

Dispensational Truths **Bible Study Series (30 Lessons)**

How to Dispensational Study Bible

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we want to thank You for Your Word the Bible, which You have given to us. We know that studying Your Word is the most important thing in this world. But just as important as studying Your Word is to understand and study it correctly. Thank You for Your Son who died on the cross for us so we can go to heaven some day. Amen.

Memory Bible Verse: II Timothy 2:15 “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**”

STORY

This is not a story from the Bible, but this happened many, many years ago. There once lived a man and wife with their two children. They were the Smith Family, and they lived next door to their friends, the Jones Family, and their houses looked almost identical.

In the Smith Family, there were two children, Ann and Peter. Their dad's name was Timothy and their mom's name was Ruth. Mr. and Mrs. Jones were an older couple whose children were grown up with homes of their own.

One day, there was a knock on the door of the Smith home. Mr. Smith answered the door, and there stood a very large man carrying a large bag. He was a courier, much like a mailman today. As you can imagine, it took a lot longer to get somewhere by horse than by car or bus.

“May I help you?” asked Mr. Smith.

The courier answered, “Yes, I have a letter for you. It is from the King.”

“A letter from the King!” Mr. Smith exclaimed. He was so excited he called for the whole family. He couldn't imagine why the King would write. He quickly opened the letter.

This is what the letter read: "You and your family are cordially invited to attend the beautiful celebration at the castle to honor the birth of our new son."

Mr. and Mrs. Smith couldn't help but wonder why they were being invited. Usually only relatives or very good friends of the King and Queen were invited, but they had never even met the King or Queen before. The courier did, however, deliver the invitation to their house. Who were they to question the King? It must be right. They figured that they would find out once they got to the castle why they had been invited. Mr. and Mrs. Smith were excited they were going to the King and Queen's castle!!

They read on. "You are to bring your finest clothes and a beautiful gift for the new baby boy. Also, it is very important that you bring this invitation with you. Just present it to the guard at the gate of the castle. Without it, you will not be allowed into the castle. You should pack a lot of food for your journey to the castle, for it will be a long one. The celebration will have all kinds of delicious food with musicians playing all day and games for adults and children."

The Smiths could hardly wait, they were so excited. The invitation gave them directions on how to get to the castle so they would not get lost.

Mr. Smith put the invitation down and began to organize the family in preparation for this fantastic journey.

Mrs. Smith and the children started packing while Mr. Smith went to the barn to get the mule ready. They would have to take a mule to carry their entire luggage. He also wanted to prepare the horse so the children could ride some of the time and not get too tired. They would have to travel across a desert and over a mountain. This journey could take about 10 days, and they only had a few days to get ready for the trip.

Mrs. Smith began packing food for the long trip. She packed dried meats and fruits because they would not spoil for many days while traveling. They had special containers to hold water since it would be four or five days before they would be able to obtain water while traveling in the desert. Now all the food was packed.

There were two other instructions in the letter they were to follow. Does anyone remember what they were? Yes, bring your finest clothes and a gift for the new baby boy. They looked through their closets to find their nicest outfits. Mother did a little sewing to make them look a little fancier since this was to be the biggest and best party they had ever gone to.

The next instruction in the letter was about the baby gift. The letter ended. In those days, the one to whom the letter was written appeared at the end of the letter. Mr. Smith read the last sentence, and closed the letter since they had many things to do before leaving on their journey.

Mother and Ann decided that they would go to town to look for the perfect baby gift. They went into a store that had things just for babies. Ohhhh, everything in the store was so pretty, they didn't know what to pick! Finally, they decided on a very beautiful sweater outfit with a hat and a little pair of tiny, tiny shoes.

Now they were all ready for their trip. Everything was packed; food, clothing, supplies, baby gift, and most importantly, the letter, because without it they would not be allowed to attend the celebration. So, off to bed they went because they had to get up very early in the morning to start their journey. Ann and Peter were so excited; they had a hard time falling asleep. Father was anxious as well. As he lay in bed thinking about the long trip ahead, he was hoping the journey would be a safe one.

It wasn't long before Ann could feel the warmth of the morning sun on her face. She opened her eyes. "Today is the day!" she shouted. She woke everyone in the house. "Today is

the day!!” The rest of the family got moving. Mother started making breakfast so they would have a good start on their long journey. Father went outside and loaded everything on the mule.

Ann and Peter wiggled all through breakfast, as they were so excited. When breakfast was done, Father closed up the house. Finally, they were on their way.

Father figured it would take about four to five days to travel through the desert, which felt like forever to Ann and Peter. Peter and Ann had never been to a desert before, so they didn't know what to expect. They never expected to see such beautiful flowers, cacti, and funny little animals, nor so much sand. They traveled on.

“Boy,” Peter said, “It sure is getting hot.” Father said, “This is what it will be like everyday until we get out of the desert.” Ann and Peter were getting a little tired so they rode on the horse for a while. Peter said, “I surely am thirsty. May I have a drink?” Father replied, “Take small sips. We must save our water and only take drinks 2 - 3 times a day or we will run out.”

Night finally came, and the air was cooling down. Father built a fire so they could make dinner and keep warm.

The Smiths woke up the next morning, packed camp, and started out for another long day. Suddenly, they were stopped by a group of scruffy looking men. The Smiths were afraid, as they did not know what the men wanted.

“Where are you going?” asked one of the men.

Mr. Smith answered, “We are going to the castle to celebrate the birth of the King's new baby boy.”

The men looked at each other. They didn't say anything for a few moments. The Smith family wondered what they were going to do. Then one of the men spoke, “You may pass through our land since it is the King you are going to see.” Without another word they turned and rode off.

The Smiths were shook up but relieved, and continued on their journey through the desert. They finally reached the end of the desert. Five days had passed with four more to go. Ann and Peter thought to themselves, “We are never going to get there.”

“Look, look!” said Father. “Look there straight ahead at the mountain. What a beautiful sight!”

“Wow,” thought Ann and Peter, “It looks so big.”

“It is,” said Mother. The sun was going down, so they decided to set up camp for the night and start their journey up the mountain in the morning.

The sun rose and they began their trip. Up, up, up, up, it was getting harder and harder to walk, and the road was getting steeper and steeper. It was even getting a little harder to breathe. They climbed all day long, and it seemed like forever. They were so tired.

Night time started they made dinner, pulled out their sleeping gear and laid their heads down. It took only a few seconds to fall asleep.

Morning seemed to come quickly. Up the mountain they started. They were now starting to come across small rocks in the road, but the rocks were getting larger. Finally they were not able to go any further. What were they going to do? They had come this far, and they didn't want to turn back. They sat down to rest for a while and think about what they were going to do. Suddenly, in front of them stood an old man. He had a long gray beard and walked with a cane, which looked like it was made from a tree branch. He was somewhat rough and rugged looking. He spoke quietly, "Where are you people trying to go?"

Mr. Smith answered, "We are on our way to the castle to celebrate the new birth of the King's son, but we can go no further. These boulders are so large, and the trail is so narrow, we cannot travel any further."

The old man stood and thought for a moment. "I have lived in these mountains almost all of my life, I know every trail. I will take you until I am sure you will be safe, and can go on by yourselves. The old man with the cane started down the path. He spoke very little, and just kept on walking. They walked all day.

The old man turned and said softly, "You will be safe now. Continue on with your journey, and may you get to the castle safely," said the old man.

"Thank you," said Mr. Smith. "We will always remember you." They traveled through the mountain for two more days until they were almost down to the other side. Night was upon them, so they made camp and went to sleep for the night. They got up bright and early on the last day of their trip! They had one small hill to climb, and the castle would be right over the top of the hill.

Ann and Peter could hardly wait. The sun was shining so brightly they could hardly see in front of them. But the warmth of the sun did feel good on their faces after being up in the cold mountain for so many days.

All of a sudden Father yelled, "Look, Look, THE CASTLE, THE CASTLE!" They all looked up, and through the rays of the sun they could see the castle. It was magnificent looking. The castle was more beautiful than they ever imagined. The closer they got, the more beautiful everything looked. Now they could see everyone getting ready for the celebration.

Finally, they made it to the castle, which had the biggest doors they had ever seen. They knocked. A soldier dressed in a beautiful red topcoat and pants answered the door. "THIS IS THE CASTLE OF THE KING AND QUEEN; HOW MAY I HELP YOU?" he said in a booming voice.

"We are here to celebrate the birth of the new baby boy," answered Mr. Smith.

"May I see your letter?" said the soldier. Father had tucked the letter in a special pocket of his shirt for safekeeping. He handed the letter to the soldier who took it and said, "So you are the Jones family." The Smith family looked at one another with surprise. "No," they said, "We are the Smith family."

The soldier looked them squarely in the eyes and said, "This letter is addressed to the Jones Family. We can only let in the families who were invited; and since you are not the Jones Family, you can not be allowed into the celebration. Good day!"

"What?" said Mr. Smith, as his family stood there in shock. He examined the letter, and suddenly remembered he had quickly read through the letter, but he never read to whom the letter was addressed at the bottom. It was addressed to the Jones family. The man who delivered the letter must have gotten mixed up because the two houses looked so much alike, and delivered the letter to the wrong house.

The Smith family's hearts sank as Father sat down. He was very disappointed with himself. They had all traveled so far, and were so excited. They had followed all the instructions in the letter so carefully, but it still didn't make any difference, since the letter was not addressed to them. If they had only read the whole letter, and most importantly read to whom the letter was addressed.

Many churches and people today make this same mistake when reading the Bible. They do not divide the Bible correctly. The entire Bible is written for us, but not all of the Bible is written to us. What God wrote to Noah, specifically about the ark, was not written to us. While we can learn many things about God from the early chapters of Genesis, we cannot obey what God said to Noah, or we would all be out in our backyards building an ark.

What God told the Jews and Gentiles in the Old Testament was not written to us. From the Old Testament we learn about God, and how He dealt with Israel, but we should not expect Israel's miracles to happen to us today. For example: during a period of time under the Law Dispensation, God worked with the Jews, miraculously healing those who were sick and demon possessed. He fed them food when they were hungry, and provided for all of their needs. Since Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave, the Law Dispensation faded out as the current Grace (Mystery) Dispensation was brought in.

People and churches today mistakenly take the promises that were made to Israel during their program, and think God is going to perform the same miracles for us today. They are like the Smith family who never took the time to see to whom the letter was addressed.

We must always look at each book of the Bible, and see to whom it is written. This is called: rightly dividing God's Word, which we are instructed to do in II Timothy 2:15. If we don't rightly divide, we will be disappointed with God, and feel that He is not living up to His promises; when actually those Bible promises are not written to us to claim. The books Paul

wrote are the books of the Bible written to us as the Body of Christ. These are the ones where we can look to find God's promises to us as well as what He expects of us.

Promises were made to Israel as God's chosen people in the Old Testament. And God has made promises to us, the Body of Christ. Let's look at some verses that tell us of God's promises to us in the dispensation of Grace.

PROMISES MADE TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

Romans 5:1&2

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:6

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

Romans 8:17

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

Romans 12:5

“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

I Corinthians 1:30

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

2 Corinthians 1:22 “Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Galatians 5:1 “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Ephesians 4:24 “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Philippians 2:5 “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”

Colossians 3:2 “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

QUIZ

1. Who was the letter supposed to be delivered to?
2. Did the Smith Family follow all the directions in the letter? Yes or No
3. Did it make any difference that they followed all the directions when they got to the castle?
Yes or No
4. Why were the Smith family not allowed into the castle even though they had followed all the directions and had the letter with them?
5. Why is it so important to rightly divide the Bible?
6. Can you think of some of the promises in the Bible that were given people during other dispensations?
7. What are some of the promises that GOD has written to us as the Body of Christ in the dispensation of grace?

God's Major Divisions in the Scripture & the Importance of Right Division

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” II Tim 2:15 KJV

God's Eternal Two-fold Purpose - Progressive Revelation about the Lord Jesus Christ

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Heaven (Books of Romans-Philemon)	Earth (Books of Genesis - Acts & Hebrews-Revelation)
The Problem: Satan and some of the angels rebel against God: <i>Isaiah14:12-15, Eze28:1-15, Rev12:7-9 Job1:6-7</i>	The Problem: Sin and death enter the earthly creation by Satan through Adam and Eve: <i>Gen2:16-17 3:1-6, Rom5:1-12</i>
God's <u>Secret Plan</u> (<u>Mystery</u>) God will cast Satan and his followers out of Heaven and replace them with the new creature, the Church the Body of Christ. <i>ICor2:6-8, Eph1:1-23, Eph3:1-9, Col3:1-4 IThess4:13-18</i>	God's <u>Spoken Plan</u> (<u>Prophecy</u>) God will cast sin and death out, put Christ's throne and kingdom on the earth and create a new earth to be inhabited by God's chosen people, The Nation of Israel: <i>Dan 2:44, 2Pet1:15-21 Matt 16:28</i>
The People: (Apostle Paul) The Church the	The People: (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) The

Body of Christ Believers in this Age of God's Grace, Jew & Gentile one in Christ Jesus <i>ICor12:12-27, Eph1:1-23, Rom11:11-13.</i>	Nation of Israel who were given God's Law thru Moses <i>Gen 12:1-3, Gen15:18-21, Exo32:13, Deut 4:1-8, Job19:25 Amos3:1-2 Matt10:5-7</i>
The Conclusion: Satan and his followers will be cast into the lake of fire; the Church the Body of Christ with Jesus Christ as the Head of the Body will dwell in the New Heaven <i>Rev20:10, Rev21:1, IThess4:17, Eph1:15-23,2:4-7</i>	The Conclusion: Death and hell cast into the lake of fire, the old earth burned. Jesus Christ establishes a New Earth , sits on David's throne, & brings the kingdom on earth with the Nation of Israel ruling with Him. <i>2Sam7:1-14 2Peter3:10-13, Rev21:1-12</i>

THE MOST IMPORTANT DIVISION IN GOD'S HOLY SCRIPTURES IS BETWEEN:

1. The preaching of Jesus Christ **according to Prophecy, the Nation of Israel Kingdom on the EARTH with the Lord Jesus Christ King of Israel ruling as the Messiah**

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: Luke 1:68-70

"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. Act 3:20-21

God Interrupts Prophecy Temporarily, Romans 11:25-27

2. The preaching of Jesus Christ **according to the revelation of the Mystery, the Church Kingdom in the HEAVENS with Jesus Christ ruling as Head of the Church the Body of Christ**

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, Romans 16:25

*"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the **Gentiles** should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should*

preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, Ephesians 3:1

“That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth: even in him;” Ephesians 1:10KJV

The Importance of Right Division

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” II Tim 2:15KJV

Notice it did not say “read” but rather to *study* to show thyself approved unto God, to grow in the knowledge of God so that you will not be ashamed. All of the Bible (word of truth) is for our learning, but all the Bible is not about us or written to us. All of the promises made in the Bible were not made to us today! Right Division means to cut straight, to make the divisions that are already cut straight in the Bible by the Holy Spirit (the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God). For example: Gen 1:1 division between Heaven and Earth; Gen 1:5 division between Day and Night; Gen 1:7 division between Waters and Waters, and so on.

It is important to recognize two major divisions or two programs (Law & Grace) in the Bible as did the Bereans in Acts 17:11. Only by rightly dividing the word of truth can this be understood. The following two columns help delineate the differences between the two. One more important difference to understand is that God divides time into three separate periods: Time Past, But Now, & the Ages to Come (Eph. 2). This is another aspect of *rightly dividing the word of truth*.

Law (Covenant) or Prophecy Program (Israel’s Program)	Grace or Mystery Program (Gentile’s Program)
<p>God made Covenants with the house of Israel, which incorporate the Abrahamic, Mosaic (the Law), Davidic, and Palestinian Covenants. The Law works on an “If ... Then” principle. Therefore it contains blessings and curses. The New Covenant is yet future for that nation. God will write His laws into the hearts of believers. Then they will become an holy nation.</p> <p>When Old Covenant Began: Exodus 19:1-8 <i>When the LORD delivered the Children of Israel out of Egypt and told Moses to tell the children if ye will</i></p>	<p>We are not covenant (Testment) People because God did not make a covenant with the church the Body of Christ. We cannot claim covenant promises today but we have unsearchable riches in Christ. We received the New Testament Spiritual blessing not by covenant or promise but by the Grace of God. This is not the “If ... Then” principle of the Law. If we don’t</p>

obey my voice indeed and **keep my covenant** then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an **holy nation**. And all the people answered together and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. Exodus 20 And the LORD gave the children of Israel not only the 10 Commandants but all 613 Commandants contained in The Law. Exodus 24: Moses wrote all the Words of the Lord (The Law) and Moses **took blood and sprinkled it on the people and said behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning The Law**. All covenants are established and sanctified by blood.

Earthly Ministry of The Lord Jesus Christ: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are still the Old Testament.

Beginning of Christ's Ministry in Matthew 5:17-18 The Lord said, *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.* Gal 4:4 says that Christ was made under the law (the Law of Moses.) **Middle of Christ's Ministry** in Matthew 8:2 – Christ cleansed the man of leprosy (leprosy is symbolic of sin that must be cleansed by shedding of blood) and told the man to go and *show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift (blood sacrifice) that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

End of Christ's Ministry in Matthew 23:1 Jesus Christ spoke to the multitude and his disciplines and said that, *The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.* The Law could atone for sins, but the law could not take away sin!

Old Testament (Covenant) Ended: At the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Please read and study Hebrews 9:14-22.**

When New Testament (Covenant) Began: It began technically at the cross and practically at a later time. Luke 22:19 *And he (Jesus Christ) took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this*

recognize the program we are in, then confusion and division will be the result.

When Dispensation of Grace

Began: It began with the conversion of Paul. 1st Tim 1:16 *Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that **in me first** Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for **a pattern** to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*

Ephesians

3:2 *If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is **given me** to you-ward:*

ROM 3:21 **But now** the righteousness of God without the law is manifested,

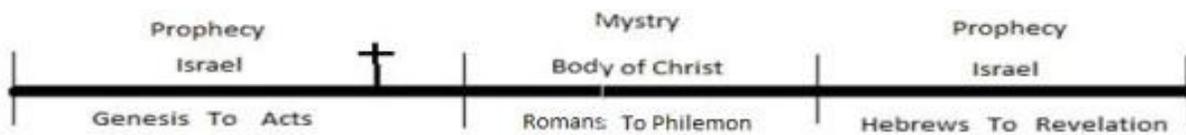
ROM 3:24 *Being justified freely **by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

The Mystery Church is the Church the Body of Christ – Today's gospel is the Gospel of the Grace of God (Acts 20:24) – through the Blood of Christ Please read and study Romans 16:25-26

do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the **new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.** Jeremiah 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a **new covenant with the house of Israel**, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Israel is the New Testament Messianic Church – Gospel of the Kingdom – through the Blood of Christ

Please read and study Acts 3:18-26



Lesson 1

THE BIBLE

An Introduction

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word *biblia* which means "books." All of the books through which God has chosen to give a revelation to humanity are contained in the Bible. Several titles are given to the Bible such as "the holy scriptures"; "the word of God"; and "the scripture of truth."¹ There are 66 books in the Bible. Commonly called the *Old Testament*, the

¹ Romans 1:2; Hebrews 4:12; Daniel 10:21

first portion of the Bible contains 39 books. The remaining 27 books are called *the New Testament*.

The Bible was written over a period of more than 1500 years by about 40 authors. Almost all of the Old Testament was originally written in *Hebrew* and the New Testament was written in *Greek* (a small portion of the Old Testament was written in Aramaic).

Revelation

The Bible is God's revelation to mankind. God reveals Himself and His will through the Bible. Paul, the apostle, writes, "How that by **revelation** he made known unto me the mystery" (Ephesians 3:3). When writing about how he received the gospel, Paul further states, "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the **revelation** of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12). God manifested Himself and disclosed His will to Paul and the other writers of the books in the Bible.

How did God reveal Himself and His will to the writers of the books in the Bible? He spoke to Moses "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." Isaiah received a vision from the Lord. Many signs and wonders were seen by the disciples who followed Jesus Christ. The Lord spoke to Paul from heaven.² Thus, God revealed Himself and His will to the Bible writers in many different ways.

Inspiration

It is very important to understand the *inspiration* of the Bible. "All scripture is given by **inspiration** of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16). Notice that it is *not* the writers who were inspired, but the *words* (the scripture). The word "inspiration" means that God had a divine influence on the Bible writers so that they always wrote the words chosen by God.

There are many false ideas concerning the inspiration of the Bible. Some teach that only certain parts of the Bible are inspired, but II Timothy 3:16 says "**All** scripture." Some say that the Bible writers were inspired in a natural way like many other great authors such as Shakespeare, Milton, Homer, Confucius, etc. However, the Bible plainly states that it was "given by inspiration of **God**" and is therefore a supernatural book. Still others teach that God gave men a spiritual viewpoint and that these men then wrote with their own words. However, those who teach this are seriously mistaken. God did not merely give thoughts or ideas; He gave *words*.³ Thus every word written was the precise word that God willed to be written.

² Exodus 33:11; Isaiah 1:1; John 20:30-31; Galatians 1:12

³ Isaiah 59:21; Matthew 4:4; Matthew 5:18; Matthew 24:35; I Corinthians 2:13; II Peter 3:2; Jude 17

The proper understanding of the inspiration of the Bible is sometimes called "plenary, verbal inspiration." Plenary means "full" or "complete." The **entire Bible** was given by the inspiration of God. Verbal means "in words" or "by means of words." God gave specific *words* to the Bible writers, not just thoughts or ideas.

Introduction to Dispensational Bible Study (30 Lessons)	
Questions & Answer Key	
<u>Lesson 1 The Bible</u>	
Question	Answer
<u>True or False</u>	
<p>1. The statement "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery" was written by Peter.</p> <p>2. II Timothy 3:16 says "All scripture is given by revelation of God."</p> <p>3. The word "Bible" comes from a Greek word meaning "books."</p> <p>4. The Bible writers received God's thoughts and then wrote these thoughts in their own words.</p>	<p>1. False. It was written by Paul (Ephesians 3:3).</p> <p>2. False. It says "given by inspiration of God."</p> <p>3. True. Some sources say "book" and others say "books."</p> <p>4. False. The Bible writers did not express God's thoughts using their own words. Every word written was God's word. See Isaiah 59:21; Matthew 4:4; Matthew 5:18; Matthew 24:35; I Corinthians 2:13; II Peter 3:2 and Jude 17.</p>
<u>Multiple Choice</u>	
<p>5. Paul, the apostle, says that he received his gospel by:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. reading the Old Testament</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b. talking to Peter</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">c. the revelation of Jesus Christ</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">d. talking face to face with God</p> <p>6. The word "inspiration" means:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. God chose some of the words</p>	<p>5. c. the revelation of Jesus Christ (See Galatians 1:12)</p> <p>6. b. God chose every word written by the Bible writers</p>

<p>written by Bible writers</p> <p>b. God chose every word written by the Bible writers</p> <p>c. God motivated the Bible writers and gave them ideas</p> <p>d. God enlightened the Bible writers so that they would know His thoughts</p> <p>7. God's revelation came to humans:</p> <p>a. through nature</p> <p>b. through miracles</p> <p>c. through visions</p> <p>d. in many different ways</p>	<p>7. All four answers are correct, but the best answer is: d. in many different ways</p>
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[Fill in the Blanks](#)

<p>8. Another name for the Bible is the holy _____.</p> <p>9. _____ scripture is given by the inspiration of God.</p> <p>10. God gave _____ to the Bible writers, not just thoughts or ideas.</p>	<p>8. Another name for the Bible is the holy <u>scriptures</u>_____.</p> <p>9. <u>All</u> scripture is given by the inspiration of God.</p> <p>10. God gave <u>words</u> to the Bible writers, not just thoughts or ideas.</p>
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[For Further Study](#)

<p>1. Are some parts of the Bible more inspired than others? How much of the Bible is for our profit today? (see II Timothy 3:16)</p> <p>2. Is the entire Bible addressed to mankind as a whole? (see Genesis 6:13; Exodus 14:1-2; Isaiah 2:1; Matthew 10:5-6; Romans 11:13)</p> <p>3. Did the Bible writers write according to their own will? Who was involved in the process of writing the Bible? (see II Peter 1:21)</p>	<p>1. No, every verse in the Bible is given by inspiration of God. The whole Bible is given for our profit today. (see II Timothy 3:16)</p> <p>2. No! For example Genesis 6:13 was spoken only to Noah. In Exodus 14:1-2, we read that those words were spoken only to Israel (not to any other nation).</p> <p>3. No, they wrote according to the will of God. Who was involved in the process of writing the Bible? The Bible was written when the Holy Ghost moved holy men of God. (see II Peter 1:21)</p>
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<p>4. How does Titus 1:2 give us confidence in God's Word?</p> <p>5. Memorize the names of the 27 New Testament books in order. When you have completed this, memorize the names of the 39 Old Testament books.</p> <p>6. List the names of at least ten Bible writers.</p> <p>7. What do many people do according to II Corinthians 2:17? What are some ways that people might do this?</p> <p>8. What comparison can we make between Jesus Christ and the Bible? (compare Revelation 19:13 with Hebrews 4:12; compare Hebrews 7:25 with James 1:21; compare Acts 17:31 with John 12:48)</p> <p>9. Is it possible that the Bible could be completely reliable in spiritual matters, but contain historical and/or scientific errors? (see John 3:12; John 17:17; II Timothy 3:16)</p> <p>10. Read Mark 12:35-36; Acts 1:16; Acts 28:25; and Hebrews 3:7. When the Bible writers wrote, who was speaking?</p>	<p>4. God cannot lie.</p> <p>5. Memorize the names of the 27 New Testament books in order. When you have completed this, memorize the names of the 39 Old Testament books.</p> <p>6. Check your Bible to see if you correctly listed ten Bible writers. Your list could include Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Daniel, Matthew, Mark, John, Peter, and Paul, among others.</p> <p>7. Many corrupt the word of God. There are many ways that people might do this. Examples would be teaching false doctrine, publishing corrupted translations of the Bible, mixing psychology with Bible doctrine, using the Bible for political or financial gain, etc.</p> <p>8. One name for Jesus Christ is "The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13) and the Bible is called "the word of God" (Hebrews 4:12); Jesus Christ is "able also to save" (Hebrews 7:25) and the Bible is "able to save" (James 1:21); Jesus Christ "will judge the world" (Acts 17:31) and the Bible "shall judge" (John 12:48). You can find many other items of similarity between Jesus Christ and the Bible. This shows that you cannot know Jesus Christ apart from the Bible. You cannot love Jesus Christ if you do not love the Bible. The written word and the Living Word cannot be disconnected.</p> <p>9. No! If the Bible cannot be trusted in "earthly things," then it most assuredly cannot be trusted in "heavenly things" (John 3:12). God's word "is truth," so it cannot contain historical or scientific errors (John 17:17).</p> <p>10. The Holy Ghost!</p>
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Lesson 2

GOD

God's Existence

The Bible does not attempt to prove that there is a God. The first verse in the Bible reads as follows: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). No further discussion or debate is needed concerning the existence of God. Man's wisdom will never lead to a knowledge of God. This can only come through faith.⁴

Every person has been given two clear testimonies of God's existence. One of these testimonies is **the world** that God has created. This *outward* testimony is easily observed by all men. Another testimony is the conscience that He has placed *within* every person.⁵ The Bible clearly describes the person who rejects these testimonies: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good" (Psalm 14:1).

Atheists deny the existence of God not because of logical or scientific arguments. Their real reason for denying God's existence is a *moral* reason. Denying God's existence is a way of seeking to avoid being responsible to an Almighty Creator. If there is no God, I can live any way in which I please. I don't need to ever fear judgment for my sin. Those who claim that there is no God are "corrupt" and do many unclean works. They hope that there is not a God who will one day hold them accountable for their thoughts, words, and deeds.

Who Is God?

Though many religions involve the worship of numerous gods and goddesses, the Bible plainly teaches that there is only *one* true God. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is **one** Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4). "For there is **one** God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5).⁶

Within the one God, there are three eternal Persons, known as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This understanding cannot be obtained through man's wisdom. Man can only know God

⁴ I Corinthians 1:21; Hebrews 11:6

⁵ Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:19-20; Romans 2:15

⁶ Deuteronomy 4:35; I Kings 8:60; John 17:3; I Corinthians 8:4

when God reveals Himself to man. In the Bible, God has revealed Himself as a Triune God (three in one). "The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and the love of **God**, and the communion of the **Holy Ghost**, be with you all. Amen." (II Corinthians 13:14).

The Triune God

The doctrine of the Godhead is most clearly taught in the New Testament, but is confirmed by the Old Testament. God uses a plural pronoun when referring to Himself. "And God said, Let **us** make man in **our** image" (Genesis 1:26). "Go to, let **us** go down, and there confound their language" (Genesis 11:7). Other Old Testament indications of the Trinity include: the Son spoken of as distinct from the Father;⁷ and the Spirit spoken of as distinct from the Father.⁸

Several times, the three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned together in the New Testament. "For **Christ** also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to **God**, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the **Spirit**" (I Peter 3:18).⁹ "Elect according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, through sanctification of the **Spirit**, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of **Jesus Christ**: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied" (I Peter 1:2).

Introduction to Dispensational Bible Study (30 Lessons)	
Questions & Answer Key	
<u>Lesson 2 God</u>	
Question	Answer
<u>True or False</u>	
1. The Bible teaches that there are three Persons in one God.	1. True.
2. The Bible writers often wrote to prove that God exists.	2. False. God's existence is evident (outwardly) through nature and (inwardly) through the conscience within each of us.
3. People become atheists because there are many sound intellectual and scientific	3. False. People become atheists because they are seeking to avoid accountability to an

⁷ Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 48:16;

⁸ Psalm 51:11; Isaiah 40:13

⁹ Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew 28:19; I Corinthians 12:4-6;

arguments to support their viewpoint.	Almighty Creator.
4. There are several passages in the Bible that mention all three Persons of the Godhead.	4. True. See Matthew 3:16-17, Matthew 28:19, and I Corinthians 12:4-6.

Multiple Choice

5. God's existence can be clearly seen through: a. logical thinking b. scientific study c. creation and conscience d. studying history	5. c. creation and conscience
6. The Bible teaches that: a. there are many Gods b. there are three Gods c. there is one God d. there is no God	6. c. there is one God
7. The doctrine of the Godhead is most clearly taught in: a. the New Testament b. the Old Testament c. the Koran d. Hindu writings	7. a. the New Testament

Fill in the Blanks

8. "In the beginning ____ created the heaven and the earth"	8. "In the beginning <u>God</u> created the heaven and the earth"
9. Atheists do not truly deny God's existence because of logical or scientific evidence, but because of ____ reasons.	9. Atheists do not truly deny God's existence because of logical or scientific evidence, but because of <u>moral</u> reasons.
10. The three Persons in one God are the ____, the ____, and the ____.	10. The three Persons in one God are the <u>Father</u> , the <u>Son</u> , and the <u>Holy Ghost (or Spirit)</u> .

For Further Study

1. Is God called "the Father" because He is the Father of all of mankind? (see John 8:44)

1. **No!** God is **not** the Father of all mankind. Jesus told some Jews that their father was "the devil" (John 8:44). All men can call God their **Creator**, but not everyone can truthfully call Him "**Father**". Is He your Father? You will find out in later lessons.

2. How does Isaiah 6:3 suggest that God is a Trinity?

2. Isaiah 6:3 repeats "holy" three times. Holy is the Father; holy is the Son; holy is the Holy Spirit.

3. Read Ephesians 1:3-14. How do these verses teach that God is a Triune God?

3. Ephesians 1:3-6 concerns the **Father**; verses 7-12 speak of the **Son**; and verses 13-14 speak of the **Holy Spirit**.

4. How does Revelation 22:16-19 teach the doctrine of the Trinity?

4. Revelation 22:16 begins "I **Jesus**;" verse 17 speaks of "the **Spirit**;" and verses 18-19 mention "**God**" (the Father).

5. What difference between God and idols is mentioned in Psalm 115:3-9 and I Thessalonians 1:9?

5. I Thessalonians 1:9 says that God is a **living** God. Psalm 115:3-9 declares that God is in the heavens and does whatever He pleases. On the contrary, idols are made by men out of materials such as silver and gold; they have mouths, but can't speak; they have eyes, but can't see; they have ears, but can't hear; they have noses, but can't smell; they have hands, but can't use them; they have feet, but can't walk; they have throats, but can't speak. There is no life in idols.

6. Is God an impersonal force or a Person? (see Genesis 1:3; Exodus 20:2-3; Isaiah 45:5)

6. God is a **Person**. He can create (Genesis 1:3); He can speak and act (Exodus 20:2-3; Isaiah 45:5).

7. Did God have a beginning? Will God have an end? (see Genesis 21:33; Psalm 102:27; Isaiah 9:6)

7. **No!** God had no beginning and will have no end. He is "the **everlasting** God" (see Genesis 21:33); His "years shall have **no end**" (Psalm 102:27); He is "The **everlasting** Father" (Isaiah 9:6).

8. What does Romans 1:21-23 teach about the beginning of the worship of many gods and

8. The worshipping of many gods began when men turned away from glorifying the

<p>goddesses?</p> <p>9. Is it pleasing to God when we make images or likenesses of Him? (see Exodus 20:4; Leviticus 26:1)</p> <p>10. List some names of God in the Bible: (see Genesis 14:18; Genesis 15:2; Genesis 17:1; Genesis 21:33; Exodus 6:3; Exodus 7:1; I Samuel 1:3; Romans 1:25; II Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 4:6)</p>	<p>true God. They were not thankful and "their foolish heart was darkened." Though they thought themselves wise, they had become fools. They began to make images of humans, birds, beasts and creeping things to assist their worship.</p> <p>9. No! It is forbidden.</p> <p>10. "the most high God" (Genesis 14:18); "Lord God" (Genesis 15:2); "the Almighty God" (Genesis 17:1); "the LORD, the everlasting God" (Genesis 21:33); "God Almighty" and "JEHOVAH" (Exodus 6:3); "LORD" (Exodus 7:1); "the LORD of hosts" (I Samuel 1:3); "Creator" (Romans 1:25); "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "Father of mercies" and "the God of all comfort" (II Corinthians 1:3).</p>
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Lesson 3

JESUS CHRIST

Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Godhead, the Son of God. One of the most important events in history was the *incarnation*. This is when God became man. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God** . . . And **the Word was made flesh**, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1,14). Jesus Christ "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was **made in the likeness of men**" (Philippians 2:7).

Another very important doctrine in the Bible is the *Deity of Christ*. The word "deity" refers to a divine nature or Godhood. Jesus Christ is both God and man. He has two natures, but is one Person.

Jesus Christ is God

Some proofs of the Deity of Jesus Christ include:

He is eternal

Jesus Christ's existence did not begin when He was born in Bethlehem. He was present when the world was created. Though Abraham lived about two thousand years before the birth of Christ, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Before Abraham was, I am**" (John 8:58). The Father loved the Son **before the foundation of the world** (John 17:24). We previously quoted John 1:1 which states that Jesus Christ was "**in the beginning**" and Micah 5:2 says He is "**from everlasting.**"¹⁰

He is called God

We refer again to John 1:1, which speaking of Jesus Christ, says: ". . . and the Word was **God.**" Thomas acknowledged this when he said to Jesus, "My Lord and my **God**" (John 20:28). Notice the words that God the Father spoke to Jesus Christ: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O **God**, is for ever and ever . . ." (Hebrews 1:8).

He is omnipresent (present in all places at the same time)

While **on earth**, Jesus Christ said: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man **which is in heaven**" (John 3:13). Thus, He was in heaven while on earth. He promised His disciples "**I am with you alway**" (Matthew 28:20).

He is omniscient (knows all things)

His disciples said: "Now are we sure that thou **knowest all things**, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God" (John 16:30). In Christ "are hid **all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**" (Colossians 2:3). The Samaritan woman testified: "Come, see a man, which **told me all things that ever I did**: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29). Jesus Christ knew the thoughts of men (Luke 11:17). He knew how He would die (John 12:33).¹¹

He is omnipotent (has unlimited power)

¹⁰ Isaiah 9:6-7; John 1:15; John 17:5; Hebrews 1:11-12; I John 1:1

¹¹ Matthew 16:21; Luke 6:8; John 2:24-25; John 13:1; John 21:17

He upholds "all things by the word of his **power**" and is called "The **mighty** God" and "the **Almighty**" (Hebrews 1:3; Isaiah 9:6; Revelation 1:8). He has power over demons (Mark 5:11-15), disease (Luke 4:38-41), and death (Matthew 9:11-25).¹²

He is immutable (never changes)

Speaking of Jesus Christ, Hebrews 1:12 states: ". . . they shall be changed: but **thou art the same**, and thy years shall not fail." "Jesus Christ **the same yesterday, and today, and forever**" (Hebrews 13:8). [He does not change in His eternal Deity, character, and plans. However, He does change in His form and ministry. For example, He "took upon him the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7).]

He forgave sins

"And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; **thy sins be forgiven thee**" (John 9:2). Only God can forgive sins (Mark 2:5-7; Luke 7:47-49).

He will raise the dead in the resurrection

"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and **I will raise him up at the last day**" (John 6:40).¹³ This is not just raising to life a dead person such as the raising of Lazarus (John 11:38-44). Those raised in the resurrection will have been decomposed, but will be raised, never to die again (I Corinthians 15:52).

He will execute eternal judgment

"For the Father judgeth no man, but **hath committed all judgment unto the Son**" (John 5:22).¹⁴

He was called Emmanuel

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, **God with us**" (Matthew 1:23).

¹² Matthew 21:19; Luke 7:12-16; John 2:3-11; John 11:38-44

¹³ John 5:25-29; John 6:39; John 6:54

¹⁴ Acts 10:41-42; Acts 17:31; Romans 14:10; II Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 19:15

**Introduction to Dispensational Bible Study (30 Lessons)
Questions & Answer Key**

Lesson 3 Jesus Christ

Question

Answer

True or False

1. Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Trinity.
2. Jesus Christ had no beginning and will have no end.
3. Since Jesus Christ has a physical body, He can only be in one place at a time.
4. Jesus Christ has unlimited power.

1. **True**
2. **True. See Micah 5:2.**
3. **False. See Eph 1:20, and Eph 3:16-17.**
4. **True. See Matt 26:64.**

Multiple Choice

5. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ forgave sin. This proves that He is:
 - a. A man
 - b. A priest
 - c. God
 - d. A prophet
6. The *incarnation* of Christ means that:
 - a. God became man
 - b. Mary was a virgin
 - c. Christ ascended into heaven
 - d. Jesus Christ never changes
7. The doctrine of the Deity of Christ means that:
 - a. Jesus lived a good life
 - b. Jesus Christ is God
 - c. Jesus Christ died on the cross

5. **c. God. Only God can forgive sin. Mark 2:5-7.**
6. **a. God became man**
7. **b. Jesus Christ is God**

d. Jesus came in the likeness of man	
<u>Fill in the Blanks</u>	
<p>8. God the Father called Jesus Christ ____.</p> <p>9. "Now are we sure that thou _____ all things"</p> <p>10. "They shall be changed: but thou art _____"</p>	<p>8. God the Father called Jesus Christ <u>His beloved son. See Mark 1:11</u>.</p> <p>9. "Now are we sure that thou <u>Knowest</u> all things"</p> <p>10. "They shall be changed: but thou art <u>the same.</u>"</p>
<u>For Further Study</u>	
<p>1. Why is the doctrine of the Deity of Christ so important?</p> <p>2. What do we learn about Jesus Christ in John 1:3 and Hebrews 1:10?</p> <p>3. What does Revelation 22:13 tell us about Jesus Christ?</p> <p>4. When Jesus Christ is called the "Son of Man," does this mean that He is only a man? Explain your answer. Read Matthew 9:6 and John 5:27.</p> <p>5. What name is given to God the Father in Matthew 4:7? What name is given to Jesus Christ in Matthew 7:22? (Also see Matthew 11:25 and Matthew 8:2)</p> <p>6. Some religions teach that the name "Son of God" means that Jesus Christ cannot actually be God. Is this true? Explain your answer. Read John 5:18 and John 10:30-33.</p> <p>7. How is the equality of the Father, Son, and</p>	<p>1. Because unless God himself satisfied all the righteous demands of the law on man's behalf, man would be eternally damned to Hell. See Romans 3: 19-28, Matt 5:17-19, Galatians 3: 10-14.</p> <p>2. He is the Creator God.</p> <p>3. Jesus Christ is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things.</p> <p>4. No. It means that Jesus has a unique two part make up. He is both fully God and fully man. See Romans 1: 3-4.</p> <p>5. God the Father is called "Lord" and Jesus is called "Lord". See also Acts 1:34-35.</p> <p>6. No. Based on the overwhelming number of Deity references the "Son of God" title only proves Jesus is God.</p> <p>7. All three persons are seen in the verses</p>

<p>Holy Spirit seen in the following verses? Read Matthew 28:19 and II Corinthians 13:14.</p> <p>8. A person who accepts worship is either God or a deceiver. What can you conclude about Jesus Christ in Matthew 14:33 and Matthew 28:9?</p> <p>9. What did Jesus Christ say about Himself? Why is this important? Read John 10:30 and John 14:9.</p> <p>10. List five names given to Jesus Christ in Isaiah 9:6-7.</p>	<p>as equal. See 1John 5:7.</p> <p>8. He is God.</p> <p>9. Jesus acknowledged himself as God. This is important because as Bible believers we are to believe what God has written even if men disagree.</p> <p>10. Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.</p>
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Lesson 4

THE HOLY SPIRIT

A Force or a Person?

The third Person of the Godhead is the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost). However, there are some religions that teach that the Holy Spirit is a powerful force or influence rather than a living Person. Study carefully the following proofs that the Holy Spirit is a Person (not just a power or force) and is God:

Personal Pronouns are used of the Holy Spirit

John 14:26 and John 16:13 refer to the Holy Spirit as "**he**"

The Holy Spirit is called "Comforter"

"But the **Comforter**, which is the Holy Ghost . . . " (John 14:26). See also John 14:16 and John 15:26. A force cannot comfort, only a *person* can do this.

The Holy Spirit has knowledge

In I Corinthians 2:11 and other verses, we find that the Holy Spirit knows "the things of God." A force cannot know anything.

The Holy Spirit does things that only a person can do

The Holy Spirit teaches (John 14:26), reproves (John 16:8), guides (John 16:13), speaks (Acts 13:2), and intercedes (Romans 8:26).

The Holy Spirit has the characteristics of a person

He is lied to (Acts 5:3), grieved (Ephesians 4:30), and blasphemed (Matthew 12:31).

He is eternal

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the **eternal Spirit** offered himself without spot to God . . . " (Hebrews 9:14).

He is omniscient (knows all things)

The Holy Spirit knows "the deep things of God" (I Corinthians 2:10-11). Jesus Christ told His disciples that the Holy Spirit "shall teach you all things" (John 14:26).

He is omnipotent (has unlimited power)

The Holy Spirit has "the **power** of the Highest" according to Luke 1:35.

He is omnipresent (present in all places at the same time)

Psalms 139:7-10 teaches that whether you go to heaven or hell or the uttermost parts of the sea, the Holy Spirit will be there. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (verse 7).

He is called God

In Acts 5:3 Peter accuses Ananias of lying "to the Holy Ghost" and in verse four says that Ananias had "not lied unto men, but unto **God**." "Now the **Lord** is that Spirit . . . " (II Corinthians 3:17).

Review Questions

True or False

1. The third Person of the Godhead is the Holy Spirit.

2. The name "Comforter" proves that the Holy Spirit is a force.
3. The Holy Spirit teaches and speaks.
4. The Holy Spirit came into existence when God created Adam and Eve.

Multiple Choice

5. The word "omnipotent" means:
 - a. Knowing all things
 - b. Able to be in all places at the same time
 - c. Never changing
 - d. having unlimited power
6. The Holy Spirit is called:
 - a. God
 - b. The Force
 - c. A Power
 - d. The Son of God
7. The Bible refers to the Holy Spirit as "he." This proves that the Holy Spirit is:
 - a. An Influence
 - b. A Human
 - c. A Person
 - d. God

Fill in the Blanks

8. "... the things of God knoweth no man, but the ____ of God" (I Corinthians 2:11).
9. Ananias ____ to the Holy Spirit.
10. _____ means to know all things.

For Further Study

1. What are two wrong ideas that some people have about the Holy Spirit?
2. If the Holy Spirit is a Person and we are persons, what is the difference between us and Him?

3. Why is the doctrine of the Personality and the Deity of the Holy Spirit so important?
4. How do Acts 10:38 and Romans 15:13 prove that the Holy Spirit is not just a power?
5. Read Genesis 1:2, Job 33:4, and Psalm 104:30. How do these verses show the Deity of the Holy Spirit?
6. In what way do Matthew 28:19 and II Corinthians 13:14 show the equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son?
7. What does the Holy Spirit do according to John 15:26 and John 16:14?
8. What is the significance of the Spirit being called the *Holy Spirit*?
9. What does the Holy Spirit do according to I Corinthians 6:11?
10. How does Luke 3:21-22 show that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons? (See also Matthew 28:19 and John 14:16)

Lesson 5

Man

The Fall of Man

The first man ever to live was Adam and the first woman was Eve. They lived in the Garden in Eden. God had provided for all of the needs of Adam and Eve. They were given great freedom in the Garden. However, God put Adam to the test in one area: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **thou shalt not eat of it:** for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). The only restriction placed upon Adam was that he must not eat of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

God was testing Adam to see if he would obey. Adam failed the test: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and **he did eat**" (Genesis 3:6). Thus, Adam disobeyed God and ate of the forbidden fruit.

The Consequences

When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they became sinners. This is when sin entered the world. "Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] **sin entered into the world**, and death by sin; and so **death** passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). The entrance of sin into the world also brought death. God had warned Adam "thou shalt surely **die**" if he disobeyed the command.

Adam now had a sin nature and soon had "a son in his own likeness, after **his image**" (Genesis 5:3). Due to Adam's sin, every person is born with a sin nature. ("For as by one man's [Adam's] disobedience many were **made sinners** . . .") Many people say that man is basically good and that we only need to create an environment in which man's goodness will be expressed. However, this is not true since all are born with a corrupt nature and are "alienated from the life of God" (Ephesians 4:18).

Man's Condition

All men are now sinners before God. "As it is written, There is **none righteous**, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). Whether rich or poor, famous or unknown, *all* are sinners in God's eyes. "For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The whole world is now "**guilty** before God" (Romans 3:19). Some religions teach that there are one or more holy men or women who live a much better life than all other people. This is not true from God's perspective. God says, "They are **all** gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is **none that doeth good**, no, not one" (Romans 3:12).

It is common to hear religious and political leaders talk about how all men (regardless of race, nationality, religion, etc.) are children of God. However, notice the following words that Jesus Christ spoke to some religious leaders of His day: "Ye are of **your father the devil**, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). In a later study we will see what the Bible teaches about how we can become children of God. However, it is important to understand that no one is *born* a child of God and being *religious* does not make one a child of God. Jesus Christ said that the religious leaders of His day were children of the devil.

The Bible not only says that the religious leaders to whom Christ spoke were children of the devil, but also teaches that Satan is "the god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4). Clearly most of the people in the world are following the devil, not the one true God. Man's understanding is darkened and his heart is wicked. Even when speaking to His own disciples, Christ said, "If ye then, being **evil**." Men may act religious and quite moral, but according to God's Word all are sinners. Romans 7:18 declares "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth **no good thing**" and thus it is impossible for a man in his natural condition to please God.

It is important to remember that man has a twofold problem. First is the fact that every person *commits sins* against God. Second is the truth that all men are born with a *sin nature*. Thus, even if a man is able to control himself from committing sins through religion or moral teaching, he still has a sin nature. Therefore, in God's sight he still is evil and guilty.

Review Questions

True or False

1. Adam was a sinner when God created him.
2. Adam became a sinner when he ate of the forbidden fruit.
3. In God's sight, all men are sinners.
4. Satan is the god of this world.

Multiple Choice

5. God tested Adam:
 - a. to see if he would obey God
 - b. to test his intelligence
 - c. to challenge Satan
 - d. to make Adam suffer
6. Adam's children, grandchildren, etc.:
 - a. were more obedient than Adam
 - b. were born in the image of Adam
 - c. had the same test as Adam
 - d. were not affected by Adam's sin
7. Many people, mistakenly, think that:
 - a. God created Adam and Eve
 - b. All men are sinners
 - c. All men are children of God
 - d. Man has a sin nature

Fill in the Blanks

8. "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou _____ eat of it"
9. "Wherefore, as by one man ___ entered into the world, and ___ by sin"
10. "As it is written, There is ___ righteous, no, not one"

For Further Study

1. Is it possible for man in his natural state to be religious? to be kind? to be outwardly moral? to please God? (see Matthew 7:21-23, II Corinthians 11:14-15)
2. What are most men motivated by in their actions? love for God? love for others? self-love? (see II Timothy 3:1-5)
3. What was one result of sin according to Genesis 3:12-13?
4. What curses did God pronounce when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit? (see Genesis 3:14-19)
5. What is one result of Adam's sin that is clearly seen by all? (see Genesis 3:19 and Romans 5:12)
6. Explain Isaiah 64:6.
7. What does Romans 8:7-8 tell us about man in his natural condition?
8. Do the Old and New Testaments both teach the same thing about man's natural condition? (see Psalm 14:1-3 and Romans 3:10-12)
9. What do we learn about mankind in I Kings 8:46 and Proverbs 20:9?
10. What do we learn about humanity in Ecclesiastes 7:20?

Lesson 6

Sin's Penalty

Penalty or Discipline?

In lesson five we learned that all men are born with a sin nature and that all men are sinners by their own will. Even children are sinners. They lie, cheat, steal, and hate without even being *taught* to do these things. Now we will consider the serious consequences that sin brings. There are, of course, *natural consequences* to sin. As a child our parents may spank us if we lie. If we are caught stealing, we will be in trouble according to the laws of our nation. However, the full penalty of sin is still in the future.

God is a holy God and His wrath must come upon all that offends Him. The penalty of sin is *not* that God will discipline us. God may discipline out of *love* to correct His child (Hebrews 12:6). Sin's penalty however, comes from the *justice* of God and is intended to punish, not correct, the

sinner. When a murderer is put to death, this does not correct him, but gives to him the penalty of his sin. In the same way, there is a penalty for sinning against a holy God.

Death Penalty

Romans 6:23 clearly states the penalty for sin: "For the wages of sin is **death**." The penalty of sin is *death*. This death penalty has three aspects. There is a *physical* death, a *spiritual* death, and an *eternal* death.

It is common knowledge that every person will one day die. Why? This is part of the death penalty that has come upon mankind due to sin. After Adam sinned, God said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and **unto dust shalt thou return**" (Genesis 3:19). Mankind is under the penalty of *physical death* in which the soul is separated from the body and the body is placed into the ground (or wherever men choose to put the now lifeless body). The Bible speaks of this physical death as "the **common death** of all men" (Numbers 16:29).

The penalty of sin is not only physical death, but also *spiritual death*. This is the separation of the soul from God. Ephesians 2:1 declares that all men in their natural condition are "**dead** in trespasses and sins." The fact that men are "dead in sins" means that they are separated from the presence of God (Ephesians 2:5). Scripture teaches that men are "by nature the **children of wrath**" and thus out of favor with God (Ephesians 2:3). Humanity has lost the knowledge of God "Having the understanding darkened, being **alienated from the life of God** through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18).

Eternal Death

Thirdly, the penalty of sin is an *eternal death*. Eternal death is the eternal separation of the soul from God. Physical death is the first death and eternal death is the second death. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the **second death**" (Revelation 20:14). This is the final and eternal state of those who suffer the penalty of sin. God's judgment is referred to as destroying "both soul and body in **hell**" (Matthew 10:28). This penalty will involve "**everlasting fire**" as men will "be punished with **everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (Matthew 25:41, II Thessalonians 1:9).

Thus, it is evident that there are extremely serious consequences to sin. "It is a **fearful** thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). Eternal death is eternal suffering without hope of ever getting relief. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with **fire and brimstone**: which is the **second death**" (Revelation 21:8). Notice that Revelation 21:8 includes "liars" as those who will suffer the second death. Since the Bible teaches that all men are sinners and liars, we can only conclude that all men, in their natural condition, are under the penalty of sin.

Review Questions

True or False

1. The consequences of sin are not very serious.
2. The wages of sin is death.
3. The penalty of sin includes physical, but not spiritual, death.
4. Many people will find the hands of God fearful instead of loving.

Multiple Choice

5. God will surely punish sin because He is:
 - a. mean
 - b. holy and just
 - c. easily angered
 - d. merciful
6. The ultimate cause of physical death is:
 - a. a poor diet
 - b. old age
 - c. a lack of faith
 - d. the curse on mankind resulting from Adam's sin
7. Eternal death is:
 - a. eternal separation of the soul from God
 - b. suffering in Purgatory
 - c. extinction
 - d. not a Biblical teaching

Fill in the Blanks

8. There are often natural consequences to sin in this life. However, the ___ penalty of sin is still future.
9. The penalty of sin is ____.
10. Spiritual death is the _____ of the soul from God.

For Further Study

1. How does James 2:26 show that "death" in the Bible means separation, not extinction?
2. What can humanity be certain of, according to Ecclesiastes 12:14?
3. What was the origin of death? (Genesis 2:17, Romans 5:12)
4. What will God judge? (see Romans 2:16)
5. Is the penalty of sin a conscious suffering or are the dead unconscious? (see Luke 16:19-31)
6. What will the Lord do according to I Chronicles 16:33?
7. Who will be the Judge when all men must come before God? (see John 5:22)
8. What day is spoken of in Acts 17:31?
9. How is eternal death described in Matthew 13:42 and Matthew 25:30?
10. What will happen to those who insist that they are innocent? (see Romans 3:19)

Lesson 7

Christ's Death

Good News

In lesson five we learned that all men have sinned against a holy God. Lesson six taught us that sin results in a terrible penalty--eternal suffering in hell. However, we now move on to some very good news! In this lesson we will learn about God's marvelous love for mankind. "But God commendeth his **love** toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The good news in the Bible is that Jesus Christ died for our sins. He paid the penalty for my sin and yours. Many people think that Christ came to earth mainly to set an example or teach us how to live. However, the primary reason for the birth of Jesus Christ was that He might die on the cross for our sins. There are many religions that claim to have wonderful teachings given by some holy man. However, only the Bible tells us that the Son of God came to earth and died for our sins. Jesus Christ "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

The Necessity of the Cross

From man's point of view the crucifixion of Christ may have appeared to be an unfortunate tragedy. However, from God's point of view it was necessary for man's salvation. Those who believe God will recognize the supreme importance of Christ's death. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved **it is the power of God**" (I Corinthians 1:18). It is not enough to teach about the Deity of Jesus Christ, His birth, teachings, good example, etc. We must emphasize the most important event in all of human history--the crucifixion of Christ. "But we preach **Christ crucified**, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (I Corinthians 1:23).

Jesus Christ knew that He would die on the cross and He did so willingly due to His love for man. "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be **killed**, and be raised again the third day" (Matthew 16:21). The death of Christ was not a mistake, but a necessity. "Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be **crucified**, and the third day rise again" (Luke 24:7).

The Meaning of the Cross

Why did Christ die? The Bible repeatedly teaches that He died to pay the penalty for our sins. ("Christ died **for us**" . . . "Christ died **for our sins**" . . . "For he hath made him to be sin **for us**" . . . "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up **for us all**" . . . "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself **for us**")¹⁵ Jesus Christ was not a sinner and did not deserve to die. He died for the sins of others--yours and mine.

God is just and holy. Therefore, He cannot just overlook or excuse sin. When a crime is committed, the law demands that the criminal be punished. Christ's death on the cross fully paid the penalty that the holiness and justice of God demanded. A judge will not be satisfied until the just penalty for the crime has been paid. God, as Judge, is fully satisfied (propitiated) by the death of Christ on the cross. ("Whom God hath set forth to be a **propitiation** through faith in his blood"--Romans 3:25)

Jesus Christ is sometimes referred to as our *Redeemer*. His death on the cross brought *redemption*. This means that Christ purchased God's favor toward us by His death. He has redeemed or delivered us:

1) From the penalty of the law "Christ hath redeemed us from **the curse of the law**, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13).

¹⁵ Romans 5:8, I Corinthians 15:3, II Corinthians 5:21, Romans 8:32, Ephesians 5:2

2) From the law itself "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become **dead to the law** by the body of Christ . . ." (Romans 7:4).

3) From the power of sin "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that **the body of sin might be destroyed** . . ." (Romans 6:6).

Christ Died for All

The death of Christ is very good news for man and it is especially wonderful to know that His death was for *all* men. "Who gave himself a ransom for **all**, to be testified in due time" (I Timothy 2:6). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to **all men**" (Titus 2:11).

Is it not possible for some men to pay their own penalty? Yes, it is possible. However, this will require eternal suffering in hell since the penalty is so great that the debt can never be fully paid by an imperfect, sinful sacrifice. How amazing it is that Christ has completely paid the penalty for our sins! He was the only one who could pay the full price because He was sinless and was fully God and fully man.

Review Questions

True or False

1. Almost all men have sinned against God.
2. God considered the Crucifixion of Christ to be an unfortunate tragedy.
3. Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.
4. Moses is our redeemer.

Multiple Choice

5. Man's choices include:
 - a. Being careful never to sin
 - b. Realizing that God will probably excuse most sin
 - c. Paying the penalty for sin by suffering eternally in hell
 - d. Believing that Christ paid the penalty for our sins
6. The good news in the Bible is that:
 - a. Christ died for our sins
 - b. God will overlook our sins

- c. Men are basically good
- d. God is too kind to punish sin

7. Jesus Christ:

- a. Was very surprised when men came to crucify Him
- b. Tried to avoid dying on the cross
- c. Had hoped that His teachings would make men become good
- d. Knew that He would die on the cross and died willingly for our sins

Fill in the Blanks

- 8. God cannot just overlook sin because He is ___ and ___.
- 9. Jesus Christ gave Himself as a ransom for ___.
- 10. All men are sinners, but Christ ___ for us.

For Further Study

- 1. A price had to be paid to redeem us. What was the price? (Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14)
- 2. Does the Old Testament give any indication of Christ's death on the cross? (Isaiah 53:8, Daniel 9:26)
- 3. How do the following verses confirm that God's plan included the death of His Son? (Isaiah 53:6, Acts 2:23)
- 4. Can we be certain that Christ died by being crucified? (Matthew 27:35, Mark 15:24)
- 5. Did Christ die because He was forced, by either God or men, to die? (John 10:17-18)
- 6. What did Christ have to do in order to bring forgiveness (remission) of sins? (Hebrews 9:22)
- 7. What information are we given about Jesus Christ in I Corinthians 15:3-4?
- 8. How is it possible for God to forgive men who lived before Christ died (such as Abraham and Moses)? (Romans 3:25)
- 9. Who did Christ die for according to the following verses? (Romans 5:6, II Corinthians 5:14, Ephesians 5:25)
- 10. What was Christ's attitude about dying on the cross? (Hebrews 12:2)

Lesson 8

Salvation by Faith

Man's Efforts

In lesson five we learned that all men have sinned against a holy God. Lesson six taught us that sin results in a terrible penalty--eternal suffering in hell. There was good news in lesson seven; Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins. Though Christ died for the sins of all men, the Bible teaches that many men will not have their sins forgiven. Multitudes will suffer in hell for all of eternity. Who will be saved from hell? How can you be saved from hell?

All men are, in some way, aware of their sin problem and need of salvation. They may feel guilty, depressed, lonely, full of hatred, hopeless, empty inside, etc. Thus, men are looking for salvation from their problems and negative emotions. Some people have enough understanding to know that the problem is that sin separates them from God. They know that they need to be forgiven. The following are some ways that men try to solve their problems or obtain salvation:

1) Religion

Many people believe that practicing a certain religion will result in their sins being forgiven. They may participate in many religious practices such as going to church (or a temple), giving money to their church, praying, being water baptized, receiving Holy Communion, confessing their sins, fasting, etc.

2) Good Works

A common belief is that God will give us salvation from our sins if we practice a sufficient amount of good works. This may include trying to keep the Ten Commandments, trying to live a good life, feeling sorry for your sins, trying to eliminate certain sins from your life, giving money to your church or to poor people, helping people who are sick, trying to be kind to all people, etc.

3) Philosophy and Psychology

Philosophy is an attempt to gain wisdom and knowledge through study and much time in thought. Philosophers spend much time thinking about questions such as: "Why am I here?"; "Who am I?"; et. al. Psychology is the study of the mind and human feelings. Many people believe that their problems can be solved through study, deep thinking, and trying to understand themselves and their feelings. They depend on the knowledge they can gain through their own efforts, but fail to believe what God has revealed in the Bible.

4) Pleasure

Yet others try to overcome their feelings of guilt, depression, and loneliness by filling their lives with something that gives them pleasure or makes them feel good. This may include accumulating money, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, seeking sexual relationships, devoting oneself completely to your career, enjoying music, sports, art, and many other forms of entertainment. These things may help people to feel better for a short time, but they do not save anyone from hell nor bring lasting joy.

Not by Works

What does the Bible say about these four ways that men attempt to solve their problems or gain salvation? "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that **not of yourselves**: it is the gift of God: **Not of works** lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). We are saved by grace, *not* by religious works such as going to church, praying, or being water baptized.

"But to him that **worketh not**, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). The Bible does *not* teach that God forgives the sins of those who try to keep the ten commandments, feel sorry for their sins, or try to be kind to other people. These are all human works (human effort) and the Bible says that salvation is "to him that **worketh not**."

It is not enough to try to be good. In order to earn salvation you would have to keep all of God's laws perfectly throughout your entire life. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that **continueth not** in **all things** which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10). "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in **one point**, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). No man can continually obey all of the laws of God without failure. Thus, it is not possible to obtain salvation in this way.

God's law does not save us, but rather proves that we are sinners (since we all disobey His commands). "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the **knowledge of sin**" (Romans 3:20). It is Christ's death, not keeping the law, which saves us.

Salvation by Faith

According to God's Word, salvation cannot be obtained through any works of man. Salvation is through faith *alone* (*not* faith plus trying to be good). "Therefore being **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). To be justified is to be declared righteous. This comes about only when we place our faith in Christ's death on the cross for our sins. "Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified by faith** without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28). The deeds of the law (our religious practices and attempts to live a good life) can never bring forgiveness of sin. Only those who believe that Christ died for their sins will be forgiven.

It is important to understand that faith is *not* an emotion. God does not require us to feel sad, or feel sorry, or have any other kind of emotion. Instead we must trust that Christ's death paid the full penalty for our sins. There is nothing that we must (or can) do to gain salvation. Christ did it all on the cross. Faith is believing what God says. The gospel (good news) from God is that Christ died for our sins. When we stop trusting in our religion or efforts to be good and trust in Christ, God will save us. "In **whom** ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in **whom** also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13).

What are you trusting for your salvation? Are you trusting in your church to save you? your water baptism? your attempts to be good? your confession of sin? There is only one way to be saved. Have you placed your faith in the payment that Christ made on the cross when He died to pay the penalty for your sins? If you have not done this, **we urge you to pause for a moment right now and make this choice to believe God's good news about Jesus Christ and His death. This will be the most important decision that you make in your entire life.** None of us know how long we will live on this earth. Today could be the last day of your life. Don't delay! Now is the day of salvation!

Review Questions

True or False

1. The penalty of sin is suffering in hell for a long time before going to heaven.
2. Many people believe that they will be saved if they faithfully practice their religion.
3. People who are very intelligent, such as philosophers, have a better chance of finding salvation.
4. We are saved by God's grace, not by our works.

Multiple Choice

5. Salvation comes through:
 - a. trying to be good
 - b. faith
 - c. faith and trying to live a good life
 - d. faith and going to church
6. God declares us to be righteous when we:
 - a. are water baptized
 - b. feel sorry for our sins

- c. pray
- d. believe the gospel

7. If we feel guilty, depressed, or lonely we should:

- a. be more sincere in our religion
- b. try to be happier and enjoy life
- c. trust in Christ and His death
- d. fast and pray

Fill in the Blanks

8. "For by ____ are ye saved through ____."

9. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by ____ without the deeds of the law."

10. For my salvation, I am trusting in _____.

For Further Study

1. How are we justified according to Romans 3:24 and Titus 3:7?

2. How are we justified according to Romans 5:9?

3. Does God require us to have blind faith? (Acts 1:3, II Timothy 3:16)

4. What does Hebrews 11:6 say about faith?

5. How does faith come? (Romans 10:17)

6. How do we become children of God? (Galatians 3:26)

7. Will anyone in heaven be able to boast about what he did in order to get to heaven? (Romans 3:27)

8. Romans 3:25 speaks of faith in what?

9. Is God satisfied if we just do our best? (Matthew 5:48, I Peter 1:16)

10. Who is it that is saved by the gospel? (Romans 1:16)

Lesson 9

Eternal Security

In lesson seven we learned the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins. Lesson eight taught us that salvation cannot be gained through any merit on our part. We must trust in Christ and His death on the cross for our sins. Now we come to two vitally important questions about salvation. Is it possible to know that you have salvation? After believing the gospel, is it possible to lose your salvation?

Assurance of Salvation

Will you go to heaven when you die? Having asked many people this question, I have received answers such as: "I hope so"; "I think so"; "I don't know"; and "No one can know until he dies." Let us consider this important question: *Is it possible to know that you have salvation?* Some would say that it is a sin of presumption to say that you know that you are saved. They insist that no one can know this until his life ends and he comes before God. What does the Bible say?

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (I John 5:13). Did you notice the word "know" in I John 5:13? It is not the sin of presumption to say that you know that you are saved. God's Word says that we can **know** that we have eternal life. The Scriptures say "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar" (I John 5:10). If the word of God says that we can **know** that we have eternal life, then we must not contradict God as though He was a liar.

In lesson seven and eight we studied how to be saved. If you believe what God has said about His Son, Jesus Christ, you can **know** that you are saved. It is very dangerous to say that you *hope* you will go to heaven or you *think* you will go to heaven. You must **know** that your sins are forgiven and that you have a sure future in heaven. After you die, it is too late! The opportunity to be saved is gone. *Now* is the time to make sure that you have eternal life!

Peace With God

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2). Chapters 1-4 of Romans teach that all men are sinners and are under condemnation. They, also, tell how to be justified by faith in Christ's death on the cross. Chapter five begins with the words "therefore being justified by faith." Thus, chapter five is addressing those who have already been saved (or justified) by faith. Verse one continues with the words "we have." This chapter is now going to tell us *what we have*---what blessings are ours with the gift of salvation.

The first blessing mentioned is "**we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ." Peace is the absence of anger and strife. This means that God is not angry with us. It is important to

note that Romans 5 does *not* say "If you obey God, then you have peace with Him" or "If you don't lose your faith, then you have peace with Him." Every person who believes the gospel in Romans chapters 1-4 has peace with God. This is a permanent possession for every one who has been justified by faith. Therefore, God will no longer be angry with you! You have peace with God! You will *never* experience the wrath of God.

A Standing in Grace

Secondly, we have "access by faith into this **grace wherein we stand.**" We have a permanent standing in the grace of God. This makes it possible for God to deal with us positively even when we sin. God is not going to deal with us in anger even when we are unfaithful to Him. We have a permanent position of fellowship with Jesus Christ. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Corinthians 1:9). Notice that this fellowship is not based on whether *we* are faithful, but instead states that "God is faithful."

A Hope of Glory

Thirdly, we "**rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**" Romans 3:23 says that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." In the past, the glory of God was something for us to *fear*. If we had died in our sin, the glory of God would have sent us to an eternal punishment in hell. However, we no longer fear God's glory. Now we *rejoice* as we look forward to sharing in the glory of God through all eternity. The word "hope" in the Bible means that we anxiously look forward to something that is sure. *Everyone* who is justified by faith will participate in the glory of God after departing this world.

Review Questions

True or False

1. We cannot do anything to earn the forgiveness of sins.
2. The book of I John was written so that we will not be too confident of our salvation, but will keep trying to live a good life.
3. We have peace with God when we keep His commandments.
4. God has given us grace, but will take it away if we disobey Him.

Multiple Choice

5. If you have been justified by faith:
 - a. You have peace with God
 - b. God will not be angry with you unless you sin

- c. You must confess your sins to have peace with God
- d. You must try to keep the commandments to have forgiveness

6. The Bible teaches that:

- a. We should never be so proud as to think that we are surely saved.
- b. After we die, we will find out if we will go to heaven.
- c. It is important for us to know right now that we have eternal life.
- d. Those who believe the gospel can be sure of salvation unless they die in a state of sin.

7. We can know that we are saved because:

- a. We feel peace within our heart.
- b. In the Bible, God promises salvation to those who place their faith in Christ's death on the Cross.
- c. Water baptism washes away our sins.
- d. God is too loving to send anyone to hell.

Fill in the Blanks

- 8. We _____ in hope of the glory of God.
- 9. "that ye may ____ that ye have eternal life"
- 10. We have a permanent standing in the _____ of God.

For Further Study

- 1. Read II Corinthians 5:1. What do we *know* according to this verse?
- 2. Who is our life? What will happen to us in the future? (See Colossians 3:3-4)
- 3. What do we *know* according to II Corinthians 4:14?
- 4. Read Romans 5:9. Is it possible that we might one day face the wrath of God?
- 5. In this life we may suffer many things, but what does the future hold? (See Romans 8:18)
- 6. Will we be found guilty in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ? (See I Corinthians 1:8)
- 7. Read I Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 5:30. How does this assure us that we will never lose our salvation?

8. What was Christ made in the past? What have we been made now? How do we know that we will not be condemned? (See II Corinthians 5:21)

9. In what way is our future linked with Christ? (See Romans 8:17)

10. Is it possible that the law will curse us in the day of judgment? (See Galatians 3:13)

Lesson 10

Eternal Security--Part 2

In lesson nine we learned that we can know that we have eternal life. It is vitally important that each of us have this absolute assurance. Thus, we will devote lesson 10, also, to this critical topic.

Sealed With the Holy Spirit

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14). Notice the progression in verse 13: First you *hear* the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; Secondly, you *believe* in Christ and His death for your sins; Thirdly, you are *sealed* with the Holy Spirit. (1. Hear the gospel; 2. Believe the gospel; 3. Sealed with Holy Spirit) Every one who hears the gospel and believes it, is sealed with the Holy Spirit.

We often seal something so that it will be secure. We may seal a box so that the contents will not spill or be stolen. In the same way, our *sealing* with the Holy Spirit makes us *secure*. We "are sealed unto the day of redemption" with the Holy Spirit. Just as we seal the box so that it will arrive safely at its destination, so, also, we will arrive safely among those who are redeemed in heaven.

An Unbroken Chain

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30). There is an unbroken chain in these verses. Everyone whom God foreknows, He predestinates. Everyone who is predestinated is called. Everyone who is called is justified. Everyone who is justified is glorified. There are no dropouts in God's plan! If you have been justified by faith, you will share in God's glory through all eternity. God sees you as *already* glorified!

Some Important Questions

Romans 8:31-35 contains some important questions that we will now consider:

Verse 31 "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

God is for us! Who is so powerful that they can then be against us? No one! We are *secure* in Christ.

Verse 32 "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

When we were wicked, lost sinners, God gave His Son to die for our sins. We deserved hell, but He gave us salvation freely by His grace. Now that we are justified, will God withhold good things from us by taking away our salvation? This would be ridiculous and God will *never* do any such thing.

Verse 33 "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

When we were justified by faith, we became part of God's elect. Who can condemn or bring charges against those that God has elected? If God has justified us (declared us righteous), who can condemn us (charge us with wrong)? Clearly there is *no one* powerful enough to overrule God's decision concerning us.

Verse 34 "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Who will condemn us? No one is more powerful than God and He has *justified* us. Is it possible that Christ will condemn us? This is impossible! Christ is the One who died for us and is risen again. He now makes intercession for us at the right hand of God. Clearly He will *never* condemn us.

Verse 35 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

Who or what can separate us from the love of Christ? Several things are listed here and *none* of them can separate us from Christ's love. We may suffer many things in this life, but nothing can remove us from Christ's love. We are *secure* in Him!

The Love of God

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Jesus Christ spoke to Paul from heaven. Paul wrote the things revealed to him by God. Paul lists many things here and is convinced that none of them can separate us from the love of God. In case something was left out of the list, Paul adds "nor any other creature." Clearly it is impossible for any person, angel, Satan, or any creature to separate us from God's love. We are *secure* in Christ!

Review Questions

True or False

1. Almost everyone who believes the gospel will one day be glorified.
2. God is for us, so no one can be against us.
3. If we disobey Christ, He will surely condemn us.
4. Death cannot separate us from the love of God.

Multiple Choice

5. Ephesians 1:13-14 teaches:

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| a. First we hear the gospel, then believe, then are sealed | with the Holy Spirit |
| b. It is not necessary to understand the gospel as long as | we have faith in God |
| c. First we hear the gospel, then we try to obey the | commandments and God |
| will forgive us if we are sincere. | |
| d. After we believe, the Holy Spirit seals us until we sin | against Him |

6. Since God did not spare His Son, but sent Him to die for us:

- a. He will give us anything we want
- b. He is angry with us for sinning
- c. He will give us all good things if we obey Him
- d. He will not take away our salvation

7. No one can bring any charges against us because:

- a. We are doing our best.
- b. God has justified us.
- c. We have done nothing wrong.
- d. We go to church and pray.

Fill in the Blanks

8. Nothing can separate us from the ___ of God.
9. We are secure because we are ____ with the Holy Spirit.
10. I know that I have eternal life because _____.

For Further Study

1. What should you do when you don't feel like God loves you? (See Romans 5:8)
2. Romans 6:23 says that we have "eternal life" through Jesus Christ. How long does eternal life last? Can it ever end?
3. We are saved by God's grace, not through our own good works. If we could lose our salvation by sinning, would salvation truly be by grace?
4. Some have taught that salvation includes: a) Salvation from the *Penalty* of sin in the *Past* b) Salvation from the *Power* of sin in the *Present* c) Salvation from *Presence* of sin in the *Future*. Can you find these three aspects of salvation in Romans 5:1-2?
5. We have mentioned that one use of a seal is to make something secure. Another use of a seal in the Bible is to show ownership. We may place a seal with our name on our possessions to identify them as ours. What does this teach us about the sealing with the Holy Spirit?
6. Yet another use of a seal is to signify a finished transaction. When we buy something, we may receive a receipt with a stamp (or seal) showing that the price has been paid in full. What does this teach us about the sealing with the Holy Spirit?
7. Since God loves us, should we expect that we will not suffer anymore? (See Philippians 1:29-30, I Thessalonians 3:2-3)
8. What assurance do we have in Philippians 3:20-21?
9. What do we have according to Ephesians 1:7, Ephesians 4:32, and Colossians 2:13?
10. Write a statement explaining how you know that you are eternally secure

Lesson 11

Our Blessings

Romans 5:1 begins, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have . . ." and then proceeds to speak

of the blessings that we have as believers. These are blessings given to every person who has been justified by faith. In lessons nine and ten we have already seen that we have peace with God, a standing in grace, a hope of glory, and are sealed with the Holy Spirit. As wonderful as this is, there is even more! In this lesson we will learn more about the marvelous blessings that we have in Christ.

Regeneration

Titus 3:3 describes each one of us before we were justified by faith: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Certainly not a very pretty picture! We were enemies of God and were spiritually dead. However, that is not the end of the matter! "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:4-6). This passage tells us about another spiritual blessing we have. We have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The word "regeneration" means a new birth or to be produced anew. The Holy Spirit has given us a new spiritual birth. We are no longer "dead in trespasses and sins," but have spiritual life within us.

Some have taught that the "washing of regeneration" mentioned in Titus 3:5 is water baptism. Since this has to do with receiving spiritual life, it is very important that we understand how this takes place in our lives. We must understand the following points:

1) Titus 3:5 says that this is "not by works of righteousness which we have done." Water baptism is a work done by men (a priest, pastor, etc.). Therefore water baptism cannot regenerate us.

2) "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:11). It is clearly stated in this verse that we are "washed . . . by the Spirit of our God," not by water baptism. Everyone who is justified by faith is instantly regenerated by the Holy Spirit!

Indwelling

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:8-9). Our own efforts to be religious and do good things can never please God. These arise out of our own flesh and we cannot please God "in the flesh." The good news is that we have the Holy Spirit living in us. Everyone who has been justified by faith, belongs to Jesus Christ. Everyone who belongs to Jesus Christ has the Spirit of Christ living in him. There is nothing we must do to get the Holy Spirit to come to live in us. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit immediately comes to dwell in every person at the moment he believes the gospel of grace.

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans

8:11). This verse tells us that the Spirit of God dwells in our mortal bodies. A mortal body is a body that is subject to death or is destined to die. This refers to the bodies that we have now. We also find this truth taught in the following verse: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (I Corinthians 6:19). If you are saved, your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. He lives in you!

More Spiritual Blessings

1. We have fellowship with God "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Corinthians 1:9). Nothing can break this fellowship.
2. We have liberty "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).
3. We have been justified---declared righteous "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).
4. We are dead to the law and alive unto God (See Galatians 2:19)
5. We have unlimited access to God "For through him [Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:18).
6. Christ lives in us "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).
7. We belong to Christ "And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Corinthians 3:23).
8. We are partakers of God's promise "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6).
9. We will never face the wrath of God "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:9).
10. We have been delivered from the curse of the law "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13).

Review Questions

True or False

1. Upon faith in Christ and His death we are saved from hell, but we do not get other spiritual blessings unless we obey God's commands.
2. Water baptism is the "washing of regeneration."

3. The Holy Spirit dwells in our mortal bodies.
4. We have liberty in Christ only if we feel free.

Multiple Choice

5. We are:

- a) dead to the law
- b) dead to righteousness
- c) alive unto God
- d) servants of sin

6. Galatians 2:20 teaches that:

- a) Christ lives in me
- b) Christ gave Himself for me
- c) We can be demon-possessed
- d) Christ lives in me when I obey His commands

7. Ephesians 3:6 teaches that:

- a) Only Jews are included in God's promise
- b) Infant baptism makes us partakers in God's promise
- c) God's promise is only for those who keep His commands
- d) We are partakers in God's promise

Fill in the Blanks

8. Christ has redeemed us from the ____ of the law.
9. According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of _____, and _____ of the Holy Ghost.
10. The moment we believe the gospel the _____ comes to live in us.

For Further Study

1. What have we received by faith? (Galatians 3:2)
2. We have been _____ to God. (Romans 5:10)
3. There is _____ in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:24)

4. We are all _____. (Galatians 3:26)
5. We have redemption through Christ's blood and the _____. (Colossians 1:14)
6. We have been washed, _____, and justified. (I Corinthians 6:11)
7. We are ____ of God through Christ. (Galatians 4:7)
8. What does Ephesians 1:6 say about our acceptance with God?
9. What has God sent into our hearts? (Galatians 4:6)
10. What are those who are justified by faith predestinated for? (Ephesians 1:5)

Lesson 12

Circumcision

It is important that we emphasize those things that are emphasized in God's Word and not make too much of things that are not important matters in God's Word. However, some churches make major issues of things that are spoken of infrequently (or not at all) in the Bible. On the other hand, they may ignore doctrines that are often taught in the Scriptures. It is interesting to note, for example, that the word "baptism" is found 16 times in Paul's epistles.¹⁶ The word "circumcision" is found 41 times in Paul's epistles.¹⁷ Strangely, while baptism is talked about a great deal, circumcision is hardly ever mentioned in many churches. (If we would extend this beyond Paul's epistles to the entire Bible, there would be an even greater difference between the frequency of these words.) It is very important that we understand what the Bible teaches about circumcision.

God's Promise to Abraham

In Genesis 12:1-3 God made a covenant (or promise) with Abraham. "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing" (verse 2). God promised Abraham a land and a great nation (see also Genesis 13:14-17). After some time passed, Abraham began to wonder how God would fulfill this promise to bring about a great nation through him. You see, Abraham did not yet have any children. How could Abraham be the father of a great nation when he didn't even have one child? Finally, Abraham

¹⁶ This includes related words such as "baptize" and "baptized."

¹⁷ This includes related words such as "circumcise" and "circumcised."

thought that maybe God would consider the son of the steward of Abraham's house to be the promised son from which a great nation would arise. However, God rejected this idea and assured Abraham that the son would come through Abraham's "own bowels" (see Genesis 15:1-4).

Years passed and still Abraham and Sarah had no son. They then devised their own plan to fulfill God's promise. Hagar was an Egyptian handmaid in Abraham's house. Since Sarah had not been able to bear a child they agreed that Abraham should have a child with Hagar. Hagar did bear Abraham's child, but God did not accept this as a fulfillment of His promise to Abraham (Genesis 16:1-4).

[A Fulfilled Promise](#)

Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety "And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him" (Genesis 21:1-2). In Romans 4:19 it says that Abraham's body was "dead" (incapable of reproducing) and so was Sarah's womb. It was impossible at that age for Abraham or Sarah to have a part in bringing a child into this world. However, God does the impossible! He gave Abraham and Sarah a son by miraculously enabling their bodies to reproduce again. God would not accept the efforts of Abraham and Sarah to fulfill His promise (through natural child birth, the steward, or Hagar). Instead, He waited until it was humanly impossible and then He fulfilled His promise. God rejected Hagar's son as a fulfillment of His promise because this son was "born after the flesh" (Galatians 4:23). He accepted the son that Sarah bore because this son was "by promise"--- completely a work of God (Galatians 4:23).

[The Sign of God's Covenant](#)

What does all of this have to do with circumcision? In Genesis 17:9-14, God tells Abraham that circumcision will be the sign of the covenant He made with Abraham. (Circumcision is the act of cutting off the foreskin of the male sex organ.) God told Abraham that every male child was to be circumcised. Abraham had learned that God does not accept the works of human flesh, but only that which comes about through His promise. The act of circumcision was to be a reminder to the Jews of this truth. Circumcision means death to the flesh---a piece of flesh is cut off and thrown away as worthless. In the same way, our flesh (human efforts) is worthless (cannot please God). We are to live by faith in God's promise.

[Our Circumcision](#)

In the Old Testament, Israel was required physically to circumcise every male child. We also have a circumcision. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Colossians 2:11). If we compare Ephesians 2:11 with Colossians 2:11 we see that Israel had a circumcision "in the flesh made by hands" while we have a circumcision "made without hands." Our

circumcision is spiritual, not physical.¹⁸ Our circumcision is performed by the Holy Spirit, not by human hands (a surgeon). Our circumcision does not cut off a piece of physical flesh, but puts "off the body of the sins of the flesh."

The unsaved person has a dead spirit (Ephesians 2:1 and Ephesians 4:17-18); a darkened soul (Romans 1:21 and Jeremiah 17:9); and a body of *sin* that is alive and active (Romans 6:6 and Romans 7:18). The unsaved soul is attached or linked to the body of sin so that the person is a slave to sin (Romans 6:20).

When we are saved, our spirit is regenerated or given life (Titus 3:5) and our soul is enlightened (II Corinthians 4:3-6). Our body of sin is circumcised (cut off from our soul---put to death). This means that we are no longer slaves to sin, but are free to serve God.

Remember This

There are two things that we ought to remember whenever we see the word "circumcision" in the Bible. The first thing is that our body of sin has been circumcised and put to death so that we are no longer slaves to sin. We will study this further in our next lesson.

The second lesson which circumcision teaches is found in Philippians 3:1-9. "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (verse 3). Paul says that he considers all of his religious efforts and attainments to be worthless. He has no trust or confidence in his own righteousness, but instead "the righteousness which is of God by faith" (verse 9). Just as we are saved by Christ's death and not our good works, in the same way we must now continue to trust in Christ's righteousness rather than in our attempts to be good.

Review Questions

True or False

1. Our doctrinal statement and church traditions should determine what we emphasize in our teaching.
2. Very quickly after God's promise was given, Abraham had a son.
3. Water baptism was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham.
4. The spirit of an unsaved person is dead.

¹⁸ God commanded Israel to physically circumcise all male children during Old Testament times. Today God does not command us to circumcise. We are permitted to circumcise if we are doing so for medical or hygienic reasons. However, we are warned not to circumcise for religious reasons (Galatians 5:2).

Multiple Choice

5. The word "circumcision" in the Bible:

- a) is of very little importance
- b) is found only in the Old Testament
- c) is a bad translation
- d) should remind us of two important truths about our spiritual lives

6. In Genesis 12:1-3, God made a covenant with Abraham and:

- a) promised that Christ would die for his sins
- b) promised a land and a great nation
- c) warned Abraham that he would curse him if he disobeyed
- d) then failed to fulfill His promise

7. When Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety:

- a) Abraham left his country
- b) Sarah gave birth to a baby boy
- c) Abraham separated from Lot
- d) Abraham fought against several kings

Fill in the Blanks

8. In the Old Testament, Israel was required to _____ every male child.

9. When we are justified by faith our spirit is _____.

10. Circumcision should teach us to have no confidence in the _____.

For Further Study

Circumcision is another spiritual blessing that we have in Christ. To learn even more about our spiritual blessings, study the following questions:

1. What have we been delivered from? (Colossians 1:13)

2. What have we been translated into ? (Colossians 1:13)

3. What are we according to Ephesians 2:19?

4. The word "peculiar" means "an exclusive possession" and "special." What blessing do you find in Titus 2:14?

5. What blessing do you find in Ephesians 2:4?
6. What are we according to Ephesians 5:8?
7. Where are we seated? (Ephesians 2:6)
8. What have we put on? (Colossians 3:10)
9. What is God doing at this time? (Philippians 2:13)
10. How many spiritual blessings do you possess right now? How many are you lacking at this time? (Ephesians 1:3)

Lesson 13

Baptism

Everyone who has been justified by faith ought to have a concern about how to live in a way that honors the Savior. In Lesson 12 we learned that the Holy Spirit has circumcised us so that we are no longer in bondage to the flesh. We will now study more about what God has done for us and how we should respond to this blessing.

Abounding Grace

All of us developed many sinful habits before being saved. We should find our habits changing after our salvation as we come to understand the blessings we have in Christ. However, most of us will have at least one or two areas of sin that seem to have a hold on us. We may feel like we have tried many times to stop sinning in a certain area, but we seem to be helpless against its power over us. The following verses are very important to keep in mind: "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, *grace did much more abound*: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:20-21). You may feel as though the power of sin in your life is great, but *God's grace is greater*. You must believe God when He says that you can have victory over sinful habits in your life. You cannot do this by your own efforts, but with God's grace you can live a triumphant life!

Grace and Works

Many religions teach that salvation comes about by God's grace plus our own efforts to be good. We have seen in earlier lessons that this is false. Others recognize that salvation is by grace alone, but then they teach believers a system of living that puts them under the law rather than under grace. This, also, is a false teaching. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works:

otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6). This verse contains a clear principle that must be remembered. Grace and works are mutually exclusive. When someone puts works into grace, he cancels the grace. If we say that salvation is by grace plus our efforts to be good, we are in fact teaching salvation by works. Grace is gone. As believers, our salvation and our daily walk are by God's grace. Anyone who mixes works with grace is teaching false doctrine and cancels grace.

Grace Motivation

We have learned in previous studies that salvation is by grace, not by works. It is important to understand that our life as believers is also to be lived by grace. Many people criticize those who teach grace by saying things such as: "If you teach grace, people will think it is all right to sin since they won't lose their salvation anyway." Some will even say that those who teach grace encourage people to sin *even more*. Paul, the apostle was accused of this very thing. "And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just" (Romans 3:8). We, like Paul, will be accused of tolerating or even encouraging evil when we teach grace. However, we must be faithful to God's Word despite what people may say. Grace does not lead to careless living, but instead motivates us to live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

Romans 6

The sixth chapter of Romans is the foundational chapter in the Bible on the subject of how believers are to live today. Lessons 13 and 14 will focus on this chapter. The first verse says, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Some people may think in the following way: "If I sin only a little, God's grace is greater than my sin. If I sin even more, God's grace is even greater to forgive my sin. The more I sin, the greater God's grace will be to forgive my sin. Therefore, it is all right to continue in sin because it shows even more the abundance of grace that God gives."

Some years ago, I read a book about a pastor who divorced his wife. He wrote about his feelings of guilt at first after his divorce. However, he later began to realize that God still loved him despite his sin. His conclusion was that it was good that he divorced his wife because he never realized how great God's love and grace were until after the divorce. This is the kind of thinking that is involved in the question in Romans 6:1.

Verse two of Romans chapter six gives the answer to the question. "**God forbid.** How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:2). Shall we continue in sin to magnify God's grace? Paul's answer is "**God forbid.**" Don't even think of such a thing! Such thinking is completely contrary to God's Word. We are not to continue in sin. We are dead to sin. Death means separation.¹⁹ We are completely separated from sin.

¹⁹ Physical death occurs when the soul and spirit are *separated* from the body (Genesis 35:18, James 2:26).

Baptized into Jesus Christ

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3). The first issue in living victoriously is to **know** something. Paul says, "know ye not?" Don't you know that we have been baptized into Jesus Christ and His death? Too many believers are concerned about what God wants them to *do*, but they haven't taken time to learn (to know) what God says in the Scriptures. It is vitally important that each of us know that we are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ. Before seeking more understanding of what this means in our daily living, we must take time to briefly study what the Bible says about baptism.

It is commonly taught that the Greek word that is translated "baptism," means "to immerse in water" or "to sprinkle with water." In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist says: "I indeed baptize you with **water** unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the **Holy Ghost**, and with **fire**." Notice that there are three *different* baptisms mentioned in this verse. There is baptism with water, baptism with the Holy Ghost, and baptism with fire. Two of these baptisms have no connection with water! There are at least *seven different kinds of baptism* in the Bible and most of them have nothing to do with water. Let us look at two more examples.

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (I Corinthians 10:1-2). These verses refer to events in Exodus 13-14. God divided the waters in the Red Sea and Israel walked through the sea on *dry ground*. According to the verses quoted above, Israel was baptized when they walked on the *dry ground*. There was clearly no water involved in this baptism.

"But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). Jesus Christ had already been baptized with water (Luke 3:21). Yet he speaks of a future baptism in Luke 12:50. This is a reference to His death on the Cross. His crucifixion is said to be a baptism, but he was not immersed in water nor sprinkled with water on the cross! We can therefore conclude that the word "baptism" *does not* mean "immersed in (or sprinkled with) water."

In the Bible, the word "baptism" carries the idea of being placed into something or being identified with something. When Israel walked through the sea on dry ground, they were placed into the leadership of Moses. When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, He was identified with our sin and the death that sin brings. Romans 6 tells us that we are baptized into Jesus Christ. This is a work of the Holy Spirit and has *no connection with water*. The Holy Spirit places us into Jesus Christ. We are identified with His death. In other words, God counts the death of Jesus Christ to be payment for our sins. This is true for every person who has been justified by faith.²⁰

²⁰ Some teach that Romans 6 is baptism by the Holy Spirit, but is also a symbol of water baptism. However, verse 4 says that we are "buried with him by baptism into death." This baptism actually does something; it is not just a symbol. Also, the Bible never teaches that people are buried in water. Going under the

[In lesson 14, we will continue our study in Romans 6.]

Review Questions

True or False

1. As long as we know that we will go to heaven, we should not care about how we live in this life.
2. Salvation is a combination of God's grace and our attempts to be good.
3. Romans 6 is written mainly to teach us how to be saved from hell.
4. God does not want us to continue in sin.

Multiple Choice

5. The word "baptism" means:
 - a. immersed in water
 - b. sprinkled with water
 - c. infant baptism
 - d. placed into or identified with something
6. Jesus Christ was baptized:
 - a. with water
 - b. when He died on the Cross
 - c. by Moses
 - d. as soon as He was born
7. Before we were saved we:
 - a. developed many sinful habits
 - b. were seeking God with all our heart
 - c. were basically good
 - d. pleased God in many ways

water (being immersed) makes no sense as a symbol of burial with Christ.

Fill in the Blanks

8. No matter what people say, we must be _____ to God's Word.
9. We are not to continue in sin because we are ____ to sin.
10. Matthew 3:11 mentions three different kinds of _____.

Lesson 14

Baptism -Part 2

In lesson 13 we learned: 1) God's grace is greater than our sin. 2) Grace does not lead to careless living, but on the contrary, motivates us to do what glorifies the Lord. 3) Grace and works are mutually exclusive. If you mix works with grace then it is no longer grace. 4) The first issue in our lives as believers is to *know* something. 5) We must know that we have been baptized into the death of Jesus Christ. 6) The baptism in Romans 6 is an operation of the Holy Spirit. It is *not* water baptism.

Know

As mentioned above, the first issue in our spiritual walk is to *know* something. Many believers are preoccupied with wanting to know what they should *do*. They continually cry out for "practical teaching." However, before you worry about what to *do*, you must have some knowledge. What if a carpenter began to work very hard at building a house, but he didn't know where the door should be or where the windows should be located? What if you were hired for a job and the boss told you to get to work, but didn't tell you *what* to do or *how* to do it? Many believers are just like this! They are very busy with church activities, but they haven't taken time to study God's Word in order to *know* what to do and how to do it.

Dead to Sin

Romans 6:2 says that we are "dead to sin." Verse seven says that we are "freed from sin." What does this mean? If I am "dead to sin" and "freed from sin," why do I still sin? God says that "our old man is crucified with him" (verse 6). If my old self (sinful nature) has been crucified, why do I continue to sin?

Let us imagine that a child has a very cruel and dominating father (old man). The father is constantly scolding and beating the child. He controls the child's life with the use of fear and guilt. The child grows up and becomes an adult. One day the cruel father dies. The child is now a man of forty years of age. Is the child (now 40) still controlled by the father who is dead and buried in the ground? You probably think the answer is "no" since the father is dead and can no longer scold or beat the child. However, the correct answer is "*maybe*." It is true that the father can no longer scold or beat the child. However, the child can go through life thinking: "If my

father were here, he would scold me for this." When trying to make a decision the child may think: "My father would tell me to do this rather than the other thing." In other words, the child's thinking is still controlled by the father, though the father is dead. The child is free from his father's control, but he lives as though he is still dominated by his father.

So also, our old man has been put to death through our baptism into Christ's death. We are no longer in bondage to the power of our old self. Before we were saved, we were slaves to sin and could do nothing to get free from its influence over us. Now the Holy Spirit has freed us from enslavement to our sin nature. No man on this earth has ever lived a sinless life (except Jesus Christ), but in any situation we are in, it is possible for us to *not* sin. It is always possible for us to do what honors the Lord. If we sin, it is for one reason only---because we **choose** to sin. We have no excuse for sin since our old man has been crucified. We cannot blame our circumstances, other people, or our personality (or nature). In every circumstance we find ourselves in, we are now free to do what is right and pleasing to God. This is because of the baptism described in Romans chapter six.

[Human Good and Evil](#)

When we speak of being freed from sin, it is important to understand that there are two sides to sin. God told Adam not to eat of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17). If Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they would come to know "good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Why would God try to stop Adam and Eve from knowing "good"? How could they come to know "good" by disobeying God (eating the fruit)? The solution to this puzzle is to understand that these verses are speaking of *human good*, not the good that comes from God. *Human evil* includes such things as murder, rape, theft, drunkenness, etc. *Human good* refers to man's attempt to earn salvation through his own religion and efforts to be good.

Isaiah writes that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Notice this does not say that the wicked, evil things we do are filthy rags to God. It says that the righteousness (good things) that we do are filthy rags to God! [In the context Isaiah is speaking about Israel.] Many of us are not seriously tempted to murder, steal, or rape. However, we *are* tempted to think that we can gain God's blessings by being a good person. Or we think we can stop God from punishing us by doing religious things like going to church, giving money to the church, praying, etc. Such thinking dishonors our Lord and Savior! Our spiritual baptism has freed us from the control of human evil *and* human good.

[Reckon](#)

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11). The first issue in a spiritual walk is to **know** about our baptism into Christ's death. The second stage is to **reckon** it to be true. This simply means that we believe what God says. Our circumstances, our emotions, and other people may tell us that we are still sinners. However, *God* says that we are "freed from sin." Will you believe your feelings or will you believe God? Your circumstances, your emotions, and other people may deceive you. God will always tell you the truth. If we live in sin, it is only because we *choose* to. God has made it possible to live in victory!

Yield

The final stage in a spiritual walk is to **yield** our self to God's service. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but **yield** yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:13). There is a chorus for children that says "Be careful little eyes what you see" and "Be careful little feet where you walk" and "Be careful little ears what you hear." These are the "members" that we are to yield to God. In the past we used our eyes to look upon things that did not please God. Now we can use our eyes to serve God by looking at things that are pure and true. In the past we used our feet to take us to places where we indulged in sinful practices. Now we can use our feet to take us to places where we will do what is honest and good. In the past our ears listened to evil and ungodly things. Now we can use our ears to listen to things that are lovely and virtuous. First we must **know** what God has done for us. After gaining this knowledge through Bible study, we must **reckon** it to be so. We must believe what God has said. Finally, we must **yield** our members to God's service. This is the way to joy and victory!

Review Questions

True or False

1. God's grace is greater than almost all sin.
2. The Bible teaches that we are alive to sin.
3. We must try to put our old sinful man to death by obeying God.
4. In the book of Isaiah it says that Israel's righteousnesses were as filthy rags to God.

Multiple Choice

5. The final stage of a victorious walk is to:
 - a. be water baptized
 - b. keep the Ten Commandments
 - c. try to do your best
 - d. yield your members to God's service
6. The first issue in our spiritual lives is to:
 - a. confess your sins
 - b. know what God has done for us
 - c. pray every day
 - d. go to church regularly

7. The illustration above about the cruel father and the child teaches that:
- a. sometimes God is cruel
 - b. we cannot overcome the power of sin
 - c. we sin only because we choose to
 - d. our old man never truly dies

Fill in the Blanks

8. Adam was told not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of ___ and ___.
9. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be ___ indeed unto sin"
10. We can have victory over sin because we have been _____ into the death of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

For Further Study

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). The following illustration may help in understanding how to live under grace. Close your eyes for a moment and get a clear picture in your mind of the number 13. After you have the number 13 clearly pictured in your mind, then forget the number 13. Just stop thinking about the number 13. You will find that you cannot do it! All the time that you are thinking "forget 13," what are you thinking about? The number 13, of course! Many people try to overcome sin by constantly thinking "I have to stop doing that" or "I am not going to look at those immoral pictures anymore" or "I have to stop being angry with my neighbor because of the mean thing he did." When we think like this, our minds are continually dwelling on the sin we are struggling with or the obscene pictures or what our neighbor did to make us mad. No wonder we find ourselves facing stronger and stronger temptation or increasing anger at our neighbor!

Again, get a clear picture of the number 13 in your mind. After you have done this, get a vivid mental picture of a bright pink elephant! Be sure to get a full picture of the trunk, legs, head, tail, etc. You will now find that the number 13 is no longer in your mind. Grace does not lead us to constantly think "I have to stop that" and "I can't do that," etc. Instead grace leads us to fill our mind with thoughts of God's love and grace and blessings. Our thoughts are occupied with His Word. The sinful thoughts are gone because they have been replaced by thoughts of what is true, pure, lovely, and praiseworthy (see Philippians 4:8).

Lesson 15

Contrasts

A *contradiction* is a statement that opposes or denies another statement. As we learned in lesson one, the Bible does not contradict itself. However, many skeptics accuse the Bible of having contradictions. All too often, Christians reinterpret what the Bible says in order to remove apparent contradictions. When this happens, both the skeptics and the Christians are mishandling God's Word. Though the Bible is free from contradictions, it is very important to realize that the Bible does contain many *contrasts*. A contrast is a difference between things that are compared. Compare each verse in the pairs of verses listed below. [Don't worry about trying to explain these differences right now. You will understand them as you continue to study these Bible lessons. In this lesson just observe carefully that there are undeniable contrasts in the Bible.]

Circumcision

"This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:10,14).

"Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" (Galatians 5:2).

In the book of Genesis God commands every male to be circumcised. If any male is not circumcised, he is cut off from God's people. Paul, on the other hand, warns against being circumcised.

Healing

"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give" . . . "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Matthew 10:8; Mark 16:18).

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" . . . "Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick" . . . "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh . . . For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4:20; II Corinthians 12:7-10).

In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus Christ commands His disciples to go forth and heal the sick and raise the dead. Mark 16 records the Lord's promise that His disciples will heal the sick. In contrast to this, Paul does not heal Timothy or Trophimus. In one case he merely prescribes medicine and in the other case he leaves a valued co-worker in the ministry sick and departs to another city. Even Paul himself had a physical problem that he prayed about three times without experiencing healing.

Law and Grace

"Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them" . . ."Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 27:26; 29:29).

". . . for ye are not under the law, but under grace" . . . "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Romans 6:14; Galatians 5:18).

The book of Deuteronomy commands obedience to all the words of the law. However, Romans and Galatians teach that we *are not* under the law if we are led by the Holy Spirit.

Eating Pork

"And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you. Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you" (Leviticus 11:7-8).

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith . . . commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (I Timothy 4:1-5).

In Leviticus we read that pork is unclean and must not be eaten. I Timothy clearly teaches that pork is not unclean and it may be eaten.

An Unbelieving Mate

". . . Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives . . . let it be done according to the law . . . And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives . . . separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives . . ." (Ezra 10:2-4,10-12).

". . . If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away . . . the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband . . ." (I Corinthians 7:12-14).

Ezra warned the men that they must separate from their unbelieving wives. Paul encouraged the men not to separate from their unbelieving wives.

The Sabbath

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days". . . "how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements,

whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days . . ." (Colossians 2:16; Galatians 4:9-11).

One of the ten commandments in Exodus is that the Sabbath must be observed. Paul says we should not observe holy days such as the Sabbath.

Genealogies

"These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood" . . . "to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites" (Ezra 2:62; II Chronicles 31:16-19).

"Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do" . . . "But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (I Timothy 1:4; Titus 3:9).

In Ezra and I Chronicles genealogies were very important and it was necessary to give heed to them. In I Timothy and Titus genealogies are not important and you must not give heed to them.

Speaking in Tongues

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews . . . every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:4-6).

"to another divers kinds of tongues . . . dividing to every man severally as he will . . . do all speak with tongues?" . . . "whether there be tongues, they shall cease . . . that which is in part shall be done away" (I Corinthians 12:9-11,28-30; I Corinthians 13:8-10).

The disciples in Acts 2 all spoke with tongues. In I Corinthians 12 they do not all speak with tongues. Furthermore, in chapter 13 the Corinthians are told that tongues will cease.

Ordinances

"Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God" . . . "keep the passover unto the Lord; according to the ordinance of the passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do" (Leviticus 18:4; Numbers 9:14).

"Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances" . . . "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was

contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14).

Leviticus and Numbers command the keeping of certain ordinances. Ephesians and Colossians teach that the ordinances have been abolished; blotted out; taken out of the way.

Review Questions

True or False

1. The Bible does not have any contradictions.
2. The disciples of Christ were never commanded to heal the sick or raise the dead.
3. Some cults forbid the eating of pork, but there is no verse in the Bible that forbids pork as part of the diet.
4. The book of Colossians teaches that the Sabbath must be observed.

Multiple Choice

5. In Acts 2:

- a) all of the disciples spoke in tongues.
- b) some of the disciples spoke in tongues.
- c) the Holy Spirit gave most of the disciples the gift of tongues.
- d) the gift of tongues had ceased.

6. The Bible:

- a) contains many contradictions.
- b) contains many errors.
- c) contains many contrasts.
- d) can only be understood by pastors.

7. In the Old Testament, circumcision:

- a) was optional.
- b) was commanded.
- c) was never practiced.
- d) is never mentioned.

Fill in the Blanks

8. James says that a man is justified by ____.
9. Paul encouraged men not to _____ from their unbelieving wives.
10. In Ezra and I Chronicles _____ were very important.

Lesson 16

Understanding the Bible

Most people who look at Christianity today are bewildered by the multitude of denominations and doctrines. No wonder that so many are confused and unstable. Several have written books and given seminars on "How to interpret the Bible." However, many of these books and seminars change what the Bible really says to remove apparent contradictions such as those we studied in lesson 15. In doing this, they only add further to the confusion.

Rightly Dividing

The Bible is not so difficult to understand as many people think it is. The key to unlocking its riches is found in the Bible itself. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). We can never understand the Bible unless we obey God and rightly divide His Word. What does it mean to rightly divide? The Greek word means to make a straight cut. We could think of a dressmaker cutting out pieces of cloth. Each piece of cloth must be properly cut and then placed in the appropriate place if the dress is to be a garment fit to wear. In the same way, we must rightly divide (or cut straight) the Word of God. Each portion must then be placed in the appropriate dispensation.

Divisions in Ephesians 2

Not only does God tell us to rightly divide, but He gives us the divisions we should use. Ephesians 2:11 speaks of "**time past**"; Ephesians 2:13 tells about "**now**"; and Ephesians 2:7 looks to "**the ages to come.**" Here, then, are three divisions in the Word of God: 1) *time past*; 2) *now*; and 3) *the ages to come*. Ephesians chapter two makes it clear that each of these three divisions is vastly different from the other two. Whenever we open the Bible, we must know if we are reading about "time past" or "now" or "the ages to come." Many Christians attempt to live their lives based on what God said to people in "time past" or to those who will live in "the ages to come." We can never honor the Lord Jesus Christ until we understand where to look in the Bible to find God's will for us today.

Divisions in Romans 5

Romans 5:13-14 designates a time as being from "**Adam to Moses.**" We can also see in this chapter a time from **Moses to Christ (law to grace)** [see verses 13-16]. Finally, in Romans 5:21, we find **the time when grace reigns** (the time of Paul's gospel). Again, it is vital that we know if we are reading instructions for: 1) *those living before the law* (Adam to Moses); 2) *those living under the law* (Moses to Christ); or 3) *those living under grace* (when grace reigns).

Divisions in Galatians 3

Galatians 3:17 refers to "**the promise**" given to Abraham; the same verse also mentions "**the law**" given to Moses 430 years later; verse 23 teaches about the time when "**faith came**" (the revelation given to Paul). We must know if the Scripture passage we are reading is part of: 1) "*the promise*" revealed to Abraham; 2) "*the law*" revealed to Moses; or 3) the "*faith*" revealed to Paul.

The Foundational Division

Please read the following verses carefully, especially noting the italics and underlining that I have added:

"As he *spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets*, which have been since the world began" (Luke 1:70).

"Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which *God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets* since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, *which was kept secret* since the world began" (Romans 16:25).

The first verse quoted above is found in Luke and the historical setting is near the time of the birth of Christ. The events of that time had been spoken of by the Old Testament prophets "*since the world began.*" When we turn the pages in our Bibles from the Old Testament and begin to read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we must realize that this is a continuation of what the Old Testament prophets wrote.

In Acts chapter three we find the second verse we have quoted above. Historically the setting is shortly after the Day of Pentecost. The death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ had already taken place. All that had taken place was spoken of by the holy prophets "*since the world began.*" Again, this was a continuation of what had been spoken of by the Old Testament prophets.

Our third verse is found in Romans. This verse refers to the "revelation of the mystery" which "*was kept secret since the world began.*" This is undeniably different from what we read in Luke and Acts. It is impossible to keep something secret and yet at the same time have all the prophets speaking about it. Romans speaks of a revelation that had previously been kept secret--unknown by any man.

The difference between "prophecy" and "the mystery" is the foundational division in the Bible. In the next several lessons we will study both prophecy and the mystery.

How to Understand the Bible

Why are there so many different denominations? Why are there so many different opinions about topics such as water baptism, speaking in tongues, the Sabbath, eternal security, etc.? It is because many do not obey II Timothy 2:15. They do not rightly divide the word of truth. The only way to understand the Bible is to study it according to the instructions given by God. Rightly dividing the word of truth will open the Word of God to our understanding in a wonderful way. However, we must be willing to set aside the traditions of men and long-held denominational beliefs.

Review Questions

True or False

1. All of the denominations in Christianity are basically the same and equally pleasing to God.
2. There are no divisions in the Bible.
3. The promise given to Abraham and the law given to Moses are two of the divisions found in the Bible.
4. The book of Luke speaks of a mystery that was kept secret since the world began.

Multiple Choice

5. The revelation of the mystery:
 - a) is found in the Old Testament
 - b) was revealed to Adam
 - c) was kept secret since the world began
 - d) is explained in Matthew
6. There are many different denominations because:
 - a) God's will is that we worship him in the way that best fits our culture
 - b) many Christians do not rightly divide the word of truth
 - c) the Holy Spirit leads people to start different kinds of ministries
 - d) it is impossible to know for certain how to interpret the Bible

7. The Bible:

- a) is extremely difficult to understand.
- b) can only be understood if we go to seminary or Bible college.
- c) can only be understood if we know Greek and Hebrew.
- d) can be understood only if we rightly divide the word of truth.

8. Romans five teaches about a time from Adam to ____.

9. "As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been _____" (Luke 1:70).

10. The foundational division in the Bible is _____ and the _____.

Lesson 17

The Beginning

In this lesson we will begin a survey of the Bible. We will begin in the first book in the Bible (Genesis) and work our way toward the last book in the Bible (Revelation).

The first verse in the Bible is: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Notice that it does not say that God created the *universe*, though that is certainly true. Instead we read that God created the *heaven* and the *earth*. This is significant because God has an eternal plan for the heaven and an eternal plan for the earth. The rest of the Bible gives us the details of God's plan for heaven and earth.

The First Commission

The Bible begins by telling us about God's plan for *the earth*. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26). Satan led a rebellion against God on the earth. God charged man with the responsibility to "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it . . ." (Genesis 1:28). This was the first commission that God gave to man. It was a great commission since it was given by God and encompassed the entire earth.

Chapter three of Genesis records the failure of Adam and Eve to obey the commission they were given. The woman "took of the fruit" and "gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6). This is when sin and death entered into the world (Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 5:12). The first murder soon followed as Cain killed Abel (chapter 4). The population on earth

increased rapidly, but so did the wickedness. Finally, God sent a flood in the days of Noah and destroyed all people except Noah and seven of his relatives (Genesis 6-8). When Noah stepped out of the ark that had kept him safe, God gave him a commission: "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 9:1). This is very similar to the commission given earlier to Adam. It involved subduing and renewing the earth.

[The Tower of Babel](#)

Some years after the flood mankind united in rebellion against God. God had given them a commission to fill the earth. However, they had different plans: "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4). A *tower* is significant in the Bible because it is associated with worship.²¹ Mankind decided to unite and form their own religion and government. This was a clear rejection of the true worship of God and submission to His rule over them.

Man's rebellion resulted in God's judgment upon them. "So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city" (Genesis 11:8). Romans 1:18-32 gives a doctrinal explanation of the events in Genesis 11. When mankind "knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21). God "gave them up to uncleanness"; "gave them up unto vile affections"; "gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Romans 1:24,26,28). Mankind fell out of a position of God's blessing and was given over to their own lusts.

[The Covenant With Abraham](#)

God gave up the Gentiles in Genesis 11 as we have seen. However, His eternal plan had not changed. In chapter 12 He chose one man, Abraham, through whom He would carry out His purpose on the earth. God made a covenant with Abraham. "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). Notice that God promised Abraham a land and a nation.

Abraham was told that God would give to him and his descendants "all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Read Genesis 13:14-18). It is vital to understand that God's promise to Abraham was literal. God promised him land on this earth that he could *see*. The nation that God promised to Abraham was later known as the nation of Israel. Abraham and his descendants were to be blessed by God in a special way. God would then use them to bless "all families of the earth." This was the beginning of the dispensation of promise (Galatians 3:17).

²¹ Psalm 18:2; 61:1-3; 144:1-2; Proverbs 18:10

The Covenant With David

Later God made a covenant with David. This covenant built upon the foundational covenant made with Abraham. David was a descendant of Abraham and was therefore included in God's covenant with Abraham. God's covenant with David is recorded in II Samuel 7:12-16. "He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (verse 13). "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (verse 16). David was promised a **king** and a **kingdom**. David was the king of Israel and God promised him that one of his descendants would be a *king* on his throne forever. Thus, the *kingdom* in Israel would be an everlasting kingdom.

Again, it is vital to understand that the kingdom God promised to David was a physical kingdom. There are some who teach that God promised David a spiritual kingdom. A careful reading of the Old Testament makes it evident that David sat on a physical throne in Jerusalem and ruled over a physical kingdom. Clearly David understood God's promise to be about a physical kingdom centered in Jerusalem.

There is another wrong teaching that we must mention here. Some teach that God made a promise of a physical kingdom, as mentioned above, but then withdrew this promise when Israel crucified Jesus Christ. We will study this further in the lessons about the New Testament. However, we will now show that this teaching is false. Psalm 89 deals with the covenant made with David: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah." (verse 3-4). God promises that His covenant "shall stand fast" and "his throne as the days of heaven" (verses 28-29).

And what if Israel disobeys God? This is addressed in the following verses. "If his children forsake my law . . . and keep not my commandments" (verses 30-31). Will God break His covenant with David? "Then will I visit their transgression with the rod . . . Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him . . . My covenant will I not break" (verses 32-34). God's faithfulness is further stated: ". . . I will not lie unto David . . . His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah." (verses 35-37).

In our next lesson we will learn more about the **land** promised to Abraham and the **kingdom** promised to David.

Review Questions

True or False

1. Genesis is the first book in the Bible.
2. The book of Genesis is primarily about God's plan for the heaven.

3. Genesis 11 tells about how mankind worshiped and glorified God.
4. God chose the Gentiles to be His people in Genesis 11.

Multiple Choice

5. God made a covenant with:

- a) Abraham and David
- b) Isaiah and Abraham
- c) Abel and David
- d) Daniel and Jeremiah

6. God's promise to David:

- a) concerned a spiritual kingdom
- b) was canceled when Israel crucified Jesus Christ
- c) was a physical kingdom that would endure forever
- d) was a kingdom in heaven

7. The first verse in the Bible says that God created:

- a) the universe
- b) the heaven and the earth
- c) light and darkness
- d) plants and animals

Fill in the Blanks

8. Chapter three of Genesis tells about the failure of ___ and ___ to obey God.
9. Chapter one of the book of ___ explains that God gave up the Gentiles.
10. God promised that He would give Abraham all the ___ that Abraham could see.

For Further Study

1. Read Jeremiah 23:5. Where will the kingdom promised to David be located?
2. How does Genesis 15:18-21 confirm that God's promise of land to Abraham is to be taken literally?
3. List at least three promises that God made to Abraham in Genesis 17:1-8.
4. What do you learn in Isaiah 9:6-7 about the kingdom promised to David?

5. How long are the covenants to Abraham and David valid? (Read Genesis 17:7; Psalm 105:9-10; II Samuel 23:5; Ezekiel 37:25).

Lesson 18

The Kingdom and the Old Testament

In the previous lesson we learned that God promised an everlasting land and nation to Abraham. We also learned that David was promised an everlasting king and kingdom. The Old Testament prophets give great detail about this promised kingdom. We will now learn more about the nature and characteristics of this kingdom.

Peace and Righteousness

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, *neither shall they learn war any more*" (Read Isaiah 2:1-4). The kingdom will be a kingdom of *peace*. Nations will no longer learn how to make war.

". . . and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor . . . And *righteousness* shall be the girdle of his loins . . ." (Read Isaiah 11:3-5). Unlike judges currently on earth, the king will not be limited to judging according to what he hears and sees. He will judge with perfect righteousness. No clever lawyer will be able to fool him. It will be a kingdom of *righteousness*.

Curse Removed from Animal and Plant Creation

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb . . . and the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together . . . And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp . . ." (Read Isaiah 11:6-9). In the original creation, man and animal were at peace and the animal kingdom was at peace with itself. Only later did animals start to eat one another and a fear arose between man and animal (See Genesis 1:29; 9:2-3). In the kingdom this curse will be removed. The wolf and lamb will live together and the wolf will not eat the lamb. The cow and the bear with their young will live together and the bear will not harm the cow. A small child will play near the den of a poisonous snake and not be hurt. *Animal creation will be tamed*.

". . . for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). Since Adam's sin, the earth has never been full of the knowledge of the Lord. Most people ignore and reject God's Word. Clearly this verse describes a kingdom that has not yet existed on earth. When the kingdom comes *the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord*.

". . . the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly . . ." (Read Isaiah 35). The curse on the plant creation will also be removed (Genesis 3:18). Farmers and gardeners will no longer struggle with drought, weeds, insects, etc. The harvest will be plentiful. *The plant creation will also be tamed.*

Physical Healing

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing . . ." (Read Isaiah 35). The physical disabilities and ailments that men suffer with today will be healed. This curse also will be removed. [Notice that this healing is not promised until Christ, the King, returns. ". . . your God will come with vengeance . . . Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened" (verses 4-6).] *There will be physical healing in the kingdom.*

"There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Read Isaiah 65:19-25). *The human life span will be greatly lengthened.* Someone who dies at the age of one hundred will still be considered a child. The only reason for death even at one hundred years of age will be because of judgment upon sin.

A Physical, Eternal Kingdom on Earth

Daniel chapter two contains a dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation. The dream concerns four kingdoms on earth. The first kingdom is Babylon, the second one is Media-Persia, the third is Greece, and the fourth is the kingdom of the antichrist. All four of these are, of course, physical kingdoms on earth (not spiritual kingdoms). Then we come to the final kingdom on earth. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed . . . and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44). We continue to emphasize that this will be *an everlasting, literal, physical kingdom on the earth* because many churches deny this truth. They teach that the kingdom is only spiritual. However, we have seen many verses in this lesson and in lesson 17 that prove the physical and eternal nature of this kingdom. There are literally hundreds of verses in the Old Testament about this promised kingdom. It is impossible to understand the Bible without understanding this kingdom that is so prominent in the Old Testament.

When did the Old Testament Begin?

Most Christians would say that the answer to this question is obvious. They would say that the Old Testament began in Genesis 1:1, the first verse in the Bible. It is true that the Bible is commonly divided into the Old and New Testaments. In this division the Old Testament, of course, begins in Genesis 1:1. However, there is another way to answer this question. A testament is a covenant (compare Hebrews 8:7-8 with Hebrews 9:15). The "old testament" can also be called the *old covenant*. The old covenant or "first covenant" was given to Moses. *The old testament formally began in Exodus 24:7-8* when Moses sprinkled blood from an ox upon the people of Israel and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."

Salvation through Israel

In lesson 17 we learned that Israel was God's chosen nation. God gave up the Gentiles in Genesis 11. Was it possible for Gentiles to be saved during Old Testament times? If so, how?

God spoke to Abraham about this matter. "And in *thy seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Read Genesis 22:17-18). The Gentiles were to be blessed *through Abraham's descendants*, the nation of Israel. Isaiah also answers our question. In Isaiah 2:1-3 we are told that "all nations shall flow" unto *Jerusalem* during the kingdom. The word of the Lord will go out from *Jerusalem* to all nations. Thus, we can conclude that during Old Testament times the *Gentiles could only be saved through the nation of Israel*. Israel was to bring blessing to all the nations.

An Earthly Hope

Many people are surprised to learn that God did not promise Old Testament saints that they would go to heaven! And that Abraham, Moses, and David had no hope of spending eternity in heaven! Nevertheless, this is true. God promised the Old Testament saints a kingdom on **earth**. Abraham, Moses, David, and all the Old Testament saints hoped to spend eternity in a kingdom on earth. Job gave the following testimony: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the **earth**: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26). Job believed that when he died and his body was destroyed, he would be resurrected and would see God *upon the earth*. Notice the location of the kingdom prophesied by Jeremiah: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the *earth*" (Jeremiah 23:5). Jeremiah, like all Old Testament saints, looked for a kingdom *in the earth*.

Old Testament Summary

All of the people who lived during Old Testament times lived in what Ephesians 2:11 calls "**time past**." "Time past" was different from the present time in many ways. Beginning with Moses, they lived under the *Law*. We live under *grace*. God favored *Israel* above all nations in "time past." God does *not* favor any nation today (Romans 10:12). Those in "time past" were looking for a kingdom on *earth*. We are awaiting the time when we will go to *heaven* for all eternity. Gentiles in "time past" were saved through *Israel*. Gentiles today are not saved through Israel, but by grace through faith *in spite of Israel's rejection* of her Savior. The beginning of the old testament brought to an end the time from "*Adam to Moses*" and started the time from **Moses to**

Christ (Law to Grace) spoken of in Romans 5:13-16. The rest of the Old Testament is the time period of *Moses to Christ*.

In Genesis and the first portion of the book of Exodus we read about the time referred to as "**Adam to Moses**." When the Law is given to Moses, the time of **Moses to Christ (Law to Grace)** begins. [See Romans 5:13-16]

"**The promise**" starts with Abraham and continues through the rest of the Old Testament. "**The Law**" begins with Moses and also continues through the remainder of the Old Testament. [See Galatians 3:17]

Review Questions

True or False

1. God promised Abraham an eternal home in heaven.
2. The kingdom promised to David will be a kingdom of righteousness.
3. Due to man's wickedness the earth will never be full of the knowledge of the Lord.
4. The kingdom promised to David is a spiritual kingdom and many will continue to suffer from physical ailments such as blindness and deafness in the kingdom.

Multiple Choice

5. Daniel chapter two confirms that the kingdom:
 - a) will be in heaven
 - b) will be a literal, physical kingdom on earth
 - c) is in our hearts
 - d) cannot be understood by man
6. During Old Testament times Gentiles were saved:
 - a) by water baptism
 - b) by being sincere
 - c) in exactly the same way that Gentiles today are saved
 - d) through the nation of Israel
7. All those who lived during Old Testament times lived in:
 - a) time past

- b) the ages to come
- c) the dispensation of grace
- d) the time of "Adam to Moses"

Fill in the Blanks

8. "The promise" started with _____ and "the Law" with ____.
9. ". . . neither shall they learn ___ any more" (Isaiah 2:4).
10. "The ___ also shall dwell with the ___ (Isaiah 11:6).

For Further Study

1. Read Isaiah 60:1-3. What will the Gentiles do when God's glory shines upon Israel?
2. Read Zechariah 8:23. What will the Gentiles do during the kingdom?
3. What possession does God the Father promise to the Son in Psalm 2:8?
4. What information about the kingdom is given in Jeremiah 31:12?
5. During the kingdom the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord and what else? (Psalm 72:19)

Lesson 19

The Gospel of the Kingdom – Part 1

Old Testament and New Testament

When reading the Bible, many people draw a major dividing line between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is common to see people carry small New Testaments rather than the entire Bible. There are many Christians who have read only the New Testament, and they consider the Old Testament unimportant today. However, this attitude does not reflect a proper understanding of God's Word.

The first verse in the New Testament is also the first time the words "Jesus Christ" are found in the Bible: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). Jesus Christ is introduced as the son of *David* and *Abraham*. You will remember from previous lessons that God made covenants with Abraham and David in the Old Testament.

Therefore, Matthew's writing is clearly linked closely to the Old Testament. The student who ignores the Old Testament will not understand the significance of even the first verse in the New Testament.

The connection between the New Testament and the Old Testament is also seen clearly in the first chapter of Luke's Gospel. "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33). When Luke writes about the birth of Christ, he says that the Lord will sit on the throne of *David* ruling in an everlasting *kingdom*. This is, of course, the kingdom promised in the Old Testament.

We will begin our study of the New Testament books by considering Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in this lesson. As we have already seen, these books must be read in light of the things we have studied about the Old Testament. For example, most believers, when reading the word "salvation" will immediately think of going to heaven for eternity. But notice what Luke writes: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham" (Luke 1:68-73). There are several things to notice in this passage: a) God is said to be the "God of Israel"; b) The nation of Israel is "his people"; c) "Salvation" in this passage is Israel being saved from her enemies; d) Luke is writing about the fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham in the Old Testament. We continue to emphasize the connection between the Old Testament and the first four books of the New Testament because far too many Christians read the New Testament as though it stands alone. Having understood the Old Testament studies in lessons 17 and 18, we are now ready to study Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

[The Kingdom is "at hand"](#)

In the Old Testament, God promised a kingdom to the nation of Israel. However, God did not tell them *when* this kingdom would come. In the book of Matthew, God has more to say about the promised kingdom. John the Baptist comes preaching "And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). The kingdom that had been promised is now declared to be "at hand" or near. [See also Matthew 4:17 and 10:7] This is, of course, because of the birth of the King.

[The Law](#)

We have seen that the nation of Israel lived under the Law of Moses during Old Testament times. They were required to offer animal sacrifices, keep the Jewish feast days, circumcise all male children, observe the Sabbath Day, etc. *Is the Law still in effect in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? Do these books match Romans 6:14 which says "ye are not under the law, but under grace"?*

It is not difficult to find an answer to the question we have posed: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18). Thus, Jesus Christ declares plainly that the Law must still be observed in Israel. In Matthew 5:23-24, Christ speaks about someone bringing a "gift to the altar." These verses are often interpreted as teaching that a Christian when praying or worshiping should immediately stop and go be reconciled to his brother if there is a conflict. When the conflict is resolved, he can continue his time in prayer or worship. However, these verses do not speak about interrupting your prayer or worship time. Verse 25 says "Leave there thy gift before the altar"; this concerns the Old Testament sacrifices brought to the altar. The command of Jesus Christ is not only to be reconciled to the offended brother, but also to "then come and offer thy gift" (verse 25).

In Matthew chapter eight Jesus Christ healed a leper "And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them" (Matthew 8:4). The leper was instructed to obey the commands of Moses recorded in the Old Testament. When Jesus Christ was on earth, He consistently taught the Israelites to obey the Law of Moses. Matthew 23:1-3 is a record of the Lord instructing his disciples to "observe and do" all that is written in the Law of Moses. (The Pharisees were hypocrites because they taught others to obey the Law, but did not observe it themselves.) Jesus Christ *did not* teach his disciples "ye are not under the law, but under grace"; He taught them to strictly obey every point of the Law.

[A Kingdom on Earth](#)

Old Testament saints were not promised an eternal home in heaven. Instead they were promised an everlasting kingdom *on earth*. *In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are believers promised a home in heaven? Or is the kingdom on earth still in view?*

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). The disciples were *not* promised an inheritance in heaven, but on earth. They were taught to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). They were looking for God's kingdom to come to *earth*. We have already quoted Luke 1:31-33 in which we read that Jesus Christ would sit on "the throne of his father David." David's throne was on earth.

Some have tried to deny the clear teaching of the verses mentioned above by pointing out that Matthew writes about "the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 10:7). They say this teaches that the disciples would be in a kingdom in heaven. The following points should be carefully noted:

- a) This interpretation would contradict Matthew 5:5; Matthew 6:10; Luke 1:31-33; etc.
- b) The phrase in Matthew is not "the kingdom *in* heaven," but "the kingdom *of* heaven."

c) Daniel 2:44 promises that "the God of heaven" will set up an everlasting kingdom on the earth. This kingdom is established by the **God** of heaven and therefore is called "the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14-15). It is established by the God of **heaven** and is therefore called "the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 3:2). Both terms refer to the same earthly kingdom promised in the Old Testament.

d) The *source* of the kingdom is heaven. It will come from heaven down to earth. It will truly be "heaven on earth" (see Deuteronomy 11:21).

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did not promise believers that they would go to heaven. They were promised a place in the *kingdom on earth* spoken of by the Old Testament prophets.

Review Questions

True or False

1. The Old Testament and New Testament are separate and unrelated books.
2. A person who has no knowledge of the Old Testament can still understand the Gospel of Luke.
3. The Old Testament promised a kingdom, but did not tell when this kingdom would come.
4. Jesus Christ came to destroy the Law.

Multiple Choice

5. The Old Testament saints:
 - a) were promised a home in heaven
 - b) lived under grace, not the Law
 - c) were promised a kingdom on this earth
 - d) did not offer animal sacrifices
6. The book of Matthew contains the following phrase:
 - a) the kingdom of heaven
 - b) the kingdom in heaven
 - c) the kingdom is heaven
 - d) the kingdom and heaven
7. According to Matthew 1:1, Jesus Christ is:

- a) the One who came to destroy the Law
- b) the son of Adam and Abraham
- c) the son of Moses and David
- d) the son of Abraham and David

Fill in the Blanks

- 8. The first four books in the New Testament are _____, _____, _____, and _____.
- 9. The Old Testament believers lived under the _____.
- 10. In Matthew 8:4, Jesus Christ commanded the leper to offer the gift that _____ commanded.

Lesson 20

The Gospel of the Kingdom--Part 2

In lesson 19 we learned that:

- 1) The first four books in the New Testament are closely linked with the Old Testament.
- 2) These books teach that *the Law of Moses must be obeyed*.
- 3) A kingdom *on earth*, not in heaven, is in view in these four books.
- 4) The basic message of these books is that Israel must repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

We will now continue our study of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Israel: The Chosen Nation

We have previously discovered, in our Old Testament studies, that God chose Israel as His nation. They were to be blessed above all nations. Does Israel still have a special position above all nations in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? Or have Gentiles been given a position of equality with the Jews in these four books?

In Matthew chapter ten, Jesus Christ calls the twelve apostles and: "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go *not* into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of **Israel**" (Matthew 10:5-6).

Notice that the apostles are told *not* to go to the Gentiles. Jesus Christ told the woman of Samaria: "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the **Jews**" (John 4:22). Without a doubt there was still a difference between the Jews and the Gentiles as to their spiritual status.

Matthew 15:22-28 is a very interesting passage. A woman of Canaan (a Gentile) comes to Jesus Christ and cries out, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil" (verse 22). This woman acknowledged Him as Lord and desperately pleaded for help. How did the Lord respond? "But he answered her *not a word*" (verse 23). Why would He treat this woman in such a manner? Then the disciples beseech Him to send her away. "But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of **Israel**" (verse 24). This statement is very important. Jesus Christ plainly says that He did *not* come to minister to Gentiles--only to the Jews!

The Gentile woman, however, was persistent in her request for help. She worshiped him and further pleaded, "Lord, help me" (verse 25). Surely the Lord will now yield to this poor woman's cries for mercy! "But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (verse 26). The Lord replies that it is not proper or right to take *Israel's* blessing (bread) and give it to Gentiles (dogs). Thus He again refuses her request and calls her a dog! However, the woman is not at all offended! "And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table" (verse 27). The Gentile woman professes faith in the Lord's statement by saying, "Truth, Lord." She acknowledges that, as a Gentile, she is a dog, and **Israel** is the master. Her plea is that she might be given some crumbs (blessings) from Israel's table.

First the Lord did not even respond to the Gentile woman. Then he said that He was sent only to *Israel*, not to Gentiles such as this woman. Upon the third request, He said it would not be fitting to give Israel's blessing to a Gentile. However, after the woman takes her position as a Gentile dog and acknowledges Israel's superior position, the Lord's response changes suddenly. He commends the woman for her faith (believing God's Word about Israel and the Gentiles). *Then* he heals her daughter (verse 28). Again, we emphasize that he refuses her request until she acknowledges Israel's special position. As in the Old Testament, Gentiles can only be blessed **through Israel**.

Another account of this woman's encounter with the Lord is given in Mark chapter seven. We now quote verse 27 from this account: "But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs." Why did Jesus Christ command His apostles *not* to go to the Gentiles? Why did He three times refuse to minister to the woman of Canaan? Was He prejudiced against Gentiles? Was He lacking concern and love for the Gentiles? Of course, not! He was merely following the plan revealed in the Old Testament. **Israel** must first be saved and established in her kingdom. *Then* salvation would flow to the Gentiles through Israel. The children must *first* be filled!

Many people believe that Jesus Christ, while on earth, freely ministered to anyone who came to Him - - Jew or Gentile. We have seen that this is simply *not true*. The only other definite account of the Lord ministering to a Gentile, while He was on earth, is found in Luke chapter

seven. A Gentile centurion had a servant, whom he dearly loved, and this servant was sick to the point of death (verse 2). The centurion knew that he, as a Gentile, was unworthy to make a request of the Lord. Therefore, he sent "the elders of the **Jews**, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant" (verse 3). The Jews came to Jesus and declared that this Gentile man was worthy to be ministered unto. How could a Gentile be worthy of the Lord's blessing? Verse five gives us the reason: "For *he loveth our nation*, and he hath built us a synagogue." Then Jesus went with them and healed the servant (verses 6-10). As with the woman of Canaan, the Lord ministers to this Gentile man only after knowing that the man *acknowledges Israel's special position* of favor with God--and his own unworthiness as a lowly Gentile.

The evidence is clear and plentiful in showing that Jews and Gentiles were *not* equal in the sight of God during the time that Jesus Christ ministered on earth. Paul, the apostle, confirms this: "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the **circumcision** for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Romans 15:8). Jesus Christ was sent to minister to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel* (the circumcision), not to the Gentiles. Knowing (and believing) this is vitally important in gaining a correct understanding of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

[The Gospel of the Kingdom](#)

What gospel was preached during the time written of in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? Did the twelve apostles preach the same gospel that we are to preach today?

We have already mentioned that, according to Matthew chapter ten, Jesus Christ chose twelve apostles and sent them out to preach (verses 5-7). Did they go forth and proclaim salvation by faith through the death of Jesus Christ? "*From that time forth began* Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matthew 16:21). The disciples were sent out to preach in chapter ten, but the Lord did not even *begin* to tell them about His coming death and resurrection until chapter sixteen! They could not possibly have preached salvation through the cross in chapter ten! And how did they respond after hearing that their Master would die? "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: *this shall not be unto thee*" (verse 22). Peter wished to *prevent* Jesus Christ from dying on the cross! Had Peter known the gospel that we preach today, he would have bowed down and worshiped the Lord with deep thankfulness for going to the cross. What, then, was Peter preaching in chapter ten?

Let us consider Luke's Gospel regarding this matter. We have another account of the choosing of the twelve: "And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the **gospel**, and healing every where" (Luke 9:6). Notice that we are specifically told that they preached the gospel when sent out in chapter nine. Later, in chapter eighteen, Jesus Christ tells the disciples that He will go to Jerusalem, be put to death, and rise on the third day (verses 31-33). Read very carefully the following verse: "And they understood *none* of these things: and this saying was *hid* from them *neither knew they* the things which were spoken" (verse 34). The disciples preached the gospel in chapter nine, but later when they were told about the death and resurrection they could not understand what the Lord was talking about! How could they possibly have preached

salvation through Christ's death on the cross? They didn't even know about it and when told they didn't understand! What, then, were they preaching?

It is common to hear people say that there is only one gospel in the Bible. We have seen that this is *not* true! There are several gospels in the Bible. When God said to Abraham, "In thee shall all nations be blessed," this was a gospel (Galatians 3:8). But it was *not* the same gospel by which we are saved today! Revelation chapter fourteen tells of a time when "the everlasting **gospel**" will be preached. The message in this gospel is that "the hour of his judgment is come" (verses 6-7). That is *not* the gospel message by which we can now be saved!

During the time of Christ's ministry on earth, the disciples were sent out to preach "the **gospel of the kingdom** of God" (Mark 1:14). This was a message to Israel to repent because their long-promised kingdom was now at hand. It was this gospel that God required Israel to believe then, but no one can be saved through faith in the gospel of the kingdom today. That gospel was preached *without mention of the death and resurrection of Christ*--the very center of our gospel today!

Summary statement concerning Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

The Scriptures studied in lessons nineteen and twenty should cause many Christians to do some serious thinking. We have learned that in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John:

- 1) It was required that God's people live under the **Law**.
- 2) The hope of the disciples was that God's kingdom would come to **earth**.
- 3) **Israel** was God's chosen nation, favored above all nations.
- 4) The disciples were instructed to preach **the gospel of the kingdom**. They preached this gospel before even knowing that Christ would be crucified and rise again.

However, in this present dispensation of grace:

- 1) We are not under the Law, but under **Grace** (Romans 6:14).
- 2) We are promised an eternal home in **heaven**, not a place in a kingdom on earth (Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20; I Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- 3) Israel is not favored above any other nation today. There is **no difference** between Jew and Gentile today as far as spiritual standing or blessing (Romans 3:9; 10:12).
- 4) We are to preach **the gospel of grace** which proclaims Christ's death for our sins and His resurrection on the third day. The gospel of the kingdom does not contain God's message of salvation for us at this time.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are a continuation of the Old Testament account of "**time past**" (Ephesians 2:11). They give further information about the time from **Moses to Christ (Law to Grace)** [See Romans 5:13-16]. The focus is still on "**the promise**" given to Abraham (Galatians 3:17). The believers are still living under "**the Law**" (Galatians 3:17).

Review Questions

True or False

1. The first four books of the New Testament can be understood without knowledge of the Old Testament.
2. In Matthew chapter ten, Jesus Christ sent the apostles out to preach to the Gentiles.
3. The Gentile woman gave up all hope after the Lord told her that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
4. When Jesus Christ said, "Let the children first be filled," He was speaking of the nation of Israel.

Multiple Choice

5. During the time of Jesus Christ's ministry on earth:
 - a) the Gentile nations were favored by God
 - b) there was no difference between Jews and Gentiles
 - c) He never ministered to a Gentile
 - d) Israel was God's chosen nation, above all nations
6. When Jesus Christ sent the twelve apostles out to preach in Matthew chapter ten:
 - a) they preached the gospel of grace
 - b) they did not yet know about the death and resurrection of Christ
 - c) they refused to obey Him
 - d) they proclaimed the death of Jesus Christ for all men's sins
7. Which of the following statements is true?

- a) There is only one gospel in the Bible.
- b) The gospel that we preach today is found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
- c) There are several gospels in the Bible. The gospel of the kingdom is different from the gospel we preach today.
- d) The gospel of the kingdom could not be preached until Jesus Christ died on the Cross.

Fill in the Blanks

- 8. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John teach that disciples must live under _____.
- 9. The first four books in the New Testament, like the Old Testament, are telling about "time _____."
- 10. The Old Testament and Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, teach that _____ is God's chosen nation.

Lesson 21

The Apostles Speak to Israel – Part 1

The book of Acts follows the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the Bible. The book of Acts is like a sequel to the four gospels in that it tells what happened after those books. What happened to Israel after Jesus Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven? What did the apostles do? Did the apostles complete the commission given to them by Christ? We encourage you to read the entire book of Acts to find the answer to these and many other questions you may have. However, in these studies we will again focus on the same areas we have studied in the preceding lessons. These are the questions we will concentrate on: Was the nation of Israel still under the law after Christ died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven? Was Israel still God's favored nation? Were they still looking for a kingdom on earth? What gospel did they preach?

The Law

We have seen that God gave the Law to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. This included such practices as the sacrificing of animals, circumcision, keeping the Sabbath Day, observing certain feast days, etc. We have also seen that Israel continued to live under this law during the time written of in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. When the book of Acts begins, Jesus Christ has already died on the Cross and risen from the dead. In chapter one of Acts He ascends into

heaven. *Did the nation of Israel still live under the law after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ? Or did Israel now begin to live under grace and not under the law as spoken of in Romans 6:14?*

Many churches teach that the disciples were living under grace after Christ died. However, let us see how the book of Acts answers our question. We will concentrate mostly on the first seven chapters of the book of Acts at this time (the reason for this will be explained later), though we may briefly refer to chapters 8-28. First we should observe that nowhere in the first seven chapters of Acts does it say that Israel no longer lived under the law. Since they had been living under the law for hundreds of years, we would expect the Bible to tell us if there had been such a major change in Israel. However, there is not even a hint that the law had been set aside or replaced by grace.

On the other hand, there is considerable evidence that *Israel was still living under the law*. We read in Acts 2:46 that they "continu[ed] daily with one accord in the temple . . ." and in Acts 3:1 we find "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." Thus, we see that the apostles did not begin to build Christian churches to worship in, but continued to worship daily in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

In Acts chapter fifteen we read about a dispute that arose concerning the law. Some were teaching, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Paul and Barnabas were accused of teaching that the Gentiles did not have to live under the law of Moses. "And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter" (Acts 15:6). In this brief study we cannot write in detail about Acts chapter fifteen. However, we want to point out a few relevant facts.

1) In Acts 15, the debate was about whether the *Gentiles* had to live under the law. They did not discuss the question of whether or not the *Jews* had to live under the law. Of course, the Jews must obey the law! Everyone agreed on this point.

2) If Peter and the other apostles began to teach in Acts 2 that "ye are not under the law, but under grace," there surely would have been no dispute on this matter much later in Acts 15. When the Jews heard Paul and Barnabas preach they would have said, "This is the same thing Peter has been preaching since the Day of Pentecost (in Acts 2)." However, there *was* a great controversy about this issue (Acts 15:1-7). Clearly Peter and the others had never previously taught that the Gentiles were under grace, instead of being under the law.

Even later Paul returns to Jerusalem and is told by James, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law" (Acts 21:20). Notice that this speaks of Jews "which believe" and they are all strictly living under the law of Moses. *The book of Acts clearly teaches us that Israel was still living under the law during the time of Acts 1-7 (and for some time after this).*

[A Kingdom on Earth](#)

The Old Testament saints and the disciples in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were not promised an eternal home in heaven. Instead, they were promised an everlasting kingdom *on earth*. *In the*

first seven chapters of Acts, are the disciples promised a home in heaven? Or are they still looking for God's kingdom to come to earth?

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). There is no doubt that the disciples were still looking for a kingdom on earth. There are some who teach that the disciples were ignorant or unbelieving when they asked the question in Acts 1:6. These teachers claim that the disciples did not understand the change in God's plans. Supposedly the disciples should have been seeking to go to heaven rather than looking for a kingdom on earth. However, the Bible tells us that these teachers, not the disciples, are the ones that fail to understand. The disciples had their understanding of the Scriptures opened before asking the question in Acts 1:6 (see Luke 24:45). After His resurrection, Jesus Christ taught the disciples about the kingdom of God for forty days (Acts 1:3). The disciples were not ignorant when they asked, "wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"--they understood *what* God would do, but didn't know *when* He would do it. They knew that God had promised to send a Messiah to sit on the throne of David (Acts 2:30).

Please, also, read Acts 3:19-21. You will see that the disciples were looking for Jesus Christ to come down to earth. They were not expecting to be taken up to heaven. The promise was that Christ would come and restore all things on the earth after Israel repented and was converted. Therefore, we know that, during the time of Acts 1-7, the disciples were not promised that they would go to heaven. They were promised a place in the kingdom *on earth* spoken of by the Old Testament prophets.

Israel: The Chosen Nation

In earlier studies, we have learned that God chose Israel to be His nation above all other nations. Israel held this special position in the Old Testament and this continued in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. *In Acts 1-7, does Israel still have a special position above all nations? Or have Gentiles been given a position of equality with the Jews?*

In considering this question, we remind the reader of Acts 1:6. It speaks of the kingdom being restored to *Israel*. Clearly the disciples thought Israel still held a special position. Reading the first seven chapters in Acts will confirm that the apostles were correct in their thinking on this matter. Peter and the other apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:4) and when Peter preached he addressed the Jews who were dwelling in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5)²². As far as we can learn in the book of Acts, Peter's audience in Acts 2 was all Jewish²³. If there were any Gentiles present, Peter did not say one word to them.

²² See also Acts 2:14,22,36

²³ Men came "out of every nation under heaven," but these men were all Jews. They had come to dwell in Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Ghost to be sent and for the Messiah to appear. The "proselytes" mentioned in Acts 2:10 were Gentile converts to the faith of the Jews. Thus, they were no longer considered to be Gentiles.

Peter speaks to "Ye men of Israel" in chapter three (verse 12). He says of them, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers . . ." (verses 25-26). Israel, not any Gentile nation, was addressed as the children of the prophets and the covenant. Peter speaks of Jesus Christ in chapter five when he says, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). According to this verse, God exalted Jesus Christ to give repentance and forgiveness to Israel. *Everything written in Acts 1-7 leads us to conclude that Jews and Gentiles were not equal in the sight of God at that time. Israel still held their favored position.*

[In our next lesson we will continue our study in the book of Acts.]

Review Questions

True or False

1. The book of Acts comes after Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the Bible and tells what happened after the events in those books.
2. All churches today teach that the disciples continued to live under the law after Christ died and rose again.
3. When we read Acts 15, we find that everyone agreed that all believers were to live under grace, not under the law.
4. Believers throughout the Bible were promised an eternal home in heaven.

Multiple Choice

5. In Acts 3:19-21 we learn that the disciples were taught that:
 - a) Jesus Christ would return to earth and set up His kingdom in which all things would be restored.
 - b) They would all be taken up to heaven.
 - c) They no longer needed to sacrifice animals.
 - d) Israel was no longer God's chosen nation.
6. Acts 1:6 show that:
 - a) The disciples were ignorant of God's will at that time.
 - b) The Church, the Body of Christ would soon begin.
 - c) The disciples were still looking for God to establish His kingdom in Israel.
 - d) The disciples couldn't understand the Bible.
7. God required Israel to keep the law:

- a) In Old Testament times
- b) Only when they sinned against Him
- c) When Christ was on earth (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John write about this time)
- d) During the time written of in Acts 1-7

Fill in the Blanks

8. In Acts 1-7, Israel was still living under the ____.
9. In Acts 21, James told Paul that all the Jews that believed were _____ of the law.
10. "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to _____?"

Lesson 22

The Apostles Speak to Israel--Part 2

In lesson 21 we have learned that in Acts 1-7: **Israel** was still God's favored nation, was still living under the **Law**, and still sought a kingdom on **earth**. We will now consider the question of what gospel was preached in Acts 1-7.

The Gospel Preached by Peter

Many churches, seminaries, and Bible colleges teach that the Church, the Body of Christ began in Acts 2. This, they claim, is where the gospel of grace was first preached. Did Peter and the other apostles preach the gospel of grace in Acts 2? We will answer this question by looking at what Peter preached in Acts 2. Specifically we will examine this chapter to see what he preached about the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

What did Peter preach about the *death* of Jesus Christ? Today, we preach the Cross as good news--the best news ever given to man! [See lesson seven to review the good news about the cross.] Is this the message we find in Acts 1-7? "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by **wicked hands** have crucified and slain:" (Acts 2:23). "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom **ye have crucified**, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Peter did *not* offer salvation through faith in the death of Christ. He did *not* preach the cross as good news. Instead, he *blamed* Israel for crucifying the Lord. He warned them of the consequences of their action. The cross was not a joy to the audience in Acts 2, but *a cause for shame and fear*.

What did Peter preach about the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Today, we preach that Christ was raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). No such thought is found in Acts 2! "Therefore being a prophet [**David**], and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ **to sit on his throne**;" (read Acts

2:29-31). Peter preaches that *Christ was raised from the dead to sit on the throne of David*. This speaks of the same kingdom promised in the Old Testament.

Finally, what did Peter preach about the *ascension* of Jesus Christ? Today, we preach the ascension as good news--Christ has been seated at the right hand of the Father. He is "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion" in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:20-22). Again, this is much different from what Peter preached in Acts 2. "For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, **Until I make thy foes thy footstool**" (Acts 2:34-35). Peter's message was that Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father until the time comes for Him to crush His enemies. When Peter spoke of the ascension, it was not a joyous message as for us today. Instead, *it was a warning of coming judgment!*

The truth is that *we cannot find the gospel of grace in Acts 1-7*. We preach the cross as the *good news of salvation*---Christ died for our sins. In Acts 2 the Cross was preached *as a warning of judgment*---the one you have crucified with your wicked hands is now alive and will return to judge His enemies.

Summary statement about Acts 1-7

In lessons twenty-one and twenty-two we have learned the following about Acts chapters one through seven:

- 1) God's people continued to live under the **Law**.
- 2) The hope of the disciples was that God's kingdom would come to **earth**.
- 3) **Israel** was God's chosen nation. God continued to speak to Israel in a way that He spoke to no other nation.
- 4) The **gospel** they preached concerned the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. Israel was **blamed** for crucifying the Lord and **warned** of coming judgment.

In this present dispensation of grace:

- 1) We are not under the Law, but under **Grace** (Romans 6:14).
- 2) We are promised an eternal home in **heaven**, not a place in a kingdom on earth (Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20).
- 3) Israel is not favored above other nations today. There is **no difference** between Jew and Gentile as far as spiritual standing or blessing (Romans 3:9; 10:12).
- 4) We are to preach the **gospel of grace** that proclaims Christ's death as **good news** of salvation.

Chapters one through seven of the book of Acts are a continuation of the Old Testament account

of "**time past**" (Ephesians 2:11). They give additional information about the time from **Moses to Christ (Law to Grace)** [See Romans 5:13-16]. The focus is still on "**the promise**" given to Abraham (Galatians 3:17). The disciples were still living under "**the Law**" (Galatians 3:17).

Kingdom Offered

Before leaving Acts, we must note a few important events recorded in this book. We have seen in previous studies that Israel was promised a kingdom in the Old Testament. This kingdom was declared to be at hand by Jesus Christ and the apostles. However, the kingdom had never actually been *offered* to Israel. In fact, it could *not* have been offered until Christ died on the cross as a ransom for the nation. The first time Israel was offered the kingdom was in Acts 1-7. In Acts 3:19-21 Peter preaches to "Ye men of Israel" and tells them they must repent [of their sin of crucifying the Lord]. He says that Jesus Christ will then return to earth and restore all things as the Old Testament prophets had promised. The stage was set for Israel to receive her kingdom.

However, the book of Acts tells a sad story about Israel. God's offer of the kingdom was violently *rejected*. The climax came in Acts 7:51-60 when they stoned Stephen to death. Israel resisted the Holy Spirit. They were guilty of betraying and murdering the Son of God. This decision by Israel's leaders was the act that Christ had warned about in Matthew 12:31-32. In Acts 7, Israel committed the sin that could not be forgiven---they had blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. (The disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts 1-7, but Israel rejected the Holy Spirit as He spoke through the disciples.)

As Stephen was about to be stoned, he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). Why was Christ *standing*? We have already seen that He was *sitting* in chapter two (verse 34). When reading through the Old Testament, we see that the Lord *stands* when it is time for Him to judge His enemies. "**Arise, O Lord, in thine anger, lift up thyself** because of the rage of mine **enemies**: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded" (Psalm 7:6).

God the **Father** spoke to Israel in the Old Testament through the prophets. However, Israel killed the prophets. God the **Son** spoke to Israel when Jesus Christ ministered on earth (in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). However, Israel crucified the Son of God. God the **Holy Spirit** spoke to Israel in Acts 1-7 when all of the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. Israel, however, resisted and blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. Israel had committed the *unpardonable sin*. The nation was ripe for judgment. [In our next lesson, we will find out what happened to Israel after Acts 7.]

Review Questions

True or False

1. In Acts 1-7, all nations have equal standing before God.
2. Today we preach the Cross as good news for salvation.

3. Believers in this dispensation of grace should consider the ascension of Christ to be a warning of judgment.
4. God set aside the Law when Christ died on the Cross. Throughout the book of Acts, the disciples lived under grace.

Multiple Choice

5. Chapters one through seven of the book of Acts is:

- a)an account of the beginning of the Church, the Body of Christ.
- b)a continuation of "time past."
- c)the beginning of the dispensation of grace.
- d)a description of Christ's ministry on earth.

6. The book of Acts tells about:

- a)Israel's acceptance of God's kingdom.
- b)Israel's repentance and conversion.
- c)Israel's humility and love for God's Word.
- d)Israel's rejection of God's kingdom.

7. In the Old Testament:

- a)God the Father spoke to Israel through the prophets.
- b)God the Son spoke to Israel through Christ's earthly ministry.
- c)God the Holy Spirit spoke to Israel through the Spirit-filled disciples.
- d)The prophets announced that the kingdom was at hand.

Fill in the Blanks

8. Many churches, seminaries, and Bible colleges mistakenly teach that the Church, the Body of Christ began in ____.
9. In Acts 2, Peter said that Christ was raised from the dead to sit on the throne of ____.
10. The gospel of ____ *cannot* be found in Acts 1-7.

Lesson 23

The Dispensation of Grace--Part 1

As we concluded lesson 22, we saw that Israel had committed the unpardonable sin in Acts 7. The Gentiles had rebelled against God way back in Genesis 11. The time was now ripe for judgment. Yet we are now living hundreds of years later and God's judgment has still not come upon the earth! What happened after Acts 7? Why hasn't God poured out His wrath upon the earth after all these hundreds of years? The answer to these questions can be found in Paul's epistles.

A New Dispensation

We will study several passages in Paul's epistles. However, let us first briefly answer the questions posed above. Instead of pouring out His wrath after Stephen was stoned in Acts 7, God introduced a new dispensation---the dispensation of grace. Under the former dispensation, God would certainly have dealt with the earth in anger. [He will yet do this in the future.] However, in the new dispensation God would pour out His grace. God revealed a new message (the mystery) to Paul, the apostle. We are now living in the dispensation of grace; it has continued for about two thousand years already.

This present dispensation is much different from the previous dispensation:

Time Past

Law

Kingdom on earth promised

The chosen nation is Israel

The gospel of the kingdom

Now

Grace

The saved go to heaven

No nation is favored

The gospel of grace

We will now support this by considering several passages in Paul's epistles.

Paul and the Gentiles

In Romans 11:13, Paul wrote: "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office." This is a very significant statement! No one else in the Bible claims to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul was given a special message about the Gentiles. We learned in lesson 20 that Jesus Christ was not sent to the Gentiles, but only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). Paul, however, writes: "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles . . ." (Romans 15:15-16). Jesus Christ came to minister to "the circumcision" (Romans 15:8). Later, Jesus Christ sent Paul to minister to the Gentiles. If the Word of God says that Paul's office is magnified, we must not diminish it!

The Mystery

It is impossible to understand the Bible without understanding "the mystery." The word "mystery" in the Bible does not mean mysterious or strange. The mystery is a message previously hidden, but now made known. Read the following verse carefully and notice the meaning of the word "mystery." "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25). No one in the Old Testament knew the

mystery. Neither did the twelve apostles during Christ's ministry on earth. No one knew the mystery until it was revealed to Paul. It had been "kept secret since the world began."

Paul speaks of this mystery often. "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints" (Read Colossians 1:24-27). God did not suddenly come up with a new plan in Acts 7. He had promised eternal life to Gentiles "before the world began" (Titus 1:2). (This was a promise that God made to Himself, since no one was present before the world began except the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.) God kept this a secret, "But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me [Paul] according to the commandment of God our Saviour" (Titus 1:3). Though planned before the world began, the dispensation of grace was not revealed until the proper time (the "due times"). God then committed this message to Paul. We will now study more about the content of "the mystery."

[The Fall of Israel](#)

Romans 11:11 tells us that Israel has fallen and "through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles." The fall of Israel has become "the riches of the world" (Romans 11:12). The "casting away" of Israel resulted in "the reconciling of the world" (Romans 11:15). Old Testament teaching is that salvation will come to the Gentiles through the *rise* of Israel (Isaiah 60:1-3). However, in Romans 11 Paul teaches that salvation has come to the Gentiles through the *fall* of Israel. This is something new! This is part of the mystery (Romans 11:25).

[Why a Mystery?](#)

Why did God keep a message secret since the world began; not revealing it to anyone before Paul? This is what Paul explains in I Corinthians. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (I Corinthians 2:7-8). Satan is "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). When Jesus Christ was crucified, Satan and the other "princes of this world" thought that they had won the victory over Christ. They did not know that Christ's death would pay the penalty for all men's sins and open the way for salvation by grace for all men. Had Satan known about the salvation that the Cross would bring, he would have tried to prevent the crucifixion. However, Satan did not know this information! He did not learn about it from the Old Testament prophets, the twelve apostles, or anyone else. This knowledge was hidden, because God had not yet revealed the mystery! Satan fell into a trap set by the wisdom of God. Only later, when the mystery was revealed to Paul, did Satan realize that the Cross was not a victory for him, but was his greatest defeat in history! This is why God kept "the mystery" a secret for all those years.

There are many denominations, sects, and cults within Christendom. All of them claim to be preaching Jesus Christ. Yet, they have vastly different messages about the Lord. It is not enough simply to preach Jesus Christ. We must preach Jesus Christ "according to the revelation of the mystery" (Romans 16:25). Jesus Christ is no longer in a state of humiliation as He was when on earth. Today, He does not get tired or hungry. No one can spit upon Him, slap Him, place a crown of thorns on His head, or crucify Him today. He is now the risen and ascended

Lord "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:21). He is now the Head of the Church, the Body of Christ. We learn all of this in the mystery!

[In the next two lessons we will study two very important passages concerning Paul and the mystery.]

Review Questions

True or False

1. Israel committed the unpardonable sin when the Jews crucified Christ.
2. There is very little difference between this dispensation and the previous dispensation.
3. You will never understand the Bible unless you understand the mystery revealed to Paul.
4. God favors Israel above all nations today.

Multiple Choice

5. We can know that a church is teaching the truth if:
 - a) they claim to be Christian
 - b) they teach about Jesus Christ
 - c) they preach Jesus Christ according to the mystery
 - d) they teach that Jesus Christ is Lord
6. After Israel stoned Stephen in Acts 7:
 - a) God introduced the dispensation of grace
 - b) God poured out His wrath on the earth
 - c) God established His kingdom on earth
 - d) They crucified the Lord
7. In Romans 11:13 Paul said:
 - a) that he was an apostle to Israel
 - b) that he was the apostle of the Gentiles
 - c) that his office of apostleship was not important
 - d) that Peter was the apostle of the Gentiles

Fill in the Blanks

8. The _____ was hidden until it was revealed to Paul.
9. ". . . for had they known it, they would not have _____ the Lord of glory" (I Corinthians 2:7-8).
10. The _____ rebelled against God in Genesis 11.

Lesson 24

The Dispensation of Grace--Part 2

In this lesson we will devote our attention primarily to Ephesians 3:1-11. We will study this passage in some detail since it is a very important part of Scripture concerning the dispensation of grace.

Ephesians 3:1-11

Please read carefully Ephesians 3:1-11. We want to draw special attention to the following:

Verse two "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:"

The time in which we now live is properly called "**the dispensation of the grace of God.**" Notice that this dispensation was given to Paul. It did not begin with the birth of Christ, nor with the death of Christ, nor in Acts chapter two. No one knew anything about the dispensation of grace until God revealed it to Paul. Paul uses the phrase "my gospel," referring to the gospel that was kept secret until revealed to him (Romans 16:25)²⁴.

Some churches are considered to be *dispensational* in their teaching. Many Christians do not realize that the word "dispensation" is a word used in the Bible. What does this big word mean? The root word is "*dispense*" which means "to deal out; to distribute; to administer." Therefore a dispensation is "a distribution" or "an administration." In "time past," God distributed **law** to the nation of Israel. In this dispensation, God is distributing **grace** to the nations. God ruled with an administration of law in "time past." God is now ruling with an administration of grace. This is the meaning of the term "dispensation of the grace of God." It is a wonderful privilege to live in this dispensation of grace!

Verse three "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,"

²⁴ See, also, Romans 2:16 and II Timothy 2:8

In verse three, Paul says "the **mystery**" was made known to him by a revelation from God. The dispensation of grace can also be called "the mystery" (See, also, Colossians 1:25-26). It is sad that many Christians have no idea what "the mystery" is, even though we are living in the time called "*the mystery*." No wonder so many are confused about God's will for their lives!

Verse five plainly states that the mystery "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men," but is "*now revealed*." This is emphasized several times by Paul and is very important to a correct understanding of God's Word (Romans 16:25; Colossians 1:25-26).

Some have used Ephesians 3:5 to try to deny that the "mystery" was first made known to Paul. They say that God revealed it to Peter, James, John, and the other apostles because this verse says "as it is now revealed unto his *holy apostles and prophets* by the Spirit." However, note the following:

a) Paul received "the mystery" by a *direct revelation from Jesus Christ* (Galatians 1:12, Ephesians 3:3). The Bible does not say that anyone, other than Paul, came to know the mystery in this way. This makes Paul unique.

b) Colossians 1:23-27 says that the mystery "now is made manifest to his *saints*." The word "saints" is not referring only to the apostles. But how did the saints come to know the mystery? The context clearly shows that this knowledge came to the saints *through Paul's ministry*.

c) In our next lesson, we will study the first two chapters in Galatians. In those chapters we will see that Peter, James, and John came to an understanding of the mystery *when Paul told them about the revelation* that he had received. Prior to this the twelve apostles had *no knowledge of the mystery*.

d) Ephesians 3:5 not only mentions apostles, but also "*prophets*." The Old Testament prophets were dead long before the mystery was revealed to Paul. If we say that these prophets knew the mystery, we make nonsense out of statements such as: "the mystery, which was kept *secret* since the world began" and "the mystery which hath been *hid* from ages and from generations" (Romans 16:25; Colossians 1:26). Something cannot be "kept secret" while it is being made known. The prophets in Ephesians 3:5 are *not* the Old Testament prophets (see note "e").

e) The "apostles and prophets" in Ephesians 3:5 are not the Old Testament prophets and the twelve apostles. Ephesians 4:11 tells us that God gave apostles and prophets to the Church, the Body of Christ. But *when* did He give these apostles and prophets? The context clearly teaches that these apostles and prophets were given *after Christ ascended* into heaven (Ephesians 4:8-11). The Old Testament prophets, however, were chosen *before Christ was even born*. Christ chose the twelve apostles *while He was still on earth* (before His crucifixion). The apostles and prophets in Ephesians are *a special group of apostles and prophets given to the Church, the Body of Christ*. They were used by God to lay the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20)²⁵.

²⁵ These apostles and prophets are mentioned in several verses such as: Acts 14:14 (Barnabas); Philippians 2:25 (Epaphroditus); I Thessalonians 1:1 cf. 2:6 (Silvanus and Timothy).

f) How did this special group of apostles and prophets get a knowledge of the mystery? Ephesians 3:5 says that it was revealed to them "by the **Spirit**." There are two possible meanings to this phrase. First we know that the Holy Spirit spoke through Paul in his preaching and writing. Therefore, when others understood the mystery through Paul's epistles or preaching, we could say they gained this knowledge "by the Spirit." A second possibility is that after Jesus Christ revealed the mystery to Paul by direct revelation, the Holy Spirit gave these apostles and prophets the gift of knowledge to understand the mystery (I Corinthians 12:8).

g) We can definitely conclude that Paul, *alone*, received the "mystery" by direct revelation from Jesus Christ. For a while, Paul was the *only* human having this knowledge. Even after others gained this knowledge, Paul held a special position as the apostle chosen by God to make this mystery known through the writing of his epistles.

There are some who use Ephesians 3:5 in another way in an attempt to deny what the Bible teaches about the mystery. This verse says that the mystery was not made known in the past "*as it is now revealed*." Therefore, there are some who teach that the mystery was *partially revealed* in the past, but is now *fully revealed*. In other words, the mystery was not fully made known in the past "as it is now [fully] revealed." However, Romans 16:25 and Colossians 1:25-26 make it clear that the mystery was never revealed (not even partially) until it was revealed to Paul. The meaning of Ephesians 3:5 is that *the mystery was not revealed at all in past ages*, but has now been made known.

Verse eight "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;"

Let us focus on the phrase "the **unsearchable** riches of Christ." The word "unsearchable" is often interpreted to mean that the riches of Christ are so wonderful that we cannot comprehend them. It is true, of course, that the riches of Christ are marvelously wonderful. However, that is not truly the meaning of the word "*unsearchable*" in this verse. The word "unsearchable" means "*cannot be searched out*." The riches of Christ revealed in the mystery could not be found (or searched out) in the Old Testament. Thus, this verse, again, emphasizes that *the mystery was unknown until revealed to Paul*.

verse nine "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"

Believers today are not called to have fellowship based upon some denomination or a particular doctrine. Our fellowship is to be based upon the revelation of the **mystery**. Again, it is sad that many Christians don't even know what we are talking about when we mention "the mystery." Therefore, we must call them into "*the fellowship of the mystery*." Notice, again, the emphasis on the mystery being unknown in the past. It was not hid in the Old Testament, but was "*hid in God*."

Application [Look back at lesson 15](#). You should now clearly understand the solution to many verses in the Bible that may seem contradictory. When we study circumcision, healing, eating

pork, the Sabbath, speaking in tongues, and many other topics, we will find that the teaching in Paul's epistles is different from the teaching in the other books in the Bible. Paul received a *new revelation* (the mystery) for the dispensation of grace. This *new dispensation* differs in many ways from the previous dispensation. This is why we must *rightly divide* the Scriptures (II Timothy 2:15). We must place all Bible teachings in their proper place:

- a) "**time past**"
or
- b) "**now**" (the dispensation of grace or the mystery)
or
- c) "**the ages to come.**"

[In the next lesson we will study another passage that is vital in gaining a correct understanding of the dispensation of grace.

Review Questions

True or False

1. The dispensation of the grace of God was first made known to Peter.
2. All churches that teach dispensationalism are teaching false doctrine.
3. Paul came to know "the mystery" by studying the Old Testament.
4. There are some who twist the meaning of Ephesians 3:5 to deny that the mystery was first made known to Paul.

Multiple Choice

5. Colossians 1:23-27 teaches that the saints understand the mystery through:
 - a) The Old Testament books
 - b) The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
 - c) The whole Bible
 - d) The ministry of Paul
6. The apostles and prophets mentioned in Ephesians 3:5:
 - a) Are still living
 - b) Are not the Old Testament prophets nor the twelve apostles
 - c) Are the Old Testament prophets and the twelve apostles
 - d) Are false apostles and prophets

7. The apostles and prophets mentioned in Ephesians 3:5 could have gained a knowledge of the mystery:

- a) Through studying the Old Testament
- b) By direct revelation from Jesus Christ
- c) Through Paul's preaching and writing
- d) By receiving the "gift of knowledge"

Fill in the Blanks

8. Romans 16:25 and Colossians 1:25-27 teach that the mystery was unknown until it was revealed to ____.

9. According to Ephesians 3:8, the _____ riches of Christ can only be found in Paul's epistles.

10. Our fellowship, as believers, is to be based upon the fellowship of the _____.

Lesson 25

The Dispensation of Grace--Part 3

In this lesson we will study the first ten verses in Galatians chapter two. Again, we will study in some detail since this passage will be very helpful in understanding the current dispensation.

Paul's independence from the Jerusalem Church

We can better understand chapter two of Galatians if we first look back briefly into chapter one. This will help us to understand the context of the verses we will study in chapter two. Please read Galatians chapter one. Take notice of how Paul is seeking to establish *his independence from the twelve apostles*. Speaking of his gospel, he writes in verse 12: "*For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" Paul did not receive his gospel from the twelve apostles. In verse 17 he writes: "*Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.*" We can see how Paul is emphasizing that he did not immediately go to spend time with the twelve apostles after his conversion. Finally, in verse 22 he writes: "*And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ.*" Paul is establishing the fact that he spent very little time in Jerusalem (where the twelve apostles were). The churches in Judea did not even know what Paul looked like.

Galatians 2:1-10

Verses 1-2 "Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And **I went up by revelation**, and communicated unto them **that gospel**

which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain."

Paul begins chapter two by telling about a trip he took to Jerusalem. Apparently there were some who were saying that Paul was under the authority of the twelve apostles and that he had gone to Jerusalem to submit to their authority. However, the ones who were making such statements were false teachers. Paul tells us that he "*went up by revelation.*" He did not go to Jerusalem because the twelve apostles said he should do so. He went to Jerusalem because Jesus Christ told him to go. His trip to Jerusalem did not suggest any position of subjection to the twelve apostles.

Some people suppose that Paul went to Jerusalem so that the twelve apostles could teach him. This, also, is false. Paul writes: "*I . . . communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.*" He went to inform the twelve apostles concerning his gospel, not to learn from them. *Paul* taught the twelve, rather than being taught by them.

Some commentators falsely claim that Paul went to Jerusalem to check with the twelve apostles to make sure that his gospel was the same as their gospel. This is not true! Paul writes that he went "privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain." When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he went privately to Peter, James, and John. Paul was not worried that he was preaching a different (or wrong) gospel. He *knew that his gospel was different from the gospel preached by the twelve* and he knew it was the true gospel for this dispensation. His concern was that the Jewish believers might reject his gospel. This would cause much trouble for Paul in his ministry. He was concerned that his preaching would then be "in vain." If the Jerusalem church and the twelve apostles opposed Paul, it would turn many people away from the gospel of grace.

Verses 3-5 "But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, **no, not for an hour**; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."

Why did Paul bring Titus with him to Jerusalem? This was a very bold move because Titus was *an uncircumcised Gentile*. There was a controversy concerning circumcision (the Law) and Paul's gospel of grace. Titus would serve as a test case as to whether Paul was willing to agree that circumcision should be required of the Gentiles. By bringing Titus, Paul was making *certain* that this issue would be at the forefront of his visit. Would the Jews force Paul to be subject to them and their gospel by circumcising Titus?

Paul's arrival in Jerusalem set up a contest between the demands of the *false* brethren and the *truth* of Paul's gospel. Paul could have simply said that he did not believe circumcision was a major issue. What harm would it do if Paul just went along with the wishes of the Jews? This would have avoided a confrontation. However, *Paul refused to compromise* the gospel of grace by submitting to the Law. In Galatians 5:2-3 Paul taught that the person who submits to circumcision becomes *obligated to keep the whole law*. The gospel of grace would then become

meaningless (vain). Paul and Titus *refused to give up their liberty* in Christ and be placed under the bondage of the Law. Thankfully, Paul was faithful to his gospel "that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."

Verse 6 "But of these who **seemed** to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who **seemed** to be somewhat in conference **added nothing to me:**"

Peter, James, and John were the ones "*who seemed to be somewhat.*" They had a great reputation as the leaders of the Jerusalem church. However, these great apostles were lacking some *knowledge*. They were not yet informed concerning the gospel revealed to Paul. Peter, James, and John had a greater reputation than Paul, but they fell short of Paul in knowledge.

Paul was not impressed with men ("whatsoever they were, *it maketh no matter to me*"). He says that Peter, James, and John "in conference *added nothing to me.*" They did not teach Paul anything new or change Paul's doctrine in any way. Paul knew that the twelve apostles needed to be taught *by him*. Sometime after this conference in Jerusalem, *Paul rebuked Peter publicly and face to face* (Galatians 2:11-14). Peter, James, and John *needed to hear Paul's gospel* and submit to his authority as "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13).

Verses 7-8 "**But contrariwise**, when they saw that the **gospel of the uncircumcision** was committed unto me, as the **gospel of the circumcision** was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship **of the circumcision**, the same was mighty in me **toward the Gentiles:**)"

In verse six we learned that Peter, James, and John *did not add anything to Paul* (did not teach him new truths or change his gospel). Now Paul says "*But contrariwise.*" On the contrary, *Paul did add something* to the Jerusalem apostles. Paul taught them about the revelation of the mystery that he received from Jesus Christ (Romans 16:25-26; Colossians 1:24-26). These apostles of great reputation *had to become Paul's students* and learn about the new dispensation given to him.

As the apostles talked, it became clear to Peter, James, and John that God had given Paul *a new gospel*. The gospel of the *circumcision* had been given to Peter and now a different gospel, the gospel of the *uncircumcision*, was given to Paul. Though many teach that there is only one gospel in the Bible, we can see that that is not true. *The gospel that Paul preached was different from the gospel that Peter preached.*

The apostles also recognized that Peter and Paul had different apostleships. *Peter* had an apostleship of the *circumcision*. *Paul* had an apostleship to the *Gentiles*.

Verses 9-10 "And when James, Cephas, and John, who **seemed** to be pillars, perceived the grace that was **given unto me**, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the **heathen**, and they unto the **circumcision**. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do."

Finally, the apostles understood that there were, also, *two different commissions*. Peter, James, and John would now go to the *circumcision* and Paul would go to the *heathen*. The apostles made a formal agreement with one another ("they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship").

After this agreement, the Jerusalem apostles had one request for Paul. They asked him to remember, in his ministry, the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem. It is important to note that Peter, James, and John *had no authority to command Paul* to do this. They could only make a *request* to him. Paul writes, "the same which I also was forward [eager] to do." Paul complied with their request, *not out of submission*, but willingly. He already had this need in mind. Thus, even in this request, the Jerusalem apostles *did not add anything* new to Paul's gospel or commission.

The apostles all recognized that there were: a) *Two different gospels*; b) *Two different apostleships*; and c) *Two different commissions*. We, also, must recognize this truth if we are going to understand the Bible and live according to God's will. Understanding and holding to the gospel given to Paul is *the key* to sound Bible doctrine and a victorious walk with the Lord.

[In the next lesson we will learn about the conclusion of the dispensation of grace.]

Review Questions

True or False

1. In Galatians chapter one, Paul emphasizes his independence from the twelve apostles.
2. Paul writes in Galatians chapter two about a trip he took to Rome.
3. Paul went to Jerusalem to make certain that he was preaching the same gospel that Peter was preaching.
4. Paul brought Titus with him to Jerusalem so that Titus could be circumcised.

Multiple Choice

5. In Galatians 2:6 Paul wrote about those "who seemed to be somewhat." He was referring to:
 - a) Peter, James, and John
 - b) Moses and Elijah
 - c) The Old Testament prophets
 - d) False teachers
6. Paul had a conference with Peter, James, and John. The result of their meeting was:

- a) Peter, James, and John taught the gospel to Paul
- b) The apostles became angry with one another and refused to come to an agreement
- c) Peter, James, and John added nothing to Paul's gospel
- d) Paul changed his teaching so that it would match the gospel that Peter preached

7. Paul informed the Jerusalem apostles about:

- a) The real meaning of the Old Testament
- b) The gospel given to him by revelation of Jesus Christ
- c) The gospel of the kingdom
- d) The Second Coming of Christ

Fill in the Blanks

8. Peter and Paul were both apostles, but they had _____ apostleships.
9. The apostles agreed together that there were two different gospels, apostleships, and _____.
10. An understanding of the gospel given to ____ is necessary in order to please God and know His will for today.

Lesson 26

The Ages to Come

In lesson 16, we studied some divisions in the Bible. The dispensation of grace is the "**now**" time in Ephesians 2:7. It is **the time when grace reigns** in Romans 5:21 and the time when "**faith came**" in Galatians 3:23.

In this lesson we will find out how the dispensation of grace ends and what will come after its conclusion. We will briefly study "**the ages to come**" mentioned in Ephesians 2:7.

The Rapture

We do not know how long the dispensation of grace will continue. The Bible does not reveal this information to us. However, we do know *how* the dispensation of grace will end. It will end with an event commonly called "the Rapture." This is when the church, the Body of Christ will be taken up to be with Christ. We will study two passages that speak of this event.

I Corinthians 15:51-52

"Behold, I shew you a **mystery**; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be **changed**, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be **raised incorruptible**, and we shall be changed."

Notice the following truths about the rapture in these verses:

1) The Rapture is a "*mystery*." This means that it is part of the revelation given to Paul. The Rapture is not spoken of anywhere in the Bible except in Paul's epistles. Paul writes about this event several times.

2) The Bible uses the word "sleep" often when referring to the death of a believer. Thus, we see in this passage that there will be some members of the Body of Christ who will not die. They will be taken in the Rapture *without dying*.

3) Every member of the Body of Christ will "be *changed*" when he receives a glorified, incorruptible body. This change will take place "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Please read this passage in I Thessalonians carefully and observe the following:

1) **Christ Himself will descend** from heaven with a shout. Also heard will be the "voice of the archangel" and "the trump of God."

2) The "dead in Christ **shall rise first**." Members of the Body of Christ who have already died will be the first ones to be taken up in the Rapture.

3) After the "dead in Christ" are taken, those "which are live and remain" will be **taken up**. These are saints who will go to be with the Lord without dying.

4) We are told that believers will "be **caught up**." The word "rapture" is not found in the English Bible. However, it comes from a Latin word meaning "caught up."

5) After we are "caught up," we will "ever be **with the Lord**." All believers will then be gathered for "the judgment seat of Christ" (II Corinthians 5:10). This is not a judgment to find out whether the believer will go to heaven or hell. Every believer is already assured of eternity in heaven. Instead, this will be a time for the giving of rewards (I Corinthians 3:10-15).

The Wrath to Come

What will happen on earth after the Rapture? God's purpose for **Israel** will continue from the point where it was interrupted in Acts 7. John the Baptist had warned Israel about "*the wrath to come*" (Matthew 3:7). As we have seen in lesson 22, the time was ripe for the wrath of God in

Acts chapter 7. However, this expected outpouring of wrath has been delayed hundreds of years by the *dispensation of grace*. After the Rapture, God will pour out His wrath upon this earth.

The Old Testament and the New Testament devote many verses to this time of God's wrath. In this lesson we can only look very briefly at some of these passages. One important passage is in Daniel 9:24-27. Daniel writes about seventy weeks in Israel's history. [In Daniel 9 a "week" is a week of years. Therefore, one week is equal to seven years.] A careful study of this passage will show that sixty-nine of the seventy weeks are already in the past. However, the seventieth week is yet in the future. The man commonly called "the antichrist" will make a covenant with Israel (verse 27). With the signing of this covenant a special *seven-year period* of tribulation begins in Israel. Jeremiah calls this "**the time of Jacob's trouble**" (Jeremiah 30:7).

Jesus Christ taught His disciples many things about "the time of Jacob's trouble." Matthew 24 is one chapter that contains some of His teachings on this subject. He calls the last three and one-half years of this time the "**great tribulation**" (verse 21). This will be *the worst time in all of human history*. Most of the book of Revelation is describing the astounding events that will occur during that time.

[The Second Coming](#)

When the seven years (the seventieth week of Daniel 9) is completed, Jesus Christ will return to this earth. "Behold, **he cometh** with clouds; and *every eye shall see him*, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." (Revelation 1:7). When Jesus Christ came to earth the first time, He came to suffer and die. However, when He comes the second time, he will come to "*judge and make war*" (Revelation 19:11-16). He will crush His enemies and save Israel (Romans 11:26).

[The Millennial Kingdom](#)

A "millennium" is one thousand years. After Christ returns to earth, Satan will be bound for one thousand years (Revelation 20:2). **Christ will reign on earth** for one thousand years. This is often called the millennial kingdom. During this kingdom the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament will be fulfilled (See lessons 17 and 18). There will be *peace and righteousness on the earth*.

[Satan and Unbelievers Judged](#)

After the thousand-year kingdom, Satan will be loosed (Revelation 20:7). He will gather a huge army to fight against the Lord (verse 8). However, fire will come down from heaven and destroy them (verse 9). Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet will be *cast into the lake of fire* where they will remain forever (verse 10).

Then comes the "**great white throne**" judgment. All unsaved people of all ages will be *cast into the lake of fire eternally* (Revelation 20:11-15).

[A New Heaven and a New Earth](#)

The first heaven and the first earth will pass away. There will be *a new heaven and a new earth* that will be everlasting. Christ will reign on the new **earth** through the nation of **Israel**. He will reign in the **heavens** through the Church, **the Body of Christ**. God's eternal purpose will be fulfilled. Every promise made to Israel and every promise made to the Body of Christ will be fulfilled. The heavens and the earth will be filled with the glory of God and *the saints will joyously serve Him forever!*

Review Questions

True or False

1. The dispensation of grace is the same as "the ages to come" in Ephesians 2:7.
2. The Bible does not tell us how long the dispensation of grace will continue.
3. There are several verses about the Rapture in the Old Testament.
4. Some members of the Body of Christ will have glorified, incorruptible bodies in heaven.

Multiple Choice

5. The first ones to be raised in the Rapture will be:
 - a) The Old Testament saints
 - b) Members of the Body of Christ who have already died
 - c) The unsaved of all ages
 - d) The angels
6. When the time for the Rapture arrives, believers on earth will:
 - a) Suffer persecution
 - b) Follow the antichrist
 - c) Bring the kingdom of God to earth
 - d) Be caught up to be with Christ
7. After the Rapture:
 - a) God's dealings with Israel will resume
 - b) Christ will reign on earth for seven years
 - c) Christ will return to earth and save all of mankind
 - d) There will be one thousand years of war and wickedness

Fill in the Blanks

8. Jeremiah wrote about the time of Jacob's _____ in Jeremiah 30:7.
9. Jesus Christ will return to earth after the completion of the _____ week of Daniel.
10. When the millennial kingdom ends, _____ will be loosed.

Lesson 27

The Church

The word "church" is one of the most important words in the Bible. Unfortunately it is also a word that is frequently misunderstood and misused. People sometimes refer to a building as a church ("We are building a new church on Main Street"). At times the church is thought to be a denomination ("I am Baptist. Which church do you belong to?"). Other times it is viewed as a meeting ("We will go to church at 8:00"). According to God's Word, what is the church? When did the church begin? How many churches are there? Is there one true church? These are some questions we will consider in this lesson.

What is the church?

The best way to define words found in the Bible is to use the Bible itself as a dictionary. We can: 1) Examine a word in its context; 2) Compare other verses that use the word. Hebrews 2:12 contains the word "church": "Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the *church* will I sing praise unto thee." This verse in Hebrews is a quotation from Psalm 22:22: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the *congregation* will I praise thee." We can see that the word "church" in Hebrews is translated as "congregation" in Psalm 22. Therefore, a church is a *congregation*. Therefore, we must erase from our minds the ideas of buildings, denominations, or meetings when we hear the word "church." We instead must think of a congregation or an assembly of people²⁶.

How Many Churches Are There?

²⁶ The word "church" in the Bible is a translation of the Greek word "*ekklesia*." Examining the use of the word *ekklesia* in the Bible shows us that it refers to any kind of assembly. It does not even have to be an assembly concerned with spiritual matters. In Acts 19:32,41 it is referring to a mob of people (an assembly) in the city of Ephesus. In Acts 19:39 an *ekklesia* (assembly) is a group of citizens gathered to discuss legal matters.

Actually there are two questions to consider at this time. How many churches are mentioned in the Bible? How many churches are recognized by God today?

There are some who teach that there is only one church in the Bible. Another common teaching is that there was no church in the Old Testament, but that the church began only in the New Testament. Both teachings are wrong as we shall now see.

Historically, the first church mentioned in the Bible is the church spoken about in Acts 7:38: "This is he, that was in the *church* in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us." We can see that this "church in the wilderness" was a *Jewish* church existing in the days when Moses went up Mount Sinai (Exodus 19). This church lived under the *Law* in "*time past*" and sought a kingdom on this *earth*. This church was gathered in *Old Testament* times (about fifteen hundred years before Christ and the apostles ministered in Israel). Therefore, we can see that those who say the church began in the New Testament are mistaken.

In the New Testament we also find several other verses which speak of a *Jewish* church. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). We know that the disciples to whom Christ spoke in the book of Matthew were: 1) Jewish; 2) Living under the Law; 3) Seeking an earthly kingdom. Thus this church is similar to "the church in the wilderness." However, in Matthew 16:18 Christ says "I will build my church." Therefore, He is speaking of a church that was yet future. Though similar to "the church in the wilderness," the church in Matthew 16 is the *second* church we have discovered in the Bible. (The Bible does not give this church a name as it does "the church in the wilderness." However, we might call it *The Kingdom Church* since they were preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Also, this is the church that will be in the Millennial Kingdom on earth.) Matthew 18:17, Acts 2:47, and James 5:14 are other verses that refer to the earthly kingdom church.

Finally, Paul writes of "the church, which is his body" (Ephesians 1:22-23). This church lives under grace, not under the law. It is this church that God is building now in this dispensation of grace. Members of this church will be taken up to the heavenly places instead of being in the earthly kingdom. Paul's epistles are the only books in the Bible that mention the Church, the Body of Christ. This church is clearly different from the "church in the wilderness" or the earthly kingdom church. Therefore, those who teach that there is only one church in the Bible are incorrect.

We have seen that there is more than one church spoken of in the Bible. But how many churches does God recognize today? What about the Baptists? Methodists? Catholics? Assemblies of God? etc. Are any of these the one true church? Or does God recognize all of them as His church? In Ephesians 4:4 we read that "There is *one body*, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." God recognizes only one church today. The one true church today is "the church, which is his body."

[How do you become a member of the church?](#)

God recognizes only one church today. Therefore it is very important that we be members of this church. Manmade denominations may have many requirements for church membership. However, to become a member of "the church, which is his body" we must believe the gospel (see Lessons 5-9). The moment that we trust in Christ's death for our sins, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the Body of Christ. This is *not* a water baptism. "For *by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:13). [This is the baptism we studied in Lesson 13.] Only baptism "by one Spirit" makes one a member of "the church, which is his body."

Review Questions

True or False

1. The word "church" is never found in the Bible.
2. Only one church is mentioned in the Bible.
3. Several verses in the New Testament speak of a Jewish church.
4. Many denominations or churches are recognized and approved by God today.

Multiple Choice

5. Hebrews 2:12 contains the word "church." This is a quotation from Psalm 22 where the word used is:
 - a. building
 - b. denomination
 - c. congregation
 - d. meeting
6. Historically, the first church found in the Bible is the:
 - a. church in the wilderness
 - b. Roman Catholic church
 - c. Church, the Body of Christ
 - d. Baptist church
7. Members of the Church, the Body of Christ:
 - a. live under the Law
 - b. must be water baptized into membership
 - c. are in a false church

d. live under grace

Fill in the Blanks

8. To become a member of "the church, which is his body" we must _____.
9. A church is a _____.
10. It is wrong to teach that there was no _____ in the Old Testament.

For Further Study

1. Do the saints have to be gathered in one place to be the church? Read Acts 14:27 and I Corinthians 14:23.
2. Which church is referred to in Philippians 3:6?
3. After Christ was risen from the dead, was the church in Jerusalem hoping to go to heaven? (See Acts 1:6)
4. Does the Word of God require a local church to construct a building to meet in? (See Romans 16:5 and I Corinthians 16:19)
5. How do the following verses describe the church of this dispensation? (Romans 12:5; I Corinthians 12:12,14; Ephesians 2:16; 4:12)
6. Read I Corinthians 12:15-20, Galatians 3:28, and Ephesians 4:15-16. Are some members of the Body of Christ more important or more necessary?
7. Who is the Head of the Church, the Body of Christ? (See Ephesians 4:15 and 5:23)
8. What does Romans 12:5 teach about church membership?
9. Many people are concerned about having unity among various churches or denominations. How does church unity come about? (See I Corinthians 12:13 and Ephesians 4:4-6)
10. Are we called to *produce* unity in the church? (See Ephesians 4:2-3)

Lesson 28

Knowing God's Will

In lesson 27 we learned that God is now forming the church, the Body of Christ. What is God's

will for the church? What is God's will for my life? These questions will be the focus of this lesson.

God's Will Revealed

Believers often wonder what God wants them to do concerning their occupation, marriage, and many other areas. However, listening to the way many of them pray and talk, you would think that God had hidden His will and left only scattered hints or clues. Is this true? In Ephesians 1:8 we read: "Wherein he hath *abounded* toward us in all wisdom and prudence." God is *not* hiding His will. He has not merely left scattered clues for us. He has given us an abundance of wisdom.

We read further in Ephesians 1:9: "*Having made known unto us* the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." God has already made known unto us "the mystery of his will." We do not have to look in many places searching for His will. The will of God has already been revealed and it is found in the Bible.

Many believers continually beg God to reveal His will about a particular matter. They will sometimes even fast and pray for hours trying to get God to make His will clear to them. It would seem that God doesn't *want* the saints to know His will. We must not think in this way! Ephesians 1:9 says that it was God's "good pleasure" to reveal His will. It is not necessary to beg God to try to convince Him to tell us His will. He *wants* us to know His will. This is why He has given us the Bible. In the Bible we have all the guidance we need to live according to God's will. He has revealed "the mystery of His will." "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17).

What is God doing?

Too many believers are preoccupied with themselves instead of having their minds focused on God. If we know what God is doing in this dispensation of grace and adjust our lives to what He is doing, we will be living according to His will. God had a plan before the world began to form the church, the Body of Christ. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). However, God kept this plan a mystery (or secret) until it was revealed to Paul, the apostle (Romans 16:25--"the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began"). We can never live according to God's will unless we understand what God has revealed in "the mystery."

God's will is not as complicated or difficult to know as many believers seem to think. For example, "For *this is the will of God*, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (I Thessalonians 4:3). It is very simple to see that God's will is that we refrain from sexual immorality. "In every thing give thanks: for *this is the will of God* in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18). This verse states very clearly that God's will is that we give thanks in every circumstance. If we will but take time to study Paul's epistles, we will know what God is doing in this dispensation. When we bring our lives into line with what He is doing, we can be assured that we are living according to God's will.

Making Decisions

How should a believer go about making a decision, e.g., which job to take, who to marry, where to live, etc.? Following are some guidelines that will be of help:

1) Have a consistent and systematic plan to study the Scriptures If you are consistently reading and studying God's Word, your knowledge will be constantly increasing. You will find yourself with an ever growing reservoir of wisdom to draw upon in making decisions. The Bible may not tell you what color of shirt to wear today or what to eat for breakfast.²⁷ However, due to neglecting Bible study, most believers do not realize how much specific guidance is found in the Bible. The whole Bible should be studied, but priority should be given to Paul's epistles (Romans through Philemon) since they contain God's will concerning this dispensation of grace. This is the most important thing that you can do if you want to know God's will.

2) Ask counsel from other believers who are well-instructed in God's Word. We must not take any man's word as the voice of God. However, counsel from discerning, mature saints can be very helpful as we seek to make wise decisions. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Proverbs 13:20). "Without counsel urposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established" (Proverbs 15:22).

3) Ask yourself the following questions about the choice you are considering.

- a) What verses in the Bible relate to this decision?
- b) Is this expedient (proper, helpful)? See ICorinthians 6:12.
- c) Will this glorify God? See I Corinthians 6:19-20; 10:31.
- d) Will this be a good example to others? See ICorinthians 8:9.

Misleading teachings

Some teachers say that we can know God's will by whether or not we *feel* an inner peace about a certain decision. However, these inner feelings are simply our emotions and must not be confused with the voice of God. Colossians 3:15 is sometimes used to support this "inner peace" idea. If you read Colossians 3:12-15 you can see that the context is one of peace in our relationships with other members of the Body of Christ. It is not proper to use Colossians 3:15 to refer to our inner feelings as a way of finding God's will. Such teaching can easily lead to living by emotions instead of living according to God's revealed will. This leads to confusion, instability, and selfishness.

Others teach that we must look at our circumstances to find God's will. If something good, or bad, or unusual happens, many believers think that God has caused this event to tell them something about His will. [E.g., "If the cute girl in my school sits by me at lunch time, God is telling me to marry her." "If my car breaks down while I am driving to a job interview, God is telling me not to work for that company." Etc.] Of course, I ought to consider my circumstances

²⁷ It should be noted however that even in matters of what shirt (or dress) to wear or what to eat for breakfast, the Bible does give some guidance. With these questions in mind, read the following verses: I Corinthians 10:31-32; I Timothy 2:9; 4:1-5; etc.

when making decisions. [E.g., "Do I have enough money to do this?" "How much time will this take?" "How will this affect my family and my health?" etc.] However, I should not assume that *God* caused my car to break down or the girl in school to sit next to me. The Bible does not tell me that *God* caused these things. I am only using my imagination when I say that God did something (e.g., causing my car to break down) because He wanted to tell me something (e.g., "Don't work for that company"). This is *not* the way to know God's will for my life.

God wants you to know His will. This is why it pleased Him to reveal His will in the Bible. Consistent and systematic Bible study will give you the wisdom needed to make wise, spiritual decisions that honor the Lord.

Review Questions

True or False

1. God's will is hidden, but He has left some clues for us.
2. God wants us to beg Him to reveal His will.
3. Coming to know God's will is a very complicated process.
4. When making a decision, it is wise to ask counsel from other believers who have a good knowledge of the Word of God.

Multiple Choice

5. When making a decision we should:

- a) Assume that the Bible will not give any practical help.
- b) Open the Bible at random and believe that God will show you a verse on that page to give you guidance.
- c) Always do what our pastor or priest tells us to do.
- d) Read the Bible and take note of any verses that relate to our decision.

6. God reveals His will to us:

- a) by giving us signs through the circumstances in our lives.
- b) through the Bible.
- c) by giving us a feeling of inner peace.
- d) through astrological charts, palm readers, tarot cards, etc.

7. According to Ephesians 1:9, God:

- a) has made known the mystery of His will.
- b) has kept His will hidden.

- c) will reveal His will when we get to heaven.
- d) is revealing His will in many ways today.

Fill in the Blanks

- 8. God had a plan _____ began to form the church, the Body of Christ.
- 9. It is important to have a _____ and _____ plan to study the Scriptures.
- 10. Inner feelings are simply our _____ and must not be confused with the voice of God.

For Further Study

- 1. What is God's will in this dispensation concerning the Law? See Romans 6:14; Galatians 5:18.
- 2. Should we look for God to reveal His will in visible ways? See II Corinthians 5:7.
- 3. Read Romans 12:9-21 and list at least five examples of how this passage could help you to live according to God's will.
- 4. Read Ephesians 4:25-32 and list at least four examples of how this passage could help you to live according to God's will.
- 5. Read Colossians 3:12-25 and list at least four examples of how this passage could help you to live according to God's will.
- 6. What is God's will according to I Timothy 2:3-4?
- 7. How do II Timothy 2:15 and II Timothy 3:16 relate to knowing God's will?
- 8. How do your personal desires and common sense fit into knowing God's will?
- 9. What does Romans 12:1-2 tell us about the will of God?
- 10. Read Judges 6:36-40. Some believers say that we must "put out the fleece" to know God's will. Should we follow Gideon's example to know God's will in this dispensation?

Lesson 29

Water Baptism

In lesson 13 we briefly considered what the Bible teaches concerning water baptism. However, since water baptism is strongly emphasized in many churches and is frequently misunderstood, we will devote this entire lesson to this topic.

What is the meaning of the word "baptism"?

There are many who teach that the Greek word "*baptizo*" means "to immerse (or dip) in water" or "to sprinkle with water." In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist says: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall *baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.*" Notice that there are three *different* baptisms mentioned in this verse. There is: 1) baptism with water; 2) baptism with the Holy Ghost; and 3) baptism with fire. Two of these baptisms have *no connection with water*. There are at least seven different kinds of baptism in the Bible and most of them have nothing to do with water. Let us look at other examples.

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And *were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea*" (I Corinthians 10:1-2). These verses refer to events in Exodus 13-14. God divided the waters in the Red Sea and Israel walked through the sea on *dry ground*. According to the verses quoted above, Israel was baptized when they walked on the *dry ground*. There was clearly *no water* involved in this baptism. It was a *dry baptism!*

"But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). Jesus Christ had already been baptized with water (Luke 3:21). Yet he speaks of a future baptism in Luke 12:50. This is a reference to His coming death on the Cross. His crucifixion is said to be a baptism, but he was not immersed in water nor sprinkled with water. In this context, the word "baptism" *does not* mean "immersed in (or sprinkled with) water."

In the Bible, the word "baptism" carries the idea of being placed into something or being identified with something. When Israel walked through the sea on dry ground, they were *placed into* the leadership of Moses. When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, He was *identified with* our sin and the death that sin brings. Romans six tells us that we are baptized into Jesus Christ. This is a work of the Holy Spirit and has no connection with water. The Holy Spirit *places us into* Jesus Christ. We are identified with His death. In other words, God counts the death of Jesus Christ to be the payment for our sins.

Which baptism?

It is unfortunate that many believers immediately think of *water baptism* whenever they come across the word "baptism" in the Bible. As we have seen, there are several different baptisms in the Bible and many of them have no association with water. The Bible mentions:

- 1) [Israel being baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea](#) (I Corinthians 10:1-2)
- 2) [Several different baptisms of the Law](#) [More is said about this below.]

3) [Traditional Jewish baptism ceremonies](#) (Mark 7:1-9) [It should be noted that these baptisms were never commanded by God and were strongly denounced by Jesus Christ. Included were such practices as baptizing (washing) their hands before eating and baptizing cups, pots, pans, etc.]

4) [John's baptism of repentance](#) (Luke 3:3) [Besides being a call to repentance, this baptism introduced Jesus as Israel's Messiah (John 1:31).]

5) [Christ's death baptism on the cross](#) (Luke 12:50)

6) [Christ baptizing with the Holy Spirit](#) (Matthew 3:11) [This baptism took place in Acts 2 (Acts 1:4-5, 2:3-4).]

7) [Christ baptizing with fire](#) (Matthew 3:11) [This is a future baptism of judgment upon Israel (Matthew 3:7-12).]

8) [The Holy Spirit baptizing believers into the Body of Christ](#) (I Corinthians 12:13)

Some have listed as many as twelve different baptisms in the Bible. We must not *assume* that "baptism" means *water baptism*. Interpreting the baptism in Romans 6, Galatians 3:27, and Colossians 2:12 to mean *water baptism*, destroys the teaching of these verses. Religious works are added to these passages that are intended to emphasize God's grace (Romans 6:14).

The beginning of water baptism

It is commonly taught that water baptism is a New Testament doctrine and that it began historically with John the Baptist. However, this is not true. Hebrews 6:2 and 9:10 mention "the doctrine of baptisms" and "divers washings" in association with the Law of Moses. Israel practiced many types of water baptism during Old Testament times. These baptisms (or washings) are found in Exodus 29:4, Leviticus 14:4-7, Numbers 8:7, 19:7-10, and several other Old Testament passages.

The Jews did not ask John the Baptist, "What are you doing?" or "What is baptism?" when he began to baptize. They knew what baptism was after hundreds of years of living under Moses' Law. They merely wondered why *John* was baptizing instead of another prophet or the Christ (John 1:25). *Remember that water baptism began in the Old Testament.* It is a doctrine of *the Law*, not a doctrine of living by grace (Romans 6:14).

Is water baptism a symbol?

Many teach that the baptism by the Holy Spirit in Romans 6 is water baptism and symbolizes our burial and resurrection with Christ. Verse four says that we are "buried with him by baptism into death." This baptism actually *does* something; it is not a mere symbol. The Bible never teaches that people are buried in water. It makes no sense to think that going under water (being immersed) in baptism is a symbol of our burial with Christ. We do not bury people in water and neither did any of the cultures mentioned in the Bible. Christ was buried in a dry tomb carved

out of a rock! Nowhere in the Bible is it taught that water baptism symbolizes burial. Instead water baptism represents *a ceremonial cleansing or purification* (John 3:23-25, Acts 22:16, Numbers 31:23-24, Ezekiel 36:25).

Baptism in the dispensation of grace

John the Baptist and the twelve apostles were sent to water baptize (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 1:4; 16:16). However, Paul wrote: "For *Christ sent me not to baptize*, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (I Corinthians 12:13).

As we have previously studied, we are now living in the dispensation of grace. We have seen that water baptism began under the Old Testament Law. What is God's will in this dispensation concerning water baptism? Ephesians 4:5 clearly says that there is "*one baptism*" for the Body of Christ in this dispensation. Not two! Not three! There is only *one* baptism in this dispensation!

What is the "one baptism"? "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:13). *All* members of the Body of Christ have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body. Since *all* have undergone this baptism, it is obvious that this must be the "one baptism." There is, therefore, no place for water baptism in this dispensation. If we add water baptism to the I Corinthians 12:13 baptism, we have *two* baptisms. However, this cannot be! We must not contradict God's Word by changing "one" and making it read "two."

If we truly understand the "one baptism" in this dispensation, we will know that there is no need for water baptism. The "one baptism" gives us a position in which we are "complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). We have been blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). What benefit can water baptism add to this? Nothing! When certain churches or denominations insist on teaching water baptism, we must reject religious tradition and hold to God's Word!

Review Questions

True or False

1. Many churches place a strong emphasis upon water baptism.
2. The nation of Israel was water baptized unto Moses in the sea.
3. The word "baptism" in the Bible always means "being placed into water."
4. Israel had "one baptism" under the Law of Moses.

Multiple Choice

5. The baptism of John the Baptist:
- a. introduced Jesus Christ to Israel as the Messiah
 - b. called the Gentiles to repentance
 - c. was strongly denounced by Jesus Christ
 - d. was a symbol of Christ's death on the cross
6. Acts 2:4 tells about:
- a. the crucifixion of Christ.
 - b. the Holy Spirit baptizing believers into the Body of Christ.
 - c. Christ baptizing with the Holy Spirit as prophesied in Matthew 3:11.
 - d. John's baptism of repentance.
7. The baptism by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ:
- a. is the same as Christ's baptism with fire.
 - b. is the "one baptism" mentioned in Ephesians 4:5.
 - c. is the only baptism found in the Bible.
 - d. is the same as Christ baptizing with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.

Fill in the Blanks

8. Many wrongly teach that water baptism is a _____ Testament doctrine and that it began historically with _____.
9. It is wrong to teach that the baptism by the Holy Spirit in Romans 6 is _____ baptism and our burial and _____ resurrection with Christ.
10. Ephesians 4:5 clearly says that there is "_____ baptism" for the Body of Christ in this dispensation.

For Further Study

1. Exodus 19:5-6 tells of God's purpose that Israel "*be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.*" What will Israel be named during the millennial kingdom according to Isaiah 61:6?
2. As a kingdom of priests, the nation of Israel will bring salvation to the Gentiles when Christ is reigning on the earth. What ceremony is required for priests? See Exodus 29:4.
3. Acts 13:24 tells us that John the Baptist preached his "baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel." According to Mark 1:4, what was John's baptism for?

4. John was sent to prepare Israel to become a kingdom of priests. What was Israel to do in preparing for this kingdom? See Matthew 3:5-6.
5. Water baptism was required for the Israelites to "flee from the wrath to come (Matthew 3:7). What will happen to the "chaff" who were not baptized by John? See Matthew 3:10-12.
6. Water baptism was associated with salvation in Israel. How does Luke 7:29-30 emphasize the importance of being baptized by John?
7. How do Mark 16:15-17 and Acts 2:38 confirm that water baptism was related to the forgiveness of sins in Israel?
8. Compare Mark 1:4 and Acts 2:38. Did the basic purpose of water baptism in Israel change after Christ died and rose again?
9. Many denominations teach that water baptism is a required ordinance for the church today. What do we learn about ordinances in Ephesians 2:15 and Colossians 2:14,20?
10. Some people will argue that Paul baptized with water and therefore we should also. However, Paul baptized with water only in his *early* ministry. Later he taught that there was only "one baptism" and it was not water baptism (I Corinthians 1:17, 12:13; Ephesians 4:5). What other practices did Paul participate in during his *early* ministry? Should we follow these practices today? See Acts 16:3, 18:6, 18:18, 21:26.

Lesson 30

Spiritual Gifts

Much excitement, confusion, argument, and division have arisen in recent years within Christendom concerning spiritual gifts. Many have excitedly claimed to have received the gift of tongues, or healing, or prophecy, or miracles. Others seek such gifts and pray for them, only to be disappointed. It is vitally important that we know clearly what the Word of God says about spiritual gifts. [Some churches refer to these gifts as miraculous gifts, charismatic gifts, sign gifts, or pentecostal gifts.] This lesson will focus on the gifts listed in I Corinthians 12. These include: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

Sign Gifts

Some churches teach that spiritual gifts are very important in our worship and in spiritual living. However, there is not very much space devoted to these gifts in the Bible. The *only* passage in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that seems to speak of spiritual gifts is Mark 16:17-20. This passage in Mark, however, does not use the word "gifts." Instead, the word "signs" is used (thus

the designation "sign gifts"). The "signs" mentioned are: casting out devils, speaking with new tongues, taking up serpents without being harmed, drinking poison without being harmed, and healing the sick. Mark does not describe or define any of these "signs" beyond just the mention of them.

Obviously we must understand the use of the word "signs" in the Bible. The first signs performed by man in the Bible were signs that Moses was to do in the midst of *Israel* (Exodus 4:8-9). Signs were important to Israel throughout its history. "And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the *signs* which I have shewed *among them*? (Numbers 14:11). God showed the signs to *Israel* and not to any other nation. Israel was taken out of Egypt "by signs" (Deuteronomy 4:34; 6:22). I Corinthians 1:22 says, "For the Jews require a sign." God is not giving signs to the Church, the Body of Christ. The signs listed in Mark 16:17-20 were given to *Jewish* disciples. They were given to confirm the gospel that Israel was to preach to the world. "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mark 16:20). From the Scriptures that we studied in Lessons 19-25, we know that Mark 16:17-20 is not *our* commission. That commission (and its attending sign gifts) was given to Israel. We must rightly divide the Word of truth (II Timothy 2:15). Signs were given to *Israel*, not to the Church, the Body of Christ.

What are "tongues"?

Possibly the most popular and controversial spiritual gift is the gift of speaking with tongues. Therefore, it is important to give special attention to this gift in our study of spiritual gifts. When studying the gifts, we must make *the Bible*, not our experiences, the final authority. Paul warns in II Timothy 4:3-4 that people will turn away from sound Bible doctrine and will instead believe fables (stories, testimonies, experiences, novels, etc.).

Many in Charismatic and Pentecostal churches claim that tongues are ecstatic languages or heavenly languages. To the uninitiated these "tongues" sound like gibberish (rapid unintelligible speech). It should be noted that most of the Corinthian believers had worshiped "dumb idols" before they were saved (I Corinthians 12:2). It is known that the heathen in Corinth (and many today, such as Hindus) commonly used gibberish---unknown words revealed by spirits. They believed that they could communicate more effectively with the gods by speaking in the language of the gods. [We should note here that when Jesus Christ was on earth, He did not speak in a special heavenly language. Even when speaking to the Father, Christ spoke in the language commonly used in Israel then.]

I Corinthians 13:1 mentions "the tongues of men and of angels." There are some who teach that "the tongues of angels" refers to special languages of the angels. Limited space does not allow a detailed discussion of this verse. We will only point out that in the Bible angels always spoke in a language commonly spoken and understood on earth. The word "tongues" in the Bible always refers to *a known language spoken on this earth*.

What is the purpose of the gift of speaking with tongues?

"In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord" (I Corinthians 14:21).

Spiritual gifts are not given for entertainment or to bring exhilaration to the one who possesses them (I Corinthians 12:7). I Corinthians 14:21 is a very important, but often neglected, verse concerning the gift of tongues. It is surprising to find Paul quoting from the book of Isaiah when writing about the gift of tongues. Most Christians think of tongues as a New Testament gift given to the church. Why, then, is Paul saying that tongues were written about in Isaiah 28:11-12?

An examination of these verses in Isaiah 28 shows that God is warning Israel about a time when they will be spoken to in a Gentile language. This will be a sign of God's judgment upon them. (It should, again, be observed that "tongues" are human languages spoken on this earth. Specifically the Assyrian language is in view here.)

After quoting from Isaiah in I Corinthians 14:21, Paul begins verse 22 with the word "Wherefore." Clearly, the reference to tongues in Isaiah has a connection to Paul's teaching about tongues in Corinth. I Corinthians 14:22 is a direct statement concerning the purpose of the gift of tongues. "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe." Tongues are "for a sign." A sign to whom? The quotation from Isaiah shows that they were a sign *to Israel*. Paul is correcting the mistaken idea of the Corinthians that tongues were given for personal edification.

Whatever various churches may claim about the purpose of the gift of tongues, the Scriptures are clear. Tongues "are for a sign," i.e., for the purpose of being a sign. Furthermore, we are specifically told that they are a sign *not* to believers, "but to them that believe not." Again, verse 22 follows the quotation from Isaiah in verse 21 that speaks of tongues being spoken to "this people." The phrase "this people" can only refer to the Jewish people when taken in its context. When we combine these Biblical facts, we can conclude that *tongues are specifically for the purpose of being a sign of judgment upon unbelieving Jews*.

There are several Biblical examples to support this conclusion. "Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, *a nation whose language thou knowest not*, neither understandest what they say" (Jeremiah 5:15). The tongues spoken on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, also, served as a warning sign to Israel. Peter's warning to Israel was confirmed by the miraculous ability to speak in tongues (see Acts 2:34-36). The unbelieving Jews recognized this instant ability to speak in foreign languages as a miraculous sign from God. Meaningless gibberish would not have had such an effect. Pagan worshipers, madmen, and drunkards commonly speak in such a manner. This would not have impressed the Jews as a sign from God.

The Hebrew people knew that being spoken to in a Gentile tongue was a sign of God's judgment upon them. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, Israel had recently fallen (Romans 11:11-12,15). God was speaking to Israel in various ways to tell them that they had fallen. One way in which God spoke to unbelieving Israel at that time was through tongues. The Corinthian

believers met in a house right next to a synagogue(Acts 18:7). Tongues spoken in the Corinthian church were a sign to the Jews next door. God is not dealing with the nation of Israel today. Therefore, God is no longer giving the gift of tongues for a sign to unbelieving Jews.

Should we speak with tongues today?

We will now give our attention to I Corinthians 13:8-13. We know that the sign gifts listed in I Corinthians 12:8-10 were still functioning when Paul wrote to the Corinthians. However, Paul made it clear that the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge would pass away. "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away" (I Corinthians 13:8). The question is: *When* will they pass away?

The context in I Corinthians 13:9-12 is one of *knowledge*. ("For we *know* in part"--verse nine; "I understood as a child"--verse eleven; "now I know in part"--verse twelve) When Paul wrote I Corinthians he did not have the complete revelation of the mystery. He only knew in part (had partial knowledge). However, he knew that the "perfect" would come. "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (I Corinthians 13:10). Many teach that the word "perfect" in this verse refers to Christ at His Second Coming. However: 1) There is nothing in the context to lead us to conclude that Paul is talking about the Second Coming. The context is *knowledge*; 2) Prophecy does not stop, but revives at the time of the Second Coming (Acts 2:16-18).

When the "perfect" (full, complete, mature) knowledge comes, that which is "in part" (the sign gifts) will be done away (verse 10). Verse 11 is an illustration of this teaching. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (I Corinthians 13:11). The "child" is the church in its infancy. When the church becomes a "man," the childish things (sign gifts) will be put away.

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (I Corinthians 13:12). Verse 12 is not talking about seeing Christ at His Second Coming as many teach. Paul is still on the same subject. Seeing "through a glass darkly" is equivalent to the infant church that had only partial knowledge. "Face to face" is like looking in a clear mirror and symbolizes seeing the mystery clearly and in its fullness.

When studied carefully, I Corinthians 13:8-13 clearly teaches us that the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge ceased when Paul had received the full knowledge of the mystery. When Paul's epistles were completed, these gifts no longer functioned. Though there are many stories and testimonies, no one today truly has these spiritual gifts

Review Questions

True or False

1. Spiritual gifts have been used by God in recent times to bring unity and peace within Christendom.
2. In the midst of *Israel*, Moses performed the first signs done by man in the Bible.
3. The Bible teaches that tongues are ecstatic languages or heavenly languages.
4. Spiritual gifts are given for the enjoyment and personal edification of the one who possesses the gift.

Multiple Choice

5. Paul quotes from Isaiah 28:11-12 to:
 - a. prove that we must keep the law.
 - b. show the purpose of the gift of tongues.
 - c. prove that God was using the gift of tongues to speak to the Gentiles.
 - d. show that water baptism is a sign of our faith.
6. When Jeremiah 5:15 mentions "*a nation whose language thou knowest not*," it refers to:
 - a. the blessings that Gentile nations will bring to Israel.
 - b. a nation of angels.
 - c. the importance of learning foreign languages in missionary work.
 - d. a foreign tongue spoken to Israel to show God's judgment upon them.
7. When Paul wrote the book of I Corinthians:
 - a. the sign gifts were still functioning.
 - b. the sign gifts had already ceased.
 - c. no one was speaking in tongues.
 - d. he taught the believers how to speak in tongues.

Fill in the Blanks

8. In I Corinthians 13 Paul taught that when the _____ knowledge came, that which is "in part" (the sign gifts) would cease.
9. I Corinthians 13:8-13 teaches us that the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge when Paul had received the _____ full knowledge of the mystery.
10. The *only* passage in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that seems to speak of spiritual gifts is _____.

For Further Study

Additional teaching about tongues and the other spiritual gifts is included in the section on lesson 30 in the Leader's Guide and Answer Key. We highly recommend that this section be studied along with lesson 30.
