A GENERAL OVERVIEW
OF THE BIBLE

Roger D. Campbell
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“For the word of the LORD is right;
and all his works are done
in truth” (Psalm 33:4).

Roger D. Campbell
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For some of you, the materials contained in this booklet will be, to a great extent, a review of matters which are quite familiar to you. You, no doubt, have already come to appreciate the fact that repetition can be a great aid in the study of any subject, including the Book of books (2 Peter 3:1). For others, the series of lessons that comprise this study may contain a considerable amount of information that is new to you. Regardless of your level of Bible knowledge, welcome to this journey through the Bible. We are glad that you have joined us, and pray that you will find our study of some Bible basics to be helpful to you.

In this first lesson, as well as in the one that follows, we are interested in getting before us "The Big Picture" of the Bible's message. The Bible is composed of 66 books. We might think of the Bible as being one large volume that is made up of these 66 smaller segments. Just what is this wonderful book all about?

WHY GOD GAVE US THE BIBLE

The Bible came from God, as it is written, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God ..." (2 Timothy 3:16). Why did God give this message to mankind? Though the Bible touches on a wide variety of topics, the basic thrust of the Bible answers three major questions: (1) Who is God?; (2) What has God done for us (mankind)?; (3) What does God expect/want humans to do?

1. Who is God? Only through the Bible can we know what God is really like. By observing the design that is present throughout our universe, a person can properly conclude that this world could not have come into existence by accident. The design that we see in nature cries out that a great Designer (not some undefined "Mother Nature") is behind it (Hebrews 3:4; Romans 1:18-20). However, just by looking at the stars, trees, and magnificent beauty of our world, there is no way for a person to understand the Being that made it. Again, only in the Bible can we find God's revelation of Himself (His nature) to mankind.

What is God like? He is not flesh and bones, but rather is a spirit being (John 4:24). God is a unique being, as there is none like Him. God is the first and the last, and beside Him there is no other true God (Isaiah 44:6). The fact that He is the Creator of all things (Acts 17:24) shows that He is all-powerful.
The Bible further portrays the God of heaven as being all-knowing (1 John 3:20). In addition, the Bible declares, “The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works” (Psalm 145:17). God is the one and only eternally-existent, perfect, almighty Being.

In Bible terminology, the one true God or “Godhead” is made up of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14). Again, no person, even if he/she lived to be 1000 years old, could ever, without the revelation given to us in the Bible, come to an understanding of the true nature of the Creator of the universe.

2. What has God done for us (mankind)? Because of God’s great love, He sent His Son into the world to die for our sins (Romans 5:8; John 3:16). His grace makes salvation from sin available to all people of all nations, and is not limited to those of any one race or culture (Titus 2:11). God’s great care for mankind also caused Him to prepare an eternal dwelling place for those that faithfully serve Him. The Bible calls this eternal abode “heaven” or “the kingdom of God” (1 Peter 1:3,4; Matthew 25:34). In addition to making provisions for man’s spiritual needs, God is also the Source of all of man’s material blessings. He provides all humanity with the sun and rain (Matthew 5:45), as well as the air that we breathe, and even life itself (Acts 17:25). The Bible alone provides us with reliable information about what God has done for mankind.

3. What does God want humans to do? The Bible is God’s lamp or light for man’s path (Psalm 119:105), showing us the way that our Creator wants us to live in order that we might please Him and be able to enter into heaven after our life in this world comes to an end. God’s word lets us know that God wants man’s whole existence on earth to be centered in serving Him and doing His will (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Yes, the Bible clearly shows that the Creator wants us (the created) to reverence Him and love Him with all of our being (Mark 12:30).

THE BASIC THEME OF THE BIBLE

In simple terms, the major thrust of the Bible is about God, human beings, and the relationship that God wants humans to have with Him. Every part of the Bible is somehow linked to God’s desire to save man from sin through His Son Jesus. God wants every person in the whole world to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). All of us should be grateful that “the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of
the world" (1 John 4:14). It is around this message of the Savior and the salvation which He offers that the whole Bible is centered.

We might say that the overall message of the Bible could be summarized in this statement: "The Christ is coming." In the first major division of the Bible, the Old Testament, there were a number of prophecies that pointed to the fact that the Messiah would one day come into the world (Luke 24:25-27,44-47; John 1:41,45,46). The word "Messiah" (which comes from the Hebrew language) means "anointed one," and is the same as the word "Christ" (from the Greek language; John 1:41).

Some of the more memorable Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah include the fact that He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23) and, like a sheep being led to the slaughter, He would suffer for us (Isaiah 53:1-7; Acts 8:27,28,30-35). Old Testament prophecies also pointed to the Messiah being born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1,4-6) and riding into Jerusalem sitting on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1-5).

The first four books (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) of the last major portion of the Bible, the New Testament, show us that the Christ has already come into the world. So, while the Old Testament taught that the Messiah would one day come, the New Testament shows that He has already come! Who is this Messiah? The Bible declares that Jesus, known as "Jesus of Nazareth," was the Christ or Messiah (John 4:25,26; Acts 2:36). It should be noted that while there were many male Jews that had the name "Jesus," there was only one Christ. Thus, it is proper to speak of Jesus of Nazareth as "the" Christ.

When did the Christ come into the world? The Bible says He came when "the fullness of the time" had come (Galatians 4:4). That simply indicates that per God's wisdom or schedule, the time when Jesus was born as a human was the very optimum time in all of history. Jesus came into the world just when the Father wanted Him to, which was about 4 or 5 B.C.

Why did the Christ come into the world? "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners . . ." (1 Timothy 1:15). Since all have sinned (Romans 3:23), then God counts all as sinners that stand in need of the salvation provided by the Christ's sacrifice of Himself.
How did the Christ come into the world? He was born into it as a human. On the day of His birth, God’s messenger told some shepherds, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). The Messiah came as a man, which meant that He, like other humans, had to be tempted (Hebrews 4:15) and go through physical death (Philippians 2:8).

A 2nd Coming – As we have seen, Old Testament prophecies pointed to the Messiah’s coming, and the New Testament shows that those prophecies have been fulfilled, and thus, the Christ has already come into the world. There is another aspect of the Bible’s message that “the Christ is coming,” which we do not want to miss. What is that? The New Testament reveals that the Christ will one day come again (Acts 1:9-11). He came the first time to be man’s Savior from sin, but when He comes the second time, He will come as the Judge of all men (2 Corinthians 5:10).

WHAT GOD MAKES AVAILABLE THROUGH JESUS

According to the Bible, through Jesus and Jesus alone, men can receive the forgiveness of their past sins and be reconciled to the God of heaven in the process (Ephesians 1:7). Sin separates a person from God (Isaiah 59:2), but through Jesus’ death/blood, sinners can be reconciled to, that is, brought back together with, their Creator (Romans 5:8-10).

God also affords us the privilege of becoming citizens of Jesus’ Kingdom (Colossians 1:13,14), which means to become a member of His church (Acts 2:47). It is through Jesus that God gives us the hope of living eternally in heaven with the Godhead (Titus 1:2; 1 Peter 1:3,4). In summary, the Bible teaches that men can enjoy all spiritual blessings in the Christ (Ephesians 1:3). All of these benefits were arranged for us because the God that created us cares so much about us!

Let’s See What We Have Learned in This Lesson!

1. True or false: By observing the world that God created, humans can know that there is a God. Give a scripture to support your answer.

2. Humans need the Bible, because only it can do what?

1)   
2) ________________________________
3) ________________________________

3. How do we know that God is a spirit being, and not flesh and bones?

4. How do we know that God really cares about us?

5. What is the major theme of the Old Testament?

6. The word “Messiah” means ________________________________.

7. “Messiah” is the same as the N.T. word ____________. Prove your answer with a Bible verse (______________).

8. Give two O.T. prophecies (including verses) about the coming Messiah, then show the N.T. fulfillment (give the N.T. verses).
   1) O.T. - ________________________________
      N.T. - ________________________________
   2) O.T. - ________________________________
      N.T. - ________________________________

9. In summary, what is the N.T. message about the Christ?
   1) ________________________________
   2) ________________________________

10. According to Galatians 4:4, when did Jesus come into the world? ________________________________ What does this mean?

11. List a N.T. verse which shows that Jesus’ kingdom already exists. ________________________________

12. According to Ephesians 1:3, what is available in the Christ?
    ________________________________

13. There are a total of ______ books in the Bible.
LESSON 2 – One Book, Two Testaments

The Bible is made up of two major divisions: the Old Testament, and the New Testament. All of the events which are recorded in the Old Testament took place before the birth of Jesus, while the New Testament’s message begins with Jesus’ birth (it actually starts with events that took place shortly prior to His birth).

A BREAKDOWN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

There are 39 books in the Old Testament. Those books can be divided easily into four parts or categories:

1. **The Law or Pentateuch**, sometimes called “The Books of Moses” or “the Torah” – This section includes 5 books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

2. **History** – This section emphasizes the history of Israel and includes 12 books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

3. **Poetry/Literature** – This section includes 5 books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.

4. **Prophets** – For one to be God’s “prophet” meant that he/she was His spokesperson, speaking in place of Him. Prophets are mentioned in other Old Testament books, but each of these books of prophecy is named after the particular prophet that wrote it. There are 17 books in this section: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations (written by Jeremiah), Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The message of the Old Testament begins with the Lord’s creation of all things (Genesis 1:1-31). It closes with matters that took place somewhere around 400 years before Jesus came into the world. Thus, there is a 400-year gap between the last portion of the Old Testament and the next recorded revelation of God to mankind (the opening of the New Testament).

ISRAEL’S SPECIAL PLACE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The nation of Israel is mentioned in the Bible more than any other nation. Why is that, and just who are the Israelite people? The Israelites, also known later in the Bible as “Jews,” look to three men as their forefathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On occasion, God
even referred to Himself in these terms: “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Matthew 22:32).

The Lord, known also as “Jehovah,” counted Israel as His chosen people. “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6). The fact that the Lord chose or selected the Israelites to be His special people did not mean that they were more righteous than others (Deuteronomy 9:4, 5), nor did it guarantee that they would please Him and be saved, regardless of what they might do.

To say that God “chose” Israel to be His covenant people simply indicates that it would be through the nation of Israel that the Messiah, the Son of God, would come into the world as the Savior of mankind. God’s selection of Israel goes back to His choice of Abraham. God saw that Abraham had a faithful heart (Nehemiah 9:8). When Abraham faithfully served the Lord, He not only blessed Abraham personally, but He also promised that it would be through Abraham’s seed that He would eventually bless all nations (Genesis 22:18). From the New Testament, we learn that the promised Seed was Jesus the Christ (Galatians 3:16).

After Abraham died, God promised Isaac, Abraham’s son, that through him the promised Seed (Messiah) would come into the world (Genesis 26:4). Later, God made the same promise to Isaac’s son, Jacob (Genesis 28:14). In addition, God changed Jacob’s name to “Israel” (Genesis 32:27, 28). Who are the Jews or Israelites? The most specific answer is, “They are the offspring of Jacob or Israel.” This is the clearest way to express it, inasmuch as, while it is true that the Israelites are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in addition to having the Israelites as their offspring, Abraham’s and Isaac’s descendants included those of others nations as well.

Why does the Old Testament emphasize Israel rather than, say, Egypt or China, both of which existed at the time we read of the beginning of the Israelite nation? First, God chose the nation of Israel because of the Israelites’ relationship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Second, from the vantage point of the New Testament looking back, when the Christ lived on the earth as a man, He was a Jew, a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matthew 1:1, 2; Romans 9:4, 5). Therefore, the Old Testament’s message about the Israelites serves as a background to what we read about Jesus in
the New Testament. The Jewish people were, on the one hand, the descendants of those three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) to whom Jehovah made great promises. At the same time, they were the forefathers of Jesus the Messiah. That is why so much attention is given to Israel during the Old Testament era.

**A BREAKDOWN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The New Testament consists of 27 books. Just as the Old Testament books can be divided into four sections, so it is with the arrangement of the books of the New Testament. Here is a breakdown of the New Testament:

1. **The Life of Jesus** – The first four books comprise this section: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Since there is only one true “gospel,” which means “good news” (Galatians 1:6-8), rather than refer to these four books as “the four gospels,” it is better to think of them as four distinct gospel accounts, or four separate records of events connected with Jesus’ life on earth.

2. **The Early History of the Lord’s Church** – This is recorded in one book, the Book of Acts. This book, sometimes called “the book of conversions,” covers a period of about 30-33 years, beginning with the establishment of the church of the Lord in Jerusalem, then showing the growth of the church in three realms: numerical, spiritual, and geographic.

3. **Epistles** – Letters to churches and individuals about Christian living. This includes 21 books from the Book of Romans to the Book of Jude. Of the 21 books in this section, either 13 or 14 were written by the apostle Paul, who wrote more books of the Bible than any other writer.

4. **A Message of Victory** – This is the theme of the last book of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation. Throughout its message, it emphasizes that Jesus is Conqueror and will be victorious over all that oppose Him and His Cause. It also shows that those followers of Jesus who faithfully serve Him will also ultimately be victorious over every adversary.

Jesus is mentioned in the very first verse of the New Testament (Matthew 1:1), as well as in the last one (Revelation 22:21). He is, indeed, the very center and point of emphasis of the New Testament. Why? Because there is no other name under heaven whereby men can be saved from sin! (Acts 4:10,12). The New
Testament teaches that, per the Lord’s plan, redemption or salvation from sin is found only in the Christ (2 Timothy 2:10; Romans 3:23,24). That salvation is available to all people of all backgrounds. In New Testament terminology, to be in the Christ is the same as being in His church, as His church is made up of saved people (Ephesians 5:23,25; Acts 2:47).

In addition to what it says about Jesus being mankind’s Savior, rather than emphasize fleshly Israel or the land in which the Israelites lived during the Old Testament era (Canaan), the New Testament points its readers to the matters of how to become and remain a faithful follower of Jesus. The word that means “a follower of the Christ” is “Christian” (Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). In addition, Jesus’ followers are also called “disciples” (Acts 11:26) and “children of God” (Galatians 3:26,27). If one wants to learn about the life and teaching of Jesus, about how to become His disciple, or about the Lord’s church, then he/she must study the New Testament, for only in it are these topics addressed.

A BRIEF CONTRAST IN THE TWO TESTAMENTS

The word “testament” simply means covenant. When we read the Bible, we learn that God has, in fact, entered into a number of different covenants with people throughout the history of mankind. However, in the Bible there is a covenant that is called “the first,” and another that is identified as “the second” (Hebrews 10:9; 8:7).

“The first” refers to the covenant that the Lord made with the nation of Israel about B.C. 1450. Through Moses, God delivered the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, and when they were at Mt. Sinai (Horeb), it was through him that God gave the nation of Israel a written law, called “the Law of Moses” (Deuteronomy 5:1-5,15; Luke 2:22). That was “the first” covenant, and it was between only Jehovah and one nation, Israel.

What about “the second” testament? That is the new covenant or new testament of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 26:28). Rather than being for only one nation (as was the case with the Law of Moses), Jesus’ covenant is for all people of all nations (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). His covenant is also referred to as “the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2), “the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16), and “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9).

The Law of Moses (“the first” covenant) was temporary in nature. God’s will was for that law to be in effect only until some
aspect of the Seed’s (Christ’s) coming into the world (Galatians 3:19). The New Testament makes it plain that when Jesus died on the cross, He abolished the old law (Ephesians 2:14-16), meaning that the old law was no longer in force from that point onward. The covenant of the Christ, on the other hand, is permanent: it will be in effect until the end of the world (Matthew 28:19,20).

Whereas the Lord counted the nation of Israel as His special, holy, chosen people during the Old Testament era (Deuteronomy 14:1,2), no longer is that the case. Instead, the holy people of God in the New Testament age are Christians (1 Peter 2:9,10). As we have noted, the chosen people of God today are those that are in the Christ (Ephesians 1:3,4). They might be Gentiles (non-Jews) or Jews after the flesh, but if they are in the Lord Jesus, they are one family, and together with all other Christians they comprise the nation of God.

During the Old Testament dispensation, God’s people offered animal sacrifices as a substitute for their sins (Hebrews 10:1-4,11). Under the second covenant, however, God no longer requires the offering of animals. Instead, Jesus came as “the Lamb of God” to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29), offering Himself as the only sacrifice necessary to wash away our sins (Hebrews 10:12).

Under the first covenant, the special day of the week for the Israelites was the Sabbath or seventh day of the week (Saturday). The seventh day was to be a day of rest, as God forbade the children of Israel to work on it (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). The Sabbath was a sign or token of the covenant between Jehovah and Israel (Exodus 31:12-17). What about under the new covenant? The New Testament shows the first day of the week or Sunday to be the special day when the early Christians gathered to worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2). It was also on the first day of the week that Jesus rose from the dead (Mark 16:9). Every day of life is a blessing from the Lord, but the first day of the week has special significance for Christians.

WHY NOT LEARN THESE 19?

Nowhere does the Bible label any man or woman as a “major” or “minor” figure in world history. Yet, there are some Bible characters who played significant roles in God’s overall scheme of redemption. We are convinced that if a person is familiar with the nineteen people listed below, as well as the history associated with them,
then he/she will have a pretty good feel for the overall message of the Bible. No doubt, others might come up with a list that included different people, less people, or more people, but we have found this particular group of nineteen names to be helpful in seeing the Bible's big picture. As we progress through our study of a general overview of the Bible, hopefully it will become more apparent why we selected these particular individuals. Will you take the challenge to commit these names to memory, and to do it in the order listed?

1. Adam – the first man.
2. Noah – builder of ark in which the human race was preserved.
3. Abraham – “the father of all them that believe” (Romans 4:11); the first one to whom God said, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 22:18).
4. Isaac – son of Abraham, to whom God’s special promises about a land, nation, and seed were repeated.
5. Jacob – also called “Israel”; son of Isaac; the children of Israel (the Jews) are his offspring.
6. Joseph – son of Jacob who helped preserve the seed of the Messiah by his role as 2nd in command in ancient Egypt.
7. Moses – through him the Lord delivered the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt; by him God gave Israel “the Law of Moses.”
8. Joshua – replaced Moses as Israel’s leader; led Israel into the land of promise (Canaan).
9. Samuel – prophet, priest, and last judge of Israel.
10. Saul – 1st earthly king of Israel.
11. David – 2nd king of Israel.
13. Jeroboam – 1st king of the Northern Kingdom after God’s people divided into two nations.
14. Daniel – a prophet of God that worked and prophesied in Babylon after he was taken there as a captive.
15. Nehemiah – led the Jews in rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem about 140 years after Babylonians destroyed it.
16. John the Baptizer – forerunner of Jesus who helped prepare the way for Jesus by the preaching that he did.
17. Jesus – the Son of God and Savior of the world.
18. Peter – one of the original 12 apostles; a main figure in the early days of the church.
Let's Put It in Writing!

1. The 1st five books of the Old Testament are called ______________________ or ______________________.

2. The Old Testament "books of history" go from ______________ to ______________.

3. The Old Testament "books of poetry" go from ______________ to ______________.

4. Between the last portion of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament, there were about _____ years.

5. Name the four main divisions of the New Testament:
   1) ______________________  2) ______________________
   3) ______________________  4) ______________________

6. The Jews counted what three men as their forefathers?

   ______________________  ______________________  ______________________

7. The word "prophet" means ______________________.

8. ______________ is sometimes called "the book of conversions."

9. The Law of Moses was a covenant that was made at _______ between God and ______________________, while the new covenant is for _______ people of _______ nations.

10. What are some of the differences in the two covenants?

   1) Per God's plan, how long the covenant was to be in effect:
      Old - ______________________
      New - ______________________

   2) Special day of the week:
      Old - ______________________
      New - ______________________

   3) Chosen people of God:
      Old - ______________________
      New - ______________________
LESSON 3 – Historical Peaks of the Old Testament (1): The Book of Genesis

In this lesson we begin a five-part section in which we want to consider what we might call the mountain peaks of Old Testament history. We will not be looking at the details of these phases of biblical history, but rather only at some of the highlights. One may wonder why we would devote one entire lesson to only one book of the Bible, the Book of Genesis. Here is the reason: this book serves as the foundation for the rest of the Bible. In one way or another, the 65 remaining books of the Bible point or connect back to the teaching that is recorded in the Book of Genesis. The contents of this book are referred to and quoted extensively throughout both the Old and New Testaments. A good understanding of the message of the Bible’s first book will be extremely helpful to any person that wants to have a solid grasp of the overall message of the Bible.

What events are covered in this book? It begins with the record of God’s creation of all things (Genesis 1:1-31). It closes with the death of Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob (Genesis 50:26).

BEFORE THE FLOOD (Genesis 1-7)

What does the opening chapter of the Bible tell us about the creation of all things? We learn that God, and God alone, is the Creator. About thirty times in this one chapter, the word “God” is used. We quickly see that God is the Center of the universe and its activities! Not only that, but about ten times in this chapter we read the words, “God said.” There is just no way to overemphasize the importance of the Lord God and what He has to say.

The very word “create,” what does it mean? It comes from a Hebrew word which means to make something out of nothing. Just how did the Lord bring this world into existence? He did it by speaking. For instance, it is written, “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). We further read, “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth . . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6,9). What a powerful God He is, when He can just say the word, and it happens!

How long did God use in creating everything? Here is the Bible’s answer: “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea,
and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day . . .” (Exodus 20:11). If God had wanted to, could He have made everything in less than six days? Of course. What about more than six days, could He have done that? Same answer. He could have done it in any fashion and in any length of time that He desired. What He did do was make everything in a total of six days’ time, and each of those days was equivalent to what we today know as a day (an approximate 24-hour time period).

It is interesting and noteworthy that, while we have a natural or scientific basis for what we call a “year” and a “month,” we must look elsewhere for the proper explanation for our concept of a “week” of time. Where do we get the idea of one week? It comes from the Book of Genesis: God used six days to create all things and rested on the seventh day. It is from this that we get the worldwide-accepted concept of the seven-day cycle that we know as a week.

The Bible says that God created all things “in the beginning” (Genesis 1:1). Do we have any idea how long ago that was? Since God created the first man and first woman on day six (Genesis 1:26-31), then we know that the earth has been around a total of five days longer than the human race. That is right: mankind is only five days “younger” than the material universe. In addition, we know that, in general terms, from our time back to the days of Jesus’ earthly life, about 2000 years have passed. Next, it can be verified that from the time of Jesus back to the days of Abraham it was also roughly 2000 years. The only time period that is left to figure is the time from Abraham back to Adam. In the Bible, we read of some twenty generations from Adam to Abraham (Luke 3:34-38). There is just no way to get millions or billions of years into those twenty generations. Using the genealogies of the Bible and the chronological information that can be gleaned from them, conservative historians estimate that the creation of the world was 4000-6000 years before the birth of Jesus.

After He had created everything else, finally Jehovah made Adam and Eve on the sixth day of His creative activity. What made this event so special is that the Lord declared that He created these humans in His image and after His likeness (Genesis 1:26,27). Because God is Spirit (John 4:24), we know that Adam and Eve could not have been made in some physical likeness to God. The Bible does not explicitly explain what it means to be in the image of God, but from other Bible passages, as well as observation, we learn
that man’s wisdom is superior to that of any other living being, we know that humans have freedom of choice, we know that only humans have a concept of morality, only humans have an eternal soul, only humans have the responsibility to serve the Creator, and only humans will be judged by the Lord and, after such judgment, ultimately enter into either heaven or hell.

Yes, the Bible portrays mankind as being the most special part of all of God’s creation. Humans alone are made in the image of God – we are unique! We must never lose sight of this arrangement: God is far above humans, but humans are also far above the critters of the world. God has given man dominion over the fish of the sea, birds of the air, and beasts of the field (Genesis 1:28). It is true that there are some similarities between animals and humans, but the Bible makes it clear that man is no animal, and no animal is a man!

In Genesis 2 we learn that God placed the first human pair in a magnificent place known as the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8). In that Garden the Lord provided for all of man’s needs. There were two special trees in that garden: the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God forbade Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the latter, and when they did (Genesis 3:6,7), they violated the will of God (Genesis 2:16,17), and thus sin, which is defined as lawlessness or transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4), came into the world. It was one of the saddest days in the history of mankind. In the amount of time that it took for two people to bite into a fruit, the planet earth, which had known no sin in the past, became a sinful place in which to live. God would, though, make provisions for man to be reconciled to Him. That great message will be developed in the Old Testament era in the form of promises and prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, and then those promises and prophecies will find their fulfillment in Jesus, Who gave His life that we might be reconciled to God, live in the hope of heaven, and be spared from experiencing the horrors of hell.

As a consequence of Adam and Eve’s transgression, God cast them out of the Garden of Eden. Why? Lest they return and eat of the tree of life and live forever (Genesis 3:22). All humans die physically because they do not have access to that tree of life. The New Testament speaks of the tree of life being in the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7), implying that we can enjoy never-ending life in heaven.
The Book of Genesis, in just a few chapters, shows us how humanity became extremely corrupt. At the end of the sixth day of creation, when God observed all that He had made, in His sight “it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). How different that was from the situation that had developed by the time of Genesis 6: “And God saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually... And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Genesis 6:5,12). God’s decision was to destroy the entire world, which He did by means of a universal flood (Genesis 7:17-23).

God made another decision in connection with that flood. God saw a righteous man on the earth, and that man, Noah, found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8,9). God’s decision was for Noah to build an ark in which he, his family, and the animals of the world could be preserved. By faith, Noah built that ark just as the Lord commanded him (Genesis 6:14,22; Hebrews 11:7). The purpose of the ark was not to provide transportation for Noah and the other seven people inside it. Rather, it was to serve as a life-preserving, floating vessel. In it, Noah and his family were saved from the waters of destruction (1 Peter 3:20). But why would God want to deliver this handful of people? Answer: In order to preserve the ancestors of the Messiah, that God might make good on His promise to provide a Redeemer for mankind. Noah, while living in an age of corruption, left his mark on the history of mankind by walking with God, being a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), and building that saving ark. Did you realize that not only are you and I the offspring of Adam, but we (as well as all other humans) are the descendants of Noah, too?

FROM THE FLOOD TO JOSEPH’S DEATH (Genesis 8-50)

There are four men that played especially significant roles during this period of time: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. We mentioned the first three of these in our last lesson, but we return to look again at some important matters connected with their lives.

Abram, whose name God changed to “Abraham,” originally lived in the city of Ur (located in the territory of modern-day Iraq), but the Lord called him to leave his homeland and travel toward a place that He would later show him (Genesis 12:3). The land into which the Lord led Abraham was called “Canaan” (Genesis 12:5). It was called by this name because the descendants of Canaan, who was a
grandson of Noah (Genesis 10:1,6), inhabited that area. In general terms, Canaan was located between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean/Great Sea, and in modern times is called “Palestine.”

God made a number of promises to Abraham, who faithfully served Him. One of the major promises that Abraham received from Jehovah was that God would make from him a great nation (Genesis 12:2). Abraham did not personally see this fulfilled, but we later learn that this had reference to the nation of Israel (Exodus 19:1,5,6). In addition, God promised Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to his offspring as an inheritance (Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 15:18). This promise was fulfilled when the children of Israel, who were Abraham’s descendants through Isaac and Jacob, conquered, possessed, and divided the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua (Joshua 21:43).

God made this third promise of great importance to Abraham: “. . . in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). The Lord later slightly modified that promise to be, “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:18). The New Testament plainly teaches that this promise of a “seed” pointed to Jesus the Christ (Galatians 3:16). Though Abraham may not have fully comprehended it at the time, the Lord was promising him that through his offspring the Messiah, the Savior of mankind, would come into the world.

In one way or another, everything that is written in the Bible from Genesis 12 through the last word in the Scriptures is connected with those three great promises that the Lord made to Abraham. In the pages of the Old Testament, our attention is often focused on the nation of promise (Israel) and the land of promise (Canaan), but in the New Testament era neither fleshly Israel nor the territory formerly known as Canaan are portrayed as necessary elements of God’s scheme to save man today. No, in the New Testament we see the seed of promise (the Lord Jesus) as the center of attention and mankind’s only hope of salvation (John 14:6).

As we read further in the Book of Genesis, we learn that God later basically repeated the same promises to Abraham’s son, Isaac (Genesis 26:1-5). Then, after Isaac’s death, God made the same promises to one of Isaac’s sons, Jacob (Genesis 28:10,13-15). You will recall that God changed Jacob’s name to “Israel,” and this man’s offspring became known in history as “the children of Israel” and “the nation of Israel.”
Jacob or Israel had twelve sons, and because of this his descendants were also called “the twelve tribes of Israel.” Judah was the son of Jacob who was Jesus’ ancestor (Matthew 1:1-3), meaning that Jesus was from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14).

There was a different son of Jacob, however, who is spotlighted in the last several chapters of the Book of Genesis. That would be Joseph, whom Jacob loved more than he did his other sons (Genesis 37:4). Joseph’s brothers hated him and sold him as a slave, with Joseph eventually being taken to Egypt. Through the course of time and God’s care for him, Joseph became second in authority in all the land of Egypt. It was through Joseph that the Lord provided food for the Egyptians and surrounding nations during a seven-year period of intense famine. Some of those that came to Joseph to secure food during the famine were his own brothers who had sold him! What was the significance of Joseph’s role in all of this history? He was able to deliver his family from starvation (Genesis 45:4-8; 50:19,20). Just why was it so important to keep them alive? It was necessary to do so in order to preserve the seed of the coming Messiah!

Please note one final truth from the Book of Genesis. Because of Joseph’s authority in Egypt, he was able to make arrangements for his father (Jacob), his brothers, and all of their families to move to Egypt. At the time of Joseph’s death, or we might say at the time of the close of the Book of Genesis, things were going quite well with the descendants of Jacob. They were a free people, they were greatly prospering, and they enjoyed good relations with the native Egyptians. All of that would change drastically after Joseph died. In the very next chapter of the Bible, Exodus 1, we learn that sometime following Joseph’s death, all of the children of Israel were forced to serve as slaves in Egypt. What a change that was!

**Review Questions on Lesson 3:**

1. The Book of Genesis records events from ______________________
   to the death of ______________________.

2. The Hebrew word for “created” in Genesis 1:1 means ________
   ____________________________________________________________.

3. How do we know that humans are superior to animals? ________
   ____________________________________________________________
4. Though Adam and Eve did not possess a written Bible, they did have a law from God while living in the Garden of Eden. How do we know this?

5. How corrupt was the human race by the days of Noah?

6. What was the main purpose of Noah building an ark – why was the ark needed?

7. Name 3 special promises that God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and give the fulfillment of each one (with a Bible verse).
   1) Promise #1 – 
      Fulfillment –
   2) Promise #2 –
      Fulfillment –
   3) Promise #3 –
      Fulfillment –

8. “Israel” was another name for ____________________.

9. Jesus was a Jew from the tribe of ____________________.

10. Briefly describe the special role that Joseph played in God’s scheme of redemption. ____________________

11. Why was a certain land area called “Canaan” in the Old Testament era? ____________________

12. On a scale of 1 to 5, how are you doing in learning (in order!) the 19 Bible characters listed on page 13 of this booklet? _____
LESSON 4 – Historical Peaks of the Old Testament (2): Israel in Egyptian Bondage and in The Wilderness

This section of history is recorded in the Bible in the four books that follow immediately after the Book of Genesis:

*Exodus* – The word means a departure or going out. It shows the children of Israel as slaves in Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, and coming to Mt. Sinai, where they received the Law of Moses. This book begins with the Israelites in Egypt, and closes with them at Mt. Sinai.

*Leviticus* – The title means “pertaining to the Levites.” It shows the duties of the Levites and priests. Two key concepts in it are holiness and worship (including sacrifice and atonement). The few historical events that are recorded in it all took place at Mt. Sinai.

*Numbers* – It shows two separate numberings of the Israelite soldiers (thus the title, *Numbers*) and records the sad saga of Israel’s unfaithfulness in the wilderness region between Mt. Sinai and the land of Canaan. Some have described it as “The Book of Murmurings” due to the excessive complaining that Israel did. It begins with the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai, and closes with them located east of the Jordan River after nearly 40 years of wandering.

*Deuteronomy* – It shows a repeating or second giving of the law from Jehovah to Israel. It records the spoken messages that Moses gave to the Israelites before they entered the land of promise. This book begins and ends with the children of Israel located east of the Jordan River, getting ready to cross over into the land of Canaan. The last chapter records the death of Moses.

**THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPTIAN BONDAGE**

As we noted in our last lesson, following the death of Joseph, the descendants of Jacob, through no fault of their own, became slaves in Egypt (Exodus 1:7-14). It was during this period of slavery that Moses was born (Exodus 2:1-10). When Moses was 80 years old, the Lord appeared to him and charged him to go deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 3:7-10). At first, Moses offered several excuses in an effort to avoid carrying out this commission, but he eventually went and did as the Lord instructed him (Exodus 3:11,13; 4:1,10). The 120 years of Moses’ life can be divided easily
into three periods of 40 years each: (1) His first 40 years were spent in Egypt, living as the son of the king of Egypt’s daughter; (2) His next 40 years were spent in the wilderness as a shepherd and family man, as the Lord was preparing him for his life’s greatest task; (3) He spent the last 40 years of his life leading the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness en route to the land of promise.

Why not just allow the Israelites to remain in Egypt? It was possible, was it not, for the Lord to help them throw off the slavery in which they lived and dwell in Egypt as a free people? The answer is found in the fact that God had promised to give the land of Canaan to the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12:7; 13:15; Exodus 2:23-25). Canaan was the land of promise, not Egypt! God had to be true to His word and fulfill His promise, which meant that at some point in time the children of Israel would have to leave Egypt and make their way to Canaan. In the Book of Exodus we see that God determined that the time was right for His people to be delivered from their slavery and suffering in Egypt, and Moses was His handpicked man to be the one to bring them out.

Moses, accompanied by his brother, Aaron, went before the king of Egypt (Pharaoh) with this message from Jehovah: “Let my people go . . . .” Pharaoh refused to do so (Exodus 5:1,2), and as a consequence of his stubborn rebellion, God sent ten plagues on the land of Egypt (Exodus 7-12). The last of these ten was the death of the firstborn child, which led to the children of Israel commemorating the Lord’s sparing of their firstborn with an annual feast known as “the Passover” (Exodus 12:3-17).

What could possibly be accomplished by God sending those ten plagues on the Egyptians? First, He did so in order to convince Pharaoh to release the Israelites. Second, those memorable miracles plainly showed to Pharaoh and all the Egyptians that He alone is the one, true God (Exodus 7:5; 9:13-16). Third, God said that He used the plagues to “execute judgment” against all the false gods which the Egyptians served (Exodus 12:12). The plagues revealed the total inability and helplessness of those “gods” to protect the Egyptians from the mighty hand and wrath of Jehovah. Finally, He used the plagues in part to punish the Egyptians for their stubborn resistance to His will.

**ISRAEL FROM EGYPT TO MOUNT SINAI**

When trying to figure a historical date for the time of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt, a good estimate would be that it took
place about B.C. 1450. The Bible specifically says that it took place on the 15th day of the first month (Numbers 33:2,3). After leaving Egypt, the children of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai in the third month of their journey (Exodus 19:1; “after three months,” NKJV).

By the powerful hand of God, the children of Israel were able to cross the Red Sea on dry ground and, by doing so, completely escaped out of the hands of the Egyptians (Exodus 14). After they safely crossed the Red Sea and saw that they were finally out of danger from the Egyptians, the Israelites sang a song of victory, praising God for the deliverance that He provided (Exodus 15).

Amazingly, though Jehovah was so gracious to them by delivering them forever from the shackles of slavery in Egypt, the Israelite people murmured about how He dealt with them. Their first recorded complaining took place before they ever crossed the Red Sea! (Exodus 14:10-12). Then, between the Red Sea and Mount Sinai their murmuring did not diminish, as they found themselves without food and water, and foolishly spoke against God, blaming Him, as well as Moses and Aaron, for their temporary lack of comfort (Exodus 16:1-9; 17:1-7).

**ISRAEL AT MOUNT SINAI**

After the children of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai (also called “Horeb”), they remained there for almost one year (Exodus 19:1; Numbers 10:11,12). There were a number of significant events that transpired during their stay there, some of which had a great bearing on their history for a long, long time. Here are five memorable things that happened when Israel was at Mount Sinai.

Ø God gave the Israelites a law, known in the Bible as “the Law of Moses” (Exodus 20-24; Deuteronomy 5:1-5,15). This law included the famous “Ten Commandments,” but it contained other instructions as well. In history, the Jews tallied all the commands in the law and concluded that there were over 600 distinct statutes. What was the purpose of the Law of Moses? It was to serve as a guide for the Israelites (Psalm 119:105). The New Testament notes that the law served to identify for the Israelites just what sin was (Romans 3:20; 7:7). In addition, the law pointed the Israelites to the coming Messiah (Galatians 3:19-24).

Ø The Israelites worshipped an idol, a golden calf, which they made with their own hands (Exodus 32).
Israel erected a tabernacle, which we might think of as a large, portable tent of worship (Exodus 40:17). They constructed it according to the pattern that God revealed to Moses (Exodus 25:9).

Moses anointed Aaron and Aaron's four sons as priests of Israel (Leviticus 8:30). Aaron served as the first high priest in Israel's history. Two of Aaron's sons, Abihu and Nadab, were killed at Mount Sinai after they offered a sacrifice to the Lord that involved unauthorized fire (Leviticus 10:1, 2). God required that all of Israel's priests be from the Israelite tribe of Levi, and specifically, they had to be from Aaron's family.

At the Lord's instruction, the Israelites numbered their soldiers. The total number of soldiers counted was 603,550 (Numbers 1:1-3, 46). This figure has caused many Bible students to conclude that the total population of Israel at that time was perhaps two to three million people. That was a massive group of people to be traveling together en route to the promised land.

ISRAEL FROM MOUNT SINAI TO THE EAST SIDE OF THE JORDAN RIVER, READY TO ENTER CANAAN

Not long after the children of Israel left Mount Sinai and headed toward the land of promise, they sent twelve spies to check out Canaan -- its terrain, geography, and inhabitants. Ten of those men returned to give Moses and the rest of the nation an evil report, saying that there was just no way that Israel could conquer the land. The other two spies, Caleb and Joshua, told a different story. They encouraged the people to trust in the Lord and go up at once to capture the land (Numbers 13:26-14:10).

In the end, to their detriment, the Israelite people accepted the report of the ten pessimistic spies. They collectively murmured against Jehovah, Moses, and Aaron, and wanted to kill Caleb and Joshua for what they had suggested. As a result of their rebellion and lack of faith in God, He announced that He would cause the Israelites to wander in the wilderness for a total of 40 years. Why 40 years? The spies had spent 40 days surveying the land of Canaan, and God said that the nation would have to spend one year wandering for each day the spies had been gone (Numbers 14:26-34). We should note that the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness was counted from the time of Israel's exodus out of Egypt until the time that they entered the land of Canaan. It is also noteworthy that, as a reward for their faithfulness, Joshua and
Caleb were the only two soldiers numbered at Sinai (out of over 600,000!) that God allowed to enter the promised land.

One might think that after God pronounced such a severe punishment on Israel, causing them to be confined to the wilderness for four decades, that this would surely cause the people of God to cease their murmuring. That, however, is not at all what took place. Throughout their travels in the wilderness, the people complained constantly, and in each case they had to face the wrath of the Lord. But, He was also merciful to the Israelites, providing them with the provisions that they really needed, including manna, a special bread from heaven. In His dealings with them in the wilderness, we can truly see Jehovah's “goodness and severity” (Romans 11:22).

There are a number of the Israelites' rebellious incidents recorded in the Book of Numbers. The bottom line is, those children of Israel that died in the wilderness and thus did not make it to the land of Canaan were plagued by a lack of faith. The Bible plainly reveals this truth: “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:19). How sad that God's own people “believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation” (Psalm 78:22). One of the real tragedies of this period of Old Testament history is the fact that, because they failed to heed the Lord's command on one occasion, Moses and Aaron were also not allowed to go into Canaan (Numbers 20:12,24; 27:12-14).

Despite their problems and turmoil in the wilderness, under Moses' guidance the Israelites made it to the east side of the Jordan River in the 40th year after they left Egypt. There, across the river from the land of Canaan, they conquered the nations that dwelt in that territory (on Jordan's eastern side, Numbers 22-25). The land there was so appealing, that two and one-half tribes of Israel decided to settle in that region (Numbers 32). Also, while situated east of the Jordan River, Israel once again numbered its soldiers (Numbers 26). This was now a new generation.

Finally, after leading Israel to the very brink of the promised land, Moses died in the region east of Jordan. The Lord Himself buried Moses in an unknown location (Deuteronomy 34:5-7). Though Moses was not allowed to enter Canaan, he had been a magnificent leader for Israel. He had done all within his power to get them ready for their next major undertaking: entering and conquering the land of promise. With Moses' passing, it would now be up to the Israelites to march into Canaan and take the land. Lord willing, in our next lesson we will see how that transpired.
Let's answer some questions!

1. Under the law of Moses, each priest was from the tribe of _____, and from the family of _____________.

2. Why did the Lord not just allow the children of Israel to remain in Egypt permanently?

3. Why is one book of the O.T. called “Numbers?”

4. We read about the children of Israel being in Egyptian bondage in the book of _________________.

5. Name 2 purposes of the plagues that God carried out in Egypt:
   1) __________________________________________
   2) __________________________________________

6. The last of the 10 plagues was ________________________, out of which grew the feast called ________________________.

7. The Law of Moses contained more than _______ commands.

8. How long did the children of Israel stay at Mt. Sinai? __________
   __________

9. The historical date for the Israelites’ departure from Egypt with Moses was around B.C. __________.

10. The only two Israelites that were soldiers at Mt. Sinai and eventually entered Canaan were ________ & ________.

11. The Israelites erected the tabernacle at ___________________ according to the ____________ that God gave Moses (Ex. 25:9).

12. The children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for _____ years. This period of time goes from when they__________________________ until they ________________________________.

13. Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter the Land of Canaan because of their ________________________ (Num. 20:12) and ________________________ (Num. 20:24; 27:14).
LESSON 5 – Historical Peaks of the
Old Testament (3): Israel Conquering the Land of Canaan and Living under the Judges

The death of Moses and the anointing of Saul as Israel’s first earthly king were both significant happenings in the history of Israel. Our present study will look at what took place between those two important events. We will see how Israel entered and conquered the land of Canaan, and how it was later led by different judges. The history of this section is recorded in the Bible in four books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and the first nine chapters of 1 Samuel.

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

This book records what the children of Israel did in relation to the land of Canaan following the death of Moses. Under the leadership of Joshua, the Israelites (1) Entered the promised land, (2) Conquered it, (3) Possessed it, and (4) Divided its territory among the tribes of Israel. In view of this, it is proper to think of this book’s theme as “Conquest and Possession.”

The book begins with the Lord encouraging Joshua after Moses’ death (Joshua 1:1,2,6-9). It would not be an easy task for anyone to replace Moses, as he had been Israel’s unquestioned leader for forty years, but God chose Joshua as Moses’ successor. Joshua would be responsible for leading the Israelites into Canaan. God promised to be with Joshua just as He had been with Moses (Joshua 1:5).

As we noted briefly in a previous lesson, the land of promise was called “Canaan” due to the fact that the descendants of Canaan dwelled there. Canaan was the son of Ham (Genesis 10:6), who was the son of Noah (Genesis 10:1). Thus, originally “Canaan” was the name of a man, Noah’s grandson.

Joshua 3 and 4 record how the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and made their long-awaited entrance into Canaan. It was approximately B.C. 1407/1406, and took place just five days short of being exactly forty years to the day from the time they had left Egypt (Joshua 4:19; Numbers 33:2,3).

Once inside Canaan, the first city that the Israelites conquered was the city of Jericho (Joshua 6). The key to their victory there was their trust in God and willingness to follow His plan. God’s plan called for the Israelites to march around the city for seven days. The
Israelites did precisely what the Lord instructed them to do on this occasion, and when they did so, He blessed them. Hear what the New Testament says about what took place: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (Hebrews 11:30).

The lesson that the children of Israel needed to learn from their experience at Jericho was that when they walked with the Lord, there was no enemy that could stand before them. In Israel’s efforts to defeat the Canaanites and possess the land during the days of Joshua, the Bible records only one instance in which Israel lost a battle. God made plain to them the reason for their defeat on that occasion: they failed to obey His word (Joshua 7).

Why would Jehovah charge His people to destroy the Canaanite people? In part, God used Israel as His instrument of punishment. Through the Israelites, He punished the Canaanites for their wickedness (Deuteronomy 9:3-5), which God counted as being "full" at the time the Israelites marched into Canaan (Genesis 15:16). In addition, God wanted Israel to destroy the people of Canaan in order to prevent them from corrupting His people (Deuteronomy 7:1-6). God wanted His people to be holy and uncontaminated by the immorality of those around them.

Under Joshua’s guidance, the Israelites were able to conquer the land and subdue the people, though pockets of resistance remained in various parts of the country. In his lifetime, Joshua and his contemporaries saw the fulfillment of the land promise that God had originally made to Abraham: "And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it and dwelt therein" (Joshua 21:43). On his part, prior to his death, Joshua charged the Israelites to choose whom they would serve, but as he put it, "... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). The Book of Joshua opens with Joshua preparing to lead Israel over the Jordan River and into the land of Canaan, and it closes with the record of Joshua’s death.

**THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES**

This book basically records events that transpired during the time that twelve or thirteen judges served in Israel. Those judges included Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech (?), Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson. As we shall notice a bit later in this lesson, the work of Israel’s last two judges, Eli and Samuel, is recorded in the Book of 1 Samuel.
Because of the evil that abounded during the time of the judges, this historical period is often referred to as “the Dark Ages/Days” of Old Testament history. The last verse of the book is quite telling: “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” ( Judges 21:25).

The role of these judges in Israel was not to make legal decisions in a court of law. Nor did they rule as kings or queens [It is for this reason that some Bible students do not consider Abimelech as a true judge, since the Bible says that some of the Israelites made him “king” (Judges 9:6,22)]. Simply put, the judges of Israel during this period served as deliverers, as Jehovah used them to deliver the Israelites out from under the hand of their oppressors. The Bible record says, “And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge . . .” (Judges 2:18).

Throughout the period of the judges, there was a recurring fourfold cycle. First, the Israelites would rebel against the Lord. Second, in each case God punished them for their disobedience (He caused their adversaries to rule over them). Third, the people would repent of their wrongdoing and call out to God to save them. Finally, the Lord would raise up a judge to deliver them from their oppressors, after which there would be a time of peace and rest in the land. After the judge died, the children of Israel would turn back to their old ways of unfaithfulness, and the cycle would start anew. A clear description of this ongoing chain of events is seen in Judges 2:14-23.

Those that served as Israel’s judges were from a variety of backgrounds. Some of them were also priests or prophets. Others were more like warriors. Three of the more well-known judges that are mentioned in this book would be Deborah, Gideon, and Samson. Deborah was the only female judge, and she also served as a prophetess (Judges 4:4,5). Gideon bravely led Israel to victory over the massive military force of their enemy with his own army that consisted of only 300 men (Judges 6,7). And, Samson was renowned for the physical strength with which the Lord blessed him (Judges 13-16).

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF RUTH

This is one of two Bible books that is named after a woman (the Book of Esther being the other one). The events of this book occurred during the time of the judges (Ruth 1:1), though the name of no particular judge is noted in it.
The book’s story line revolves around three main characters. There was Naomi, who along with her family, left Israel due to a severe famine and went to live in the land of Moab. There her husband and two sons died (Ruth 1:1-5). When Naomi decided to return to her home in the town of Bethlehem in Israel, one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, a woman of Moab, accompanied her back to her home. Ruth was now a widow, but she came as a foreigner to dwell among the Israelites, and she helped provide and care for Naomi (Ruth 1,2). Though Ruth was a Gentile, over the course of time the people of Bethlehem observed that she was a virtuous woman (Ruth 3:11).

The third principle person in this short book was a man by the name of Boaz. Boaz was a well-known Israelite in the region of Bethlehem. Eventually, he married Ruth and they continued to live in Bethlehem. Their son was the grandfather of David, the second king of Israel (Ruth 4:21,22). Notice the Bethlehem connection: Boaz and Ruth lived there (they were Jesus’ ancestors, Matthew 1:1,5), King David grew up there, and it was the place of Jesus’ birth (Matthew 2:1).

THE MESSAGE OF 1 SAMUEL 1-9

Some Bible students do not realize it, but the events that are recorded in these nine chapters actually fit into the period of the judges. The two judges that are noted in this section of Scripture are Eli and Samuel. Though these two men are not mentioned in the Book of Judges, their role was just as important as that of their predecessors.

Hannah was a special woman about whom we read in the first chapter of 1 Samuel. She was childless for a long time, but prayed to the Lord and asked for a son, promising that if He would give her one, she would devote him to the Lord and His Cause. God granted her wish, and she kept her promise, giving her son to be in the Lord’s service for his entire life. That son was Samuel.

During Samuel’s childhood years, he served in the tabernacle when Eli was a priest of God and Israel’s next-to-last judge. Eli served for a long time in the Lord’s work, but he made the costly mistake of failing to restrain his sons when they did wickedly. Their action brought shame on the people and their father’s name, but Eli still did not discipline them properly (1 Samuel 3:12,13).
Despite Eli's weakness in handling his sons, it was under his tutelage that Samuel "learned the ropes" of the Lord's service. When Samuel grew up, he played a vital role in Israel's history. Not only was he Israel's last judge, but he was also a prophet and priest (1 Samuel 7:15-17; 3:19-21). Samuel is sometimes thought of as a "man of transition" in Israel's history due to the fact that he helped lead the Israelites from the period of the judges into the time when they had kings reigning over them. He would, in fact, be the one that anointed Israel's first two kings.

1 Samuel 8 records a tragic development in Israel. When Samuel was old, the people of Israel came to him with a special request. They stated it this way to Samuel: "Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:5). When Samuel voiced his strong disapproval of their desire, they emphatically told him again, "Nay, but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles" (1 Samuel 8:19,20). It was a sad day in Israel when the people openly admitted that they wanted to be like all the other nations around them. By saying such, they were implying that they were not satisfied with God's arrangement, which was for Him to be Israel's Ruler. How did God see Israel's request? Here is what He told Samuel: "... they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Samuel 8:7). God wanted His people to be holy, a distinct people, separate from others. There were times in their history, though, as in this case, when the Israelites were determined to do things like everybody else did them. That is a strategy or approach that is guaranteed to fail in the spiritual realm.

**Let's See What We Have Learned in This Lesson!**

1. The events recorded in the Book of Ruth took place during the period of __________________ (1:1).

2. What does the Book of Joshua show that the Israelites did with the Land of Canaan?
   1) __________________  2) __________________
   3) __________________

3. __________________ took Moses' place as the leader of Israel.
4. Name a verse that shows that God fulfilled the land promise which He made to Abraham (Joshua _____:______).

5. Name the last two judges of Israel. __________  __________

6. Name two reasons why God gave the order for the children of Israel to destroy the Canaanites.
   1) ______________________________________________________________________
   2) ______________________________________________________________________

7. We should think of the judges in the Old Testament period of the judges as ______________ that God raised up.

8. Name the 4-fold cycle that we see throughout the period of the judges:
   1) ______________________________________________________________________
   2) ______________________________________________________________________
   3) ______________________________________________________________________
   4) ______________________________________________________________________


10. Name a tragic mistake that Eli made.

11. When Samuel was old, what special request did the people of Israel make of him? (1 Samuel 8).

12. Briefly identify each of the following people:
   Ruth – ______________________________________________________________________
   Hannah – _____________________________________________________________________
   Gideon – _____________________________________________________________________
LESSON 6 – Historical Peaks of the Old Testament (4): The United Kingdom and the Divided Kingdom

Following the era of the judges, the nation of Israel had a 120-year period in which it was united under the rule of three kings. In order, those three kings were Saul, David, and Solomon. The United Kingdom covers the events from the anointing of Saul as king to the death of Solomon.

The historical time frame of the United Kingdom was B.C. 1051-931. Thus, in general terms, the events of this period of Israel’s history took place roughly 1000 years before Jesus was born. In the Bible, the happenings of the United Kingdom are recorded in five different Old Testament books. The history of the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon is written in 1 Samuel 10-31, 2 Samuel 1-24, 1 Kings 1-11, 1 Chronicles 10-29, and 2 Chronicles 1-9.

THE REIGN OF KING SAUL

You will recall that the people of Israel came to Samuel with the request for him to provide them with an earthly king. Why? Mainly because all the other nations that they observed had a king, so they wanted one in order to be like them (1 Samuel 8:1-22). Who had been ruling as king over Israel to that point? The Lord Himself. Samuel later reminded the Israelites, “...ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king” (1 Samuel 12:12). Thus, Israel’s request for an earthly monarch was, in fact, a rejection of the Lord and the job that He was doing as their Ruler!

The prophet Samuel anointed Saul as the first earthly king of Israel (1 Samuel 10:1). Saul reigned over Israel 40 years (Acts 13:21), as did both David and Solomon that ruled after him. The time frame of his reign was from B.C. 1051 to B.C. 1011.

Why did Jehovah select Saul to serve as king? Obviously, God saw that Saul was the best man for the job at that time. In the beginning of his rule, Saul was a humble man, being small in his own sight (1 Samuel 9:20,21; 10:22; 15:17). Sadly, though, Saul showed himself to be a failure when he proudly rejected the word of the Lord. More than once he did not carry out the instructions that
God gave him, causing God to look outside of Saul’s family for the next king (1 Samuel 13:8-14; 15:3,9,12-15,22,23,28).

When David became popular with the people of Israel, Saul was incensed with jealousy and became obsessed with trying to kill him (1 Samuel 18:5-9). Saul’s life was one of great tragedy, in part because he had such wonderful potential and so many opportunities from the Lord, but he was not faithful in carrying out what the Lord charged him to do.

THE REIGN OF KING DAVID

David was Israel’s second earthly king. As Saul had done, David reigned over Israel for 40 years (1 Chronicles 29:26,27). The historical dates for David’s reign were B.C. 1011-971.

Just as the prophet Samuel had anointed Saul to be king, so he was also the one whom God selected to anoint David (1 Sam. 16:1,7-13). Though yet a very young man at the time he was anointed, God saw that David was a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22). After Samuel anointed him, David did not immediately become king. Rather, he first served Saul as his harp player and a soldier, and later began serving as king only after the death of Saul. During the period of David’s life when he had to flee for his life because Saul sought to kill him, more than once he had the opportunity to kill Saul and seize the throne, but he refused to do so because he recognized that Saul was the Lord’s anointed (1 Samuel 24:6,10).

Though it is common to refer to this historical period as “the United Kingdom,” we should note that as soon as Saul died, there was a temporary division in the kingdom. For two years the tribes in the northern part of Israel followed Ishbosheth, the son of Saul (2 Samuel 2:8-11), while at that same time David ruled over other portions of the nation.

It was during David’s time on the throne that Jerusalem became the capital and most prominent city of Israel. David’s reign went smoothly until he committed adultery with a woman (Bathsheba) and tried to cover it up by having her husband put to death. As a consequence of those grievous mistakes that David committed, though he repented and the Lord forgave him, serious troubles plagued him until the day of his death (2 Samuel 11:1-12:23).

In addition to being king over Israel, David was also a prophet of God and the writer of a large portion of the Book of Psalms (Acts 2:29,30; 2 Samuel 23:1,2). In the Bible much is also made of the fact
that David desired to build a temple (house of worship) for the Lord God. However, it was not God’s will for David to do so. That task would be left for David’s son to carry out after David’s passing. To David’s credit, though he must have been disappointed that the Lord would not allow him to build His house, he did put forth a great effort to prepare materials that could later be used in the temple’s construction (1 Chronicles 22:5,14; 29:1-3). Part of David’s role as king over God’s people was to bring peace to the kingdom by the battles that he fought against Israel’s adversaries. When he died, the conditions were right for David’s son, Solomon, to build the temple for the Lord (1 Kings 5:3-5).

THE REIGN OF KING SOLOMON

Solomon served as Israel’s third earthly king. Like the two kings that preceded him, Solomon reigned over Israel for a period of 40 years (1 Kings 11:42). He was the last Israelite in history to rule as king over a united Israel. Solomon began reigning in about B.C. 971, and his rule ended when he died in about B.C. 931.

The reign of Solomon got off to a good beginning. This is indicated in two ways. First, in the initial stage of his rule, the Bible plainly states, “And Solomon loved the LORD” (1 Kings 3:3). Second, when Jehovah told him that He would give him anything that he desired, Solomon asked the Lord to give him wisdom to discern between good and evil and to rule God’s people well. God was pleased with Solomon’s request and blessed him not only with incredible wisdom, but with great material blessings as well (1 Kings 3:7-11).

One of Solomon’s greatest accomplishments was his work in overseeing the building of a magnificent temple in Jerusalem. It was to this temple that the Israelites came to offer worship to the Lord. The temple was seven years in construction, and was completed around B.C. 960 (1 Kings 6:1,38)

During the reign of Solomon, Israel was at the peak of its military strength and ruled over the largest territory in its history. The land area over which Solomon ruled was much larger than that which Israel had in its possession when Saul was king. It was during Solomon’s reign that a second phase of God’s land promise to Abraham was fulfilled: Solomon and Israel ruled over the territory from the Euphrates River (“the river”) all the way to the border of Egypt (1 Kings 4:21; Genesis 15:18).
In addition to his 40-year reign as king, Solomon left his mark on Israel's history and culture by the writing that he did. He spoke 3000 proverbs and came up with over 1000 songs (1 Kings 4:32). He was the writer of three Old Testament books: the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Solomon foolishly married many foreign wives, women that were not servants of Jehovah. His union with them led to his own spiritual downfall when he was older, as he began serving false gods and making idolatrous temples to please his wives (1 Kings 11:3-7). Solomon's departure from the Lord, coupled with the manner in which he had caused many in Israel to serve rigorously during his reign, laid the groundwork for the division of Israel, which would transpire following his death.

**THE DIVIDED KINGDOM**

The term “Divided Kingdom” applies to that period in the history of the Israelites during which the nation of Israel was divided into two distinct kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom was known as “Israel,” while the Southern Kingdom was called “Judah.”

The division in the kingdom took place shortly after the death of Solomon, and is recorded in 1 Kings 12. The Divided Kingdom covers the events from the death of Solomon (B.C. 931) to the time when the Northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria (B.C. 722). Thus, the Divided Kingdom lasted about 210 years.

As we noted, the Northern Kingdom was called “Israel.” In the books of the prophets, it is also sometimes referred to as “Samaria” or “Ephraim” (Hosea 5:3; 7:1; 8:5; 10:5).

The first king of the Northern Kingdom was Jeroboam. Ten of the twelve tribes that constituted God's people rallied around him and formed the Northern Kingdom. Upon becoming king, Jeroboam immediately established a form of worship in which he changed the object of worship, the place of worship, and the criteria for the priesthood. Most striking about his new setup for worship was the fact that he set up two golden calves for the people to worship in Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:25-33).

Jeroboam's unauthorized worship remained a corrupting influence throughout the entire time of the Northern Kingdom's existence. In all, there were nineteen kings that ruled over the Northern Kingdom, and tragically, every one of them was evil. Because the general rule in spiritual matters is, as goes the
leader(s), so go the people, the Northern Kingdom remained in a state of rebellion against Jehovah, thanks in a large measure to its corrupt kings. From a spiritual standpoint, the worst of Israel's nineteen kings was Ahab, who, along with his wife Jezebel, hated the prophets of God and took the nation to unprecedented levels of wickedness.

Time and again the Lord sent His prophets to preach to the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom, calling on them to repent of their wrongdoing and return to Him. Such prophets as Jonah, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Amos, and Hosea were among those that carried God's word to Israel during this period. Unfortunately, for the most part, their message fell on deaf ears. In the end, the longsuffering of God ran out, and in B.C. 722 He used the Assyrian Empire to conquer the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 17:5-23).

What about the Southern Kingdom of Judah, how did it fare? A son of Solomon, Rehoboam, served as Judah's first king. The Southern Kingdom basically consisted of only two tribes: Judah and Benjamin. We should note, though, that faithful Levites and priests from all areas came to the support of the Southern Kingdom from the earliest days of the kingdom's division (2 Chronicles 11:13-17). Later, on various occasions we read of some people (a faithful remnant) from other tribes joining themselves to the Southern Kingdom (2 Chronicles 15:8,9; 30:1,11).

Just as there were nineteen kings in Israel, so there were nineteen kings in the history of Judah. All of the kings in the Southern Kingdom were the descendants of David, and thus were from the tribe of Judah. Some of those men were righteous, while some were more like their evil counterparts in the Northern Kingdom. During the period of the Divided Kingdom, the most faithful kings of Judah included Asa and Jehoshaphat (See a complete listing of all the kings of both kingdoms on the next page).

During the Divided Kingdom, the Lord sent a number of prophets to exhort and warn the people of the Southern Kingdom. Two of the more well-known prophets of that era who prophesied to Judah included Isaiah and Micah. The people of the Southern Kingdom observed how Israel was destroyed by Jehovah when it refused to serve Him faithfully. Would Judah receive the message that God gave her through His prophets and thereby avoid Israel's mistakes, or would she follow the same reckless path of destruction? God willing, in our next lesson we will see the answer.
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**Review Questions over this lesson:**

1. The United Kingdom lasted for _____ years, going from B.C. _____ to B.C. _____.

2. List Israel's 1st three kings: ____________________________________________

3. ______________________ anointed the 1st two kings of Israel.

4. Why did Saul desire to kill David?
5. Serious problems plagued David’s reign after what took place?

6. What is recorded in 1 Kings 3 that indicates that the reign of Solomon got off to a good start?
   1) 
   2) 

7. Solomon’s downfall came about when he 

8. The Divided Kingdom covers events from the death of ________ to the fall of the ___________________.

9. The Northern Kingdom was called __________________, and the Southern Kingdom was called __________________.

10. The nation that the Lord used to conquer and punish the Northern Kingdom was __________________.

11. The Northern Kingdom was destroyed in B.C. ________.

12. The 1st king of the Northern Kingdom was _______________. What kind of corrupt worship did he establish?

13. The 1st king of the Southern Kingdom was _______________, who was the son of ____________________.

14. There were a total of _____ kings in the Northern Kingdom, while _____ men ruled as king in the Southern Kingdom.

15. All of the kings of the Southern Kingdom were David’s offspring, and thus were from the tribe of ________________.

16. Name something that all of the kings of the Northern Kingdom had in common.

As we learned in our last lesson, when Solomon died, God’s people quickly divided into two kingdoms. Because of its departure from the Lord and unwillingness to turn back to Him, the Northern Kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians in B.C. 722. What became of the Southern Kingdom after that? How did it fare? In the end, Judah suffered the same fate that her brethren in the north, Israel, had to endure: Judah was eventually destroyed, and a number of her people were carried away into captivity. However, that is not the end of the Old Testament story of the Jews. Let us now look at some of the highlights of the latter stages of Old Testament history.

JUDAH ALONE

Following the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, when it came to the Israelite people, the only nation remaining was the Southern Kingdom of Judah. While there had been two kingdoms (Israel and Judah), after Israel’s fall the only one left standing was Judah. Thus, we call the next phase of the history of God’s people “Judah Alone.” This period includes the events from the fall of the Northern Kingdom to the destruction of the Southern Kingdom.

Again, the fall of the Northern Kingdom to the Assyrians took place in B.C. 722. The Southern Kingdom was ultimately destroyed at the hands of the Babylonians in B.C. 586. Thus, the time covered in this period, “Judah Alone,” was about 136 years. We can read about this history in 2 Kings 18-25 and 2 Chronicles 29-36.

During this period, there were two outstanding kings in Judah: Hezekiah and Josiah. Both of them were the sons of evil kings, but each of them tried to carry out much-needed spiritual reforms in the nation (2 Chronicles 29,30,34). Their reforms, however, did not truly capture the hearts of the people, and Judah continued in its departure from Jehovah. Just as He had done with the Northern Kingdom, time and again during this period the Lord sent His prophets to call for Judah to repent, but she refused to turn back to Him (2 Chronicles 36:14-17). In the end, that was what spelled Judah’s doom: her unwillingness to humble herself and obey God.
The dominant power in the Middle East during the final years of this period was the Babylonian Empire under King Nebuchadnezzar. God used the Babylonians as His instrument to punish and destroy rebellious Judah. The Babylonians took Jews into captivity in three major groups:

Group #1 – B.C. 606/605 – The prophet Daniel was among the captives in this group (2 Chronicles 36:5-7; Daniel 1:1,2,6).

Group #2 – B.C. 598/597 – The prophet Ezekiel was in this group of captives (2 Kings 24:8-16; Ezekiel 1:1,2).

Group #3 – B.C. 586 – This group of Jews was carried away to Babylon at the time of the final destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (2 Kings 25:8-21). After the destruction of Jerusalem, Judah was no longer an independent nation, but was merely a province in the Babylonian Empire.

A number of God’s prophets prophesied during the time of “Judah Alone.” That list would include Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Daniel, and Ezekiel.

CAPTIVITY/EXILE IN BABYLON

The Jews’ captivity or exile in Babylon lasted until about B.C. 536, at which time the Jews were allowed to return to their homeland. From the destruction of the Southern Kingdom to the time when the Jews were free to go back home, was about 50 years. This period of history is recorded in 2 Kings 25:22-30, as well as in some portions of the Books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

As a note of clarity about the length of the exile/captivity in Babylon, the total length of forced captivity in Babylon for the Jews was a total of 70 years. Jeremiah had prophesied about this (Jeremiah 29:10; 25:11,12). Some Jews were taken into captivity in B.C. 605, some in B.C. 597, and still others in B.C. 586. Because Jerusalem and the temple were not destroyed until B.C. 586, then we prefer to point to that date as the final fall of Judah and the end of the period that we identify as “Judah Alone.” Others like to count the period of “Babylonian Captivity/Exile” from the taking of the first group of Jews to Babylon in B.C. 606/605.

The work of three prophets of God stands out during this time. First, there was Jeremiah, who preached the word of the Lord in Judah. Before Judah fell, he pleaded with her leaders to repent and guide the people back to the Lord. His warnings went unheeded,
and, as a result, Judah was crushed. Prior to the final fall of Judah, Jeremiah wrote a letter to Jewish exiles in Babylon about their life there (Jeremiah 29:1-10), encouraging them to settle in for “the long haul.” Jeremiah suffered much at the hands of his own brethren due to his faithful preaching.

A second prophet of this era was Ezekiel, who lived and preached among the common Jewish exiles in the land of Babylon (Ezekiel 1:1-3). In addition, there was Daniel, God’s faithful servant who prophesied in Babylon, where, through the providence of God, he gained the favor of the king of Babylon and served in the Babylonian government (Daniel 2:48,49). Daniel predicted that in the future God would establish a kingdom which would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). That kingdom, which was established in the first century of our era, is the church of the living God.

Led by Cyrus, the Medes and Persians combined to overthrown the Babylonian Empire in about B.C. 538. The new ruling empire is known in history as the Medo-Persian Empire. Not long after coming to power, Cyrus made a decree that allowed the Jews to return to their homeland (2 Chronicles 36:22,23).

RESTORATION

We call the final period of Old Testament history “Restoration,” because it was during this time that a number of the Jews returned to their homeland, where they proceeded to restore the worship of the Lord and rebuild structures that had been destroyed during the fall of Judah. In terms of the events that transpired during this period, it goes from the decree of Cyrus, whereby he allowed the Jews to return to their homeland, to the end of the work of Nehemiah. With the end of Nehemiah’s work, the history of the Old Testament era came to a close.

The history of the Restoration Period is recorded in the Bible in the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, as well as in parts of the Book of Daniel. As we have already noted, in about B.C. 536 King Cyrus allowed any Jews that so desired to return to their homeland (Ezra 1:1-4; 2 Chronicles 36:22,23). By the power of God, Isaiah had prophesied about what Cyrus would do to benefit the Jews long before the king was even born! (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).

Following Cyrus’ decree, there were three significant returns of Jews from the land in which they had been exiles under the rule of the Babylonian Empire. God had promised His people that their
stay in Babylon would not be permanent, as He would one day bring them back to their beloved homeland. The first return of Jews came in about B.C. 536, when Zerubbabel led a group of Jews from Babylon to Judah (Ezra 2). Assisted by the high priest Joshua (Jeshua), Zerubbabel led the people in rebuilding in Jerusalem the temple of God which had been destroyed 50 years earlier by the Babylonians. With the prophets Haggai and Zechariah exhorting them, the Jews completed the rebuilding of the temple in B.C. 516/515 (Ezra 5:1, 2; 6:14, 15).

Another major development among the people of God during the Restoration Period was the rise of a Jewish woman, Esther, to be queen of the Medo-Persian Empire. Esther was queen of the empire from B.C. 480-470. As queen, she was able to help deliver the Jews from a plot that threatened to totally exterminate them. This amazing story, which can only be explained by God’s providential care of His special people, is recorded in the book of the Bible that is named after the queen (Esther 2-9).

A little over ten years after Esther’s time as queen came to an end, a second group of Jews returned to their homeland. That return took place in B.C. 458/457 and was led by Ezra, a faithful priest and scribe in the law of God (Ezra 7:1-10).

Later, in B.C. 445/444 Nehemiah traveled from the palace of the Medo-Persian Empire to Jerusalem. Nehemiah was a Jew that served as cupbearer to the king. He had received news that the affairs of the Jews in Jerusalem were in disarray, and that the wall around the city was still broken down, though it had been some 140 years since the Babylonians had destroyed it (Nehemiah 1:3). Under Nehemiah’s leadership, the Jews successfully rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem in only 52 days (Nehemiah 2:1-6:15). After the work to reconstruct the wall was completed, Nehemiah worked with Ezra to help stabilize and set in order the affairs of the Jews in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas.

In B.C. 432, Nehemiah came to Jerusalem a second time. Due to the various forms of corruption that had developed among the Jews in his absence, Nehemiah found it necessary to carry out a number of important reforms (Nehemiah 13). Chronologically, the close of Nehemiah’s work in Jerusalem was the last recorded historical activity in the Old Testament. Thus, in a nutshell, the history of the Old Testament goes from the creation of the world (Genesis 1) to the final reforms of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 13).
We read in the Bible of three prophets of God that played a key role during the Restoration Period. As we noted, two of those prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, prophesied during the days of Ezra. The third prophet of this era was Malachi, the writer of the last book of the Old Testament.

This final period of Old Testament history is appropriately characterized as “Restoration,” seeing that during this time the Jews were restored to their homeland, the temple was restored in Jerusalem, proper worship was restored, and the wall around Jerusalem was restored as well.

Let’s See What We Have Learned in This Lesson!

1. “Judah Alone” is the historical period from the fall of the ____________ to the fall of the ____________.

2. Name two kings of Judah that were righteous reformers during “Judah Alone.” ________________ ________________

3. The Southern Kingdom was destroyed by the ____________ in B.C. ________.

4. The Northern Kingdom was destroyed by the ____________ in B.C. ________.

5. The king that conquered the Southern Kingdom was ________.

6. Jeremiah prophesied that the Jews’ exile in Babylon would last ________ years.

7. ________________ was a prophet of God that was carried away to Babylon and prophesied that God would set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed.

8. The king of the Medo-Persian Empire that gave a decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland was ________.

9. ________________ was the Jewish woman that served as queen of the Medo-Persian Empire and helped save the Jews.

10. ________________ led the 1st group of Jews from Babylon back to Judah in B.C. ________.
11. ____________ led the 2\textsuperscript{nd} group of Jews that returned to Judah in B.C. __________.

12. Nehemiah's first major task in Jerusalem was to lead the Jews in __________________________.

13. Name three prophets of God that prophesied during the Restoration Period of Old Testament history.

_________________  ___________________  ___________________

14. Put the following events in the order in which they happened. Place a number in the blank, with “1” being the first event, and “5” the last.

___ David became king of Israel
___ Joshua led Israel into the land of Canaan
___ Noah built an ark
___ The nation of Israel divided into two kingdoms
___ God gave Israel the Ten Commandments

15. Put the following events in the order in which they happened. Place a number in the blank, with “1” being the first event, and “5” the last.

___ Saul became king of Israel
___ The period of the judges that delivered Israel
___ The Israelites were slaves in Egypt
___ Esther was queen of the Medo-Persian Empire
___ Joseph was 2\textsuperscript{nd} in command in Egypt

16. Put the following events in the order in which they happened. Place a number in the blank, with “1” being the first event, and “5” the last.

___ Nehemiah led the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem
___ The Southern Kingdom was destroyed by the Babylonians
___ The Northern Kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians
___ Solomon ruled as king and built the temple
___ Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years
LESSON 8 – The Earthly Life and Role of Jesus in God’s Plan to Save Man (1)

After Jesus came into the world to live as a human, the world would never be the same again! Through Jesus, the God of heaven reached out to mankind and provided us with a way to be saved from sin. What we know about Jesus’ earthly life is recorded in the first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), while His overall role in God’s scheme of redemption is spoken of throughout the New Testament. Because Jesus is the lone Savior available to us, we need to understand Who He is and what He has done.

JESUS’ MISSION ON EARTH

Jesus came as the promised “Seed,” the One that was the descendant of Abraham through Whom all nations of the earth can be blessed (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; Galatians 3:16).

Jesus came to seek and to save lost people (Luke 19:10). Truly, “Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

The Christ came to reveal the Father and the way to the Father. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me . . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father . . .” (John 14:6-9).

Jesus came to preach the word of God. He once said, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth” (Mark 1:38).

In addition, Jesus came to serve mankind. “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

JESUS’ CHILDHOOD YEARS

“Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa” (Matthew 2:1). The town of Bethlehem was located about five miles (eight kilometers) south of the city of Jerusalem. Most modern historians give the date of Jesus’ birth as B.C. 5 or 4.

Little is recorded in the Bible about the early years of Jesus’ life on earth. This should not alarm us or cause us to have doubts. First of all, the Bible provides us with all the information that is needed in order to demonstrate that Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:30,31). Not only that, but it is obvious from what the Bible does
tell us about Jesus, that God wanted to emphasize to mankind what took place in the latter phase of Jesus' life, not in His early years.

The brief sketch that the Bible gives us of the early stages of Jesus' life reveals that he was circumcised on the eighth day of His life (Luke 2:21). Then, after He was at least 40 days old, He was presented to the Lord and an offering was made for Him (Luke 2:22-24,27). When a king (King Herod the Great) wanted to kill Jesus when He was still an infant, His mother, Mary, and earthly father, Joseph, took Him to Egypt to protect Him from the hand of the blood-thirsty king (Matthew 2:13-15).

Following Herod's death, while Jesus was yet very small, He returned from Egypt with His parents to live in the region of Galilee, which was the northern section of Palestine. The town in which they settled was Nazareth (Matthew 2:19-23). Thus, in Jesus' adult years, and even after He died, He was often known as "Jesus of Nazareth."

The Bible records only one event in connection with Jesus' later childhood days. When He was twelve years of age, Jesus accompanied His parents to a feast in Jerusalem, where they unknowingly left Him behind (Luke 2:42-52). From the time of Jesus' return to Nazareth as an infant, to the time of His baptism when He was about thirty years old (Luke 3:23), this incident when He was twelve is all that we have recorded about Him in the Bible from His infancy until He reached adulthood. Thus, in the Scriptures there is an approximate eighteen-year period of silence (from age 12 to age 30) about what was going on in Jesus' life.

**JESUS AS A TEACHER**

Before Jesus began His work as a teacher, there was another great preacher of God that preceded Him in working among the Jewish people. The Bible says, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (John 1:6). John, who was known as John the Baptistizer, and whose mother was a cousin of Jesus' mother (Luke 1:34-36), began his preaching work in about A.D. 26. John served as a forerunner to Jesus. His role was one of preparation, as the major task of his preaching was to help pave the way for Jesus. John's preaching was intended "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord . . . for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways" (Luke 1:17,76). John knew that He was not the Christ, and told the Jews, "There cometh one mightier than I after me" (Mark 1:7). He identified Jesus to the Jewish people as both "the
Son of God” and “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:34,29).

John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River when He was about thirty years old (Mark 1:9; Luke 3:23). It was only after His baptism that our Lord began His public ministry. The Bible does not tell us how old Jesus was at the time of His death, but by reckoning the time according to the Jewish feasts that are mentioned in the Scriptures in connection with His adult life, we would conclude that His public ministry lasted about three years, meaning that He died when He was around thirty-three years old.

What does the Bible reveal about Jesus as a teacher? Jesus was always busy teaching. He taught, He taught often, and He taught wherever He had the opportunity (Mark 10:1; 14:49). Sometimes there was a multitude to hear Him, sometimes there were just twelve apostles, sometimes He taught only one person. Yes, before He went to the cross as the Savior, Jesus was first a teacher.

The Christ was, indeed, the Master teacher. Even those who did not believe in Him confessed, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). What made Jesus so special as a teacher? He spoke with authority (Matthew 7:28,29), but at the same time He also taught with compassion and kindness (Mark 6:34), showing that He was greatly concerned for those whom He taught (Luke 22:31,32). Our Lord spoke without partiality or favoritism, teaching a message that was appropriate to what His hearers needed to hear. Another mark of His teaching is that He presented His message in plain, understandable terms, and He taught as people were prepared to learn or take in what He spoke (John 16:12). His influence as a teacher was, no doubt, greatly enhanced by the fact that He always “practiced what He preached” (Acts 1:1), which is just what we would expect from One that “did no sin” (1 Peter 2:22).

Jesus taught the message that His Father wanted Him to teach. Jesus said, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me” (John 7:16). He also declared, “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49). Thus, the teaching of God the Father and the teaching of His Son are one and the same.

**JESUS’ APOSTLES**

Those who became Jesus’ followers were known as His “disciples,” which means pupils or learners. From His disciples,
Jesus selected twelve men to be His “apostles,” disciples who were granted special powers and who were sent forth as the Lord’s special messengers (Luke 6:13-16; Mark 3:14-18). These twelve were constantly with Jesus throughout His ministry, observing Him, learning from Him, working with Him, and serving Him.

These men whom Jesus handpicked, referred to in the Scriptures as “the twelve,” “the twelve disciples,” or “the twelve apostles,” would be given the task of leading the Lord’s work after Jesus left this world. Thus, we might think of the time that they spent with Jesus during His ministry as a period in which He was preparing them for their role after His departure. The apostles were privileged to sit daily at the feet of the Master, as He was training them for their future service.

Later, after Jesus returned to heaven, the Lord chose two additional apostles. Those two were Matthias and Saul (also known as Paul), and their selection as apostles is recorded in the Book of Acts (Acts 1,9). Thus, in the New Testament we read of a total of fourteen men who served as Jesus’ special apostles.

**JESUS’ MIRACLES**

Three Bible words are used to describe Jesus’ supernatural acts: “signs,” “wonders,” and “miracles.” “Miracles” points to the power that the supernatural actions manifested; “signs” indicates that the Lord’s works were convincing demonstrations; “wonders” refers to the awe that such acts produced in those that observed or heard of them.

Their purpose – Why did Jesus perform miracles? One clear purpose of His signs was to prove His divine nature, to show that He really was Whom He claimed to be (John 5:36; 10:25,37,38). Furthermore, Jesus’ miracles often demonstrated His compassion (Matthew 14:13,14; 20:30-34). A third purpose of His miracles was to fulfill prophecy about Him (Matthew 8:16,17; Isaiah 53:4).

Their nature – Jesus’ miracles were undeniable. Even those people that opposed Him admitted that He did many genuine miracles (John 11:47,48). The Lord’s miracles produced immediate and complete results, and they were successful 100% of the time.

Their variety – Today when mention is made of Jesus’ miracles, many folks seem to think automatically of His miracles of healing. It is true that the Christ did heal all manner of disease and physical infirmity, and there was no health challenge which He could not
handle. Yet, His signs were certainly not limited to correcting physical disorders/maladies. In addition, Jesus also showed His power when He controlled nature (such as when He walked on the sea), possessed miraculous knowledge of man’s thoughts, cast out demons, multiplied food, and raised the dead. Friend, no one living today is doing miracles like Jesus did!

**Let’s see what we have learned!**

1. Jesus was born in the town of ________________, but He grew up in the town of ________________.

2. Why did Jesus come to earth? What was His mission?
   1) ________________________________
   2) ________________________________
   3) ________________________________

3. Historians usually give the date of Jesus’ birth as ________.

4. The king that tried to have Jesus killed when He was an infant is known in history as ____________________________.

5. What was the basic role of John the Baptist?

6. Why did Jesus perform miracles? List three purposes of or things demonstrated by His miracles.
   1) ________________________________
   2) ________________________________
   3) ________________________________

7. How do we go about determining Jesus’ approximate age when He died?

8. Where did Jesus get the message that He taught on the earth?

9. Altogether, the Lord had ___ men who were His special apostles.

10. Two other Bible words that are often used in connection with or as synonyms of “miracles” are _________ and _________.

11. What is the only event in Jesus’ life from His early childhood until He became an adult that is recorded in the Bible?
apostles, Judas Iscariot, came to them with an offer to betray Jesus into their hands (Matthew 26:14-16).

When they thought the time was right, Judas and others dragged Jesus off to the Jewish leaders, and in the course of the next several hours Jesus was forced to stand before both Jewish and Roman officials and undergo a series of intense interrogations. It was Jesus’ confession that He was the Son of God which especially infuriated the Jewish leaders (Mark 14:61-64). Because they envied Jesus so much, and because they wanted so badly to do away with Him, the Jews turned Him over to the Roman authorities, hoping to convince them to put Him to death.

In the end, Pilate, who was the Roman-appointed governor of the land, gave the order for Jesus to be crucified. The Savior of the world was put to death in the same way that common criminals of that day were punished. Spikes were driven into His body to hold Him on a wooden cross, that cross was put in place, and He endured agony that never ceased until He breathed His last breath. It was a horrible, inhumane form of death, especially for One that had done no wrong to anyone at anytime. The name of the place where Jesus was put to death was Calvary (Luke 23:33), also known as Golgotha or place of the skull (John 19:17,18). Our Lord’s crucifixion took place just outside the city of Jerusalem (John 19:20).

There is another side to the account of Jesus’ death, and that is the Divine side. God the Father used man’s wicked deed (killing His Son) to bring about our salvation. Before the creation of the world, it was God’s plan for Jesus to come into the world to offer Himself as a sacrifice and to shed His blood for our redemption (1 Peter 1:18-20). There is more. Not only is it true that God the Father sent His Son, but it is equally true that God the Son willingly went to the cross and stayed on the cross in order that wretched sinners might have their sins washed away (John 10:17,18). What amazing love our God had for us in loving us while we were so evil (Romans 5:8), and what marvelous love Jesus showed by bearing our sins (1 Peter 2:24)!

The gospel of the Christ reveals three great facts about Jesus that all men need to know and believe: “. . . how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). Jesus did not simply die, but as the text says, He died “for our sins.” He was buried that same day, but the great news is, three days later, which was the first day of the week or
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Sunday, He rose from the dead, showing His power over the bonds of death (Mark 16:9). Yes, our Lord rose from the dead. He lives! We serve a risen, living, never-to-die-again Lord! (Romans 6:9).

What did Jesus accomplish or make possible through His death? By means of His death, He abolished the old law (the Law of Moses or Old Testament law), meaning that it would no longer be in force (Ephesians 2:15). What He did, so to speak, was to take that old law out of the way and nail it to His cross (Colossians 2:14). But, at the same time, Jesus used His blood to establish and seal the new covenant. “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

In addition, as we think of the cross of the Christ and what it means, we cannot help but look to it as God’s provision for the sins of humanity. The Bible teaches that it is only through the death of Jesus that we can be reconciled to God (Romans 5:9,10), as it is the plan of God for redemption to be possible for all sinners through, and only through, the precious blood of Jesus (Ephesians 1:7).

It is also true that by means of the cross, Jesus bought His church: “. . . the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The Bible plainly says that “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25).

Jesus was crucified about 9:00 a.m., apparently on Friday. He died about 3:00 p.m., and before the sun went down, His body had already been placed in a tomb. But, as we noted, death could not hold Him, and He came out of the grave early Sunday morning, after which He appeared to His followers on at least five different occasions that very same day. Following His resurrection, Jesus remained on the earth for 40 days, during which time He appeared to over 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:4-8) and continued to teach His disciples about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

Jesus’ earthly sojourn came to an end when He ascended back to heaven in the full view of His apostles (Acts 1:9-11). Again, His ascension took place 40 days after He rose from the dead. Jesus ascended on high and sat down on the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19; Colossians 3:1), where He awaits the time that He will come again in order to judge all men.

**PROOF OF JESUS’ DEITY**

There is abundant biblical evidence that Jesus was God’s Son. What are we told in the Bible that demonstrates Jesus’ Deity, that
is, what is there that shows that the Christ possesses the divine nature? Here are nine proofs.

(1) His eternal existence – Jesus never began to exist. He always existed, having been with the Father before the foundation of the world (John 1:1,14; 17:5,24). Since only God has no beginning and no end, then Jesus’ eternal nature points to His divinity.

(2) His work as Creator – “For by him were all things created . . . all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16,17).

(3) His virgin birth – Jesus had an earthly mother, but no biological human father. His real Father was the God of heaven (Matthew 1:18-25).

(4) God the Father’s confession of Him – Since God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18), we accept His statement about Jesus: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

(5) In Him and His work were fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah that was to come – This included prophecies about His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14) and the place of His birth (Bethlehem, Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1).

(6) His own claims – He said that He and the Father were one (John 10:30), declaring also that the Father sent Him from heaven (John 6:38) and that He was the Son of God (Mark 14:61,62). His miracles gave evidence that His claims about Himself were true.

(7) His sinless life – Though Jesus was tempted in every aspect like all other humans, He never violated the law of God, and thus did what no other person ever has or could do (Hebrews 4:14,15). Since only God is completely without sin (Psalm 92:15), then the fact that Jesus lived without sin clearly demonstrates His Deity.

(8) His miracles – Whether He was healing the sick, raising people from the dead, or showing His power over the laws of nature, His miracles not only showed His concern for man’s best interest, but they also confirmed that He was speaking the truth, and thus served to prove that what He said about Himself was true (John 20:30,31; 5:36).

(9) His resurrection from the dead – His victory over death showed that He was “the Son of God with power” (Romans 1:4).

The evidence is overwhelming: Jesus possesses the characteristics of God. There is simply no other way to account rationally for His nature and what He was able to accomplish.
Review questions on Lesson 9:

1. The word “Christ” means ________________________.

2. The word “Emmanuel” means ________________________.

3. The word “Lord” means ________________________.

4. The word “Jesus” means ________________________.

5. The apostle of Jesus that betrayed Him was ____________.

6. The name of the place where Jesus was crucified was ________ or ____________, which means ________________________.

7. Name three things that the Lord accomplished or made possible through His death on the cross.
   1) ________________________
   2) ________________________
   3) ________________________

8. After Jesus rose from the dead, over ______ witnesses saw Him.

9. Jesus remained on the earth for ______ after His resurrection and before He ascended to heaven.


11. List 5 evidences that Jesus is God (possesses the nature of God).
    1) ________________________
    2) ________________________
    3) ________________________
    4) ________________________
    5) ________________________
LESSON 10 - The Church in God's
Plan to Save Man (1)

The church of our Lord is referred to frequently in the New Testament, being mentioned in both the Book of Matthew and the Book of Revelation, as well as a great number of times in between. About one year before His death, Jesus made a promise to build His church, saying, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus made good on that promise, and from the Book of Acts onward we read of His church being in existence.

TWO COMMON FALSE CONCEPTS OF THE CHURCH

Perhaps the most common false idea that people have about the church is that it is a building or physical structure. It is not uncommon to hear folks ask, "Where is your church located?" We understand that they are asking about the location of the physical building in which we gather for our activities, but biblical speaking, the word "church" never has reference to a physical structure. The Greek word from which we get our English word "church" is "ekklesia," which means the called out or called-out group of people. When we read the Bible, we learn that the early church showed fear (Acts 5:11), was persecuted (Acts 8:1), prayed (Acts 12:5), and was strengthened in faith (Acts 16:5). These examples show that the "church" has reference to people, not a building.

A second major false concept that a lot of people have of the New Testament church is that it is made up of many separate denominations. So often people of our day have the idea that there is a universal church, made up of all people that claim to believe in Jesus, and that this universal church is composed of a number of different denominations. In this sense, they speak of a "denomination" as being a part of the whole, that is, each particular kind of denomination is part of, but not all of, the church. If one will take the time to read carefully the New Testament, then he/she will observe that the Bible never speaks of the church being a denomination (a part of the whole family of God), being made up of different denominations, or having any kinship with denominations. The modern concept of denominationalism is simply not found in the Bible. The proposal that men can divide into various groups which have different names, teach different doctrines, have
different worship practices, and follow different creeds of men, is foreign to the Scriptures.

**HOW THE WORD “CHURCH” IS USED IN THE BIBLE**

The word “church” is used in three basic ways in the New Testament. First of all, the word “church” can refer to the universal church, which would be that organization that is made up of all of Jesus’ disciples throughout the whole world. For instance, we read that the “Christ is the head of the church” (Ephesians 5:23). This refers to the church world-wide or universal.

A second biblical use of the word “church” is in reference to a local church or congregation. An example of such usage would be 2 Corinthians 1:1, in which we read about “the church of God which is at Corinth.” We also read about congregations in a particular geographic region, such as “the seven churches which are in Asia” (Revelation 1:11) and “the churches of Galatia” (Galatians 1:2). These local churches followed the same doctrine, taught the same message, and engaged in the same worship. They simply existed in different geographic locations.

Third, the word “church” is also used in the New Testament to refer to an assembly of Christians, that is, to Christians coming together in a worship setting or assembly. For example, in 1 Corinthians 11:18 it is written, “First of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you . . .” This is not a reference to a physical structure (church building), but to the Christians assembling together. The Bible also talks about speaking “in the church” and being silent “in the churches” (1 Corinthians 14:19,34). In both of these instances, the word “church” refers to an assembly, a coming together of a group of Christians.

**THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHURCH**

How can we be sure that the church is unique? Because the Lord has only one of them! Remember, His promise was to build His “church,” singular in number, not plural (Matthew 16:18). We further read that Jesus “is the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18). Coupled with this truth is the fact that “There is one body” (Ephesians 4:4). Since there is one body, and the body is the church, then it follows that there is only one church. Again, if there is only one church, then it is unique: there is none like it.
The Bible portrays Jesus as the single Head of the body or church, and the church as the one and only spiritual body of Jesus. One head with one body: it makes sense, does it not? The wording of Ephesians 5:23-26 makes it clear that the Lord's church is one of a kind [All emphasis in the quotation is mine, rdc]: “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. . . Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH

A lot of people recognize the importance of Jesus' role, but they do not have the same mindset when it comes to His church. Many look to the cross of God's Son, but feel like they could do without anything called a “church.” The Bible, however, paints a different picture of things, showing the essentiality of both the Christ and His church in God's scheme of redemption. How do we know that God's church is important?

First of all, God planned the church before the world began. The church was not some sort of afterthought or spur-of-the-moment idea. Rather, it was part of God's eternal plan, which was to save lost people in the Christ and through the gospel, making them part of His body or church (Ephesians 3:4-6,9-11; 1 Peter 1:18-20).

Second, Jesus shed His blood for His church. As we just noted, “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). We further read about “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The church was so important that Jesus poured out His precious blood to buy it. Does that sound like the church is of little significance to the Lord? Not hardly!

Third, the church's importance can also be seen from the fact that Jesus saves the church. In Ephesians 5:23 we read, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.” The Bible plainly teaches that Jesus died for all people, making His salvation available to every person (Titus 2:11). The Bible is equally clear in teaching, however, that those whom Jesus saves are in His church. Yes, the Lord adds saved people to His church (Acts 2:47). Since that is the case, then the church must be awfully important in the eyes of God.
Fourth, glory is given to God in the church, as we read in Ephesians 3:21: “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” If it is in the church that God receives true glory, then surely the church must be of great importance to Him.

Fifth, the eternal destiny of the church shows its greatness and important place in God’s plan for man. Where is the church headed? “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . .” (1 Corinthians 15:24). It is true: the kingdom or church of God is heaven-bound. Since that is the case, no one should ever doubt the church’s significance!

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Whatever the work of the church should be, it is revealed in the pages of the New Testament. Since we are to do all things in the name of the Lord (Colossians 3:17), then only those activities that are authorized by the teaching of the New Testament are activities which can scripturally be part of the work of His church.

As we noted in an earlier lesson about the earthly life and role of Jesus, He came to earth in order to seek and to save that which was lost, that is, to save lost people (Luke 19:10). Since the church is the body of the Christ, and since He is the Head of the church, then would it not be proper for the body or church to continue doing what its Head did? What does the church do in trying to help people be saved and go to heaven? The work of the church can be divided into the following three aspects:

(1) “Evangelism” – Preaching the gospel to those that have never been saved, that is, those people that are lost in sin outside of the Christ (Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16; Acts 5:41,42; 8:4).

(2) “Edification” – Spiritually strengthening or building up the church, helping keep church members steadfast in their service to the Lord. This is done primarily by teaching them the Bible, as it is God’s spiritual food for Christians (Acts 20:32; 1 Peter 2:2).

(3) “Benevolence” – Helping those that are poor or needy (Galatians 2:10; 6:10; Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 5:16).

Questions over Lesson 10:

1. How do we know that the church of the Bible is unique? _______
2. Name 3 ways in which the word “church” is used in the Bible.
   1) _____________________________________________
   2) _____________________________________________
   3) _____________________________________________

3. The Greek word from which we get our English word “church” means ________________________________.

4. Name 3 things that show the church is important in God’s plan.
   1) _____________________________________________
   2) _____________________________________________
   3) _____________________________________________

5. Name & explain the 3 areas that comprise the church’s work.
   1) _____________________________________________
   2) _____________________________________________
   3) _____________________________________________

6. All of the activities of the church must be authorized by ________

7. Name a misconception that some people have about the church, and show how to refute it from the Bible. ____________________________

8. Name a 2nd false idea that people sometimes have about the church, and show how to refute it from the Bible. ____________________________

9. The Head of the church is _________________. Give a Bible verse that shows this. ______________________________
LESSON 11 - The Church in God’s
Plan to Save Man (2)

In our last lesson, we learned that Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). In that study we also looked at how the word “church” is used in the Bible, the uniqueness of the church, the significance of the church, and the work in which it engages. In this lesson, we want to consider other important aspects of the New Testament church.

BIBLE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CHURCH

The New Testament refers to the church as “the house of God” (1 Timothy 3:15), “the body” of the Christ (Ephesians 1:22,23), “the temple of God” (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16), “the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13), “the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 4:17) and “the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:15). The Bible also portrays the church as the bride of the Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). These expressions do not indicate that there is more than one church or that the Lord has more than one spiritual organization. Rather, each of the above references shows a different aspect of what the church is.

Furthermore, the Bible also denotes the church as “the church of God” (1 Corinthians 1:2), “the churches of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:14), and “the churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16). As we have already seen, the plural word “churches” is used to indicate congregations of the Lord’s church in different geographic locations. It should be noted that expressions such as “the church of God” or “churches of Christ” indicate possession: they show that the church belongs to the Father Who planned it and the Son Who bought it. People can become members of the church, but the church does not belong to any mere humans. It is not ours, but the Lord’s. He planned it, bought it, saves it, and rules it. Yes, it is His, not ours.

HOW TO IDENTIFY THE LORD’S CHURCH

How can one find the true church of the living God? The only way is to turn to the Bible and learn from it what the church is. In the Bible we can find the identifying marks of God’s church. Since the word of God is like a seed (Luke 8:11), if humans will sow or teach that seed (the word) in any place at any time, then they can have the true New Testament church. What are some of those distinguishing marks of the church that are revealed in the Bible?

The church’s **Founder** – Jesus. It was Jesus that said, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). Lest you think this is not important, consider this principle: “Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (Psalm 127:1).

The church’s **Foundation** – Not Peter, not someone called “the Pope,” and not some modern-day preacher, but rather Jesus. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

The church’s **Time of Beginning** – The first Jewish Day of Pentecost after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus back to heaven. Jesus promised to build His church, and the Bible shows that He did so in the first century, as the church’s existence is clearly seen in Acts 5:11 and elsewhere. The church’s establishment is recorded in Acts 2, and the historical date for it was about A.D. 30. Do not miss the truth that Jesus’ church was in existence hundreds of years before any man-made church came on the scene.


The church’s **Instruction Manual** – The New Testament of the Christ. While many religious organizations that men started have their own written human creeds or human-authored manuals, the church of the Lord has only one “guidebook” – the Bible. Jesus said that we are to teach men everywhere to observe or follow all that He has commanded (Matthew 28:20). Since Jesus has all authority (Matthew 28:18), we must take heed to and follow His teaching. The church is not the source of any teaching, but rather it is to teach, support, and defend the truth that the Lord has given to us.

The church’s **Organization** – The most basic truth about the church’s organizational structure is that it has Jesus as its Head (Colossians 1:18). Jesus alone is the Head, King, or Supreme Ruler over the church. The church is obligated to be in subjection to Him
in all things (Ephesians 5:24). The church shows its submission to the Christ by submitting to His teaching (Luke 6:46).

Please note that in the Bible we never read of the church having a worldwide headquarters, district headquarters, or earthly headquarters of any type. The New Testament portrays each local church of God as being self-ruling or autonomous (1 Peter 5:1-3). Local churches can work together in carrying out the Lord’s work, but no local church has the scriptural right to rule over other congregations, regardless of the size, level of spiritual strength, or location of those other churches.

But if Jesus is now seated at the Father's right hand in heaven, is there not a need for someone to act as leaders or rulers in the church on the earth? Indeed, there is, and the Lord has made provisions for that need. The Lord has decreed that faithful brothers serve as rulers over local churches. In the Bible, these men are referred to as “overseers” (Acts 20:28), “elders” (Acts 20:17; 14:23), “pastors” or “shepherds” (Ephesians 4:11), “bishops” (Philippians 1:1), and “presbyters” (1 Timothy 4:14; “eldership,” NKJV). These men do not have the right to make up their own rules and regulations for the church, but rather are given the responsibility of leading a local church as it strives to carry out those instructions that the Lord has already laid out for us in the New Testament. As shepherds, they have the duty of providing for the spiritual needs of the flock (Christians) and protecting the flock from spiritual danger.

For those that serve as elders in the church, God has set forth a series of qualifications or characteristics that each one must possess. These are recorded in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These characteristics are not optional, but mandatory. In addition to the church’s pastors or overseers, there is also a special group of brothers known as “deacons” (Philippians 1:1). The word “deacon” means “servant,” indicating that the deacons of the church are its special servants. God-given qualifications for those brothers that serve as deacons are set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-10,11-13.

The church’s Worship – Jesus taught that true or acceptable worship is offered to God, it is done “in spirit” (with the right attitude), and it is done “in truth,” meaning that it is conducted in harmony with the truth, which is God's word (John 4:23,24; 17:17). The New Testament shows that for the early Christians, their special day of worship was “the first day of the week” or Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2).
The New Testament shows that the worship in which the first-century Christians engaged on the first day of the week included the following:

(1) Giving or contribution— The God-ordained means for the church to raise funds for its activities is for its members to offer free-will offerings. Each Christian is to give according to how he/she has prospered or been blessed financially (1 Corinthians 16:2). We never read in the Bible of the church having auctions, bake sales, clothing sales, etc., in order to raise funds to finance its work. Such activities are unauthorized by the New Testament.

(2) Prayer (Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 2:8).

(3) Preaching the word of God (Acts 20:7; 2 Timothy 4:2).

(4) Singing praises to God — The Bible teaches that God wants all Christians to sing spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). The purpose of their singing is not to put on a performance or to entertain others, but rather to praise the Lord. It is also true that while Christians are instructed to sing, there is no New Testament reference to the New Testament saints of God praising Him to the accompaniment of mechanical instruments of music. When singing spiritual songs of praise, mechanical instruments of music are unauthorized by the New Testament.

(5) “The Lord’s Supper” (1 Corinthians 11:20-26) — This is also called “communion” and “breaking bread” (1 Corinthians 10:16; Acts 20:7), and it includes eating unleavened bread and drinking fruit of the vine. God has greatly blessed Christians in giving them this special opportunity to remember the death of Jesus, for that is the purpose of the Lord’s Supper: to serve as a memorial of the death that Jesus died on our behalf.

As we have already noted, Jesus’ church has a great destiny. Why is that? Because it has Jesus as its Savior (Ephesians 5:23). How can a person become a member of the Lord’s church? Lord willing, we will see the answer to this question when we study in our next lesson about what a lost person must do in order to be saved.

Let’s see what we have learned!

1. In the Bible, members of the church are called ____________.
   ____________, ____________, ____________, & ____________.
2. In the Bible, those brothers that rule over a local church are called ____________, ____________, ____________, ____________, ____________, or ____________.

3. What Bible verse records Jesus’ promise to build His church?

______________________________

4. The word “deacon” means ________________.

5. What Bible chapter records the church’s establishment? _____

6. The church began in ________________ (place) at what time? ________________

______________________________

7. Name a New Testament verse that shows that the first-century Christians worshipped on Sunday (1st day of the week). _____

8. What does John 4:24 teach us about acceptable worship?
   1) ________________
   2) ________________
   3) ________________

9. What is the purpose of partaking of the Lord’s Supper? _____

______________________________

10. What is the purpose of Christians singing spiritual songs? _____

______________________________

11. According to 1 Corinthians 3:11, Who is the foundation of the church? ________________

12. Would you want to be a member of a “church” that was not founded by Jesus? _____ Why, or why not? ________________

______________________________

13. Would you want to be a member of a “church” that you cannot read about in the Bible? _____ Why, or why not? ________________

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LESSON 12 – How Can a Lost Person Be Saved?

God wrote the book on salvation! That should not surprise us, seeing that He is “the God of our salvation” (Psalm 68:19). Thank God that He gives each one of us the opportunity to have our sins forgiven. How can a lost person be saved from his/her past sins? Let us see what the Bible teaches about this great topic.

GOD HAS MADE PROVISION FOR OUR SALVATION

What is there that God has done to make salvation from sin possible? The Bible points us to God’s mercy, God’s grace, and God’s love. These three great concepts are linked together in the following Bible passage: “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Ephesians 2:4,5, NKJV; emphasis mine, rdo).

God’s Mercy – What a sinner deserves for his/her sin against the Lord is eternal punishment, because “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). However, by His mercy, God allows us to escape such punishment: He permits us to avoid the horrors of hell. Would it be correct, then, to think of salvation being by mercy? Yes, for the Bible says that “according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5).

God’s Grace – This is kindness or favor that we do not deserve. Again, by His mercy God allows us to escape that which we do not deserve, and by His grace He allows us to receive that which we do not deserve. So, is it safe to conclude that sinners are saved by the grace of God? Absolutely. In Titus 2:11 it is written, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” The Bible is plain in showing that without God’s grace, not one person would have a chance to be saved. Is it possible for you and me to earn our salvation? No. Can we be saved by our good moral deeds? Never. Would it be possible for us to devise our own scheme or checklist of actions whereby we might save ourselves? The answer is still “no.”

God’s Love – What is there that motivates our Creator to make a way for all humans to be saved from sin? His love. Because of God’s great love, He “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4, NKJV). In addition to God’s desire for our salvation, we must not miss the action which He has taken to bring about such salvation. The good news for us is that
“the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). It was God’s love that made it happen: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9).

Any person that is saved from sin owes the God of heaven a debt which he/she could never repay! Thank God for His mercy, His grace, and His great love. The Bible tells us that redemption or salvation is available in and through Jesus (Romans 3:24; 2 Timothy 2:10). Why? Because that is God’s plan. Even before the foundation of the world, that plan for our redemption was in place (1 Peter 1:18-20). What a great, loving God He is!

BEING SAVED – OUR GREATEST NEED!

The Bible says that sin is “lawlessness” or “transgression of” God’s law (1 John 3:4). It also reveals that all people have sinned, making everyone of us a sinner (Romans 3:23). The awful consequence of sin is that it separates a person from the God of heaven, and sin keeps him/her separated from Him. “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).

Does this not mean that all of us are in a hopeless situation? Without Jesus, yes. But, through Jesus there is hope! Remember, Jesus came into the world to save sinners, to give us life, and He accomplished it by shedding His blood on the cross of Calvary. Through Jesus’ blood we can have our sins washed away and be reconciled to God (Romans 5:9,10).

WILL ALL PEOPLE BE SAVED & GO TO HEAVEN?

Jesus taught that there are two possible paths that we might take in life, and two possible destinies to which those paths lead. One path leads to destruction, while a second leads to life. According to Jesus, those that enter the gate to destruction are “many,” but those that enter into life are “few” in number (Matthew 7:13,14). The Christ further taught that while some will go into “life eternal,” others will go into “everlasting punishment” (Matthew 25:46). Thus, while it is true that God’s grace makes salvation available or possible for all, not everyone will be saved eternally.

WHAT ABOUT “REALLY BAD” SINNERS?

As humans, we may tend to think that there are some sins that are worse than others. There is no doubt that some sins have greater earthly consequences than others do. Yet, in truth, any sin
is horrendous and condemns the sinner. Still, there are a lot of
people that express the following or similar sentiments: “I have
done such wicked things that there is no way that the Lord
would/could ever forgive me.” The problem with such reasoning is
simple: the Bible does not teach it. Instead, the Bible teaches that
God is willing to forgive us of any and all past transgressions,
regardless of what they might be. Before he became a Christian,
Saul of Tarsus, later known as Paul, greatly persecuted the Lord’s
church, even causing some of its members to be put to death (Acts
26:9-11). Yet, this evildoer was later saved by the grace of God. We
also read in the New Testament that thieves, drunkards, adulterers,
homosexuals, idolaters, and other immoral people were saved from
their past life of sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). So, yes, even those that
some may count as “really bad” sinners can be saved by the blood of
God’s Son. God’s salvation is available to all.

**SALVATION: CONDITIONAL, OR UNCONDITIONAL?**

There is no doubt that the Bible calls salvation a gift from God
(Ephesians 2:8). We know that some gifts or blessings in life are
conditional, while others are unconditional. What about salvation
from sin, is it a conditional gift, or an unconditional one? It is
*conditional*, which simply means that God saves a person only when
he/she complies with the terms or conditions that He has set forth
in the gospel. The Bible teaches that Jesus is “the author of eternal
salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus saves.
Jesus saves lost people. Which lost people does He save? According
to Hebrews 5:9, Jesus saves those lost people that obey Him. No
obedience means no salvation. Therefore, salvation is conditional.
Jesus Himself taught that only those that do the will of God the
Father shall enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21).

**WHAT MUST A LOST PERSON DO TO BE SAVED?**

We have already learned in our studies that redemption is made
possible only through the blood of Jesus (Ephesians 1:7). Thus, if
the question is, “What can wash away my sins?,” the answer is “the
blood of Jesus.” However, if we ask, “When does Jesus’ blood wash
away a lost person’s sins?,” that is an entirely different question.
Here is the scriptural answer: the blood of the Christ cleanses a
person of past sins when he/she obeys Jesus (“obeys the gospel”).
What does this obedience include? Just what must a lost person do
in order to become a saved person?
Many people of our generation have never heard the correct answer to this question. Why? Because they have only listened to and been influenced by those that give a man-made answer instead of stating what the Bible teaches. Maybe you have heard or read something like this: “In order to be saved from your sins, all you need to do is pray to Jesus, confess your sins to Him, and receive Him into your heart as your personal Savior.” This is an extremely popular and widespread idea that untold millions of people have accepted. It is sometimes called “the Sinner’s Prayer.” But, do you know what? Such an idea is nowhere to be found in the Bible. It is just not in there! “Pray to Jesus and confess your sins to Him” is one answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” The problem, though, my friend, is that this answer is not from the Bible, but rather comes from the imagination of man’s heart.

In order to be saved, **having faith or believing** is certainly required, for “without faith it is impossible to please him” (Hebrews 11:6). In whom or what must one believe? The Bible teaches that a person must believe in God’s existence (Hebrews 11:6). It also teaches that in order to be saved, a person must believe in Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life... He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16,18).

How does one become a believer? The Bible says, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). So, one must hear or read the gospel before he/she can become a believer in Jesus. Let us be clear in stating that the Bible clearly teaches that a person is saved or justified “by faith” (Romans 5:1), but it just as plainly shows that a person is not justified “by faith only” (James 2:24). There is a huge difference in declaring that salvation is “by faith,” and stating that it is “by faith only.”

In addition to believing in Jesus as God’s Son and our Savior, what else must one do in order to be saved from sin? A person must **repent** of every past sin. In the first century, sinners were told, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19). God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). “Repent” does not mean simply to say, “I am sorry,” but rather it means to change one’s
mind. In the process of genuine repentance, after one has sinned against God, he will: (1) Regret what he has done/be sorry for it; (2) Determine in his heart not to repeat this mistake (i.e., he will change his will); and (3) Change or reform his life.

Confession of faith in Jesus is also required. “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:10). We read in the Bible of some that believed on Jesus, but out of fear and pride, would not confess Him (John 12:42,43). Jesus said that He will confess a person that confesses Him before men, but He will deny in the Father’s presence anyone that refuses to confess Him (Matthew 10:32,33).

Baptism in water is another condition of salvation. The Bible does not teach that one should be baptized after he is already saved. Nor does the Bible teach that a person ought to be baptized as an outward sign to show that he has been saved already prior to baptism. Jesus Himself said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). According to these words of Jesus, who shall be saved? One that just believes? No. One that is just baptized? No. Rather, one who believes and is baptized. If Jesus said it, how can it be wrong?! In the New Testament, we also read that a sinner (Saul of Tarsus) was told, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

No, water cannot save a person. It is not water that washes away sins. It is the blood of Jesus that has the power to remove sins (Colossians 1:14), not water. Yet, and this is important, if God has made water salvation a condition of receiving the forgiveness of sins, then a lost person must comply with that condition. Water baptism is a command of God (Acts 2:38; 10:48), and we remember that only those who obey Jesus’ commands are saved (Hebrews 5:9). Baptism is no more important than hearing the gospel, believing in Jesus, repenting of sins, and confessing faith in Jesus, but like these other matters, it is required in order to be saved. In fact, it is only through baptism that one can get into the Christ (Romans 6:3).

We hasten to emphasize that in the New Testament, the word “baptism” means an immersion or plunging, not a sprinkling or pouring of water. Baptism involves a burial (Colossians 2:12) and requires going down into the water and coming up out of the water (Acts 8:36-39). Scriptural baptism is an immersion.
WHAT ABOUT AFTER A PERSON HAS BEEN SAVED?

Once a person has been saved from past sins and is a Christian, what then? The Bible teaches that the Lord adds saved people to His church (Acts 2:47), so a saved person is a member of the Lord's church. One that has been baptized into the Christ is now a new person with a new Master, new desires, new priorities, and new obligations (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Being "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:27) is not the end of one's spiritual life in the Christ, but only marks the beginning of it. After water baptism, one must live a life of faithful service to the Lord. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Jesus wants His followers to obey Him in all things (Matthew 28:20). He wants all Christians to put the Lord's Cause first in their lives (Matthew 6:33). The Lord wants us to live a holy life, one in which we are distinct from the world in the way that we think, talk, act, and dress (Romans 12:1,2). Attending the assemblies of the local church is an important aspect of a Christian's life (Hebrews 10:25), as is personal Bible study and prayer (1 Peter 2:2; Philippians 4:6,7). In order for the church to grow in number, it must actively teach the gospel to lost people, so teaching others ought to be part of the life of every child of God (Acts 8:4).

Christians are going to make mistakes. They were forgiven of all past sins when they obeyed the gospel by being baptized for the remission of sins, but how do they obtain the cleansing of the sins that they commit after baptism? A child of God that sins must repent of his/her sins, confess such sins to God, and pray for Him to remove those sins from His record (Acts 8:21,22; 1 John 1:7-10).

Following Jesus is no small matter. It is a life-long commitment that requires our greatest effort and sacrifice (Luke 13:24; 14:33). Being a Christian is not just one type of lifestyle, but rather it is the greatest life in the world! May the Lord bless you as you strive to live for Him.

**Let's put it in writing!**

1. What is the grace of God? ________________________________

2. What is the mercy of God? ________________________________
3. How did God show His love for mankind?

4. How do we know that our salvation is conditional?

5. Where is salvation found/available? 
   Give a Bible verse to prove your answer.

6. What is the awful consequence of sin?
   Bible verse:

7. How do we know that even the vilest of sinners can be saved?

8. Prove that the following statement is false. “All people will go to heaven.”

9. How much power does the blood of Jesus have?
   Why is this the case?

10. Where in the Bible do we read “the Sinner’s Prayer?”

11. How does a person get into the Christ?
   Prove your answer with a Bible verse.

12. For a person that has never been saved before, what must he/she do in order to be saved? Put a Bible verse for each point.
   1) 
   2) 
   3) 
   4) 
   5) 

13. How can one that is already a Christian get the forgiveness of his/her sins?
   Bible verses:
LESSON 13 – The Day of Judgment/The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Coming of the Christ

Throughout the history of the human race, there have been a number of special days on which memorable events took place. Among other things, the creation of Adam and Eve, the death of Jesus, and the church’s beginning on the day of Pentecost – those were all unique occurrences that took place only once, never to be repeated again.

The New Testament teaches that in the future there will be another one-of-a-kind event, and believe me, it will grab the attention of mankind like nothing ever has or ever will before that time. The Bible refers to that special day as “the great day” (Jude 6). In the Scriptures it is also described as “the day of judgment” (2 Peter 3:7), “the end of the world” (Matthew 13:39), “the last day” (John 6:39, 40), “the day of the Lord” (2 Peter 3:10), “the day of God” (2 Peter 3:12), and “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). What a day that will be!

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN

Jesus once told His apostles, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3). What was it that Jesus said? “I will come again.” Immediately after Jesus ascended to heaven, two messengers of God said to Jesus’ apostles, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). What was their message? Jesus is coming back. Time and again the New Testament teaches that the Christ will “appear the second time” (Hebrews 9:28).

JESUS THE JUDGE

When Jesus came into the world the first time and took on the form of a human, He came to be the Savior of the world (1 Timothy 1:15), tasting of death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). But, when He comes again, it will not be to pour out His blood to redeem us from sin. Instead, Jesus will come again to judge all men. Jesus said, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). The apostle Paul preached that the God of heaven “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world
in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). The matter is settled: on the day of judgment, it will be the resurrected Christ that will serve as Judge.

**JESUS WILL JUDGE ALL PEOPLE**

No one will escape the judgment of that great day. That is one appointment that no person can avoid: nobody will be able to cancel it, postpone it, or run away from it! The Lord will be there on that day, and He will be joined by all humanity. Everyone that has ever lived will be there – you can count on it! The Bible says, “...for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ... So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:10,12). It is also written, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

**JESUS WILL JUDGE US AS INDIVIDUALS**

Jesus taught that “all nations” will be gathered before Him (Matthew 25:32). While it is true that people of all nations, tribes, and families will appear before God’s Son in judgment, the New Testament makes it plain that the judgment will be individual in nature. Jesus said, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to this works” (Matthew 16:27). As much as they may want to try, no person will be able to stand in the place of others to receive the judgment that they ought to receive. It is a fact that “...every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).

**THE STANDARD BY WHICH JESUS WILL JUDGE US**

According to what criteria will the Christ judge us? As we noted earlier, God has determined that the judgment will be done “in righteousness” (Acts 17:31). That indicates that the judgment will be done rightly, according to God’s standard of right. In Romans 2:2 it is written that “the judgment of God is according to truth.” So, the judgment will be according to God’s righteousness, which is His standard of truth. God’s truth is His word (John 17:17).

Jesus taught that He will judge men according to His word: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the
last day” (John 12:48). There will be no exceptions: each person will be judged according to the truth of God’s word. Those that lived in the gospel era will be judged by the teaching of the gospel, while those that lived during the Old Testament era will be judged according to the specific law which was in force and to which they were amenable at the time.

WHEN WILL THE JUDGMENT BE?

It will be on the one day that the Bible calls “the day of judgment” (2 Peter 3:7). There will be one day of judgment, period, with no retrials and no second chances. Since Jesus will judge us on “the last day” (John 12:48), there will be no more days after that. Because the judgment day is the last day, then that will have to be the same day when this world comes to an end, known as “the end of the world” (Matthew 13:39). That will also be the day that Jesus comes again. But when will He return?

When Jesus spoke of the time of His second coming, He said, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only . . . Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your lord doth come . . . Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24:36,42,44). The New Testament plainly teaches that the day of the Lord will come “as a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). This indicates that Jesus’ coming will be sudden and at an unexpected time. We must accept the reality that “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God” (Deuteronomy 29:29). The time of Jesus’ second coming is one of those secret matters that only God knows. It follows that since we do not know when Jesus will come again, then we do not know when the judgment day will be. Why is it that we do not know? Because God has not revealed it to us in the Bible. Despite this fact, in history many have tried to predict when Jesus would come again. Each prediction has been false, and those who made the predictions have been shown to be false prophets.

IN WHAT MANNER WILL JESUS COME AGAIN?

The Lord’s second coming will certainly not be a secret, silent affair. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God . . .” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). You can expect some noise on the day of Jesus’ coming! Notice that this verse also shows that Jesus will come personally: “For the Lord himself shall descend . . .” This reminds us
of what the messengers of God told the apostles: *This same Jesus . . . will so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11). Please note that the Bible nowhere says that Jesus will return to walk and live on the planet earth. Rather, it says that when He comes, the faithful will be taken up *in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air* (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). Remember, there will be no opportunity for Him or any others to live on the earth after He comes to judge us. Why? Because the day of judgment is “the last day,” and there can be no more days (let alone years, decades, centuries, or milleniums) after the last one.

**WHAT ELSE WILL HAPPEN WHEN JESUS COMES AGAIN?**

In addition to Jesus judging all people when He comes, what else will transpire on that notable day? We need to understand that when Jesus comes again, He will not establish an earthly kingdom and rule from an earthly throne. Jesus’ kingdom is a spiritual one, not a physical or material one. Jesus Himself said, “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (John 18:36). The truth is, Jesus’ kingdom has already existed nearly 2000 years. The Bible makes it plain that the saints of the first century were already in Jesus’ kingdom: “*Who [God the Father, rdcl] hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (Colossians 1:13). According to this verse, where were those Christians after God translated them into His Son’s kingdom? In Jesus’ kingdom. They could not have been in that kingdom if it did not already exist! Since the kingdom of the Christ already exists (and has existed since about A.D. 30), then it cannot be the case that He is waiting to establish His kingdom when He comes again.

When the Lord comes again, He will raise all the dead. Jesus said, "*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*” (John 5:28,29). But when will the dead be raised? Jesus Himself said that the raising of the dead will take place at “the last day,” which we know is the day of His second coming (John 6:39,40,44). Some people will still be alive on the earth when Jesus comes again. Since they will not have died, then they cannot be raised from the dead. Instead, their bodies will be changed before they enter into their eternal dwelling place (1 Corinthians 15:51,52).
The New Testament also teaches that on the day of Jesus’ second coming, the earth and atmosphere around it will be burned up with fire. Hear what the Bible says: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up . . . the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:10,12).

AFTER JUDGMENT, WHAT THEN?

Once Jesus has pronounced judgment on all people, there will be an eternal separation of mankind into two groups. Some will go into life, while others will go into condemnation (John 5:29). Put another way, some will go into eternal life (known as “heaven”), while all the others will go into eternal punishment, also known as “hell” (Matthew 25:46). For every person, these are the only two possible eternal destinies: either the blessing of heaven, or the horror of hell.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE DAY OF JUDGMENT?

Friend, you and you alone, will determine where you will be in eternity. How is that true? If Jesus is going to be our Judge, then won’t He be the One that will decide our eternal destiny? What He will do, is judge us according to our deeds. But, who makes our choices in life? That is right: you and I do. So, when you think about it, by our actions and the lives that we live, we are really the ones that determine where we are headed after we leave this world.

Are you ready? Are you ready for the Master to come and judge you? If you died this very hour, are you confident that you would leave this world in the right relationship with the Lord? If we want to hear the Lord tell us on that day, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21), then we must be prepared! What is it that we must do in order to be well prepared for the coming of the Christ? We must be in the Lord and faithfully serving Him.

To be prepared, a person must become a Christian, a follower of the Christ. As we learned in our last lesson, the only way to do that is to hear the gospel, believe it, and obey it. That is, a lost person must hear the gospel preached, believe in Jesus, repent of sins, confess faith in Jesus, and then be baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). After baptism, the Lord wants us to live faithfully, being steadfast in His service (1 Corinthians 15:58).
Questions over this last lesson:

1. How do we know that Jesus will be the One Who will judge us? ____________________________________________________________________

2. On which day will the judgment take place? ______________
   What Bible verse proves your answer? ______________________

3. On which day will the dead be raised? ______________
   What Bible verse proves your answer? ______________________

4. By what standard will Jesus judge people? ______________
   What Bible verse proves your answer? ______________________

5. Which people will be exempt from judgment on the day of judgment? ____________________________________________________________________

6. How do we know that Jesus is not waiting to establish His Kingdom when He comes again? ____________________________________________________________________

7. Name 3 things that will take place when Jesus comes again.

   1) ______________________________________________________________________

   2) ______________________________________________________________________

   3) ______________________________________________________________________

8. Who knows for sure when Jesus is coming again? ______________

9. After Jesus judges all men, what separation will occur? ____________________________________________________________________

10. What must a person do in order to be prepared for judgment? ____________________________________________________________________

11. How important is it to you to be ready before Jesus comes again? ____________________________________________________________________

12. If you and I do not make it to heaven, whose fault will it be? ______________

13. If you are a Christian, then what should you be doing with the information that the Bible gives us about Jesus one day coming again to judge all men? ____________________________________________________________________
**APPENDIX** - Some Important Bible Events with Their Approximate Historical Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Date</th>
<th>Historical Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 1447</td>
<td>Moses led Israel out of Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 1407</td>
<td>Israel entered Canaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 1051</td>
<td>Saul became king of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 1011</td>
<td>David became king of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 971</td>
<td>Solomon became king of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 960</td>
<td>The temple (built by Solomon) was completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 931</td>
<td>The nation of Israel divided after Solomon died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 722/721</td>
<td>Northern Kingdom destroyed by Assyria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 606/605</td>
<td>1(^{st}) group of Jews taken to Babylon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 598/597</td>
<td>2(^{nd}) group of Jews taken to Babylon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 587/586</td>
<td>Destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and the Southern Kingdom by the Babylonians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 536</td>
<td>Zerubbabel led 1(^{st}) return of Jews to Judah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 516/515</td>
<td>Rebuilding of the Jews’ temple was finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 458/457</td>
<td>Ezra led 2(^{nd}) return of Jews to Judah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 445/444</td>
<td>Nehemiah led the Jews in rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 432</td>
<td>Nehemiah’s 2(^{nd}) return to Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. 5/4</td>
<td>Birth of Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.D. 30</td>
<td>Beginning of the church of the Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.D. ???</td>
<td>The 2(^{nd}) Coming of Jesus/End of the world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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