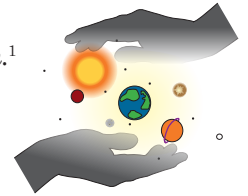




Part 1: The Creation

Where Do We Come From?

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*¹ Such powerful words are the first ones recorded in the Bible. This is the first of many big questions the Bible answers: where do we come from? The answer is: we come from God.² The Bible begins with a book called *Genesis*. This is a Hebrew word that means *Beginnings*. Genesis explains the beginnings of our universe, humanity, and the great history of our common heritage. While it may be difficult to completely understand, we can know that God has always been and that He created life out of nothing.³



The Creation

On the first day, God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. He separated the light from darkness. On the second day, God separated the waters and put space in between them. This is how the sea and sky were formed.⁴

On the third day, God created land. He adorned it with all nature like trees, grass, mountains and valleys. On the fourth day God created the sun, moon, and the stars.⁵ On the fifth day, God created all the animals that swim in the seas and fly in the sky. On the sixth day, God created all the animals that walk on land. He crafted each one just the way He wanted it.⁶

God’s Greatest Creation

God then said, “Let Us make man in Our Image.” So God took dust from the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. Man became a living being.⁷ This is what makes man so special in the world. There is no other thing in God’s creation that bears His image. Does this mean we all look like God with our skin and hair? No, it means we carry within us a spirit, an immortal part of our being that is made in the image of God. Our physical bodies will eventually waste away, but our spirit will remain.



¹Genesis 1:1; See *Christian Basics: A Theistic Worldview*

²See *Christian Basics: God*

³Psalms 90:2

⁴Genesis 1:6-8

⁵Genesis 1:14-19

⁶Genesis 1:24-26

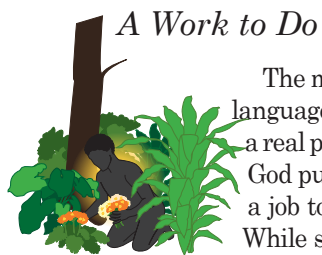
⁷Genesis 1:27

⁸Romans 8:15-16

Many people in this world will tell you that you are no better than any brute animal; that you are just a collection of flesh and bone that evolved from lesser animals. This mentality strips humanity of the holy place that we have in God's creation. Bearing God's image is an honor. You are special, unique, and crafted by the Almighty God. For this reason, He loves and cares about you. This special love is unique to all creation.⁸ An inspired Bible writer named David praised God by saying:

*I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.*⁹⁻¹⁰

After the sixth day, Creation was complete. On the seventh day, God rested. Genesis records God stating that His creation as good six times within the first chapter! In fact, when He has finished, He called it very good.¹¹ Man and God lived in a state of perfect fellowship and harmony. There was yet to be anything bad, for God is good and only created good things.



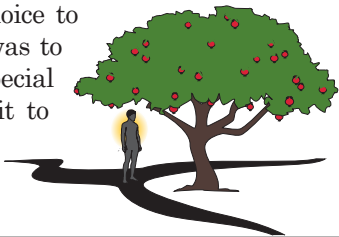
A Work to Do

The man formed from dust was named Adam.¹² In the Biblical language of Hebrew, Adam means *man* or *humanity*. Adam was a real person. He also serves as a type or example of all mankind. God put Adam in a beautiful garden called Eden. He was given a job to do. There were all sorts of trees and plants to care for. While some may look at work negatively, we should remember that work was given to Adam from God. God only creates good things. When done with a proper attitude, work can provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Gifts of Life and Choice

Within the garden were two special trees given as a blessing from God: the tree of Life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹³ The tree of Life indicated God was willing to share the gift of eternal life with Adam. Genesis shows that Adam could enjoy a perfect harmony with God continually.

God did not want His creation to serve Him only out of a sense of duty, but out of devotion. So, He gave Adam another gift: *choice*. This was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. With this tree came a command: do not eat from it. In this way, God offered Adam the choice to obey God and deny himself. The other choice was to obey Self and deny God (by eating from this special tree). In essence, Adam could choose to submit to God's definition of good, or he could defy God's command and choose what he thought was good.



⁹ Psalm 139:14

¹⁰ See *Christian Basics: Why Should We Worship God?*

¹¹ Genesis 1:27-31

¹² Genesis 2:19

¹³ Genesis 2:8-15

Study Quiz | Lesson 1

TRUE

FALSE

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. The Bible says that God was created along with the rest of creation. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Genesis explains the beginnings of our universe, humanity, and the great history of our common heritage. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. The Bible says God created the world over millions of years. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Man was created in the image of animals. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. You are special, unique, and crafted by the Almighty God. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. There are many human ways to remove sin by ourselves. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Sin is only a problem for Christians. Everyone else is okay. |

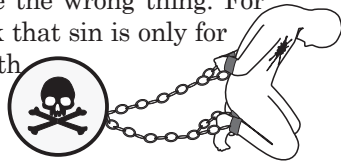
Search the Scriptures

1. *God saw all that He had made, and behold, _____.* And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31 NASB)
2. *I will give thanks to You, for I am _____ made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.* (Psalm 139:14 NASB)
3. *For the wages of sin is _____, but the gift of God is _____ in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 6:23)
4. *This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is _____ and in Him is no _____.* (1 John 1:5)
5. *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will _____, and you will _____.”* (Genesis 3:15)

Deeper Connections

1. What was God's gift of "choice," and what were the possible outcomes of the choice?
2. Explain how a husband and wife become "one flesh" and why their relationship is unique.
3. Why can't God just overlook our sins and continue to have a loving relationship with those who are in sin?
4. Explain the prophecy of Genesis 3:15.

The sad truth is that there is no way to remove sin by ourselves. Sin is like a disease. Once we disobey God, it is like being infected. There is no cure once the “infection” sets in. Everyone of age and understanding has known the right thing to do, and one way or another, we chose the wrong thing. For this reason, sin affects us all.¹² Some may think that sin is only for Christians or people who believe in God. The truth is that all people have sinned, regardless of our culture or beliefs. Humanity stands in need of relief from this great problem.¹³



But God Had a Plan

Before the creation of the world, God had a plan.¹⁴ His love for mankind motivated such a plan. Knowing that man would fall if given a choice, God took steps to secure fellowship with His image bearers again. Even though He is Holy and cannot fellowship sin, God planned for a sacrifice that would take away the sins of all who have faith. Through the willing sacrifice of someone innocent, the guilty could be redeemed. This plan was for Jesus Christ to come to this world. He alone would live a life without sin, and He alone would be the perfect sacrifice to take our sins away.

Genesis reveals God’s plan in a prophecy. A prophecy is a prediction or foretelling about something or someone in the future. While dispensing judgment to the devil, God declared Satan would be the enemy of mankind. He would continue to attempt to ruin mankind’s relationship with God, yet would ultimately fail.



*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*¹⁵

Jesus Christ would eventually come. The devil would try to defeat Him by crucifying Jesus on a cross. Although this act would appear to work, it turned out to only *strike His heel*. Jesus’ death and resurrection would redeem man from sin, and in this figurative way, Jesus would *crush the head* of the devil.

We have had our first glimpse of the need for Jesus as a sacrifice for sin. Now, we can begin to see how great God’s love for mankind is! Even as man rebelled, denying God and obeying Self, God’s love would motivate a continual reaching out to restore man to his place as God’s children and image bearers.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16

This is how God offered Adam (and all of us) a relationship of love and harmony: through free-will.¹⁴ To not allow the choice would deny God and man the opportunity to enjoy each other’s fellowship and love completely. To allow the choice (and for man to choose to obey God) would complete the perfect relationship that God desired.¹⁵

With choices come consequences. If Adam chose to obey God, he would live in this state of harmony and life. If Adam chose to obey Self, he would die.¹⁶ This is the first mention of death in the Bible. It indicates that there was not a problem with death yet. The consequence of death would be twofold: physical death (separation of body and spirit) and spiritual death (separation of spirit from God).

The First Family

Adam grew lonely as he worked. All the animals had mates; they produced offspring; yet, Adam was alone. God took notice of this, and put Adam into a deep sleep. He took from his side a rib and fashioned a helper for the man. When the man awoke, he found this helper near him—a woman! The woman’s name was Eve. Her name means *life or living*.¹⁷ Like Adam, she was a real person and also a figure or example of humanity.



Eve was created to be Adam’s perfect helper.¹⁸ Genesis says that she was *comparable*, meaning she was his perfect counterpart. Eve was not created inferior. She was everything that Adam needed. God brought Adam and Eve together in marriage as husband and wife to become the first family. He gave them a principle of human nature: to become one flesh. This means that a husband and wife share a unique physical, emotional, and spiritual relationship that they are to have only together. God said:

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*¹⁹

God had given another wonderful gift to His creation: the family. Bible students can observe the blessings of the first family and apply them to all families today. God’s principles of the family were given for the benefit of all mankind. What universal principles can we learn from the first family?

- A family begins with one man and one woman.
- Woman was created as a helper, not a slave.
- Man is the head of the family.
- Marriage creates a new family.

¹¹ 1 John 1:5

¹² Romans 3:23

¹³ See *Christian Basics: Who Has Sinned?*

¹⁴ 1 Peter 1:20

¹⁵ Genesis 3:15 (Emphasis Added)

¹⁴ See *Christian Basics: Free Will: God’s Gift of Choice*

¹⁵ Romans 6:17-18

¹⁶ Genesis 2:17

¹⁷ Genesis 3:20

¹⁸ Genesis 2:18-25

¹⁹ Genesis 2:24

Part 2: The Fall

An Enemy Comes

Adam taught Eve about God's gift of choice. Now both were given the opportunity to choose to obey God or to serve Self. Adam and Eve enjoyed a relationship with God that was based on choice and motivated by love. Away in the spirit realm, God had created heavenly beings to minister and help Him. One of these spirits soon chose to obey Self over God. The consequence of this choice corrupted his heart. He deceived many angels into serving him instead of God. There was a great war in the spirit realm. The corrupted one and his followers were cast out of heaven. He soon found his way to the Garden of Eden.

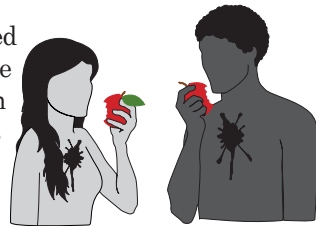


Temptation + Sin

This enemy's name was Satan. In the Biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek, Satan means *adversary* and *lying in wait*. Satan is also called the devil which means *false accuser*. The Bible reveals the devil's nature and motivation.¹ He chose to be an adversary who lies in wait to tempt humans into denying God and obeying Self. Satan's temptations take God's gift of choice and corrupts it. Temptation makes denying God appear more attractive or satisfying than obeying Him.²

After being banished from Heaven, the devil decided to lie in wait and spoil the perfect fellowship between man and God. One day, Adam and Eve were near the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. The devil took the form of a snake and approached Eve. He said, "Did God really tell you that you should not eat from the fruit of this tree?" Innocent Eve told the snake about God's command for them not to eat from the tree or they would die. The devil lied by saying she would not die but would be like God.³ In essence, Satan falsely accused God of being selfish by not allowing Eve to enjoy the "knowledge of good and evil."

Eve took some fruit and ate it.⁴ (She wasn't forced to take it. By her own free-will she ate.) Then, she gave some to Adam, and he ate too. With this choice, Adam and Eve decided that they could determine what was "good" by rejecting what God had commanded. Their actions denied God and obeyed Self.

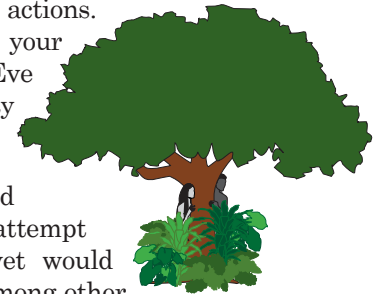


The Bible provides a special word for when someone disobeys God. It is called *sin*. Sin is any action or attitude that disobeys God's authority or law.⁵ When someone sins, they seek to please Self apart from God while denying God's good ways. This is a rebellion against the love and harmony God designed for man.

Perfect Fellowship Lost

Adam and Eve did gain knowledge of good and evil when they ate from the tree. Instantly, they realized that what they had done was wrong and sinful. They realized that they were naked and became ashamed. They tried to cover their nakedness by sewing fig leaves over themselves.⁶ This was a silly idea because the leaves could not cover their nakedness properly. It also represented a bigger problem. No matter how they may try to cover their sin, they could not solve the problem on their own.

God found Adam and Eve hiding in the garden. He asked, "Where are you?"⁷ An all-seeing, all-knowing God had no problem locating them. God was asking Adam to give an account of his actions. In essence, God said, "Where are you in your relationship with Me?" Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the snake. No one accepted responsibility even though they had chosen to sin.



God pronounced judgment on those who had disobeyed Him. The devil would continue to attempt to ruin mankind's relationship with God, yet would ultimately fail (more on that in a moment). Among other punishments, God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden.⁸ Their perfect relationship with God was broken by sin.

The Choice of Sin Brought Consequences

Eve's choice would have consequences for all time. Because of sin, Adam and Eve would grow old and die. This is the first death warned about: physical death (separation of body from spirit). We all face the problem of death because of sin.⁹ As a result of sin, all evil became possible: such as pain, suffering, and disease. Sin also leads to a greater destruction: *spiritual death* (the separation of the spirit from God). This is an eternal damnation in Hell.¹⁰ If we do not find a way to remove sin from our spiritual body, we are doomed to an eternity of pain and suffering away from God. Sin is mankind's greatest problem.

One might wonder how a God of love could banish the ones whom He had created to love. We must realize that as much as God loves us, He is also holy.¹¹ To be holy means *to be sacred or set apart*. God is set apart from sin. He desires us to live eternally in Heaven, an eternal reward of life without sin and its consequences: pain, suffering, and death. Would God really love us if He turned a blind eye to sin and allowed Heaven and all the saved to be once again corrupted by sin? God's love for one will not jeopardize His love and reward for others.

¹ See *Christian Basics: Satan: Mankind's Great Enemy*

² Genesis 3:1-5
³ Genesis 3:6

⁴ James 1:13-15

⁵ See *Christian Basics: Sin & Spiritual Death*

⁶ Genesis 3:7

⁷ Genesis 3:9

⁸ Genesis 3:21-24

⁹ Romans 6:23

¹⁰ Matthew 25:41



Part 1: A World Struggling with Sin

Family Growth

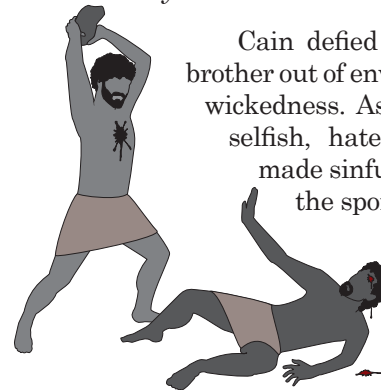
After being expelled from the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve began their new life in a harder and crueler world. Soon, two sons were born (Cain and Abel). Adam and his family tried to maintain a connection with God through the sacrifice of animals. The joy of their simple life with children would soon be spoiled by sin.



A Descent into Sin

Adam and Eve suffered heartbreak when their firstborn son, Cain, fell greatly into sin. God had warned Cain that sin would manipulate him, if he was not careful.

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.¹



Cain defied God's call for peace when he murdered his brother out of envy. This act was the first in a trend toward total wickedness. As the world was populated, people grew more selfish, hateful, deceitful, murderous, and continuously made sinful choices. God looked with sadness and pity on the spoiled creation He loved. The Bible says:

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.²

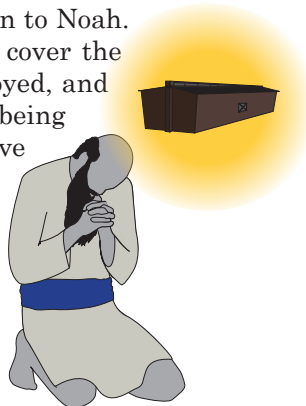
A Family of Faith

With each new generation, it appeared that the honor of bearing God's image was more and more tainted by sin. While all seemed lost, there was one family that still served God among all the wickedness of the world. This family group was made up of a man named Noah, his wife, three sons, and their wives. In a generation of evil, these eight souls were doing their best to live by faith and obey God.

¹ Genesis 4:7

² Genesis 6:5

God appreciated Noah's faith. He revealed a plan to Noah. God would send a great flood of water that would cover the whole earth. All of the wickedness would be destroyed, and God would start fresh again with Noah's family being the beginnings of a new human race. God would save Noah and his family inside of a giant boat called, "the ark."³ Noah was to build the ark. God would send animals of every species to the ark. Noah and his family would care for them. This may have seemed very strange for Noah. But even if he didn't understand why, Noah listened and obeyed. The Bible says that Noah's faith was great:



"and Noah did everything, just as God commanded him."⁴

We can learn from this kind of faith. Sometimes God calls us to do things that may seem strange to us. Our faith in God should inspire us to obey. *Faith is a demonstration of complete trust.*⁵ We should have complete trust and confidence in God's plan for our lives today!

A Global Flood

When Noah's family finished construction, God sent the animals to the ark. Once Noah and his family entered, God shut the door. Then, it started to rain. God also sent waters from the deep parts under the earth. Water began to cover all the land. Some people probably ran to the ark and beat on the door. We have no idea what Noah was thinking, but since Noah was human like us, we can imagine that he was sad to hear their cries. Outside of the ark, all were washed away.

It was because of sin that the flood came.⁶ It was because of sin that these people were crying out. It was because of sin that they were being washed away. How sad it must have been for God to destroy so much of His creation. We can learn a lesson from this: God is holy, and He cannot fellowship sin.⁷ We must make sure that we have the sin removed from our life. In our time, the only way to accomplish this is through an obedient faith in Jesus Christ.⁸

For almost a year, the flood covered the whole earth. Eventually the waters decreased and the new chance for mankind began. Noah prepared an animal sacrifice to honor God. God made a special covenant with all of mankind that He would never again destroy the whole world through a flood.⁹

³ See *Christian Basics: Noah's Ark: A Type of the Church*

⁴ Genesis 6:22

⁵ Hebrews 11:1

⁶ 1 Peter 1:16, Habakkuk 1:13; See *Christian Basics: How Could a "Good God" Do That?*

⁷ 1 John 1:5-7

⁸ Hebrews 1:1-4

⁹ Genesis 8:20-9:23

Study Quiz | Lesson 2

TRUE

FALSE

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Noah had faith in God by obeying God's commands. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. There were thousands of people who survived the flood all over the world. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. The people of Babel wanted to build a tower to give God glory. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. The different tribes and languages began as a result of the people's pride at the tower of Babel. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Abraham refused to sacrifice his son on the altar. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. God did not ask Abraham to do anything that He was not willing to do Himself. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. God's promise of a blessing for the world was fulfilled in Jesus. |

Search the Scriptures

- If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire _____, but you should rule over it. (Genesis 4:7)*
- Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was _____. (Genesis 6:5)*
- "Do not lay your hand on the lad, [...]; for now I know that _____ since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." (Genesis 22:12)*
- [...] and through your offspring all nations on earth _____, because _____. (Genesis 22:18)*



Deeper Connections

- How did Noah demonstrate his faith in God?
- Why did God decide to flood the whole world?
- How did God's promise to Abraham involve Jesus?
- Why is it important that we know that men like Abraham struggled with sin?

Abraham's Family Still Struggled with Sin

The devil was as busy as ever, tempting and corrupting mankind. While the patriarchs led their families to call on the name of the Lord, these godly men struggled with sin. What mercy and patience the Lord must have had to work patiently with those who would sometimes defy Him! The promise of a Redeemer and Messiah could not come soon enough!

Patriarchs like Abraham did not always do the right thing, and it is important that we know that.¹⁴ They were human, not super human. These people were tempted, and sometimes gave in to sin. Their decisions to defy God and obey Self are recorded in the Bible as examples and warnings for us.



Not once but twice, Abraham was afraid that others would kill him in jealousy for his beautiful wife. So, he deceived others by pretending she was his sister.¹⁵ His cowardly actions were learned by his son, Isaac. As an adult, Isaac once feared for his life and also deceived others into believing that his wife was his sister.¹⁶ Abraham's grandson Jacob lied about his identity to trick his own father into blessing him with the family inheritance instead of his older brother!¹⁷ Abraham's great grandsons sold their own brother into slavery and lied to their father, claiming that this son was dead!¹⁸

Abraham's Family Grew into a Small Nation

After Abraham died, his family steadily grew. God gave this family the name *Israel* which means *God prevails*.¹⁹ It means that Israel would be a blessed nation by which God would bless the world.²⁰ The small Israelite nation was surrounded by greater and wicked peoples. God knew that if they stayed in Canaan, they would be influenced too greatly by sin, and so God led the descendants of Abraham down to the land of Egypt. Here they would grow for more than 400 years.

In conclusion, patriarchs such as Abraham stood as spiritual leaders between their family tribe and God. God promised Abraham that the world would be blessed through his offspring. The Bible will show that Jesus fulfills the promise of God! And while these men of faith sometimes chose to defy God and obey Self, we can still learn from them. They are examples for us that all humans need spiritual help and cannot save themselves.

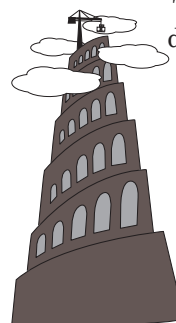
"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

Sin Spoils the New World

Now that wickedness was washed away, it may seem like all would be good again. However, Noah and his family still had the "sin problem," too. Even though they were faithful and loved God, there were times when they struggled with sin. Genesis records a time when Noah became very drunk and naked. One of his sons greatly dishonored him. The consequences of sin brought curses on the family.¹⁰

Noah's descendants began repopulating the earth. Great cities were built, and mankind accomplished great wonders. One reason that mankind worked together so well during this time was because of their common language.¹¹

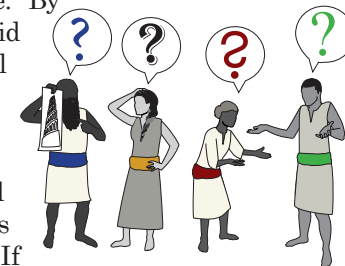
One great city was called Babel. Here, many gathered to build a great tower that would reach up into the sky and into heaven. Their reason was not to give God glory, but to glorify themselves. They wanted to become equal with God.¹²



This was very much like the temptation that the devil used to deceive Eve! He told her that she could be like God. Humans struggle greatly for who will reign as the Lord in their life. We all must choose to serve someone.¹³ Many people choose to serve themselves. They are the god of their life, even if they don't want to admit it. God wants us to submit to His loving will and let Him lead our lives.¹⁴ This allows Him to show us the way to redemption and eternal life.

In His mercy, God came down and put different languages into the minds and mouths of men.¹⁵ Suddenly, people could not talk to each other anymore. By confusing their languages, God halted this rapid decline of sin. He knew that the pride of Babel would have made the world only more wicked!

Because there was so much confusion, the people divided into smaller groups and scattered. This is how the different tribes and cultures of the world were established. If mankind had not been so proud, perhaps there would still be only one language to this day. Unfortunately, sin and the devil will not stand by and allow peace on this earth. The devil will always be jealous of the goodness of God, and will always seek to bring sin, destruction, and death to those who have been created in God's image.



¹⁴ Genesis 12:10-20, Romans 15:4

¹⁵ Genesis 20:1-18

¹⁶ See Genesis 26

¹⁷ See Genesis 27

¹⁸ See Genesis 37

¹⁹ Genesis 32:28

²⁰ See *Christian Basics: Is Israel Still God's Chosen Nation Today?*

¹⁰ Genesis 9:18-23

¹¹ Genesis 11:1

¹² Genesis 11:3

¹³ Joshua 24:14-15

¹⁴ Romans 6:15-18

¹⁵ Genesis 11:9

Part 2: A Family of Faith

An Age of Patriarchs

As time moved on, patriarchs often led their family and tribe. In Bible times, a patriarch was the father, grandfather, and leader of a large number of people. Even his employees and servants looked to him as their leader and elder. The patriarchs stood as mediator and spiritual leader between their family tribe and God. They often led sacrifices on behalf of their family or tribe.¹ During this time, the Word of God was not yet written, so the common man required either direct revelation from heaven or a patriarch to guide them. The common man had only a narrow way to understand who God was and man's purpose.²



Abraham the Patriarch

One patriarch that God selected to be the trusted leader of God's ways was Abraham which means *Father of a Multitude*.³⁻⁴ God called Abraham to leave all of his relatives and move to a new country. In faith, Abraham moved his wife Sarah and all their servants away from his family to a new land called Canaan.



The book of Genesis spends more time in Abraham's family than on anything else. Of the fifty chapters of the book, Abraham's family takes up thirty-nine chapters! Abraham had many adventures and trials in his life. He was a warrior, a shepherd, a business man, and a leader.



Eventually, Abraham grew old. While he had been very successful and had great wealth, he had no child to whom he could pass his legacy. Abraham was ashamed because his name meant *Father of a Multitude*, but he could not have even one child. Though Abraham and his wife Sarah tried to make up their own way for Abraham to become a father, God had plans for them.⁵

Sarah was long past the time when a woman can naturally have children. However, God performed a miracle. The sadness and longing of Abraham and Sarah was replaced with the cries of a new baby. Abraham named him Isaac, which means *laughter*. No doubt Abraham and Sarah laughed with delight and joy that God had blessed them in their old age with a son.⁶

Abraham Is Tested

As Isaac grew, God again called to Abraham. He was told to take Isaac whom he loved, and offer him as a sacrifice on an altar to the Lord.⁷ Abraham would have to kill his only son. Before we become horrified, we have to remember that God really did not want such a sacrifice. God wanted to test Abraham's faith. When they reached the place of sacrifice, Isaac helped Abraham build the altar.

Then, Isaac found himself tied up and placed on top. No doubt, Abraham struggled greatly within his heart with anticipated guilt. Just as he raised the knife to deliver the deadly blow, the Angel of the Lord called out for him to stop:



Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.⁸

The Angel of the Lord provided a ram trapped in the bushes nearby as an alternative for Isaac. Abraham untied his son, took the ram, and sacrificed it on the altar to God. Abraham and Isaac returned home together, overwhelmed with relief.

Jesus Foreshadowed in God's Blessing

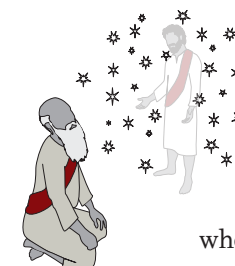
God called Abraham to go outside at night and look at the stars. God said:

I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.⁹

God's plan of redemption continued through the age of the Patriarchs. From Adam to Noah to Abraham, God made covenants (agreements between two parties or persons) that blessed these great men of faith.¹⁰ He also showed His plan for the redemption of the world. Consider Abraham: He was called to sacrifice his son but later was able to release his son from certain death. God gave His only begotten Son to be sacrificed.

The difference is that God did not release Jesus. He allowed Jesus to die on the cross. He died as a sacrifice for our sins.¹¹ What an amazing God we serve! Consider this: God did not ask Abraham to do anything that He was not willing to do Himself! In fact, God allowed Abraham to escape from such pain. However, God went through the heartache because of how much He loves us.

We recall that God promised that Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. This figurative promise came true as Abraham would become the Patriarch of a mighty nation called Israel.



God also promised that all peoples of the world would be blessed through Abraham. Concerning Jesus, he would come as a descendant of Abraham.¹² Through Jesus, the Christian message can reach all mankind and anyone can be saved by God's grace through faith!¹³ Truly the whole world is blessed because of Jesus Christ. Truly the whole world is blessed because of the faith of Abraham!

¹ Job 1:3

⁴ Genesis 17:5

² See Appendix A: Three Spiritual Ages

⁵ Genesis 16:1-16, 18:1-15

³ Genesis 12-25

⁶ Genesis 21:1-7

¹⁰ See *Christian Basics: When God Makes a Covenant*

⁷ See Genesis 22

¹¹ 1 John 2:2

⁸ Genesis 22:12

¹² Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3:23-28

⁹ Genesis 22:17-19

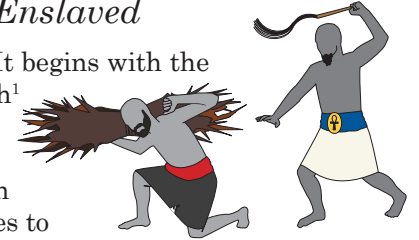
¹³ Matthew 28:19-20, Romans 1:16



Part 1: Israel Enslaved and Redeemed

Introduction: God's People Are Enslaved

The next book of the Bible is *Exodus*. It begins with the Israelites in Egypt. When the kind Pharaoh¹ died, a new Pharaoh ruled (*Pharaoh* is an Egyptian title for king). He grew afraid that Israel would grow into a mighty nation and attack Egypt. He ordered the Israelites to be enslaved.² For 400 years, they served Egypt. They needed a *savior* to deliver them from slavery to freedom. (A *savior* is someone who saves others from danger or ruin.)³



Moses: A Savior for Israel

Another cruel Pharaoh tried to stop the growth of the Israelite nation by having all the baby boys killed. One of the Israelite woman hid her baby boy in a basket and placed it in the reeds along the edge of the Nile River to escape the Egyptian soldiers. An Egyptian princess found him by the river. She named him *Moses*, which means *drawn out*, since he was drawn out of the river. Through God's planning, Moses' mother was found to care for the baby. When he was weaned, he was brought to live with the Egyptian princess.



Moses was living in two worlds. One had all the comforts and riches of Egyptian royalty. The other was one of guilt and frustration, because he knew that the Israelites were suffering.

One day, Moses noticed an Egyptian beating an Israelite. He could not tolerate what he saw; Moses killed the Egyptian. (Like other faithful men in the Bible, Moses still struggled with sin. He was guilty of murder. Although he would become a great man, he was still only human.) The king of Egypt tried to kill Moses in revenge. Giving up his life of Egyptian royalty, Moses escaped to another kingdom where he became a humble shepherd.



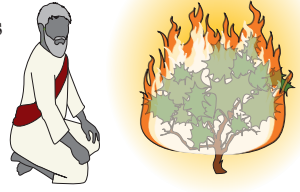
¹ Genesis 47:5-6

² Exodus 1-2

³ See *Christian Basics: What is a Savior?*

God vs. Pharaoh

Many years passed. One day while Moses was watching the sheep, he noticed a strange light on the mountainside. When he approached, he saw there was a burning bush. It was on fire continually, but never burning up. God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. He told Moses that He heard the cries of the Israelites. God wanted Moses to deliver the nation. Moses was very hesitant to become such a leader, but eventually he agreed to be the savior of Israel.⁴

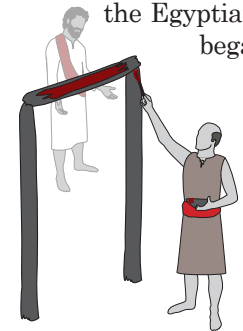


When Moses came before Pharaoh, he told him that the God of the Israelites commanded that Pharaoh let them go. This was an insult to Pharaoh because he considered himself to be a god. As the supposed god in control of Egypt, Pharaoh would not listen. When the Pharaoh would not heed Moses' warnings, God used Moses to perform great miracles called "The Ten Plagues." These plagues were designed to show the power of God over Pharaoh. Some of the plagues included various swarms of pests like frogs, flies, and gnats that destroyed the crops and land.⁵

Sometimes, Pharaoh pretended to be sorry until Moses sent the plague away. Other times he openly defied the warnings of God without being sorry. Either way, it always ended with him being stubborn or "hard hearted." The plagues grew worse. Livestock began to die and entire harvests of crops were lost.

The Passover: A Symbol of Jesus

The final plague was the worst of all.⁶ It was called *the death of the firstborn*. God would come down and go through the land and either take the soul of the first born in each home. In order to protect a home from this plague, God commanded that each home sacrifice a lamb and cover their door frames with its blood. As the Lord went through the city, he looked at each door. If there were blood on the door frame, the Lord would pass over and leave that home alone. If a home did not have blood, then the soul of the firstborn child of the home would be taken (thus, the child would die). All the Israelites obeyed God, but the Egyptians did not. That night the Egyptians (even the Pharaoh) began to cry when they realized what had happened.



God also commanded that the Israelites prepare a special meal. It was called *the Passover*.⁷ They were to eat it inside their blood covered houses as the Lord *passed over* them. This special meal was a foreshadowing example of Jesus Christ. He would become the "Passover lamb" that was sacrificed for our sins. Similar to the sacrificial lamb, His blood is our protection. The difference is that Jesus saves us from *spiritual death*.⁸

⁴ Exodus 3-4; See *Christian Basics: Moses: A Type of Jesus*

⁵ Exodus 5-10

⁶ Exodus 11

⁷ Exodus 12

⁸ 1 Corinthians 5:7, 1 Peter 1:18-19; See *Christian Basics: The Passover: A Preview of Jesus' Sacrifice*

Study Quiz | Lesson 3

TRUE

FALSE

- 1. Moses never struggled with sin.
- 2. The Passover was a special meal and a foreshadowing example of Jesus.
- 3. The Law of Moses was meant to teach Israel how to love and honor God, as well as how to love and honor their fellow man.
- 4. The sacrificial system in the Law was to teach Israel that in order for sins to be forgiven, an innocent sacrifice had to die.
- 5. Israel was meant to be a holy nation and a beacon of hope to the world that would bring mankind to God.
- 6. God has always desired a relationship based on choice and motivated by love.
- 7. Jesus did not fulfill any prophecies in the Bible.

Search the Scriptures

1. *Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they _____; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.* (Exodus 2:23)
2. *You shall love the Lord your God with all your _____, with all your _____, and with all your _____.* (Deuteronomy 6:5)
3. *In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right _____.* (Judges 21:25)
4. *The Lord has sought for Himself a man _____, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people [...]* (1 Samuel 13:14)
5. *But He was wounded _____, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes _____.* (Isaiah 53:5)

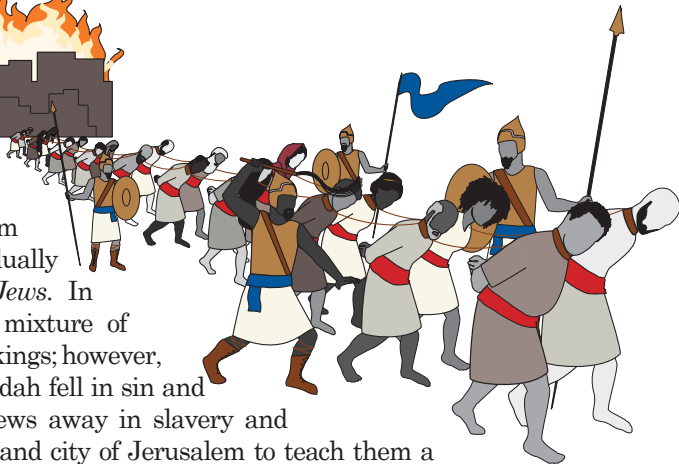


Deeper Connections

1. What was the purpose of the Law of Moses?
2. Why did God demand that a sacrifice of an innocent be made for a guilty sinner?
3. Why would God allow Israel to make bad choices (wanting a human king) instead of just telling them what to do all the time?
4. What evidences does the Bible use to show that Jesus would be part of God's plan to redeem man from sin?

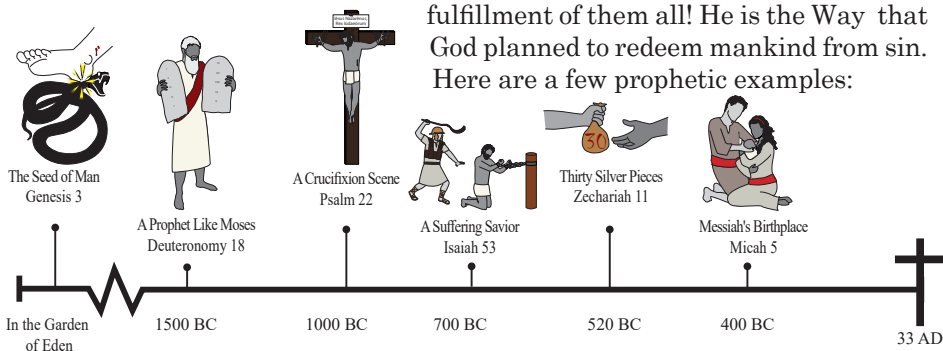


The faithful remaining people became the kingdom of *Judah*. They gradually began to be called *Jews*. In Judah, there was a mixture of righteous and wicked kings; however, more were wicked. Judah fell in sin and ruin. God sent the Jews away in slavery and destroyed the temple and city of Jerusalem to teach them a lesson. Eventually, He let some return to the Promised Land. Judah was never the same country as it was in the days of Moses, Joshua, David and Solomon.⁵



Prophets Show the Way

God called prophets to preach during these times. They preached that God's people needed to repent.⁶ They foretold historical events hundreds of years in advance.⁷ They declared God's judgment on the wicked.⁸ They also prophesied a Messiah would come (which means Anointed One). He would be anointed with God's power to save those who had faith and obeyed God. There were numerous prophecies about this Messiah. We will see that Jesus is the fulfillment of them all! He is the Way that God planned to redeem mankind from sin. Here are a few prophetic examples:



Israel's decline is a dark example of how sin was a problem that humanity could not solve alone. But God had a plan. All of history, creation, and time was preparing itself for the arrival of Jesus. God's plan for the redemption of humans everywhere was about to begin.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

⁵ For Biblical history of these times. see 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

⁶ See books such as Jeremiah, Micah or Zephaniah

⁷ See the book of Daniel

⁸ See books such as Obadiah, Jonah, or Nahum

⁹ John 14:6

The Exodus from Egypt

A broken and humbled Pharaoh released the Israelites. They gathered their possessions and left Egypt immediately. The Israelites began the long journey back to their promised land, Canaan. While they traveled, the Pharaoh hardened his heart and rebelled against God again. He wanted his slaves back. His chariot army chased after the Israelites. They caught them at a place called the Red Sea. The Israelites were trapped between the sea and Pharaoh's army.

God told Moses to lift his staff and stretch out his hand towards the sea. When he did, God parted the waters! Israel quickly began crossing the dry ground on the sea floor. Pharaoh sent his chariot army in after them. When all the Israelites were safe on the other side, the Egyptians were still inside. God made the waters return. The army of Egypt was destroyed. God had saved the Israelites.⁹

The Law of Moses



Shortly after this, God called Moses to the top of a mountain called Sinai. Here, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. These ten laws were the moral foundation of a covenant that God made with Israel. Eventually, 613 laws became the Law of Moses.¹⁰ This is found in the Bible books of *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*.

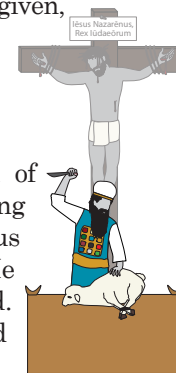
The Law of Moses was meant to teach Israel how to love and honor God. The laws also taught Israel how to love and honor their fellow man. Through Israel, God intended to reveal His plan of redemption to the entire world.

Blood Sacrifice

The Law introduced a tabernacle (and later a permanent temple) where God's people could come and worship God at a specific location. There were also priests whose job was to sacrifice animals as a sin offering for the people. This sacrificial system was to teach Israel that in order for sins to be forgiven, an innocent sacrifice had to die. This is what God required.

*And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.*¹¹

For their covenant, the Israelites could use the blood of animals. It would temporarily cover their sin. God was teaching His people what to look forward to when the time came for Jesus to arrive. This sacrificial system foreshadowed His death.¹² He would become the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. His blood would redeem the sins of people for all time, instead of needing to sacrifice again and again.



⁹ Exodus 13-14

¹⁰ See *Christian Basics: Do Christians Obey the Law of Moses?*

¹¹ See *Christian Basics: Blood Sacrifice*

¹² See Appendix A: Three Spiritual Ages

Part 2: The Rise and Fall of National Israel

Entering the Promised Land

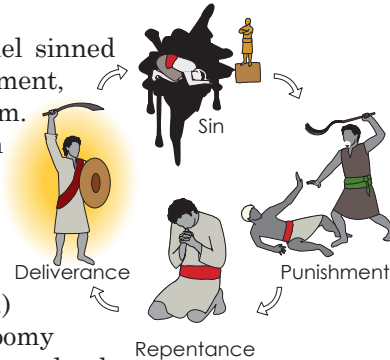
By the time Israel arrived at the Promised Land, Moses had died. A new leader, Joshua, led them on a military campaign of conquest. The Bible records the history of these times in a book named after their leader: *Joshua*. Like the people during the times of Noah and the flood, the nations in Canaan were completely depraved. They were a cancer of sin that could potentially infect the whole world. In His mercy, God used Israel to destroy these nations. Israel was to be a holy nation and a beacon of hope that would bring mankind to God.



Cycles of Sin and Repentance

While Israel had many victories and conquered much of the Promised Land, there were times when they permitted these wicked nations to live. Instead of cleansing the region from sin, they became ensnared and sometimes gave in to temptation. Many Israelites betrayed their faith in God and worshiped false idols.

A cycle of events followed: First, Israel sinned by worshiping false idols. Next, as punishment, various nations were sent to oppress them. Later, Israel was reminded how bad sin was and repented. Finally, God sent great heroes called *Judges* to bring the Israelite people back to God. (These mighty men and women did incredible deeds written down in a book in the bible called *Judges*.) This part of Israel's history ended with a gloomy observation. After hundreds of years of this cycle, the nation was aimless and without a clear direction. The Bible says:

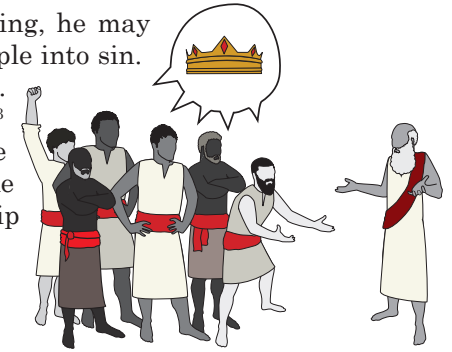


*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*¹

Israel Demands a King

Looking at the nations around them, Israel saw that they had kings. Israel was different. God was their King and the Judges were His representatives. Israel grew tired of serving God and wanted a human king.² God warned them by using prophets. (The prophets were men to whom God spoke directly. They told the people what He had said. They often were given miraculous power to prove their authority.)

God warned that if Israel had a king, he may not honor God and would lead the people into sin. However, the people would not listen. So God permitted them to have a king.³ We can see that God still gave people the gift of choice. Even when people made bad choices, God desired a relationship based on choice and motivated by love.



A Golden Age

The first king was named Saul. He was chosen directly by God and ordained by the prophet Samuel. When Saul chose a pattern of disobeying God, Samuel was sent to declare this message:

*But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.*⁴

The second king was named David. He was indeed a man after God's own heart. He honored God and led the people in God's holy way. For this, the Lord blessed him. His family became the royal family. David's family remained in power until the Israelites sinned so badly that God sent them into captivity hundreds of years later. Jesus was a descendant of this great king. This family connection demonstrated that Jesus was worthy to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

David and his son Solomon led Israel into great prosperity. David brought peace to the region and inspired the people to honor and worship God. Solomon built a great temple for Israel to come and worship God. Surrounding nations sent tribute to pay their respects. The kingdom grew in strength, riches, and glory. Israel seemed to be the holy nation and inspiration for a worldwide revival to return to God.

The Fall of Israel

The devil is always lurking, tempting, and corrupting mankind. He often tempted the people of Israel to sin as well. Although David and Solomon were some of Israel's greatest kings, they still struggled with sin. They were guilty of adultery, murder, idolatry, and arrogance. By the end of Solomon's reign, Israel was tired of the royal family. They felt like the nation was working too hard for the royal family's profit. In a dramatic showdown the majority of the Israelites split away and began a new nation, keeping the name *Israel*. (All of the kings of this rebellious nation were wicked. Eventually, they were carried away into slavery.)

¹Judges 21:25

²1 Samuel 8:5; See *Christian Basics: Give Us a King!*
A Warning About Idolizing the World

³1 Samuel 8:11-22

⁴1 Samuel 13:14; See *Christian Basics: How Can We Be Men and Women "After God's Own Heart?"*



Part 1: The Life of Jesus

Introduction: At Just the Right Time

The prophets of God were silent for 400 years. The remnant of God's people were now called *Jews*. They were living under the cruel occupation of a powerful country called Rome. The consequences of sin and rebellion weighed heavy on the Jewish people.



Meanwhile, God had been preparing for the redemption of man from sin. Before His arrival on Earth, Jesus was with the Father in Heaven as part of the eternal Godhead. He was "*the Word that became flesh.*"¹ That means He left the perfection of Heaven to live among men.

The Christ is Born!

God's prophecy included *where* the Savior would be born!



*But you, O Bethlehem ... from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*²

A young Jewish woman named Mary was betrothed to a Jew named Joseph. One night as she slept, an angel from God came. He said that by the Spirit of the Lord, she would become miraculously pregnant even though she was a virgin.³ This Child was the long awaited Messiah and Redeemer. He was to be named Jesus. Even though there were many struggles, she accepted God's will to become the mother of the Messiah. Mary gave birth to Jesus in Bethlehem. Jesus fulfilled the birth prophecy from hundreds of years prior!

Jesus Begins His Ministry

The Bible books that tell about Jesus' life are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They are called *the Gospels*. Gospel means *good news* and presents the life, work, and sacrifice of Jesus as the good news for everyone to hear. Jesus was thirty years old when he began His gospel ministry. He started by being baptized.⁴

¹ John 1:14,14; See also Philippians 2

² Micah 5:2 ESV

³ See *Christian Basics: Why does the Virgin Birth Matter?*

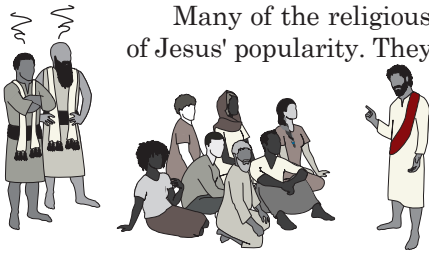
⁴ Luke 3:22; *Christian Basics: Why Does the Baptism of Jesus Matter?*

Jesus gathered disciples to Him from different backgrounds. Some were poor fishermen. Others were political, and one was a tax collector. Twelve of these men became Jesus' apostles.⁵ They were trained to help the church after Jesus' ministry was finished. There were also women of great faith who provided for the financial needs of Jesus and the disciples.⁶



The Great Teacher

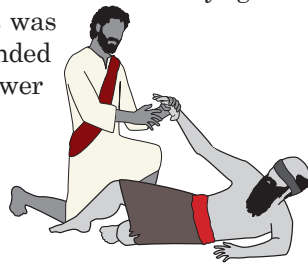
The Gospels are full of the teachings of Jesus. We can see the greatest sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount.⁷ Jesus used opportunities like this to teach people about His mission and the purpose for their lives. He wanted everyone to know the Way that God planned to redeem mankind. Sometimes, He taught only a few people. Other times He taught thousands. As His ministry grew in popularity, people came from near and far to see Jesus. Jesus taught by giving common examples. Since many were farmers and country folk, he often taught lessons that used farming and fishing as the example.⁸



Many of the religious leaders of the Jews began to be jealous of Jesus' popularity. They did not like that Jesus was not properly schooled like they were and yet He had a perfect understanding of the Law of Moses. They did not like that He was more popular than they were with the common people. They also did not like that Jesus preached that He came from Heaven and was equal with God the Father. They thought Jesus was a false teacher, and they began to plot how to get rid of Him.

The Great Miracle Worker

Jesus performed miracles to show that He had power and authority from Heaven.⁹ He healed the sick. He gave blind people their sight. He gave the deaf the ability to hear. He brought dead people back to life! All of these miracles were intended to show people that He had the authority of God. The Jewish religious leaders were also envious of Jesus' miracles. They ignored the obvious power of God and tried to say that it was the devil who gave Jesus special powers. They blinded themselves to the truth: Jesus' miraculous power demonstrated God's superior power over the devil!



TRUE

FALSE

- 1. Since most people were factory workers, Jesus often taught lessons that used machines as examples.
- 2. Jesus performed miracles to show that He had power and authority from heaven.
- 3. The Jewish religious leaders usually liked Jesus.
- 4. Jesus Christ sinned, just like every other person on Earth.
- 5. The bread and the fruit of the vine (grape juice) magically turn into Jesus' body and blood.
- 6. The Jewish religious council gave Jesus a fair trial.
- 7. Pilate was brave and refused to be bullied by the crowd.

Search the Scriptures

1. *"But you, O Bethlehem... from you shall come forth for me one who is to be _____, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."* (Micah 5:2)
2. *"And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, '_____'; in You I am well pleased."* (Luke 3:22)
3. *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; _____." (Matthew 26:26)*
4. *O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, _____ (Matthew 26:39)*
5. *Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "_____!" (John 19:5)*



Deeper Connections

1. Why does it matter that Jesus fulfilled prophecy?
2. Why does it matter that Jesus did not sin?
3. What do the symbols of the communion represent?
3. Who is responsible for condemning Jesus to death?

⁵ John 1:35-51, Matthew 4:18-22, 9:9-13, 10:1-4

⁶ Luke 8:1-3

⁷ Matthew 5-7

⁸ Matthew 13:1-23

He said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."⁷ When they refused to accept it, he threw the money in the temple. Then Judas left and hanged himself. Perhaps he felt that the consequences of his sins were too much to bear.

Pilate the Governor took Jesus inside, and they had a private conversation. From this, Pilate began to see that Jesus was innocent and that the religious leaders were envious of Him. He tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish mob was angry and called for His death. Pilate had Jesus scourged with a whip.

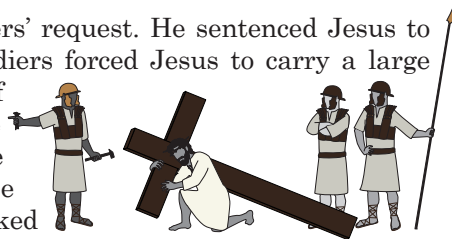
The whip most likely had metal, bone, or glass in its tips so that the whip would cut into the flesh. After His body was ripped open by the scourging, the Roman soldiers put a crown of thorns on Jesus' head. They put a purple robe on His bloody back and put a reed in his hand. Then, they mocked Him by bowing down and saying, "Hail, King of the Jews." Then, they took the reed out of His hands and hit Him with it. Eventually, they led the bloody and broken Man back to Pilate.

Pilate took Jesus to the front of the large Jewish mob. He called out, "Behold the Man." He called for Jesus to be released. Pilate believed Jesus was innocent. (Perhaps he had hoped that scourging Jesus would make the people feel pity.) The religious leaders were ready. When Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus, they had told the mob what to say. "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate was shocked. "Why?" he shouted, "What crime has He committed?" The mob only shouted louder, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

A Long Walk

Only a week earlier, the city had welcomed Jesus. They shouted with joy that He had come. Now they called for His death. They called for His blood to be on them and their children. Jesus was probably overcome with grief to see these people calling for His death when so little time had passed since they celebrated His life.

Pilate gave in to the religious leaders' request. He sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion. The Roman soldiers forced Jesus to carry a large wooden cross through the streets of Jerusalem. As Jesus slowly walked, the people of the city came out to see the horror. Blood fell to the streets as He struggled through. They slowly walked towards a hill called *Golgotha*. This word means *the place of the skull*. Even the hill looked like death. May the raw emotion of this part of the gospel narrative shed a new sense of appreciation on God's love for mankind:



"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

⁷ See *Christian Basics: "I'm Sorry, God." Remorse and Repentance*

A Life Without Sin

The life of Jesus is remarkable because He never sinned!¹⁰ He followed the Law of Moses perfectly and never committed an act of disobedience! The devil even visited Jesus to personally tempt Him to sin but was unable to sway Jesus' goodness. Because He was tempted yet did not sin, Jesus can sympathize with us when we struggle with temptation.

The sinless life of Jesus was necessary because of God's pattern of sacrifice. In the Law of Moses, priests offered sacrifices to God using animals *without blemish*. These pure and spotless animals were intended to show that God would forgive the sins of men when an innocent sacrifice was offered in its place. The animals foreshadowed Jesus, the sinless and perfect sacrifice.

Conspiracy

After three years of preaching, Jesus came into Jerusalem one last time. He entered the temple, the holy place of worship for the Jews. Unfortunately, many people had started doing business in the temple. They were exchanging money and selling merchandise there. Jesus was angry that the people were not honoring God. He began turning over the tables of money and ran out the money changers. He rebuked the religious leaders for preaching but not obeying God's commands.¹¹

This rebuke made the Jewish leaders even angrier. Jesus' words made them look bad. They wanted to kill Him, but they could not find an opportunity. They were afraid of the people who seemed to love Jesus. They began to form a plan to get rid of this man who had caused them so much trouble.

Betrayal

One of Jesus' disciples was named Judas Iscariot. The Jewish leaders were able to convince Judas to betray Jesus. The Bible gives little detail about his motive, but we can know this: Judas was not tricked. While he was influenced by the devil, Judas *chose* to betray Jesus. He went to the religious leaders in secret. He asked how much they would be willing to pay if he handed Jesus over to them. They counted out thirty pieces of silver and gave it to Judas. He left and waited for an opportunity to betray Jesus. Hundreds of years before this happened, God inspired a man named Zechariah to make a prophecy about the betrayal:

*So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the Potter." – that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter.*¹²



⁹ Examples of Miracles: Matthew 9, Mark 7, John 9, 11

¹⁰ See: Matthew 4:1-11, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:22, Hebrews 4:15; 7-10; *Christian Basics: Why Does A Sinless Savior Matter?*

¹¹ Matthew 23; Luke 19:45-48

¹² Zechariah 11:12-13

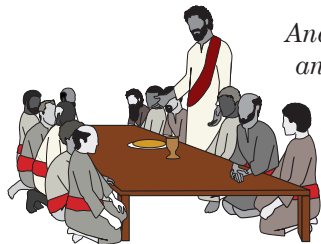
Part 2: One Last Night, One Dark Day

Introduction: Plans

Many plans had been made that would be accomplished soon. Judas had plans to betray Jesus to the religious leaders. They had plans to condemn Jesus to death. The devil had a plan to destroy the Son of God. Even the greatest plan of all, God's plan to redeem man from sin, was soon to be accomplished. All that was left for God's plan to be fulfilled was one last night and one dark day.¹

The Communion

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He brought His disciples into an upper room. There they had a meal together. After the meal, Jesus did something very special: He instituted the Communion. (It is also called *the Lord's Supper*.) This is a very special ceremony that Christians still keep to this day.



And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."²

The bread and the cup of fruit of the vine (grape juice) did not magically turn into Jesus' *body* and *blood of the new covenant*. (Nor does it today.) They are symbolic examples. Christians use these symbols every Sunday to honor Jesus' sacrifice.³

Jesus told Judas that He knew of his betrayal. Even so, Judas did not repent. Instead, Judas left to find the religious leaders. Meanwhile, Jesus was trying to tell His followers that He would die soon. He knew God's plan involved His sacrifice on the cross. He also said that all the disciples would forsake Him and run away.

A Garden Prayer

Jesus led His disciples to a mountainside olive grove to pray. All of His disciples, even Judas, knew of this location. With His disciples nearby, Jesus knelt in prayer. Jesus was in great sorrow and deeply distressed. His prayer was a window into His heart:

"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."⁴

Jesus' prayer for the cup to pass was a reference to God's wrath. Since the time when sin first came into the world, the wrath and judgment of God.

He knew that the death of an innocent person was necessary in order to atone for the sins of the guilty. Since Jesus lived a perfect life without sin, He was the only one who could die in order to save man from sin.

Jesus Is Arrested

As Jesus was praying, the sound of soldiers' feet filled the garden. Jesus' disciples were surprised to see a large mob around them. In the middle of this group of troublemakers was Judas Iscariot. He told the mob as they arrived to look for the one that he kissed. This would be a sign for them to see who to arrest.

Judas stepped forward. He kissed Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi." Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." With the sign witnessed by the soldiers, they stepped forward to arrest Jesus. At this point, all of Jesus' disciples deserted Him and ran away. It was just as He had said.



A Dishonest Trial

Jesus was brought before the Jewish religious council. They tried many ways to prove that Jesus was guilty of something that deserved death. No one could find anything. Eventually, after many false witnesses, the high priest asked for Jesus to answer if He was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered:

"It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."⁵

The high priest accused Jesus of blasphemy, which is insulting God. They thought Jesus insulted God by saying He and the Father are equals. What they refused to see was that Jesus was (and is) a part of the Godhead.⁶ He had come from heaven and from God the Father! The council agreed that Jesus was worthy of death. They blindfolded Him, spat in His face, and struck Him with the palms of their hands. They mocked Him and asked for Him to prophesy who had hit Him.

An Angry Mob and the Roman Governor

The Jewish leaders took Jesus to the Roman Governor's courtyard. They needed permission from Pontius Pilate (the governor) to execute Jesus. When Judas saw Jesus was condemned, his betrayal made him feel guilty. He ran to the temple and begged that they take back the money.

¹ Scriptures of Jesus last night and final day are found in Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:16, Luke 22:24, and John 18:19

² Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; See *Christian Basics: All About the Communion*

³ Matthew 26:64

⁴ Matthew 26:26-29 (See also Mark 14:22-26 & Luke 22:14-23)

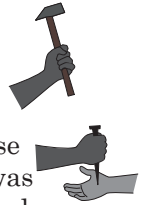
⁵ Matthew 26:39



Part 1: Jesus' Death and Resurrection

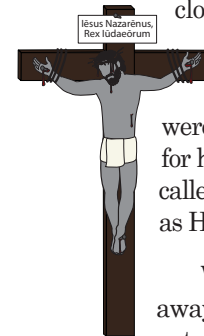
The Crucifixion

When Jesus arrived on the hill of Golgotha, the soldiers laid His body on the wooden beam and drove nails through His hands and His feet. Then they raised the beam onto the fixed cross for all to see. Beside Jesus were two more crosses. On these the soldiers crucified two common criminals. The physical pain was magnified by the body hanging all of its weight on the nails. The slow dying as a public spectacle was an additional cruelty of the cross.¹



A King on a Cross

They placed a sign above His head in three languages so that everyone could read it. The sign said, "This is Jesus, king of the Jews." Some stood nearby and mocked Jesus. Others shouted for Him to perform a miracle and come down from the cross. Even the two thieves who had been crucified near him mocked Jesus. (Although one would repent shortly thereafter.²) The soldiers gambled for His clothes to see who could keep them.



Only one of Jesus' disciples came to the cross. The rest were hiding and afraid. Some of the women who had followed Jesus were there. Jesus' mother was also there. How terrible it must have been for her to see her Child hanging on the cross! After He was crucified, He called out, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."³ Even as He was dying, Jesus loved those who were killing Him.

When Jesus became the sacrifice for sin, God the Father turned away. There was darkness over the land for three hours. Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me!"⁴ The pain of separation from the Father was greater than we may ever know. Finally, when Jesus knew that all things had been fulfilled, He said, "It is finished."⁵ Then, He died.

Jesus' death appeared to be a victory for Satan. Since the garden of Eden, he brought the destruction and deception of sin to the world. For centuries, man struggled and failed against sin. However, in this act of sacrifice, Jesus

¹Scriptures of Jesus crucifixion and resurrection are found in Matthew 27-28, Mark 14-16, Luke 22-24, and John 19-21

³Luke 23:34

⁴Matthew 27:46

⁵John 19:30

²See *Christian Basics: The Thief on the Cross*

conquered Satan by offering redemption from sin. The very first prophecy was fulfilled:

*“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will **crush your head**, and you will **strike his heel**.”*⁶

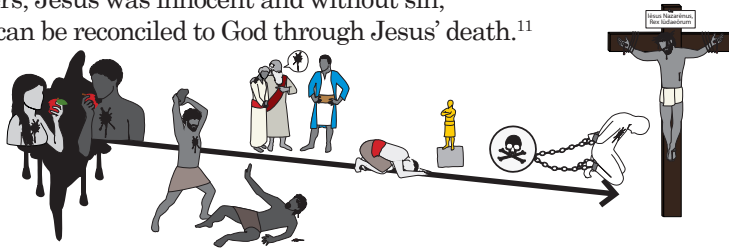


Satan had *struck the heel* with the death of Jesus. What he didn't realize was that very act *crushed the head* of Satan and the destructive grip of sin on mankind.

Why Jesus' Death Matters

When Jesus died, there was a great earthquake. The temple curtain was torn in two. (This symbolized that the Mosaic Age was over. The Christian Age was about to begin!) The first part of God's redemption plan had been accomplished. Jesus' death as the innocent and perfect sacrifice redeemed man from sin. Consider this:

- We all have sinned;⁷
- God is holy and can have no part of sin;⁸
- The ultimate fate for sinners is spiritual death in Hell;⁹
- God has always used the pattern of innocent sacrifice redeeming the guilt of others; Jesus was innocent and without sin;¹⁰
- We can be reconciled to God through Jesus' death.¹¹



An Empty Tomb



One of Jesus' followers named Joseph and some of the women present took the body down from the cross. They wrapped His body in linen and laid it inside a cave-like tomb. They rolled a large stone in front to seal the tomb. For three days, it seemed that Jesus was gone and His mission failed.

Early on Sunday morning, as the day began to dawn, some of the women took some spices to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus and show respect. When they arrived, they found the stone had been rolled away! They ran back to tell the disciples. When two of them (Peter and John) heard, they ran to the tomb. The only thing they found was the burial clothes lying there with the head cloth folded up and lying by itself!

⁶ Genesis 3:15 (NIV, emphasis added) ⁹ Romans 6:23

⁷ Romans 3:23

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁸ 1 John 1:5

¹¹ Romans 5:10

Study Quiz | Lesson 5

TRUE

FALSE

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Everyone (including Jesus) has sinned. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. We are reconciled to God through Jesus' death. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. The Resurrection proves that Jesus really came from Heaven. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Saul (Paul) considered himself "the worst sinner" who ever lived. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. We can earn our salvation through works of merit alone. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Faith is when something is planned by God and is worked out (accomplished) by man. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Without faith, being baptized is just getting wet! |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Anyone in the world can become a Christian. |

Search the Scriptures

1. "My God, my God, why have You _____!" (Matthew 27:46)
2. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will _____, and you will _____." (Genesis 3:15)
3. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men _____. (1 Corinthians 15:19 NASB)
4. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am _____. (1 Timothy 1:15)
5. For by _____ you have been saved through _____, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of _____, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
6. Corresponding to that, _____—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ... (1 Peter 3:21 NASB)

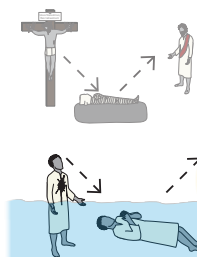


Deeper Connections

1. In your own words, why did/does the death of Jesus matter?
2. In your own words, why does the resurrection of Jesus matter?
3. Why is do you think someone who tried to work for a salvation of merit would be offensive to God?
4. What is the difference between works of merit and obeying God?
5. How does a person become a Christian?

What must I do to be saved?

The Bible teaches that faith comes by *hearing* the gospel.¹⁵ Faith *believes*¹⁶ that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be. Faith is shown in *repentance*¹⁷ of sins. Repentance is a lifestyle change from serving sin to serving God. Faith is stated by *confessing*¹⁸ that Jesus is the Son of God. These words are confessed when one is ready to be saved, but it doesn't end there. The new lifestyle of godliness becomes a confession of Christ. Faith is demonstrated when a penitent sinner is *baptized* in water for the remission of sins.¹⁹



Baptism is symbolic of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. He submitted to a physical action (death on a cross) to accomplish a spiritual action (redemption of sin for mankind) Likewise, a penitent sinner symbolically dies to sin, is buried with Christ, and is resurrected as a new, saved person!²⁰ The penitent sinner submits to a physical action (going under water) to accomplish a spiritual action (remission of sins.)

When a penitent sinner is baptized, there is nothing magical in the water that literally washes us clean. The water is not holy. The act of faith that obeys as God instructed is what saves us. The Bible says:

Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ²¹

Hearing the gospel, believing, repenting of sin, confessing Christ, and baptism must be done in faith. Without faith, hearing the gospel would only be *listening* to words; confessing Christ would only be *saying* some words; being baptized would only be getting wet. By the grace of God, we obey the gospel of Jesus in faith when we obey what God has planned. From that moment, we belong to Christ and do our best to live a Christian lifestyle. God wants all men to be saved. While some may feel guilty or unworthy, the Bible teaches that God's grace can reach anyone who is willing to faithfully obey the gospel. Please know that Jesus has *you* in mind when He said so long ago:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

¹⁵ Romans 10:17

¹⁶ Mark 16:16

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 7:10

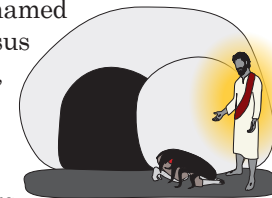
¹⁸ Romans 10:9-10, Acts 8:36-38, Matthew 10:32-33

¹⁹ Acts 2:38; 22:16, Galatians 3:27-28

²⁰ Romans 6:3-6

²¹ 1 Peter 3:20-21 (NASB); See *Christian Basics: All About Baptism*

The two men went away confused. A disciple named Mary stayed at the empty tomb crying. Suddenly, Jesus appeared. He was alive again! Prompted by Jesus, she ran to the disciples and told them what she had seen. While they were together that evening, Jesus appeared to them. He said, "Peace be with you."¹² One of the disciples (Thomas) had not been with the others, and he wouldn't believe them. After eight days, all the disciples were together (including Thomas). Jesus appeared among them again! Thomas was in shock. He could only answer with a confession of who Jesus was: "My Lord and my God!" Jesus' response to Thomas is meant as a blessing for all Christians.



*"Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed."*¹³

Why Jesus' Resurrection Matters

With such amazement at the events surrounding Jesus' miraculous return from the dead, a perceptive question is: Why does the resurrection of Jesus matter?

1 *The Resurrection proves the Deity of Jesus.*¹⁴ He claimed to come from heaven, and His miraculous return from the dead proved it.

2 *The Resurrection validates the Bible's message.*¹⁵ With so many books written across so many years foretelling that a Messiah and Redeemer would come, the entire message of the Bible is validated when He returned as risen Savior!

3 *The Resurrection demonstrates God's power over death.*¹⁶ By returning from the grave, Jesus showed that God's power could overcome death and offer man the salvation of a resurrection to eternal life.



4 *The Resurrection offers man the hope to have eternal life.*¹⁷ If Jesus died as a sacrifice only to be conquered in death, there could be no true victory for Christians. It wouldn't matter that we were saved, if our only fate was to die. There would be no need for salvation; everyone would just stay dead. The Bible says:

*For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.*¹⁸

Jesus was crucified, killed, and buried. Early that Sunday morning, God raised Jesus back to life. God's plan had worked! Man can escape sin and death and return to a harmonious fellowship with God! The following is sweeter now than ever before:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

¹² John 19:23

¹³ John 20:29

¹⁴ Romans 1:4

¹⁵ Psalm 16:8-10

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:55-57

¹⁷ Romans 5:10

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:17-19 (NASB)

Part 2: Anyone Can Be Saved

Introduction: The Great Question

What must I do to be saved?¹ This is the great question that people have asked since the good news about Jesus' sacrifice was first preached. Other inquiries about salvation might be: *How does a person become a Christian? How does someone begin a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? How does one join the church?* While the wording may vary, the concepts point to the same inquiry: *the need be saved from sin and spiritual death.*



The First Conversions

After His resurrection, Jesus stayed on the earth forty days. Then, He ascended to Heaven in clouds. Later, God sent the Holy Spirit to inspire Jesus' apostles.² The Spirit appeared like fire and wind. He gave them miraculous power to *speak in tongues*. This means they could speak in foreign languages with no prior study or experience. God granted them the ability to overcome the curse of Babel from thousands of years ago!³ The apostles immediately began preaching.



A special festival had brought people from all nations to Jerusalem. Peter preached to a large crowd of Jews and explained who Jesus was, why He mattered, and how the people were all guilty for putting Jesus to death. Many people were convicted of their sins when they heard this gospel sermon. They asked what they should do. Peter said:

*"Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*⁴

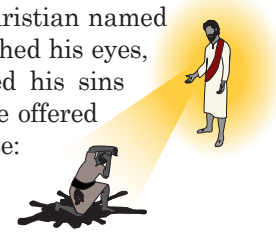
Three thousand people obeyed Jesus' gospel and were baptized! The Christian Age had begun and the church was established.⁵ The Bible says these new Christians:

*[...] ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*⁶

The Worst Sinner

The Bible shows many Jewish religious leaders did not like this new faith. They greatly persecuted the church. While they stoned a Christian to death, a man named Saul watched in approval.⁷ He then began persecuting Christians *unto death*.⁸ While traveling to a different city to arrest some, Jesus appeared and blinded Saul! He asked why Saul was persecuting *Him*.

Jesus implied that when a Christian is persecuted, He is too.⁹ Saul was told to wait in Damascus. After a few days, a Christian named Ananias was guided by the Lord to find Saul. He touched his eyes, and Saul could see again. Saul immediately washed his sins away in baptism.¹⁰ How could such a terrible man be offered redemption from his sins? Saul (a.k.a. *Paul*) later wrote:



*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.*¹¹

The Good News About Salvation

Paul considered himself *the worst of sinners* because he had opposed God and approved in the arrest and murder of Christians. He reflected that if God could forgive *the worst of sinners*, God could forgive anyone!

The gospel of Jesus is good news for a good reason: *we can all be saved!* Salvation is not for people of a certain skin color, language, culture, wealth, or education. God wants *everyone* to be saved! God created every person in His image. Every person is special and unique to God. No matter who one is, what they have done, or how unworthy they may feel, God loves us all and wants everyone to be saved.

Salvation starts with God

The converted Paul explained that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*. Salvation from sin and spiritual death must always be seen as Divine in origin. Mankind has tried to save themselves in many ways, but sin is too great and mankind is too weak. For this reason, salvation starts with God. It's important to know some specific terms when we consider salvation:

When God plans and God works	When God plans and man works	When man plans and man works
Grace an unmerited/undeserved favor	Faith a demonstration of complete trust	Merit a reward or wage that one deserves

Salvation starts with God's grace because He did not have to send Jesus. In His love, God sent His innocent Son to die in our guilty place. This unmerited and undeserved favor is God's grace. The Bible teaches we cannot be saved by our own works.¹²⁻¹³ If one tries to *earn* salvation through their own works of merit, they imply that salvation is something they *deserve* and not God's precious gift. The Bible also says we access God's grace through faith. We have faith in God by obeying what He has commanded (also called "obeying the gospel").¹⁴ What has God planned for penitent sinners to do in faith?

¹ Acts 16:30

² Acts 2:1-4; See *Christian Basics: Miraculous Gifts in the NT*

⁵ For further studies on the church, please consider *Pure and Simple Bible: The Church Series*

⁶ Acts 2:46-47

⁷ Acts 6-7

⁸ Acts 22:4

³ See Genesis 11 for the curse of Babel

⁴ Acts 2:38

⁹ Saul's encounter with Jesus and eventual conversion are found in Acts 9

¹⁰ Paul's baptism is recorded in Acts 9:10-22 and 22:15-16

¹¹ Timothy 1:15-16 (NIV)

¹² Ephesians 2:8-10; See *Christian Basics: All About Works*

¹³ Ephesians 2:6,8; See *Christian Basics: How Do You Become a Christian?*

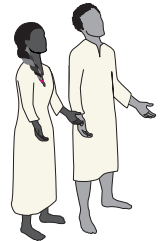
¹⁴ 2 Thessalonians 1:8



Part 1: Until Jesus Comes Again

Patiently Waiting

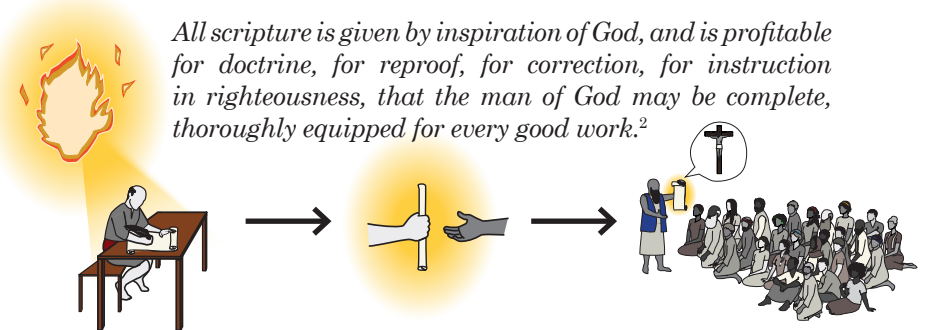
The church continued to grow despite persecution and faithfully took the good news all over the world. The devil lost his hold on the world when Jesus died and resurrected. However, he was (and still is) a deceiver. The great adversary of God's people adapted to the Christian Age. Through his evil influence, governments and individuals persecuted the church. Christians wait patiently for Jesus' return someday and live a lifestyle of faithfulness unto death.¹



The New Testament Written Down

Many Jews, Gentiles, and even the Roman government did not like Christians. Many were killed or persecuted for their faith. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles and other New Testament men of faith to write down the Gospel of Jesus and Christian teachings so that the Word of God could be passed on to all nations. In addition to four gospel accounts of Jesus' life, they wrote letters of Christian encouragement and instruction to different churches. These letters are also known as *the epistles*. These epistles are meant to teach all Christians how to love and obey God, serve others, and stay faithful. The Bible says:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.²



With the New Testament written down, copies passed from church to church. The church of Christ had begun, had grown, and continues to grow to this day!

¹ See *Christian Basics: What Do We Do After We Are Saved?*

² 2 Timothy 3:16-17; For more information about how we got the Bible, please consider *Pure and Simple Bible: The Bible Series*.

Some Depart the Faith

Sadly, there is not only good news to tell about the Christian Age. Satan knew that their devotion to Jesus' good news was strong. The devil used the same strategy that He tempted Eve with in the garden of Eden. He cast doubt on God's message. Through evil influence, false teachers and selfish Christians began to try to change the beliefs and practices of the church.³ The apostle Paul warned:

*"Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron..."*⁴

Faithful Christians stood up for what was right. They refused to be deceived by Satan nor agree with these false teachers. Because the false teachers would not quit, they departed from the faith and began churches of their own. Even though Jesus said that He would build the church⁵, others have created churches to meet their own desires.⁶ To this day, groups that do not obey what God commands or follow the teachings of a man are not part of the church that Jesus built. They take Jesus off the throne of their heart, and reign as kings themselves.



Faithful Christians Carry On

Even though the devil is busy influencing people into sin and spiritual death, Christians fight back by bringing the good news of Jesus: salvation and godly living. This spiritual war between Jesus' good news and Satan's evil influence will continue throughout the Christian Age. Through godly living, caring for the poor and weak, and sharing the gospel, Christians can expose sin and Satan for their evil ways.

The Christian faith is centered on *evangelism*, meaning *the sharing of the good news of Jesus*. Christians often move to new places and take the gospel with them. As the church grows around the world, more people are faithfully obeying Him. Jesus commissioned that His gospel be taken all over the world. He said:

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*⁷

³ See *Christian Basics: Deception*

⁴ 1 Timothy 4:1-2

⁵ Matthew 16:16-18

⁶ See *Christian Basics: Six Common Misconceptions About Christianity*

Study Quiz | Lesson 6

TRUE

FALSE

1. Hell is only for the really bad people.
2. God does not have a "rulebook" to determine which sins are worthy of Hell.
3. All sins -- if not forgiven -- no matter how we may view them, are worthy of spiritual death in God's eyes.
4. Jesus took away the fate of Hell for anyone who believes and obeys.
5. We can learn exactly what Heaven looks like.
6. In Heaven, we will live as we were meant to be: in perfection and in God's presence.
7. I am ready for Jesus to come back.

Search the Scriptures

1. "Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because _____ is the gate and _____ is the way which leads to life, there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)
2. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this _____? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:24-25)
3. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more _____, nor _____, nor _____. There shall be no more _____, for the former things have passed away. (Revelation 21:4-5)
4. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign _____. (Revelation 22:5)



Deeper Connections

1. How should we live since we do not know exactly when Jesus will come back?
2. Why do sinners go to Hell?
3. Does anyone deserve to go to Heaven?
4. What makes Heaven so special?

Heaven: An Eternal Home with God

There are many descriptions of heaven in the last book of the Bible, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (commonly referred to as *Revelation*). This Christian prophecy tells of the struggle between good and evil for the hearts of mankind. It ends with the victory of Jesus over the devil and the beginning of an age called Eternity. The book of Revelation says:



And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."²¹

We know that heaven is a place where all the symptoms of sin are taken away. There will be no more pain or suffering. People will not lose loved ones to death. Hatred, evil, and all the devil's greatest weapons of darkness will not exist. We will live as we were meant to be: in perfection and in God's presence! The Bible says:

*And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month.*²²

The tree of Life, God's gift to Adam and Eve so long ago, is planted in Heaven. It symbolizes a complete restoration of the relationship between God and man! God's faithful shall live forever and ever in perfection with the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus, and the Father.

Are You Ready?

In the very last verses of the Bible, Jesus speaks. The man writing was the apostle John. Jesus says, "Surely I am coming quickly." John was so excited to know this that he responded by declaring, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"²³

Are you ready for Jesus to come back? That question has eternal consequences, and we hope that you are ready. This series has covered over a thousand pages of information from the Bible in a few brief studies. While there is more information in the Bible, all should be able to appreciate one very important point: Jesus came to the world to redeem sinners, among whom we all are included.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. -John 3:16

Jesus gave a very specific command for Christians: *Go and make disciples of all nations.* Through salvation and edification (stated by Jesus as "baptize them" and "teach them"), people all over the world are faithfully awaiting the day that Jesus will come again. Until then, Christians remain faithful by spiritually growing through the Bible, godly living, and sharing the gospel with others.



Faithful to Death

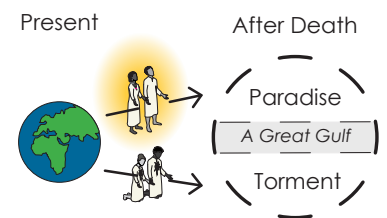
Christians have waited for Jesus' return for a long time. God has told us to be patient, because time is not the same to Him as it is to us.

*But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*⁸

When Jesus said He is coming *soon*, it is not referring to measurable time, but a Heavenly guarantee: He *will* come again. Knowing this, Christians do their best to be faithful to God. A life spent in devotion to God is worth an eternity of reward in Heaven!⁹ At the end of our life, what happens if we die and Jesus has not returned? What has happened to all those who have died before our time?

Mankind has devised answers for this question that are plentiful and diverse. Some people believe that we will simply cease to exist. They think that this life is all we have. Others believe that life is one great cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. The ideas above are a sample of the plethora of ideas from the construct of man, not God. The Holy Spirit revealed in the Bible what will happen if we die before Jesus returns again.

The Bible says that once we die, our chance for redemption has passed. If we are faithful to Him, He will be faithful to us. If we have denied Him, He will deny us.¹⁰ The Bible teaches that when we die, our soul goes to a waiting place called Hades.¹¹ Hades is a realm where the dead wait for the Day of Judgment. Jesus waited in Hades for three days from the time of His death to the moment of His resurrection.¹²



After His ascension, Jesus now reigns in Heaven with God the Father.¹³ Therefore, Hades is not Heaven. There is a great gulf that separates the righteous and the unrighteous in Hades. This gulf is so wide that none can cross to the other side. The righteous dwell in a part of Hades called Paradise where there is peace and comfort. The unrighteous dwell in a part of Hades that is a place of torment and pain.¹⁴ While the living await Jesus' return on the earth, the dead wait in Hades until Jesus comes again.

²¹ Revelation 21:3-5

²² Revelation 22:1-3

²³ Revelation 22:20

²⁴ See *Christian Basics: The Story of the Bible*

⁷ Matthew 28:19-20

⁸ 2 Peter 3:8

⁹ 2 Corinthians 4:17

¹⁰ 2 Timothy 2:11-13

¹¹ Luke 16:22-23

¹² Acts 2:31

¹³ See Revelation 4-5

¹⁴ Luke 16:19-31

Part 2: An Eternal Reward

The End of the Age

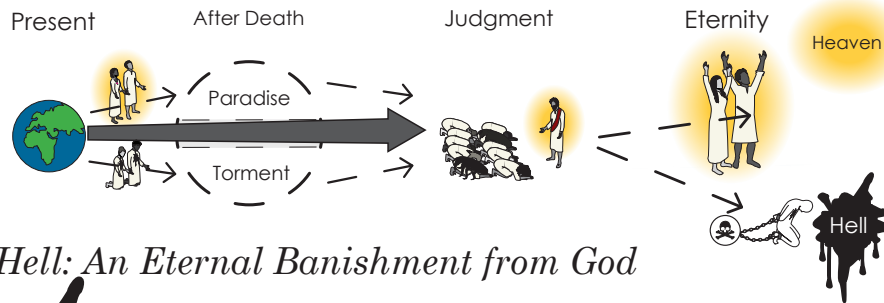
The Christian Age will continue until the Lord Jesus returns to bring judgment on the world. God is patient. He wants all men to be saved.¹ Eventually, there will come a time when God will decide that He has been patient long enough. He will begin the end of time by sending Jesus back. No one knows the exact time of Jesus' return except God the Father.² The promise we have is that Jesus will return, and until He does, we should live for Him!

The Bible says Jesus will come like a thief in the night. This means that no one will anticipate the time. He will appear in the sky with angels and all of mankind (both living and dead) will be called to the judgment. When all are assembled, all people will bow and confess that Jesus is Lord.³ After this assembly comes judgment and an eternal reward.



The Judgment

Everyone who has ever lived, from the very first man to you and me, will face judgment. The Bible says that the books will be opened and our lives will bear witness for us. Our life will either demonstrate faithfulness or rebellion to God.⁴ The blood of Jesus will cover the sins of those who have faithfully obeyed His gospel. The names of those who are saved will be found in the book of Life. Those names that are not found will be cast into eternal Hell.⁵ This Judgment is a sentencing. No one will be able to argue their case before God. None will be able to change the sentence they receive. God will sentence each soul for the life lived (either in faith or in rebellion).



Hell: An Eternal Banishment from God



Hell is a part of God's will. This punishment was not initially for man; God designed Hell for the devil and his fallen angels.⁶ Hell became necessary for man after the rebellion in the Garden of Eden.⁷ While some prefer not to think about Hell, people must realize what lies ahead, if they do not repent. Hell has a threefold purpose: punishment, destruction, and banishment from God.⁸

¹ 2 Peter 3:9
² Matthew 24:36; 2 Peter 3:10-13, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
³ 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, Philippians 2:10
⁴ See *Christian Basics: Judgment: Who Will Be Judged?*
⁵ Revelation 20:11-15
⁶ Matthew 25:31, 2 Peter 2:20-22
⁷ 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, Romans 6:23

The Bible uses the five physical senses to describe Hell (hearing, touch, taste, sight, and smell). These are intended to be examples of a *spiritual* future. Our minds may think about these senses in a physical way, but the Bible uses them to describe a spiritual punishment:

- **Hearing:** Constant weeping and gnashing teeth in pain will be heard in Hell.⁹
- **Touch:** Eternal fire, pain, and worm that continually eats the souls in Hell.¹⁰
- **Taste** (or lack thereof): Hell is compared to unquenchable thirst.¹¹
- **Sight** (or lack thereof): Hell as a place of total darkness.¹²
- **Smell:** The constant rot and burning will fill the nostrils of those in Hell.¹⁰

Who Will Be in Hell?

Satan and his fallen angels will be cast into Hell.¹³ Beyond these spirits, who will be sent there? While no human is the judge of another's soul, we should understand what the Bible teaches: the way to heaven is difficult, and the way to Hell is easy.

“Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, there are few who find it.”¹⁴

Some believe that Hell is reserved for the most terrible sinners. Who gets to decide which sins are terrible and which ones can be overlooked? The Bible teaches that all sins—that have not been forgiven—are punishable in God's judgment.

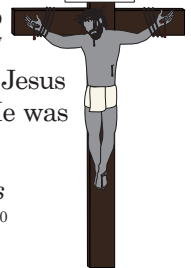


This is why Christians take the good news all over the world. Anyone *can* be saved.¹⁵ However, Jesus' death doesn't mean everyone *will* be saved. It means that we have the *opportunity* to be saved, if we are willing to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ! What about good and moral people who do not believe in God and obey Jesus' gospel? The Bible teaches that being a good person does not get rid of sin. Only God's grace and an obedient faith in Jesus Christ can save us from Hell.¹⁶

Jesus Paid the Price

Hell is a terrible reward for the unrighteous. However, those who have faith do not face the threat of Hell. It was taken care of in God's plan for redemption. Jesus took away this future for anyone who believes and obeys. Jesus faced the *punishment* of sin for us.¹⁷ Jesus' sacrifice ended in death, the *destruction* of His body.¹⁸ Jesus was momentarily separated from God's fellowship, meaning He was *banished*.¹⁹ Thank God for Jesus! The Bible says:

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!²⁰



⁸ 2 Thessalonians 1:5-7, Revelation 20:15
⁹ Luke 13:27-28
¹⁰ Mark 9:43-48
¹¹ Luke 16:24
¹² Matthew 8:12
¹³ Revelation 20:10
¹⁴ Matthew 7:13-14
¹⁵ Galatians 3:26-28
¹⁶ John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 1 John 5:12
¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:21
¹⁸ Mark 15:42-47
¹⁹ Matthew 27:4-6
²⁰ Romans 7:24-25