fulfillment. For this reason, a good knowledge of the history of world civilizations is also important and necessary to understand Bible prophecy. Understanding Bible prophecy is such a demanding pursuit that even devout and learned Christians settle for a basic understanding of it which is what is presented in this lesson. However, if you are interested in more detail about prophecy, there are many good books available that can help guide you into a better understanding.<sup>41</sup>

In this lesson we will discuss a specialized area of Bible prophecy called *eschatology* which is the study of the end of the world or end times. The Rapture (discussed in the previous lesson) is the first major event usually covered when discussing end time events. You might see it as the event that it winds the end time clock. Listed below are the major end time events described in the Bible listed in what is believed to be chronological order by most eschatologists. As you can imagine, great debate encircles the study of end times. However, this presentation is not meant to defend one viewpoint over another. It will unfold only one way, and when it does, I believe we will all say, "Oh, that's what that meant!" So, we must always leave room for our personal understanding and that of others to be limited.

Following is a chart of the timeline that is generally agreed upon by mainstream Christian eschatologists.<sup>42</sup>



<sup>41</sup> The two books about end time prophecy used in preparing these summaries are: *Our Destiny Biblical Teachings on the Last Things* by Stanley M. Horton and *The End Times* by Herman A. Hoyt. *The End* by Mark Hitchcock is also excellent.

<sup>42</sup> Eschatology: A Study of Things to Come, Zenas Bicket, Global University/Berean School of the Bible, pg. 61. Note: This chart is meant to show the order, but not in proportion.

## The Judgment Seat of Christ<sup>43</sup>

The Judgment Seat of Christ (the Bema of Christ) when all of those who believe in Jesus stand before Him. This is a special judgment for believers only. There will be another judgment for the rest of mankind called the Great White Throne Judgment. Most end times teachers believe that the Judgment Seat of Christ will happen shortly after the Rapture. It will not determine whether we are eternally saved or perish. That was already decided when we believed in Jesus and were given “everlasting life” (John 3:16). ALL Christians will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

- **Romans 14:10**

*But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

- **2 Corinthians 5:10**

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

What does that second verse mean exactly? Once a traveling minister visiting our church told the congregation that at the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be a video tape of each and every action of our lives since the time we received Jesus. In other words, His view was that we were forgiven of sins *before* we were a Christian, but afterward, we will have to give account for each and every action. This is completely inaccurate. In 1 John 1:7 it says, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” There is therefore a continual cleansing from sin. Once our sin is cleansed, it is removed from us forever. In Hebrews 8:12 it declares of the new covenant, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” So, we are not only forgiven of initial sins, but forgiveness is an ongoing process. It is clear from these and many other Scriptures that the atoning work on the cross of forgiveness of sins continues into our daily walk with Him. However, we know from Romans 6 that we have been set free from the power of sin, so that in reality, we do not have to sin. John also writes in 1 John 2, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” When we sin, Jesus comes along side us. This isn’t to say that God is out to get us and Jesus steps in to save us. It means that Jesus paid the price for our sin and stands by our side. When we fail, He is there and so is the fact that he took away our sin.

God knew that even though He set us free from the power of sin, so that we no longer are bound by it and therefore never have to sin again, that most would fall short. That is why He built into the Atonement the covering for future sin as well as past. We aren’t supposed to sin, we are set free not to sin, but if we do sin, the blood of Jesus has already atoned for sin.

Yet the Scripture does declare that when we are judged our unrighteous and righteous deeds will be revealed. I have often wondered, “If our sins are continually cleansed, what sorts of things might these be?” From the following verse we know that those who have built on the Body of Christ (teachers, for example) will be

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<sup>43</sup> For a more detailed teaching on the Judgment Seat of Christ, please visit our website at: <http://graceandfaithministries.org/sgfteachings/judgement-and-discipline>

responsible for what they have placed on the foundation. I believe this has to do with what we have taught and how we have “loved one another” (treated each other). In 1 Cor. 3:10-15 it says,

*According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup> If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

We might have opinions about one minister or another, but each will stand before his Master. Did someone build the body of Christ with precious jewels of truth and love, or did they pervert the gospel and mistreat God's sheep. Don't worry. God knows, and that day will reveal it.

Some worry about the Judgment seat of Christ, but if you believe in Jesus and are living by grace through faith, you need not fear. When we live by grace through faith, we love each other. We teach the truth.

What might the time of the Judgment Seat of Christ look like. It does not give specifics. Since our sins are forgiven, it WILL NOT be a time that God tattle tales on us before our brothers and sister. Let me share with you what I think. I have formed a picture of what it might be like based on what we know about it and the character and work of Jesus.

I don't know if it will be one by one or simultaneously. When I come before His throne, I don't even think He will need to speak, but maybe He will. If I have been unkind to my brothers or sisters or taught things that are not true, I will realize it, but His grace and mercy will be immediately extended. The wood, hay, and stubble of my life will be burned up, completely consumed by His love and grace. At last I will be completely free. The wood, hay, and stubble will be forever gone. What's left will be only gold, silver, and precious stones. Then He will praise me for what I have done in His name and for His kingdom. He won't leave out anything. I will stand amazed that He noticed every righteous loving deed I ever did from forgiving an offense to helping someone in need. I will be sobbing both because He burned up the garbage in my life and because my Lord and Savior will recognize what I have done in His name. Then, He will reach down and dry my tears and say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in a few things. I will make you ruler over many.”

This could also happen with all of us before the throne at the same time. No words would need to be spoken. We would know of all the areas where we built poorly. There might be a moment of deep regret and weeping, and then He will mercifully consume the wood, hay, and stubble of our lives, and wipe away our tears. Again, this will not have to do with sin. It will have everything to do with our deeds in regard to the body of Christ (each other).

Again, Jesus will not make our unrighteous deeds a public matter, for it is written, "Love covers a multitude of sin," (1 Peter 4:8), and "God is love." (1John 4:8)

Then, the reward ceremony will begin, and the various crowns and awards will be given<sup>44</sup>. It has been speculated, and I whole-heartedly agree, that we will all then throw our crowns at his feet because He alone is worthy of praise and without Him, we would never have done one thing.

While this is one of those prophecies that we will not know the exact details about until it is fulfilled, we can rest assured that whatever happens at the Judgment Seat of Christ, it will be just and gracious. Jesus will serve both as our Judge and Advocate. If we have fallen short, there will be no argument. Then He will reward us. I am convinced that this will not be a time of fear, but of joy. Imagine it. The church now united with their Savior forever.

## The Wedding Supper of the Lamb

After the Judgment Seat of Christ, it is believed that we will celebrate with our Lord our marriage to Him at a feast called the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. Rev. 19:1-8 reads:

*After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! <sup>2</sup> For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." <sup>3</sup> Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" <sup>4</sup> And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" <sup>5</sup> Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" <sup>6</sup> And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! <sup>7</sup> Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." <sup>8</sup> And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"*

The Bible doesn't give many details as to the actual supper. It's almost as if it is left to our imaginations. So, enjoy your wondering, and try to see the millions of those that constitute His bride celebrating together. If you are a musician, capture the moment in song. If you are an artist, represent it visually. If you are a poet, use your words to express the joy that will be ours, and His.

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<sup>44</sup> Some rewards that the Bible mentions are the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), the crown of life (James 1:12), the crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4), the right to eat from the tree of life in the Paradise of God (Rev. 2:7), to not be hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:11), hidden manna to eat and a white stone with a name written on it that only the individual knows (Rev. 2:17), degrees of power to rule over the nations (Rev. 2:26), the morning star (Rev. 2:28), to not be hurt by the second death (Rev. 3:11), we will be clothed in white garments, our names will not be blotted out from the Book of Life, Jesus will confess his name before the Father and before His angels (Rev. 3:5), to sit with Him in His throne (Rev. 3:21)

## The Tribulation

After the rapture of the church the seven years of tribulation will begin. Millions of hated Christians will have disappeared off the face of the earth. Accidents in every form of transportation have happened when individuals and whole families have been removed. Doubtless, it will be a stunning and shocking event of international concern. Every aspect of life will be disrupted world-wide.

Many people, having heard of this from their Christian friends will know right away what has happened, and will turn to God. Others will simply be afraid and look to their leaders for help. Every system known to man will be in crisis. News reports will examine the issue all over the world. There will be a call for calm, for time to analyze the situation. People will theorize. It will become obvious that each and every person missing was indeed a Christian. Some will be bold enough to quote Scriptures from the Bible. Could it be the Rapture Christians warned about?

Another group, which I believe will be aligned with Israel's enemies, will speculate that they believe that the event represents a divine punishment on Christians. Their god has wiped them instantaneously off the face of the earth, and as people rejoiced in some countries when 9-11 happened, millions will rejoice when the troublemakers are gone. They will believe their god destroyed them. Then when the defenders of Israel are removed, her enemies will begin to plot her destruction. I believe this will be when the Antichrist steps into the light. He will be perceived at first as someone who seeks peace and brings calm to a troubled world.

Two very interesting persons will also come into public view known as the two witnesses. They will prophesy the first three and one-half years during the Tribulation. Their ministries very nearly reflect those of Elijah and Moses who appeared to Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Some believe they will actually be Moses and Elijah. I love that idea: as if God gives them one more opportunity to glorify His name on the earth. Moses, who was not allowed to enter the Promised Land, and Elijah who hid himself in fear from Jezebel. Now, with the power of the Holy Spirit, they again minister, but this time in victory. Others think they only minister *like* Moses and Elijah. It will be as it will be. We can read about their ministry in the eleventh chapter of Revelations.

*And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. <sup>4</sup> These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands standing before the God of the earth. <sup>5</sup> And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. <sup>6</sup> These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. <sup>7</sup> When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. <sup>8</sup> And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. <sup>9</sup> Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. <sup>10</sup> And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup> Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw*

*them. <sup>12</sup> And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. <sup>13</sup> In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

Some erroneously believe that when the Jews rejected Christ when He was on earth, they forfeited forever any possibility of salvation. For this to be true, God would have to break His promises to them, and this will never happen. The two witnesses will bring the message of Jesus Christ as the Messiah to the Jews. During the first three and one-half years, 144,000 Jews will be saved. Others will align themselves with the Antichrist. These 144,000 will refuse to take the mark of the beast and receive the seal of God on their forehead. They will suffer great persecution. We read in Revelation 7:2-4:

*Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, <sup>3</sup> saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." <sup>4</sup> And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.*

## The Antichrist

The term antichrist can refer generally to any one or any system that is opposed to Christ. John wrote in 1 John 2:22 "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ. He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son." Yet it is clear there is a specific individual to come who will be *the* Antichrist. Piecing together all of the information about him throughout the Old and New Testament appears to this author a lifetime pursuit. I defer to the hundreds of others who have dedicated their lives to studying and understanding end time prophecy. It my view that much of what we read will come into sharper focus as we get closer to the end.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:2-10 we read (not all verses are included here):

*Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, . . . <sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. . . . <sup>9</sup> The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup> and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

It is widely believed that the Antichrist will be revealed right after the Rapture of the church since it is he who makes a treaty with Israel for seven years. The most widely held belief is that he will be a leader among the revived Roman Empire<sup>45</sup>. It is likely that He will be someone who is aligned with Israel's enemies that has influence (financial or political) or power (military might) over them. From the world's

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<sup>45</sup> The two main views are that it is a revived Roman empire or an Islamic leader.

perspective, he will be seen as a peacemaker. He will be highly respected and applauded for his accomplishments. The treaty he will make will be for seven years.<sup>46</sup> During the first three and a half years of that time, there will seem to be peace on the earth. After that, he will break the treaty and begin to persecute Israel (and those who have become Christians after the Rapture).

It is believed that Jewish ritual sacrifices will be going on before and during the Tribulation, but after three and a half years<sup>47</sup>, the Antichrist will cause them to cease and set himself up as God in the temple. This is referred to as the abomination of desolation as we read in Daniel.

*The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration (abomination of desolation NKJV), until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him. Daniel 9:27 NLT*

Sometime during the tribulation, the Antichrist receives a mortal wound. He comes back to life miraculously, but by the power of Satan. Some believe He will work with Satan's power, others believe he will be Satan incarnate, an imitation of Jesus. Another term used for the Antichrist is "the Beast". Working with the Beast is a helper known as the false prophet (also referred to as a beast in Revelation...I know, a little confusing, but hang in there with me!) The Antichrist will set up an image of himself in the temple, and the false prophet will give life to the image. People will be in awe and come to worship.

*This person will be antichrist theologically as he claims to be God himself; he will be antichrist politically as he will attempt to rule the world. He will be antichrist satanically because he will prosper on satanic power, much as Christ manifested the power of God. In many respects the future prophet of Revelation 12:11-18 will fulfill a role similar to that of the Holy Spirit, justifying the concept of an unholy trinity composed of Satan, the antichrist and the false prophet<sup>48</sup>.*

It was Satan's desire from the beginning to be God. He succeeded with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but Jesus Christ defeated Him on the cross freeing any man who would receive Him to be free from his control. But Satan is short-sided. He thought killing Christ would keep him from reigning, but instead, it gave Jesus complete authority. I am guessing that Satan will actually believe that he will be able to rule the world and defeat the Lord God Almighty.

The Antichrist will also set up an economic system in which people are not allowed to buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast in the hand or forehead.

*He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, <sup>17</sup> and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. <sup>18</sup> Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the*

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<sup>46</sup> Daniel 9:27

<sup>47</sup> Daniel 12:11

<sup>48</sup> The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Volume 1, 1976, pg. 181

*number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.  
Revelation 13:16-18*

The Antichrist and the False Prophet will be responsible for thousands of deaths. Those who refuse to take the mark or who refuse to worship the beast will be killed. However, the judgment of God on the evil inhabitants of the earth will be far worse. Some believe that the three sets of punishments mentioned in the book of Revelation are actually the same, but repeated. Conventional thinking is that they are just what they appear to be, three sets of seven punishments. The punishments of Revelations become more and more intense, but most people on earth will hatefully refuse to repent of not believing in Jesus. They will align themselves even more steadfastly to the unholy trinity of the Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet.<sup>49</sup>

### **The Visual Return of Christ with His Saints**

While Satan is wreaking havoc on anyone who dare believe in the One True Lord God Almighty, God will have his own say. In mighty fury He will punish the inhabitants of the earth who have the mark of the beast and who worship him. At the end of the seven years, Jesus Christ will return visibly to the earth. Here are some Scriptures about that event. I suggest you read these slowly forming a picture in your mind.

#### **Jude 1:14-15**

*Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."*

#### **Revelation 19:11-15**

*Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. <sup>13</sup> He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. <sup>14</sup> And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. <sup>16</sup> And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. <sup>17</sup> Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, <sup>18</sup> that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." <sup>19</sup> And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. <sup>20</sup> Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. <sup>21</sup> And the rest*

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<sup>49</sup> These judgments are recorded in the book of Revelation.

*were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.*

Heaven opens! Think of that. What will heaven opening look like? From the midst of this opening we see Jesus sitting on a white horse which I see having a long mane and tail, perhaps braided for battle, and behind him are ten thousands of His saints clothed in white on horses. We will ride with Jesus! Think of that! Jesus' eyes are like flames of fire and a sword is coming out of His mouth, a sword of judgment against the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and all those who have taken the mark of the beast. Jesus is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is The Word of God. He also has another name written on Him that no one can read. Upon His head are many crowns. He also has KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS written on his thigh.

Suddenly an angel appears in the sun and he cries with a loud voice to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven to come and eat the flesh of those that are about to be defeated. Every time I read that these idiots gather to fight against Jesus and ten thousands of His saints, I am dumbfounded. How stupid and how arrogant they must be to believe they could win against God Himself. It does not appear that the battle is long, but the outcome is sure. The Antichrist and the False Prophet are cast into the lake of fire, and many others are killed.

## **The Millennial Reign of Christ**

Prior to the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ, Satan will be bound for 1,000 years. He will not be allowed to deceive the nations that entire time.

### ***Revelation 20:1-3***

*Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; <sup>3</sup> and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.*

We will be in heaven after the Rapture, but Scripture clearly teaches that we will return to live on earth. After our enemy is bound, we will reign with Christ for 1,000 years on earth. Those still living after the Tribulation, will continue to live on the earth. They will be ruled by Jesus Christ and by those who were part of the first resurrection.

There will be no tempter, so people will live in peace. Those who have taken part in the Rapture will never die again<sup>50</sup>. Other people will live, be born, and die during that time, and life expectancy will be greatly extended<sup>51</sup>. However, it won't be like any earth we have ever known. Here are some scriptures that give us clues as to what the millennium will be like. Again, read slowly, and picture these things in your heart.

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<sup>50</sup> The resurrected saints of God will not marry. See Matthew 22:30.

<sup>51</sup> Isaiah 65:20

**Revelation 20:4-6**

*And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup> But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

**Isaiah 11:6-9**

*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,  
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,  
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;  
And a little child shall lead them.*

*<sup>7</sup> The cow and the bear shall graze;  
Their young ones shall lie down together;  
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*

*<sup>8</sup> The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole,  
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.*

*<sup>9</sup> They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,  
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
As the waters cover the sea.*

**Isaiah 2:1-4**

*The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

*<sup>2</sup> Now it shall come to pass in the latter days  
That the mountain of the LORD's house  
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,  
And shall be exalted above the hills;  
And all nations shall flow to it.*

*<sup>3</sup> Many people shall come and say,  
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
To the house of the God of Jacob;  
He will teach us His ways,  
And we shall walk in His paths."  
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,  
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

*<sup>4</sup> He shall judge between the nations,  
And rebuke many people;  
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
And their spears into pruning hooks;  
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
Neither shall they learn war anymore.*

**Ezekiel 34:25**

*I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.<sup>52</sup>*

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<sup>52</sup> The author of this book looks forward to sleeping in the woods without fear and perhaps next to a bear while petting a wildcat.

**Hosea 2:18**

*In that day I will also make a covenant for them  
With the beasts of the field,  
The birds of the sky  
And the creeping things of the ground  
And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land,  
And will make them lie down in safety.*

**Isaiah 2:4**

*He shall judge between the nations,  
And rebuke many people;  
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
And their spears into pruning hooks;  
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
Neither shall they learn war anymore.*

**Satan Released for a Season, the Final Battle,  
and the Ultimate Punishment of Satan**

To my constant amazement, after one thousand years, Satan will be again released to deceive the nations. Stunningly, even after 1000 years of complete peace and the knowledge of Christ's goodness to them, with no war at all for that time, with the joy of being at peace even with animals, many of those remaining will be deceived when Satan is loosed. They will align themselves with him believing that they can actually overtake Jerusalem. Their destruction is assured.

**• Revelation 20:7-10**

*Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison<sup>8</sup> and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.<sup>9</sup> They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.<sup>10</sup> The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

After this event, Satan will no longer ever again have any opportunity to deceive the nations. He will live permanently in the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are and all those who opposed Him.

**The Great White Throne Judgment and the Second Death**

Christians will not be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment. Our only judgment is that of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**• Revelation 20:11-15**

*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written*

*in the books. <sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup> And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

At this point, all who have died throughout time including those who were not included in the Rapture, those who died during the Tribulation, those who died during the millennium, and those who died in the Last Battle stand before the throne of God. These are judged by their works. In short, those who rejected Christ will themselves be rejected. Those who have received Him, will be saved. There will be several books. One set of books will apparently have recorded the works of all being judged, and there will be another book, The Book of Life. Anyone whose name is not written in that book, will be cast into the lake of fire.

## **New Heavens and a New Earth**

All of this was done, from Adam's fall to the end of time, to save man and expel evil forever. All of this was accomplished for love of His creation, to redeem us once and for all of anything that could harm us, but most of all to be united with us forever. This earth we know, even the heaven that now exists will melt away, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. It appears that earth and heaven will no longer be separated, and some believe that we will travel between the two as though they are one—at the speed of thought. What will we do for eternity? We will worship Him first and foremost. He will be our God and we will be His children. We will inherit all things. It doesn't say what the "all things" are, but there will be no one who is disappointed. Most of us will be content to worship Him forevermore.

### **Revelation 21:1-5**

*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup> Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." <sup>5</sup> Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."*

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

### **Revelation 21:22-27**

*But I saw no temple in it (referring to the New Jerusalem), for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. <sup>24</sup> And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. <sup>25</sup> Its gates shall not be*

*shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).<sup>26</sup> And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.<sup>27</sup> But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie<sup>53</sup>, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*

**Revelation 22:22-26**

*But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.<sup>23</sup> The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.<sup>24</sup> And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.<sup>25</sup> Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).<sup>26</sup> And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.<sup>27</sup> But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*

## LIFE APPLICATIONS

When we consider end time prophecy something in our spirits cries out. We have hope of being reunited forever with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Imagine the joy and love we will know when we join our Lord in the air. It won't just be our joy, but His. He is longing for us. In Revelation 22:17 we read these few words that impact our hearts intensely, "And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" We are longing for His arrival as a bride longs to be married to her husband, and He is longing for us as a groom longs for His bride.

When we realize that this life we know here on earth is not all there is, and we hope for a new heaven and a new earth, our perspective is changed. In Titus 2:13 it says, "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ". Too many times we lose sight of the assurance of our ultimate salvation. Life happens and we get caught up in it. We have people to see, places to go, and things to do each day. Even those in Christian ministry can get so consumed by their work that they forget that we have a hope. There is more to life than this life, so we can live above it! We look for a new city "whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). We realize we are not citizens of this world, but of a new world to come. It causes us to long for spiritual things instead of temporal.

Knowing how things are going to come about, we are also less likely to be deceived by shallow promises of political and religious leaders or movements. We know that promises of peace or utopia are lies. There will no be peace on this earth until God Himself intervenes. Man is not capable of bringing about peace, no matter how much he hopes for it or works toward it. When we see the war and destruction of this earth, we know a time is coming when swords will be beaten into plowshares, but we also know that it will not be during our time, rather when Christ returns.

1 John 3:2-3 says, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.<sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." The hope of knowing we will be like Him does

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<sup>53</sup> This Scripture is not implying that there will still be these types of people outside of the city. All will have been judged and cast into the lake of fire. It is only saying that there will be no such people in existence to go into the city.

something quite miraculous in us. It keeps us pure. Our love and longing for Him produces purity.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW

1. In your opinion, how do the events of the end times speak of God's love for you?
2. In what ways did this lesson help you understand the things which are to come?
3. Look up the lyrics to the very popular song "Imagine" by John Lennon by either using this link or using a search engine. Considering what you have learned in this chapter, in what ways was the author of this song mistaken?  
[http://www.lyricsdomain.com/10/john\\_lennon/imagine.html](http://www.lyricsdomain.com/10/john_lennon/imagine.html)
4. Can you think of other ways the world system ignores that which is promised to come?
5. How does your knowledge of the end time prophecies affect you personally?

**❧ LOVE OF GOD DISCIPLESHIP SERIES ❧****PART TWO****OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE****WE BELIEVE . . .**

. . . that you will be greatly blessed by studying Part Two of The Love of God Series.

The second part of the Love of God Series is a deliberate departure from what are commonly taught as the “spiritual disciplines”. Instead of being buried with a long list of Christian rules and regulations, you will learn about the awesome privilege it is to respond to God’s love. “We love because He first loved us,” says 1 John 4:19. When we realize how much God loves us, we are motivated to love.

We have heard it said repeatedly that knowing Jesus is “not a religion; it’s a relationship”. Yet for decades, the Body of Christ has allowed our relationship to be turned back into a religion. By doing so, we have lost the joy of knowing and loving Him. We get tied up in knots by the dooties and don’ties and feel justified by being able to do them or condemned because we cannot.

Let us reject forever a salvation by grace through faith PLUS WORKS. What we do and don’t do as Christians should only be a RESPONSE to His love. What we do, how we live, how we love, ALL OF THESE need to be a result of our confident and love-based relationship with God.

If you enjoy rules and regulations, THIS IS NOT THE CLASS FOR YOU. If you want to learn to stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made you free, and you want your relationship with God to be alive and powerful again, come and learn with us!